# THE DESIGN OF MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAIS*

VITTORIA FALLANCA
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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Medieval and Modern Languages

University of Oxford
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For N., with all my love.
*E di questo l'universo ne può far fede.*

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## Short Abstract

*Dessein* is, in the sixteenth century, a polysemic term whose meanings cover the entire spectrum of the creative process: from an originating idea, project or intention to a material plan or visual design. This thesis reads Montaigne's *Essais* through the lens of this spectrum of meanings, showing that attending to the uses of, and approaches to, design in the *Essais* reveals the ways in which Montaigne conceived of his writing project as the product of a mode of experimentation and mediation between thought and world. One of the contentions of this thesis is that much like the practice of drawing that was central to the Renaissance artistic process, Montaigne's writing retains a marked indeterminacy, possessing an unresolved, 'sketch-like' quality. Like Renaissance artists, who in the century preceding the publication of the *Essais* had become increasingly interested in the *process* of artistic creation (a change reflected in the growing importance and value of drawing), Montaigne is also fascinated by the process of translating an internal notion or idea into its public manifestation. This fascination animates the *Essais*, and influences Montaigne's position on questions of authorial intention, posthumous reputation, and his relationship to both real and imagined readers, including Montaigne himself. Making use of a hybrid methodology that brings together word history, art theory, image analysis, close reading and design theory, this thesis uncovers what Montaigne has to say about design; how the notion of design functions in the *Essais*; and how Montaigne's relationship to designed objects sheds light on what we might call a 'Montaignian aesthetics'. Understanding Montaigne's uses of, and attitudes to, design ultimately allows us to reimagine the kind of project constituted by the *Essais*.

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## Long Abstract

In the preface to the *Essais*, Montaigne famously writes 'c'est moy que je peins'. In the shadow of this painting metaphor in the 'Au lecteur' is another word that carries connotations of visual representation. 'Je n'ay eu nulle consideration de ton service, ny de ma gloire', Montaigne writes, 'Mes forces ne sont pas capables d'un tel dessein.' With these words, Montaigne pre-emptively dismisses a number of the reader's possible claims of influence on his project as well as those of Montaigne's own glory. His forces, we are told, are not capable of following such a design. Or should it be: are not capable of making such a drawing? This is more than just a bad exercise in *paranomasia*; Montaigne was alive at a time when the French possessed no separate word for drawing, the art-term *dessin* emerged towards the end of the seventeenth century. *Dessein* thus captured both poles of the creative process: the mental, private formulation of an image or an idea as well as a finished product—the material and public manifestation of what was once solely in the mind. The term shares this oscillation between the mental and the material with the word *essai*, which captures both the mental exercise of 'trying out' one's judgement, and the material artefact that is the product of such an exercise.

This thesis is the first full-length study to read Montaigne through the conceptual lens of *dessein*. Attending to this term's inherent polysemy (poised between the mental and the material, the real and the ideal), it creates original connections between literature, philosophy and the visual arts in Montaigne and his wider historical context. The key idea animating this study is that design and Montaigne are mutually enlightening: not only does design act as an important tool for understanding elements of the *Essais*'s composition and the attitude to writing they embody; this analysis of Montaigne's language of *dessein* also uncovers vital and sometimes surprising dimensions of this concept. Each of the four chapters of the thesis considers *dessein* from a different angle, exploring distinct but interrelated aspects of the notion as it operates in the *Essais*.

The Introduction lays bare the central problematics of *dessein* by looking at the first instance of the word in the *Essais* in the 'Au lecteur'. It considers the term in light of its surface meaning of intention, looking at two different ways of reading Montaigne's prefatory moves: firstly as a statement of authorial intention, and in the second instance as an expression of an Aristotelian final cause. It argues that both of these approaches fail to do justice to the complexity and nuances of the term as it appears in the 'Au lecteur' and beyond, and proposes a different way of considering the intentional thrust of the term—by seeing it as sharing central dynamics, including an essential freedom, openness and unfinishedness, with the Renaissance sketch.

Chapter One approaches *dessein* from the point of view of the painting metaphor, first used by Montaigne in the 'Au lecteur' to characterise his project, via its attendant recent history of scholarly criticism, using Montaigne's visual imagery to take seriously the contention that the *Essais* are analogous to a visual artistic artefact. Building on work by Boutcher (2017), it asks what it might mean for a text to be like a painting, situating the *Essais* within the visual and material culture of Renaissance portraiture. Departing from the standard interpretations of portraiture of the period as personality cultivation or commemoration, it finds in Montaigne's language of visual metaphor a freer, more open understanding of visual representation that has more in common with Renaissance drawing. Through this parallel, the chapter counters the idea of portraiture as something fixed and static to restore to the painting metaphor its hermeneutic import for the Montaignian *œuvre*. It uses these insights to push back against the idea that Montaigne finds the painting metaphor wanting or even 'replaces' it with more suitable descriptions of his project as he progresses in writing it. The chapter is deliberate in its retracing of some well-trodden paths and examples—the aim is for the seasoned reader of the *Essais* to emerge with a fresh perspective of what portraiture is and could be at the turn of the seventeenth century (as denoted by the word 're-imagined' in its title) and to breathe new life into an aspect of Montaigne scholarship that might be seen as stale. Chapter One also has the function of setting up the importance of drawing, and particularly of the sketch, to the view of design that emerges in this thesis, and of providing an art-theoretical framework to the Renaissance conception of sketch and line that is then used throughout the remaining chapters.

The term *dessein* possesses an interesting and complex semantic baggage which has so far been underexplored in French literary studies, despite the wealth of attention that its Italian cognate *disegno* has received in art history and beyond. Chapter Two constitutes a close linguistic analysis of *dessein*, following this word around in the *Essais* to understand the idiosyncratic ways in which Montaigne makes use of its semantic restlessness. Starting with a short philological inquiry into significant instances of the term in late sixteenth-century texts, from art manuals to theological treatises, it considers how Montaigne's uses of *dessein* both partake in and depart from this immediate semantic landscape. Uncovering some of the philosophical tenets of Montaigne's conceptions of design: design understood as a form of will, it analyses how these relate to Montaigne's descriptions of his writing and the overtly 'artistic' elements of his text, in order to reconstruct what I call the *Essais*'s textual design. Scrutinizing those places where Montaigne uses *dessein* self-referentially (that is, to refer to his own project of writing), I analyse what these instances of the term reveal about Montaigne's attitudes to his own text.

Chapter Three develops the artistic and philological strands contained in Chapters One and Two by comparing Montaigne's attitudes to design with Italian theorisations and practices of *disegno*. It extends this comparison by looking at Montaigne's contemporary, the artist and theorist Federico Zuccaro, and his distinction between internal and external *disegno*, showing how, despite some interesting parallels in their approaches to the artistic process, Montaigne's design is ultimately more restless than Zuccaro's—it thrives on the productive tension between the mental and material rather than being neatly resolved in the category of the Idea. Through a close reading of II.xxvi, 'Des pouces', it then teases out the drawing-like nature of Montaigne's writing, which, it argues, resides in the physical tracking of lines of thought that constitutes his own personal *maniera*. This is then put in dialogue with the accounts of Montaigne and Mannerism offered by Nakam (2006), who sees in Montaigne the marks of a Mannerist sensibility. The chapter concludes by putting the *manus* back in *maniera*, as it were, arguing that if Montaigne is a Mannerist this is more because of the role played by the hand in his writing, than because of the sustained presence of a Mannerist style. I explore the extent to which these attitudes are reflected in the formal

aspects of the Montaigne's writing, looking beyond the written word to consider other visual traces (such as marginalia and aberrant pen marks) which constitute an evocative visual analogue to the sketch-like quality of 'Des pouces'.

The role of the aesthetic in Montaigne's writings is the concern of Chapter Four, which analyses how Montaigne's views of design operate beyond the confines of the *Essais*. It starts by considering Montaigne's relationship to the plastic arts, identifying and deconstructing the assumptions behind the critical commonplace that Montaigne was uninterested in or actively adverse to art (Pertile, 1973; Rigolot, 2016). The chapter distinguishes Montaigne's approach to such artefacts from those of his contemporaries through a comparison between the *Journal* and the diary of the young sixteenth-century traveller Nicolas Audebert, arguing that the nature of Montaigne's aesthetic experience is characterised by a radically embodied, personal approach to objects. It then locates the foundations of a Montaignian aesthetic in the author's descriptions of bodily encounters with what I argue are *designed* (and not just 'technical') artefacts. It ends on an extended discussion of Montaigne's encounters with three examples of such designed objects, which it argues are emblematic of Montaigne's aesthetic posture. Focusing on the vulnerability that emerges from such encounters in both the *Essais* and *Journal de voyage*, it then uses these insights to reflect on the poetics of the *Essais* as one characterised by all the open-endedness, ambivalence and studied vulnerability of Montaignian *dessein*.

Finally, the epilogue asks what a Renaissance understanding of *dessein* (informed both by Montaigne's *dessein* and by Renaissance theories and practice of sketching and *disegno*) can bring to our modern understanding of design and the field of design studies, fields which are gaining traction, and require sustained scrutiny, in our increasingly designed world. If *dessein* can offer fresh insights into the writing of the *Essais*, the Montaignian *essai* can also provide a way of 'essaying' design.

In order to do justice to the richness and complexity of *dessein*, this thesis employs a hybrid methodology that combines aspects of close reading, philosophical enquiry, (key)word analysis, art theory and aesthetics. While this hybridity is sustained throughout, the various chapters retain different methodological emphases, as they each seek to explore *dessein* from different angles, providing their own answer to the question 'what is the design of the *Essais*?'. Broadly speaking, however, the four chapters can be grouped into two, overlapping, methodological groups. Chapters One, Three and Four are companions, in that they connect the notion of *dessein* to (1) art-historical and cultural-material context and (2) to wider critical debates and tendencies in Montaigne studies; chapters Two and Three, on the other hand, share a focus on close reading and keyword analysis, analysing the terms *dessein* (in the case of the former) and *dessein* and *disegno* (in that of the latter) as they function at a textual level.

From intention to creation to interpretation, this thesis explores the role of design in Montaigne's writing, both 'inside' and 'outside' of the *Essais,* the former in terms of his own 'authorial' design and the latter in terms of what I call a 'textual design': the visual, material and public manifestation of Montaigne's thought. The overarching impetus behind this study is that of uncovering the relationship between these two types of design, how they manifest themselves in Montaigne's work, and what they tell us about the kind of project constituted by the *essai*. In following the vagaries of *dessein* as it operates in the *Essais*, it also offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between design and literary studies, arguing that these can be mutually enlightening. Not only does design act as an important tool for understanding elements of the *Essais*'s composition and the attitude to writing they embody; my analysis of Montaigne's language of *dessein*, and his attitudes towards the notion, also uncovers vital and sometimes surprising dimensions to design in the

Renaissance. Far from an end-oriented practice of self- or artistic control, design emerges here as a chancy, experimental encounter between mind and world.

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# Note on Abbreviations, Texts, Translations, and Gender

## Abbreviations

I use the following abbreviated forms:

CUP Cambridge University Press
OUP Oxford University Press
PUF Presses universitaires de France

## Texts

My decision to use the Villey-Saulnier edition for all quotations from the *Essais* is largely down to convenience, but I also refer to markings and annotations on the *Édition de Bordeaux*. Page numbers are given in-text. Chapters and book numbers are referred to in the form 'I.i'. I follow Villey's taxonomy of different *couches* and have supplemented those missing as far as possible, marking these with an apostrophe (') after the *couche* letter. Where I refer to the most recent Pléiade edition of the *Essais*, the chapter numbers follow those of that edition, and I give the page number together with the corresponding page number from the Villey text.

## Translations

Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

## Gender

I use the feminine pronoun to refer to the reader. Mostly, this is because I am a woman and 'the reader', in so far as this refers to an abstract entity with whose readerly habits I nevertheless can empathise, is for me a female one. In part, however, this is also a tribute to the many women who have read Montaigne's text, beginning with the contemporary female readers he mentions throughout. I like to think that when Montaigne records his frustration, in 'Sur des vers de Virgile', at the thought of the *Essais* serving merely the function of a 'public article of furniture' for ladies, and his desire for his book to be brought 'into the boudoir' instead, he is expressing the wish for the *Essais* to have something true to say to women, too, and that women will be able to find something deeply theirs in the text. Marie de Gournay was one of the first in a long line of women who have since done so, and my imaginary reader is in their midst. The artist, on the other hand, is referred to using the male pronoun. When using this term, I am referring to either a historical—male—individual, or using the word as shorthand for a group of people that were largely (although by no means exclusively) male.

# Introduction

## I. *Dessein,* Centre-stage

'Le dessein en est pris, je pars, cher Théramène'. With these words Hippolyte, possessed of all the assuredness of a young tragic hero, announces to his tutor the intention to leave Troezen in search of his father. Almost one hundred years before Racine's *Phèdre* was first performed, another canonical work of French literature was being written, one that also features the word *dessein* in its *incipit*. Montaigne, writing the preface to the first edition of the *Essais* in 1580, chooses to couch the 'Au lecteur' in the language of design, addressing his reader as follows:

> C'est icy un livre de bonne foy, lecteur. Il t'advertit dès l'entrée, que je ne m'y suis proposé aucune fin, que domestique et privée. Je n'y ai eu nulle considération de ton service, ni de ma gloire. Mes forces ne sont pas capables d'un tel dessein. (3)

On the surface, what could be more different than these two uses of the word *dessein*? Unlike in *Phèdre*, the intention announced at the start of the *Essais* does not belong to a fictional character; it belongs to an historical individual by the name of Michel de Montaigne. The design announced does not merely further a plot or highlight certain aspects of a drama or story, instead it tells us something about the (professed) relationship of the author to his work.[1] Hippolyte's *dessein* is inscribed in a dialogue; Montaigne's announcement of his *dessein* takes the form of an address: the design of which his forces are not capable is explicitly and irretrievably connected to the reader. While Hippolyte's pronouncement is a positive assertion ('je pars'), Montaigne's is a negative construction—we are told what his *dessein* does *not* consist in: the pursuit of glory or personal favour. With his opening lines, Racine plays on his audience's prior awareness of the relative success or failure of Hippolyte's *dessein*, a knowledge based on both the content of the story (known to seventeenth-century viewers via Euripides) and of the workings of the tragic genre. In this way, Hippolyte's proclamation of his design foregrounds the *dessein*, the narrative arc, of the entire play.[2] In the 'Au lecteur', Montaigne cannot rely on such a shared understanding of the workings of his book; the book, and the genre that it inaugurates, are still in the making as he pens those words. The announcing of his *dessein*, or rather, the kind of *dessein* he is *not* capable of, acts here to defy, instead, whatever readerly assumptions are brought to the book, and in so doing points to the text's own generic slipperiness.

Seen in the light of this last comparison, the *dessein* of the 'Au lecteur' and Racine's use of the same term at the start of *Phèdre* might have more in common than at first appears. In both these instances, *dessein* functions as a 'handle' on the text—a way of either

[1] For the relation of design to plot see Peter Brooks's work, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). It is worth highlighting that Racine was writing before the rise of the modern novel in Europe, and thus before the development of the kind of 'plot' that Brooks is concerned with. Nevertheless, many of Brooks's insights on narrative can be fruitfully applied to pre– and early modern texts. More recently, Jane Alison has tackled 'alternative' narratives in fiction while making use of the notion of design; see her *Meander, Spiral, Explode: Design and Pattern in Narrative* (New York: Catapult, 2019).

[2] Mark Gross, in analysing the word *dessein* in Racine's *Bajazet*, argues that '*dessein* may be the Racinian equivalent in theatre of plot in a novel' ('*Bajazet* and Interxtuality', *Yale French Studies* 76 (1989), 146–61, 155).

mobilising or subverting expectations about the kind of text it is, and how it works. In *Phèdre*, we can judge and understand the character of Hippolyte partly in terms of his intentions—and how successful he is in bringing them to fruition (not very, as it turns out). The same can be said for a literary work like the *Essais*. If Montaigne's aim is to write a book of 'bonne foy' that 'paints' a portrait of its author, that reveals him in his 'simple, natural, everyday fashion', as he tells us in the remainder of his preface, then perhaps part of our role as readers of the *Essais* is to track this intention and to ascertain the extent to which it succeeds. Much in the same way as Racine's opening gambit asks us to measure Hippolyte's actions in the rest of the play against his declared *dessein*, the 'Au lecteur' invites readers of the *Essais* to measure up what we read in the 107 chapters that follow the preface against this initial insight into the authorial aims of the book.

In this study, my guiding intuition has been to take Montaigne's pronouncement seriously. If, as he writes, he has eschewed at least one kind of design, what has he followed instead? What, in other words, is the design of the *Essais*? In attempting to answer this question, I have adopted a prismatic approach that treats the word *dessein* as both compass and destination—using the term both as a means of guiding my inquiry, by attending to Montaigne's uses of *dessein* beyond the 'Au lecteur', and as its final aim, to understand Montaigne's attitudes to design writ large. The core of this thesis investigates Montaigne's attitudes to design, both 'inside' and 'outside' of the *Essais,* the former in terms of his own 'authorial' design and the latter in terms of what I call a 'textual design': the visual, material and public manifestation of Montaigne's thought. The overarching impetus behind this study is that of uncovering the relationship between these two types of design, how they manifest themselves in Montaigne's work, and what they tell us about the kind of project constituted by the *Essais*.

## II. *Dessein* and Intention

Before setting out the view of design that underpins the thesis, it is worth spending a little longer on one possible interpretation of *dessein* in the 'Au lecteur', namely *dessein* as the pronouncement of an intention. Such a reading hinges on the equation of the word *dessein* with the word *fin* which precedes it ('je ne m'y suis proposé aucune fin, que domestique et privée'), and to consider these as having the same function: as referring, that is, to the ends towards which the book does (or does not) strive. And what could be more precious for the literary scholar of a work as challenging and elusive as the *Essais* than its author telling us explicitly what his aims and intentions are? When Montaigne does just this, for the first time in the 'Au lecteur' and then on numerous occasions throughout the rest of the chapters of his book, might we not exult at our good fortune? Here, after all, is our author *telling us* what his authorial intentions are with his work, and by extension how it ought to be read.

In reality, of course, things are not so simple. But despite the muddied waters of authorial intention, there are many currents of criticism that take the primary role of the reader (or viewer) of literary (or artistic) works to be precisely that of discerning the creator's intents, regardless of their explicit expression. Consider Freud's claim in his short essay on Michelangelo:

> In my opinion, what grips us so powerfully can only be the artist's intention, in so far as he has succeeded in expressing it in his work and in getting us to understand it. I realize that this cannot be merely a matter of intellectual comprehension; what he aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create. But why should

> the artist's intention not be capable of being communicated and comprehended in words, like any other fact of mental life?

For Freud, as we might expect, the 'comprehension' of this intention involves psychoanalytic interpretation:

> Perhaps where great works of art are concerned this would never be possible without the application of psychoanalysis. The product itself after all must admit of such an analysis, if it really is an effective expression of the intentions and emotional activities of the artist.

But Freud's main point is that before we can apply the tools of psychoanalysis to the artist's intention, we must first interpret the meaning behind the artwork: '[t]o discover his intention, though, I must first find out the meaning and content of what is represented in his world; I must, in other words, *interpret* it'.[3] Despite the central place of Freudianism in what would come to be known as the hermeneutics of suspicion, this passage displays a clear commitment to a causal connection between (creative) intention and interpretation. The idea that there is a retrievable idea or meaning behind a work of art, and that as viewers (or readers) our job is to recover it and interpret it fared less well, as is known, in a post-Barthesian climate, where the desire to extricate the intentions of the author was seen as a—sometimes violent—performance of readerly authority. After Barthes, Foucault's 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' called those things which we associate with authorial intention ('"deep" motive, a "creative" power, or a "design"') a readerly 'projection' and one which limits the possibilities of interpretation.[4] Two decades prior to the publication of Barthes's 'La Mort de l'Auteur', Beardsley and Wimsatt's argument against the intentional fallacy, which purported that 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art', was widely influential in framing the terms of the debate about the role of intention and meaning in the interpretation of works of art.[5] Much has been written about and in response to the intentional fallacy in the course of twentieth- and twenty-first century aesthetics; I am not going to summarise the debates here. But a picture emerges from this brief excursus into intention: whether in a positive or negative light, the uncovering of an intention has traditionally been seen to be at the heart of the activity of literary criticism and interpretation. Even in denying its importance, writers in literary studies and aesthetics have only reaffirmed the centrality of intention in these disciplines.

More recently, authorial or creative intention has been given a new lease of life in the anglophone world, primarily by an emergent current of 'cognitively-inflected' literary

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[3] Sigmund Freud, 'The Moses of Michelangelo' in *The Pelican Freud Library*, Vol 14: Art and Literature, trans. James Strachey, ed. Albert Dickson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 249–82 (p. 254).

[4] Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est qu'un auteur?', *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie*, 63:3 (1979), 73–104. The quotations are taken from p. 150 of the English version which appears in Josué Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post–Structuralist Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1979). For an extended analysis of the fate of the author in literary criticism with a focus on these two writers, see Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

[5] W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 54.3 (1946), 468–88. Wimsatt and Beardsley also co–authored a paper on what they termed the 'Affective Fallacy', which, aside from showing the authors' propensity for identifying fallacies, argues against equivalating a work of art's meaning with its (emotional) effects (W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Affective Fallacy', *The Sewanee Review*, 57.1 (1949), 31–55). For a defence of the intentionalist stance, see Noël Carroll, 'Art, Intentions, and Conversations', reprinted in Carroll's *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 157– 180, and Carroll, 'The Intentional Fallacy: Defending Myself', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55.3 (1997), 305–9. For a more recent reappraisal of the role of intention in art, see Paisley Livingston, *Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005).

criticism. As Wes Williams notes, 'cognitive approaches rehabilitate both intention and readerly response, recognizing both as being bound up with communication and psychological agency.'[6] They take their inspiration from arguments surrounding meaning and intention that emerged between Oxford and Cambridge in the early part of the twentieth century, especially the work of the philosopher Paul Grice.[7] Grice took Austinian speech acts as the basis of his theory of semantics but construed them as involving the disclosure and recognition of a speaker's intentions.[8] For Grice, a speaker's meaning in uttering a sentence relies on an intention to cause certain beliefs or actions in the interlocutor by means of their recognition of this intention. When I say, 'you can't sit there', the meaning of my utterance depends on my intention to communicate something about the relationship between you and the chair, and on your recognition of this intention which will cause you not to sit on the chair. We might see Montaigne's declarations in the 'Au lecteur' as implicitly relying on precisely this kind of view of language; through the direct and explicit declaration of an intention Montaigne is telling the reader (who here stands in for an interlocutor) his intentions and trying to cause the reader to acquire a set of beliefs about the nature of his writing project. Gricean pragmatics was later adapted into what is widely known as relevance theory, whose main tenets have been appropriated by literary scholars in the so-called 'cognitive turn' led by Terence Cave and others. As Cave explains in the introduction to his and Deirdre Wilson's edited volume on literature and relevance theory *Reading Beyond the Code*, the main contention of relevance theory is that we can infer from a series of observations the intentions behind a speaker's utterance, making effective communication 'an exercise in mind reading'.[9] These inferences depend, as Cave goes on to say, on the notion of cognitive environment. Cave does not define this, perhaps expecting his readers to be *au fait* with Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber's original definition:

> an individual's cognitive environment is the set of all the facts that he can perceive or infer; all the facts that are manifest to him. An individual's cognitive environment is a function of his physical environment and his cognitive capabilities.[10]

According to this definition, then, the business of communication amounts to a series of cognitive and psychological factors and processes, making inference of intention an in principle empirical affair.

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[6] Wes Williams, '"the proof of the pudding…": Common Knowledge and the Matter of Taste', *Paragraph*, 37:1 (2014), 143–51 (149–50).

[7] As Raphael Lyne puts it, 'cognitive readings of literature have rehabilitated some aspects of the idea of intention by seeing them as (more or less verifiable) characteristics of reading and listening'. For literary cognitivists, 'attention to a text always entails a posited speaker (or writer) and intention', Raphael Lyne, 'Relevance Across History' in Terence Cave and Deirdre Wilson (eds), *Reading Beyond the Code: Literature and Relevance Theory* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), pp. 35–52 (p. 49). See Lyne's article for ways in which cognitive criticism might be seen to resolve some of the problems of application of Gricean semantics in the sphere of literary criticism. It is important to note that, on the cognitivist view, communication is *ostensive*, i.e. based on a mutual assumption that the communicator wants to make manifest a certain intention (it is not the intention itself, whatever that might mean, that is supposed to be retrievable).

[8] See Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) for a collection of Grice's most important texts. According to speech act theory, some types of utterances constitute illocutionary acts, i.e. actions performed by virtue of uttering certain words, a classic example being promises – in saying 'I promise to φ' I am performing the action of promising by saying that I am doing so. The two seminal texts on speech acts are J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd edn, ed. J.O. Urmson and M. Sbisá (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) and John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969).

[9] Terence Cave and Deirdre Wilson (eds), *Reading Beyond the Code*, p. 4.

[10] Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edn (London: Blackwell, 1995), p. 39.

The line I have drawn from Freud to the cognitive turn is not intended to be read as a straightforward narrative of the development of attitudes to intention and interpretation, but serves, I think, as a useful reminder of the different ways that intention has been utilised, mobilised, dissected or ultimately discarded in the business of the interpretation of works of art and literature. Williams succinctly characterises the centrality of intention in the act of reading texts like the *Essais*:

> Whether we think of ourselves as listening to the dead or mindreading, we are engaged in practices which fall within the ambit of the intentions, designs and desires of people other than ourselves.[11]

Whether or not intention has been characterised as retrievable, or a useful or desirable way of thinking about textual interpretation, it has been most often characterised broadly as a mental aspect, condition, or state that can/cannot be gleaned, approximated or inferred.

## III. The Sketchiness of *Dessein*

One alternative to the intentional reading is to interpret the 'Au lecteur' against the backdrop of views of causality and action contemporary to Montaigne. This is Ann Hartle's reading of the 'Au lecteur', which she sees as engaging with the Aristotelian four causes, arguing that Montaigne invokes these only to weaken or subvert them. If for Aristotle the superior aim is the public one—the 'place of human fulfilment through the exercise of the moral virtues' – for Montaigne it is a strictly private end to which he aspires.[12] For Hartle, this reveals 'a decidedly un-Aristotelian understanding of action and thought',[13] not geared towards a single (external) aim or tied together by a single unifying philosophical perspective. She relates this to the form of Montaigne's writing, saying that 'the essay form matches this appearance of randomness and absence of final cause'.[14] If we read the word *dessein* in the 'Au lecteur' as announcing an intention, it is true that, as Hartle notes, Montaigne is subverting our expectations. By telling us his aim is private, not public, we are left with the hermeneutic problem of how to interpret the public—published—words that follow the 'Au lecteur'. Straightforward teleology, it seems, just won't cut it. Hartle doesn't dwell on the tension between the teleological language (*fin*, *dessein*) and the absence of 'final cause', focusing instead on constructing a parallel between the waywardness of Montaigne's actions and the waywardness of his writing: '[j]ust as Montaigne's actions are "without striving," so too his essays display a mode of thought without striving'.[15] Hartle's analysis is useful in that it highlights the idiosyncrasy of Montaigne's uses of the word – from the outset Montaigne's use of *dessein* in the *Essais* exacts careful attention from the reader. But there is something else going on with the use of *dessein* in the 'Au lecteur', I contend, which can be brought out through closer attention to the term's inherent polysemy. In order to bring to light what is at stake, let us consider an instance of the word that is found, once again, in Racine.

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[11] Wes Williams, '"the proof of the pudding…"', 150. 'Listening to the dead' can be read as a gloss here for the approach favoured by New Criticism, whose most prominent proponent, Stephen Greenblatt, uses the phrase in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 1. The juxtaposition of this with the cognitive practice of 'mindreading' in this way suggests that these two forms of reading are, for Williams, the main (if not of course the *only*) critical options facing the literary scholar.

[12] Ann Hartle, 'The Transformation of Virtue in Montaigne's *Essais*', *L'Esprit Créateur* 46:1, 2006, 3–12, 4.

[13] Ibid., 5.

[14] Ann Hartle, 'The Transformation of Virtue in Montaigne's *Essais*', 3.

[15] Ibid., 5.

### *III.i Dessein and Unfinishedness*

In his commentary on Racine's *œuvre*, the eighteenth-century grammarian Pierre-Joseph Thoulier d'Olivet reproaches the playwright for one of his uses of *dessein*.[16] In Act I Scene III of *Alexandre le Grand*, we find the following instance of the word in lines spoken by Axiane to Porus:

> Et ne le forçons pas par ce cruel mépris
> D'achever un dessein qu'il peut n'avoir pas pris.

D'Olivet is clear in locating the source of Racine's error: '[o]n dit exécuter un dessein, et non achever un dessein, à moins qu'on entende par-là l'ouvrage d'un homme qui dessine.'[17] Behind the somewhat snide nature of this remark lies an interesting philological problem. For d'Olivet, Racine's use of the word *dessein* here refers strictly to an aim or intention, and thus belongs firmly in the realm of the mental. But, as d'Olivet's comment attests, *dessein* could also, in the period, refer to a visual plan, design or drawing, as the separate word for drawing, *dessin*, only came into common use toward the middle of the eighteenth century. D'Olivet's *remarques* were published in 1738, precisely during the rise to prominence of the word *dessin*. When, however, Racine wrote *Alexandre* in the mid-1660s, or indeed *Phèdre* in the mid-1670s, there was no lexical distinction between the word for drawing and that for design-as-intention. As with all polysemic words, context plays an important part in inferring the correct interpretation and usage. Here, we can suppose that d'Olivet takes the verb *prendre* in the second line as evidence that Racine intended *dessein* as an aim for a course of action (*dessein* is thereby assumed to be close to the realm of decision-making, as in *prendre une décision*). But, given that the word *achever* is grammatically appropriate for some uses of the word *dessein*, Racine may well have had both semantic fields of *dessein* in mind when writing these lines, and the material meaning of *dessein* as a physical plan or desig, is mobilised here by Racine, whether willingly or not, by the verb *achever*.

When, in 1580, Montaigne penned the preface to the *Essais*, then, the word *dessein* and its orthographic variations possessed this same multiplicity of meaning. From signifying an intention, aim, plan to a draught or drawing, the word could be used to capture both poles of the creative process: the mental, private formulation of an image or an idea as well as the finished product, a material manifestation of what was once solely in the mind. *Dessein* shares this slipperiness between the mental and material, with the word *essai*. One way to render in English the French word that Montaigne used to characterise his writing is as 'sketch', and the chapters of the *Essais* possess precisely a sketch-like openness. Much like a preparatory drawing or study used by Renaissance artists as an initial representation that would then be 'resolved' or 'finished' in the final piece, Montaigne's writing often possesses a marked indeterminacy—its purpose is to thrive on the dynamism of multiple possibilities, rather than to aim towards a single perspective. Some have put this down to Montaigne's singular style, others to a particular way of thinking (characterised variously as sceptical, libertine, or otherwise), but the *Essais*'s non-resolution has rarely been conceived of in light of Renaissance art practices, in which sketches—*schizzi* or *abbozzi* in Italian—were commonly used by artists as a rapid means of working out a composition or putting down initial thoughts in preparation for a finished work.[18] Sketching was an inherently generative

[16] See Emile Littré, 'Remarque 2' in 'Dessein', *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, vol. 2 <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5460034d> [accessed 16 October 2019].
[17] Pierre-Joseph Thoulier d'Olivet, *Remarques de grammaire sur Racine* (Paris: Gandouin, 1738), pp. 10–11.
[18] Fausta Garavini qualifies Montaigne's *œeuvre* as not just 'jamais terminée' but 'fondamentalement non terminable' (*Itinéraires à Montaigne* (Paris: Champion, 1995), p. 86). For different approaches to the *Essais*

activity that allowed artists the freedom to pursue multiple lines of thought on the same sheet, as well as possessing an essential functionality: sketches could act as a template for a range of different commissions or act as a bank of ideas or inspiration for future works. In all of this, sketches also possessed their own aesthetic qualities, independently of their relation to any 'finished' work. As Carmen Bambach writes, '[s]uggestive sketchiness had long been acceptable, indeed admired, in drawings on paper for its ability to express the quick spark of artistic inspiration.'[19] Importantly, individual sketches did not necessarily belong in the category of the unfinished artwork, what was termed in Italian the *imperfetto* or *non-finito*. Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively to our modern understanding of artworks, works that were described as *non-finito* were often paintings or drawings that seem highly refined and polished. Sometimes these were deliberately left incomplete by artists – this could be for a number of reasons, ranging from a desire to leave the artwork 'open', to the level of commitment to an artwork by the artist.[20]

To better understand this openness, let us consider as an example of a *non-finito*: Leonardo's *c.* 1500 drawing of the Virgin and Child with St. Anne and John the Baptist known as the Burlington House cartoon, currently housed in the National Gallery:

and unfinishedness/non–resolution, see Jean Lafond, 'Achèvement/inachèvement dans les *Essais*', in Claude Blum (ed.), *Montaigne et 'les Essais' 1588–1988* (Paris: H. Champion, 1990), pp. 175–85; André Tournon, 'Les prétéritions marquées ou le sens de l'inachèvement', in Claude Blum (ed.), *Montaigne et les 'Essais', 1588–1988* (Paris: Champion, 1990); Silvia Giocanti, *Penser l'irrésolution. Montaigne, Pascal, La Mothe Le Vayer: Trois itinéraires scéptiques* (Paris: PUF, 2001). On the non–finito and its relation to the fragment, see André Chastel, 'Le fragmentaire, l'hybride, l'inachevé' in *Fables, formes, figures* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), 2 vols, 2: pp. 33–45.

[19] Carmen Bambach, 'Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Notions of the Unfinished in Art' in Kelly Baum, Andrea Bayer and Sheena Wagstaff (eds), *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), pp. 31–41 (p. 32).

[20] See Andrea Bayer, 'Renaissance Views of the Unfinished' in Kelly Baum et al. (eds), *Unfinished*, pp. 18–29 (p. 18–19).



***Figure 1:*** Leonardo da Vinci, The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the Infant Saint John the Baptist ('The Burlington House Cartoon'), charcoal with white chalk on paper, c. 1500, The National Gallery (London)

At first glance, the drawing appears highly finished: amidst the accomplished drapery and the absorbing effect of Leonardo's famous *sfmuato* it is easy to miss the right feet of the Virgin and St. Anne, whose form is barely hinted at with a crude outline, or St. Anne's unfinished pointing hand. These 'unresolved' elements coexist with the more refined, masterly elements of the drawing and, rather than detracting from the overall effect, help to create a sense of compositional depth, allowing the 'lay' viewer to grasp something about the drawing process through a visual awareness of its creative layers. These layers are both chronological – we are made aware of drawing as a process unfolding through time – and visual – the illusion of weight and depth is contrasted with the blunter two-dimensionality of the unresolved forms. Once alerted to these, it is likely that as onlookers we begin a process of 'filling in the gaps' left by the unfinished elements, using the rest of the composition to help us provide the form, weight and depth that they otherwise lack. While Renaissance drawings such as this were more likely to bear marks of the *non-finito*, thanks to infrared reflectography we are now able to see the ways in which many artists abandoned or otherwise deviated from their original composition in their paintings as well, in ways that often left the initial idea unresolved.

In the case of Montaigne, of course, we do not require the help of infrared technology to see the layers of composition—using the three editions of the *Essais* and the visual evidence of alterations and *allongeails* found in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* (EB), we can see the strata of the *Essais* and compare the different versions. The modern reader of Montaigne can, indeed, first encounter the *Essais* in a format in which the various *couches*, often marked with the letters *a*, *b* and *c* corresponding to the 1580, '88 and '95 editions, are visible on the same page of text. The compositional layering is one of many similarities between the *essai* and the Renaissance sketch and *non-finito*. Like both of these, Montaigne's writing has also been characterised in terms of inexhaustibility.[21] In many instances across the *Essais* Montaigne's writing performs a cognitive function—it is used by the author to work his way towards an understanding or description of a subject, or to approach the same subject from multiple sides, without settling on a definitive viewpoint or interpretation. Montaigne, in his middle position between the advent of the valorisation and theorisation of drawing, and the emergence of the separate term *dessin* in France, constitutes an interesting and apposite case study for an analysis of sixteenth-century *dessein*.

As my remarks so far testify, rather than analysing design strictly in terms of intention, this thesis focuses on an art-theoretical dimension of design that has not yet been the focus of design-led studies of early modern literature (more on these in the methodology section below). On this interpretation, design concerns aspects and implications of what we might see as the fundamental procedure of the creative process: the transference of an internal idea into a public work. This is not, however, to consider design from outside the realm of philosophical investigation. The 'sketchiness' of *dessein* has philosophical import within an understanding of philosophy that encompasses questions of creativity and invention and concerns the relationship of thought to world outside the parameters of traditional metaphysics, or even aesthetics, at least the ways in which the latter has been framed and is practiced within the analytic tradition. I see my project instead as having a greater affinity with what might be viewed as 'continental' aesthetics.[22] Like the style of philosophy practiced

[21] Most persuasively by Terence Cave in *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: OUP, 1979).

[22] I have found Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy's reflections on drawing particularly pertinent to the project. See the former's *Mémoirs d'aveugle: L'autoportrait et autre ruines* (Paris : Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1990) and the latter's *Le Plaisir au dessin* (Paris: Galilée, 2009). Nancy's text in particular is pertinent given his (brief) exploration of the linguistic complexity of *dessein/ dessin* (see p. 15). For an exposition of Nancy's philosophy of drawing, see Ginette Michaud, 'Extended Drawing', trans.

by Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, it also relies on the assumption of a natural parallel between philosophy and sketchiness. Witness Wittgenstein's remarks in the preface to the *Investigations*, where he describes the nature of the project:

> my thoughts soon grew feeble if I tried to force them along a single track against their natural inclination.—And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of investigation. For it compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction over a wild field of thought.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and meandering journeys.[23]

The sketchiness that Wittgenstein describes here is not just incidental to his philosophical project. As the first line quoted indicates, it arises naturally from the kind of thinking that he has attempted to put to paper. Wittgenstein's remarks about a 'wild field of thought' which 'compels us to travel criss-cross in every direction' might remind us of Montaigne's characterisations of his wayward mind in I.viii, 'De l'oisiveté'. Expecting to find it well-ordered and his thoughts easy to control, Montaigne finds instead that it behaves like a wild horse:

> faisant le cheval eschappé, il se donne cent fois plus d'affaire à soy mesmes, qu'il n'en prenoit pour autruy; et m'enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques les uns sur les autres, sans ordre, et sans propos. (33)

Like Montaigne, Wittgenstein embeds in the preface of what he considered his life's work an expression of unease about its status as a published artefact, and the act of rendering his philosophical 'sketches' something different to, if not more than, a private record of his philosophical musings. Encapsulating this unease in one pithy sentence he writes: I make them public with misgivings.[24] A large part of my analysis of design in this thesis is concerned precisely with the unease, or, in its more neutral manifestation, the preoccupation, with the transference of a private mode of thought into a public work. Design, standing in as it so often does for the process bridging the former with the latter, is intimate with the space between the two. As the 'Au lecteur' shows, this space concerns Montaigne from the outset, and it is no coincidence if we find the language of *dessein* embroiled in the first formulation of that concern that we come across as the *Essais*'s readers. In all of this, the sketch, and the broader activity of drawing of which it is a part, become a model for the kind of vulnerability that is enacted, performed, addressed or otherwise evoked by the design process, as well as constituting itself, quite literally, a form of *dessein*.

The spatio-temporality of the sketch is also pertinent to an investigation of *dessein***.** To reflect on the polysemy of *dessein* is to consider the relationship of this term to time: intention is inherently teleological, and the process of the creation of a visual design or drawing is one that unfolds over time (as the Leonardo cartoon above evocatively reminds us). This connects with one of the fundamental elements of the sketch: the line. What is evident from the remarks in the preface of the *Investigations*, as well as the passage from 'De l'oisiveté', is that for both Wittgenstein and Montaigne thought possesses an inner

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Fernanda Marie Negrete in Verena Andermatt Conley and Irving Goh (eds), *Nancy Now* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), pp. 90–109.

[23] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Philosophical Investigations*), trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, rev. 4th edn (Chichester: Wiley–Blackwell, 2009), p. 3[e]. For an analysis of the metaphors Wittgenstein uses to describe his philosophical 'modes', see David Schalkwyk, 'Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Garden": The ladders and labyrinths of philosophy as *Dichtung*' in John Gibson and Wolfang Huemer (eds), *The Literary Wittgenstein* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 55–74.

[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* p. 4[e].

waywardness that is best captured through linear metaphor: Wittgenstein uses the image of a track to underscore his thoughts' resistance to singularity and regimentation, whereas Montaigne's horse metaphor conjures images of non-linear movement (one can almost picture the horse's trajectory from a bird's eye view as a messy tangle of lines). While the most basic component of drawing is the line, as is evident from the Burlington House cartoon, drawing equally deals in non-linearity, both in terms of composition (with its many strata and 'wayward' lines) and in terms of viewerly experience, as our eyes follow these many lines across the sheet. The Greek σχεδῖος (*sxedios*), from which 'sketch' derives, is an adjective meaning near, close by, but also denotes a quality of spontaneity or 'off-the-cuffness' (as of extemporaneous speech).[25] *Sxedios* thus simultaneously evokes the closeness and intimacy of the sketch, as well as its essential freedom and restlessness.

### *III.ii Intention Revisited*

Together, these elements form the core of my interpretation of *dessein*, which deals with various kinds of wayward lines and the performances of both vulnerability and *sprezzatura* in which they engage the reader. Lines appear in different guises in the thesis as natural companions to the sketch and the drawing dimension of design; they also serve as an alternative way of thinking about intention. To think of *dessein* in terms of the model provided by the sketch is not, then, to forsake the issue of intention with which I opened this introduction. But instead of tying down design to a particular philosophical stance on intention, this thesis embraces the kind of metaphysical quietism about intention espoused by the art historian Michael Baxandall, who summarises his approach to this freighted term in his discussion of Picasso's:

> 'intention' here is referred to pictures rather more than to painters. In particular cases it will be a construct descriptive of a relationship between a picture and its circumstances. In general intentionality is also a pattern posited in behaviour, and it is used to give circumstantial facts and descriptive concepts a basic structure.[26]

In Baxandall's formulation, intention is something that emerges from the patterns and circumstances present (and represented) both within and without the work of art. Intention is not, then, a mental state, even less a propositional mental state. It is in this sense that the intentional view of design that emerges particularly at the end of Chapter Three, what I call 'textual design', ought to be understood: as a property ascribed to the artwork (the *Essais*), rather than to its author. Rather than analysing design in terms of 'traditional' (philosophical or literary) accounts of intention, then, the thesis takes this term and unravels it, opening it up to the various interpretations it allows for. It does so by taking seriously the polysemy of *dessein*, zooming out from the 'Au lecteur' to attend to these multiple meanings in instances of *dessein* and attitudes to design displayed in Montaigne's *œuvre*, showing how the writing of the *Essais* is poised between the mental and the material, the internal and the external, and often plays—creatively and at times irreverently—with the friction between the two. Throughout this thesis, then, design emerges as a series of interconnected perspectives on

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[25] This connects *sxedios* with another Greek word which has been treated as a keyword of Montaignian thought*:* καιρός (kairos), a complex term that denotes a kind of timeliness that is connected to chance. As Robert Aulotte writes, 'καιρός c'est un point d'intersection entre le "pas–encore" et le "déjà–plus", un instant critique tranché dans le devenir, un moment infinitésimal, toujours décisive, mais qui comporte toutefois quelque contingence, qui laisse place à l'imprévisible, à une part d'aventure' ('Montaigne et la notion de καιρός', in Kyriaki Christodoulou (ed.), *Montaigne et la Grèce 1588–1988, Actes du Colloque de Calamata et de Messène* (Paris : Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990), pp. 153–63 (p. 153)).

[26] Michael Baxandall, 'Intentional Visual Interest: Picasso's *Portrait of Kahnweiler*' in *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 40–73 (p.42).

the encounter between will and world, idea and external manifestation. In trying to qualify the view of design taken in this thesis, I have at times taken refuge, inadvertently, in Montaigne's own strategy of negative construction – describing what it is in terms of what it is *not* trying to do. The temptation to revert to an apophatic approach to descriptions of design is symptomatic of the difficulties one runs up against in talking of this term—difficulties due in no small part to its semantic restlessness. It is to some of these complexities that I turn in the next section as a way of broaching questions of methodology.

## IV. Reflections on Method

Despite my comments on the absence of an explicitly metaphysical framework for the project, the first difficulty is somewhat metaphysical in character. Throughout this thesis I maintain a distinction, posited in the previous section, that the semantic possibilities afforded by *dessein* stretch between two poles: the mental and the material. This carries with it the risk of sounding as though I believe the mental to be ontologically distinct from the material. I do not, however, think the world is made up of two different kinds of 'stuff', the mental and the material (although I do think that explanations for mental processes are not reducible to physical facts about the world).[27] I use these terms instead as shorthand for a cluster of related terms and ideas: on the one hand the private and internal – what we might call the realm of consciousness, including (propositional) thought, sensation and imagination – and on the other hand the public and external, where we find the outward expressions of the former realm, including things like verbal communication, written texts and man-made objects. As will be clear, the thesis is not concerned with the question of whether or not Montaigne believed, or wrote as though he believed, mental processes to be reducible to physical processes.[28] I am more interested in those places in which his writing tests, or comes up against, the boundaries between idea and manifestation, either through self-conscious and -reflexive description or through what I call Montaigne's personal *maniera*—his idiosyncratic embodied mode of experimentation-through-writing.

The second difficulty is one of translation. As its title suggests, my thesis is concerned with *design* in a French text and, so far, I have considered the use of the word *dessein* in the preface of this text. To this semantic couple I add—in Chapter Two—a third term, the Italian *disegno*, meaning drawing, plan, intention (as well as being the first-person singular form of the verb to draw, plan, intend, etc.). But the English *design* and the French *dessein* are not straightforwardly equivalent, nor are they themselves straightforward equivalents of *disegno*.[29] As Michael Baxandall has shown in his discussion of the permutations of *disegno* and its cognates, the English *designe* was inherited from the French *desseing* before the latter would come to hold the stronger visual and artistic connotations linking it more closely with the Italian term *disegno*.[30] While neither the French *desseing* nor the English *designe* had

[27] More on this view in David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), particularly Ch. 2.

[28] For a discussion of Montaigne and the mind-body problem, as well as the 'hard problem' of consciousness, see Max Gauna, 'Montaigne and the Hard Problem' in Keith Cameron and Laura Willett (eds), *Le Visage changeant de Montaigne/The Changing Face of Montaigne* (Paris: Champion, 2003), pp. 155–61.

[29] This despite their shared etymology; in his 1694 *Dictionnaire étymologique* Gilles Ménage simply writes 'De l'italien *disegno*' for the entry on *dessein*, and refers the reader to the *Vocabolario della Crusca* (*Dictionnaire étymologique ou Origine de la langue françoise* (Paris: Jean Anisson, 1694), p. 248). Shared etymology is not, of course, a sure sign of semantic coextension.

[30] See Michael Baxandall, 'English Disegno' in *Words for Pictures: Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 83–97.

the same charged nature of *disegno*, which, as we will see in Chapter Two, was exploited by Italian Renaissance artists and theorists alike for it its polysemic potential, the English *designe* is, in the early modern period, the most removed from the mental-material complex of semantic interpretations of *disegno*. Randall Cotgrave's 1611 French-English dictionary entry for *desseing* has the following English translations: A designe, plot, project, purpose, determination; resolution.[31] The lack of explicitly visual vocabulary in this list demonstrates that for the English in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries *designe* was largely a mental phenomenon. Baxandall also points to the diachronic nature of the linguistic problem I want to flag here. While the English *design* is, today, the lexis of choice for translations of both *dessein* and *desseing*, Baxandall proposes that *draught* is a far better alternative for capturing the semantic range of these terms, citing three writers, Richard Haydocke, John Florio and Charles Wotton as users of 'draught'. [32] Florio's case is particularly interesting, given the trilingualism of this Italian-born English writer and translator of the *Essais*. In his English-Italian dictionary, Florio lists '…a purpose, an intent, a desseigne, a draught, a modle, a plot, a picture, or pourtrait' as English equivalents of *disegno*,[33] but gives *desseigne* for Montaigne's *dessein* in his English translation of the 'Au lecteur'.[34] For Florio to list *desseigne* as one of the translations of *disegno* (particularly in a bridge position in the list between the explicitly mental 'purpose' and *intent* and the more material *draught*, *modle*, etc.) and to use the same word (albeit a different orthographic variation) to translate Montaigne's first instance of *dessein* is significant—at the very least Florio was attuned to the semantic complexity with which *disegno* could be imbued and felt that *desseigne* could capture at least some of this complexity, as well as serve as an apt translation for the similarly complex *dessein*. This is not to be taken for granted, as the semantic nuances of *dessein* elude even some modern translators—in his 1957 translation of the *Essais*, for example, Donald Frame translates *dessein* in the 'Au lecteur' as 'purpose'.[35] Unlike Baxandall (but perhaps like Florio) I believe in the semantic elasticity of English *design* and use it throughout the thesis as an analogue of *dessein* while nevertheless keeping in mind the historical specificity (or in this case the lack of specificity) of *designe*'s semantic range.

The third difficulty is more an opportunity to pause on a particular methodological 'omission'. This project was hatched and developed at Oxford and was inspired by some of its contemporary currents of thought. The most salient such current, which emerged just as this project was beginning, is that of cognitively-inflected criticism, which I introduced briefly in the guise of relevance theory in the first section of the Introduction. Relevance theory and its accompanying cognitive apparatus have much to offer the literary scholar of Montaigne, and my analysis of the *Essais* has benefited from some of its insights, particularly on its insistence on the primacy of the body. However, I have opted to let these insights guide me without adopting cognitivism wholesale in this thesis, mostly because I find one of its philosophical tenets, that the function of language is to communicate internal meaning or intention, to be problematic with respect to my subject matter. The word *dessein*, as I

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[31] 'Desseing' in Randle Cotgrave, *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Islip, 1611) assembled by Greg Lindahl, accessed online at <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/>.

[32] Baxandall writes: '"draught" had most of the potentiality of *disegno*; it could have sustained much of the play between intentionality and drawing on which *disegno* thinking turned', 'English Disegno', p. 97.

[33] 'Disegno' in John Florio, *Queen Anna's new world of words, or dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues,* (London, 1611), compiled by Greg Lindahl <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio/> [accessed 10 August 2019>.

[34] Michel de Montaigne, *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses*, trans. John Florio (London: Valentine Simmes for Edward Blount, 1603), p 12.

[35] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters,* trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 2.

argue in the thesis, has multiple functions, only some of which might be termed 'intentional' in the way that relevance theory demands, especially those uses of *dessein* which, like that in the 'Au lecteur', occur inside a negation. Negations are a historically tricky category, for linguists and philosophers alike, for two main reasons. First, they are generally taken to convey less information than positive statements, and, second, they belie a fundamental asymmetry in natural language: every statement of negation presupposes a corresponding affirmative statement, but not *vice versa*.[36] Negations can become problematic for a theory, like relevance, that depends on speakers (or writers) making manifest the intentions behind their ostensive behaviour, and whose fundamental assumption is that in communicating we choose the most relevant stimuli from the options available in order to be understood.[37] Despite this, the notion of underspecification, used by cognitivists to denote aspects of speech or text that require greater levels of inference from the interlocutor or reader, can be a useful way of thinking about some of the aspects of design that I emphasise (principally its essential open-endedness) as, too, the distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' implicatures (things suggested or implied by an act of communication), where the latter comprise the 'vaguer' aspects of communications such as expressions of feeling, figurative language, etc. I come back to the issue of underspecification in my final chapter and the epilogue.

More generally, however, my analysis resists the kind of methodology practised by cognitive critics, which might be boiled down to the set of empirical assumptions that make cognitive criticism a fundamentally normative enterprise.[38] In a way, there is nothing new about this kind of normativity, which might have as its core the desire to 'tidy up' the messy enterprise of literary interpretation. As Ian James puts it in a recent *état présent* on post-deconstruction in French studies,

> Cave's cognitive criticism unequivocally, and at times quite explicitly, restores the (hitherto less pluralistic and often value-laden) norms of traditional positivist criticism, norms that were rejected by the structuralist and post-structuralist critical turn of the last decades of the twentieth century.[39]

Unlike James, my desire is not to vindicate or reimagine the post-deconstructive critical apparatus of post-structuralism for a modern literary criticism. But I share his latent suspicion of the positivistic and systematizing dimensions of cognitive criticism. My intuitions on this subject align more closely with other theorists of language such as Chomsky and the later Wittgenstein, who take a more sceptical view with respect to the possibility of describing human intention within a closed system of communication.[40] It is principally for that reason that I have not followed the current of cognitively inflected enthusiasm, an enthusiasm which, it might be argued, is embedded in the critical dimension of cognitive criticism,

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[36] Laurence R. Horn and Heinrich Wansing, 'Negation', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/negation/ [accessed 17 October 2019]. For a comprehensive study of negation, see Laurence R. Horn, *A Natural History of Negation*, (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2001).

[37] Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edn (London: Blackwell, 1995), p. 157.

[38] Some proponents of cognitive criticism may well disagree with this characterisation, arguing that elements of relevance theory – such as underspecification – can account for the open–endedness of literary texts. In some ways, the disagreement might come down to different desiderata with respect to literary criticism. Where the cognitivists aim to describe literary communication within a wider (complex, yet still closed) system of human communication, it seems to me that an equally valid desideratum is for a literary criticism that chimes with experiences of writing and reading a text, of which there may be as many and varied as there are human subjectivities.

[39] Ian James, 'Post–Deconstructive Thought and Criticism', *French Studies*, 73:1 (2019), 84–102, 98.

[40] See Noam Chomsky, *Language and Mind*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

giving rise what Matt Phillips has termed 'cognitively inspired optimism', or a belief in literature's empathy-building effects on its readers.[41]

This suspicion may also be due to my own disciplinary restlessness. Having come to literature from (analytic) philosophy, I, too, like the feminist writer Sara Ahmed, 'was "brought up" between disciplines and […] have never quite felt comfortable in the homes they provide'.[42] Inspired by Ahmed's self-coined personal brand of 'non-philosophy'[43] and reflections on her own method, which squirms at the perceived constraints of disciplinary boundaries, this thesis constitutes an experiment in crossdisciplinarity—a crossdisciplinarity that I see as emerging organically from the hybrid nature of its object of study. This is not intended to mark out its method as particularly ground-breaking or original—a dose of rebellion against methodological constraint might just come with the job. Carlo Ginzburg (a figure fairly firm on his disciplinary feet) cites the French sinologist Marcel Ganet on methodology: 'la méthode, c'est le chemin après qu'on l'a parcouru', before saying that 'in any scholarly situation a discussion on method has some value only when it is an *a posteriori* reflection on concrete research, not when it shows up (by far the most frequent case) as a series of *a priori* prescriptions.'[44] As Ginzburg alludes, a methodology is not a cold, analytical framework that one can select and apply like a set of surgical instruments, but is rather always necessarily *personal* in the sense that it arises from the singular combination of viewpoints and skillset of the researcher. Ganet's metaphor of the *chemin* is particularly fitting for, as we shall see, one of the visions of *dessein* to emerge from this thesis is precisely that of a line or series of lines that emerge retrospectively or *a posteriori*—design as a look behind the shoulder at the ground that has been covered, as much as, if not instead of, a plan of the journey to be undertaken.[45]

When it comes to research, however, there do have to be *some* methodological boundaries in place in order to avoid falling into the trap of Meno's Paradox, or the idea that the only possible answer to the question 'what am I looking for?' is 'you'll know once you've found it'. Sara Ahmed once again provides a model for the kind of enquiry I conduct here. In her introduction to her latest book, *What's the Use?* (2019), she describes it as forming the third instalment in a trilogy that includes *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) and *Willful Subjects* (2014), saying:

> [i]n these books I follow words around, in and out of their intellectual histories. To follow a word is to ask not only how it acquires the status of a concept in philosophy but also how that word is exercised, rather like a muscle, in everyday life.[46]

This thesis is the product of my following the word *dessein* around in the *Essais*, but also of considering it as a term worthy of attention in its own right, both within and without Montaigne's historical context. Following *dessein* has meant crossing into the realm of art history and theory, and, as we shall see, it has also meant following it across another kind of border, into the Italy of the early, High and late Renaissance.

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[41] Matt Phillips, *Empathy's Messes: Genet, Barthes, Ernaux* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017), p. 27. Phillips offers convincing counterpoints to this optimism.
[42] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 22
[43] Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 15.
[44] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Witches and Shamans' in *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive* trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 215–28 (p. 215).
[45] We might think here also of the Heideggerian *Holzweg* (the woodland path that leads to no particular endpoint), an emblem for the kind of writing that entreats us to think of philosophy as an activity without a necessary teleology, that thrives on discursive errancy (Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2002), translated in French as *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*)).
[46] Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), p. 3.

At the heart of this thesis is a resolutely comparative vision, which receives its most extended exploration in Chapters 1 and 2, where I compare Montaigne's writing, whether at the level of the individual chapter or at the level of the broader global nature and feel of the *Essais*, to a series of sketches produced by artists during the period between 1474 and 1651. The artists that bookend this timespan, Leonardo and Rembrandt, would seem to have little in common with one another—let alone Montaigne—and the decision to place them in dialogue with the *Essais* may well raise some early modern hackles for the lack of not just historical but generic continuity. It is one of the convictions that has sustained this thesis that such an approach to comparison, one that brings together temporally or generically disparate elements, offers productive and enlightening perspectives on both elements comprising the *comparata*. In my approach, I have taken inspiration from recent comparative monographs, particularly those of Jennifer Rushworth (2016) and Julia Hartley (2019), whose studies of Dante, Proust and Petrarch, and Dante and Proust respectively, put forward excellent justifications for the 'tessellation' of differing texts, whether by processes of 'interpolation' or 'analogy'.[47] My own approach has been not so much textual as philological and conceptual: I conduct comparisons of constellations of words and images through the spectrum of a semantic analysis of certain key terms.

The kind of philology I am interested in, and which finds its most extended expression in Chapter Two, bears more resemblance to the kind of keyword analysis characterised by Richard Scholar as 'new philology', at least insofar as it shares the 'focus on language *in* history, and on language *as* history' emphasised by Raymond Williams's original contribution to the study of keywords and culture.[48] Where my approach differs from the keywords analysis of the new philologists is in the addition of a third element to their combination of close reading and cultural analysis. This is the use of a single term, in this case design, as a lens through which to understand a text, in this case the *Essais*—the key term becomes the basis for a new critical method. *Dessein* is in this sense both the object of my enquiry and, through the implications that are evinced from the analysis of this term in the *Essais*, it becomes itself a lens through which to read Montaigne's text. The way in which this works in practice, in terms of the content and development of the theses' chapters, is explained in more detail in the final section of this introduction.

## V. Design in Literary Studies

Before turning to the thesis outline, it is worth saying a brief word about where the thesis situates itself with respect to other work undertaken on design in French studies, as well as in the wider field of literary studies. In French, notable monographs on design are Doranne Fenoaltea's *"Si Haulte Architecture": The Design of Scève's "Délie"* (1982), and Edwin Duval's series of monographs on Rabelais: *The Design of Rabelais's Pantagruel* (1991), *The Design of Rabelais's Tiers Livre de Pantagruel* (1997) and *The Design of Rabelais's Quart*

[47] See Jennifer Rushworth, 'Interpolation and the "M*o*dieval"' in *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch and Proust* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 15–16 and Julia Caterina Hartley, *Reading Dante and Proust by Analogy* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2019), pp. 2–5. A recent monograph that constructs a diachronic comparison with Montaigne is Robert Miner, *Montaigne and Nietzsche* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), although there a historical relationship of direct influence holds, given Nietzsche's reading of the *Essais*.

[48] Richard Scholar, 'The New Philologists' in Ita Mac Carthy (ed.), *Renaissance Keywords* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2013), pp. 1–12 (p. 2). Scholar traces the origins of 'new philology' to Edward Said's chapter on 'The Return to Philology' in his *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 57–84. Raymond Williams's classic text is *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1988).

*Livre de Pantagruel* (1998).[49] Duval's view of design might be summed up in the following quotations from the first book in his series:

> By *design* I mean not the kind of thematic unity or general coherence of vision that might be inferred from the sum of a work's several parts, but rather a masterplan that appears to have preceded and governed the composition of each of Rabelais's books.[50]

> Design in this sense is thus simultaneously an intention, a structure, and a built-in hermeneutic device. It is a sure and indispensable guide to correct interpretation that reveals, through form, the meaning and most profound intentions of the work.[51]

Duval can be said to adopt a hard intentionalist stance with respect to design: uncovering a design is, for him, the same thing as uncovering the intentions of the author with respect to the literary work. It ought to be clear that my understanding of design differs in significant respects from Duval's; most importantly it does not understand design to be a 'sure and indispensable guide to correct interpretation'. For her part, Fenoaltea is less concerned with the relationship of design to intention. She uses the notion of design to draw out, instead, what she sees as the underlying coherence and overarching order of Scève's poetry. This involves exposing formal and structural links between the various poems and showing in part how these patterns are ordered according to visual plans. For Fenoaltea, the visual elements offer a model of harmony and cohesion and are used to demonstrate the internal logic of the *Délie*. By contrast, the links between design and the visual arts in this thesis insist on the essentially open, at times fragmentary or unfinished, nature of visual design understood through the lens of drawing. While I am also concerned with uncovering patterns in Montaigne's understanding of design and his use of visual metaphor, the notion of design that emerges from this study is not one of unity or coherence, nor one of a masterplan that enacts or reflects the intentions of a master-author.

In some ways this means stretching design beyond the remit of its everyday usage. When we talk about design, we most often, as the above examples testify, mean the idea of an ordering principle or coherent vision about a work—conversely, the idea of something lacking design, implies it lacks order, or has come about through chance. The antinomic relationship between design and accident is underscored in the title of a recent monograph by Victorianist Paul Fyfe. *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis* (2015) deals with the relationship between the haphazard and accidental formation of the Victorian city and the kinds of writing that it engendered, particularly writing about accident. Despite this focus on the accident as integral to literary form and genre, and despite giving some space to the view that the accidental and the designed might be more natural bedfellows than we might presume (writing at the end of his final chapter that it is 'possible to consider the accidental for its particular theoretical and textual designs'),[52] his study is nevertheless predicated upon the assumption of a natural opposition between these two notions.[53] Accident and design are treated as slightly less disparate elements in David Alff's 2017

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[49] Duval's work on Rabelais and design dates back to an article: 'Panurge, Perplexity, and the Ironic Design of Rabelais's *Tiers Livre*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35:3 (1982), 381–400, which was followed by an article on Montaigne and design ('Lessons of the New World: Design and Meaning in Montaigne's "Des cannibals" (I:31) and "Des coches" (III:6)', *Yale French Studies*, 64 (1983), 95–112), in which Duval takes design to mean the structure of the chapters.

[50] Edwin Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's Pantagruel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. xiv.

[51] Ibid., p. xv.

[52] Paul Fyfe, *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), p. 210.

[53] A similar antithesis is posited in Ann Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003).

monograph *The Wreckage of Intentions: Projects in British Culture 1660-1730*. Alff's concern is more properly with the term 'project' than with design, but in the introduction, where he discusses a 1652 pamphlet—*A Designe for Plentie*—proclaiming the end of famine, he comes close to attributing to *designe* the characteristics of a role he ultimately resolves for project: that of a dynamic, open-ended, procedural term that is invoked in the subtle linguistic negotiation of the 'challenge of suturing an indicative present to a subjunctive future'.[54] Alff links *designe* and *project* to a third term that completes the linguistic field he is concerned with in the pamphlet—the word *assay*. Montaigne is invoked on page 2 of the book to remind readers of the experimental nature of the term as he originated it. My treatment of design shares more with Alff and Fyfe than it does with Fenoaltea and Duval. Rather than beginning with an idea of design as an overarching principle or masterplan and seeking to reveal and describe its structure within the *Essais*, I let design itself do the talking, doing justice to the complexity of this notion without imposing a unified idea of what it is, and does, for Montaigne.

## VI. Structure

I start with a chapter that focuses on Montaigne's painting metaphor, which he first uses in the 'Au lecteur' and then in various formulations throughout the rest of the *Essais*, to set out what I term Montaigne's visual imagination:[55] those instances of his writing in which he appeals to, or approximates, the techniques of visual artists. Revisiting the painting metaphor in light of design brings forth in striking ways the very particular nature of Montaigne's understanding of the links between writing and visual art, which is often focused on the dynamic, the open-ended and the unresolved. Through a series of close readings of Montaigne's visual and artistic metaphors and analogies, I push back against the idea that the painting metaphor, first used in the 'Au lecteur' but repeated at various points in the *Essais*, is ill-equipped to capture the malleability and fluidity of Montaigne's writing. I argue that in order to do justice to the metaphor we ought to conceive of the genre of portraiture more widely than it has traditionally been understood, to encompass in particular self-portrait sketches. This chapter aims to establish a critical standpoint that is crucial for the rest of the thesis, namely that by attending to the affinities between Montaigne's writing and actual theoretical and practical attitudes to visual arts prevalent during the Renaissance we can better understand both Montaigne's unique writing style, and his own approach to writing. In this sense, Chapter One acts as a 'primer' for the chapters that follow – laying out the comparison between Montaigne's attitude to writing and the act of drawing, which is developed, or finds echoes, in Chapters Two and Three.

Chapter Two constitutes a close linguistic analysis of *dessein*, following this word around in the *Essais* to understand the ways in which Montaigne makes use of its semantic restlessness. By starting with a short philological inquiry into some significant instances of the term in mid and late sixteenth-century texts, it provides the semantic backdrop to Montaigne's uses of the term, showing how the author of the *Essais* was writing at the cusp of the semantic split that would divide *dessein* from its more visual connotations.

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[54] David Alff, *The Wreckage of Intentions: Projects in British Culture 1660–1730* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), p. 11.

[55] My thinking about the visual aspects of Montaigne's thought and writing is greatly indebted to Tom Conley. See in particular his *À fleur de page*: *Voir et lire le texte de la Renaissance* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015): *An Errant Eye: Poetry and Topography in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); *The Graphic Unconscious in Early Modern French Writing* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992).

Uncovering some of the tenets of Montaigne's attitudes to design understood as a form of human will/intention, it analyses how these relate to Montaigne's descriptions of his writing and the overtly 'artistic' elements of his text, in order to reconstruct what I term the *Essais*'s textual design: a design that insists on the chancy, experimental nature of its own creation, as well as on its own potentiality and possibility.

Chapter Three combines the artistic, philosophical and philological strands contained in Chapters One and Two by looking at Montaigne's attitudes to design through the lens of two Italian keywords: *disegno* and *maniera*. I have already touched upon the historical linguistic relationship that existed between *dessein* and *disegno*. While in Italy *disegno* becomes, as Chapter Three shows, a hotly contested term embroiled in debates about the status of the visual arts in culture and society, in France, there is nothing close to an equivalent contestation or theorisation of drawing in the sixteenth century. While Chapter Two does not argue that there existed a causal relationship between the conceptualisations of *disegno* in Renaissance Italy and Montaigne's conception of design, it nevertheless aims to inscribe Montaigne in the existing Renaissance culture of visual and material innovation and experimentation, whose principal keyword was *disegno*. In particular, it looks at Montaigne's contemporary, the Mannerist artist and art-theorist Federico Zuccaro, and his distinction between internal and external *disegno*, showing how, despite some interesting parallels in their approaches to the artistic process, Montaigne's design is ultimately more restless than Zuccaro's – it thrives on the productive tension between the mental and material. It then extends the comparison between the *essai* and the sketch through a comparative reading of the chapter 'Des pouces' and two Italian sketches, teasing out the drawing-like nature of Montaigne's writing and the physical tracking of line of thought that it argues constitutes his own personal *maniera*.

As argued in the preceding chapters, Montaigne's descriptions of his project, as well as the practice of his writing, involve a process of exploration and experimentation that shares characteristics with the act of drawing. Montaigne, like many Renaissance artists, shows how a subject can be explored from many sides, he circles around it as he attempts to gather his thoughts and ideas on a subject without 'pinning it down' to a univocal line of thought. In all of this we might ask ourselves whether there is a guiding aesthetic principle behind Montaigne's writing and whether the design of the *Essais* is, then, based on certain—explicit or implicit—views about what art is and does. Chapter Four takes this question as its starting point as it explores Montaigne's approach to Renaissance art, deemed underwhelming by many critics. Identifying and deconstructing the assumptions behind the critical commonplace that Montaigne was uninterested in or actively adverse to art, the chapter distinguishes Montaigne's approach to such artefacts from those of his contemporaries (through a comparison between the *Journal* and the travel diary of the young sixteenth-century traveller Nicolas Audebert), arguing that the principles of a Montaignian aesthetics reside in the author's descriptions of bodily encounters with *designed* (and not just 'technical') artefacts. It looks at three *loci* of such an approach: a pair of decorations adorning Montaigne's study, fountains and, somewhat surprisingly, Montaigne's renal calculi, or kidney stones.

Taken together, these four chapters span the semantic range of the term design from its mental pole to its material one; stretching from Montaigne's authorial aim of self-portraiture, to the textual design of the *Essais*, to the embodied dynamics of this textual design in Montaigne's manner of writing, to designed objects or applied arts. Rather than purporting to reveal the intimate wishes or desires Montaigne held with respect to his writing—to possess, in other words, a key to unlock a 'correct interpretation' of his *œuvre*—these chapters constitute instead a reflection on the shared problematics of textual design and visual and artistic design, while respecting and doing justice to the idiosyncrasies of

Montaigne's attitudes to writing. In this sense, they offer a different perspective on the relationship between design and literary studies, arguing that these can be mutually enlightening: not only can design act as an important tool for understanding elements of the *Essais*'s composition and the attitude to writing they embody; my analysis of Montaigne's language of *dessein*, and his attitudes to this notion, also uncovers vital and sometimes surprising dimensions to this notion.[56] Far from an end-oriented practice of self- or artistic control, design emerges here as a chancy, experimental encounter between mind and world.

[56] Some possibilities for how these reflections might intercede on current debates in design studies are sketched out in the epilogue.

# I

# Painterly Designs

## *Self-Portraiture Re-Imagined*

*I draw a head. You ask, "Whom is that supposed to represent?"—I: "It's supposed to be N."—You: "But it doesn't look like him; if anything, it's rather like M."—When I said it represented N., was I making a connection or reporting one? And what connection was there?*

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, Philosophical Investigations

In the *Chronologie* inserted at the beginning of his edition of the *Essais*, Villey writes that in adding the 'Au lecteur' to the first edition of his book, Montaigne 'y formule son dessein de se peindre'.[1] This chapter takes Villey's claim as its starting point, approaching design from the angle of the famous metaphor of self-portraiture. Its goal is to stretch our imaginary of portraiture—which too often in Montaigne scholarship is understood as something fixed and static (a snapshot of a face, or person/*persona* frozen in time)—to a more fluid, dynamic understanding of the genre, which is able to capture the passage of time and/or the simultaneity of existence or experience. I first unpack some of the assumptions behind the former view of portraiture as it operates in Montaigne criticism, before moving to look at the broader context of Renaissance portraiture as commemoration or the cultivation of individual *personae*. I then supplement this understanding of portraiture by looking at four works on paper, two by Montaigne's contemporary Annibale Carracci, and two by a later artist whose career was marked by a sustained and profound interaction with the genre of self-portraiture: Rembrandt van Rijn. I use the insights from this discussion to reflect on Montaigne's use of the language of painting, and broader visual vocabulary, showing how Montaigne's descriptions and attitudes to *peinture* bring it closer to the realm of drawing. Finally, I start to consider what this discussion can tell us about Montaigne's attitudes to the limits of discursive language, and to sketch Montaigne's alternative: a language akin to that of drawerly lines.

## I. Portraiture & Disillusionment

What more could possibly be written about the self-portraiture metaphor? This question is a useful starting point for my discussion not least because of the assumptions on which it appears to rest. The first is that everything has been said about the famous metaphor with which Montaigne opens the *Essais*, to the point that it has become something of a tired cliché. The second assumption is that, even if the existing literature is not exhaustive of the interpretations of the metaphor, nothing *interesting* can any longer be said about this feature of the *Essais*—even if its hermeneutic possibilities have not by this point been exhausted, its imaginative potential has. This is not an attitude reserved to informal comments in the university corridor. Some Montaigne scholarship of recent decades demonstrates a desire to take leave of the metaphor, and to focus on other images used by Montaigne to describe his writing which are deemed to be more accurate or more revealing.[2] Those that have gone down this route have criticized the metaphor on the grounds of its appropriateness, or lack thereof, particularly its (in)ability to capture Montaigne's distinctive writing style. Here is Gérard Defaux writing about its ultimate 'inadequacy' in 1987:

> Du coup, la métaphore du "portrait" qui, dans son expressivité, avait jusque-là rendu des grands services à Montaigne, se révèle inadéquate. Elle avait évidemment pour fonction de cautionner à la fois la fixité et la fidélité absolues de la représentation. Or, le fait est patent, il n'y a plus désormais d'espace intérieur stable, d'espace ou Montaigne puisse, repliant sur soi son regard, se

[1] Pierre Villey, 'Chronologie sommaire', in Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, p. xlv.

[2] It should be noted that the very project of self-portraiture received criticism from Montaigne's own day. Etienne Pasquier laments Montaigne's excessive self-description, and Pascal famously wrote of Montaigne's 'sot projet […] de se peindre'. For more on contemporaneous reactions to the self-portrait, see Ian J. Winter, *Montaigne's Self-Portrait and its Influence in France, 1580–1630* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1976), particularly Chapter IV. In this chapter of the thesis, I am more interested in the (comparatively) very recent fortunes of the metaphor rather than of the self-portraiture project as a whole, although there is of course overlap between the two.

> réfugier pour se connaitre…le peintre ne peut plus "asseurer son object". La "peinture" ne saurait donc plus comme elle le fait par exemple dans "De la presumption', prendre la forme, traditionnelle et prévisible entre toutes, de l'auto-portrait.[3]

This passage illustrates a common view among Montaigne scholars, namely that the *Essais* exhibit a chronological progression or evolution as the chapters added from 1588 onwards become more introspective.[4] For Defaux, this greater introspection represents a problem for the portraiture metaphor, which for him collapses once Montaigne's writing become more explicitly self-representational and the author grapples with the problem of capturing an ever-moving, ever-changing 'I'. Defaux sees III.ii, 'Du repentir', in particular as marking a turning point in Montaigne's metaphorical descriptions of his project, from trying to capture the self to attempting to portray its changing motions. A similar view to Defaux's, albeit without the evolutionary undertones, is espoused by Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani:

> Les *Essais* ne sont pas davantage un autoportrait. […] La peinture du moi est par nature essentialiste: elle vise à découvrir une forme maîtresse, et prétend mettre à jour un caractère aux traits fixes, dégager de la multitude des indices une 'nature'; l'écriture du moi, telle que la pense et la pratique Montaigne, est existentielle et d'orientation phénoménologique: elle ne décrit pas 'la' conscience, mais une conscience de, conscience qui n'est rien sinon rapport au monde, intentionnalité.[5]

In the above passage, portraiture is again "taken to be fixing and immortalising ('aux traits fixes'), intent on the crystallization of a singular *nature* from the multitude and simultaneity of the subjective *moi*. Mathieu-Castellani contrasts this with Montaigne's writing, which she sees as phenomenological: as attempting, in other words, to capture the 'what-it's-like-ness' of this complex subject. More recently, Terence Cave has taken issue with the metaphor for similar reasons, arguing that:

> the portrait is however in the end neither the most original nor the most productive of Montaigne's metaphors of self-representation: static rather than dynamic, it fails to render the temporal continuity and flux that is essential to his perception of himself and the world. By the time he wrote the 1580 preface, he had already found other ways of describing his inward explorations.[6]

For Cave, the ultimate inadequacy of the portraiture metaphor supports his view that the prefatory aims of the 'Au lecteur' (broadly put, to capture the aims and spirit of the *Essais*) are better realized by I.viii, 'De l'oisiveté', which emphasizes the fluidity and unpredictability of thought and in which Montaigne introduces the language of the *contrerolle,* or register, as a way of capturing this essential slipperiness of thought.[7] The notion of Montaigne's competing metaphors is taken up by Rowan Tomlinson, who writes,

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[3] Gérard Defaux, *Marot, Rabelais, Montaigne: L'Écriture comme Présence* (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1987), p. 183.

[4] The classic 'evolutionary' interpretation is Pierre Villey's *Les Sources et l'Evolution des* '*Essais*' *de Montaigne* (Paris: Hachette, 1933).

[5] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Montaigne: L'ecriture de l'essai* (Paris: PUF, 1988), p. 11.

[6] Terence Cave, *How to Read Montaigne* (London: Granta, 2007), p. 10.

[7] *How to Read Montaigne*, p. 10. This thought, rid of its evaluative overtones, is echoed by Richard Scholar: 'In 'Of idleness', the metaphor of the record offers an image for the *Essais* that differs from the static pictorial one of 'To the Reader' in that it makes of the text something always unfolding, an open-ended process' (*Montaigne and the Art of Free Thinking* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010) p. 26). See also Cave's British

> [the *Essais*] are best represented not by the celebrated notion of the self-portrait but by Montaigne's own image of his writing as a 'contrerolle', a register, or inventory. This replaces his earlier painting metaphor and suggests a self-presentation that is accumulative and open-ended, like a list.[8]

For reasons that will become apparent, I do not think that the dual metaphors of the *contrerolle* and the *registre* ought to be seen in competition with the metaphor of painting. Nor should these two metaphors be seen as mutually exclusive ways of representing the *Essais*. Indeed, Renaissance artists often viewed visual representation (mostly drawing, but sometimes also painting) as a way of 'keeping track'—either of their evolving intentions for a final piece, or of their technical experiments and *invenzioni*—as well as a means of testing out their thoughts through tracing and re-tracing lines of intention on the page. Drawing and painting are also, thus decidedly 'accumulative and open-ended' in this way. The criticisms levelled at the painting metaphor, particularly in recent Anglophone criticism, revolve, it seems to me, around an implicit dichotomy: Montaigne's writing is fluid and mobile; a portrait is fixed and immutable. The two things, presented in this way, are incompatible. But as I shall argue in the next chapter, where I consider some aspects of Italian *disegno* and the changing attitudes to drawing and painting in Renaissance Italy, visual representation in this period was not perceived as a fixed and static medium, nor was the line perceived as a way of offering us a single temporal snapshot of the artist's mind. Rather, later in this thesis we'll see the ways in which artists from Leonardo onwards used drawing as means to conduct experiments in thought as well as in visual design. Drawing and sketching were in many cases used and conceived of as a way to extend an image or idea temporally, to capture the simultaneity as well as the temporal development and modulation of thought.

A large part of the dissatisfaction with the metaphor of painting stems, I would contend, from glosses on the artistic framework of Renaissance attitudes and practices of painting. In what follows, I conduct a sustained analysis of Montaigne's wider uses of the visual arts in the *Essais* in those places where he is either describing his project or trying to capture the dynamic and mutable character of thought, a semantic field that Montaigne avails himself of with consistency throughout the *Essais* and does not straightforwardly discard in favour of 'better' or more precise descriptions. The central claim of my thesis is that the language of design provides a prism through which to read the portraiture metaphor and Montaigne's characterizations of his project more widely. Chapter Two in particular will be concerned with drawing out from the language of *dessein* in the *Essais* a view of the project of self-representation that emphasizes its fluidity and malleability. In the present chapter, I explore Montaigne's visual imagery in the light of humanist attitudes and practices surrounding portraiture. In doing so I want to offer a more nuanced understanding of the Montaigne's attitudes towards visual representation, which in turn will help us to more fairly assess its success in capturing the nature of his project.

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Academy lecture: 'The *Essais* are much better characterised in this way as a continuous record of ever-shifting reflections on the writer's mental and physical experiences than as a self-portrait, which is the conventional metaphor used by Montaigne in his very brief preface 'Au lecteur' and elsewhere (although he himself is aware of its limitations)', 'Master-mind lecture: Montaigne', *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 131, (2005) 183–203.

[8] Rowan Tomlinson, '"Intelligible sans discipline": Enumeration, Observation, and Communication in Montaigne's "Apologie de Raimond Sebond"', *Nottingham French Studies*, 49:3 (2010), 87–109 (87).

## II. The *Essais* as *Pourtraict*

Let us backtrack a little. When Montaigne wrote the preface to the *Essais* in 1580, he included a phrase that came to dominate descriptions of his book for the four centuries after its publication, and is often used to characterize Montaigne's entire project.[9] The phrase, which is really an image, centres around the first person present of the verb *peindre*. While Michael Screech (1991) translates 'c'est moy que je peins' using a participle ('it is myself that I am painting'), Frame (1957)—perhaps influenced by the prevalence of the image of self-portraiture in Montaigne scholarship—renders it as 'it is myself that I portray'. Indeed, this word, and the reflexive formulation 'self-portrait', are so closely associated with Montaigne's writing project as to be used interchangeably with the word *Essais*: critics have tended to take Montaigne at his word, readily making use of the portraiture metaphor when describing his project. But it is curious that this should be so given that Montaigne uses the noun *pourtraict* only once to refer to the *Essais,* in one of the later chapters (III.v, 'Sur des vers de Virgile') of the third book.[10] The—short, pithy—sentence in which it makes its tardive appearance is the following: '[C] Je dois au publiq universellement mon pourtraict' (887).

For all its apparent directness, the sentence is not unambiguous, in part because of the polysemy of the word *pourtraict*, which when Montaigne was writing could refer both to a visual or painterly representation of a person, as well as more generally to the rendering of any object or scene through the means of either verbal or visual communication.[11] As we will see in the course of this chapter, Montaigne productively makes use of this slippage. For the moment, let us spend a while on the ambiguity that stems principally from two different words in the sentence, the verb 'dois' and the verb 'universellement'. Does Montaigne mean that the public *is owed* a portrayal of him? Or that he owes this portrayal to the public (in the sense of feeling indebted for it)? The context of the passage seems to exclude the latter, which would constitute a reversal of the sentiment expressed in the 'Au lecteur' in which he states that the *Essais* are a private enterprise, and the 'portrait' is intended solely for his family and close ones. Of course, as discussed in the Introduction, this incipit can be read as part of a *captatio* that is there to solicit the good will of the reader and detract from the text's shortcomings (the strategy of playing down one's ambitions in order to

[9] There is a plethora of works in early modern scholarship dedicated to the Montaignian project of 'painting the self'. Some notable studies from the last three decades include: Marie-Clarté Lagrée, *'C'est moy que je peins': Figures de soi à l'automne de la Renaissance* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Université, 2011); Craig Bush, *From the Perspective of the Self: Montaigne's Self-Portrait* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994); and Michel Beaujour, *Miroirs d'encre: Rhétorique de l'autoportrait* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1980). Some articles centred around the use of the metaphor include Sue W. Farquhar, 'Irony and the Ethics of Self-Portraiture in Montaigne's "De la praesumption"', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 26:4 (1995), 791–803; Hope H. Glidden, 'The Face in the Text: Montaigne's Emblematic Self-Portrait (Essais III:12)'; *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46:1 (1993), 71–97; Jack Abecassis, 'Self-Portraiture and the Problematics of Phallic Representation in Montaigne's "On Some Verses of Virgil" (III, 5)'; *Pacific Coast Philology*, 24:1 (1989), 34–42; Steven Randall, 'The Rhetoric of Montaigne's Self-Portrait: Speaker and Subject', *Studies in Philology* 73:3 (1976), 285–301. Not to mention the vast number of works that refer to Montaigne's project via the self-portraiture metaphor from the beginning of Montaigne scholarship, of which I will not attempt to provide a comprehensive list.

[10] Montaigne does use the verb form *pourtraire* once prior to this, in the context of describing the aim of his writing in II.viii, 'De l'affection des peres aux enfans', when addressing Madame d'Estissac he writes: 'Madame, ayant à m'y pourtraire au vif, j'en eusse oublié un traict d'importance, si je n'y eusse representé l'honneur que j'ay tousjours rendu à vos merites' (386). More on this formulation below.

[11] The Oxford English Dictionary refers to the French etymology of the English 'portrait' and notes that in French usage, the word referred to 'representation in speech or writing (1550)'. 'portrait, n., adv., and adj.'. OED Online. July 2018. OUP, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/148230?rskey=tVWjZd&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

ingratiate oneself with the audience is as old as rhetoric itself). Moreover, by the time he penned the words in 'Sur des vers de Virgile' the *Essais* enjoyed a much wider readership, or *publiq*, than he had in all likelihood intended (although he had a number of opportunities to change the 1580 preface, Montaigne ultimately chose to keep in its original form in subsequent editions). The words following this instance of the portraiture metaphor shed some light on the matter: '[l]a sagesse de ma leçon est en verité, en liberté, en essence, toute'. Montaigne is most probably claiming for himself here a mode of total *franchise*, defending the liberty to discuss all aspects pertaining to himself, including those things (sex; his penis; his aging body) that lack the respectability of literary *decorum*.

*Universellement* presents a similar initial hermeneutic challenge, this time pertaining to scope. Should we take it to indicate that Montaigne wants his whole self to be put on display? Or that the *way* in which he owes his readers this self-portrayal is universal, he owes it to them under every aspect of obligation? The ambiguity is here a little harder to resolve, perhaps intentionally so, although the word *universellement* echoes one of Montaigne's statements in III.ii, 'Du repentir', that one man bears the imprint of the entirety of humanity, which might lend support to the first interpretation:

> [B] chaque homme porte la forme entiere de l'humaine condition. Les autheurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque particuliere et estrangere; moy le premier par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne (805).

Nevertheless, these ambiguities are compounded by the fact that this first instance of the noun to describe the writing of the *Essais* is an odd one—why now (so late in the writing of the project) and why here (in a chapter nominally on sex and poetry) does Montaigne decide to use the noun *pourtraict* as shorthand for his project of self-writing?[12] This is only one in a series of conflicting and at times contradictory readings that arise once we begin to scrutinize Montaigne's use of what I refer to as 'visual metaphor', that is, those instances in which the author invokes, for comparative purposes, painting or other visual arts. I propose to look at the metaphor of *peinture*, and the accompanying image of the self-portrait, in light of these other instances of visual imagery, in order to uncover the attitudes to visual arts latent in Montaigne's visual language. Despite the widespread infiltration of the language of portraiture and painting in Montaigne scholarship, few critics have considered what would it mean for a text such as the *Essais* to behave like a painting. What are the properties that would make the *Essais* painting-like? How might the process of writing the *Essais* be akin to that of painting? These questions, which have at their heart both conceptual issues of representation as well as material questions to do with the conditions of production, have important implications for all aspects that influence the text's reception—from how it is produced, to its existence *qua* material object, to how it is read or interpreted.

Warren Boutcher's work on Montaigne is one recent exception to the trend of taking the language of painting and portraiture at face-value or as a literary gloss for self-representation.[13] Rather than interpreting it as part of Montaigne's arsenal of semantic or stylistic choices, in his study of the 'lives' of Montaigne's *Essais* across early modern Europe

[12] I revisit this *essai* in more detail in Chapter 4, where I consider its complex staging of the interplay between sex and poetry in the context of Montaigne's attitudes to designed objects.

[13] One might also add Marc Blanchard, *Trois Portraits de Montaigne: Essai sur la Représentation à la Renaissance* (Paris: Nizet, 1990), and Steven Randall's chapter 'Faces' in his *Distinguo: Reading Montaigne Differently* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 95–112. While Blanchard is more concerned with thematic continuities between sixteenth-century portraiture and Montaigne's self-portrait, Randall discusses the self-portrait metaphor in light of a classic list of epigraph portraits some of which I also discuss below but is, however, ultimately more concerned with the semiotics of word and image.

(and beyond), Boutcher's starting point is that we must instead examine the embedded attitudes to portraiture that were displayed during Montaigne's time, attitudes that he encapsulates as follows:

> we can sidestep much of what has been written in anachronistic terms about Montaigne's self-portrait by attending to the ways in which its recipients describe it. They understand it to be a public witness to the author's private moral character as a freeman, not a discovery of his authentic inner self.[14]

Boutcher uses this insight to link the *Essais* to the theory of the art index developed by Alfred Gell. An art index is an object through which one can infer an intentional mental state and which possesses social agency.[15] Gell's theory posits that art objects possess agency in virtue of their participation in a series of nexuses (broadly understood as sets of social-cultural practices and rituals). For Boutcher, when Montaigne tells us in the 'Au lecteur' that the *Essais* are for the sole consumption of his family and friends, he is telling us that his self-portrait functions as 'an artistic index of Montaigne's external relations with friends and family'[16] and that this allows these friends and family to interact with the private *persona* of Montaigne, much as they would have done with the author in flesh and blood.[17] In this way, the book 'stands in' for its author like an avatar.[18] My discussion in this chapter and in parts of the remainder of the thesis is inspired by Boutcher's claims, in *The School of Montaigne* and elsewhere, that we ought to consider the broader social context, circulation and reception of objects like books and paintings.[19]

But whereas Boutcher puts these considerations about the material status of Montaigne's portrait in the service of a historical argument about the fortunes of the *Essais*'s reception among Montaigne's European readership, my arguments in this chapter are much more strictly concerned with Montaigne's language, and to uncovering the attitude towards its artistic status that are expressed within it. My starting point for the discussions in this chapter remain Montaigne's attitudes to painting as expressed through his language of visual metaphor, which I trace across different chapters of the *Essais* in order to attend to its productive capacities as well as to observe its frictions. There is nevertheless a strong historical/material element to my discussion. I suggest that in order to give this language proper consideration we must also consider it in light of the views of painting and portraiture prevalent at the time of the *Essais*'s writing, views which have also come to influence our modern understanding of the genre, and consequently how critics have read Montaigne's 'c'est moy que je peins'. My main contention is that Renaissance (self-)portraiture extended over a richer variety of modes and sub-genres than those modern Montaigne critics, including Boutcher, have acknowledged.[20] I push back, therefore, against Boutcher's claim that what matters in understanding the *Essais* as self-portrait 'is less the analogy between the *Essais* and this or that style of painted portrait than the ways in which portraits feature as indexes of the actions and interactions of noble bodies and souls in early modern culture'.

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[14] Warren Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols, (Oxford: OUP, 2017), I: The Patron-Author, p. 21.
[15] Warren Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne*, I, p. xviii. Gell takes the notion of an index from Piercean semiotics. See Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p. 17.
[16] *The School of Montaigne*, I, p. 20.
[17] Ibid., I, p. 53.
[18] Warren Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne*, I, p. 207.
[19] Notably in 'Literary Art and Agency? Gell and the Magic of the Early Modern Book', in Liana Chua and Mark Elliott (eds), *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering After Alfred Gell* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2013).
[20] *The School of Montaigne*, I, p. 92.

My aim is precisely to flesh out portraiture beyond such offhand glosses ('this or that style') because, I maintain, the view of portraiture that emerges from the *Essais* does not coincide with the narrow understanding of portraiture we witness in discussions of Montaigne's self-portrait. Specifically, I argue that we ought to consider Montaigne's metaphor in light of the complex dynamics at play in (self-portrait) sketches. Before doing just that, let us motivate the view of portraiture that, I contend, lies behind the dissatisfaction of those critics mentioned in the previous section.

## III. Portraits of the Author

Under the reign of François I, France witnessed a large increase in artistic production, and portraits became especially fashionable.[21] At the forefront of portraiture in France were court painters François Clouet and his father Jean, known for their portraits of figures like Marguerite de Navarre and Catherine de Medici, as well as king François himself. One of the main functions served by portraits such as those made by the Clouets was commemoration: representations of illustrious figures (primarily although not exclusively members of the court or high nobility) were made with the aim of preserving and displaying their physical appearance, moral countenance and/or material wealth both to their contemporaries and for posterity.[22] The view of portraiture as something fixing and immortalizing was to some extent the guiding approach behind the Clouet's portraits, and, more generally, the genre of the portrait in Europe at the time of the *Essais*'s publication.[23] In a second instance, there were portraits that served what we might call a more domestic function—those created by artists of their family or friends, and which circulated in smaller, familial or domestic circles. The aim of the latter category of portraits is somewhat less clear-cut, who and what they were for was more dependent on contingent factors, and even at times on the whim of the artist. In both cases, portraiture bore an essential relation to death, in the sense of preserving the image or memory of someone after they died or were no longer physically present.[24] The performative aspect of such portraits is evident: they were used to showcase the sitter's qualities and attributes, and by virtue of their public nature, also helped to cement these associations, thereby in some ways entrenching their truth value. Portraits, whether in the form of paintings or medals or coins, were in this way also a means of fashioning and controlling the *imago personae* of the sitter, to shape and influence the sitter's public image not only insofar as physical traits and material possessions were concerned, but also in terms of status, culture, and intellectual, moral and personal

[21] Henri Zerner, *Renaissance Art in France: The Invention of Classicism* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), p. 195.
[22] As Patricia Rubin writes, two key functions of portraiture in the Renaissance were recognition and long-term recollection ('Understanding Renaissance Portraiture' in *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini*, ed. by Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), p. 5).
[23] Indeed, the desire to fix, immortalize, a subject is arguably built into the (Western) conception of visual representation. The myth of the invention of drawing, traceable to an account by Pliny the Elder in the *Natural History*, attributes the discovery to the daughter of Butades, a Corinthian potter, who had fallen deeply in love with a young man. The youth was set to leave Corinth, and the young maiden drew the outline of his shadow, cast by a lamp on a wall, to preserve his memory during his absence. See Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV, 15. trans. by H. Rackman, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).
[24] See Edouard Pommier, *Théories du portrait: De la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), pp. 43–8, and Stephen Kemperdick, *The Early Portrait: From the Collections of the Prince of Liechtenstein and the Kunstmuseum Basel* (Munich/London: Prestel, 2006).

character.[25] Beyond encapsulating one's 'likeness', it was portraiture's link to the formation of a public *persona* that helps to explain why it enjoyed a privileged status among Renaissance humanists, and portraits circulated among humanist intellectual and friendly circles.[26]

One of the most well-known examples of this practice is the diptych of portraits of Erasmus and Pieter Gillis, completed by the Dutch artist Quentin Massys and sent to their mutual friend Thomas More, accompanied by a statement written by Erasmus of his intention to gift More the portraits so that he might remember his two friends should they die before him.[27] Erasmus and Gillis are both shown sitting at a desk with writing implements (Erasmus) and a book (Gillis) in front of them, with shelves of books in the background. In this instance we see many of the functions and characteristics of portraiture: the connection with death and memory, the fashioning of a public self, and the shared participation in an intellectual as well as amicable community, which this double portrait itself aids in constructing through its status as a gift object.[28]

[25] Stefan Weppelmann traces the development of the Renaissance portrait from the idea of *ritratto dal naturale* inherited from Classical portraiture, which attempted to capture an individual's physiognomy, to the focus on personality in the creation of an *imago*, with the latter emerging in the fifteenth century ('Some Thoughts on Likeness in Italian Early Renaissance Portraits', *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini*, pp. 64–76.

[26] See John Pope-Hennessy, 'Humanism and the Portrait' in *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1963), pp. 64–100. Pope-Hennessy's approach to Western portraiture favours the Burkhardtian idea of the special relationship between the Renaissance and the (modern) individual. This view of portraiture has been convincingly contested—see Harry Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations*, 46 (1994), 87–120, and Maria H. Loh, 'Renaissance Faciality', *Oxford Art Journal*, 32:3 (2009), 343–63. I think the view of portraiture I discuss here can be accommodated within both frameworks, indeed Loh argues for a similarly performative understanding of the portrait that goes beyond questions of 'uniqueness' and 'authenticity' (356).

[27] Lorne Campbell, Margaret Mann Phillips, Hubertus Schulte Herbrüggen and J. B. Trapp, 'Quentin Matsys, Desiderius Erasmus, Pieter Gillis and Thomas More', *The Burlington Magazine* 120:98 (1978), 716–725 (716, n. 8). See also Alois Gerlo, *Érasme et ses portraitistes: Metsijs, Dürer, Holbein* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1969).

[28] Pommier, *Théories du portrait*, p. 43–44. See also Harold Keller, 'Entstehung und Blütezeit der Freundschaftsbilder', in Douglas Fraser, Howard Hibbard, Milton J. Lewine (eds), *Essays in the History of Art presented to Rudolf Wittkower* (London: Phaidon, 1967), pp. 161–173; John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Rennaisance*, pp, 92–6; and Erwin Panofsky, 'Erasmus and the Visual Arts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 32, (1969), 200–227 (214).

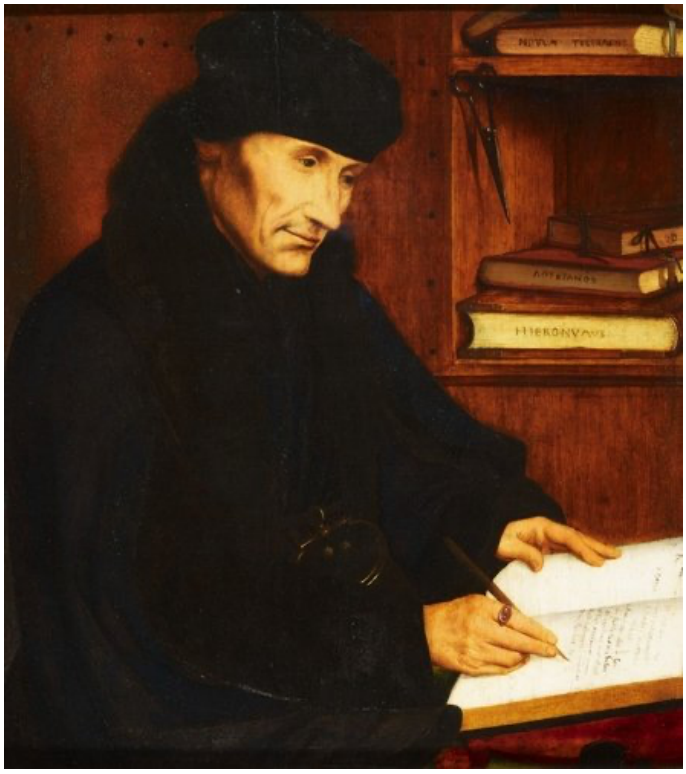

***Figure 2**: Quentin Massys, Desiderius Erasmus, oil on oak panel (1517), Royal Museum of Fine Arts (Antwerp.*

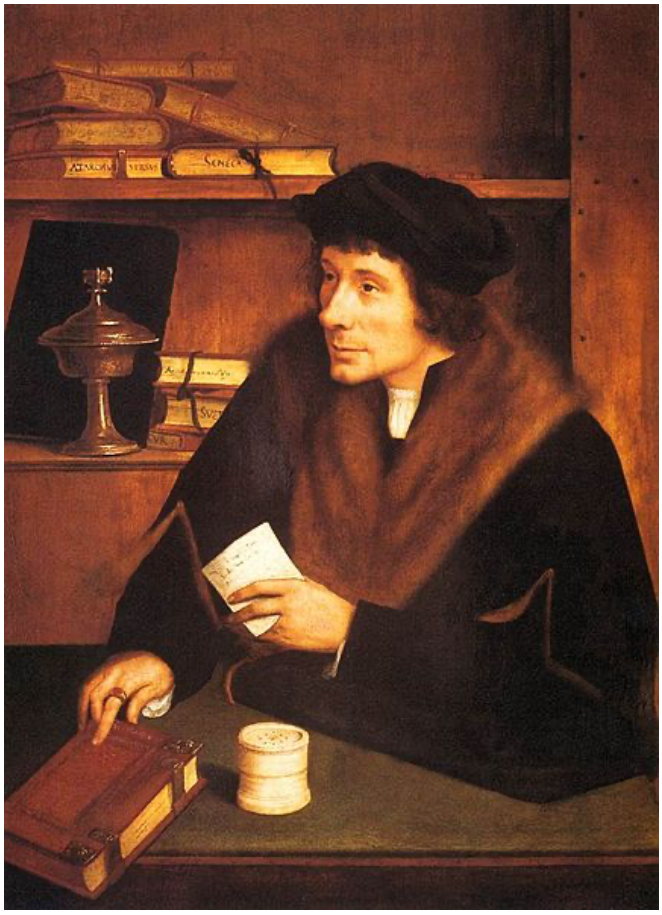

***Figure 3:** Quentin Massys, Pieter Gillis, oil on oak panel (1517), Royal Collection (UK).*

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In the same vein, portraits were also made with the aim of showing certain moral or intellectual characteristics associated with the sitter, and were in such cases embellished either with objects associated with a particular trait or virtue, or with Latin or Greek epigrams that reflected a philosophical or moral maxim, as can be seen in Dürer's engraving of Erasmus now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York:[29]

[29] See Harry Vredeveld, '"Lend a Voice": The Humanistic Portrait Epigraph in the Age of Erasmus and Dürer', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 66:2 (2013), 509–67.




***Figure 4:*** Albert Dürer, *Erasmus of Rotterdam,* engraving (1526), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).

The success of portraits like the above depended to some extent, certainly, on the degree of *vraisemblance* (the point was to capture the *likeness* of the sitter, as the caption *ad vivam effigiem deliniata*—drawn to life—suggests). But even more than this, I think, it depended on the ability of the work to give a holistic sense of the particular human subject. Erasmus here is shown amongst a multitude of books, pen in hand, in an atmosphere of serious yet calm, leisurely study. The objects surrounding the author, and the work's general composition, are a crucial part of the formation of Erasmus's *persona* in the portrait—*ad vivam* in this sense should not be taken just as shorthand for physiognomic likeness, but for the representation of a whole life, the objects here acting as emblems of parts of Erasmus's *vita*. There is a reflection on time at play here, too, as the past tense of *deliniata* (drawn, sketched) points to an act of creation that is finished, yet Erasmus is portrayed as in the process of writing, pointing to a future work still in the making. This time play is furthered by the Greek inscription, which reads 'the better image will his writings show'—a caption that, too, alludes to the superiority of prose over painting in capturing the totality of the human subject.[30] Despite the obvious function of commemoration and personality cultivation, seen in this light the Erasmus engraving above is already more 'dynamic' than critics' characterization of portraiture presented in the first section. The temporal subtleties at play between text and image create a more complex *imago* that extends beyond the time of sitting or painting.

George Hoffmann has written persuasively about the phrase *pourtraire au vif*, the French translation of *ad vivam effigiem*, arguing that in light of Renaissance practices and reception of portraiture, the idea of drawing *to* rather than *from* life shows that in Montaigne's time 'the most important quality of a portrait was […] its ability to stimulate in the mind of its beholder a sense of being with a person not present'.[31] Like Hoffmann, Boutcher argues that the *Essais* can be seen to bear a number of features characteristic of such portraits. Montaigne tells us explicitly that the *Essais* are supposed to act as an object of remembrance for his close ones after he is gone. As such, they form a record both of Montaigne's opinions on certain subjects as well as a constant reminder that, despite the variety of subject matter, they reflect the mind of a man embedded in a certain time and place, as well as a certain social *milieu*. They are also a public demonstration of this man's classical learning and all the qualities that such a spiritual and cultural confrontation with the classics entails. To some degree they are also predicated on the belief in their subject's exceptionalism: to write the *Essais* is to believe that those thoughts and meditations on classical sources are worthy of being recorded and also of being read. In this way, the *Essais* function as a portrait insofar as they share the performative aspect of the view of portraiture sketched out above. They present to the world a set of associations between man and maxim or idea but also, by the force of their purchase on their *publiq*, help to render those associations the basis of the public identity of the man, Michel de Montaigne.

But at the same time Montaigne resists this performative aspect. While insisting on the honesty and naturalism of the *peinture* that he presents in the *Essais*, he is also keenly aware of the limits of mimetic representation in capturing a changing subject. In III.xiii, 'De

[30] On the Erasmian dynamics of this motto, see Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 1993), Ch. 1: '"A better portrait of Erasmus will his writings show": Fashioning the Figure', pp. 27–54. For a related discussion of *verba* and *res*, and Erasmus, see Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*, pp. 41–8.

[31] George Hoffmann, 'Portrayal from Life, or to Life? The *Essais*'s Living Effigy', *French Forum*, 25 (2000), 145–63, 148.

l'experience', Montaigne reflects on the inability of a portrait to capture one's aging physiognomy:[32]

> [B] J'ay des portraits de ma forme de vingt et cinq et de trente cinq ans; je les compare avec celuy d'asteure: combien de fois ce n'est plus moy, combien est mon image presente plus esloingnée de celles là que de celle de mon trespas. C'est trop abusé de nature de la tracasser si loing, qu'elle soit contrainte de nous quitter et abandonner nostre conduite, nos yeux, nos dens, nos jambes et le reste à la mercy d'un secours estranger et mandié, et nous resigner entre les mains de l'art, lasse de nous suivre (1102).

In this reflection on his changing features, Montaigne looks both backwards (at portraits of his younger self) and forwards (evoking the image of a death mask). The triangulation between his past sel(ves), his present form, and his countenance at the point of death already in some way distorts the traditional association between portraiture and death, based as it is on a straightforwardly linear conception of time, as Montaigne flits forwards and backwards from the vantage point of the present. It is fitting that in the next sentence he should describe the act of nature *resignedly* consigning the aging subject (of portraiture) to art: rather than the expected exaltation of the ability of portraiture to capture the living likeness of the subject, art here simply takes over where 'nature' can no longer continue to physically hold the body together. The view of portraiture presented in these lines is at best ambivalent about its function. While portraits are able to preserve the illusion of a unified body even after nature has run its course, there remains an inescapable insufficiency and inexactitude in such artistic endeavours to capture a human face whose ultimate end is dissimulation and disintegration.[33]

While Montaigne, like many contemporary noblemen or *hommes de lettres*, made use of the tropes of portraiture, he remains skeptical about its ability to achieve its proposed purpose. So, for example, while the personal *jeton* or coin that Montaigne had made in 1576 was intended to signal his belonging to the Ordre de Saint-Michel, it also bore a Greek inscription—*epokhe* [I withhold judgement]—that placed it firmly within a humanist trend of including such Latin or Greek formulas whose purpose was to convey one's personal *motto* or encapsulate their philosophy.[34] But such medallions most often represented the head of the author in profile in the centre (in the style of Greek and Roman coins), a feature that Montaigne's medallion notably lacked.[35] Similarly, the editions of the *Essais* published during Montaigne's lifetime did not include an accompanying portrait, despite this being a common practice for famous authors at the time.[36] An oft-cited example of the latter is

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[32] Erasmus expressed his dissatisfaction with a drawing done by Dürer along similar lines, saying: 'It is not surprising that this picture does not correspond exactly to my appearance. I am no longer the person I was five years ago' (cited in Andrée Hayum, 'Dürer's Portrait of Erasmus and the Ars Typographorum', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38:4 (1985), 650–87 (654)).

[33] This might also explain Montaigne's interest in masks in the *Essais*. See Philippe Desan, *Portraits à l'Essai: Iconographie de Montaigne* (Paris: Honoré-Champion, 2007), p. 19.

[34] Anita Traninger has argued that with his own coin depicting his personal symbol, Terminus, Erasmus subverted this trope, and attempted to mask—as much as reveal—himself. See her 'Erasmus Birthday Lecture 2015: Erasmus' *personae* between Rhetoric and Dialectics', *Erasmus Studies*, 37:1 (2017), 5–22.

[35] On the *jeton* and its social functions see the article by Marie-Luce Demonet in Philippe Desan (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*, (Paris: Champion, 2007), pp. 612–14. Following in the footsteps of the commonplace of Renaissance inscriptions on portraits such as Erasmus's above, Demonet argues that while the *jeton* notably lacked Montaigne's portrait, this was made up for by the virtual portrait constituted by the *Essais*.

[36] See Desan *Portraits à l'essai*, p. 12.

Ronsard's frontispiece portrait, where the poet is portrayed in profile, with an accompanying quatrain:[37]




***Figure 5:*** Pierre de Ronsard, *Amours*, frontispiece woodcut (1552).

[37] The identity of the engraver is unknown, but may be Ronsard's poet and painter friend Nicolas Denisot (see Paul Laumonier, *Ronsard, poète lyrique: étude historique et littéraire* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1997), p. 85).

We can agree with Desan that the intention of portraits such as these was to 'créer une image fixe de l'auteur.'[38] The interaction of text and image is worth pausing on here, however. The short poem describes Ronsard's *vers* as one of two *crayons* used to make the *portrait au vif* of the author, establishing the poems contained in the *Amours* as a supplement to the author's physiognomy depicted above, one that purports to capture the author's *esprit* rather than his surface (facial) characteristics. Despite this *rapprochement* between writing and portraiture, it is the latter that is considered standard or even superior, as the *vers* are nevertheless described in visual-artistic terms—a *crayon* is an instrument more proper to the artist than the writer.

A similar dynamic between verse and image can be observed in a frontispiece for a posthumous (1608) edition of the *Essais*:

[38] Desan, *Portraits à l'essai*, p. 12.




***Figure 6**:* Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, frontispiece engraving by Thomas de Leu (1608).

Here, the quatrain announces that Montaigne has *peinct* 'son bel esprit', just as the *peinctre* has 'peinct le corps'. But whereas in the Ronsardian epigraph portraiture and verse are set up as equal counterparts, here Montaigne's writing is ostensibly granted greater powers: it is said to surpass Nature where painting can only equal it ('Le premier [the *peinctre*] par son art égale la Nature / Mais l'autre la surpasse en tout ce qu'il escrit'). One wonders what Montaigne would have made of this claim (and indeed of being referred to as 'le grand').[39] There are good reasons to think he would have rejected the view that his writing 'surpassed' Nature. There are good reasons, too, to think that this comparison might not be the compliment that it seems. Renaissance visual artists were, as we shall see in Chapter Two, involved in a struggle to establish the importance and value of their craft—excluded as it was from the established system of liberal arts— a struggle that was also fought on the battleground of various *paragoni*, or debates about the relative merits of the different arts.[40] One oft-rehashed argument involved the greater ability of painting to imitate nature, presenting to the senses an immediate experience that replicates that of the natural world. To say that writing 'goes beyond' Nature could, in this context, be interpreted as meaning that words can *distort* Nature, creating artifice and deception as opposed to *vraisemblance*.[41] Read in this light, the presence of the signature of the artist ('Tomas de Leu fecit') at the bottom of the inscription further compounds a multimedial rivalrous dimension—the image of 'le grand Montaigne', the great writer, rubs up against the written signature of the visual artist.

These two frontispiece images of Ronsard and Montaigne, and their accompanying texts, offer us the opportunity to reflect on Montaigne's 'c'est moy que je peins' in light of the practice of epigraph portraiture and the questions of verisimilitude, mimesis and the relationship between writing and visual art. I think that this genre forms part of a frame of reference for Montaigne and his readers when writing/reading the description of his self-representation.[42] But Montaigne's 'c'est moy que je peins' also differs from this genre in important respects. Firstly, with his prefatory announcement, Montaigne is not just making explicit the subject of his work, but that he is himself the painter of the *peinture*, that the *moy* is both subject and artist: *c'est moy qui peins*.[43] Secondly, the *peinture* of the *Essais* differs from the above examples by virtue of its ambition to a vaster temporal scope. While, for example, Ronsard presents us a portrait that points backwards (as denoted by his use of

[39] Although, as Hoffmann notes, this epithet was used by Marie de Gournay in her preface to the 1595 edition ('Montaigne's Face?', p. 19).

[40] A useful outline of the context of these debates in relation to Leonardo's *Paragone* (one of the major interventions in this area) is given in Monica Azzolini, 'In praise of art: text and context of Leonardo's *Paragone* and its critique of the arts and sciences', *Renaissance Studies*, 19:4 (2005), 487–510. As far as I know, no monograph devoted to Renaissance *paragoni* exists in English. See, however, Simonetta La Barbera, *Il Paragone delle Arti nella Teoria Artistica del Cinquecento* (Bagheria, Sicily: Cafaro, 1997).

[41] Although it is worth noting that some artists felt the need to claim for themselves the same audacity as the poet in going beyond the limits of the imagination—see Judith Dundas, 'The *Paragone* and the Art of Michelangelo', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21:1 (1990), 87–92.

[42] We ought to keep in mind that this epigraph portrait, and those of Ronsard and Erasmus, are not of course, *peintures* proper, but *prints*. The use of the terms *peinctre* and *peinct* in the Montaigne epigraph portrait might be an indication that this image was based on the Chantilly portrait painting of the author. George Hoffmann has contested this view (see 'Montaigne's Face?', pp. 17–9), and I agree with his conclusions there. I think that the flexibility with which *peinct* is used here reveals both the absence of clear-cut boundaries between different media during this period, as well as the relative paucity of French technical artistic vocabulary at this time. More is said about the latter in Chapter Two.

[43] For an interesting reading of the dynamics of this de-doubling and the relation between 'je' and 'Moi', see Louis Marin, "C'est moi que je peins": De la figurabilité du moi chez Montaigne' in *L'écriture du Soi; Ignace de Loyola, Montaigne, Stendhal, Roland Barthes*, Librairie du Collège international de philosophie (Paris: PUF, 1999), pp. 113–25.

'fut') from a projected future point,[44] Montaigne's portrait is still becoming, it is an action in the present tense, and the *Essais* are a record of this ongoing action, rather than of a unified and completed *persona* ready to be presented to the world. This might also explain why none of the editions printed in the author's lifetime included a portrait of Montaigne: the author's aversion to the 'fixating' nature of the portrait genre encompasses a resistance to the idea that the function of pinning down and immortalizing a subject is as difficult for the fluctuating, changing composition of a *figure* as it is for an *ouvrage*, for a *corps* as much as a *corpus*.[45]

If the *Essais* are a portrait, they are not one that purports to capture the essence of a united subject, insofar as their subject, as Montaigne writes in II.xvii, 'De la praesumption', constantly eludes him even as he strives to attend to its changing characteristics. But when Montaigne points to the limits of portraiture, and thus indirectly to those of his own chosen metaphor, the reason for this, I contend, is to do with a failure of imagination on our part as modern readers. The portraits we have considered so far, despite not being as 'static' as we might be led to expect, are nevertheless embedded within a temporal framework that is essentially forward-looking—pointing to a projected 'afterlife' of the image, and indeed of its sitter. This is as much to do with form as content: as complex as the resulting image may be, these portraits do not engage at a formal level with the representation of their own becoming—they do not, in other words, show on their surface the process of their own creation. If we attempt to find a model for the kind of 'self-portrait' conducted by Montaigne through the *Essais* in the portraits of his day, the latter inevitably come up short. But this is not to say that we should abandon the idea of the *Essais* as painting wholesale. Rather, I argue, we ought to redirect our attention towards a different, more experimental kind of visual representation flourishing in the century that Montaigne conducted his own experiment in writing, namely the sketch. This is a medium that allows a more complex interplay between temporal modes, an oscillation between past, present, and future. As we shall see in the following section, self-portrait sketches capture something about the future-directedness of the 'standard' portrait, while also looking back to the moment(s) of composition.

## IV. Self-Portraits of the Artist

In the rest of this chapter, I show that Montaigne's descriptions of painting are descriptions of an open-ended, exploratory and dynamic art form. While my arguments don't depend on Montaigne's direct knowledge of this genre, I do contend that he conceived of painting as a complex process of many stages, including the initial setting down of one or more ideas on paper. Before turning our attention to Montaigne's language of drawing, let us consider four examples of portrait-sketches in the form of two pen and ink sketches by Montaigne's contemporary Annibale Carracci and—to jump half a century down the line—two engravings by Rembrandt. These works on paper evoke some of the subtleties that we shall see operate in Montaigne's conception of painting.

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[44] On the use of the preterite and this construction of an 'imagined postmortem point' in Ronsard's epigraph, see Neil Kenny, *Death and Tenses: Posthumous Presence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), p. 202.

[45] For these reasons I disagree with Kathy Eden's claims that 'Michel de Montaigne is like Mark Zuckerberg in having successfully exploited the status of the human face as a stand-in for—a substitute or short-hand for—the singular identity that each of us believe we possess'—'Facebook *avant la lettre*: Communicating Renaissance-style in Montaigne's *Essais*', in Neil Kenny, Richard Scholar and Wes Williams (eds), *Montaigne in Transit: Essays in Honour of Ian MacLean* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), pp. 61–76 (p. 61).

In this section, I shift to consider the genre of the self-portrait, a genre that involves a 'bending back' of the subject matter and one that engages the artist in a meta-reflexive mode of creation. This meta-reflexivity lends itself to an open and exploratory mode of representation which, when combined with the openness of drawing, can result in composite experimentation across both form and content. We can see this at play in a striking way in a work by Carracci, completed between 1603 and 1605. The sheet depicts the artist in front of a panel showing an easel which itself bears a portrait, above which is a further self-image (a mirror? A painting?). This complex *mise-en-abîme* enacts to an almost dizzying extent the continuous back and forth between subject and object occurring in the process of self-depiction. The proliferation of faces on the sheet subverts the idea of the connection between portraiture and likeness as a one-to-one relation and, together with the various degrees of accomplishment or 'finishedness' of the drawing (ranging from the more refined head of the artist in the right of the painting, to the looser more allusive strokes of the head in the upper composition), the overall effect is one of refraction, suggestive of an essential asymmetry between subject and object, as if Annibale is pointing to the necessarily distorting nature of self-representation. The enormous experimental potential of the medium of drawing in this particular composition is brought to light when considered alongside the paintings for which this sheet served as a preparatory study, figures 8 and 9 below.



***Figure* 7**: Annibale Carracci, *A self-portrait on an easel*, pen and ink on paper (c. 1603-1605), Royal Collection (UK).



***Figure 8:*** Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait*, oil on canvas (c. 1603), Galleria degli Uffizi (Florence)

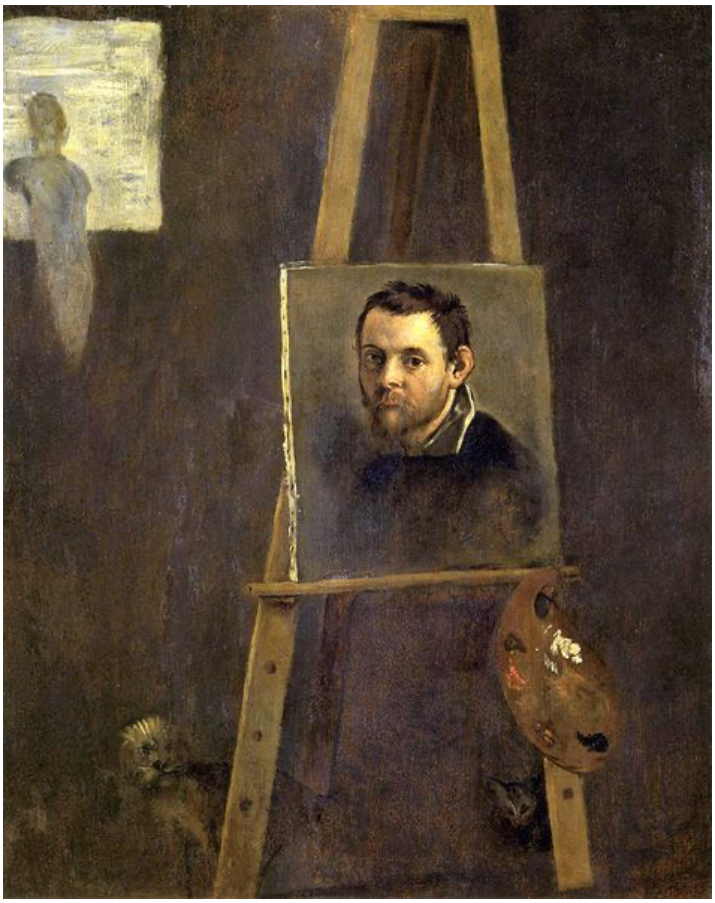

***Figure 9****: Annibale Carracci, Self-Portrait*, oil on canvas (c. 1603), Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg)

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The two almost identical works above retain the element of self-portraiture of the drawing but the complex play between different levels of representation has been greatly pared down. The impression here is already of a more fixing, immortalizing approach to the self-portrait, which is in part due to the more restrictive nature of oil painting as opposed to the looser, more dynamic possibilities afforded by the sketch.

If the eye is, in figure 7, drawn into a more effortful interpretative experience, one that requires extended viewing as Carracci invites us to flit between the different elements and layers of the composition, the second Carracci drawing below points to a different and more immediate dimension of self-representation in drawing: its performance of intimacy and vulnerability. In this sheet by Annibale from the early 1580s (fig. 10, below), the artist is represented in a curious manner—slightly hunched, with unkempt hair and bearing an almost forlorn expression. The overall impression is that of a searching attempt to capture something elusive and indefinable—a feeling of melancholy about the artist's old age, perhaps, or simply a passing feeling that overcame the artist in that particular moment. The effect is of a rapid execution that imbues the drawing with an immediacy and directness which contrasts the overall ambiguity of the design. The fluid lines of the artist's pen create a sense of movement, almost shakiness, which conspire with the aloofness of the artist's expression to render an overall feeling of ambivalence. The ambiguity is carried forward at a further formal level with respect to the genre of the drawing.




***Figure 10:*** Annibale Carracci, *Self-Portrait*, pen and brown ink (c. 1580), J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles).

Here, the artist's face is inscribed in an oval surrounded by a decorative design, evocative of the ornate niches of frontispiece portraits of the period, such as that of Ronsard discussed above. There are several differences between this self-portrait of Carracci and the traditional epigraph portrait. An obvious difference is that this is a sketch, and the fluid, rapid lines of Carracci's pen already depart some way from the decorum of the epigraph portrait. The function of the drawing is unknown, but it could feasibly have been a preparatory design for a painting. Even if this is the case, Carracci's choice to represent himself with a beard and unkempt hair, with a slightly hunched posture subvert the expectation of an epigraph portrait to convey a sense of prestige and authority. We saw, too, that one of the characteristics of epigraph portraits was their futurity, creating an illusion of a projected future standpoint from which we are to view and judge both the writer's portrait and their work. Instead, Carracci's sketch involves us in a temporal oscillation: between the act of creation, in the enacting and re-tracing of the graphic elements of the composition; and the projected future image of the 'finished' frontispiece portrait that Carracci's composition resembles. The likeness of the drawing to a different yet related genre, that of the *epitaph* portrait, similarly introduces an element of subversion, as Carracci plays with the fixity (the desire for *vraisemblance*) and seriousness that such portraits entailed. In this vein, Gail Feigenbaum comments on the relationship of this drawing to the genre of the portrait print, arguing that '[i]f Annibale made the Getty drawing for a commemorative purpose, then he did so in a spirit of bitter irony, mocking the decorum of the genre'.[46] The freedom afforded by the formal qualities of the sketch make possible this element of subversion. Moreover. the loaded ambivalence of this sketch—hovering between melancholy, nostalgia, irony, and perhaps, too, a sort of defiance—is intimately temporal, and it is the temporal dynamism of the *sketch* that makes it so well-placed to capture this ambivalence.[47]

[46] Gail Feigenbaum, '"A likeness in the tomb": Annibale's Self-Portrait Drawing in the J. Paul Getty Museum', *Getty Research Journal*, 2 (2010), 19–38, 27.

[47] Here is Feigenbaum on the opportunities offered to Carracci by the medium of drawing:
'the Getty drawing is a modest object that required little investment of time or materials, which made it a good site for experimentation. A radical idea can be tried out in a sketch on paper, and a caricature depends on lightness of execution and indeterminacy to carry its weight of a double meaning ('"A likeness in the tomb"', 31).



***Figure 11:*** Rembrandt van Rijn, *Sheet of studies: head of the artist, a beggar couple, heads of an old man and old woman, etc,* etching on laid paper (1632). ©Ashmolean Museum (Oxford). Accession no.: WA1855.387.

Something similar can be seen in a different medium of representation (one that Carracci himself experimented with): etching. One that can be singled out in particular from the very large corpus of such works (Rembrandt was a serial chronicler of his aging physiognomy) is on a sheet held at the Ashmolean on which we find Rembrandt's head alongside a beggar couple and two elderly heads, one male, the other female.[48]
The juxtaposition of these seemingly unrelated elements points to the sketchy and experimental nature of these designs, which coexist on the sheet with more accomplished, 'finished' aspects: Rembrandt's characteristic depth and shading are added in the typical cross-hatching style and there is a generous amount of detail around the mouth and on the eyes. Once again, it is the artist's expression that is ambiguous—is Rembrandt's air one of seriousness or amusement? Does he look out at the viewer in light-hearted conviviality or with mild scorn? These aspects of dynamic ambivalence bear testament to Rembrandt's freer approach to the self-portrait, despite the relatively more fixed and methodical process involved in etching compared to drawing.[49] Rembrandt likely used the same copper plate for the multiple designs above, and this, together with the probing nature of the artist's rendition of his own face, points to an essential fluidity in the approach to self-portraiture.[50]
This juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated elements was a regular practice in the early modern period, when artists would often use the same sheet for multiple studies, or even different kinds of creation (half-written sonnets could be found side by side with studies of draperies, for example). Rembrandt is no exception to this economical use of paper, but the juxtaposition of his own face with less personal compositions adds a further dimension of intimacy. As we are confronted with the artist's physiognomy it is even more tempting to try and recreate the stages of creation, thinking with the artist as he places these disparate subjects side by side, at times in such a way as to create a natural continuity between the lines of one design and those of another, as in the print below:

[48] For a critical overview of Rembrandt's etchings corpus, see An Van Camp, *Rembrandt in Print* (Ashmolean Museum, 2019) and Michiel Kersten, *Rembrandt Etchings: Looking at Rembrandt's Prints* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Publishers, 2017). Many of Rembrandt's early etchings figure self-portraits such as these known as *tronies* (character heads) as well as beggars (see Jaco Rutgers and Timothy K. Standring, *Rembrandt: Painter as Printmaker* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 21).
[49] In etching, a copper plate is covered in a waxy, acid-resistant ground which the artist then incises his design into, in so doing exposing the metal underneath. The plate is then dipped in acid ('mordant') which 'bites' into the metal, revealing the incised lines. The artist then applies ink to these lines, and proceeds to print the design onto a sheet. This technique, known as 'intaglio', might be seen as relatively more controlled than that of 'freehand' drawing, but in fact etching has traditionally been seen as much closer to drawing than other forms of printmaking (see Madeleine Viljoen, 'Etching and Drawing in Early Modern Europe' in *The Early Modern Painter-Etcher*, ed. by Michael Cole (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 53–74 (p. 53)). I thank Rachel Skokowski for alerting me to this distinction.
[50] Rembrandt was famous for kickstarting a more experimental and fluid approach to print-making (see Perrin Stein, 'Echoes of Rembrandt and Castiglione: Etching as Appropriation' in *Artists and Amateurs: Etchings in 18th-Century France*, ed. by Perrin Stein (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), pp. 156–83 (p. 157)).



***Figure 12:*** Rembrandt van Rijn, *Sheet of studies with the Head of the Artist, a beggar Man, Woman and Child,* etching on laid paper (1651). ©Ashmolean Museum (Oxford). Accesion no.: WA1855.389.

Etchings such as those of figures 11 and 12 are not just a way of recording Rembrandt's passage through time, they are also ways of testing out ideas on the page and of probing the confines of both his chosen genre and medium.

As these works on paper demonstrate, the sketch affords the means to play with the opportunities as well as the limits of self-representation. While self-portrait sketches might, in the case of both Annibale Carracci and Rembrandt, retain the close link with death and likeness, the approach is a dynamic rather than static one—there is an ongoing reckoning taking place, a complex but at times also playful exploration of the ability or non-ability of art to capture and pin down the artist's subject in all of its complexity. Montaigne shares with these artists the lively interaction with the twin themes of death and self-representation, and the mediation between seriousness and capriciousness. When considering the portraiture metaphor in the context of actual artistic practices of portraiture in the time of Montaigne we ought, I contend, to take seriously the multiplicity and variation of this genre, and to broaden our conception of the (self-)portrait from straightforward likeness, commemoration or personality cultivation to include more experimental works on papers like the above.

## V. Montaigne's *peinture*

We saw above how the flexibility and indeterminacy of the works discussed come down in large part to the simultaneity and immediacy of sketching, which pose an invitation to the viewer to participate in what the art historian David Rosand describes as a process of recollection:

> The drawn mark is a record of a gesture, an action in time past now fixed permanently in the present; recalling its origins in the movement of the draftsman's hand, the mark invites us to participate in that recollection of its creation.[51]

Rosand notes that drawing involve a backwards-looking gesture; pointing always to its own conception and urging the viewer to imagine that process of graphic creation. Compared to the more linear, future-directedness of Renaissance commemorative portraits, drawing operates within a less rigid temporal framework, one in which the act of drawing itself is being constantly revisited and called to mind. John Berger describes this aspect of drawing through a comparison with painting:

> Drawings reveal the process of their own making, their own looking, more clearly. The imitative facility of a painting often acts as a disguise—i.e. what it refers to becomes more impressive than the reason for referring to it. Great paintings are not disguised in this way. But even a third-rate drawing reveals the process of its own creation.[52]

Rather than functioning linearly in the opposite direction (backward rather than forward), drawings involve a bending back, as they also point towards an elaboration of the subject of the sketch—for example through a finished artwork (this was the function of those drawings called 'preparatory'). As Berger notes '[t]his is how the act of drawing refuses the process of

[51] David Rosand, *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 2.
[52] John Berger, 'Drawn to that moment' in *The White Bird: Writings by John Berger* ed. by Lloyd Spencer (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985), pp. 146–51 (p.149).

disappearances and proposes the simultaneity of a multitude of moments.'[53] In Chapter Three I discuss how Italian Renaissance artists and art theorists exploited the temporal fluidity of drawing, also in large part because of the polysemy of the Italian word *disegno*, which can mean both intention/mental idea, the action of drawing, and the material product of the act. In what follows, I show how Montaigne invokes such a temporally nuanced view of painting through his use of visual metaphor, and how this brings the notion of *peinture* in his imaginary closer to drawing than painting. As a starting point for this discussion it is worth revisiting the famous passage from III.ii, 'Du repentir', partially quoted by Defaux in the first section above as the locus (and crystallization) of a change in the author's attitude towards his writing:

> Je ne puis asseurer mon object. Il va trouble et chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle. Je le prens en ce point, comme il est, en l'instant que je m'amuse à luy. *Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage*: non un passage d'aage en autre, ou, comme dict le peuple, de sept en sept ans, mais de jour en jour, de minute en minute. Il faut accommoder mon histoire à l'heure (805).[54]

The extract begins with Montaigne describing his inability to pin down his object—the object *of* what is ambiguous: of thought or, of a particular chapter, or, perhaps, of the *Essais* as a whole. What follows this declaration of impotence is an instance of syntactical play between two registers, one the one hand what we might call the epistemological register of object/subject of thought, and on the other the grammatical register of object and subject of a verb. The word 'objet' becomes the (grammatical) subject of the second sentence ('[i]l va trouble et chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle'), before becoming object again in the third ('je le prens'). This modulation, object-subject-object, reflects the struggle that Montaigne is trying to capture here of retaining control over his topic, as though he is himself oscillating between being the subject and object of his own thoughts. After the third sentence, when his *object* is once again rendered (grammatical) object, it is the verb *peindre* that is used to assert the agency of the subject Montaigne, through two short, affirmative clauses. Paradoxically, however, what the subject paints is not the self, 'l'estre', but something fluid and indistinct: 'passage'. In the struggle between being object and subject, the action of painting is called upon to restore agency to the writer, but this agency is reflected in an action the product of which is mutable rather than firm or fixed.

To see this, let us pause awhile on the temporal dimension of the passage. If a portrait is conceived of as a 'snapshot' of a figure, 'static' to return once again to Cave's description, the subject of Montaigne's *peinture*, in contrast, stretches here across minutes, hours and days. The final sentence, 'il faut accommoder mon histoire à l'heure' echoes the discussion of Montaigne's standard reading time in II.x, 'Des livres', which, he states, usually falls under

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[53] Berger, 'Drawn to that moment', p. 150. This is in contrast to painting, which for Berger remains 'static', despite mediating between 'the timeless and the ephemeral' (see the essay on 'Painting and time' in *The White Bird: Writings by John Berger*, pp. 205–210).

[54] Emphasis mine. Much has been written about this famous passage, see, for example, Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought* trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 285–90. For a philological analysis of 'Du repentir', see Jules Brody, '"Du repentir" (III.2): A Philological Reading', *Yale French Studies*: 64 (1983), 283–272. A different kind of semantic analysis is offered in François Rigolot, 'La *Pente* du "repentir": Un exemple de remotivation du signifiant dans les *Essais* de Montaigne' in Donald M. Frame and Mary B. McKinley (eds), *Columbia Montaigne Conference Papers* (Lexington: French Forum, 1981), pp. 119–34. For an analysis of the chapter that is in dialogue with both Brody and Rigolot, see James J. Supple, *Les 'Essais' de Montaigne: Méthode(s) et méthodologies* (Paris: Champion, 2000), Ch. 9: 'Du repentir' (pp. 237–78). See also Michel Jeanneret, 'Mouvement' in *Dictionnare de Michel de Montaigne*, pp. 694–97.

the hour.[55] The *peinture* here is bound between two temporal frameworks: on the one hand it is a painting of *passage* and as such must extend temporally beyond the immediate moment, on the other hand, it must be accommodated within the time of reading and, it is also implied, of writing. In other words, Montaigne's self-portrait must be such that it can represent a changing object that is also subject—a self that is also the writing self. The time of personhood meets the time of prose or narrative. But how might a portrait live up to such requirements, and what specifically about painting leads Montaigne to use visual metaphor to capture the nature of his project?

Let us turn to two further passages in which Montaigne describes his *peinture* for further evidence of the link between time, self-portraiture and the writing self in the *Essais.* The first is from III.ix, 'De la vanite':

> Et de me jetter à la mercy de mon invention presente, encore moins: je l'ay lourde et trouble, qui ne sçauroit fournir à soudaines necessitez, et importantes. Laisse, lecteur, courir encore ce coup d'essay et ce troisiesme allongeail du reste des pieces de ma peinture. J'adjouste, mais je ne corrige pas. (963)

Again, Montaigne invokes *peinture* in the context of describing a writing process that is temporally extended: he refers to the 'adjustments' that he makes to the *Essais*, the *allongeails* through which he expands his trains of thought, at times into very different, conflicting territory. The immutability of portraiture is here brought up against the mutability of the *Essais* over different chronological editions. Nevertheless, a certain fixity is still preserved: Montaigne tells us that he adjusts his words, yes, but that he does not correct what he has written. With this epigrammatic remark Montaigne brings the project of the *Essais* a little closer to the finite, unchangeable nature of portraiture as viewed by so much recent criticism. The *peinture* captures *passage* and therefore change, but its own faculty to change is restricted by the author to adjustments and additions, not to negations or substitutions of what has come before. What Montaigne is describing reads a lot like a process of sublation, the radical change of one thing into something new that, however, involves no destruction or cancellation. That this process involves a productive antithesis is evident if we look back at 'Du repentir' and the sentences that proceed directly from the passage cited earlier:

> Je pourray tantost 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 moymesme, soit que je saisisse les subjets par autres circonstances et considerations. Tant y a que je me contredits bien à l'adventure, mais la verité, comme disoit Demades, je ne la contredy point. (805)

This passage plays host to a tension between two camps of words, on the one side words such *changer*, *fortune*, *accidens*, *echet*, and *adventure*, and on the other words like *intention*, *contrerolle*, *saisisse* and *verité.*[56] The former fall under the semantic field of chance which we saw characterized many of the instances of *dessein* throughout the *Essais* and point to the slipperiness Montaigne describes in the previous passage from 'Du repentir'. The latter speak to the desire to control, to fix, a subject—a desire that struggles against this slipperiness. The two camps clash in this passage, as Montaigne weaves them into his

[55] 'Si j'ay employé une heure à le lire, qui est beaucoup pour moy, et que je r'amentoive ce que j'en ay tiré de suc et de substance, la plus part du temps je n'y treuve que du vent' (II.x, p. 413–14).

[56] On the former semantic field, see Alexandre Tarrête, 'Fortune' in Philippe Desan (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: Champion, 2004), pp. 415–16.

sentences to evoke the theme of contradiction that is named at the end. But this clash is ultimately productive: from the antithetical poles of chance and control derives what we are told is a faithful—a *truth*ful—version of the subject that is Montaigne. The writing in the passage enacts the chronological order of this process, with the end product, *verité*, arriving at the end of this confrontation.

The second passage comes from III.xiii, 'De la phisionomie':

> [B] J'ay choisi le temps où ma vie, que j'ay à peindre, je l'ay toute devant moy: ce qui en reste tient plus de la mort. Et de ma mort seulement, si je la rencontrois babillarde, comme font d'autres, donrrois je encore volontiers advis au peuple en deslogeant (1057).

These lines come after Montaigne has expressed regret at not writing the *Essais* during the prime of his life. He says that he chose a time to write at which life 'lies before him' like an artist's model waiting to be sketched or painted—what at first sight appears to be a temporal metaphor acquires on this reading a spatial dimension. The verb *peindre* here is used simultaneously to describe an action that is in the past (the project of writing the *Essais* that was begun in 1572), that is in the present (as Montaigne is partaking in that project as he writes) and that lies also in the future (as the tense of the phrase, and indeed the later C-text editions, suggest, Montaigne has, as he is penning this phrase, still some *vie* to *peindre*). But what is left of his life—what cannot yet be seen, remains unknown—is more like death than life. He continues that should he find death 'blabbering' he would gladly continue to advise the people as he abandons life (literally 'dislodges himself' from it). Montaigne is surely already thinking of Socrates' famous death here and the moral and philosophical lessons drawn from it from Plato onwards, indeed Socrates (his life, thought, countenance and appearance) forms one of the threads woven through this chapter. But the figure of Montaigne addressing a *people* after having conversed with death is interesting beyond the Socratic comparison: here we have Montaigne imaginatively embodying the shoes of an orator, it is speech that governs the imagery in this sentence. Subverting what we saw was the common *topos* of portraiture, namely its use for commemoration and immortalization of the dead (and as a means of continuing communication through death), for Montaigne it is *life* in all its simultaneity that portraiture is better able to capture—death instead serves an open-ended locutionary role: it converses and instructs rather than fixes and stabilizes.

Painting (in this wider sense) is, then, in Montaigne's imagination, perfectly suited to representing the perennial movement of life and lived experience. In comparing his writing to painting, he is doing more than appealing to the ability of visual representation to capture its subject matter, or of portraits to fix the sitter's external appearance or personal qualities. Rather, Montaigne appeals to the fluidity and the instability of painting and portraiture, particularly with respect to his own understanding of these media and their relationship with time. For Montaigne, their fluidity is also intimately bound up with the question of chance, something that for him painting shares with writing. In what is perhaps the most telling passage concerning the links between writing and painting for the author, occurring in I.xxiv, 'Divers evenemens du mesme conseil', Montaigne likens visual and literary artistic creation through their relation to the motions of *fortune*. It is worth quoting the passage in full:

> Les saillies poetiques, qui emportent leur autheur et le ravissent hors de soy, pourquoy ne les attribuerons nous à son bon heur? puis qu'il confesse luy mesme qu'elles surpassent sa suffisance et ses forces, et les reconnoit venir d'ailleurs que de soy, et ne les avoir aucunement en sa puissance: non plus que les orateurs ne disent avoir en la leur ces

> mouvemens et agitations extraordinaires, qui les poussent au delà de leur dessein. Il en est de mesmes en la peinture, qu'il eschappe par fois des traits de la main du peintre, surpassans sa conception et sa science, qui le tirent luy mesmes en admiration, et qui l'estonnent. Mais la fortune montre bien encores plus evidemment la part qu'elle a en tous ces ouvrages, par les graces et beautez qui s'y treuvent, non seulement sans l'intention, mais sans la cognoissance mesme de l'ouvrier. Un suffisant lecteur descouvre souvant és escrits d'autruy des perfections autres que celles que l'autheur y a mises et apperceues, et y preste des sens et des visages plus riches (127).

Like the poet, the painter is said to be moved by forces that push him beyond his design ('au delà de son dessein'). In part, this passage betrays a strong Neoplatonic influence in Montaigne's understanding of the transporting nature of poetic inspiration. For Marsilio Ficino, great poets could attribute their skill to a divine frenzy as much as (if not more than) a mastery of technique or skill.[57] Montaigne read Plato's dialogues probably through Ficino's Latin translations and was almost certainly aware of the view of poetic frenzy set out in Ficino's commentary on the *Phaedrus* and the *Ion*, for example. Where Montaigne differs from this Neoplatonist view, aside from his lack of emphasis on a divine aspect of poetic *furor*, is in his *rapprochement* between poetry and painting indicative of an affinity in the creative process behind these two arts.[58] The artist or poet sets out to act along lines of intention, but for Montaigne it is the artist's encounter with the contingencies of the creative process that determines the direction of these lines. Once again, we find here two camps of words being brought up against one another. *Suffisance*, *forces*, *puissance*, *conception*, *science*, *intention*, *cognoissance* and, of course, *dessein*, are contrasted to *fortune*, with verbs such as *emportent*, *surpassent/surpassans*, *poussent*, *eschappe* acting as vehicles to pull the former into the realm of the latter.[59] The word *dessein* acts like a bridge in this passage, providing a link between writing and painting. We can read the word as signifying the initial intention the writer or artist sets out to fulfil through the process of creation (as Montaigne almost certainly intended it) but the sixteenth-century uses and meanings of the word also extended to the visual manifestation of such an intention. The image of the painter's hand evoked here also places in parallel the act of putting lines on paper with the act of another hand not directly mentioned but alluded to in this comparison, the hand of the writer. For Montaigne, both processes involve a straying away from, or perhaps a conscious surrendering of, the initial guiding intention.

Much can be, and indeed has been, made of the Montaigne of considered thought and rational moderation, the same Montaigne who had the Greek maxim *epekho* ('I hold back [from judgement]') inscribed on his personal *jeton* (and indeed in various places around his home). But there is also another Montaigne, one who is attracted to the exalting powers of poetic excess, and who considers this a necessary component of true poetic practice. In II.ii, 'De l'yvrognerie', for example, while Montaigne deplores inebriation because of its excessiveness and its conduciveness to losing control, he also devotes a final section of this chapter to the Greek concept of *mania* or (poetic) folly, commenting on the idea that (good)

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[57] See Marsilio Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato, Volume 1, Phaedrus and Ion*, ed./trans. Michael J. B. Allen (Cambridge: I Tatti Renaissance Library, 2008). On poetic frenzy in Ficino, see Sophia Howlett, *Marsilio Ficino and his World* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2016), pp. 136–8.

[58] For a more holistic overview of Montaigne's divergences from the Neoplatonist model of inspiration, see Michael Screech, *Montaigne and Melancholy: The Wisdom of the 'Essays'* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), esp. pp. 61–2. I disagree with some of Screech's characterisations of Montaigne's approach to poetic *furor*, as the reader will see below.

[59] The language here echoes Montaigne's description of his love of poetry in I.xxxvii, 'Du jeune Caton': '[C] Dès ma première enfance, la poésie a eu cela, de me transpercer et transporter' (232).

poetry requires the poet to be mentally transported by his soul in such a way as to be surprised at their own creation ('qu'elle emporte et ravisse son homme si loing qu'apres il s'estonne luy-mesme de son faict'), and adds that, for Aristotle, no person of remarkable capabilities is ever free from this kind of madness: 'dit Aristote que aucune ame excellente n'est exempte de meslange de folie' (347). Once again, we find the word 'ravisse' being used in a description of the effects of poetic inspiration as in the first line of the passage from I.xxiv. The image of motion, transportation evoked by this word echoes the idea of poetic inspiration as a going beyond, a crossing of boundaries. In contrast to Screech's interpretation of Montaigne's attitudes to *ravissement* as largely negative, borne out by a fundamental mistrust of the melancholic potential of ecstasy,[60] I see the passages quoted above as revealing a more ambivalent approach: Montaigne is highlighting the inevitability of contingency in the creative process, and the lack of ultimate control of the artist (or writer) over his lines. Moreover, Montaigne's attraction to displays of artistic inspiration that go beyond cautious moderation is attested in the short introductory note to what would have been the chapter enclosing the sonnets of La Boétie. Here, he compares those youthful sonnets where his friend wrote more fervently and passionately about love, to those written after marriage decidedly cooled his pen, adding that he himself prefers poetry that is capricious and unruly:

> […] certes ceux-cy ont je ne sçay quoy de plus vif et de plus bouillant, comme il les fit en sa plus verte jeunesse, et eschauffé d'une belle et noble ardeur que je vous diray, Madame [de Grammont, Countess of Guissen], un jour à l'oreille. Les autres furent faits depuis, comme il estoit à la poursuite de son mariage, en faveur de sa femme, et sentent desjà je ne sçay quelle froideur maritale. Et moy je suis de ceux qui tiennent que la poesie ne rid point ailleurs, comme elle faict en un subject folatre et desreglé (196).

These descriptions of a certain kind of poetic *licence* point not so much to a celebration of poetic excess (which may well be deleterious, as Screech says) but to a fascination with the waywardness of poetry. In particular, what Montaigne is interested in, I contend, is the frictional relationship between the will and chance, between the originating *dessein* (intention) behind the creative impulse and the resulting *dessein* (design).

In the final chapter of *Drawing Acts*, David Rosand describes what he calls the serpentine or 'antic' line: the line that does not straightforwardly conform to geometric linearity.[61] Rosand connects the antic line to the artistic notion of *capriccio*, best rendered in English as a whimsical or fanciful artistic feature or representation.[62] The antic and capricious lines that Rosand discusses have something in common with the view of drawing that he explores throughout the remainder of the book. Drawing emerges from Rosand's analysis, in particular of Renaissance conceptions of the process, as an act in which the artist and his intention perform a struggle on the page:

> Once begun, the line becomes more than a means to an end. Insinuating itself into the drawing process, it insists upon its own role as protagonist, on establishing its own reciprocal relationship with its maker. Whatever initial intention may have inspired the making of a drawing, whatever external stimulus, the draftsman

[60] Michael Screech, *Montaigne and Melancholy*, p. 12. This as opposed to other humanists such as Rabelais and Erasmus.

[61] David Rosand, 'The Antic Line' in *Drawing Acts*, pp. 265–327.

[62] 'Capriccio' is often used to refer to artistic compositions based on invented or imaginary architectural elements. A foremost example of such an endeavour, and one discussed by Rosand, are the *carceri* etchings by Giovanni Battisti Piranesi. More broadly, architectural *capricci* became increasingly in vogue in the 17th and 18th-centuries with the popularization of the European Grand Tour.

> inevitably finds his attention being commanded by his own line. Whatever its intended function in the structure of representation, the line becomes an active participant in the act of drawing, in the process of its own making, even asserting its own creative independence.[63]

Rosand describes a process in which the role of the artist's will is subjugated to something external to it—the line here is beyond the artist's full control. What we might call the two poles of design, on the hand the intention of the artist and on the other its public manifestation, diverge. Rosand's passage brings out quite strikingly, I think, that Montaigne's *peinture* shares many characteristics with drawing. Or rather, the attributes that he associates with painting (indeterminacy, freedom, malleability, the act of viewerly re-creation or re-interpretation) are more readily attributed to drawing. Montaigne appeals to artistic metaphors, because, I would contend, it is easier to imagine this *furvoiement* happening in the supple, indeterminate lines of a drawing or painting rather than in the fixity of writing. It is easier, in other words, to imagine a drawn line escaping the will of the artist than a word escaping the intention of the writer. But, Montaigne seems to be saying, this divergence is only illusory—in fact, words can just as easily become wayward or run astray. As I will argue in the next chapter, this is not necessarily a bad thing for Montaigne, who builds into the design of the *Essais* a redemptive approach to the workings of chance. The decision to keep the metaphor of self-portraiture in the 'Au lecteur' throughout subsequent editions can thus be read as a conscious decision to appeal to this indeterminacy, reflecting his need to lean on something located outside of verbal discourse to convey the *fourvoiements* of his thought. In the *Essais*, *peinture* replicates, through its very processes, the contingencies and vagaries of thought, and is set up as a model for a more transparent and immediate medium when it comes to representing the subject matter of human thought and affairs.

## VI. The Hazards of Discourse

I have drawn attention to the verb *fourvoyer* as one of the keywords relating Montaigne's metaphors of painting and self-portraiture to the fluidity of the act of drawing, the 'extravagance' of the drawn line. In a passage from III.ii, 'Du repentir', Montaigne links this verb to painting: '[B] [o]r les traits de ma peinture ne forvoyent point, quoy qu'ils se changent et diversifient' (804). Taken at face value, this sentence seems to contradict the argument I have been making about the relationship in Montaigne's imagination between his *peinture* and the special flexibility of the sketch. His *peinture*, we are told, does *not* go astray. In III.ix, 'De la vanité', Montaigne returns to the image of the line: 'je ne trace aucune ligne certaine, ny droicte ny courbe' (985), he writes of his practice of travelling, the lines or *chemins* of which echo, or run parallel to, we are told, those of his habits of thought. But if none of the lines of his *chemin* are *certain*, how could it also be true that the traces of his self-portrait do not themselves stray from a *chemin*?[64] According to Huguet, the primary definition of *certain* in the sixteenth-century is 'fixe, determiné'; when Montaigne writes 'je ne trace aucune ligne certaine' he is saying that the lines of his portrait are not fixed, static, but restless, alive.[65] In Montaigne's mind, setting himself the *dessein* of

[63] Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, p. 12.
[64] Villey glosses fourvoyer precisely as 'ne se trompent pas de chemin' (*Essais*, p. 804, n. 4).
[65] 'Certain', Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, 2 vols (Paris: Didier, 1967), vol. 1, p. 159.

self-representation is not, then, inconsistent with fluidity, dynamism. The *traits* of Montaigne's *peinture* do not go astray from their *dessein*, understood as the aim of self-representation, but they are also not *certains*—in the sixteenth century sense of fixed or (pre-)determined, they retain the dynamism of a *dessin*.

We return once again to Montaigne's idiosyncratic understanding of painting, this time as regards its ability to represent reality. In the passage from 'Du repentir', painting is linked to truth-telling—Montaigne's *peinture* paints an accurate image of the author, it does not stray from the reality of its subject. But this does not mean that it is fixed or rigid, its strokes are ever-changing and ever-moving (*se changent et se diversifient*) in order to capture all the vicissitudes of human thought. Truth-telling is thus manifestly slippery, inconstant. This is because the design of creating an accurate self-representation—one that successfully captures all the vicissitudes of human thought—must also take into account the pronouncement of III.xii, 'De la phisionomie', namely that human designs often go awry, particularly when we place too much blind faith in the power of our own will: '[C] [n]ous […] pretendons plus de nostre conduite qu'il ne nous appartient. Pourtant fourvoyent si souvent nos desseins' (1061).[66] If Montaigne avails himself of visual metaphors, relies on the image of the *traict* or *ligne*, it is because, as I have argued, in Montaigne's imagination it is *peinture* that is more naturally able to do this—the capacity to enact the *branloire perenne* of existence lends itself more easily to the flexibility, the 'un-fixedness', of brushstrokes, and the capriciousness of lines, rather than the rigidity of *discours*.[67]

This distinction between verbal and painterly designs is particularly apparent when we consider his treatment of *discours* against a broader backdrop of things (and thoughts) going astray. At the very end of I.xlvii, 'De l'incertitude de nostre jugement', Montaigne writes:

> [A] Mais, à le bien prendre, il semble que nos conseils et deliberations en dependent bien autant, et que la fortune [C'] engage en son trouble et incertitude aussi [A] nos discours. [C] Nous raisonnons hazardeusement et inconsidereement, dict Timaeus en Platon, par ce que, comme nous, nos discours ont grande participation au hazard. (286)

This short chapter is a 'Ronseal'-style *essai*: it does exactly what it says on the can—it is a discussion, by way of historical anecdote, of the limits of human judgement. But this passage, and in particular the C-text addition which constitutes the final words of the chapter, connects the fallibility of discourse (understood as the representation of human reasoning) to the workings of chance, including, crucially, the 'hazardous' nature of human beings. In order to render the frailty of human agency, the chancy nature of our mind's encounter with the world, an equally chancy medium is needed, one that not only does not purport to be immune to or independent of the vicissitudes of human life but, better still, reflects a freer and less linear approach to the relationship of mind and world. Montaigne spends many more pages in the *Essais* denouncing the trappings of certain kinds of discourse, particularly scientific arguments. As Ian Maclean has shown, despite his criticism of artifice Montaigne prefers the open-ended, generative and altogether 'looser' kinds of communication afforded by the visual arts, which allow for arguments which are derived from life and need not rest

[66] There is a temporal story to be told here, too. The sentence from 'De la phisionomie' is a C-text addition, as is that from 'De l'art de conferer'. The B-text additions of 'De la vanité' and 'Du repentir' might suggest a prior stage in Montaigne's visual thinking that harbours an ambivalence towards the certainty of his line—a tension as yet unresolved by the publication of the 1588 edition.

[67] Villey helpfully provides a list of sixteenth-century meanings of *discours* (*Essais*, p. Ixxxiii). I use *discours* here mostly to refer to his first two meanings ('exercise de la pensée' and 'raison, jugement, volonté') although Montaigne's uses are not always easily categorizable under one of the five given by Villey.

on empirically certain or logically demonstrable foundations.[68] Montaigne's resistance to the syllogism can be seen, too, as an aversion to teleological linearity, a forward-directedness that overlooks the unstable, flexible nature of human knowledge and experience.

While both discourse and painting can *fourvoyer*, they do so in different ways. For Montaigne, discourse errs, goes astray, because it proceeds in a teleological manner, linearly attempting to render an authorial intention. But this one-directedness, which envisions *discours* as a one-to-one relation between mind and world, makes it susceptible to disruption, reversal and errancy. *Peinture*, on the other hand, as imagined by Montaigne has this kind of errancy built into it: when Montaigne writes 'les traits de ma peinture ne forvoyent point' he is saying not just that his *peinture* doesn't stray from the project of self-representation, but that it does so *because* it enacts the chancy, meandering movements of his thinking—because, paradoxically, it is always already straying from the linear path. By setting up *discours* as fallible because too rigidly wedded to a narrow (teleological) understanding of intention, and *peinture* as able to capture the restless nature of human thought, Montaigne inserts himself into a wider Renaissance tradition of seeing discourse as rigid and visual art as more flexible. As we shall see over the course of the following chapter, Italian artists and theorists conceived of *disegno* (drawing) as a fluid and experimental practice through which artists could enact the simultaneity and spontaneity of their imagination. Humanist attitudes to discursive prose, by contrast, were concerned with setting up *discours* as a vehicle through which to pin down thought and to fix interpretation. The influence of Scholasticism on Humanism, with its ambitious conception of the powers of discursive prose, translated into writing practices that reflected a belief in a privileged link between the human mind and the written word. The favouring of a relationship between *discours* and linearity persisted even among Humanist critics of Scholasticism; we might think, for example, of the famous tree diagrams of Petrus Ramus, used to spatially exemplify logical schemas.[69] Both scholastic humanism and the new kinds of humanism that emerged from northern Europe made use of the visual as an aid to understanding or communicating logical *discours*.[70]

Montaigne, by contrast, places the expressive powers of *peinture* above those of *discours*. He does so not because they are any less prone to the workings of chance (as I argue in the following chapter, Montaigne's understanding of design constructs an inextricable link between the two) but because *peinture*, for Montaigne, replicates the contingency of life lived and is thus a more truthfully representative medium when it comes to the nature of human thought and affairs. Not for nothing does Montaigne point to the inadequacy of *discours* in II.xxviii, 'De l'amitié', writing that his friendship with La Boétie lies '[A] au delà de tout [s]on discours' (188). While this is clearly not the kind of *discours* of scientific argument, it fails on similar grounds. It is incapable of capturing the messy, contingent nature of their love, which lies beyond the grasp of (teleological) reason: '[C] [n]ous nous cherchions avant que de nous estre veus, et par des rapports que nous oyïons l'un de l'autre, qui faisoient en nostre affection *plus d'effort que ne porte la raison des rapports*' (188).[71] Once again, it is not surprising that Montaigne should compare himself to a painter at the start of this passage, as it is painting (in the expanded sense encompassing the

[68] Ian Maclean, 'Montaigne and the Truth of the Schools' in *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne* ed. by Ullrich Langer (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), see esp. pp. 153–55.
[69] See Peter Mack, 'Humanist rhetoric and dialectic' in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), pp. 82–99 (p. 89 on Ramus).
[70] See Susanna Berger, *The Art of Philosophy: Visual Thinking in Europe from the Late Renaissance to the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).
[71] Emphasis mine.

initial stages of creation, i.e. sketching) that, as we have seen, best captures for the author the chancy relationship between mind and world.

The *Essais* are rife with passages in which the author insists on the role of chance in his writing process. Montaigne revisits one such passage from II.xvii, 'De la praesumption', to make an addition that is present in the 1595 edition, yet not in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*. The sentence from EB reads 'je m'abandonne à la nayfveté, et à tousjours dire ce que je pense, et par complexion, et par ***discours***: laissant à la fortune d'en conduire l'evenement' (649). Montaigne's single alteration regards the word *discours*, which he replaces with the word *dessein*: 'je m'abandonne à la nayfveté, et à tousjours dire ce que je pense, et par complexion, et par ***dessein***: laissant à la fortune d'en conduire l'evenement' (P: 688).[72] With this editorial move, Montaigne builds chance into his design, a design that proceeds not in the manner of a traditionally linear *discours* but through the sketchy lines of a *dess(e)in.* In this way, the writing of the *Essais* contains within itself the answer to the question raised by Montaigne in II.xvii, 'De la praesumption'; '[A] [p]ourquoy n'est-il loisible de mesme à un chacun de se peindre de la plume, comme il se peignoit d'un creon?' (653), and attempts, in its forging of an experimental genre, to take what may appear to be only a whimsical observation in the tradition of Horatian *ut pictura poesis* as the driving force of its authorial design.

## Conclusion

I have argued that by paying close attention to Montaigne's language of visual metaphor, a different understanding of painting emerges than that of the metaphor's detractors for whom painting is 'fixed and static' and therefore unable to capture the *branle* or *passage* that Montaigne insists is the subject of his writing project. Montaigne's understanding of *peinture*, I have shown, is that of a form of representation that lies on a spectrum that includes both fixing and immortalising 'finished' works (such as those portraits of himself he mentions in II.xiii, 'De l'experience'), as well as graphic forms of representation that are inherently more dynamic, involving a continual 'pointing back' to their own coming-to-being. I demonstrated how the latter category of graphic representations function in practice by looking at four self-portrait sketches, arguing that such sketches are better able to capture the kind of portrait constituted by Montaigne's writing and that they also provide a thus far overlooked correlative to Montaigne's complex conception of *peinture*. Throughout this chapter it has emerged that the connection between Montaigne and his *peinture* is more than a gesture of literary, metaphorical, expressiveness, however successful we might take that metaphorical gesture to be.[73] Through his use of visual language, Montaigne draws attention to the fraught relationship between representation and time, and to the trappings of a kind of *discours* that is built on a linear, teleological, model of reasoning. By doing so he implicitly alerts us to the need for a (new) kind of writing that does not resist, or purport to resolve, the complex of contingencies that animate both human thought and lived experience. In the next chapter, I look more closely at Montaigne's design beyond the aim of self-portrayal. I do so by considering the way the term *dessein* operates in the *Essais* and teasing out the dynamics therein.

[72] Emphases mine.

[73] Thus echoing and expanding Louis Marin's claim that 'Dans l'(*Avis*) *au lecteur*, les glissements entre les termes du visuel et du textuel sont trop immédiats pour renvoyer à des simples valeurs métaphoriques' ('Transparente et Opacité de la Peinture…du Moi' in *L'écriture du Soi*, p. 129).

# II

# Montaigne and the Language of *Dessein*

[L]a matière n'est pas inerte. Elle vit et bouge.

GÉRALDE NAKAM, *Le Dernier Montaigne*

My starting point in this chapter is the view that *dessein* ought to be considered a keyword of the *Essais*, that is, as a term that reveals important aspects of Montaigne's approach to his own *œuvre*. I look at the ways in which Montaigne uses the word *dessein* in his writing, considering this term in all its complexity and applications, to uncover what I call the 'textual design' of the *Essais*. Montaigne uses the word *dessein* and its cognates 95 times in the edition of the *Essais* based on the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*—[1]this is one more instance than those recorded in the *Concordance des 'Essais' de Montaigne* compiled by Roy Leake, who misses the instance of *desseigner* that appears in I.xxxix, 'De la solitude'.[2] Despite some substitutions, there are also 95 instances of the term in the 1595 edition.[3] This number in itself is not significant—the most used noun, *homme*, appears 1,180 times in total if we count both singular and plural instances—although the frequency of *dessein* is comparable to that of other, more established 'keywords' of the *Essais* like *volupté* (105) and *hazard* (63).[4] The term merits special attention, I contend, because the language of *dessein* is woven deep into Montaigne's literary imagination and forms an important part of the fabric of his writing—including, crucially, at the meta-textual level; in those places where Montaigne confronts the problems and challenges of his own authorship.

One story that could be told about Montaigne's use of *dessein* might go as follows: over the course of the three editions of the *Essais*, Montaigne's uses of *dessein* become more self-reflexive, as the process of writing comes to form part of the content of the *Essais*, and the writing itself becomes a way of recording as well as testing out thoughts about writing and the nature of his project. This narrative aligns itself with a generally-held view about the *Essais* and the journey Montaigne undertakes towards greater writerly self-consciousness. Another possible story to be told of these instances is one of progression writ large, namely that Montaigne's language of *dessein* forms part of wider shifts occurring in both the French language and in France's cultural history. According to this story, Montaigne's uses of *dessein* are influenced by the fact that the word (as discussed above) undergoes important semantic changes in France during this time, notably towards greater 'exteriorization' as it comes to be associated more and more with visual/material (as much as intentional) designs. According to this interpretation, the *Essais* constitute one example of French writing which responds to this semantic shift by reflecting, implicitly or explicitly, on the relationship between, and interaction of, the two poles of *dessein*.

Yet neither of these stories adequately captures the nuances of Montaigne's language of *dessein*. In the first instance, there is no single line that can be traced through the instances of the term in the *Essais* which reveals the existence of a teleological progression along a gradient of greater self-awareness and explicitness regarding intention. While the self-referential use of *dessein* (i.e. Montaigne's use of this term with reference to the project of the *Essais*) is more frequent in the third book, as well as in the later *couches*, it is nevertheless

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[1] These 95 occurrences include the plural form *desseins*, the alternative spellings *desseing* and *dessain* (and their respective plural forms), and the verb form *desseigner*, variously conjugated. See Appendix 1 for a full list of instances of the term in the *Essais*.

[2] Roy E. Leake, David B. Leake, and Alice Elder Leake, *Concordance des 'Essais' de Montaigne*, 2 vols, (Geneva: Droz, 1981), vol. 1, p. 333.

[3] In the 1595 edition, one new instance occurs in the 'Apologie de Raymond Sebond' (P: II.xii, p. 538; V: II.xii, p. 510) and one in 'De la praesumption', discussed in Chapter One above (P: II.xvii, p. 688; V: II.xvii, p. 649); *dessein* is removed from the second instance in 'De l'utile et de l'honneste (P: III.i, p, 832; V: III.i, p. 793) and changed from *desseigner* to *designer* in 'Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir' (P: I.xix, p. 90; V: I.xx, p. 89).

[4] As Craig Bush notes, one should always take *concordances* with a pinch of salt, but especially so with Montaigne. Bush cites the example of the self, an idea at the heart of Montaigne's writing but one for which the French language possessed no substantive term at the time of his writing (Craig Bush, review of Roy E. Leake, *Concordance des 'Essais' de Montaigne* (1981), *Computers and the Humanities*, 18:2 (1984), 123–5, 123).

present from the first chapters and, moreover, the insights encapsulated in these 'later' instances build on, and form a dialogic relation with, Montaigne's early reflections on the *Essais*'s design.[5] In the second place, the notion of Montaigne as inscribed in a wider historical development of *dessein*, while attractive, is difficult to prove. There is not only no evidence that Montaigne read contemporary artistic writings, or that he was *au fait* with issues concerning the theorisation and conceptualisation of *dessein* understood as drawing or visual design, but the issue of linguistic change is also complex and is not straightforwardly one-directional.[6] While texts respond to linguistic changes, they are also themselves active agents in these changes.[7] There is nothing to preclude the fact that Montaigne influenced these shifts as much as he may have been influenced by them. Taken as a set of interconnected clusters, rather than points on a linear trajectory, the uses of *dessein* in the *Essais* do not help to construct a narrative of Montaigne as a writer who tends towards greater authorial self-consciousness, but rather as one interested from the beginning with questions of human intention and its vicissitudes, and one for whom such questions are inextricable from the process of writing. Before looking at the way this term operates in the *Essais*, it is worth spending some time understanding the full complexity of the term during the late sixteenth-century. In the next section, I briefly trace both the development of the term *dessein* from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, looking at a variety of different texts in which the term appears in ways that make use of its unique polysemy.[8]

## I. *Dessein* in Motion

At the end of the sixteenth century, the word *dessein* possessed a multiplicity of meanings. From signifying an intention or aim to a draught or visual plan, the word captured the entire spectrum of the creative process—from the mental, private formulation of an image or an idea to the finished product, the material and public manifestation of what was once solely in the mind. Up until the eighteenth century, the French language officially possessed no separate word for 'drawing'. The noun *dessin*, denoting a specific art term, only entered the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* in its fifth edition, as late as 1798:[9]

> Dessin. Terme d'Art. Il se dit De la représentation d'une ou de plusieurs figures, d'un paysage, d'un morceau d'Architecture, etc. soit au crayon, soit à la plume.[10]

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[5] I look at two such 'personal' instances, occurring in I.xx, 'Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir' and I.xxviii, 'De l'amitié', in the next section.

[6] Montaigne would have encountered some art terms and ideas in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (which he possessed in a French translation, probably that of Jacques Colin (1537)) but no art theoretical works were present in his library, as far as we know. Montaigne did possess two books by the famous art theorist Benedetto Varchi, but these were *L'Ercolano* (a dialogue on language) and some *lezzioni* on love (Pierre Villey, *Les Essais*, p. lxxi).

[7] As Neil Kenny aptly puts it, language change is not pure epiphenomenon—it effects social and cultural changes just as it is affected by them (*The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), p. 24). Written texts play an important in how language does so.

[8] As André Tournon rightly notes, most natural language terms are polysemic in that their everyday use is highly fluid and context-dependent (*Montaigne: La Glose et l'Essai* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1983), p. 109). What interests me in this chapter is not so much polysemy, as the specific range of meanings *dessein* encompasses in the sixteenth century, and the semantic restlessness that lies at the heart of this term during this time and as Montaigne uses it. There is, however, a case to be made about the special nature of *dessein*'s polysemy, given the semantic split I discuss below. Suffice to think that, in modern usage, *dessein* has undergone a semantic transfer: it no longer stretches over both intentional and visual/artistic meanings.

[9] The verb form *dessiné*, however, appears in the first (1694) edition.

[10] 'dessin', noun, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 5th edn, accessed at <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/publicdicos/navigate/10/11445/>.

*Dessein* does appear in the slightly earlier 1787 *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* whose author, acknowledging the semantic split from *dessein* to *dessin* and highlighting the by then slight anachronism of the *Académie Française*, calls *dessin* 'une heureûse innovation, pour exprimer l'art de dessiner et l'ouvrage du Dessinateur', going on to say '[o]n écrivait auparavant *dessein*, l'*Acad.* l'écrit encôre de même'.[11] That *dessin* is called not just a linguistic innovation but a happy one speaks to the need in France at this time for a term to capture the product of visual/graphic representation. Until this semantic split, while *dessein* was commonly used to refer to an aim, project or intention, it was also used to mean a manual process of artistic representation. Witness the artist and printmaker Abraham Bosse's use of the word in a passage from his 1645 treatise on engraving:

> Je vous ai dit cy-devant, la methode d'appliquer & arrester fermement sur vostre planche, le dessein que vous y voulez graver ; & voicy la maniere de le contretirer ou calquer. Ayant vostre dessein arresté bien fixe sur la planche, vous prendrez une pointe à calquer, & la passerez sur tous les contours des figures qui le composent, en l'appuyant assez fort & esgalement, sur tout quand il y a deux papier […][12]

Bosse is using *dessein* to refer here to a draught or outline of the image to be engraved. *Dessein* is used to denote something whose medium is physical matter: in this case the engraver's *planche*. *Dessein* was used to mean drawing or visual plan at least as late as 1754—the *Encyclopédie* contains multiple entries for *dessein* under the categories of painting, architecture and other arts and the term *dessein* is also used to label some of the *planches* of the *Encyclopédie* that are related to drawing.[13] Indeed, the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie francaise* includes 'la représentation d'une ou de plusieurs figures, d'un paysage, d'un morceau d'Architecture, &c. soit au crayon, soit à la plume' as a secondary meaning of *dessein* in its 1762 edition.[14]

Modern French dictionaries testify to the semantic ambiguity of *dessein* before *dessin* came into usage. The present-day edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Academie francaise* notes that in the fifteenth century, *desseing* was the *déverbal* (verbal noun) of *desseigner,* itself the archaic form of dessiner.[15] The *Dictionnaire Littré* goes further, noting in a section on the etymology of *dessin*:

> Dessein et dessin sont le même mot; il n'y a pas longtemps que l'orthographe les a distingués pour l'œil; et dans le XVII[e] siècle dessin s'écrivait souvent dessein. Dessein n'est que dessin pris figurément, c'est-à-dire ce que l'on dessine ou désigne, car ces deux mots sont identiques.[16]

The Littré points to a visual shift, the removal of the second 'e', occurring between these two homophonous terms—a change in the visual design of *dessein*, if we will. The

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[11] 'dessin', *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*, vol. 1, ed. Jean-François Feraud (1787) <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/publicdicos/navigate/5/5470/>.

[12] Abraham Bosse, *Traicté des manieres de graver en taille douce sur l'arin. Par le Moyen des Eaux Fortes, & des Vernis Durs & Mols* (Paris: Abraham Bosse, 1645), p. 21.

[13] The entry for *dessein* as a term relating to *peinture*, written by Claude-Henri Watelet reads: 'Le mot *dessein* regardé comme terme de l'art de Peinture, fait entendre deux choses: il signifie en premier lieu la *production* qu'un artiste met au jour avec le secours du crayon ou de la plume. Dans une signification plus générale dont cette premiere dérive sans doute, il veut dire l'*art d'imiter* par les traits les formes que les objets présentent à nos yeux', *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* 28 vols, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Geneva: Briasson, 1754–72), p. 889.

[14] 'dessin', noun, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 4th edn, accessed at <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/publicdicos/navigate/8/10735/>.

[15] 'dessin', noun, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 8th edn, accessed at <https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/publicdicos/navigate/18/9200/ >.

[16] 'dessin', noun, *Dictionnaire Littré* accessed at <https://www.littre.org/definition/dessein >.

emphasis on the identical nature of *dessein* and *dessin* that bookends this dictionary entry goes some way towards clarifying the strong association between *dessein* and the visual elements of its cognate. Below, I look at how this connection plays out in some sixteenth-century texts.

While around the time Montaigne was writing the most common use of *dessein* was the intentional one—as testified by Randall Cotgrave's entry for 'desseing' which ignores the visual significations altogether, for him a *desseing* is simply 'a designe, plot, project, purpose, determination; resolution'—,[17] the visual/artistic use was by no means uncommon. In the *Cinquiesme Livre* (1564), for example, Rabelais uses *dessein* to mean a visual design in his description of the cobbled pavement of the *Temple de la Dive Bouteille*: '[d]essus le portique, la structure du pavé estoit une emblemature, à petites pierres rapportées, chascune en sa naïvfe couleur, servans au dessain des figures'.[18] Let us turn to a contemporary text that is explicitly artistic, or art theoretical, in character: Bernard Palissy's *Récepte veritable par laquelle tous les hommes de la France pourront apprendre à multiplier leurs trésors* (1563), to see how artists made use of the term.[19] The *Recepte véritable* is a curious and complex work, constructed as a dialogue between 'Demande' and 'Responce', and constitutes among other things an important early instance of French thinking on architectural and landscape design. In the dedicatory letter, addressed to the Marechal de Montmorancy, Palissy explains the nature of his book as follows:

> Item, en ce livre est contenu le ***dessein*** et ordonnance d'une ville forteresse, telle que jusques ici on n'a point ouy parler de semblable. Il y a audit livre plusieurs choses fructueuses, que je laisseray dire à ceux qui en lisant les retiendront, et vous en feront le recit. Je n'ay point mis le portrait dudit jardin en ce livre, pour cause que plusieurs sont indignes de le veoir, et singulierement les ennemis de vertu, et de bon engin: aussi que mon indigence et occupation de mon art ne l'a voulu permettre. Je say qu'aucuns ignorans ennemis de vertu, et calomniateurs, diront que le ***dessein*** de ce jardin est un songe seulement, et le voudront peut estre comparer au songe de Polyphile, ou bien voudront dire qu'il seroit de trop grande despence, et qu'on ne pourroit trouver lieu commode pour l'edification dudit jardin, jouxte le ***dessein***. A ce je repons, qu'il se trouvera plus de quatre mille maisons en la France, aupres desquelles se trouveront plusieurs lieux commodes pour edifier ledit jardin, jouxte la teneur de mon ***dessein***.[20]

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[17] In part, this is also because English was behind French in the development of artistic terms. Although *drawinge* exists from around the start of the 13th century (from Old English *dra* to draw in the sense of draw out, pull, drag), it does not possess the same semantic spread as *dessein*; it is probably the English *draught* that comes closest to encapsulating both poles of *dessein.* But both terms are absent from Cotgrave's list here. The question of English art terms is a complex one, and is intimately related to the response to the spread and import of Italian art terms, especially *disegno*—I cannot do justice to the issues here. For a helpful account of some of the central dynamics, see Lucy Gent, *Picture and Poetry, 1560–1620: Relations between Literature and the Visual Arts in the English Renaissance* (Leamington Spa: J. Hall, 1981), and Baxandall, 'English *Disegno*'.

[18] François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 816. The chapter in which this description occurs (no, XXXVII, 'Comment le pave du temple estoit faict par emblemature admirable') is inspired by the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, suggesting Rabelais has in mind here an architectural sense of design (see notes to p. 816, n. 1).

[19] Although Rabelais's and Palissy's texts appeared within a year of each other, Rabelais's is posthumous, published eleven years after his death. For debates about the authenticity of this work, see Richard Cooper, 'L'Authenticité du Cinquiesme Livre: état présent de la question', in Franco Giacone (ed.), *Le Cinquiesme Livre de Rabelais*: *Actes du colloque international de Rome, 16–19 octobre 1998* (Geneva: Droz, 2001), pp. 9–22.

[20] Bernard Palissy, *Récepte veritable par laquelle tous les hommes de la France pourront apprendre à multiplier leurs trésors*, ed. Keith Cameron (Geneva: Droz, 1988), p. 44. All emphases on *dessein* in this and the following quotations are mine,

As a craftsman and artisan, Palissy would have been particularly sensitive to the visual/artistic connotations of *dessein*, and indeed in the passage above I think Palissy has both an intentional and an architectural design in mind. While he deplores those that would have his *dessein* compared to that of the *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili* (1499),[21] Francesco Colonna's famously quirky (and uncategorizable) dream-like narrative that contained drawings of architectural designs, Palissy also writes in the first line that the book *contains* the *dessein* of the fortified town ('en ce livre est contenu le dessein'), suggesting that *dessein* is being used here to mean more than an intention. The third subtitle of the book similarly uses *dessein* in this way: 'Item, en ce livre est contenu le dessein d'un jardin autan delectable et d'utile invention, qu'il en fut oncques veu'.[22] Palissy's book contains no actual drawings (as he himself states, 'je nay point mis le portrait dudis jardin'); he entreats his reader instead to conjure a mental image of its features, based on his descriptions of its design. Neither solely conceptual nor material, Palissy's *dessein* is a visual design that never quite materialises (either on the pages of his book or in real life), like the term *dessein* itself, it is caught constantly between the real and the ideal.[23]

While Palissy's text is in some ways idiosyncratic—both because he was one of the first to write within the genre of 'art theory' in France, and because he was, himself, quite an eccentric thinker—his ambivalent uses of the term are symptomatic of a wider trend in the second half of the sixteenth century.[24] *Dessein* comes to be invoked in this ambivalent way especially in writings about divine creation. In his 1578 *L'Harmonie du Monde*—a translation of Francesco Giorgi's treatise *De harmonia mundi totius* [1525], an architectural allegory of the universe as a perfect building— the Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie uses *dessein* in the text's preface:

> La Nature nous enseigne, & l'art, & l'experience nous conferme, Monsieur, & singulier amy, que l'Ouvrier ou l'Architecte qui desire ***desseigner***, construire, & mener à fin quelque bel edifice ou bastiment soit sacré, ou profane, public ou privé, avant que l'entreprendre, pour ne perdre son temps & sa peine en vain, & afin de ne prodiguer pour neant les grands fraiz, & somptueuses despences qu'il y convient employer, en doibt faire un ***dessein*** & modelle sur le plus bel exemplaire, & la plus parfaicte Idée qu'il puisse imaginer & depeindre au tableau de son Entendement.
> […]
> Premièrement il en a faict le ***dessein*** et modelle sur l'exemplaire et patron le plus parfaict et accomply qui se puisse trouver en la nature des choses, qui est le monde universel, premierement ***desseigné*** par l'unique et supreme Ouvrier et Createur en sa Pensée divine.[25]

La Boderie's use of *dessein* here is couched in explicitly visual and artistic language, in the context of an architect or builder creating a (visual) design or model before going ahead to 'mener à fin' his project. But the use of *desssein* here is not as straightforwardly physical or material as that in the passage from Bosse's artistic treatise cited above. For one thing, la

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[21] Palissy probably knew the text through the 1546 French version printed by Jacques Kerver.
[22] Ibid., p. 39.
[23] As Hester Lees-Jeffries comments of another of Palissy's works that: '[l]ike many other early modern writers about landscape, in writing his Discours and 'On Waters and Fountains' in particular, Palissy described not simply what he saw or knew, but rather frequently created it through an agglomeration of texts, mostly classical, and located it at the intersection of the real and the ideal, the sacred, the classical and the contemporary, the aspirational and the everyday' ('An Elizabethan translation of Bernard Palissy's 'On Waters and Fountains', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 30:1 (2010), 1–56, 4).
[24] See Frank Lestringant, 'Bernard Palissy, ou l'inquiétante étrangeté: Le "potier du roi" en son demi–millénaire', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 55 (2009), 767–79.
[25] Francesco Giorgi, *L'Harmonie du monde, divisee en trois cantiques* trans. Guy La Fèvre de la Boderie (Paris: Jean Macé, 1578), f. i$^{r}$.

Boderie puts 'dessein & modelle' on the same level with 'la plus parfaicte Idée' that one can both imagine and (or) depict '*au tableau de son Entendement*'. Two lexical fields merge here: the mental and private realm of thought or understanding (*idée, Entendement, Pensée*), and the public and visual realm of physical instantiation to which belong the words *depeindre, tableau* and *modelle*. *Dessein* could here easily fall into either of these categories, and retains the same ambiguity as *desseigner* in the second line; does la Boderie mean the forming of a mental aim or intention, or the creating of a visual architectural plan or design?[26] La Boderie's uses of *dessein* in this passage mobilise the inherent pliability and polysemy of the word, which reaches its peak in the sixteenth century. The ambivalence here is not accidental, but nor is it stylistic—it is not that *dessein can* signify something mental and something material; during this period in an artistic context it is invariably used in a way that simultaneously means both. As Jacqueline Lichtenstein notes in *the Dictionary of Untranslatables* '[w]hen used about painting, *dessein* means something more but not something different [to project or intention]. Though it has a specialized usage, it continues to signify the project or intention'.[27]

Something similar is happening in Pierre Charron's apologetic pamphlet *Les Trois Veritez*, first published in 1593. In a passage that constructs a commonplace parallel between God and an artist or 'universal designer', Charron's uses of *dessein* (in both the noun and verbal form) oscillate between these two poles (the intentional and the material):

> Ainsi qu'un ***peintre***, qui a un ***dessein***, et veut, par quelque bel ***ouvrage*** monstrer ce qu'il scait faire, et acquerir honneur, ayant dressé et appresté son ***tableau*** il tire au milieu d'iceluy, et ***pourtraict*** ce qu'il a ***desseigné***, remplissant le reste vuide de nuages, paisages, crotesques, et autres fantaisies à plaisir, qui apportent quelque lustre et beauté accessoire à ***l'ouvrage***, mais qui ne sont rien du ***dessein*** principal du maistre. Aussi Dieu […] son ***dessein*** principal n'a pas esté de faire un Soleil, une Lune, une mer (que luy sert ou importe tout cela?), mais une Eglise […] Le ***dessein*** doncques de Dieu, son ***chef d'œuvre***, son entreprise est l'Eglise, tout le reste n'est que pour servir à icelle, en laquelle Dieu faict voir les principaux ***traicts*** […].[28]

The first use of *dessein* appears to signify intentionality, but by the third line the verb *desseigner* is ambiguous—it could refer to the forming of the intention introduced in line 1, or it could refer to the process of drawing. Once we get to the final instance of *dessein* in the passage in line 7, however, the visual connotations are explicit—God's *dessein* is equated with a *chef d'œuvre* which is described in explicitly artistic terms ('traicts'). The artistic semantic field is strong, as the highlighted words show. Within it, *dessein* serves as a bridge between the intentional act and the creative or artistic one—between an image in God's mind and the physical instantiation of that idea in the Catholic Church. The commonplace of divine design was already established by the time of the publication of Ronsard's *Odes* (1550), in which the poet mobilises this analogy using the verb *designer* and the noun *dessein*:

> Vrayment Dieu qui tout ordonne
> Sans estre forcé d'aucun,
> Le beau present qu'il te donne,

[26] A later instance of the verb *desseigner* in the preface is less ambiguous and more straightforwardly mental: 'tout ainsi que le monde fut pourpensé et desseigné en la Pensée divine premièrement […]'.
[27] 'Disegno' in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* ed. Barbara Cassin, translation edited by Emily Apter et al., trans. Steven Rendall et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 224. Cassin goes on to explain that it is only once *dessin* enters the French vernacular that the French possess a word that signifies drawing alone, but that *dessin* is (radically) semantically different from the Italian *disegno*.
[28] Pierre Charron, *Les Trois Veritez Contre Tous Athées, Idolatres, Iuifs, Mahumetans, Heretiques, & Schismatiques: Le Tout Traicté En Trois Liures. Avec L'indice Des Principales Matieres* (Paris: Leger Delas, 1594), p, 186.

Ne donne pas à chacun.
Aussi sa saincte pensée
***Designant*** ce Monde beau,
A sa forme commencée
Sus le ***dessein*** d'un tableau:

Le variant en la force
D'un pourtraict ingenieux,
Où maint beau trait se rapporte
Au contentement des yeux.[29]

In these verses Ronsard uses the analogy of God as painter to praise the speaker's beloved by claiming that God gave her beauty beyond the ordinary, going on to describe the world as an ingenious portrait ('pourtraict ingeniuex'). The line 'Sus le dessein d'un tableau' is ambiguous between the intentional and visual meanings of *dessein*. Ronsard exploits here the wide semantic range of the term with an image that conflates visual design and divine will.

The most famous formulation of what we now refer to as the 'design' argument, the *a posteriori* proof of the existence of God derived from the evidence of intelligent design in the natural world, comes in Aquinas's Fifth Proof—although nowhere there does Aquinas use the Latin verb *designare*, the Fifth Proof instead is based on an appeal to (Aristotelian) final *causes*.[30] The Renaissance saw an increase in the popularity of the design argument which did, however, as we saw above, make use of the term *dessein.* One of the texts to usher in this new focus is Raymond Sebond's *Scientia libri creaturarum*, which came to be known as the *Theologia naturalis,* a name (and book) that inaugurated a new kind of theology in Europe.[31] There, in the sixteenth chapter, *dessein* appears in Montaigne's French translation (first published in 1569) once again in the context of an analogy between God and an architect (or, more properly, here a builder) and a painter:

> Puisque le premier estre, qui est par soy, a produit de neant un autre estre, il estoit necessairement en luy avant qu'il le produisist, par ce que naturellement il ne se fait nulle generation, où celuy qui engendre n'ait premierement en soy ce qu'il veut engendrer: ainsi a le maçon la maison en son ***dessein*** avant qu'il la batisse, autrement il ne la pourroit mettre hors en l'estre que nous luy voyons, ny le peintre son image.[32]

Here, as in the citations from Charron and Ronsard above, *dessein* could be used to mean either the *idea* of the house in the builder's mind, or the *visual plan* (the architectural design) of the building.[33] Most probably, however, it means both at once, for as we have seen the French had not yet articulated in language the distinction between the idea of a work

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[29] Pierre de Ronsard, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Jean Céard et. al, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), vol. 1, Book 5, Ode XI, ll. 57–68.

[30] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I.2.3, accessed at <www.corpusthomisticum.org>.

[31] On Sebond's *Theologia* and Montaigne's translation, see Mireille Habert, *Montaigne Traducteur de la 'Theologie naturelle': Plaisantes et Sainctes Imaginations* (Paris: Garnier, 2010).

[32] Raymond Sebond, *La Théologie naturelle* trans. Michel de Montaigne (Paris: Michel Sonnius, 1581), fol. 21$^{v}$.

[33] In her analysis of Montaigne's use of metaphor, Carol Clark notes that '[a] comparison of Montaigne's translation of Sebond's *Theologia naturalis* with the original shows that in many contexts Montaigne has introduced the notion of the world and man as complex constructs, where this was absent in the original'. Clark focuses on some passages where Montaigne supplies artistic or architectural imagery (Clark, *The Web of Metaphor: Studies in the Imagery of Montaigne's* Essais (Lexington: French Forum, 1978), p. 151). We can presume that Montaigne was influenced by the circulation of the idea of God-as-designer by the late sixteenth-century.

(whether a painting or a house) from its visual plan or manifestation. The important thing to note here is the proximity *dessein* constructs between the notion of will and the material or visual manifestation of an idea, a visual design.

This sampling of the status of *dessein* in the late sixteenth century through the lens of these texts serves to flesh out the idea found in the *Littré* that *dessein* and *dessin* are 'le même mot'. In the absence of a word for drawing, sixteenth-century French makes use of *dessein*, without, however, being able to shrug off its intentional, mental semantic baggage. In the case of the texts analysed above, this relationship works also in the other direction: when *dessein* is used intentionally, it appears in contexts of artistic and visual metaphor or description in which its ultimate signification remains ambiguous—hovering between the mental and the material, the public and the private. The trajectory of *dessein*'s semantic motions from the sixteenth to the latter half of the eighteenth century is not one of linear progress, therefore, but is, rather, dialectical: the germs of the fully-fledged artistic term *dessin* are already found in late sixteenth-century uses, which, as we have seen, were at times suspended between the real and the ideal, the practical and the theoretical, and the mental and the material.

## II. The Best Laid Schemes

Of the 95 instances of *dessein* in the *Essais*, almost all are human designs, and the vast majority are the designs of men.[34] The most interesting of these for our purposes are those connected to a cluster of themes: death, chance and judgement, and I begin by considering a chapter explicitly concerned with these themes: II.xiii ('De juger de la mort d'autruy').[35] The first instance of *dessein* in this chapter occurs after Montaigne has been discussing the idea that few people when faced with death are truly 'ready' to die, which, for our author, means *knowing* that they will die—there is an epistemological clause built into this readiness. Montaigne writes that because of this unknowingness, we cannot judge someone to be strong-spirited in the face of death when their own death is not epistemologically certain to them. Most people, he says, put on such a show of resolve to gain reputation, thinking that they will, in fact, live on to enjoy it. Here, we get an instance of *dessein*: Montaigne writes that of all those that he has seen die, fortune has encouraged their demeanour, but not their design: 'la fortune a disposé les contenances, non leur dessein' (607). Already, we see these two terms, *fortune* and *dessein* brought together. This *rapprochement* occurs with a second instance of *dessein* in the chapter which comes a few lines later, when Montaigne discusses the case of the Emperor Heliogabalus:

> De maniere que le plus effeminé homme du monde Heliogabalus, parmy ses plus lasches voluptez, desseignoit bien de faire mourir delicatement, ou l'occasion l'en

[34] That Montaigne never uses *dessein* in relation to animals reveals, I think, how closely it is linked in his imagination to human will. Even in the famous passage from the 'Apologie' where Montaigne discusses the action of swallows in anthropomorphic terms, the words he uses there are *jugement*, *deliberation, pensement*, *conclusion* (II.xii, p. 455). In this passage, Montaigne laments humans' belief in their superiority over nature. As we shall see, this is partly a lamentation of one understanding of the power of human designs.

[35] On these themes in Montaigne, see (among others), Raymond La Charité, *The Concept of Judgement in Montaigne* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968); Richard Regosin, 'Prudence and the Ethics of Contingency in Montaigne's *Essais*', in John D. Lyons and Kathleen Wine (eds), *Chance, Literature and Culture in Early Modern France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009); Alain Legros, 'Montaigne Between Fortune and Providence', in John D. Lyons and Kathleen Wine (eds), *Chance, Literature and Culture in Early Modern France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009) pp. 17–30; Hugo Friedrich, 'Montaigne et la mort', in *Montaigne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968).

> forceroit: Et afin que sa mort ne dementist point le reste de sa vie, avoit faict bastir exprès une tour somptueuse, le bas et le devant de laquelle estoit planché d'ais enrichis d'or et de pierrerie pour se precipiter: et aussi faict faire des cordes d'or et de soye pour s'estrangler : et battre une espée d'or pour s'enferrer: et gardoit du venin dans des vaisseaux d'emeraude et de topaze pour s'empoisonner, selon que l'envie lui prendoit de choisir de toutes ces façons de mourir. (607)

This anecdote speaks to a wider theme that preoccupies Montaigne throughout the *Essais*, namely the idea of death 'aligning' with one's life—that is, of reflecting the way one has lived. The idea of 'dying well' was an important concern in sixteenth-century culture, and was a popular subject for early modern writers, influenced by the late medieval Christian tradition of the *ars moriendi*.[36] Heliogabalus embodies an example of the concern with dying well pushed to an obsessive extreme, and he was often cited in the early modern period as an example of decadence.[37] That Montaigne finds Heliogabalus's case ridiculous is shown in his use of this story as an example of a man who is in a good state of mind and health resolving to kill himself and thereby showing no courage or resoluteness in the face of an unplanned or unpremeditated death. [38] The excessiveness of Heliogabalus's design serves to emphasise the comedic aspect of the anecdote, and it is clear that Montaigne clearly expects his readers to 'fill in the gaps' of this story with their own knowledge of Heliogabalus's unfortunate end: assassinated and then dumped in a sewer by members of the Praetorian Guard. Heliogabalus *designed* to die well, to die delicately (and materially arranged things to ensure this was the case) but ultimately this design was frustrated by factors outside his control. Fortune may have helped to pass down to us an idea of his 'countenance' (of a man who enjoyed lavishness and wealth) but utterly destroyed his design of ensuring that his death contained the same extravagant indulgence as his life.

The instance of *dessein* in this chapter marks one of the relatively rare times that Montaigne uses the verb form of *dessein* (*desseignoit*)—of the 95 total instances only 12 use this form. In doing so, he points to the temporal dimension of Heliogabalus's design as future-oriented, and as involving an action (or series of actions) over time. The verb form appears once again in the context of discussions of death, this time in the following prescription in I.xx ('Que philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir): 'Il ne faut rien desseigner de si longue haleine, ou au moins avec telle intention de se passionner pour n'en voir la fin' (189).[39] The temporal dimension is even more explicit here as Montaigne seems to mean both a mental plan as well as its execution. In line with this, the metaphor of 'haleine'

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[36] For a discussion of the culture of death in the period, see Neil Kenny, 'Surviving Death in the Early Modern Period', in *Death and Tenses*, pp. 36–8.

[37] Heliogabalus's life had become so much of a cliché that Thomas Cooper, author of *Cooper's Chronicle* (1549), lists 'the vicious lyfe of Heliogabalus' among a series of examples of historians' penchant for exemplarity at the expense of truthfulness (cited in A. D. Cousins and Damian Grace, *A Companion to Thomas More* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), p. 115).

[38] This ridiculousness has a gendered aspect, as we can see from Montaigne's use of the words 'effeminé' and 'lasches'. This aspect deserves more attention than I can devote it here. Philip John Usher's article 'Soldierly Masculinity in the *Essais*' is a good place to start for a discussion of the indeterminacy characterising Montaigne's attitudes to questions of masculinity, especially in the context of war (in Philippe Desan (ed.), *Montaigne et la Philosophie Politique*, special issue of *Montaigne Studies*, 28 (2016), pp. 189–99). Kathleen P. Long discusses the queerness and exemplarity of Heliogabalus in Chapter 7 of her *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 189–213.

[39] As highlighted in the Introduction, this instance of *desseigner* is substituted by *designer* in the '95 edition. While both share the same Latin root (*designo*) the primary definition for *designer* given in Huguet's *Dictionnaire* is *dessiner*, although Huguet also immediately refers the reader to *Desseigner*, which he defines as 'Dessiner, faire le plan de' (Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, vol. 3 (Paris: Didier, 1967), p. 116)). This suggests that the two verbs, *desseigner* and *designer*, were largely interchangeable in the sixteenth century.

conjures the idea of a plan being something that needs to be continuously alimented, as suggested by the image of someone 'running out of breath'.[40] The next sentence in the chapter tells us a little more about what Montaigne means, as he writes that he wants death to find him planting his cabbages ('plantant mes chous'), without a care about death or about his imperfect (unfinished) garden. The metaphor of planting cabbages is generally interpreted as being an example of the *vita activa* encapsulated in Montaigne's exhortation in I.xx, 'je veux qu'on agisse' (89).[41] The tone of the passage is one of calm assertion: Montaigne prescribes that we ought to *act*, that death can come at any time and so we must be wary of making plans that we cannot finish. This is mixed with an element of light-heartedness as he reverts to the image of death surprising Montaigne while he is tending to his garden, a hypothetical continuation of the list of improbable deaths of famous individuals some lines earlier in the chapter. Alongside its fundamental unpredictability, Montaigne hints at death's levelling quality: we are all equal in our being powerless to stop it. The passage where this instance occurs emphasises the role of chance, particularly when it intersects or interferes with human affairs: we must not make fixed and predictive plans because, as the saying goes, 'the best laid schemes of mice and men go often awry'.

Montaigne's view was no doubt informed partly by the material contingencies that characterised his time: a period marred by pervasive conflict and violence, which—far from being a remote reality—often manifested itself very close to home. We get a flavour of the implications of the threat of bodily danger in 'Que philosopher' when Montaigne writes of a note he had written to himself while out riding about a wish he wanted realised after his death, which he had scribbled down immediately for fear of not making it back home—which was but one league away—alive.[42] In this sense the call to *agir*, and the call to *immediate* action in particular, becomes a practical and not just abstract concern.[43] Montaigne's aversion to designs of 'longue haleine' has echoes also of the idea of human vanity that he comes back to frequently throughout the *Essais*. In the context of this instance of *dessein*, in committing ourselves to a project of long duration or one that we would like to finish or render 'perfect' (in the sense of complete to perfection), then we are either vainly thinking that we will live long enough to finish it, or remain committed to it for as long as it takes, or we vainly think we are *able* to render it 'perfect'. Vainly, because the workings of chance can intervene in human designs and reverse their trajectory in the force of a single moment.

In talking about human designs, Montaigne often reverts to how chance can make them go wrong, with death acting as the ultimate frustrater of future-oriented plans, including, crucially, those made to control death itself. The conception of design expounded in the two chapters above is a teleological one, a design is a formulation of an intention to make something (a state of events) materialize in the world. In both chapters Montaigne is

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[40] The French expression 'de longue haleine' seemed already to have been a commonplace during the sixteenth century: Ronsard, for example, uses the expression 'poëmes de longue alaine' in the 'Advertissement au lecteur' to his *Odes* (*Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. by P. Laumonier (Paris: Hachette, 1924), p. 54).

[41] The modern-day meaning of this expression is rather different—'planter ses choux' signifies to retire from the active life (generally to the countryside). It is interesting to consider whether Montaigne may have had some influence on this modern meaning, with his insistence on nonchalance eventually supplanting the more literal sense of manual activity.

[42] 'Quelcun, feuilletant l'autre jour mes tablettes, trouva un memoire de quelque chose, que je vouloy estre faite apres ma mort. Je luy dy, comme il estoit vray, que, n'estant qu'à une lieue de ma maison, et sain et gaillard, je m'estoy hasté de l'escrire là, pour ne m'asseurer point d'arriver jusques chez moy' (88).

[43] For a discussion of the importance of the immediate moment in Montaigne's theoretical thinking, and in particular in relation to his understanding of history, see John D. Lyons 'Montaigne and History', in Philippe Desan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 215–231.

dismissive of such designs, as we have seen, adopting a broadly Stoic attitude which emphasises the unpredictability of both life and death.[44] This picture is complicated when we turn to the question of judgment, however, as Montaigne invokes the linear, teleological model of design as the only possible basis for successful epideictic rhetoric.[45] Witness the following passage from II.i ('De l'inconstance de nos actions'):

> Pour juger d'un homme, il faut suivre longuement et curieusement sa trace; si la constance ne s'y maintient de son seul fondement, *cui vivendi via considerata atque provisa est*, si la varieté des occurences luy faict changer de pas (je dy de voye, car le pas s'en peut ou haster ou appesantir), laissez le coure: celuy la s'en va avau le vent, comme dict la devise de nostre Talebot. (337)

The language here (*trace*, *pas*, *voye*) is reminiscent of that of the 'guiding thread' discussed above, or of Woolf's metaphor of the 'string' that we must 'follow' in order to read a book in the correct way. The goal-directed nature of this understanding of human intention-cum-action is brought out even more strongly in the lines following these where, quoting Seneca, Montaigne writes that it is no wonder that chance has such a hold on us, given that it is according to chance that we live: 'Ce n'est pas merveille, dict un ancien, que le hazard puisse tant sur nous, puis que nous vivons par hazard'. The passage continues as follows:

> À qui n'a dressé en gros sa vie à une certaine fin, il est impossible de disposer les actions particulieres. Il est impossible de renger les pieces, à qui n'a une forme du total en sa teste. À quoy faire la provision des couleurs, à qui ne sçait ce qu'il a à peindre? Aucun ne fait certain dessain de sa vie, et n'en deliberons qu'à parcelles. (337)

Montaigne seems to say that in the same way as paints are useless to someone without an idea of what to paint, so, too, it is useless to try to arrange or 'guide' the different actions and events in your life, unless you have a 'general aim' to which they are geared or under which they can be interpreted. He then inserts the following judgement: that people in fact only determine bits of their life, rather than make out a 'definite design' for their (whole) life. At times it seems that Montaigne draws a contrast between the material and the ideal, for example when material resources—'couleurs'—are contrasted with the theoretical process needed for the activity to succeed—the idea for a painting. At other times, it seems he is contrasting the part to the whole, saying that we cannot consider the portion (a 'piece' of a life) if we do not have knowledge of the whole, the overall 'design', or an idea of the ultimate 'end' of that life. Underlying these statements is the key theme of judgement: namely, the idea that we cannot *judge* a man's actions if we do not know or understand the 'whole' of his life. Montaigne is taking the core issues at stake in I.xi—death and chance—and triangulating them with the theme of judgement. In order to draw out this triangulation, we can perform a reconstruction of these various strands of the passage as follows:

(1) We should only judge someone's life if we can know its overall design;
(2) An individual life can stray from its design, because of the effects of chance;
(3) We cannot truly know the 'true' design of someone's life for certain;

[44] Many of Montaigne's thoughts here can be found in the 101st epistle of Seneca's letters to Lucillus, 'On the Futility of Planning Ahead'. See Seneca, *Epistles, Volume III: Epistles 93–124*, trans. by Richard M. Gummere, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), pp. 158–67.

[45] For an analysis of this chapter in relation to the epideictic and the notions of judgement and 'contradiction', see Neil Kenny 'La part du dire dans le contredire, ou l'inconstance des paroles humaines: Léry, Montaigne, Colletet', *Seizième Siecle*, 4 (2008), 255–87 (esp. pp. 266–77).

(4) We cannot perform a 'complete' judgement of someone's life.[46]

The passage above from 'De l'inconstance de nos actions' ends with a final metaphor: Montaigne invokes the image of an archer, saying that he must know what to aim at before drawing his arrow and aiming for his target: '[l]'archier doit premierement sçavoir où il vise, et puis y accommoder la main, l'arc, la corde, la flesche, et les mouvemens. Montaigne is talking, here, of the grand scheme of a human life, but these concerns are, of course, applicable too to the large-scale writing project of the *Essais*. Indeed, the language in the passage is reminiscent of classical writings on rhetorical composition and decorum ('arranger ses pieces'), and Montaigne may have had in mind the words of Quintilian, who uses the evocative image of the archer to discuss rhetorical composition in the *Institutio oratoria*:

> Do we not see that the best-thrown spear is the one that was launched with most grace, and that the truer the archer's aims with the bow, the more graceful is the position of his body?[47]

Quintilian goes on to say, in the same passage, that '[c]omposition, therefore, as it seems to me, plays the part of a sort of throwing strap or bowstring in giving direction and force to our thoughts'. Montaigne returns to the image of the archer in II.xvii, 'De la praesumption', where he discusses the case of a man who was offered his life in exchange for proof that he was skilled with a bow:

> On offroit à un excellant archer condamné à la mort de luy sauver la vie, s'il vouloit faire voir quelque notable preuve de son art: il refusa de s'en essayer, craignant que la trop grande contention de sa volonté luy fit fourvoier la main. (650)

We find the word *fourvoyer*, analysed in the preceding chapter as central to Montaigne's visual metaphor, implicated here as an involuntary response to the expression of *volonté*. In all of these examples from the *Essais*, human will is both necessarily ends-directed and, *because of this*, Montaigne seems to say, subject to derailing, deviation, and, in extreme cases, disaster.

The three thematic strands of death, judgement and chance which arise from this analysis of select instances of *dessein* are interwoven most explicitly in I.xix ('Qu'il ne faut juger de nostre heur, qu'après la mort'), where Montaigne takes Solon's adage, 'Que nul avant mourir ne peut estre dict heureux',[48] as a starting point for a short reflection on 'le maistre jour', 'le jour juge de tous les autres' (80). The subject was popular among humanists and was treated by both Erasmus and Louis Le Roy among others,[49] but Montaigne deviates from this tradition in an important respect: he attributes to *chance* a decisive role in the

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[46] I have phrased these in a schematic form to render what I see as Montaigne's reasoning here more explicit and to draw out more clearly the 'conclusions' I see Montaigne coming to in this passage. Despite his professed dislike for such logical forms (see I.xxvi, 'De l'institution des enfans', (161)). Montaigne does include aspects of Scholastic logic in his writing, but often purposefully subverts these (see Ian Maclean, *Montaigne philosophe* (Paris: PUF, 1996), pp. 32–5). My own need to reconstruct Montaigne's line of thought in this way is telling, I think, of the dual dimension of Montaigne's free-flowing style of writing, which treats complex lines of thought with spontaneity, incorporating them into the body of his chapter (itself rarely separated into paragraphs) rather than 'breaking them down'. It could be argued that this style invites a reconstruction on the part of the reader into a schematic form. For a precedent of this kind of systematization of Montaigne's manner of thought, see Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 296–7.

[47] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Books 3–4*, trans. by Donald A. Russell, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), Book 4, IX, 4, 8–10. For a discussion of the importance of the *Institutio oratoria* for the *Essais*, see Debora Knop, *La Cryptique chez Montaigne* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Grenoble, 2012).

[48] As rephrased by Montaigne in I.iii, 'Nos affections s'emportent au delà de nous'.

[49] Jean Balsamo, 'Notes et variantes', in Montaigne, *Les Essais*, p. 1355.

retrospective judgement of a person's life—by others—upon their death. Montaigne mentions 'fortune' four times (thrice directly and once in its adjectival form, *fortunée*) and includes various other words pertaining to the lexical field of chance (*incertitude*, *disgraces*, *accidents*) in this chapter. These textual patterns highlight Montaigne's recurrent preoccupation with chance and its role in human affairs, and chance's extraordinary power to 'renverser en un moment' that which one has 'basty en longues années' (79).

In many ways, these patterns, along with the instances of *dessein* I have analysed here align with John O'Brien's comments about Montaigne and prudence, namely that '[Montaigne] retains a keen sense of the contradictions that make the operation of conventional prudence an impossibility' and that his response to this is to privilege 'a nonchalance and a diffidence that is the opposite of prudential action as traditionally conceived'.[50] What is the point of *bastir*, carefully and prudentially, Montaigne seems to say, if a gust of bad fortune can blow all your designs down? But where O'Brien sees the mark of Montaignian diffidence in practical wisdom, the language of *dessein* reveals a flipside: an attitude marked by *hope* as well as pessimism, and the desire, however irrational, to see design and fortune align. It is in these terms that Montaigne, at the end of this short chapter, in a C-*couche* addition, returns to the death of La Boétie: '[C] Je luy ay veu trancher le fil d'un progrez de merveilleux avancement: et dans la fleur de son croist, à quelqu'un, d'une fin si pompeuse' Montaigne writes, in an allusive tone that nevertheless betrays a quiet grief, 'qu'à mon avis ses ambitieus et courageux ***desseins*** n'avoient rien de si hault que fut leur interruption' (80). In a similar fashion to the passage from 'De l'amitié' where Montaigne posits a counterfactual narrative of La Boétie's mature writings, our author is here using *dessein* to imagine a life both as that already lived and that which *could have been lived*.

But unlike in 'De l'amitié', La Boétie's life is described as at its *height* at the moment of death, his designs as having already—paradoxically, given the future-oriented nature of *ambitieux*—reached their apex. Montaigne imagines his friend's life here explicitly in terms of a thread, a *fil*. But this linearity is only conjured up to evoke its vulnerability—the *fil* can be *tranché* (the violence of this word creating a stark dissonance with the word *fleur* in the second clause), not just cut but cut *short*, cut *in the middle*, as the words *progrez*, *advancement* and especially *interruption* suggest. This *tranchement* is itself enacted in the form of the chapter, which, at three pages in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*, is one of the shortest in Montaigne's corpus. But Montaigne comes back to this chapter towards the end of his life to insert the above lines about La Boétie, as well as to substitute the word 'sourdement' for 'seurement' in the following, closing, passage of the chapter: '[B] [a]u Jugement de la vie d'autruy, je regarde tousjours comment s'en est porté le bout; et des principaux études de la mienne, c'est qu'il se porte bien, c'est-à-dire quietement et sourdement' (80). The *desseins* of Montaigne and La Boétie once again co-mingle on the page, but he no longer places them side by side to imagine what would have happened if only La Boétie had 'pris un tel dessein' as Montaigne. Now, preoccupied more than ever with the idea of death, Montaigne deliberately re-writes the arc of La Boétie's life alongside his own, to leave us with this final, unformulated (*sourd*, not quite *sur*) thought: *he* lived, died and designed well. *I hope the same will be said of me*.

[50] John O'Brien, 'Aristotle's Prudence, and Pyrrho's', in Ullrich Langer, *Au-delà de la Poétique: Aristote et la littérature de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), pp. 35–45 (p. 44).

## III. A Wild and Extravagant Design

'C'est [B] le seul livre au monde de son espece, d'un dessein farouche et extravagant' (385), so Montaigne writes of his book at the start of II.viii, 'De l'affection des pères aux enfans'.[51] Constituting part of a passage well-known to seasoned readers, this line is a popular starting point for scholars' discussions of Montaigne. Terence Cave, for example, begins his companion to the *Essais*, *How to Read Montaigne*, by quoting the line before describing the *Essais*'s lack of formal organization or unifying intellectual position. He translates the phrase as '[i]t is the only book of its kind in the world, wild and extravagant in *conception*',[52] suggesting that for him *dessein* here is primarily mental although not necessarily intentional—'conception' relates to mental figuration and is closely related to the imagination.[53] This translation choice nevertheless reveals that, for Cave, the wildness and extravagance relates to a mental posture or attitude held by Montaigne towards his writing project prior to its execution. The line from II.viii also constitutes the opening of the introduction to Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani's study *Montaigne: L'écriture de l'essai*. Mathieu-Castellani uses quotations from the *Essais* that include *dessein* three times in total in her introduction and begins a section ('Le modèle de la poesie') with another—in all cases *dessein* is invoked in the context of explaining or introducing Montaigne's writing project.[54] With each of these opening moves, Cave and Mathieu-Castellani betray, perhaps unintentionally, the seductive allure and salience of the word *dessein*: what better place to start a study on Montaigne than with those places in which he, seemingly, explicitly discusses the intentions behind his project? The lines from II.viii are a particularly tempting place to begin, it seems, perhaps because of the characteristically Montaignian move enclosed within them: simultaneously purporting to give us a key to unlocking the writing of the *Essais*, by using a word—*dessein*—that speaks to a guiding principle or intention, while frustrating the desire to see any such unlocking carried through—the intention is revealed to be a slippery one, the aim precisely to refute any such guiding principle.

In her *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom,* Felicity Green characterises the 'wildness' of Montaigne's design as lawlessness.[55] One of Green's main contentions is that the *Essais* are an elucidation of Montaigne's 'true moral value and character'[56] and Green links the Montaignian conception of self at the heart of the *Essais* as one characterised by self-possession and self-husbandry, which is to say one able to rule over itself rather than submit to external control. To reconcile these two seemingly conflicting dimensions of the *Essais* (lawlessness and self-rule), Green focuses on the notion of freedom of the will, which she sees as central to the Montaignian writing project. In her view, even Montaigne's spontaneity and *nonchalance* are themselves forms of self-possession, more akin to an active form of *sprezzatura* than to a lack of control in any strong, ethical sense.[57] For Green, 'Montaigne's protestations of uselessness and weakness are designed to reinforce his *ethos* or authority as a speaker' by highlighting his lack of artifice.[58] A much more 'intentionalist' position is held by Francis Goyet, who argues that the *Essais* are fundamentally a project of

[51] Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will be making continuous reference to a number of passages that include the word *dessein*, sometimes referring back to passages discussed prior—for ease I have included all instances in Appendix 1.
[52] Terence Cave, *How to Read Montaigne*, (London: Granta, 2007) p. 1. Emphasis mine.
[53] See the Oxford English Dictionary entry for 'conception' ("conception, n.". OED Online. March 2019. OUP. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38137?redirectedFrom=conception (accessed April 15, 2019)).
[54] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Montaigne: L'écriture de l'essai* (Paris: PUF, 1988), pp. 5–8; p. 90.
[55] Felicity Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), p. 32.
[56] *Life of Freedom*, p. 53.
[57] *Life of Freedom*, p. 151.
[58] *Life of Freedom*, p. 152.

public instruction, that Montaigne is ultimately a *prudens* (the classical archetype of the prudent man) and that 'the fragmentation and spontaneity of his writing are myths'.[59] Both Green and Goyet take issue with a 'postmodern' understanding of Montaigne which for Green is characterised by a conception of the self that prizes individuality and subjectivity (instead of agency and autonomy), and for Goyet is equated with a view of Montaigne's writing as fragmentary and disordered, rather than structured according to principles of prudence.

The way forward for many critics when trying to characterise the intention of Montaigne's writing project is to choose a middle route between complete freedom and masterful control: scholars inevitably emphasise the spontaneity, freedom and malleability of Montaigne's mode of writing, while acknowledging the elements of control and fixity within the text. But even the tendency in some Montaigne scholarship to set these up as antitheses only to reveal how they are in fact compatible or co-existent in the text is often still normative in practice and goes hand in hand with the impulse to find a guiding principle, an intention, if we like, underlying the text. Cave, for example, while at pains to emphasise the flexibility and malleability of the text, still makes use of a language that betrays such an impulse, referring to the 'linking thread' of the first-person-singular subject as that which 'connects [the *Essais*] together'.[60] This kind of reading captures a modern way of approaching a text as a reader, an approach that I think is neatly encapsulated in the following passage from Virginia Woolf's essay 'How Should One Read a Book?':

> Books have a great deal in common, they are always overflowing their boundaries; they are always breeding new species from unexpected matches among themselves. It is difficult to know how to approach them, to which species each belongs. But if we remember, as we turn to the bookcase, that each of these books was written by a pen which, consciously or unconsciously, tried to trace out a design, avoiding this, accepting that, adventuring the other; if we try to follow the writer in his experiment from the first word to the last, without imposing our design upon him, then we shall have a good chance of getting hold of the right end of the string.[61]

Woolf is chiefly concerned with fiction here, but her reflections are equally applicable to a text like the *Essais* (indeed, the image of books 'overflowing' their boundaries might remind us of Montaigne's characterisation of the *Essais* as 'extravagant'). On the surface this passage emphasises freedom and flexibility in both the writing process (described as an 'experiment') and the act of reading (we should refrain from 'imposing our design' on the author). But, looking closer, the conception of design invoked by Woolf is a straightforwardly linear one, one that can be traced like a string through the text, and which as good (obedient?) readers we can follow 'from the first word to the last'.

We saw in the previous section that Montaigne's characterisations of human *desseins* often come in the form of a linear, teleological depiction of human will. Seen in this way, human designs are problematic, because they are vulnerable to the workings of *fortune*, to the extent that for Montaigne it appears that the two (design and chance) are almost indistinguishable—as John Lyons writes, for Montaigne 'chance often appears with special

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[59] Francis Goyet, 'Montaigne and the notion of prudence', in Ullrich Langer, *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 118–141 (p. 136).

[60] A similar conclusion is reached by Antoine Compagnon: 'the thread is the syntax: that first person master key that suffices to bring unity to the *Essais*' ('A Long Short Story: Montaigne's Brevity', trans. Carla Freccero, *Yale French Studies*, 64 (1983), 24–50, 50).

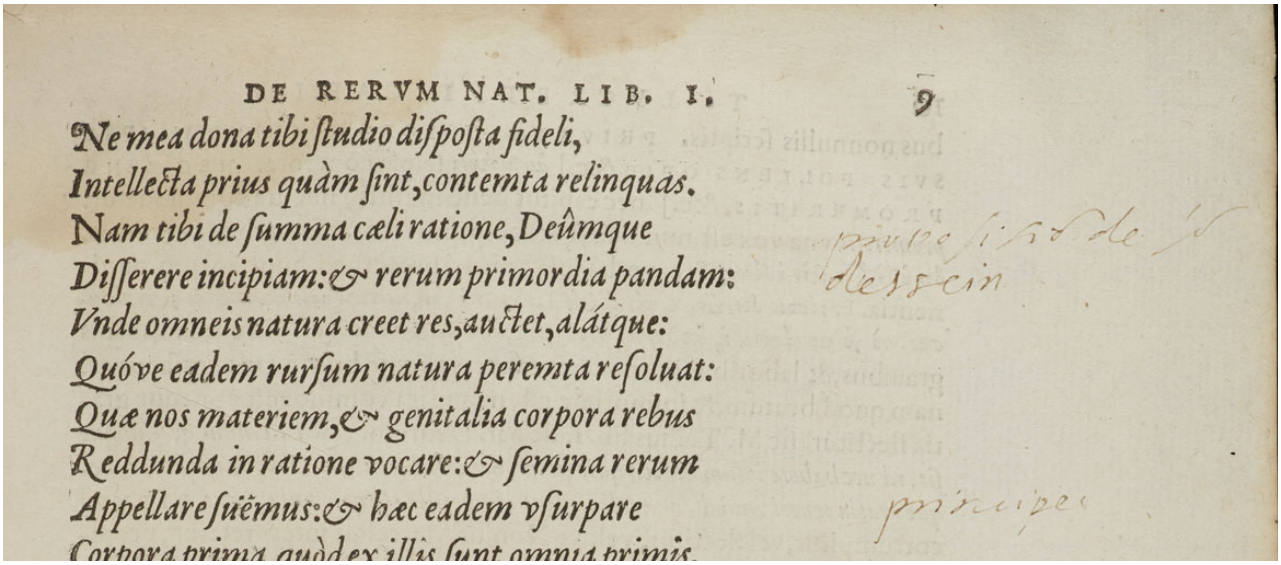
[61] Virginia Woolf, 'How Should One Read a Book?', in *Selected Essays* ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: OUP, 2009), pp. 63–73, p. 64. It is interesting to note the similarities concerning readerly prescriptiveness in Cave's and Woolf's titles.

clarity as a manifestation of an *excess* of order or system'.[62] It is no surprise, then, that Montaigne should take great pains to characterise his own *dessein* of writing in very different terms. One straightforward way in which Montaigne uses *dessein* is to characterise the general flavour or direction of a text. In II.xii, 'Apologie de Raymond Sebond', Montaigne uses *dessein* in the context of appraising the theologian's text: '[j]e trouvay belles les imaginations de cet auteur, la contexture de son ouvrage bien suyvie, et son ***dessein*** plein de pieté' (440). Sebond's *dessein* here is qualified as full of piety, but we are not told exactly what this *dessein* consists in. We can be fairly sure that Montaigne is not referring here to the *aim* of the *Théologie*, as he qualifies the *fin* of Sebond's text in quite a different manner just a couple of sentences later: '[s]a fin est hardie et courageuse' (440). We find *dessein* performing a similar function in Montaigne's annotated copy of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, where the author of the *Essais* comments in his own hand, next to lines 54 and 55, the words 'proposition de son dessein' (Fig. 13).[63] The Latin verse that Montaigne annotates reads:

> nam tibi de summa caeli ratione deumque
> Disserere incipiam, et rerum primordia pandam
>
> [For I shall begin to discourse to you upon the most high system of heaven and of the gods, and I shall disclose the first-beginnings of things].[64]

The word *incipiam* clearly sets out the prefatory nature of these lines, as Montaigne himself highlights with his annotation.

[62] John D. Lyons, 'Preface', in *The Phantom of Chance: From Fortune to Randomness in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. x.
[63] On Montaigne's annotated copy of Lucretius, see Alain Legros, 'Le "Lucrèce" de Lambin annoté par Montaigne, lecteur de commentaires', in Neil Kenny and Philip Ford (eds), *La Librairie de Montaigne*, Proceedings of the Tenth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium 2–4 September 2008 (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 2012), pp. 81–102.
[64] Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. by W. H. D. Rouse, rev. by Martin F. Smith, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).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Ne mea dona tibi ſtudio diſpoſta fideli,
Intellecta prius quàm ſint, contemta relinquas.
Nam tibi de ſumma cæli ratione, Deûmque
Diſſerere incipiam: & rerum primordia pandam:
Vnde omneis natura creet res, auctet, alátque:
Quóve eadem rurſum natura peremta reſoluat:
Quæ nos materiem, & genitalia corpora rebus
Reddunda in ratione vocare: & ſemina rerum
Appellare ſuëmus: & hæc eadem vſurpare
Corpora prima, quòd ex illis ſunt omnia primis.

***Figure 13***: Lucretius, *Titi Lucretii Cari De rerum natura libri sex*, ed. Denis Lambin (Paris/Lyon: Rovillium, 1563). Montaigne's annotated copy, p. 9.

As in the 'Au lecteur', *dessein* occurs above and in the 'Apologie' in the context of an *incipit* or as part of the author's opening moves, and is used to capture the global quality or spirit of a writing project. But whereas in these contexts, although perhaps vague, *dessein* is nevertheless used positively, to *affirm* a design, aim, or to characterise a project; the *dessein* of the 'Au lecteur' retains an essentially negative character: we are told what the *dessein* of the *Essais* is *not*, what it does *not*, *cannot* do.

Once we begin to look more closely at a number of key instances of the word as used by Montaigne in relation to the *Essais*, a pattern of negation begins to emerge.[65] Instances of *dessein* used in this way appear in well-traced passages of the text. In the Introduction, I argued that the word as it operates in the 'Au lecteur' raises important questions for our understanding of Montaigne's posture to his text. The *dessein* of the 'Au lecteur' as we saw has been generally glossed as intention or as Aristotelian 'final cause', but as we have seen, sixteenth-century uses of *dessein* were not exclusively categorizable as mental or intentional, often the same instance possessed a marked ambivalence, oscillating between two poles—the material and the mental. We can see this at play in a passage from I.l, 'De Democritus et Heraclitus', where Montaigne describes his (absence of) a 'method' of writing:

> [C] Semant icy un mot, icy un autre, eschantillons despris de leur piece, escartez, sans ***dessein*** et sans promesse, je ne suis pas tenu d'en faire bon, ny de m'y tenir moy mesme, sans varier quand il me plaist (302).

The visual, material nature of the image constructed here by Montaigne adds a material dimension to the use of *dessein*, as we imagine him scattering the seeds of his subject matters across the material text. With the word *semant*, Montaigne is also incorporating himself into a chain of literary comparisons of words to seeds which goes back at least as far as the Bible,[66] and finds its 'literary' formulation in the Middle Ages as the well-known riddle of black seeds (words) being sown in a white field (the page or parchment).[67] As in the 'Au lecteur', *dessein* makes an appearance while Montaigne is at pains to distance himself from the weight of the expectations of his reader, 'je ne suis pas tenu' reads here like a small statement of rebellion against an imagined chastisement at his lack of depth or exhaustiveness. Again, like in the 'Au lecteur' we find *dessein* embroiled in a negative construction, *sans dessein*. Montaigne's pronouncement captures quite evocatively a chapter like 'Des pouces', which we've seen possesses a sketch-like non-resolution. With the negative construction *sans dessein*, Montaigne is telling, rather than showing us, the effect of this kind of writing, which is bitty, diverse and chancy (as 'eschantillons', 'escartez' and the verb 'varier' additionally convey) and that his aim is to, as Alain Legros writes, 'n'écrire que chez lui, donc par intermittence, sur ce qui se présente alors à son esprit, quoi que ce soit, sans dessein

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[65] For a discussion of negation in the *Essais*, particularly the third book, see Zoe Samaras, 'La fonction de la negation dans le *Troisième Livre*', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 88:5 (1988), 849–57.

[66] Cf. Luke 8:11, 'Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God'.

[67] Perhaps the most famous European instantiation of this trope is the *indovinello veronese*, a fourteen-word riddle found on the margin of a late eighth–century/early ninth-century manuscript. Here, the act of writing is likened to a white plough (a quill) drawn by oxen across white fields (the page) in which black seeds (words in ink) are sown: *Se pareba boves, alba pratalia araba, et albo versorio teneba, et negro semen seminaba.* For more on the *indovinello* see the entry on 'History of the Italian Language', *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies*, 2 vols, ed. Gaetana Marrone (New York: Routledge, 2007), I, p. 967. A fifteenth-century French version of the riddle existed, as evidenced in the *adevineaux amoureux* (MS. 654 (1572), Musée Condé, Chantilly), a miscellaneous collection of puzzles and riddles about love. See James Hassell, *Amorous Games: A Critical Edition of "Les Adevineaux Amoureux"* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 93, riddle n. 343.

préétabli'.[68] There is another instance of *dessein* lurking in the shadows of this famous C-*couche* addition. Some lines above, Montaigne avails himself of the metaphor of the *chemin* to describe his writing process, noting

> Tantost je le promene à un subject noble et tracassé, auquel il n'a rien à trouver de soy, le chemin en estant si frayé qu'il ne peut marcher que sur la piste d'autruy. Là il fait son jeu à eslire la route qui luy semble la meilleure, et, de mille sentiers, il dict que cettuy-cy, ou celuy là, a esté le mieux choisi. Je prends de la fortune le premier argument. Ils me sont également bons. Et ne ***desseigne*** jamais de les produire entiers. (301-2)

Together, this noun and verb instance of *dessein* from 'De Democritus et Heraclitus' give us one strong picture of the writing of the *Essais*: it has no overarching or coherent design, nor does its author design for it to have such. There are two further instances of *dessein* involving different kinds of negation which further enrich this picture. The first appears in III.iii, 'Des trois commerces' where Montaigne writes, in a passage that strongly echoes the first one from 'De Democritus et Heraclitus',

> Là, je feuillette à cette heure un livre, à cette heure un autre, sans ordre et sans ***dessein***, à pieces descousues; tantost je resve, tantost j'enregistre et dicte, en me promenant, me songes que voicy. (828)

This declaration appears to give us the readerly analogue to Montaigne's pronouncements about his lack of writerly design.[69] *Dessein* is here coupled not with *promesse* but with *ordre*, foregrounding even more strongly the lack of any aim or principle in his reading.

Judging from these instances, a picture of Montaigne's *dessein* (or lack of it) begins to emerge. The *Essais* are described as the product of a habit of both reading and writing that is *sans dessein*. But what *kind* of design is said to be lacking? The readings I provided relied on *dessein* to mean straightforwardly aim or principle, but is this what Montaigne meant by it, given the semantic complexity of this term as he was writing these chapters? It suffices to look at another instance of the word in 'Des trois commerces' to see that the answer is not so simple. '[B] Je vis du jour à la journée; et, parlant en reverence, ne vis que pour moy: mes ***desseins*** se terminent là' (829), Montaigne writes. The tone of this instance of *dessein* is once again defensive as Montaigne vindicates his decision to devote the majority of his time to idle, pleasurable reading in his tower, in spite of those who could accuse him of 'avillir les muses' in so doing (829). But the verb *terminer* is incongruous if *desseins* here mean solely aims or intentions (indeed, we saw in the Introduction how Racine was berated for his use of *achever* with *dessein*). Montaigne may here mean something like 'have their final end in', with the suggestion that his designs are autotelic, they require nothing external to be completed. We have a flash of this earlier in the chapter, when Montaigne writes of his *esprit* that 'son plus laborieux et principal estude, c'est estudier à soy' (819).[70]

But the plurality of this instance of *dessein* suggests, I think, a broader understanding of design that we have not as yet encountered in the instances considered thus far. Montaigne, from the vantage point of his older age, is reflecting on the designs of his whole *life*, not of a particular activity or project. The view he gives us of his designs, while

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[68] Alain Legros, 'Montaigne: une maison, un livre', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 4: 109 (2009), 797–808, 807.

[69] On Montaigne's reading habits, see Terence Cave, 'Problems of reading in the *Essais*', in I. D. McFarlane and Ian Maclean (eds), *Montaigne: Essays in Memory of Richard Sayce* (Oxford: Legenda, 1982), pp. 133–66, and Richard Regosin, 'Conceptions of the Text and the Generations of Meaning: Montaigne's *Essais* and the Place(s) of the Reader', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 15:1 (1985), 101–14.

[70] There are echoes here of I.viii, 'De l'oisiveté': 'Il me sembloit ne pouvoir faire plus grande faveur à mon esprit, que de le laisser en pleine oysiveté, s'entretenir soy mesmes, et s'arrester et rasseoir en soy' (33).

negatively syntaxed, is a bold one, and must be prefaced by an assurance of decorum: 'parlant en reverance'. Nevertheless, when used in the context of his own life, *dessein* is no longer employed to refer, as with la Boétie, to an arc or thread of a life that can be cut short, but as something *already* limited, as in this instance from III.ix, 'De la vanité': '[B] [m]on ***dessein*** est divisible par tout: il n'est pas fondé en grandes esperances; chaque journee en faict le bout' (978). The unit of the day is invoked, as in 'Des trois commerces' as the measure for the duration or extension of Montaigne's *dessein*(*s*).

In the same way as Montaigne describes his own habits of reading and writing, in the language of *dessein*, using images of fragmentation and unfinishedness, so too he describes his own life as based on designs that are already interrupted, already divided. Montaigne's ethos regarding his own life could be, and has been, described according to an ethics of prudence,[71] and we might, using these insights from his language of *dessein*, extend this same description to his writing of the *Essais*. What should we make, then, of Montaigne's characterisations of his *dessein* as both *farouche* and *extravagant*, as well as *fol*, to add a description used by the author in II.xvii, 'De la praesumption'?[72] If, as Montaigne writes, the project of '[C] suyvre une alleure si vagabonde que celle de nostre esprit' is 'une espineuse entreprinse' (II.vi, p. 378) what should we make of his claim that he is '[B] trop mol pour desseins […] espineux' (III.v, p. 853)? *Farousche*, *extravagant*, *monstrueux*, *fol, espineux*, yet also *pas fondé en grandes esperances*, temporally coextensive with the limits of a day, absent as much as it is present—as we might expect from their author the *dessein* of the *Essais* is elusive, ambivalent, shifting. In what remains of this chapter I want to focus not on *dessein* as a guiding principle or intention behind the *Essais*, and thus not a particular *way* of writing, but rather on *dessein* as something already externalised even *as* it is being formulated or described, what we might call a *textual* rather than an authorial, or writerly, design. As we'll see, this way of considering the design of the *Essais* is already inscribed in Montaigne's own language of *dessein*.

[71] See Thierry Gontier, 'Prudence et sagesse chez Montaigne', *Archives de Philosophie*, 75: 1 (2012), 113–130, 115.

[72] 'sans l'avertissement d'autruy, je voy assez ce peu que tout cecy vaut et poise, et la folie de mon dessein' (653).

# IV. The Textual Design of the *Essais*

At the beginning of I.xxviii, 'De l'amitié', discussing la Boétie's *Servitude Volontaire*, Montaigne characterises it as a youthful work, and then goes on to engage in a counterfactual thought about what his friend might have been capable of if he had embarked on a similar project as himself:

> Si y a il bien à dire que ce ne soit le mieux qu'il peut faire; et si, en l'aage que je l'ay conneu, plus avancé, il eut pris un tel ***desseing*** que le mien, de mettre par escrit ses fantasies, nous verrions plusieurs choses rares et qui nous approcheroient bien pres de l'honneur de l'antiquité: car, notamment en cette partie des dons de nature, je n'en connois point qui luy soit comparable. (184)

*Dessein* here appears to mean, quite straightforwardly, a project or aim that la Boétie *could have* undertaken if his life had not been cut short. If, in an imagined stage of maturity, la Boétie had embarked on the same project as Montaigne, that of writing down his '*fantasies*', then, Montaigne writes, we would have been left with a higher quality corpus of writing. But the use of the word hides more than first appears. Where we might expect to find *dessein* coupled with a verb like *former* or *formuler*, Montaigne pairs it with the verb *prendre*, an unusual choice if we consider *dessein* here to be purely intentional. *Prendre* is a more natural companion to *decision*, a noun that is one step closer to the realisation of an idea, of bridging the gap between thought and action. The weight afforded to *dessein* is compounded by the value he seems to attribute to his own writing project—while he praises his friend's intellectual prowess, his incomparable 'dons de nature', the material manifestation of this virtuosity is only *hypothetical*, whereas Montaigne's *dessein* is being realised as he writes. Unlike the phantasmatic counterfactual of his friend's imagined writings, it is already incarnated in the materiality of the page.

We can see the simultaneity of *dessein*—always already material, instantiated—at play by returning to the sentence from II.viii, where Montaigne calls the *Essais* a book of wild and extravagant design. It is worth quoting the passage in full here, as I return to different parts of it in the following discussion:

> Et puis, me trouvant entierement despourveu et vuide de toute autre matiere, je me suis presenté moy-mesmes à moy, pour argument et pour subject. C'est [C] le seul livre au monde de son espece, [A] d'un dessein [C] farouche [A] et extravagant. Il n'y a rien aussi en cette besoingne digne d'estre remerqué que cette bizarrerie: car à un subject si vain et si vile le meilleur ouvrier du monde n'eust sçeu donner façon qui merite qu'on en face conte. Or, Madame, ayant à m'y pourtraire au vif, j'en eusse oublié un traict d'importance, si je n'y eusse representé l'honneur que j'ay tousjours rendu à vos merites

This instance of *dessein* is complicated by the fact that Montaigne changes the sentence quite significantly from the version that appears in the 1588 edition of the *Essais*. The author later splits up this thought into two separate clauses, and *dessein* goes from occupying the more prominent position of the predicate nominative [pn] of this thought ('*C'est un* dessein…') to being a complement of his book ('*d'un* dessein…'),[73] Comparing the two versions we therefore have:

[1588] C'est un dessein [pn] farouche et monstrueux.

[EB] C'est le seul livre [pn] au monde de son espece, d'un dessein [complement] farouche et extravagant.

[73] Emphasis mine.

In the first formulation of the sentence the word *dessein* refers back to the preceding sentence, and in the first instance (the '88 edition) the 'dessein farouche et monstrueux' is thus identified with Montaigne's project of making himself the subject-matter of his book. In the Bordeaux Copy revision, instead, Montaigne shifts the focus of the word *dessein*, which no longer refers to the author's characterisation of the text as an exercise in self-writing, but to the whole 'livre'. The book, not Montaigne's view of it, is what is now judged 'farouche et extravagant'. The question of whether or not we should still, after the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* revision, understand the *dessein* of the text to be that of Montaigne presenting himself to himself, as theme and subject, is rendered more ambiguous. This change shows the author wanting to emphasise that the design in this particular use of the word is predicated on the *Essais* as a 'livre'—or a text. The design, then, is regarded not as Montaigne's own but as the *text's*.

A design belonging to a book seems strange given we have seen that Montaigne has used *dessein* to mean, in the examples I analysed in the previous section, the intentions and plans of human beings. But of course, there is another meaning of design which can be attributed to a text, as we saw in Section One, and that is design understood artistically as something *between* intention and execution, between thought and matter. While Montaigne's attitudes to the *dessein* of the *Essais* might be read as cautious or prudential, his ambivalence and defensiveness surrounding his *dessein* (encapsulated in his negative syntax) arise, I suggest, because of the fundamental instability of this term during the sixteenth century. This instability affords him the means to conceive of his project in something other than linear, teleological terms (like the design of an archer overly eager to hit his target); it opens up a 'third way' between will and action, idea and *œuvre*. In this respect, we can apply to the *Essais* the same description used by Pascal of his own work, who describes the writing collected in the *Pensées* as 'sans ordre, et non peut-etre dans une confusion sans dessein'.[74] There are strong echoes of the instance of *dessein* in III.iii, and I follow Michael Moriarty in thinking that Pascal has something more akin to the visual-material sense of *dessein* in mind here.[75] Montaigne's *Essais* are similarly 'disordered' in that they are subject to the workings of chance in their creation as in their reception, to its disruptive force but also to its engendering effects. But they also constitute a *dessein*; one that retains an essentially gerundive character—that is, one that is constantly coming into being and constantly pointing, and going, beyond itself, but whose susceptibility to be thus transcended is inscribed into its very formula, and is its most distinguishing dimension.

## Conclusion

What is the design of the *Essais*? Montaigne appears to tell us directly—it is a design that is *farouche* and *extravagant*, perhaps also *monstrueux*. It is to 'mettre par escrit ses fantasies', to cite the instance of *dessein* from 'De l'amitié'. But the writing of the *Essais*, as we have seen, is also variously characterised as 'sans dessein et sans promesse', and its design described apophatically, in terms of what it is *not*, does *not* do. The temptation to find a guiding thread in the various instances, I have argued, restricts our interpretation, and flattens the semantic possibilities afforded by *dessein*. My principal aim in this discussion was to ask instead: what happens if we take the author literally, and consider his *design*—with all the connotations of that word including, crucially, its visual or material connotations? What

[74] Pascal, *Pensées* ed. Louis Lafuma (Paris: Seuil, 1962), p. 457.

[75] Michael Moriarty, *Pascal: Reasoning and Belief* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), p. 69.

happens, that is, if we abandon a narrow notion of design as intention or purpose and consider the full range of meanings attached to the term when Montaigne was writing? To do so, I propose, is to let go of a way of reading the *Essais* that privileges the discovery of the presence or absence of a guiding principle or intention, and whose starting point is the attempt to resolve or dissolve a tension between freedom and control, nonchalance and prudence, system-building and digressive thought. The *dessein* of the *Essais* inhabits a spectrum: not quite human or intentional and not quite material, it is a textual design that moves in the space between thinking and doing, the public and the private, the fixed and the flexible. This has implications for the way in which we approach the *Essais* as readers, not least in getting us to think more carefully about the role of chance and contingency in the poetics of the *essai*.

In Chapter Three, I develop the analysis of the manifestation of the textual design of the *Essais*, paying attention to these 'lines' in order to develop the comparison between the *Essais* and drawing which I laid out in Chapter One. I do so not by looking at Montaigne's visual language, but by considering the ways in which the dynamics and preoccupations at the heart of Renaissance *disegno* animate Montaigne's own approach to writing, and by attending to the 'sketch-like' qualities of the *essai*.

# III

## Montaigne's *maniera*

*If I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for.*

LUDGWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophical Investigations*

> In the sense of a project or intention, the *design* [dessein] to form or to show is originally only another word for drawing, which up until the eighteenth century was written in exactly the same way.[7] Both stem from *de-signare* (whence the Italian *disegno* and the today's *design*), of which we have conserved the term and notion *to designate*. Drawing designates the form or idea. It is the thought that designates, presents, monstrates, or ostentates. This signifies that it is not "demonstrative" thought—a demonstration does not show; it unfolds through stages, in such a way that it can be followed, accompanied, and even carried throughout its progression. Inversely, monstration puts one, as it were, before the fait accompli.[1]

In this passage from *The Pleasure in Drawing*, Jean-Luc Nancy describes the 'monstrative' power of drawing and in so doing underscores its *immanence*— its power to alert us radically to its own here-and-nowness—as well as its ability to incarnate form, or the idea. Drawing 'points' to something other than itself while simultaneously involving us in a performance of its own creation, manifesting in an immediate and transparent way the motions of thought and of the imagination. Towards the end of the last chapter, I offered an alternative way of considering the portraiture metaphor afforded by the self-portrait sketch and laid the foundations for the view that Montaigne's writing possesses a sketch-like quality, resisting the more traditional linearity of *discours* in favour of a different kind of linearity, one afforded by the restlessness and dynamism of the sketched line. In this chapter, my aim is to develop this line of thinking by extending the comparison between Montaigne and the visual arts. Following Nancy's description, I am interested primarily in animating the particular tension (I use this word neutrally) at the root of the relationship between internal idea and external manifestation, a tension that preoccupied Renaissance artists and theorists, and that I explore in this chapter through one significant case study: the Mannerist painter and writer Federico Zuccaro (1539-1609).[2] I approach this tension obliquely, by providing, firstly, a summary of the development of attitudes towards the term and practice of *disegno* in Renaissance Italy and, secondly and more extensively, through a consideration of the notion of *maniera*, picking up on a strand of argument first made by Géralde Nakam. My aim here is to show the ways in which Montaigne's writing can be brought into constructive dialogue with some of the central ideas animating Renaissance attitudes to the creative process, and how such attitudes find a Montaignian reflection in the surface of his writing, particularly in those places where we might least expect: those early, short chapters where Montaigne seems to compile lists of anecdotes or *exempla*, providing, as he says, just the thread with which to tie them together (III.xii, 1055). By re-reading one of these chapters, II.xii, 'Of thumbs', in light of my discussion of *disegno* and *maniera*, I want to draw attention to the ways in which Montaigne's writing enacts, through its performance of unfinishedness and allusiveness as well as through its subject-matter, a sketch-like mode of thinking-on-paper. To bring this sketchiness out, I proceed by analogy, comparing 'Of thumbs' to two sketches, one by Leonardo and one by Bartolomeo Schedoni, both of which are based on the same *concetto*: a study (or *studies*) of hands. In the first section below, I set

[1] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. by Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 11.

[2] On Zuccaro as thinker, see Bonita Cleri (ed.), *Federico Zuccari: Le idee, gli scritti, Atti del Convegno di Sant'Angelo in Vado, 28-29-30 ottobre 1994* (Milan: Electa, 1997). On the artistic life of Zuccaro and his artist brother Taddeo, see Cristina Acidini Luchinat, *Taddeo e Federico Zuccari: Fratelli pittori del cinquecento*, 2 vols (Milan; Rome: Jandi Sapi, 1998) and Julian Brooks et al. (eds), *Taddeo and Federico Zuccaro: Artist-Brothers in Renaissance Rome* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007). The artist's name is variously given as Zuccaro or Zuccari; I use the former spelling throughout.

up the art-theoretical background of the chapter by foregrounding some of the central dynamics of Renaissance and early modern drawing that animate the rest of my discussion.

## I. *Disegno*

Until the mid-*quattrocento*, drawing in Italy was largely but not exclusively seen in utilitarian terms, that is as a necessary tool in both the training and development of an individual artist and as a crucial first step in the creation of a finished artwork. The occasional examples of drawing being viewed as more than simply an instrument of instruction or preparation before this time are found for the most part in the small artistic circles in Northern Italy, or are limited to small selections of artworks by individual artists.[3] But by the turn of the sixteenth century, a shift in attitudes to drawing was well underway. As Vasari tells us, in 1501 a cartoon by Leonardo depicting the Virgin and child with St Anne attracted huge crowds when it was displayed in the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata in Florence.[4] What drew people *en masse* to Leonardo's preparatory design at the Annunziata? The answer to this question is, in large part, an increased interest in the *process* of artistic composition and creation, and part of it is to do with a conscious effort on behalf of artists and art theorists to revaluate the status of their craft.

As Leonardo was active, artists still largely belonged to the class of skilled workers or artisans. While some were consciously struggling to shrug off this label, artists, particularly in the fifteenth century, were not in general considered learned men and most of them possessed only the minimum education required by the merchant class.[5] Their social value instead consisted in their mastery of a *techne*. But far from the Kantian image of a genius whose hand was guided by inspiration derived solely from his nature, Renaissance painters were engaged from a young age in a process of repetitive learning. They were commonly trained first as an apprentice in the workshop (*bottega*) of an already established master (or masters), or in a guild (*scuola*), where they would carry out manual tasks usually involving the preparation of materials. The art of drawing was learned by copying and re-copying other artists' designs, and although this was not done uncritically,[6] and there was still scope for originality, a large part of younger artists' learning nevertheless came through internalising more experienced artists' techniques. While the more menial tasks (such as the preparation of paper or gluing together of cartoons) were often delegated to hired assistants, this was not always the case, with some artists being involved in the initial stages of manual preparation.[7] Moreover, some practices such as fresco painting involved physically demanding tasks, which required expert technique and resisted delegation.[8] Painting was

[3] For a detailed account of the Italian story of the development of drawing from a preparatory tool to artwork in its own right, and the regional particularities in this story, see Francis Ames-Lewis, *Drawing in Early Renaissance Italy* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1981), esp. pp. 1–7.

[4] See Jack Wasserman, 'A Re-Discovered Cartoon by Leonardo da Vinci', *The Burlington Magazine* 112 (1970), 194–204.

[5] For a useful description of the social and educational background of Renaissance artists, see Francis Ames-Lewis, 'The Artist's Education and Training' in *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 17–60.

[6] See Isabel Seligman, *Lines of thought: Drawing from Michelangelo to now* (London: Thames & Hudson/The British Museum, 2016), p. 30.

[7] See Carmen C. Bambach, 'Processes, Materials, Tools, and Labour' in *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300–1600* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 33–80.

[8] Ibid., p. 66. Bambach cites a diary entry by Jacopo Pontormo, who writes of the 'gruelling hardships' (Bambach's words) of frescoing, as well as Vasari's descriptions of such hardships in the *Vite*. We might also remember Michelangelo's physically taxing experience of painting the Sistine chapel, recorded in his sonnet for Giovanni da Pistoia which begins 'I' ho già fatto un gozzo in questo stento' ['I've already grown a goiter

also a commercial business, and successful painters in particular also had to have a developed sense of professional and entrepreneurial acumen. While we might nowadays conceive of the work of Renaissance artists as highly individual and often solitary (perhaps influenced by notions of the melancholy genius),[9] the role of the painter in the High Renaissance was rather different; there was far greater emphasis on both the commercial and communal aspects of the craft.[10] At the same time, however, more and more artists were beginning to emphasise the intellectual aspects of the craft, and to campaign in writing for the inclusion of painting in the canon of the liberal arts. Already Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura*, (1432),[11] the first work of art theory, had 'aimed to remove the mechanical stigma from the painter's art, to bring it into the circle of liberal studies.'[12] One of the principal ways in which it did so was through the notion of *historia*. In the fifteenth century, this term generally referred to historical narratives, and derived its meaning from rhetoric where an orator would use *historiae* (real events) as specific examples from which to draw out moral lessons. But, as Anthony Grafton has convincingly argued, Alberti departs significantly from this classical model, not least in attributing the descriptor *historia* to mythological stories, as when he cites the story of Narcissus in his discussion of the origin of painting. Moreover, as Grafton notes, Alberti associated *historia* with the preparatory stages of an artwork as much as with a finished piece, suggesting that for Alberti the *historia* was something to be worked out in the initial, imaginative stages of creation, and not only a term used to describe a 'resolved' narrative found in the final work.[13]

After Alberti, *disegno* was used 'increasingly to describe an intellectual process of design'.[14] One of the earliest and more explicit attempts to define this term came in Vasari's *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori* (first published in 1550), where the painter and architect describes *disegno as* 'una apparente espressione e dichiarazione del concetto che si ha nell'animo, e di quello che altri si è nella mente imaginato e fabricato nell'idea' ['an apparent expression and declaration of the concept one has in one's soul, and has in in other ways imagined in one's mind and fabricated in one's ideas'].[15] A *disegno* thus begins as a mental image, an idea in the artist's mind, that skill and artistry then transform into something external, rendering the initial internal and subjective idea ultimately public and examinable. This focus on the 'intellectual process' of design was reflected in changes to status of drawings during the sixteenth century.

While in Italy we see an increasing emphasis on *disegno* and its attendant processes (including the forming of a *historia*), in France there is nothing close to an equivalent theorisation of drawing in the sixteenth century. One of the first art theoretical texts to

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from this torture']. See *Michelangelo: Life, Letters and Poetry* ed. George Bull, trans. George Bull and Peter Porter (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 139.

[9] See Laurinda S. Dixon, 'A Privileged Profession: Artists and Melancholy' in *The Dark Side of Genius: The Melancholic Persona in Art, ca. 1500–1700* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), pp. 115–142.

[10] James Ackerman, *Distance Points: Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1991), p. 378.

[11] On the relationship of the *De pictura* to art theory, see Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), esp. Ch. 4. Richard Keatley discusses Montaigne's approach to *peinture* in light of Alberti's theory of painting in 'Montaigne et la théorie picturale' in *NBSIAM*, 50:2 (2009), 79–89.

[12] Rosand, *Drawing Acts*, p. 27.

[13] Anthony Grafton, 'Historia and Istoria: Alberti's Terminology in Context', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 8 (1999), 37–68, 56.

[14] Ben Thomas, 'Disegno', in Ita Mac Carthy (ed.), *Renaissance Keywords* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2013), pp. 31–34 (p. 33).

[15] Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* [1568], ed. Paola Barocchi retrieved from <http://www.memofonte.it/home/files/pdf/vasari_vite_giuntina.pdf> (PDF, 2006), p. 34. Henceforth abbreviated as *Vite*.

circulate is Hilaire Pader's 1649 translation of the first book of Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura, et architettura*, published 65 years after the original was first printed in Milan.[16] It is in the seventeenth century that French art theory begins in earnest, with the writings of Roger de Piles, André Félibien, Abraham Bosse and Roland Fréart de Chambray, and after the establishment of the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* in 1648.[17] That is not to say, however, that French art was not a site of artistic innovation during the sixteenth century. Invention plays a crucial role in the development of artistic practices in France from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, in no small part due to the influence of Italian artists crossing the borders and establishing an artistic presence in France. The School of Fontainebleau, established in 1530 by artists from the peninsula, principally Il Rosso who had arrived in France that year to complete the decoration of the palace and was replaced in 1540 by Primaticcio (both skilled and prolific draughtsmen), was the largest and most important artistic movement in France until the second decade of the seventeenth century and was characterized by an Italian-influenced style.[18] The art of Fontainebleau was primarily decorative but by no means un-experimental—aside from experiments with *capricci*, as André Chastel notes, Fontainebleau artists favoured the nude and the grotesque, elements which had thus far been rare in French art.[19] Fontainebleau artists were also notable for their works on paper, and Sylvie Béguin highlights 'the essential part that drawings played' in the 'Fontainebleau artistic revolution'.[20]

Despite the practical advancements offered by Fontainebleau, it is true that the French were some ways behind the Italians in the development of a fully-fledged artistic theory and vocabulary.[21] It is natural, therefore, that critics who have attempted to construe Montaigne and his *œuvre* in artistic terms, including historians like Carlo Ginzburg, have looked to Italy, not France, for these artistic analogies. One locus of such a comparison involves a movement that nevertheless has something in common with the French school of Fontainebleau: Mannerism. This comparison is precisely predicated on the productive tension that we have seen animates the development of art and art theory in Italy, a tension between internal idea and external manifestation.

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[16] On Pader and Lomazzo, see Stéphanie Trouvé, 'Lomazzo and France. Hilaire Pader's Translation: Theoretical and artistic issues' (2016), accessed online at <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01319315v1/document>.

[17] For the development of art writing in France, see Christian Michel and Maryvonne Saison, *La Naissance De La Théorie De L'art En France, 1640–1720* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1997).

[18] See Marian Davis, 'Introduction' in *The School of Fontainebleau: An Exhibition of Paintings Drawings, Engravings, Etchings and Sculpture 1530–1619* (Texas: Fort Worth Art Center; University Art Museum, The University of Texas, 1965). The foundational text on the School of Fontainebleau is Sylvie Béguin and Michel Laclotte (eds.), *L'École de Fontainebleau* (Paris: Éditions Des Musées Nationaux, 1972).

[19] André Chastel, 'Fontainebleau, formes et symboles' in *L'École de Fontainebleau*, p. xxi–xxiv.

[20] Sylvie Béguin, 'School of Fontainebleau: The Fortunes of Criticism' in *Fontainebleau: Art in France, 1528–1610*, 2 vols, Vol II (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada for the Corporation of the National Museums of Canada, 1973), pp. 9–19, p. 11.

[21] Jean Balsamo has elevated this relative semantic lack to a claim about the *experience* of art in France: 'les Français ne savaient pas décrire la peinture, ils n'avaient pas les termes pour en juger le métier ni pour la comprendre en tant qu'art' ('Les écrivains français du XVIème siècle et la peinture italienne: réévaluation d'un épisode de l'histoire du goût', *Studi di Letteratura Francese*, 21 (1996), 29–54 p. 41). The claim is a bold one, all the more surprising because Balsamo spends most of his article carefully deconstructing the commonly held view that French writers and travellers were disinterested in the art of the period, which was dominated by the style or *maniera* of Italian masters, and I consider it more amply in the final chapter. It should be clear from my arguments about *dessein* in Chapter Two that I disagree French art writers (like Palissy) possessed no terms to talk about art.

## II. Internal and External Designs

In II.xii, 'Apologie de Raymond Sebond', Montaigne provides a long enumeration of the different functions of hands: [22]

> [C] Quoy des mains? Nous requerons, nous promettons, appellons, congedions, menaçons, prions, supplions, nions, refusons, interrogeons, admirons, nombrons, confessons, repentons, craignons, vergoignons, doubtons, instruisons, commandons, incitons, encourageons, jurons, tesmoignons, accusons, condamnons, absolvons, injurions, mesprisons, deffions, despitons, flattons, applaudissons, benissons, humilions, moquons, reconcilions, recommandons, exaltons, festoyons, resjouissons, complaignons, attristons, desconfortons, desesperons, estonnons, escrions, taisons; et quoy non? D'une variation et multiplication à l'envy de la langue. (454)

The 'variation et multiplication' of uses and capabilities of hands listed here says much about their gestural force in Montaigne's imagination, so much that, as he writes, they are 'l'envy de la langue'. This chiastic passage is composed of a long list of third person verbs bookended by the interrogative *quoy*. While the proliferation of verbs points to the inability of *langue*—underscored here by Montaigne—to capture the essence of hands, the deliberate style and structure of the passage paradoxically point to the special ability of language to mobilise unique structures of meaning. The passage is emblematic of the fundamental relationship in Montaigne's writing between *main* and *langue*, which plays out along axes of gestural force and a special attention to the marks left behind by the creative mind at work—what Hélène Cixous, with in mind Montaigne, refers to as *stigmata*. Foregrounding the etymological meaning of *stilus* as that of a writing (or drawing) instrument that leaves traces or tracks in parchment or wax, Cixous thinks of the equivalent marks made on the writing hand and mind. Through their shared Greek root *stig*— to prick or puncture—, stylus and stigmata both speak to leaving behind visible traces of an invisible activity. Cixous exhorts herself, and thereby us, to pay attention to these traces, what she calls 'engravings, the stings in her flesh and the mental parchment', suggesting a continuity between the act of writing and these small violent incisions, excavations and perforations of the flesh.[23] In both cases there is a dual experience of vulnerability and control, of impotence and wilfulness: '[s]tigma wounds and spurs, stimulates'.[24]

Montaigne reverts his attention to the different kinds of physical violence enacted on hands in II.xxvi, 'Des pouces'. Published as part of the 1580 edition of the *Essais*, the text of this very short chapter was left practically untouched in the subsequent two editions; Montaigne adds only two sentences at the very end; one in the 1588 edition and one in the Bordeaux Copy.[25] The chapter sees Montaigne approach the subject of thumbs from a variety of different, and seemingly unrelated, perspectives. He begins with a story from Tacitus about a ritual oath practised by barbarian kings who would suck the blood from one another's thumbs, and ends with the Lacedaemonians, whose teachers would bite their pupils' thumbs by way of chastisement (this is the sentence added in '95). Between these two anecdotes that bookend the chapter, he considers, variously, the opinions of doctors; the supposed (and probably spurious) Latin etymology of the word (*pollere*); the Greek

[22] On Montaigne's use of lists in the 'Apologie', see Tomlinson, '"Intelligible sans discipline"'.
[23] Hélène Cixous, 'On Stigmatexts', trans. By Eric Prenowitz in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. xiii.
[24] Ibid.
[25] For an analysis of the short (one-page), unrevised chapters against the broader structure of the *Essais*, see Alain Legros, 'Delaissés, mais laissés, les chapitres d'une page et l'ordre des *Essais*', in Philippe Desan (ed), *Les Chapitres oubliés des 'Essais' de Montaigne: Actes des journées d'étude à la memoire de Michel Simonin*. Bibliothèque Littéraire de la Renaissance: La librairie de Montaigne 1 (Paris: Champion, 2015), pp. 13–30.

word for thumbs (*anticheir*) and its accompanying idea of thumbs as another hand; the Roman practices of kissing thumbs and dismissing from martial duty those whose thumbs had been wounded; and four more anecdotes about thumbs concerning, respectively, the Emperor Augustus; the fate of a man named Caius Vatienus (the merciless winner of a naval battle who cut off his enemies' thumbs); and the Aginetes, whose thumbs were cut off by the Athenians to ensure they would not surpass them in the art of navigation (this last anecdote is added in '88). 'Des pouces' reads as a collection of stories and ideas on the subject of thumbs that Montaigne was struck by in his readings, and that he found variously interesting or amusing. Rather than providing a personal anecdote, or an interpretation of the various pieces that he presents to us, Montaigne is content just to lay these side by side, without comment or analysis, making this text one of the most 'concise, compilatory and opaque' in the Montaignian corpus.[26]

What are we to make of a short, early chapter like 'Des pouces'? Certainly, 'Des pouces' seems problematic for the critical explored in Chapter Two, and pushed back against, according to which the syntactic use of the first-person singular subject is thread linking the different chapters; Montaigne makes no use of the pronoun *je* in 'Des pouces', and the only personal pronoun comes in one of the final lines of the chapter in an off-hand statement: '[q]uelcun, de qui il ne me souvient point, ayant gaigné une bataille navale, fit coupper les pouces à ses ennemis vaincus' (692). As Antoine Compagnon reminds us, 'critics had, for a long time, the tendency to scorn the oldest chapters of the *Essais*'.[27] He quotes Pierre Villey, who considered these chapters 'the mere juxtaposition of a few facts, a few remarks which struck Montaigne in the course of his readings'.[28] Villey's understanding of these short early chapters aligns itself with the interpretation that these are the product of Montaigne's initial commonplacing practices in the style of contemporary books like the *Diverses Leçons* of Pedro Maxie, translated into French by Claude Gruget and published in France in 1552. Earlier chapters like 'Des pouces' are also sometimes taken to be evidence of Montaigne's evolution as a writer. Witness this claim from Hoffman's study of Montaigne:

> One would expect any author to evolve over twenty years' time, yet the *Essays*' transformation is so pronounced after 1588 that it resembles less an extrapolation of his earlier manner than an open break with his previous habits of composition and revision.[29]

On this view, the detached, humanist reader Montaigne of 'Des pouces' has little in common with the personal, intimate and vulnerable Montaigne of a chapter like 'Sur des vers de Virgile'. I'd like to pause just a second longer on Hoffman's quote in order to bring attention to a particular word he uses, the word *manner*. So far, I have entertained the possibility that the particular nature of the short chapter can broadly be put down to questions of style: paradoxically for such a short chapter Montaigne could be said to be engaging in the style of *copia* (excess or abundance), and the practice of commonplacing.[30] But Hoffman's choice word here is not style but *manner*, a term that carries art-historical connotations that Hoffman would certainly be aware of.

Some Montaigne critics have approached Montaigne through the lens of *maniera*,

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[26] This characterisation ('stringato, compilatorio, opaco') is Fausta Garavini's from her 'Il pollice di Montaigne', *Paragone*, 434–436 (1986), pp. 3–7 (p.4). My arguments draw on and develop her analysis of this chapter, which is as brief as it is brilliant.

[27] Antoine Compagnon, 'A Long Short Story', 25.

[28] Cited in Antoine Compagnon, 'A Long Short Story', 25.

[29] George Hoffman, *Montaigne's Career* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), p. 97.

[30] On commonplacing in the early modern period, see Ann Moss, *Printed Common-Place Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). Moss characterises the *Essais* as 'the most uncommon of common-place books', but a common-place book nonetheless (p. 213).

most notably Nakam and Richard Sayce have argued that Montaigne possesses a mannerist sensibility, and Nakam in particular has written extensively and evocatively of the *manière* of the *Essais*, and its interaction with the matter of the book.[31] Arnold Hauser goes so far to class Montaigne, along with Giordano Bruno, as 'unquestionably the most important and representative philosopher of mannerism'.[32] So let us take these pronouncements seriously and take a closer look at this word manner/*manière* and consider what further light it might shed on the textual design of the *Essais* in light of the short, early chapters. The terms derives from the Italian *maniera*, and the first use of this term as an aesthetic category is generally attributed to Vasari, who in his famous compendium of artist's lives the *Vite*, uses the word *maniera* in a passage on the life of the artist Pietro Perugino, using it to describe his particular fashion of using colour.[33] Although it was not, as Vasari was writing, an art-theoretical term, *maniera* came to give rise to an art-historical classification of its own: Mannerism and Mannerist art are generally acknowledged as defining the period between the end of the High Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque. Erwin Panofsky characterizes this art as distorting and twisting the balanced and universally valid forms of the classic style in order to achieve a more intense expressivity but identifies its most salient characteristic as 'an internal dualism, an inner tension'.[34] Despite the apparent willfulness of its manner of composition, for Panofsky this style strives for strict control of the total image. Mannerism came to be associated almost with a distortion of style, far removed from the grace and decorum of the High Renaissance and with an obsession over form sometimes at the expense of content. We can see traces of this tendency in Montaigne's descriptions of his own literary/aesthetic tastes. In III.viii, 'D l'art de conferer', for example, he describes his penchant for form over and above substance:

> [B] Autant peut faire le sot celuy qui dict vray, que celuy qui dict faux: car nous sommes sur la maniere, non sur la matiere du dire. Mon humeur est de regarder autant à la forme qu'à la substance, autant à l'advocat qu'à la cause, comme Alcibiades ordonnoit qu'on fit. (928)

The reference to Alcibiades here is significant. Probably best known as the drunken scoundrel of the *Symposium*, in Classical reception he was often associated with profligacy and sexual promiscuity.[35] With this reference to Alcibiades, Montaigne would have evoked for contemporary readers a certain flippancy and lack of decorum opposed to the more rigid norms of proper rhetorical style. But what does *manière* refer to in the above passage? It is tempting to gloss it as style, as some critics have done, and as the subsequent mention of

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[31] See Richard Sayce, 'Renaissance Mannerism and Baroque' in *The Essays of Montaigne: A Critical Exploration* (London: Widenfield & Nicolson, 1972), pp. 313–26; Richard Sayce, 'Renaissance et maniérisme dans l'œuvre de Montaigne', in *Renaissance, Maniérisme, Baroque*, Actes du XI[e] stage international de Tours (Paris: Vrin, 1972), pp. 137–151; Géralde Nakam, 'La "*maniera*" de Montaigne: quelques traits, et leur sens', *Études Épistémè*, 9 (2006), accessed online at <http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/2555>; Géralde Nakam, 'La "manière" de Montaigne dans le livre III de 1588, "ce troisieme allongeail du reste des pieces de [sa] peinture"' in *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 88, 5, Montaigne 1588–1988 (1988), pp. 870–890; Géralde Nakam; '"Manières" d'un autoportrait', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 97:6 (1997), 986–1007; Géralde Nakam, 'Montaigne maniériste' in *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 95,6 (1995), 933–957.

[32] Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art,* 2 vols, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965), p. 51.

[33] Giorgio Vasari, *Vite*, p. 359.

[34] Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. Joseph J. S. Peake (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), p. 79.

[35] On Montaigne and Alcibiades see Clara Welch, 'Montaigne's Response to the Alcibiades Question' in Jeff Persels et. al., *Itineraries in French Renaissance Literature: Essays for Mary McKinley* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 330–48.

*forme* might tempt us to do.[36] Others, however, have taken this word with its expanded, art-historical meaning. In her *Montaigne, La Manière et la Matière*, Nakam conducts an analysis of the *Essais* that performs a *rapprochement* between Montaigne's style and the emergence of Mannerism at the turn of the seventeenth century. Via a series of readings of passages of the *Essais* such as these through what we might call an aesthetic lens, her aim is to elucidate what she sees as Montaigne's Mannerism. Nakam is, however, keen to distance her reading from the idea of an overly laboured or embellished style—reminding us of Montaigne's dislike of 'la prétention du beau parler'—and associates Montaigne's Mannerism rather with a 'style personnel, sincère et expressif'.[37] The book builds on previous work, in which she describes Mannerism as marked by a radical subjectivity and introversion, brought to a point of 'morbidité' and certainly of melancholy:

> Le Maniérisme est et se veut un art de la subjectivité, marqué d'abord par la passion et la nostalgie d'une perfection antérieure, idéalement située dans l'Antiquité ou dans la première Renaissance, qu'on dira "classique". Marqué ensuite par l'intensité de la vie intérieure, son inquiétude, ses étrangetés, jusqu'à la morbidité cultivée parfois par un Pontormo. L'introversion, 'le regard intérieur' sont fondamentaux. L'inquiétude affective a des sources spirituelles et métaphysiques.[38]

Mannerism is also, for Nakam, distinguished by an acknowledgement of one's own creative faculties, as she writes in the subsequent sentence: '[m]ais ce qui marque encore le Maniérisme, c'est la conscience de son génie, la vision propre de l'artiste, ce *disegno interno* que toute son invention veut traduire'.[39]

These quotations deserve some unpacking. For Nakam, Mannerism is made up of two impulses that seemingly lie in tension, in a way that is reminiscent of Panofsky's description. The first is what we might call an 'inward impulse'—the desire to turn the eye to the goings on of the subjective mind. The second is what we might call an 'external impulse'—the self-conscious realisation of the artist of his own power and the desire to 'translate' the object of inward scrutiny into an outer expression. Nakam's use of the term *disegno interno* is particularly worth pausing on in light of this dualism. This term is an unacknowledged reference to the art theory of the Central Italian painter Federico Zuccaro, who has come to be seen as central figure of Mannerism. Zuccaro was instrumental in the revaluation of painting during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; in 1593 he helped found the Accademia di San Luca in Rome and became its first *principe* (director). The Accademia, like its older cousin the Florentine Accademia delle Arti del Disegno (opened by Vasari and others in 1562), was established in order to promote the study and instruction of the plastic arts. Through the work of Zuccaro and others, the academies began to take the study of painting out of the exclusive and restricted sphere of individual masters' workshops and into a centralized seat of learning that was recognized by the city state and was funded privately by politically important patrons. *Disegno* played an important role in this process of academization. Not only does it gain symbolic importance through its incorporation into the very name of the Accademia del *Disegno* in Florence, it also becomes central to the philosophy of artistic teaching of the two academies as it comes to be officially heralded as the father of all the plastic arts.[40] Drawings were also made available for students

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[36] See, for example Tom Conley who writes that in 'De l'art de conferer', 'Montaigne spells out the ways he has fashioned the *Essais* as a work of style' (*The Graphic Unconscious*, p. 116).

[37] Géralde Nakam, *Montaigne, la Manière et la Matière* (Paris: Champion, 2006), p. 306.

[38] Géralde Nakam, 'Montaigne maniériste', in *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 95,6 (1995), 933–957 (941–42).

[39] 'Montaigne maniériste', p. 942.

[40] The metaphor of fatherhood is used already in the late medieval period by Cennino Cennini, however, and was gaining currency in the workshops of the period. See Gianni Carlo Sciolla, '"Schizzi, macchie e pensieri":

of the Academies to consult for their own artistic development; to this end Vincenzo Borghini, the first *luogotenente* of the Accademia del Disegno, created an entire library of models and drawings that artists at the academy could peruse at their will.[41] As well as his role as artist and preceptor of the first *Accademia* in Rome, Zuccaro is famous for his 1607 treatise on painting, *L'Idea de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti*, in which he draws a distinction between two different kinds of *disegno*, a distinction that he uses to structure his two-book treatise. The first term, which he calls *disegno interno*, is defined in the first book as follows:

> per Disegno interno intendo il concetto formato nella mente nostra per poter conoscer qual si voglia cosa, e operar di fuori, conforme alla cosa intera.[42]
>
> [By internal design I mean the concept formed in our mind in order to know anything, and to operate from without it, in conformance to the whole].
>
> il Disegno interno in generale è un idea, e forma nell'intelletto rappresentante espressamente, e distintamente la cosa intesa da quello, che pure è termine, ed oggetto di esso.[43]
>
> [Internal design is in general an idea and a form in the intellect, representing purposefully and distinctly that which is intended by it, which is also its end and object].

As we can see from the passages above, Zuccaro emphasizes the radically *mental* properties of internal design: *disegno interno* is called a concept, an idea and a form in the intellect. Throughout *L'Idea*, Zuccaro makes *disegno interno* the starting point for not only all artistic but all cognitive processes, and divides it into three categories: divine *disegno*, *disegno speculativo* and *disegno prattico*).][44] As Ben Thomas notes, Zuccaro's writings on *disegno* performed the task of revaluating the term from the relative hegemony of the Vasarian description, which saw it as deriving from the soul but as an *expression* of an internal concept— and therefore already external.[45] Zuccaro's project of reclaiming *disegno* as a radically internal, spiritual faculty is bound up with his view of design as a mark of God: Zuccaro argued that the word 'disegno' was an anagram of 'segno di Dio in noi' [mark of God within us].[46] Robert Williams highlights the Aristotelian influences in Zuccaro's discussion of art and *disegno*, as Zuccaro calls art a secondary cause whose primary cause is *disegno*.[47] While this description might be reminiscent of the Aristotelian four causes (and it is tempting to associate *disegno interno* with an Aristotelian efficient cause, or cause as we know it, and *disegno esterno* with a final cause, or end), Zuccaro's Aristotelianism, and thus the distinction between these two kinds of *disegno*, is not so straightforward. For Aristotle, art (*techne*) is a teleological form of knowledge: art (or skill/craft/expertise) is always geared

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Il disegno negli scrittti d'arte dal Rinascimento al Romanticismo' in *Disegno: forme, techniche, significati*, ed. by Annamaria Pietroli Tofani, Simonetta Prosperi Valenti Rodinò and Gianni Carlo Sciolla, (Cinisello Balsamo, Italy: Silvana editorial/ Torino: Istituto bancario San Paolo di Torino, 1991), pp. 11–89 (p.12).

[41] Rick A. Scorza, 'A Florentine Sketchbook: Architecture, Apparati and the Accademia del Disegno', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 54:1991, 172–185, p. 184.

[42] Federico Zuccaro, *Idea dei pittori, scultori et architetti* [1607] in *Scritti d'arte di Federico Zuccaro*, ed. Detlef Heikamp (Florence: Olshki, 1961), p. 152. Hereafter '*Idea*'.

[43] Zuccaro, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

[44] Zuccaro, *Op. cit.,* p. 155–63.

[45] Ben Thomas, 'Disegno', p. 38.

[46] Zuccaro, *Op. cit.*, p. 303.

[47] Robert Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997) p. 139. See also David Summers, *The Judgement of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), pp. 287–88.

towards an end, towards bringing something into existence.[48] While for Zuccaro *disegno interno* is similarly teleological, its end and 'perfection' is not, as we might expect, material (the visible design on the page), but rather the clear representation of an idea in the mind. Given the radically *mental* nature of *disegno interno*,[49] the relationship between the idea and its public execution preoccupied Zuccaro, who constructs two examples that point to this tension. In the first, he considers the mental image of a lion:

> È necessario che l'operazioni interne abbiano un termine, acciochè siano anch'esse compite, e perfette. Il qual termine altro non è che la cosa intesa, come per esempio s'io voglio intendere, che cosa sia il Leone, è necessario, che il Leone da me conosciuto sia termine di questa mia intellezione: non dico il Leone che corre per la selva, e da caccia agli altri animali per sostentarsi, che questo è fuora di me ; ma dico una forma spirituale formata nell'intelletto mio, che rappresenta la natura, e forma del Leone espressamente e distintamente ad esso intelletto.
>
> [It is necessary for internal operations to have an end, in order for them to be completed, and perfect. Their end is nothing other than the thing that is grasped, so for example if I would like to grasp what a lion is, it is necessary that the lion that I know be the end of this mental act of mine: I do not mean the lion that runs through the forest, and hunts other animals to sustain itself, as that is external to me; but I mean a spiritual form formed in my intellect, that represents the nature and form of the lion expressly and distinctly to this intellect].

The end (*telos*) of 'internal operations' (internal designs) is the spiritual form of the thing represented in the mind which captures its true essence. Thus, in forming the mental image of a lion we should not attempt to recreate the real, living, thing, but rather form a distinct impression of the *form* of the lion in our minds. The Italian *intendere* is semantically ambiguous, it can mean both understand and intend, and thus retains many of the same teleological undertones as *disegno*. In the second example, Zuccaro conjures the image of a mirror in which is reflected a gallery of paintings and sculptures:

> Io dico che se si pone uno specchio di finissimo cristallo, che sia grande in una sala ornata di pitture eccellenti, e di statue maravigliose, chiara cosa è, che fissando io l'occhio in quello non pure egli è termine del mio vedere; ma anco oggetto rappresentante chiaramente e distintamente tutte quelle pitture, e statue a gli occhi miei; e pure in quello non sono quelle pitture, e quelle statue secondo la materia e stostanza loro, ma solo in lui rilucono col mezzo delle lor forme spirituali. Così devono filosofar quelli che vogliono intendere che cosa sia Disegno in generale.[50]
>
> [I say that if one should place a large mirror of finest crystal in a hall adorned with excellent paintings and marvellous sculptures, it is clear that, in fixing my eye on it not only is it the final object of my seeing; but it is also an object that represents clearly and distinctly all those paintings and statues to my eyes; and yet those paintings and statues are not within it in their materiality and substance, but they are reflected in it only by means of their spiritual forms. Thus should philosophise those that would like to understand what *Disegno* is in general.]

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[48]Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Ch. 4 ,1140a, 4. *Techne* for Aristotle is one of the three capacities of the soul, alongside *episteme* (rational or scientific knowledge) and *phronesis* (practical wisdom).

[49] Zuccaro emphasises that *disegno interno* 'non è materia, non è corpo, non è accidente di sostanza alcuna' [is not matter, nor body, nor something that we attribute to any kind of substance' (*Idea*, p. 153).

[50] Zuccaro, *Idea*, p. 154.

Zuccaro uses this image to argue once again that *disegno interno* is concerned purely with images, and not with material things.[51] But whereas in the first example of the lion, he is concerned with the metaphysical question of mental representation of the *idea*, here he complicates the question with an image seemingly informed by the scientific issue of optics. The image constructs an analogy between visual perception and internal cogitation, between the reflective surface and the mind (perhaps playing on the polysemy of 'reflection' also contained within the Italian *riflessione*). Science, metaphysics and artistic representation converge in a kaleidoscopic *mise-en-abîme*. The mirror is, of course, a symbol often associated with the art of Mannerism and, later, with the Baroque.[52] The image of the artist looking at art reflected in a mirror evoked by Zuccaro is reminiscent of Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, created almost a century earlier in the 1520s, which represents almost an inversion of Zuccaro's image—there it is the work of art that represents an image reflected in a mirror:



***Figure 14***: Francesco Mazzola, called Parmigianino, Self-portrait in a convex mirror, oil on wood (c. 1523), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

The distortive quality of Parmigianino's self-portrait, with the exaggerated hand in the foreground, testifies to the artist's desire to display an accurate and skilful representation of the reflection, but also to the desire to capture a phenomenon of scientific interest (as Vasari recounts, Parmigiano went to some length in order to be able to complete this particular

[51] For an analysis of the Aristotelianism of the mirror image in Zuccaro and other writers of the period, see James Hutson, *Early Modern Art Theory, Visual Culture and Ideology 1400–1700* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2016), pp. 138–39.

[52] The mirror is also important in Christian symbolism, and this symbolism mobilised in Neo-Platonic writings intent on characterising both human and divine love in terms of mutuality and reciprocity. Given Zuccaro's evident Neo-Platonic leanings, it is not unreasonable he is making use of this symbolic tradition here.

painterly experiment).[53] Zuccaro's examples echo wider debates during this period about the nature of mental representation. The phrase 'rappresentante chiaramente e distintamente' used by Zuccaro to characterise the nature of the images reflected in the mirror might indeed remind us of the Cartesian 'clear and distinct perction' of the *Discours* (1637), *Méditations* (1641) and *Principles of Philosophy* (1644).[54] As both these passages, along with the definitions of *disegno interno* above show, Zuccaro emphasises the radically formal quality of the idea in the artist's mind— it is the intellect and not the senses, that enables the artist to arrive at the essence of the thing represented.

Given this insistence on the mental, we might ask ourselves what the causal link is between the idea in the artist's mind and the external, drawn representation of that idea. The answer is that Zuccaro does not provide a causal description of their relationship, stating only that *disegno esterno* is the expression of the idea:

> questa immagine ideale formata nella mente, e poi espressa, e dichiarata per linea, ò in altra maniera visiva, è detta volgarmente Disegno, perché segna, e mostra al senso, & all'intelletto, la forma di quella cosa formata nella mente, & impressa nell'idea.[55]
>
> [This mental image formed in the mind, and later expressed and declared through lines or by other visual means, is commonly called [external] design because it marks and shows to the senses and the intellect the form of that thing formed in the mind and impressed in the idea].

The stark divide between *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno* is formally reflected in their treatment in two separate books of the treatise. Taken together, *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno* comprise the entire trajectory of artistic creation from beginning (mental idea) to end (execution). Zuccaro's uses of *disegno* span from the moral/prudential understanding of design as a means of regulating human affairs, to the ideal (*disegno* as pure mental image or *concetto*) to the explicitly material and artistic (*disegno* as line drawing, for example).

## III. Montaigne's 'Middle Way'

We've seen how the kind of dualisitic impulse that Nakam, and in a similar way, Panofsky, see as characterizing Mannerism operates in Zuccaro as a distinction between internal and external design. For Nakam, it is particularly echoes of *disegno interno,* the focus on internal idea or the subjective motions of the mind, that she finds in Montaigne. Nakam does, at least implicitly, address the 'external impulse', but subsumes it in her talk of 'genius'—for her, it seems, there is a separation between the internal and the external: first comes Montaigne's exploration of his interiority, then the recognition that this interiority has something to express; the gap here appears to be temporal. But, as I shall argue Montaigne's writing oscillates between, and often wrestles with, these two categories: the internal, private aim of writing and the material, public product of that writing. We often have flashes of his *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno* simultaneously, and as we saw in the previous chapter his uses of the word *dessein*, when applied to his own writing, also often point us in both directions. Montaigne often brings us closer to, or attempts to shed light on, the friction and movement between *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno*. One, overly simplistic, way

[53] Zuccaro, *Idea*, p. 222.
[54] René Descartes, *Œuvres*, 11 vols, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1964-7), vol. 6 (*Discours*, p. 18), vol. 7 (*Méditations*, e.g. p. 65), vol. 3-ii (*Principles)*, p. 26.
[55] Federico Zuccaro, *Idea*, p. 222.

of articulating the differences in Zuccaro's and Montaigne's conception of the relationship between internal and external designs is to conceive of this as a difference in attitudes to the relationship between mind and body.

To flesh out this difference let us consider a passage from II.xvii, 'De la praesumption' occurring after a discussion of language in which Montaigne describes his own as being crude and rugged ('mon langage n'a rien de facile et poly') and as having free and unregulated dispositions ('ayant ses dispositions libres et desreglées'). He goes on to discuss questions of accent (his own 'Perigordin' is described as painful to 'pure French ears') and dialect (including 'Gascon', which he finds 'singularly beautiful') and finally tells us that has lost the fluency of his spoken Latin due to lack of use. We are then offerred the following discussion of beauty:

> [A] La beauté est une piece de grande recommandation au commerce des hommes; c'est le premier moyen de conciliation des uns aux autres, et n'est homme si barbare et si rechigné qui ne se sente aucunement frappé de sa douceur. Le corps a une grand'part à nostre estre, il y tient un grand rang; ainsin sa structure et composition sont de bien juste consideration. Ceux qui veulent desprendre nos deux pieces principales et les sequestrer l'une de l'autre, ils ont tort. Au rebours, il les faut r'accoupler et rejoindre. Il faut ordonner à l'ame non de se tirer à quartier, de s'entretenir à part, de mespriser et abandonner le corps (aussi ne le sçauroit elle faire que par quelque singerie contrefaicte), mais de se r'allier à luy, de l'embrasser, le cherir, luy assister, le contreroller, le conseiller, le redresser et ramener quand il fourvoye, l'espouser en somme et luy servir de mary; à ce que leurs effects ne paroissent pas divers et contraires, ains accordans et uniformes. (639)

At first, it seems like Montaigne is moving away from talking about what beauty might look like in (or through) language and towards a discussion of physical beauty. Indeed, some lines after this passage, we are given a self-conscious description of the author's physical appearance by way of his stature: 'Or je suis d'une taille un peu au dessoubs de la moyenne. Ce defaut n'a pas seulement de la laideur, mais encore de l'incommodité […]'. But rather than expounding on the claim that the body has a large role to play in our being, in who we are, and, implicitly, in how we are judged ('le corps a une grand'part à nostre estre'), he goes on to claim the importance of keeping the body and the soul together ('il les faut r'accoupler et rejoindre'). In fact, we have not departed from linguistic territory. The idea that the soul must not abandon the body, but rather be (re-)allied with it ('se r'allier à lui'), should I think be read as a continuation of a previous comment, occurring some lines earlier, where Montaigne emphasises the importance of an *embodied* form of communication:

> [A] Le mouvement et action animent les paroles, notamment à ceux qui se remuent brusquement, comme je fay, et qui s'echauffent. Le port, le visage, la voix, la robbe, l'assiette [attitude], peuvent donner quelque pris aux choses qui, d'elles mesmes, n'en ont guere, comme le babil.

The list of verbs that Montaigne provides in the first passage above are all ways in which the soul and the body should interact, but rather than leave the 'doing' to the body, it is rather the incorporeal soul that is performing these (physical) actions. It is the soul (the creative part of us) that must embrace the body, control it, bring it back when it strays, espouse it. It is on this fine balancing act between body and soul (in their various incarnations as both active/passive) that the creation of an aesthetic harmony depends: 'à ce que leurs effects ne paroissent pas divers et contraires, ains accordans et uniformes'. Although beauty seems to depend on the body and soul working together, then, its effects do not straightforwardly enact this harmony. While beauty is first said to be the primary means of conciliation

between people ('le premier moyen de conciliation des uns aux autres'), some lines further down we are given an opposite characterisation, beauty is what first distinguishes people from one another and creates hierarchies between them:

> [A] La premiere distinction qui aye esté entre les hommes, et la premiere consideration qui donna les præeminences aux uns sur les autres, il est vraysemblable que ce fut l'advantage de la beauté.[56]

The distinction appears to be based on the appreciation versus the possession of beauty: all people have in principle an equal capacity to be affected by beauty ('n'est homme si barbare et si rechigné qui ne se sente aucunement frappé de sa douceur') but not all people are equally possessed of beautiful traits. Beauty is thus both uniting and divisive. Nevertheless, union and separation take place through the body as site of both beauty possessed and beauty appreciated. The discussion of beauty in 'De la praesumption' is emblematic of Montaigne's view of *corps* and *esprit* as two inseparable entities, long before Descartes tried to bridge the gap he posited between them by declaring them to be 'co-mingled'—mind, the imagination, are not for Montaigne purely 'internal' phenomena in the sense of belonging to the irrecoverably private realm of thought.[57] Circling back to Zuccaro, by way of Nakam, we can see that the insistence on the internal movements of the mind as the primary agents in the formation of a *disegno* or a *dessein*, is not reflected in Montaigne's own approach to the mental faculties. In the following section, I consider the ways in which this 'co-mingling' between internal and external designs is reflected in Montaigne's practice of writing, by returning to Montaigne's writing on thumbs.

## IV. Lines, Hands and Thumbs

Montaigne takes great pains to characterize his own writing as fluid and spontaneous, and as emerging more from the workings of chance than those of his will: '[B] [l]e hasard y a plus de droict que moy' (I.x, 40). Using the same techniques employed by artists as a means of trying out ideas on the page, Montaigne traces and re-traces lines of thought, sometimes turning established lines into new ideas, or at other times following familiar trains of thought in new and unexpected directions. This can be seen on a formal level in those very short chapters like 'Des pouces' in which he touches on a subject to reveal an intuition or idea that he associates with it, only to dive out of it as quickly as he launched in. In other chapters, there are sketches of arguments or ideas that are proposed without being followed through, either to be picked up again in later chapters, or to be left tantalizingly incomplete. There is something particularly evocative in Montaigne's focus on the human hand, which is the part of the body most immediately concerned by gesture. We might think of hands as the conduit for intention, mediators between the mental and the material, for both artists and writers. The thumb has a special role in the gestural language of creation: '[l]e rapprochement du pouce et de l'index, si caractéristique de l'humain, s'ouvre ici sur la possibilité des trois gestes créateurs du mouvement, de l'écriture et du dessin.'[58] It is no

[56] II.xvii, p. 640.

[57] My discussion here is in dialogue with that of Wes Williams in 'Montaigne on Imagination', in Philippe Desan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 679–98. Williams stresses the embodied nature of Montaigne's accounts of mind and imagination, but does so through an approach that is cognitive in flavour. The literature on Montaigne and imagination is rich—see Williams's article above for a good preliminary bibliography.

[58] Guillemette Bolens, *Le Style des Gestes: Corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire* (Lausanne: BHMS, 2008), p. 4.

coincidence that hands also formed the subject of studies on paper by many Renaissance artists, as they experimented with the gestural potential of this subject[59]. A famous example of such a study of hands is this drawing by Leonardo:

[59] On the gestural force or 'eloquence' of the hand in Renaissance drawing see Catherine whistler, 'Raphael's Hands' in Catherine Whistler and Ben Thomas (eds), *Raphael: The Drawings* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2017), pp. 29–41.



***Figure 15***: Leonardo da Vinci, Study of Hands, charcoal, metalpoint, white heightening, on pale pinkish-buff prepared paper (1474), Royal Library, (Windsor).

In this drawing, a study of female hands made, most probably, in preparation for the portrait of Ginevra de' Benci which now hangs at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, Leonardo experiments with the composition—his modulating ideas captured on the page through the changing contours of the line.[60] The subject's right hand includes multiple variations—we can see Leonardo playing with the outline, varying through different strokes of the stylus the shape of wrist and fingers and the thickness of the palm. We have the same hand repeated below it but in a different incarnation, softly outlined as he plays with the position of the thumb and the angle of the wrist, and has it rest gently against the cradling left hand. The relatively more finished drawing of the left hand gives way to a series of wayward lines at the level of the forearm which then converge into the bare hints of an outline of the upper arm. Adding another level to the exploratory nature of the study, the grotesque head in the upper left-hand corner can be interpreted as adding a dimension of playfulness, as Leonardo juxtaposes the graceful with something decidedly less so.

However, the grotesque head could also be seen to be a continuation of Leonardo's thinking about the human form. Whereas Ginevra's hands play tribute to a highly idealized beauty that is found across many of Leonardo's painted works, the grotesque head corresponds to a different way of conceiving human figures, one in which symmetry and proportion are foregone, and may show how for Leonardo these two seemingly opposite manifestations of the human form are simply two points on a spectrum, consistent with the manifold variations of human anatomy.[61] Although what we have here is a preparatory study, intended to be 'resolved' in a final piece (in this case the portrait of Ginevra), Leonardo was a prolific draughtsman, and the majority of his drawings were not preparatory (that is, not meant as studies for a final painting)—often they were highly skilled doodles drawn by the artist in the pages or margins of his many notebooks.[62] Leonardo is notable for the ample use he made of the spectrum of artistic possibilities afforded by the sketch in his notebooks, and for his experiments with *invenzione*, or artistic invention.[63] Leonardo mobilises the inherent open-ended generativeness of the sketch, which 'inspires variations

[60] On Leonardo's drawings in the Windsor Collection, see Kenneth Clark and Carlo Pedretti, *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle*, 3 vols (London: Phaidon, 1968). See also Carmen C. Bambach (ed.), *Leonardo da Vinci: Master Draftsman* (New York and New Haven/ London: The Metropolitan Museum and Yale University Press, 2003).

[61] Leonardo's grotesques were among the most copied and disseminated of his works and played to the taste for monstrosity and deformity that, already well-established in Leonardo's time, had grown substantially by the seventeenth century. The Vasarian view of Leonardo as a man of whim and experimentation supports the interpretation that the grotesque head is just a playful addition to the sheet. In the nineteenth century, with the discovery of Leonardo's manuscripts, Leonardo's methodical approach to nature and particularly the human body became evident. Seen in light of his writings, the grotesques are consistent with Leonardo's scientific fascination with the human form. See Ernst H. Gombrich, 'Leonardo da Vinci's Method of Analysis and Permutation' in *The Heritage of Apelles: Studies in the art of the Renaissance* (Edinburgh: Phaidon, 1976), pp. 39–75 (p. 57–75).

[62] Leonardo also stands out among his contemporaries for the number of pieces, many of them paintings, that he left unfinished. Freud devotes a large part of his psychoanalytic study of the artist to uncovering what he sees as the reasons for these routine abandonments of his works before completion. See *Leonardo da Vinci: A Memory of His Childhood*, trans. by Alan Tyson (London: Routledge, 2013), esp. Section One.

[63] *Invenzione* is an art-theoretical term that was used to describe the choice of subject matter in painting and other visual arts. It is closely related, although not identical to, the rhetorical tenet of *inventio* which was considered the first of the five canons of rhetoric and designated that part of oratory concerned with coming up with the subject matter (*res*) of discourse. The classic tenets of *inventio* are laid down in Cicero's *De Inventione* (see Cicero, *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics.* trans. by H. M. Hubbell, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949)). It is not surprising that Italian art theorists often associate *invenzione* in painting to that of poetry. Inserting himself into debates surrounding the *paragone* between the two, Leonardo explicitly writes that painters are just as free as poets to engage in *invenzione*. See Leonardo da Vinci, *On Painting*, ed./trans. Martin Kemp (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 33.

on itself, *nuove invenzioni*'.[64] The decision to display drawings (such as the Virgin with St. Anne at the Annunziata) rather than 'finished' works of art, made the viewer privy to the process of creation, and thereby provided access, in some sense, to the internal mechanisms of thought that gave birth to the visible marks on the page—to the *process* of *invenzione* and not just its final, more polished, outcomes.

If Leonardo stands near the beginning, as we saw above, of the story of the revaluation of drawing in Renaissance Italy, his experimental drawing practice nevertheless retains a historical continuity with that of later artists. Let us fast forward some 100 years from the exhibition of Leonardo's drawing of the Virgin and St. Anne, to a sketch produced by the hand of a young apprentice, Bartolomeo Schedoni.[65] Schedoni studied under Federico Zuccaro and, operating at the turn of the seventeenth century, lies at the cusp of Mannerism and the Baroque, separated from Leonardo by a century of artistic development in both theory and practice. We might therefore expect, given also Zuccaro's emphasis on the metaphysical status of *disegno interno* as the guiding principle in artistic creation, the drawing of his pupil to exhibit a refined and resolved approach to drawing. Yet the Morgan Library sheet (Fig. 16) represents a fundamentally exploratory approach to its subject matter—we can see Schedoni trying out different positions with the fingers in the right hand, experimenting with the thickness of the left thumb, as well as with the shape of the left index finger. The roughness of the lines suggests rapidity in the laying down of the different options, and the sketch represents, more than the Leonardo drawing (which already includes the layers of shading required of a 'finished' piece) a vigorous and searching inquiry into the subject matter. The hands and forearms are not suggestive, unlike in the Windsor Sheet, of the rest of the figure, appearing disembodied, almost floating against the plain backdrop of the paper. As much as an 'intellectual process of design', these two drawings, and particularly the Schedoni, foreground the dual nature of the design process. As mental idea or image collides with the means of visual and material expression(s) of the image on paper. We are invited to follow the ensuing lines that the artists have traced and retraced in order to capture the movement of that mental image, the more 'finished' aspects represented simultaneously, visually and spatially, as the elements of unresolvedness and allusion. These visual traces are the evidence left behind of the frictional and multiple, encounter between mind and world, that is not a straightforward one-to-one relation.

[64] David Rosand, *Drawing Acts,* p. 52.

[65] On Schedoni, see Federica Dallasta and Cristina Cecchinelli, *Bartolomeo Schedoni: Pittore Emiliano* (Parma: Fondazione Monte di Parma, 1999) and Emilio Negro and Nicosetta Roio, *Bartolomeo Schedoni 1578–1615* (Modena: Artioli, 2000).



***Figure 16***: Bartolomeo Schedoni, *Studies of Forearms and Hands* (recto), charcoal and white chalk on paper (c. 1600), Morgan Library, New York.

What is the upshot of placing these two drawings alongside 'Des pouces'? It might seem strange to compare these two sketches, with their *pentimenti* (alterations) to a chapter that undergoes practically no revision—whose pages in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* bear almost no trace of rethinking or reworking. But at a primary level, Montaigne, too, tests out his ideas on the page in an effort to enact the movements of his thoughts and the associations between different images, snippets of his readings, memories, and ideas, each of which feed and aliment one another. This chimes with Montaigne's own descriptions of the motions of the mind, *l'esprit*: '[B] C'est un mouvement irregulier, perpetuel, sans patron, et sans but. Ses inventions s'eschauffent, se suyvent, et s'entreproduisent l'une l'autre' (III.xiii, 1068).[66] These sketches provide a visual analogue to that process and are motivated by a similar concern to capture the particular motions of the thinking, imaginative mind. Chapters like 'Des pouces' build into their textual design a marked restlessness and open-endedness that aligns them with the dynamics of sketches such as those above, whose artists play with different ideas, leaving behind the raw traces of these experiments. In the chapter, Montaigne offers us a number of interpretations of the main subject—thumbs—each of which, while connecting to the preceding one, also pulls us in a different direction—he experiments with his theme, not here in the sense of testing out his opinions on it, but in allowing it to guide him as much as he guides it. The effect that this creates on the reader is, in part, the same as that of the sketch on the viewer—it invites us to participate in an act of (re)creation as we retrace the visible steps of the stylus's creative journey, so too does Montaigne, as he places in front of us the task of recreating his associative imagination through the many traces that it leaves on the page in the form of images, anecdotes and Latin citations. In Montaigne, as in the two drawings, the *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno* of the artist mingle as the lines or words on the sheet or page allow the viewer or reader a glimpse, or more, of the transition between one and the other, a transition that in Montaigne involves a friction, a tension that is never quite resolved.

In the case of the Windsor sheet, the experiments with the placement of the thumbs echo the shifting positions of the hands of the artist as he undertakes the drawing—the viewer is tempted to superimpose an imagined view of Leonardo's hand at work over the (drawn) hands of his subject. In the Morgan Library sketch, the greater rapidity of the sketch enacts the movements of the artist's working mind, capturing the vitality of his cognitive motion. In both instances, the works perform their own haptic qualities. In her discussion of the chapter, Fausta Garavini also points out the latent sexual import of the subject of thumbs, and its symbolic relation to virility, linking 'Des pouces' to other instances in the *Essais* where the thumb appears in a more overtly sexualised context.[67] For Garavini, this chapter represents a surfacing of Montaigne's unconscious through a series of symbolic associations that resist logical connection.[68] Garavini is right that we might see this chapter as staging a particularly masculine set of anecdotes, dominated by war and gore. And there is a parallel to be made, too, with the kind of masculinity associated with the line; the line ventures, probes and delimits. As Patricia Reilly shows, these associations are embedded in the art-historical context of Montaigne's time, when 'the relationship between *disegno* and *colore* is one of gendered opposition', which has its roots in the gendered hierarchization

[66] For an excellent analysis of this passage from 'De l'experience' and Montaigne's changes in the Bordeaux Copy, see Luke O'Sullivan, '"Double et divers": Writing Doubly in Montaigne's *Essais*', *The Modern Language Review*, 112:2, 320–40 (esp. 321–23).

[67] Fausta Garavini, 'Il pollice di Montaigne', pp. 6–7. She cites II.xvii, 'De la praesumption' (650) and III.v, 'Sur des vers de Virgile' (887).

[68] Ibid., p. 7.

of form (male) above matter (female).[69] We perhaps needn't venture into a psychoanalytic reading of 'Des pouces', then, to bring forth the (gendered) sexual dimension in this chapter—it is inscribed in the kind of freedom enacted in the lines of Montaigne's sketch-like thinking on paper. Moreover, while the lists of anecdotes brought together by Montaigne indubitably speak to a male military and violent imaginary, they also speak of the special vulnerability of the flesh.

Montaigne performs in this short chapter the process of his own writing, leaving behind raw, visible traces of the movements of his thoughts. In choosing not to go back and edit this chapter, leaving it in a tantalisingly sketch-like form, the author draws our attention to the fraught question of literary creation. Although the various anecdotes and ideas share a common underlying object, the thumb, they also, I think, share an ineffable additional something that Montaigne himself perhaps struggled to put into words and which is only reducible to his own peculiar habits of thought. Montaigne is feeling himself towards an inexpressible idea, an *aboutness* of his subject matter, if we like. That this metaphorical act of reaching through or towards an experience, through writing, should be so evident in a chapter about thumbs, or, as Montaigne mentions himself what they often stand in for, hands—is no coincidence. Hands provide a visual image that in some ways stands in for the kinesic nature of thought required to recreate the phenomenological experience that Montaigne is trying to relate. The visceral images of thumbs pricked and bitten or hands de-thumbed that Montaigne puts side by side and has rub up against one another in the chapter also serve as an abrupt reminder of how much we, and our author, depend on these small digits, necessary tools in writing as much as in war. In both cases, the work in front of us performs its own haptic qualities through the chosen subject-matter, (re)alerting us to the embodied nature of writing as well as reading. The vulnerability, the nakedness if we like, of chapters such as 'Des pouces' should be read as a performance of the kind of vulnerability Montaigne talks about elsewhere in the *Essais*, particularly in those places where he considers the fallibilities of the reproductive member, which I explore in the final chapter. The permeability of the penis or the hand runs parallel to the permeability of the creative mind, leaking thoughts out onto the page, at times through wilful effort and at others through factors lying just *au-delà* of the writer's control. In this way, we can also reconsider the interpretation offered by Garavini that this text remains 'frozen in its primitive form, paralysed at the level of its first draft'.[70] The text retains an essential motion as it invites us to follow the non-discursive lines of Montaigne's mind, and reading, at work.

My thinking about the connections between drawing and the expressive force of writing owes a great debt to the Raphael and Eloquence project spearheaded by Catherine Whistler. The exhibition with which that project culminated underscored the gestural force of Raphael's drawings which, far from being given value and meaning as preliminary studies for finished paintings, were exalted as works of art in their own right, and as means to witness the thinking process of the artist at work. In the catalogue for that exhibition, and elsewhere in her writings, Whistler has demonstrated the importance of the exploratory and experimental function of drawing, its ability to capture the movement of an artist's thinking

[69] Patricia Reilly, 'The Taming of the Blue: Writing out Color in Italian Renaissance Theory' in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds), *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992) pp. 86–99 (p. 88). We might be reminded of Montaigne's quip in III.viii, 'D l'art de conferer' that he privileges the *manière*, not the *matière*, as well as his biologically bizarre description in I.viii, 'De l'oisiveté', of a woman being only capable of creating amorphous lumps of flesh without the help of a male seed (32).

[70] 'congelato nella sua forma primitiva, paralizzato al livello della redazione originaria' (Fausta Garavini, 'Il pollice di Montaigne', p. 7).

mind, including, crucially, the changing of that mind.[71] Despite the emphasis I have placed in this thesis on drawing's dynamic and experimental force, Whistler's arguments are not uncontroversial—in the world of Renaissance art history, drawings are largely still analysed in terms of their teleological function, playing a fundamental part in the attribution of 'finished' works of art.[72] But, as the abstract artist Bridget Riley points out, this teleological approach to sketches and studies 'does not necessarily bear any relation to how artists themselves viewed them'. Often 'drawing is an exploratory end in itself'.[73] In a sense, as I explored above, the same teleological approach has been adopted for Montaigne's short and/or early chapters, which have been placed at the beginning of a teleological progression towards more mature, developed writings culminating in the chapters of the third book. Despite his focus on Montaigne's writerly experimentation, Legros nevertheless approaches them with such an *analyse génetique*.[74] The charged language he uses to describe the short chapters ('delaissés' 'nains' (27), 'sans lendemains' (28)) and his comparison of these chapters to Montaigne's dead children, reveals a marked hierarchy, one which viewing Montaigne's writing through the dynamics of the sketch allows us to resist.[75]

## V. Of Atoms and Squiggles

The triangulation between the hand, chance and the textual design of the *Essais* can be further developed via an exploration of two seemingly distinct elements of the text: the author's engagement with Lucretius, and some paratextual markings made by Montaigne in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*.[76] Let us start with the former. As scholars have noted, the author's textual debt to Lucretius runs high—his citations of the poet are exceeded only by those of Horace.[77] Lucretius's *De rerum natura* perhaps more than any other work cited in the *Essais* constructs a Montaignian balance between form and content—with the philosophical, metaphysical, subject matter inscribed in a language that is as poetic as it is sincere, as methodical as it is digressive. Perhaps we should say rather that Montaigne's prose is 'Lucretian' in its approach to the combination of philosophy and literature. Or, to listen to Montaigne, we could say both, for as the author of the *Essais* writes (in Latin) in his annotated copy of the poem that, according to the Epicurean theory of the movement of atoms, he might have been born before and might be born again.[78] We can read this as an

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[71] See Catherine Whistler, *Venice and Drawing 1500-1800: Theory, Practice and Collecting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016) and

[72] The debate, and the assumptions and implications of the two sides, are helpfully summarised in Ita Mac Carthy, review of Catherine Whistler and Ben Thomas, *Raphael: The Drawings*, *Renaissance Studies*, 32:5 (2018), 848–57.

[73] Bridget Riley, 'Foreword' in Isabel Seligman, *Lines of Thought*, p. 17.

[74] Alain Legros, 'Delaissés, mais laissés', 27.

[75] It is interesting, given Legros's comparison, that both Florio and Charles Cotton, the seventeenth-century translator of the *Essais*, translate '[C] pourtant fourvoyent si souvent nos desseins' (III.xii, 1061) with *miscarry* (Michel de Montaigne, *The essayes*, trans. John Florio, p. 632 ; Michel de Montaigne, *Essays of Michael seigneur de Montaigne*, 3 vols, trans. Charles Cotton (London: T. Basset, 1693), vol. 3, p. 461). In both cases what I have given as a positively inflected chancy, experimental quality to Montaigne's *extravaguant* writing receives a reading with more negative (and misogynistic) undertones.

[76] There is also a connection between Lucretius and Montaigne's annotations: the author of the *Essais*'s copy of *De rerum natura* contained many passages marked and commented in his own hand. See Michael A. Screech, *Montaigne's Annotated Copy of Lucretius: A Transcription and Study of the Manuscript, Notes and Pen-Marks* (Geneva: Droz, 1988). I look at this conection briefly in the next chapter.

[77] See Pierre Villey, *Les sources et l'évolution des* "Essais" *de Montaigne*, p. 150.

[78] As Montaigne writes in a flyleaf of his copy of Lucretius: 'Ut sunt diversi atomorum motus non incredibile est sic convenisse olim atomos aut conventuras ut alius nascatur Montanus 251/' ('seeing that the movement

example of how Montaigne's readings seep into his attitudes to writing, and subsequently affects the way in which he writes. As Gerard Passannante notes, for a writer preoccupied with his literary legacy, the idea of transmigration must have seemed particularly appealing.[79] But we can read this annotation as pointing to more than Montaigne's concern over the posthumous reading of the *Essais*. The metaphysical content of Lucretius's poem, which constitutes one of the key classical sources for Renaissance thinking on chance, and in particular the idea of change (however accurately represented by Montaigne), is reflected in his process of writing. which involves a series of 'chance encounters' between various strands of experience and 'atoms' of discursive thoughts.[80]

This idea is brought out lucidly by the lines from III.ii ('Du repentir') that I analysed in Chapter One: 'Les traits de ma peinture ne forvoyent point, quoy qu'ils se changent et diversifient. Le monde n'est qu'une branloire perenne' (804). Montaigne's textual design (the brushstrokes of his 'peinture') cannot go wrong or be frustrated (cannot 'fourvoyer') unlike the designs of men. The *Essais* will thus be 'exactly' Montaigne's because they will replicate the chancy, perennial movement of his thought, which is itself a microcosmical replication of the chancy, perennial movement of the world. The manifold movements of chance are pre-inscribed into Montaigne's design, as he himself writes in III.ix ('De la vanité'): 'mon dessein est, de representer en parlant, une profonde nonchalance d'accent et de visage, et des mouvemens fortuites et impremeditez, comme naissans des occasions presents' (963). This quotation should not be interpreted as referring so much to the *style* or structure of Montaigne's writing, but to the author's attempt to represent the mix of contingent factors entering the writing process by giving himself over to them—including, importantly, the acts of posthumous interpretation. With this Montaigne asserts that the life and his work is blurred: his reading, his thoughts and his lived experience find a common meeting space at the level of the page, where Montaigne's writing reflects this unique constellation and interaction of external and internal influences.[81] Lucretius's influence on Montaigne is to bring forward the 'embodied force'[82] of textual design, which brings together these various influences. As Montaigne is minutely aware that these various influences are in flux, his design is always radically open to their changing and fluctuating nature as they are modulated by the workings of chance. What critics have most often glossed as Montaigne's preference for a particular *style* of writing, then, bears reformulating in terms of a *dessein*. Montaigne's himself alerts us to the difference between these when, in a C-text addition to a passage in the 'Apologie', he writes of the 'dogmatic' philosophers, such as Epicurus and Parmenides (and with whom he also groups Seneca and Plutarch):

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of atoms is so diverse it would not be unbelievable if the atoms once came together, or will come together in the future, so that another Montaigne be born.'), Michael Screech, *Montaigne's Annotated Copy of Lucretius* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), p. 134. Translation my own.

[79] Gerard Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 105.

[80] For a discussion of the relationship between chance, encounters and the writing of the *Essais*, see Olivier Guerrier, *Rencontre et Reconnaissance: Les 'Essais' ou le jeu du hasard et de la vérité* (Paris: Garnier, 2016).

[81] For an insightful exposition of this view, see Richard Regosin, *Montaigne's Unruly Brood: Textual Engendering and the Challenge to Paternal Authority* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 15.

[82] 'Lucretius does more than confirm Montaigne's belief in the redundancy of the opposition between sense and style; reading, annotating, and rereading this poem alongside the writing of his own *Essais* alerts him to the *embodied force* of both conjoined.' Wes Williams, 'Well said/Well thought: How Montaigne read his Lucretius', in David Norbrook, Stephen Harrison, Philip Hardie (eds), *Lucretius and the Early Modern* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), pp. 135–60, p. 160. Emphasis mine.

> [A] Ils ont une forme d'escrire douteuse [C'] en substance [A] et un [C'] ***dessein*** [A] enquerant plustost qu'intruisant, encore qu'ils entresement leur stile de cadances dogmatistes. (509)[83]

Here, Montaigne replaces '*stile* enquerant' with '*dessein* enquerant'—denoting that the particular quality of these writers, what Montaigne most admires in them, is identified not in a written style but in a *design*, a mental idea or project that is then externalised through writing.

At this point, we might think back to Terence Cave's description quoted in Chapter Three which implicitly asked what, if anything, links the various strands, chapters and meandering thoughts of the *Essais* together. We saw that Cave's answer, at the end of his short book, is that it is 'the first-person-singular subject' of experience[84], but Cave goes onto say that this subject is an essentially fragmented one, often depicted by Montaigne as no more than 'a fleeting series of temporally located experiences'.[85] And, indeed, if we see Montaigne's views of the world as 'ever-changing' and perennially in flux as bearing on his own conception of himself, too, then, on this view, there would be as many 'threads' as there are Montaignes, of which—following Montaigne's interpretation of Lucretius—there could be infinitely many. I do not wish to challenge Cave's claim as much as to offer a different version of its core idea: namely that the 'thread' that runs through the various chapters and strata of the *Essais* should be identified with a *design*—at one pole of which lies authorial intention, at the other pole of which lies the material text, made up of a series of words in a certain order. At the heart of this design is a method of writing in which the potentially damaging effects of chance and circumstance are 'neutralised' (which is not to say resolved) by being incorporated into the very process which gives rise to the textual artefact we call the *Essais*.

The *dessein* of the *Essais* is, then, embedded in a textual artefact that is the result of a practice of writing that incorporates chance into its creative process. We saw in Chapter One that in I.xxiii ('Divers evenemens de mesme conseil') Montaigne evokes precisely such a model of artistic creation when he discusses the overpowering force of the inspiration of poets and orators that pushes them beyond their design, and states in the subsequent sentence that the same thing occurs with painters:

> Les saillies poetiques, qui emportent leur autheur et le ravissent hors de soy, pourquoy ne les attribuerons nous à son bon heur? puis qu'il confesse luy mesme qu'elles surpassent sa suffisance et ses forces, et les reconnoit venir d'ailleurs que de soy, et ne les avoir aucunement en sa puissance: non plus que les orateurs ne disent avoir en la leur ces mouvemens et agitations extraordinaires, qui les poussent au delà de leur dessein. Il en est de mesmes en la peinture, qu'il eschappe par fois des traits de la main du peintre, surpassans sa conception et sa science, qui le tirent luy mesmes en admiration, et qui l'estonnent. (127).

The language here speaks of transgressing boundaries: Montaigne uses 'hors de soy', 'surpassent', 'd'ailleurs', 'extraordinaires' and 'poussent au delà'—all words or phrases that convey a sense of going beyond limits or constraints. The talk of 'forces' being 'surpassed' harkens back to the 'Au lecteur' and the phrase 'mes forces ne sont pas capables d'un tel dessein', which represents the very first instance of the word in the *Essais*. As in the 'Au lecteur' we have a sense of a certain quality or type of writing being beyond an author's

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[83] On Montaigne's engagement with Seneca and Plutarch and their 'doubtful' way of writing, see Luke O'Sullivan, *'Une forme d'escrire douteuse et irresolue': Seneca and Plutarch in Montaigne's* 'Essais', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham, 2017).

[84] *How to Read Montaigne*, p. 96.

[85] Ibid., p. 93.

*dessein*—but whereas in the preface of the *Essais* this is the negative quality of 'beautifying' the self-portrait for (posthumous) glory ('peigner' rather than 'peindre' his likeness)[86] here it is the transporting power of poetry that is beyond the poet's power. Likened to, or perhaps even identified with, chance, true poetic inspiration is external to the poet, it is a force that acts *upon* her, rather than originating *within* her. It is worth returning to this passage in the light of the discussion in the previous section of Montaigne's approach to human designs, not least because Montaigne departs here quite starkly from the teleological model that informs his accounts of the designs of humans. What we have here is instead a view of design that pertains to artistic creation that emphasises the essential unpredictability and indeterminacy of the artistic process. The embodied nature of this indeterminacy is evocatively called to mind by Montaigne through the reference to the artist's hand (la peinture […] eschappe parfois les traits de la main du peintre'), and in particular the apparent disconnect between the artist's mental faculties ('conception' and 'science') and the graphic act which escapes or otherwise overflows cognitive control.

Once more, this problematizes the question of how we should understand the design of the *Essais*. For if Montaigne's dual descriptions of the effects of chance in the creative endeavour are applied to his own *œuvre*, then it seems that both the negative qualities and the positive qualities of the *Essais* are down to *fortune* rather than *dessein*. There is another way to think of this passage, however, and that is to read the last line 'qui les poussent au delà de leur dessein' as meaning that the 'extraordinary movements and agitations of orators'—and by extension the overwhelming effects of the other arts Montaigne mentions in the passage—push artists to achieve, not only their original design, but something even greater than they had intended. What lies 'au-delà' would then encompass both the original design *and* something other, something more, than lies within the scope of their intended outcome. On this view, chance and design are not opposed forces but complementary; they are two things that can sometimes align to favourably shape the course of events. Human design is only disrupted by chance when it aims for perfection, but a design that is flexible rather than fixed (as, it is implied, those of the best poets, painters and orators) can be aided, rather than hindered, by the workings of chance. This has an important consequence for our reading of the language of *dessein* occurring in the 'Au lecteur'*:* when Montaigne asserts that the attainment of posthumous glory is 'beyond his design' he might placing such an achievement squarely in the realm of chance.[87] Montaigne's *process* of writing embodies this attitude: manifested in the digressive style of the *Essais*, their lack of sustained organizing principle, and their stratified, rather than linear, composition.

Let us look at a striking visual manifestation of the particular kind of dynamism that characterises the textual design of the *Essais*, enacted by Montaigne's own hand. On the second page of II.viii in the Bordeaux Copy, after Montaigne has just announced the wildness and extravagance of his design, we find a large pen mark. This mark—which resembles an extended 'M'— may well be no more than Montaigne testing out his pen in the margin of the manuscript. But it enacts the way the relationship between the semiotic act of writing and that of drawing, encapsulated in the visual import of the line on the page, whilst also serving as an apt reminder of the spontaneity and chancy nature of the creative process described by Montaigne:

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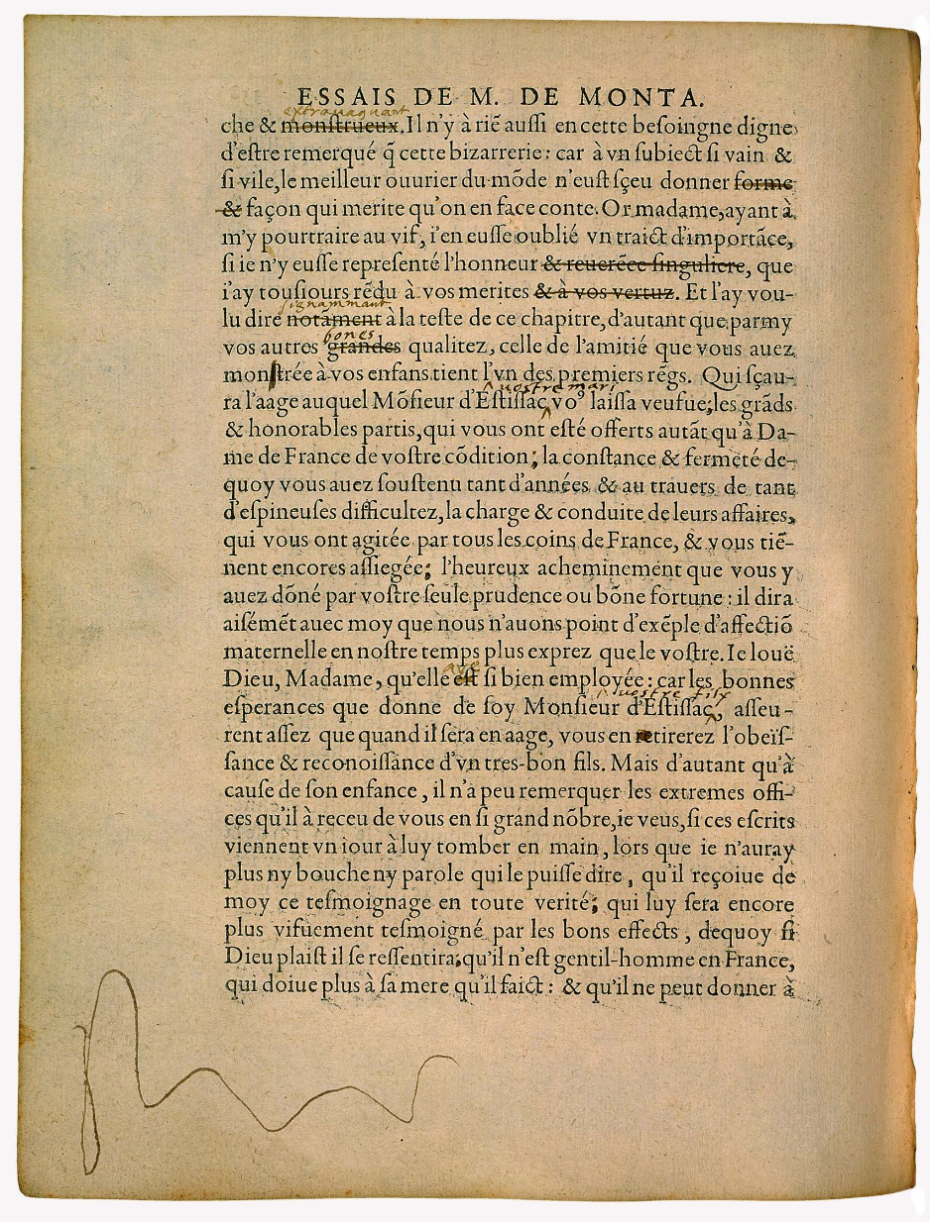
[86] See II.xviii, 'Du dementir', (665).

[87] As Marie-Dominique Couzinet writes, for Montaigne '[l]a Gloria, in effetti, non è attaccata alla persona, ma alla fortuna. È una cosa esterna, "accidentale" nei confronti del glorioso.' [Glory, indeed, is not attached to one's person, but to fortune. It is something external, 'accidental' with respect to the glorious person']. ('Materia e Forma' in *Ombre del Soggetto: Potere e autonomia nella costruzione della modernità* ed. by M. E. Sanna (Pisa: ETS, 2006), p. 13).



ESSAIS DE M. DE MONTA.

che & ~~monſtrueux~~. Il n'y à riẽ auſſi en cette beſoingne digne d'eſtre remerqué q̃ cette bizarrerie : car à vn ſubiect ſi vain & ſi vile, le meilleur ouurier du mõde n'euſt ſçeu donner ~~forme & façon~~ qui merite qu'on en face conte. Or madame, ayant à m'y pourtraire au vif, i'en euſſe oublié vn traict d'importãce, ſi ie n'y euſſe repreſenté l'honneur ~~& reuerẽce ſinguliere~~, que i'ay touſiours rẽdu à vos merites ~~& à vos vertuz~~. Et l'ay voulu dire ~~notamment~~ à la teſte de ce chapitre, d'autant que parmy vos autres ~~grandes~~ qualitez, celle de l'amitié que vous auez monſtrée à vos enfans tient l'vn des premiers rẽgs. Qui ſçaura l'aage auquel Mõſieur d'Eſtiſſac vo⁹ laiſſa veufue, les grãds & honorables partis, qui vous ont eſté offerts autãt qu'à Dame de France de voſtre cõdition ; la conſtance & fermeté dequoy vous auez ſouſtenu tant d'années & au trauers de tant d'eſpineuſes difficultez, la charge & conduite de leurs affaires, qui vous ont agitée par tous les coins de France, & vous tiẽnent encores aſſiegée ; l'heureux acheminement que vous y auez dõné par voſtre ſeule prudence ou bõne fortune : il dira aiſemẽt auec moy que nous n'auons point d'exẽple d'affectiõ maternelle en noſtre temps plus exprez que le voſtre. Ie louë Dieu, Madame, qu'elle eſt ſi bien employée : car les bonnes eſperances que donne de ſoy Monſieur d'Eſtiſſac, aſſeurent aſſez que quand il ſera en aage, vous en retirerez l'obeïſſance & reconoiſſance d'vn tres-bon fils. Mais d'autant qu'à cauſe de ſon enfance, il n'a peu remerquer les extremes offices qu'il à receu de vous en ſi grand nõbre, ie veus, ſi ces eſcrits viennent vn iour à luy tomber en main, lors que ie n'auray plus ny bouche ny parole qui le puiſſe dire, qu'il reçoiue de moy ce teſmoignage en toute verité ; qui luy ſera encore plus vifuement teſmoigné par les bons effects, dequoy ſi Dieu plaiſt il ſe reſſentira ; qu'il n'eſt gentil-homme en France, qui doiue plus à ſa mere qu'il faict : & qu'il ne peut donner à

***Figure 17:*** Michel de Montaigne, Les Essais (Paris: L'Angelier, 1588), from the Exemplaire de Bordeaux, p. 359.

The squiggle, with its serpentine trajectory across the bottom of the page, might remind us of the graphic lines found in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*—those used to describe plotlines in volume 6 of the novel, and that representing the flourish made by Corporal Trim with his walking stick marriage in volume 9 (Figure 16).[88]

[88] The flourish is made by the Corporal when discussing freedom in relation to marriage, as a gesture symbolising the freedom of the single man. On the squiggle, see Polly Dickson, 'Tracing Squiggles: Laurence Sterne, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Honoré de Balzac', *Comparative Literature*, 72:1 (2020), 53–67. The flourish is also reprinted at the start of Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin* (1831).

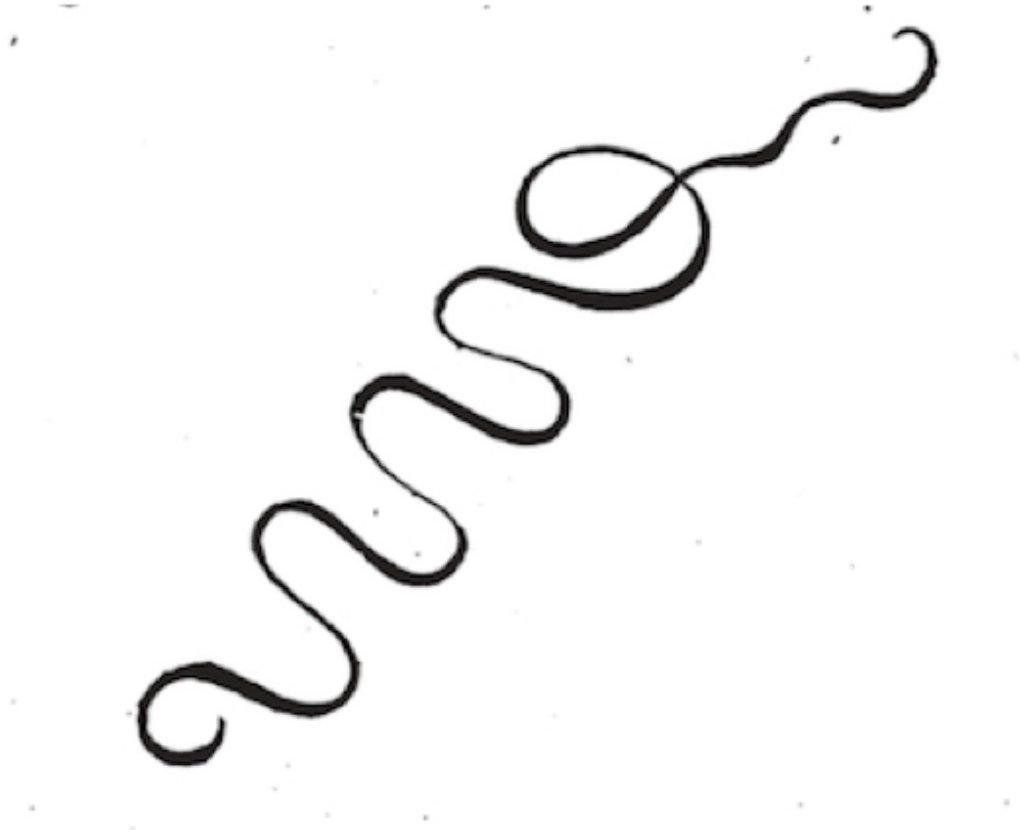


***Figure 18:*** Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristam Shandy, Gentleman (1759), Corporal Trim's flourish.

Sterne, an avid reader of the *Essais*, would not have known of Montaigne's doodle, of course, but I like to think he would have been pleased by the presence of this aberrant pen mark in Montaigne's manuscript, finding in it a companion to his vivacious squiggle. In his study of lines, the anthropologist Tim Ingold uses the Corporal's graphic flourish as an example of a specific *type* of line, what he calls, following Paul Klee, the line that 'goes out for a walk'. Ingold describes this as follows:

> When, pen in hand, Sterne recreated the flourish on the page, his gesture left and enduring trace that we can still read. The artist Paul Klee described this kind of line as the most active and authentic. Whether traced in the air or on paper, whether by the tip of the stick or the pen, it arises from the movement of a point that—just as the Corporal intended—is free to go where it will, for movement's sake.[89]

Ingold's words here capture the dynamic force of the 'walking' line that is reflected in Montaigne's own practice of graphic composition, possessing as it does a similar kind of simultaneous intentional restlessness. The *extravagance* of Montaigne's writing is faithful to the etymological roots of that word, a kind of waywardness characterised by straying *au-delà* of any set, or expected, paths—following serpentine lines of thought that set forth in multiple directions. In the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*, the paratextual annotations in Montaigne's hand add a further layer to this *extravagance* and, as Tom Conley writes, 'comprise an element integral to the verbal picture'.[90] As a further example of this paratextual element, we can think about the epigram Montaigne inscribed in the frontispiece of the Bordeaux manuscript, a phrase transcribed from Virgil's Aeneid: *Viris acquirit eundo*—'she gains strength as she goes'.

[89] Tim Ingold, *Lines* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 75. Klee's expression is taken from his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* and is a reference point for Rosand's discussion of the line *Drawing Acts*, (p. xiii).
[90] Tom Conley, 'The Graphic Imagination and the Printed Page', *The Cambridge Companion to French Literature*, ed. by John D. Lyons (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), pp. 52–69 (p. 65).

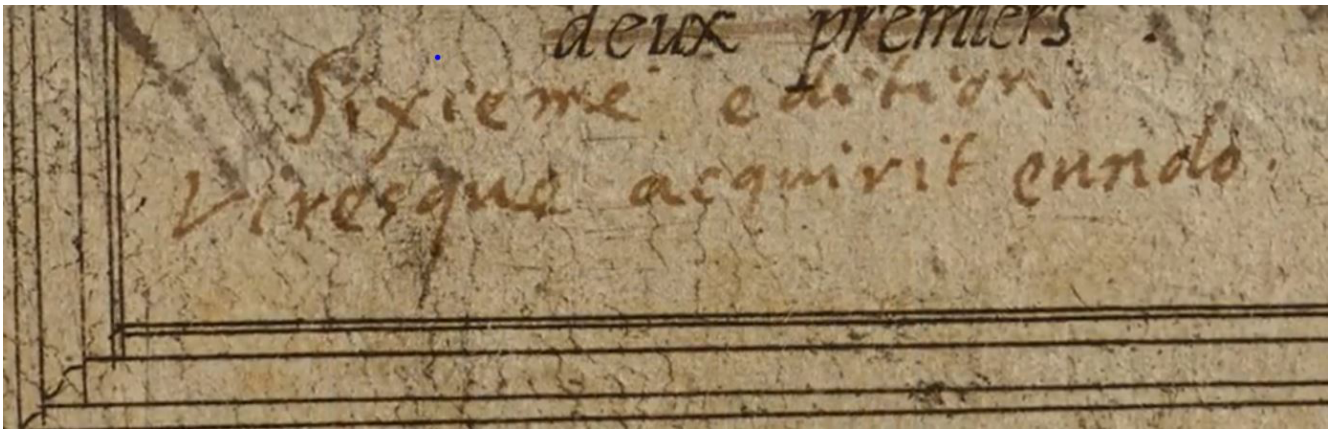



***Figure 19:*** Michel de Montaigne, Les Essais (Paris: L'Angelier, 1588), from the Exemplaire de Bordeaux, frontispiece.

Nominally about *fama* (fame or reputation), this phrase has been interpreted in relation to Montaigne's anxieties (and hopes) about being known and understood via his writing.[91] But, I think, there might also be a more 'surface' reading to be made here of the phrase as capturing something about Montaigne's *hand*writing process and about the particular energy of the graphic line. Gaining strength as they go, the *lignes* of Montaigne's handwriting have a will, or design, of their own—not quite intentional, or teleological, but not simply random. As Montaigne himself writes in I.xxi, 'De la force de l'imagination' that captures the simultaneous activity and passivity of the writing process: [l]a main se porte souvent où nous ne l'envoyons pas' (102).

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by considering the question of *maniera*, and the idea that Mannerist art is characterised as a tension between interiority and expression, between internal and external design. Closer scrutiny of the Mannerist's Zuccaro's understanding of these two poles revealed a chasmic gap between the two: for Zuccaro *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno* remain distinct entities, bridgeable only perhaps through divine will. In order to tease out Montaigne's own *maniera*—something akin to, but not reducible to a personal style, I looked at 'Des pouces' as a special instance in the Montaignian corpus, a chapter that appears impersonal and enumerative and remains largely untouched in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*, but, when read in light of the dynamics of the Renaissance sketch, reveals a process of writing that stages a performance of exploratory open-endedness. I then turned to look, via an exploration of the Lucretian motion of the *Essais*, at some idiosyncratic examples of Montaigne's *disegno esterno* as they appear on the pages of the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*, arguing that these re-alert us once again to the hand as a seat of its own kind of design, not fully internal nor external but somewhere (or something) in between.

Did Montaigne have a *maniera*? One way of summarising what I have proposed by way of an answer to this question is that of putting the *manus* (hand) back in *maniera*, that is, of considering the role of the body as a mediator between thought and page, as well as between form and content, when thinking of the manner of composition and the attitude to writing that produced the *Essais*. The experience of reading the essays, and especially a chapter like 'Des pouces' partakes in this kind of vulnerability, as we have seen, both at times through the chosen subject matter (conjuring images of visceral attacks on bodily integrity), as well as through the interweaved lines of thought that come together at the level of the page, lines that—reflecting the imagination of their author—often have a will of their own. As readers, we are asked to follow these various lines without asking where they (and by extension, we) will end up. In the next and final chapter, I take the notion of design further, into a more expanded, perhaps also more modern, understanding of the term. I look at Montaigne's relationship to designed objects to develop some of the strands that have already arisen from the totality of my discussion so far: aesthetic judgement, vulnerability, and the body.

[91] See Steven Rendall, 'Montaigne under the Sign of *Fama*', *Yale French Studies*, 66 (1984), 137–59.

# IV

# Montaigne and Designed Objects

C'est un mouvement irregulier, perpetuel, sans patron, et sans but. Ses inventions s'eschauffent, se suyvent, et s'entreproduisent l'une l'autre. Ainsi voit l'on, en un ruisseau coulant, Sans fin l'une? eau apres l'autre roulant, Et tout de rang, d'un eternel conduict, L'une suit l'autre, et l'une l'autre fuyt. Par cette-cy celle-là est poussée, Et cette-cy par l'autre est devancée: Tousjours l'eau va dans l'eau, et tousjours est-ce Mesme ruisseau, et tousjours eau divers.

MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, 'De l'experience'

In this chapter my aim is to connect the discussion conducted thus far with a broader debate in Montaigne studies, namely the author's relationship to the plastic arts. In so doing I aim to explore the related question of Montaigne's exploration of the category of the aesthetic, a fraught category, as we shall see, in discussions of the author. What follows is divided into two main parts. I start by looking at Montaigne's writing about Italy and Italian art in the *Essais* and the *Journal*, showing that his apparent disinterest in art is a construct of critics' assumptions about the nature of 'proper' aesthetic response that rests, as Jean Balsamo has also argued, on a distinctly anachronistic understanding of the experience of art. I then use the insights from this analysis to consider Montaigne's approach to three types of designed objects, two of which might initially be surprising. The first is a complex of objects, made up of a *secco* (wall painting) that adorned Montaigne's study, and the inscription of some lines from an ode by Horace that accompanied it. The second object is the kidney stone, the source of Montaigne's much-discussed malady that some see as central to understanding the nature of Montaigne's travels in Europe as well as the accounts they engendered.[1] The third objects are fountains, in particular those encountered by Montaigne during his travels in Italy. These are often cited in the scholarship as objects of interest and appreciation for Montaigne, and as evidence for aesthetic engagement in the *Journal*. I consider what Montaigne's descriptions of fountains in the *Journal* reveal about the nature of his engagement with such 'technical' artefacts in light of the conclusions drawn from the other two types of objects analysed (the Horatian object-complex and the stone), and how they related to a passage involving a fountain in 'De la vanité' (III.ix). In the final part of the chapter, I turn to the question of the relationship between the different kinds of design evinced by these objects and Montaigne's approach to writings. I should note that my uses of the word 'design' in this chapter depart in some respects from uses of the term thus far. I am chiefly concerned here with the notion of the *designed*, understood as objects that are man-made, and that are inscribed with particular functions—what might be called a 'modern' conception of the term, although as we shall see, this modern usage is not incongruous with Renaissance understandings of design. In analysing Montaigne's interactions with these, I want to propose that it is designed objects, rather than artistic objects (whether of mechanical or fine arts) that reveal the principles underlying a Montaignian aesthetics.

## I. Montaigne and the History of Taste

In the article on Aesthetics in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, William Adams begins by setting out the main difficulty in attempting to outline Marx's positions in this area*:*

> There are several good reasons to pause before wading into Karl Marx's philosophy of art, but surely the most worrisome is that there is nothing there to wade into […] there is nothing even approaching a systematic aesthetic theory in [his writing about aesthetic objects]. Judging strictly from the written record, it appears that Marx was after bigger, or at least very different, fish.[2]

Anyone attempting to construct a Montaignian theory of art similarly has their work cut out for them, for not only do the *Essais* evidently lack 'a systematic aesthetic theory', their

[1] See, for example, Margaret Healy, 'Journeying with the "Stone": Montaigne's Healing Travel Journal', *Literature and Medicine* 24:2 (2005), 231-49.
[2] William Adams, 'Aesthetics' in Terrell Carver (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 246–74 (p. 249).

author rarely talks about aesthetic objects.[3] Or so one might be inclined to believe by reading many of those who have broached the topic of Montaigne's attitudes to art.[4] In what follows, I revisit three different stages in the historical development of this idea, starting with the first editor of the *Journal de voyage,* to contemporary critics such as François Rigolot, teasing out the assumptions underlying these commentators' observations, and linking them to developments in the modern history of aesthetics. My aim is to uncover some of the assumptions underlying critical approaches to the issue, starting with the central assumption that we must seek to understand, rationalise, resolve, and perhaps even artfully gloss over Montaigne's disinterest in the art and artists of his day.[5] For in so doing, we might reach a clearer understanding of Montaigne's relationship to art, and to the significance of designed objects in his experience of art.

In the very first edition of the *Journal de voyage* the eighteenth-century editor, Anne-Gabriel Meusnier de Querlon, highlights the fact that, despite the wealth of artworks he would have come across in Italy, Montaigne did not discuss these in any detail:

> À l'époque du Voyage de Montaigne en Italie (1580), cette belle contrée, couverte des ruines et des débris de l'antiquité, étoit encore depuis deux siècles devenue la patrie des Arts. […] Si le Journal de son Voyage contient peu de ces descriptions des Statues, de Tableaux, d'autres monumens dont tous les voyageurs modernes chargent successivement leurs Relations (la plupart en se répétant ou se copiant les uns les autres) : c'est, comme il le dit, qu'il y avoit dès ce tems-là des Livres où tout cela se trouvoit : c'est encore qu'il ne voyoit que pour soi, ou qu'il entroie point dans son plan d'observation de faire montre des impressions que les objets faisoient sur lui, ni de se parer de connoissances dont il laissoit la possession aux Artistes.'[6]

As we can see, Querlon is quick to provide an explanation for this apparent omission: Montaigne did not want to repeat existing descriptions of Italian art objects (which were already in themselves, in Querlon's words, repetitive and unoriginal) and, more importantly, he preferred to keep his impressions private, leaving ekphrastic exercises to the real connoisseurs (disparagingly referred to as 'Artistes'). Implicit in Querlon's discussion is that Montaigne *did* have aesthetic responses to the works of art that he must have come across; the writer's *ability* to possess such responses is not brought into question, although the matter of social standing and performance is left open in significant ways.

In 1774, when Querlon's prefatory piece was published along with the edited manuscript of the *Journal*, art criticism in France had been underway for the best part of two decades.[7] Diderot's *Salons*, the first of which was written in 1759 for the small and select

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[3] Critics that have broached the topic of Montaigne and aesthetics include Peter Burke in his chapter 'Montaigne's Aesthetics' in *Montaigne* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 58-63, and John Lapp in his *The Esthetics of Negligence: La Fontaine's 'Contes'* (Cambridge: CUP, 1971), pp. 14-29. Both focus on literary style rather than a theory of art.

[4] This characterisation at times intersects with the idea of Montaigne as a writer of 'serious' subjects such as history. The fact that aesthetics is considered of comparatively lesser intellectual or cultural import is perhaps also denoted by Adams's use of the phrase 'bigger fish' in the quote from the *Cambridge Companion*.

[5] This attitude is not limited to Montaigne and art. For an account of how scholars have critiqued Montaigne's literary taste and his omissions in this area, and a defence of Montaigne against these charges, see Michael Screech, 'An Aspect of Montaigne's Aesthetics', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 24:3 (1962), 576–82.

[6] 'Dédicace et discours de Meunier de Querlon (1774)' reprinted in Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de voyage*, ed. by François Rigolot (Paris: PUF, 1992), p. 312. All citations from the *Journal*, including translations, are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

[7] The germs of French art criticism can be located in the earlier writings of Bouhours, whose *La Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit* was published in 1687. On the eighteenth-century developments of art

group of readers of Grimm's *Correspondance Littéraire*, had reached their sixth instalment with the *Salon* of 1771, by which time they represented more developed exercises in art writing.[8] Discussions of literature and works of art were considered worthy topics by the Enlightenment *philosophes*, and the appreciation and discussion of works of art developed from a principally amateur activity to the rise of art criticism proper with the instalment of the Salons.[9] One can understand Querlon's alacrity, therefore, in attributing to Montaigne judgements of taste despite the lack (by Querlon's own admission) of any textual traces of these. Such responses to artworks, which we might call 'aesthetic', were, when Querlon was writing, the proper domain of a man of Montaigne's intellect and social standing.[10] More than glossing over Montaigne's perceived omissions, Querlon is signalling to his readership that, despite the paucity of explicitly aesthetic passages in the text, Montaigne nevertheless possessed the appropriate attitude to works of art, thereby in some sense protecting his place among the worthy subjects of study of salon society. It should be noted that Querlon took over the role of editor following a dispute between the finder of the *Journal*, the abbé Joseph Prunis, and the owner of Montaigne's chateau at the time, Charles Joseph Ségur, over Prunis's decision to excise the more 'personal' sections of the *Journal*, notably those in which Montaigne discusses his bodily ailments.[11] The question of the 'right' Montaigne to present to eighteenth-century readers was a fraught question from the start. While Querlon took a more open approach, choosing to publish an unredacted version of the manuscript, he nevertheless, as Philippe Desan notes, took pains to construct the *Journal* as a 'série de notes philosophiques'.[12]

Post-Enlightenment critics have tended to highlight, like Querlon, the absence in Montaigne of sustained engagement with art, although not all have shared in Querlon's charitable reading of Montaigne's omissions: for many twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics Montaigne was not interested in, or even actively disliked, art; art did not move him in the same way as great literature or interest him as much as history, or art did not provoke in him any properly aesthetic responses.[13] In his 1973 article 'Montaigne e l'Italia', Lino Pertile provides a framework for understanding Montaigne's relationship to art, based on the distinction between (fine) art and *techne* .[14] Pertile begins by rehearsing the view that Montaigne was not interested in art, writing that in those rare times when Montaigne does remember contemporary works of art in the *Journal*, this is more out of his 'curiosity for

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criticism in France, see Richard Wrigley, *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Régime to the Restoration* (Oxford: OUP, 1993).

[8] On the development of Diderot's art writings, see the classic study by Else Marie Bukhdal, *Diderot, Critique d'Art. Vol. 1: Théorie et Pratique dans les 'Salons' de Diderot,* trans. Jean-Paul Faucher (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1980) and, more recently Elisabeth Lavezzi and Pierre Frantz (eds), *Les Salons de Diderot: théorie et écriture* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2008).

[9] See Rémy G. Saisselin, *Taste in Eighteenth-Century France: Critical Reflections on the Origins of Aesthetics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965), p. 61. On the relationship between eighteenth-century public taste and art criticism, see Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Pars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[10] For a discussion of the social import of taste and its role in class and power dynamics in France in the century prior to Querlon, see Michael Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988).

[11] See Philippe Desan, 'Introduction' in Michel de Montaigne, *Journal du voyage en Italie* [facsimile of the 1774 edition], (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 2014), pp. vii-lxx (p. vii-viii).

[12] Ibid., p. xiii.

[13] See, amongst others, Charles Dédéyan, *Essai sur le 'Journal de voyage' de Montaigne* (Paris: Boivin, 1944).

[14] Pertile uses 'art' in a broader, more modern sense than Renaissance *ars*, and glosses what he describes as technical artefacts with the Greek *techne*, which refers to technical skill or mastery. *Techne* is often used in a modern sense to refer not just to this kind of skill, but also objects that are 'useful' or functional.

history' rather than an 'aesthetic sensibility'.[15] But he then goes on to claim that, throughout the *Essais*, it is apparent that art as we understand it today does not exist for Montaigne.[16] Pertile's central claim is that Montaigne is more attracted to *techne* than *ars,* to the mechanical art of clocks and fountains than the *beaux arts* of painting, and by extension to the function of those works of art that he does comment on, rather than on the abstract properties that we might associate with Renaissance masterpieces using keywords such as beauty, grace, style, or manner.[17]

More recently, François Rigolot, in an article on Montaigne and Italy echoes the idea of 'aesthetic sensibility' found in many of these critical accounts, writing that Montaigne does not pass aesthetic judgement on works of art, on the rare occasions when he talks about them in the *Journal*.[18] Rigolot repeats the sentiments expressed in his introduction to his edition of the *Journal*, where he echoes Querlon's apologetic tone:

> on remarque un décalage entre l'intérêt certain de Montaigne pour les œuvres d'art et son désir d'en enregistrer la trace dans ses notes de voyage. Pour plusieurs raisons il ne semble pas chercher à consigner dans ses souvenirs tout ce qu'il a pu admirer.[19]

Rigolot nevertheless emphasises, like Pertile, that Montaigne displays a penchant for the 'mechanical arts': among which Rigolot lists 'technical innovations such as fountains and waterworks'.[20] Despite Pertile's admonition that Montaigne did not have access to our modern conception of art, both he and Rigolot (who cites Pertile in his article) pursue discussions on a fundamental distinction between *ars* and *techne*. In both approaches we find a version of what we might call 'retroprojection' or the imbuing of these texts with our modern, and thus anachronistic, understanding of a particular notion or concept.[21] Jean Balsamo writes a resonant paragraph, worth quoting in full, about the nature of this anachronism:

> Chateaubriand et Stendhal déploraient-ils l'ignorance de Montaigne, qu'ils considéraient pourtant avec estime comme le grand ancêtre du touriste moderne: il n'avait pas su, selon eux, bien parler de Raphaël, de Michel-Ange, des maitres du *Cinquecento* florentin ou romain qu'il aurait du nécessairement connaître. C'était oublier non seulement que l'Italie n'avait pas toujours été considérée comme un musée vivant, que les conditions mêmes dans lesquelles il était possible de voir les œuvres avaient changé, mais aussi que le goût avait une histoire, comme le genre littéraire, la relation de voyage, dans lequel il s'inscrivait. Cette erreur de perspective, un anachronisme, n'a pas manqué de fausser le jugement que les érudits qui étudient ces textes ont porté sur la place des arts visuels dans les récits de voyage de la Renaissance, et plus généralement sur la référence aux arts dans la littérature française de cette époque.[22]

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[15] 'Nelle rarissime occasioni in cui ricorda opere moderne lo fa più per curiosità storica che per sensibilità estetica.' Lino Pertile, 'Montaigne in Italia: Arte, Tecnica e Scienza dal *Journal* agli *Essais*', *Saggi e Ricerche di Letteratura Francese* (1973), 47-92 (49).

[16] 'Da quanto traspare dagli *Essais* si può però dire che l'arte, come l'intendiamo noi oggi, non esiste per Montaigne' [From what we can deduce from the *Essais*, we can, however, state that art, as we understand it today, did not exist for Montaigne], 'Montaigne in Italia', p. 56.

[17] See Rigolot, 'Montaigne's Travel Journal', in Philippe Desan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 179-95, p. 193. For an example of a keywords approach to early modern aesthetics, see Ita Mac Carthy, 'Grace' in Ita Mac Carthy (ed.), *Renaissance Keywords*, pp. 63-80.

[18] François Rigolot, Montaigne's Travel Journal', (p. 190).

[19] Rigolot, 'Introduction', *Journal de voyage*, p. xxvi.

[20] Rigolot, 'Montaigne's Travel Journal', p. 193.

[21] See Terence Cave *Pré-histoires: Textes Troublés au Seuil de la Modernité* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), p. 113. Cave discusses the prehistory of the self, but the observation is equally applicable to a term like art.

[22] Jean Balsamo, 'Les écrivains français du XVIème siècle et la peinture italienne: réévaluation d'un épisode de l'histoire du goût', *Studi di Letteratura Francese*, 21 (1996), 29-54, 30.

Balsamo's analysis supports what I have tried to show, that modern-day commentators like Rigolot and Pertile project notions of art and aesthetic experience onto their sixteenth-century writerly subjects, sometimes even while acknowledging the anachronism in applying those categories to sixteenth-century accounts. The 'mechanical' versus 'fine' arts distinction, when understood in a binary sense, is one such anachronism, and I explore this in more detail in the following section. In order to do so, I look at a contemporary sixteenth-century travel diary, mentioned by both Pertile and Balsamo, notable both for the high level of detail it encompasses in its descriptions, as well as for the insight it provides into the networks of humanist culture and learning of which its author, Nicolas Audebert, was a part. I do in order to bring to light some of the ways in which Nicolas, and not Montaigne, reveals through his writing a more recognisably 'modern' aesthetic response.

## II. A Humanist Aesthetics? Montaigne and Nicolas Audebert

Nicolas Audebert was born in 1556 to a wealthy Orléans family. His father, Germain, was a magistrate and a local literary persona, part of a literary circle known as the *Sodales*. Like his father, Nicolas also wrote and published Latin verse, and was involved in literary collaborations with Germain which involved copying out the father's verse in his beautiful scribal hand.[23] Nicolas's decision to embark on a journey to Italy was also inspired by a similar journey undertaken by his father in his youth, at around the same age at which Nicolas left France in 1574 on his own trip. As is well-known, such trips were common among gentlemen of means, and the pull of Rome, in particular, attracted many Frenchmen to the peninsula.[24] Through his father's connections, Nicolas was armed with a list of contacts in Italy, among which the notable humanists Gian Vincenzo Pinelli and Carlo Signoio.[25] Most of Nicolas's three-and-a-bit-year stay in Italy was spent in Bologna where his father had studied before him with, among others, the notable jurist Andrea Alciato, founder of a school of legal humanists and creator of the popular emblem book *Emblemata*.

Lino Pertile notes that the young Audebert reveals a specific interest in both ancient and contemporary art, and he joins Thomas Coryate and other travel writers who, Pertile notes, made much of foreign art in their accounts.[26] Indeed, Nicolas's Italy is an object of enquiry and curious observation, a place of study and of personal, literary and academic formation, as it was for many learned men wo travelled to Italy during this time. It is also a place that holds visual wonders, among them artistic artefacts that inspire interest and at times fascination in the young traveller, as revealed in his descriptions of the fountains and gardens at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli which span several pages, his fascination with the ruins of Rome, his description of Michelangelo's marbles in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, or his descriptions of the Church of St. Peter at Bologna, or again of the tomb of Petrarch at Arquà. The latter is reproduced in a careful drawing by his own hand (Fig. 20).[27]

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[23] The Audeberts are notable for their joint literary aspirations. See Neil Kenny, *Born to Write: Literary Families and Social Hierarchy in Early Modern France* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), pp. 106-11.

[24] See Margaret McGowan, *The Vision of Rome in Late Renaissance France* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000). McGowan discusses Audebert on pp. 69-88. See also Eric MacPhail, *The Voyage to Rome in French Renaissance Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

[25] Lino Pertile, 'Un umanista francese in Italia: Il *Voyage d'Italie* (1574-1578) di Nicolas Audebert', *Studi mediolatini e volgari*, XXI (1973), 87-214.

[26] Lino Pertile, 'Montaigne in Italia' p. 54. Audebert was particularly interested in sculpture and architecture—see Lino Perile 'Un umanista francese in Italia', pp. 199-200.

[27] Audebert introduces the image as follows: 'la structure du sepulchre de Petrarque est fort rustiquemment faicte, toutesfoys est d'un beau marbre, mais non poly, et sans ouvrage de la forme qu'il est icy representé' (Nicolas Audebert, *Voyage d'Italie*, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 720, fol. 121).




***Figure 20***: Nicolas Audebert, *Voyage d'Italie*, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 720. Fol. 121: drawing of Petrarch's tomb at Arquà.

This not the only such example of a visual representation by Nicolas's own hand, there are a dozen or so fairly accomplished drawings, particularly in the earlier part of the manuscript. Often these are preceded by phrases such as "de la forme qu'il est icy representé" or "pareille à celle cy", the young Audebert seems to have felt the need to invoke the aid of visual representation to fully capture the detail of what he saw, drawings in this case take over where words fail to do justice to the objects he wants to immortalize in the pages of his diary.

This need to visually augment the words on the page provides an interesting parallel, and a contrast, to a line from Montaigne's *Journal*. When discussing the Villa d'Este, Montaigne writes:

> Là se voit ce fameus palais & jardin du Cardinal de Ferrare: c'est une très-bele piece, mais imparfaite en plusieurs parties, & l'ouvrage ne s'en continue plus par le Cardinal presant. J'y considerai toutes choses fort particulieremant; j'essaïerois de le peindre ici, mais il y a des livres & peintures publiques de ce sujet.[28]

Montaigne is of course using the verb 'peindre' figuratively here, to mean that he will not waste time describing the Villa when it has already been represented in so many guidebooks and pictures. The terse remark provides a stark difference to Nicolas's lengthy and precise descriptions of the Villa and its gardens, which describe each fountain and its mechanisms. But we can also read the verb *peindre* here literally, restoring its visual connotations—Montaigne will not attempt (and the use of the verb 'essayer' is telling here) to visually portray the Villa, such portrayals already exist, and—the implication is—of better quality than what he could accomplish. However we read this verb, in the act of creating a mental image of the Villa Montaigne is deferring here not only to the authority of other texts but also of other, public, *images*.

Nicolas's *Voyage d'Italie* is an object forged with a great deal of care and delicacy, from its fine scribal hand to the elaborate titles and embellishments, to the drawings. Ist is clear that Nicolas cared about the visual impact of his work as well as the accuracy and detail of his descriptions, and that these visual elements were part of the literary-authorial self-fashioning that took place through its production. Now lost, we know little about the physical nature of Montaigne's travel diary, but we can glean from descriptions such as Querlon's that it was a far cry from the young Audebert's manicured manuscript. In many ways, Nicolas's attitudes to Italian art fit neatly into a narrative of the development of Western attitudes to art that would lead to the Kantian theory of disinterested appreciation and would concretise in a separate discipline of bourgeois aesthetics in the eighteenth-century.[29] Nicolas is able to recognise objects of 'taste', as Kant would call them, and display the appropriate response—a kind of detached admiration that is both universally valid, in the sense that it is understood that everyone would have the same response to such an object *qua* artwork, and subjective, in the sense that it springs from an individual interaction with an artwork that occurs not at a cognitive level but at a level of personal feeling and experience. It is this, I would argue, that makes Nicolas's responses to Italian art the more 'aesthetic' of the two. The young author's desire to align himself with a pre-existing, codified, understanding of 'proper' conduct with respect to works of art is typical of a young man of his social standing and humanist persuasion. Via his *journal*, Nicolas insert himself into an elite network of people capable, both in terms of material means needed to see such artworks and of education and training as to their recognition and appreciation, of having the appropriate reactions. Little of a personal response transpires from Nicolas's descriptions,

[28] Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de voyage*, p. 128.

[29] For an analysis of the relationship of judgements of taste to cultural and economic capital, see Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979).

which are intended to speak to, and in a language of, like-minded and like-educated people. The closest he comes to such a personal dimension, I would argue, is through his drawings. Despite their finished nature, the drawings reveal a more intimate interaction with the objects they represent; in the act of graphic recreation, Nicolas is taking the dutiful process of recording his travels away from the fixity of verbal explanation and into the looser, more fluid realm of drawing. *Despite* their finished nature, as the rigid lines and their desire for *vraisemblance* nevertheless do not possess the freedom and malleability that belongs to more rough or unfinished drawings or sketches—Nicolas is still attempting to recreate the style of paintings or etchings of Italy that circulated at the time, of the kind that, as we have seen, Montaigne defers to in his description of the Villa d'Este.

There is just one example of a more free-hand sketch in the Lansdowne manuscript, which comes in a page that has been folded and pasted into the back of Nicolas's manuscript. Here, we find this small rapid sketch of a fountain, with the following annotation: 'entrant par la porte du Populo y a une grande place dans laquelle y a une fontaine toute pareille a celle cy' (Fig. 21).[30]

[30] Nicolas Audebert, *Voyage d'Italie*, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 720, fol. 171[r].

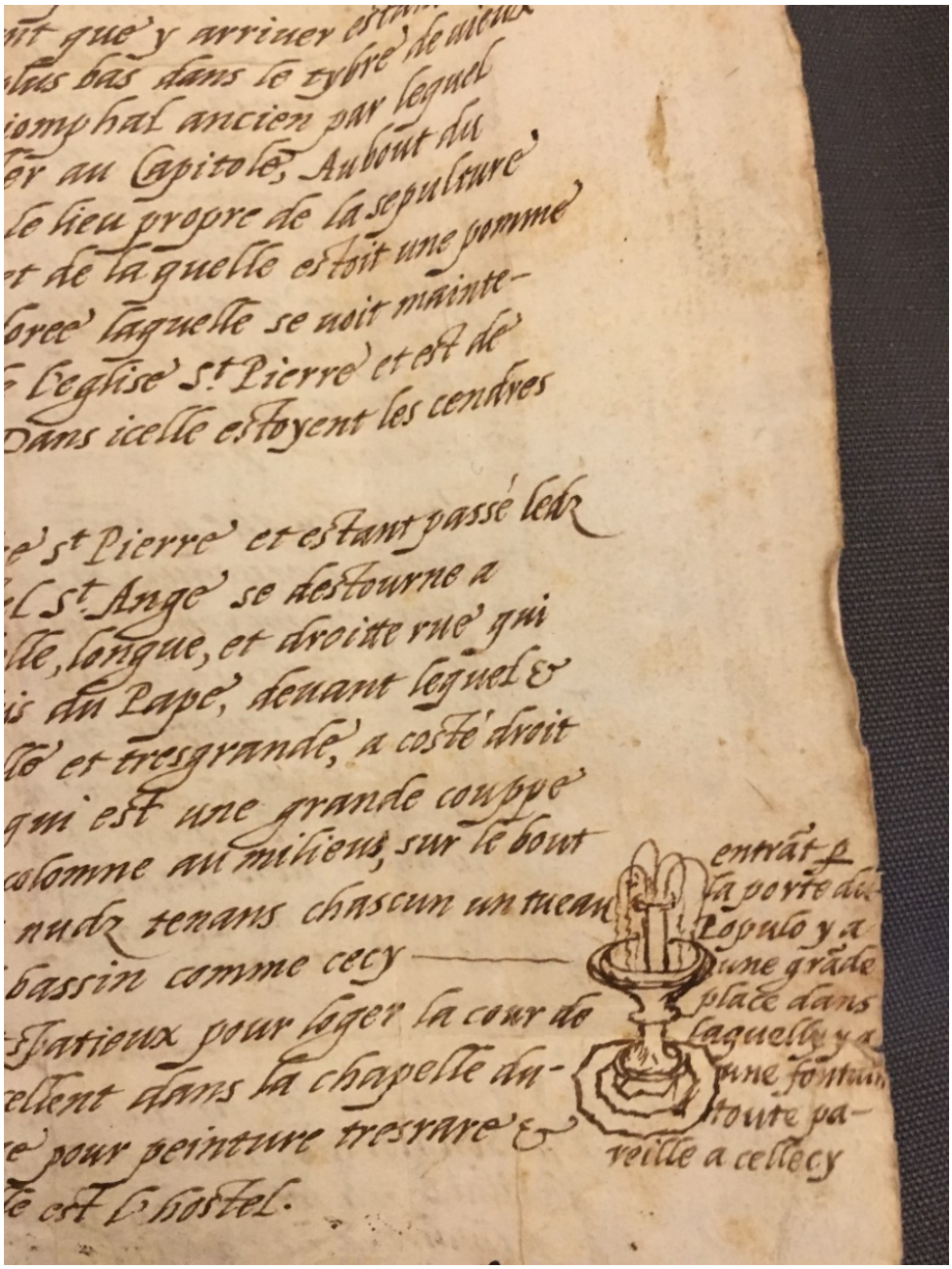

***Figure 21***: Nicolas Audebert, *Voyage d'Italie*, London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 720. Fol. 171: sketch of a fountain (page pasted in at the back of the manuscript).

The rough sketchiness of this drawing shows, in a less conventional, more intimate way, the immediacy of Nicolas's reaction to this object that struck him as worthy of notice and remembrance. The hasty, more uncertain lines of the sketch, the shaky jets of water, are a far cry from the surer hand of his other drawings, such as that of Petrarch's tomb reproduced above, and provide a more intimate insight into the mind of the young humanist. The sketch's physical position in a paratextual addition, a piece of paper folded and pasted into the back end of the main manuscript like an afterthought, jars with the formality that characterises the rest of the diary. Nevertheless, there is a clear effort to align this folded last folio to the elements that characterise the main texts of the diary—there is still a great deal of care taken in the detail of the description and the neatness of the scribal hand, for example. Even in this more 'personal' element of aesthetic response, the manuscript strives to conform to the decorum of a pre-established genre. With its limited and sporadic mentions of, and engagement with, objects of fine art, it is true that Montaigne's travel account does not engage in similar practices of aesthetic narrative.

But Montaigne's travel diary is already at the formal level a very different creature to Nicolas's. Written by two (if not more) hands[31] and in two languages, there is at least one kind of mediation that occurs in most parts of the text, and indeed Sayce proposes the language barrier as a possible explanation of the lack of appraisals of Italian art.[32] More interesting are the deeper formal differences between the two travel diaries which expose the differences in attitudes to art and art objects held by the two authors. While Nicolas's diary was the product of a young humanist keen to insert himself into European networks of learned gentlemen travellers and the manuscript is probably a *belle copie* produced with the intention of being printed, Montaigne possessed, as is well known, no such ambitions for the *Journal*.[33] The text bears a more authentically personal flavour than Nicolas's, the judgements enclosed therein are the product of a *franchise* of thought.[34] In this we can agree with Querlon's assessment that Montaigne 'ne voyoit que pour soi'. If, as we can see through the young Audebert's manuscript, the cultivation of aesthetic taste as a social marker linked to social standing was already in motion in the sixteenth century, the *Journal* contains no more than a couple of instances of a performance of this aspect of sociability. Partly this is because, as we will see in the following section, Montaigne relates rather differently to art objects, as things that elicit situated embodied responses. Partly, however, this is also because the line between 'higher' and 'lower' art (which for the sake of this discussion we will take as the line between '*techne*' and '*ars*') was configured differently in Renaissance artistic practice.

Nicolas's diary is the product of a young man keen to establish himself among literary humanist circles; it also bears the imprint of a proto-bourgeois sensibility to the relationship between and viewing and responding to art and social status. In this sense, Nicolas can be seen as a natural precursor to the leagues of gentlemen that would, some two centuries later, embark on the European Grand Tour. Montaigne's travel diary does not correspond

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[31] On the role of the secretary in the composition of the *Journal*, see Richard E. Keatley, 'Intimacy and Public Display: Secretarial Design in Montaigne's *Journal de voyage*', *Yale French Studies*, 134 (2018), 82–96.

[32] Richard Sayce,'The Visual Arts in Montaigne's *Journal de voyage*', in Raymond C. La Charité (ed.), *O un amy! Essays on Montaigne in Honor of Donald Frame* (Lexington, Forum Publishers, 1977), pp. 219–41, 220–21.

[33] Which is not to say that Montaigne's *travels* themselves were not motivated by political aims. For the clearest formulation of why this could have been the case, see Philippe Desan, *Montaigne: Une biographie politique* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2014), pp. 58–66.

[34] See Warren Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne*, Vol. 1: The Patron-Author, p. 6. Although I do not take this to imply, as Rigolot does, that 'le *Journal* est écrit sans effet de style, à la va-vite, sans le savant naturel des *Essais*' ('Introduction', *Journal de Voyage*, p. xiii).

straightforwardly to this narrative of the development of aesthetic taste, in part because his diary was not intended for the same audience or purpose as Audebert's. In part, though, this is also due to Montaigne's idiosyncratic attitudes to the art objects he came across. Where the young Audebert strives for realism in both his descriptions and pictorial representations of man-made objects worthy of note, Montaigne's comments are more akin to impressionistic strokes; he prefers to leave such descriptions to others, ensuring that, centuries later, we are left to 'fill in the gaps' in his narrative. Unlike in the Lansdowne manuscript, the (less frequent) descriptions of artefacts and art objects in Montaigne's *Journal* are also often highly personal, interspersed as is known with comments about his bodily functions and ailments. When scholars point out that rather than display an 'aesthetic sensibility', Montaigne discusses instead the historical nature of art objects or the technical mastery behind, them they betray an implicit surprise at finding that Montaigne's responses do not fit into the narrative of the development of European aesthetic sensibility. This unease arises, I think, because of the commonplace of Montaigne as an eminent precursor of the modern man, and the central role he plays in other 'pre-histories' of modern notions such as selfhood.[35] Warren Boutcher makes a similar point that, nevertheless, betrays the stubbornness of the critical expectation that Montaigne should conform to our modern aesthetic tastes:

> We invest heavily in the image Montaigne has offered of the free critical agent reproduced by the liberal arts and their modern descendants. This is why we are so embarrassed when he appears to let us down—as when, for example, on his tour of Italy, he fails to record his aesthetic appreciation of the great paintings and sculptures of the Renaissance.[36]

I hope to have shown in my discussion here and in the section above that the image of Montaigne as a writer in whom we expect to find evidence of such aesthetic appreciation is a product of our vantage point at the tail end of around 300 years of aesthetic discourse. That he does not fit neatly within this narrative does not mean, however, that Montaigne was disinterested in works of art *as* art objects—that is as objects produced by Renaissance nexuses of artistic *techne*. In what remains of this chapter, my aim is to show that what critics have glossed as Montaigne's interest in technical or mechanical artefacts reveals more subtle concerns surrounding the embodied interaction with designed objects. My argument is that Montaigne's language of *peinture*, his writing-qua-drawing, the instantiation of his thoughts about design, and his attitudes to such objects are part of the same Montaignian discourse. They each represent different points on a design spectrum, from the idea characterising Montaigne's writing project, to that idea in action, to his bodily interactions with designed objects. My reading takes care not to pigeonhole Montaigne in a linear historical narrative of aesthetics (and is therefore at times deliberately, and heuristically, anachronistic); it aims instead to recuperate the specificity of Montaigne's aesthetics.

## III. Three Designed Objects

In this final section, I am interested in uncovering the ways in which Montaigne related to physical objects that were moulded by humans or human bodily processes. So far in the thesis, I have looked at design from the point of view of the creative process. I have approached design, in the first chapter, as an overarching aim or vision for a project, in the

[35] On Montaigne's place in the 'prehistory' of the self, see Terence Cave, *Pré-histoires*, ch. 4: 'Fragments d'un moi futur: de Pascal à Montaigne'.
[36] Warren Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne*, Vol 1: The Patron-Author, p. 70.

second chapter, as a word operating within the *Essais* whose meanings extend from human will to textual design and in the third chapter, in its visual and artistic aspects as the process of drawing or *disegno*. These understandings of design have largely echoed the understandings of the words *dessein* and *disegno* that are endogenous to the social and cultural context of the *Essais* or the wider Renaissance. In what follows, I use design in a more applied way, to denote objects that are man-made or produced, and that bear an imprint of their maker. But while this applied sense considers a designed object one in which we can discern an intention to fulfil a certain function, only some of the objects below fall into this category.[37] What I have termed 'designed objects' are objects in which I have identified some of the key dynamics of design that have emerged from this thesis: the interplay between mental idea and image, a simultaneously backwards-looking and forwards-pointing temporality, the tension between chance and intention, and the quality of open-endedness or unfinishedness. In Montaigne's interactions with each of the objects that I consider below touch on at least one of these dynamics.

### *III.i Upon Some Verses of Horace*

We can be fairly certain that Montaigne was interested in the material conditions of artistic production of his day. He tells us in II.xxviii, 'De l'amitié', that he had not only employed a painter at his chateau, but that, watching him at work, he felt compelled to imitate his craftsmanship: '[c]onsidérant la conduite de la besongne d'un peintre que j'ay, il m'a pris envie de l'ensuivre' (183). His study was adorned with twelve *secco* frescoes and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he witnessed at least part of the process of their creation, and, as George Hoffmann notes, Montaigne's interaction with these *seccos* was one of active involvement.[38] Next to one of the *seccos* in his study which represented a shipwreck scene, Montaigne had the final lines of Horace's Ode to Pyrrha (I.5) inscribed.[39] In this address to a former lover, Pyrrha, the speaker portrays himself as a shipwreck from the sea of love. The final lines of the Ode are also included in 'Sur des vers de Virgile' (III.v), where Montaigne uses the act of undressing to which they allude as an evocative image of sexual vulnerability. They read as follows:

me tabula sacer
votiva paries indicat uvida
suspendisse potenti
vestimenta maris deo.

[ the sacred wall indicates
with a votive tablet that I have hung
my drenched clothes
to the powerful god of the sea.][40]

[37] For a modern definition of design in this sense, see Jane Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), p. 67–8.
[38] George Hoffmann, 'Montaigne's Nudes: The Lost Tower Paintings Rediscovered', *Yale French Studies* 110 (2006), 122-33 (123-4). See also Alain Legros, 'Peinture-Peintre(s)' in *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*, pp. 771–73: 'Quant au programme décoratif des principales scènes à l'antique inspirées d'Ovide, d'Hygin ou d'autres mythographes, mais aussi d'Horace et de Valère Maxime, il est probable que le propriétaire lui-même en a fait la commande' (p. 772).
[39] The tower paintings are now lost but have been described by previous generations of visitors to Montaigne's *château*.
[40] I thank Nicolò Crisafi for help with this translation.

Hoffmann reads a political overtone in Montaigne's use of these lines, connecting it to the Lucretian *topos* of the *Suave mari magno* via the common trope of the ship of state.[41] Alain Legros similarly links the image of shipwreck survival with Montaigne's decision to leave the troubled apparatus of French government and 'hang up his (political) clothes'.[42] As far as I know, no critic has commented on the fact that Horace's verses are about pictorial representation: the votive tablet ('tabula votiva') hung up on a wall ('paries') shows or indicates ('indicat') that the speaker has hung up his damp clothes in honour of the god of the sea.[43] Horace is most probably referring here to two ancient practices: that of fastening a votive tablet to a wall to commemorate and give thanks for surviving a dangerous enterprise, and that of sailors hanging up their clothes at the end of a voyage as an *ex voto* to the gods.[44] In a double mise-en-abîme, the act of the *ex voto* is here represented through another votive offering, that is itself represented in a poem.

Montaigne's decision to place these lines physically adjacent to a pictorial representation of shipwreck creates a complex network of multimodal reference and allusion that plays with different layers of surface and depth. On a primary level, the simple connection of shipwreck and survival links the painting and the inscription. On this view, the picture visually illustrates what the poem merely alludes to, providing a physical referent for the final image of the poem. But on a secondary level, Horace's image of shipwreck survival is already represented, its visual referent is already contained within the poem in the figure of the votive tablet. The *secco* painting is thus a representation of a representation of a representation.[45] Moreover, the position of the Horace quote in Montaigne's study, on the wall just above the door to the private side chamber—his famous *arrière-boutique*—physically enacts the position of the votive tablet described in the poem as being hung on a wall. The proximity and location of these two objects, and I will use the word 'object' to cover these wall decorations, is striking; they reveal an intricate set of intertextual and 'inter-visual' relations. These relations, to be grasped fully, require more work than simple one-off visualisation, they require physical movement—we can imagine Montaigne's eyes occasionally darting from one to the other as he passed through from the larger study to the *arrière-boutique*, his motion through the passageway echoing in some sense the 'motion' and exchange of meaning occurring between painting and inscription. The physicality of Horace's lines, encapsulated in the forsaken lover's act of undressing, and, presumably, the physicality of the shipwreck scene depicted on the wall, find an analogue in the physical act required to move from one space to the other, and as these two decorations 'rub' up against

[41] Hoffmann, 'Montaigne's Nudes', p. 128.

[42] Alain Legros, *Essais sur poutres: peintures et inscriptions chez Montaigne* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2000), p. 139. A similar interpretation is offered by Jennifer Oliver (*Shipwreck in French Renaissance Writing: The Direful Spectacle* (Oxford: OUP, 2019), p. 131-2).

[43] It should be noted that these lines are ambiguous, and interpretations differ among scholars and translators. The ambiguity stems, it seems to be, from the verb 'indicat'. Whereas many translators, from Milton onwards, take the 'indicat' to mean, as I have done, that the votive tablet shows *on its surface* that the speaker has dedicated his wet clothes to the god of the sea, some commentators have interpreted these lines as meaning that the votive tablet *is evidence of* the other votive act. Sidney Alexander's translation follows neither of these interpretive routes; he has the wet clothes as *themselves* hung up on the wall (*The Complete Odes and Satires of Horace* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.11, and this is also Ronsard's interpretation in his adaptation of the ode in the *Amours*: 'j'appan dessus le bord/Aux Dieux marins ma despouille mouillée' (*Oeuvres Completes,* vol. 1, p. 449). I take the comment of Nisbet and Hubbard that '[i]n an illiterate age the [votive] plaque often told its story by means of a picture' to lend support to my interpretation (Robin G. M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard (eds), *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I* (Oxford: OUP, 1970), p. 78).

[44] See Nisbet and Hubbard (eds), *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book I*, p. 78.

[45] As Philippa Bather and Claire Stocks note, 'Horace's use of *tabula* does double duty. His painted votive is also his written text', *Horace's Epodes: Contexts, Intertexts, Reception* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), p. 188.

one another, so too, Montaigne 'rubs' up against them in his entering and exiting the side chamber. This kind of frictional interaction is, as we shall see in the remainder of this section, typical of Montaigne's encounters with designed objects, encounters which always prompt a reflection on the embodied nature of the experiences they provoke.[46] But it is also, crucially, reflected in Montaigne's approach to poetry, which calls attention to the body as mediator between thought and world.

That the body is the site of aesthetic experience is, of course, almost a tautology (*aessthesis:* bodily perception), and, as Terry Eagleton writes, 'aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body'.[47] As Eagleton goes on to say, 'the vital distinction the term signifies for its inventor […] is not between art and life but between the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas, what is bound up with our creaturely life of perception as opposed to what belongs in the mind.'[48] As we have seen in previous chapters, Montaigne is deeply invested in working through and animating precisely this distinction. The chapter that is perhaps most emblematic of this impulse is III.v, 'Sur des vers de Virgile', where Montaigne proceeds to intertwine a discussion of his body with two other discourses: sex and poetry. The highly physical nature of the language in this chapter has been widely remarked on.[49] I want to focus on a passage that occurs towards the start of the chapter, where Montaigne constructs a complex parallel between poetry and painting, while reflecting on his aging body, contrasting its present faculties with those that it possessed in his youth. Although he is 'tout asseché' and 'appesanty', we are told, his body is still able to feel echoes of the 'ardeur passée' it was once capable of (III.v, 849). As an analogy, Montaigne quotes a passage from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* in which the poet describes the movement of the Aegean sea which, after the winds have stopped blowing, holds some of its initial impetus. Tasso's language is imbued with images of motion: the sea 'vuolse e scosse' [tossed and turned] and retains ''l moto' [the movement] of 'l'onde anco agitate e grosse' [the still great and rough waves].[50] This is another example of a nautical scene implicated in the interplay of poetry and movement, which gains greater significance in light of Montaigne's next line, in which he writes that he now finds that poetry is able to capture the feelings provoked by 'ce Dieu' (*Eros* or *Amour*) better than direct experience itself:

> [B] Mais de ce que je m'y entends, les forces et valeur de ce Dieu se trouvent plus vives et plus animées en la peinture de la poesie qu'en leur propre essence (849).

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[46] Wes Williams has written about the importance of the idea of 'rubbing up against' for Montaigne in light of his travels in Europe, including with respect to Renaissance votive tablets. See '"Rubbing up against others": Montaigne on pilgrimage' in Jaś Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), pp. 101–123.

[47] Terry Eagleton, 'The Ideology of the Aesthetic', *Poetics Today*, 9:2 (Durham: Duke University Press,1988), pp. 327–38, p. 327.

[48] Terry Eagleton, 'The Ideology of the Aesthetic', p. 327.

[49] See, for example, Cathy Yandell, '"Corps" and "Corpus": Montaigne's "Sur des vers de Virgile"', *Modern Language Studies*, 16, 3 (1986), 77–87.

[50] The presence of Tasso in this context is interesting given Montaigne's alleged meeting with the poet in Italy towards the end of his life, after he had been committed to a madhouse. One wonders whether there might be a subtle reflection on the extent of Tasso's retention of his cognitive capacities at play here. Montaigne's citations of Tasso increase five-fold in the final edition of the *Essais*, after his travels to Italy and his hypothetical meeting of the poet. See Jean Balsamo, 'La peinture de la Poesie, qui est libre et volontaire': Montaigne et ses poètes italiens', *Montaigne Studies,* 18 (2006), pp 89-108, and Ayesha Ramachandran, 'Montaigne's Tasso: Madness, melancholy, and the enigma of Italy', *Forum Italicum*, 47:2 (2013), 246–62, 250. On the question of whether Montaigne actually met Tasso, I side with Boutcher in thinking that if the meeting did happen, it likely doesn't appear in the *Journal* because it was recorded separately (see *The School of Montaigne in Early Modern Europe*, vol. 1, p. 111, n. 71).

Verse not only has the power to simulate experience, but it can also surpass it, evoking a bodily response that is more forceful (and appears more real) than that produced by the encounter with the thing (here, love) 'in the world'. The curious expression 'la peinture de la poesie' is telling of Montaigne's response to different kinds of works of art—implied in this expression is the view that if poetry possesses the ability to move us in this way, it does so through its likeness to painting, through its power to affect the reader through her senses.[51] These words are followed by a typical Montaignian expression of ineffability: 'Elle represente je ne sçay quel air plus amoureux que l'amour mesme' (849). Montaigne means 'elle' to refer to poetry, but due to the grammatical construction of the sentence the subject is, in fact, *peinture*. Once again, we find painting and poetry 'rubbing up' against one another, in this case co-mingled via Montaigne's idiosyncratic syntax.

This co-mingling is also apparent in his paraphrase of Juvenal that follows the above passage—'*Et versus digitos habet*'. The poet describes verse as having fingers (*digitos*)—a play on the 'dactylic' structure of epic verse, and an image that viscerally evokes the ability of words to 'reach out' from the page and physically, erotically, affect their reader.[52] But it is Montaigne who adapts the focus of the line to written poetry ('versus'), as Juvenal's original phrase is about speech and not verse: 'quod enim non excitet inguen ***vox*** blanda et nequam? digitos habet' ['Is there any crotch that's not in fact aroused by such a seductive and naughty phrase? It has fingers of its own'].[53] We can extrapolate from this passage, where Montaigne juxtaposes two excerpts of evocative verse with a description of poetry's powers to compellingly represent lived experience, a broader claim with respect to his views on art. Poetry, like painting, works best when it is able to stir our senses, to evoke bodily responses that replicate or even exceed those that we have when we interact with other physical bodies.[54] But what might seem at first a 'purely' aesthetic appraisal of poetry's powers retains an important temporal element: for it is surely also thanks to the rousing effects of verse that Montaigne is able to relive some of his youthful *ardeur*. The image of poetry as having fingers has a double function, then. It works not only as a way of (re)alerting us to the power of verse to elicit a corporeal aesthetic response, it also *points* outside of itself, helping us perhaps to relive previous (sensual) experiences in the way that Montaigne glances back over his shoulder at a time of youthful passion, a time which, through poetry, comes to be relived in the present. The fingers metaphor thus brings forth, alongside its embodied erotic imagery, the inescapable indexicality of poetry: what it points to will shift from person to person, age to age, and sometimes—as here with Montaigne—between different stages within a life.

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[51] Montaigne may also be thinking here of the common description of painting as mute poetry.

[52] On the haptic quality of Montaigne's writing, and particularly his use of this and other quotations in 'Sur des vers de Virgile', see Terence Cave, 'The Transit of Venus: Feeling Your Way Forward' in *Montaigne in Transit: Essays in Honour of Ian Maclean* ed. by Neil Kenny, Richard Scholar, and Wes Williams (Oxford: Legenda, 2016), pp. 9-18.

[53] Juvenal, *Satires* in *Juvenal and Persius* ed./trans. by Susanna Morton Braund, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), VI, ll. 196-7, p. 251. The emphasis is mine, the translation is from the Loeb text. For a cognitively inflected reading of the haptic quality of Montaigne's writing, and particularly his use of this and other quotations, in 'Sur des vers de Virgile', see Terence Cave, 'The Transit of Venus: Feeling Your Way Forward' in Neil Kenny, Richard Scholar, and Wes Williams (eds), *Montaigne in Transit: Essays in Honour of Ian Maclean* (Oxford: Legenda, 2016), pp. 9-18. See also Emma Herdman, 'Montaigne and Juvenal: Intertextual Recognition and the Readership of the *Essais*' in the same volume (pp. 133–54).

[54] It is tickling to think that Montaigne may be hinting at this idea further on in the chapter with a possible pun on the word *page*: '[m]on page faict l'amour, et l'entend' ['my page-boy makes love, and understands it'], III.v, p. 874. Indeed, Anne Carson engages in a productive misreading of this passage as being about the written page making love to its reader (*Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 87), although the gender of the word *page* is enough to suggest this is probably not what Montaigne intended.

Let us circle back now to the Horatian verse with which I started. When Montaigne cites the lines in 'Sur des vers de Virgile' they occur towards the end of the chapter:

> [B] Jamais homme n'eust ses approches plus impertinemment genitales. Cette voye d'aymer est plus selon la discipline; mais combien elle est ridicule à nos gens, et peu effectuelle, qui le sçait mieux que moy? Si ne m'en viendra point le repentir: je n'y ay plus que perdre:
>
> *me tabula sacer*
> *Votiva paries indicat uvida*
> *Suspendisse potenti*
> *Vestimenta maris Deo.*
>
> Il est à cette heure temps d'en parler ouvertement (890).

Montaigne uses Horace's image of the sailors' clothes being hung up after a shipwreck to indicate that he does not repent the nature of his advances towards women (which were 'impertinently genital'), but the finality of the metaphor also extends to the fact that there is no coming back from his decision to speak openly and frankly ('parler ouvertement') in this chapter—what's done is done, the writing (or the dripping wet garment) is on the wall. The fixity of this decision to adopt a mode of *franchise*, and Montaigne's somewhat brash tone here, are echoed in a marginal comment in the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* that appears a couple of pages earlier in the same chapter. In this passage, which has been partially lost and which did not make it into the '95 edition, Montaigne reflects on the development of the *Essais* as a project, and on the aims inscribed in the 'Au lecteur':

> Ma preface liminaire montre que je n'esperois pas tant. Les plus sages et sains escrits des antiens m'ont enhardi. Et le recueil qu'on a faict a mon premier project [the next two words are illegible] je me suis pique a rompre la glace et montrer a nos [the rest of the sentence has been cut off]. Je ne m'excuse.[55]

The short anti-apology constructed in this marginal note is telling of Montaigne's anxieties surrounding the fate of the *Essais* as a published work. The reference to the lowly aspirations of his 'introductory preface', and the detached use of 'on' for the act of gathering together the 'receuil' of the first two books of the *Essais*, strike quite a different key to the first-personal bluntness of the final clause. 'I am not making excuses to myself',[56] or, perhaps: I refuse to apologise for what I have written. The frictional confrontation of past and present that occurs here enacts Horace's verse which depicts an action that records and bears testimony to a previous action, but the attribution of a causal relationship between past and present can only happen retrospectively, as a backwards glance over the territory that has been traversed in order to arrive where we (the 'shipwrecked' lover; Montaigne; his readers) now are. This forwards and backwards motion enacts the temporal mode of the chapter: Montaigne reflects on the life he has lived and that which remains in turn prompting a reflection on the relationship between the final *essais* he is presently writing and the conception of his project.

Montaigne's juxtaposition of the Horatian ode—imbued with its complex temporal mode—and the *secco* painting enacts various kinds of movements between text and image, past and future, initial intention and final manifestation, movements that are themselves

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[55] *Les Essais*, ed. by Jean Balsamo et al., (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), p. 1758, notes on p. 932, note c. The C-text in the '95 edition reads: 'Je ne m'excuse pas envers moy: et si je le faisoy, ce seroit plustost de mes excuses, que je m'excuseroy, que d'autre mienne faute' (p. 888).
[56] This is Frame's rendition (Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, p. 823).

replicated in Montaigne's physical movement between the two different spaces in his study demarcated by these objects. This object-complex, I contend, is *designed* to enact these movements and to facilitate the networks of association (between Montaigne's physical surroundings and the text of the *Essais*, between Montaigne's past and current self) that I explored above.

### *III.ii Fluids, Fave and 3-D Printers: Encounters with the Stone*

Cave has written about the interplay of sex and text occurring in 'Sur des vers de Virgile'[57]—the idea that in this chapter, Montaigne employs the semantic field of sex to shift between images of sexual intercourse and 'textual' intercourse—between reader and text—in such a way that 'sex and language are […] so closely associated that it is difficult (and unnecessary) to decide whether language represents sex, or sex language.'[58] I think more can be made of the vulnerability that is performed in this chapter.[59] With his opening gambit that on this occasion he will bear all ('[B] je me suis ordonné d'oser dire tout ce que j'ose faire, et me desplais des pensées mesme impubliable' (845)), Montaigne tells (or warns) us that we will find him at his most intimate here. The subject he has chosen for this personal conversation with his reader is sex—yet this concerns a part of his body which is the source of pain and anxiety, and, as he recounts in this and other chapters in the *Essais*, is also unable to perform at least one of the things it is designed to do.[60] Montaigne's descriptions in 'Sur des vers de Virgile' of the power of poetry to represent passion are even more striking when read in light of passages on his impotence,[61] not just in the sexual act but in exerting control on his member on other occasions, too:

> [C] On a raison de remarquer l'indocile liberté de ce membre, s'ingerant si importunement, lors que nous n'en avons que faire, et defaillant si importunement, lors que nous en avons le plus affaire, et contestant de l'authorité si imperieusement avec nostre volonté, refusant avec tant de fierté et d'obstination noz solicitations et mentales et manuelles (102).

'De la force de l'imagination' (II.xxii), begins with a description of Montaigne's empathic qualities, which he says to be stronger than most—as an example, Montaigne tells us how merely being in the presence of a frequent cougher is enough to irritate his throat (97). This, and the discussion of sex and impotence that follows, are evidence of the connection present for Montaigne between imagination and the lack of control: imagination overcomes him, or, more precisely, his body—and he is powerless when it hits. For Montaigne imagination is a physiological faculty; unlike in other contemporary accounts its locus is not the mind but the body, and it can act against the will.[62]

The wayward activities of his member form a central part of the *Journal de voyage.* We hear a lot there of Montaigne's struggles with his *coliques*, as well as the palliative steps he undertakes to attempt to rid himself of the violent fits that they subject him to. As has been remarked, parts of the Italian section of the *Journal* read like a sort of medical log as

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[57] Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*, p. 285.
[58] Ibid., p. 287.
[59] Cave limits the transference of the image of impotence to Montaigne's use of the vernacular (*The Cornucopian Text,* p. 288).
[60] See, e.g., the crossed-out marginal comment in 'De la tristesse' (I.ii): 'un accident qui ne m'est pas incogneu'.
[61] On impotence in the *Essais*, see Lee R. Entin-Bates, 'Montaigne's Remarks on Impotence', *Modern Language Notes*, 91:4 (1976), 640–54.
[62] On this point, see John O'Brien, 'Reasoning with the Senses: The Humanist Imagination', *South Central Review*, 10:2 (1993), 3-19, 13.

Montaigne lists again and again the steps that he has taken to alleviate his suffering and the consequences of this self-care. Through those passages where he logs his water intake in glasses and pounds drunk, Montaigne is almost constructing a register of his journey through small acts of medical self-care, measuring out his days in cups of water ingested and elsewhere we also get details of what comes out the other end, another, more scatological, example of Montaigne taking stock through the goings on (and in and out and through) of his porous body. We might be reminded of the metaphor of the *contrerolle* or *registre* that Montaigne adopts throughout the *Essais* and which runs alongside the portraiture metaphor.[63] As Montaigne writes in 'Du dementir' (in a re-writing of the same thought in 'De l'oisiveté'), the act of keeping a register of one's thoughts allows one to keep one's thoughts in order, keeping them from roving too extravagantly:

> [C] Aux fins de renger ma fantasie à resver mesme par quelque ordre et projet, et la garder de se perdre et extravaguer au vent, il n'est que de donner corps et mettre en registre tant de menues pensées qui se presentent à elle (665).

The passages from the *Journal* about liquid intake and expulsion speak to that same need to impose some form and structure on the movement of the imagination, and betray, too, I think, a desire to feel some sense of control over a vulnerable, ailing body, whose physiological movements are messy, painful and disruptive. It is instructive, too, to set the idea of Montaigne's habit of tracking his water intake in the *Journal* as well as other movements into and out of his body alongside his approach to the Italian language. We can think of Montaigne's opening words in the Italian section telling us that he is 'assaggiando di parlar un poco quest altra lingua' ['trying a little of this other language'] as another image related to movement into or through the body: *assaggiare* in Italian is literally 'to taste' but also, of course— as the Querlon translation testifies—evokes the French verb *essayer*. In the *Essais* the project of *essayer* is often associated with physical, bodily imagery: we might think for instance of the famous description in 'De Democritus et Heraclitus' (I.l) that of many subjects that he could write about he '[C] en prens un tantost à lecher seulement, tantost à effleurer; et par fois à pincer jusqu'à l'os' (302). But Montaigne's anxiety of control is never too far away. Despite his desire to delve in to the language of his surroundings, while reflecting on this experience in the *Essais* he is a little less than pleased with his ability to manipulate[64] the language at will: '[B] en Italie, je disois ce qu'il me plaisoit en devis communs ; mais, aus propos raides, 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' (873). Once again, an image of physicality and (lack of) control gives rise to the question of that which is proper to oneself: 'quelque chose du mien'.

Insofar as the *Journal* is as much an account of a physical journey as it is a record of what passes in and through the author's body, the body becomes itself a site—an object to be observed, monitored, spectated, understood, a source of fascination—as well as the medium through which Montaigne relates to the physical sites and locations on his itinerary. Throughout, we find an emphasis on the body's vulnerability, and Montaigne's vulnerability to the workings of his body. Perhaps the most striking example of this comes in the following passage, taken from the section written during Montaigne's stay at Bagni alla Villa near Lucca:

> Al 24 la mattina buttai una pietra, la quale si fermò al canale. Mi stetti perfino di quella ora a quella del desinare, senza orinare, acciò me ne venisse gran voglia. Allora non senza disagio e sangue, et innanzi e dopo, la buttai, grande e lunga come

[63] On the *Journal* as a *registre medical*, see François Rigolot, 'Introduction', *Journal de Voyage*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

[64] I use this word advisedly because the imagery here is tactile, malleable.

> una nocciola di pino, ma all'un capo grossa a pari d'una fava: avendo a dire il vero la forma d'un cazzo affatto, affatto. Fu mia grande ventura di poterla spinger fuora. Non ne ho mai messo, che stesse a petto di questa grandezza. Aveva troppo veracemente indovinato della qualità delle mie orine questo successo. Verrò quel che n'è da seguire.[65]
>
> [Enfin, le 24 matin, je poussai une pierre qui s'arrêta au passage. Je restai depuis ce moment jusqu'à diner sans uriner, [quoique] j'en eusse grande envie. Alors je rendis ma pierre non sans douleur et sans effusion de sang avant et après l'éjection. Elle étoit de la grandeur et longeur d'une petite pomme ou noix de pin, mais gross d'une côté comme une féve, et elle avoit exactement la forme du membre masculin. Ce fut un grand Bonheur pour moi d'avoir pu la faire sortir. Je n'en ai jamais rendu de comparable en grosseur à celle-ci ; je n'avois que trop bien jugé, par la qualité de mes urines, ce qui en devoit arriver. Je verrai quelles en seront les suites].[66]

The language employed by Montaigne here is infused with both implicit and explicit sexual imagery. He refers to the 'pietra' (the stone) that has passed through his urethra first as a 'nocciola di pino' (a pine nut), then as a 'fava' (a broad bean) before coming out with the image to which these two comparisons have alluded, in a sort of crescendo that itself evokes the anticipated expulsion of the stone: it has, to tell the whole truth, the form of a 'cazzo'—a penis.[67] Aside from the adventurous nature of Montaigne's Italian,[68] the real adventure here, as he himself says, is the stone's expulsion, the largest that has ever passed through his body. The passage demonstrates Montaigne's scientific interest in the act of passing a stone: he notes his empirical observations on the causal relationship between the 'qualità delle [sue] urine' and the size of the stone and records the incident as a basis for continued scrutiny: 'Verrò quell che n'è da seguire'.

But above all, I think, Montaigne is fascinated by the fact that the stone possesses the same shape as the member whence it came. To use an anachronistic metaphor, it is as if his penis has become a 3-D printer, albeit one whose printed object is, bizarrely, a mini-replica of itself. This highly personal anecdote reveals Montaigne's interest in the machinations of his body as both agent and vessel. While it is his body that has expelled the stone, with blood (certainly), sweat (likely) and perhaps even some tears, his body has not 'chosen' this course of events (there is only one natural way out for the stone, after all) and the ultimate form of the product of this excretion is beyond control. At the same time, the stone is made in the image of its immediate originator, and as such bears the unmistakeable imprint, a sort of formal watermark, of a specific body—Montaigne's body. The interplay of agency and accident, freedom and control that arises out of Montaigne's descriptions of his expulsion of stones share a similar dynamic to that described by John O'Brien in his comments on the vulnerability of the Renaissance book[69] as a material object subject to the vagaries of bodily

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[65] *Journal*, p. 199.
[66] Trans. by Meunier de Querlon, *Journal*, p. 272.
[67] On the Freudian psycho-dynamics of what he terms 'the phallic stone', see Lawrence D. Kritzman's chapter 'Romancing the Stone' in *The Fabulous Imagination: On Montaigne's Essays* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 154-92 (and in particular pp.171-80).
[68] For an analysis of Montaigne's use of Italian in the *Journal* which includes a quantitative analysis of descriptions related to his body, see Chiara Nifosi, 'Une Langue de Voyage: Étude quantitative sur l'italien de Montaigne' in Philippe Desan (ed.), *Montaigne à l'étranger: Voyages avéres, possibles et imaginés* (Paris: Garnier, 2016), pp. 225-241.
[69] As opposed to T. M. Greene's vulnerable Renaissance *text*, with which O'Brien is in dialogue here, although parts of Greene's discussion have affinities with my own (cf. *The Vulnerable Text: Essays on Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), particularly pp. 131-2).

interaction:

> The distortions and depredations brought about by the pressures of the human body in its contact with the book are familiar to all readers of Renaissance printed works, and bear witness to the physicality of reading as a pragmatic process and the book's corresponding existence as an object prone to accidents, susceptible to the vicissitudes of handing and historical transmission from hand to hand.
> […]
> The sense of vulnerability is endemic to the physical practice of reading, as books can be subjected to uses not intended in their original design, but not outside the reading process.[70]

Montaigne's fixation on the functions and functionality of his genital organ similarly reveals a concern with deviations from those 'intended in [its] original design'. The stone, viewed as a designed object, becomes emblematic of those anxieties with (posthumous) interpretation which, as we saw in Chapter Two, found their expression in Montaigne's negative uses of *dessein*. When triangulated with the stone—viewed as a designed object—and O'Brien's analysis of the physical vulnerability of texts-objects, those concerns, which were to do with the dually disruptive/creative force of chance, take on a further, embodied dimension. It is not just that chance acts upon a text as an external force, but chance is inscribed in the very materiality/physicality of the text/writer. The body can produce objects that the will has no control over and yet still bear the imprint of that which excreted them; the text can give rise to 'accidental' meanings and uses that are beyond the author's command. Designed objects are not thus those that straightforwardly manifest an intention, but those resulting from a process of creation in which contingency (both present and future) plays as important a part as control. In the final section below, I explore a final dimension to design that can be uncovered through Montaigne's interaction with designed objects, and that is open-endedness, which translates, in the example below, to a potential for infinite uses.

### *III.iii 'Infiniti disegni'/'Infinis essais'*

In 'De la phisionomie', Montaigne opens with a lamentation of the spirit of his age. If Socrates were to be transported to late sixteenth-century France, no one would take any notice, Montaigne says, because his contemporaries care only about 'les graces que pointues, bouffies et enflées d'artifice', which are a far cry from Socrates's style:

> [C] [i]l n'a jamais en la bouche que cochers, menuisiers, savetiers et maçons. [B] Ce sont inductions et similitudes tirées des plus vulgaires et cogneues actions des hommes; chacun l'entend (1037).

Montaigne's antipathy for *artifice* is well-known—it is announced in the very opening of the *Essais*.[71] But in those places where Montaigne brings up *artifice* in a negative context, he is usually discussing the demerits of custom and sociability rather than those of man-made objects.[72] It is objects that are more than just decorative—useful objects—that Montaigne is

[70] John O'Brien, 'Wounded Artifacts: Vulnerability and Montaigne's *Essais*', *MLN*, 27:4 (2012), 712-31 (714).
[71] 'Je veus qu'on m'y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans contention et artifice', 'Au lecteur', 3.
[72] See, for example, III.ii, 'Du repentir': 'Le voisin degré, c'est de l'estre en sa maison, en ses actions ordinaires, desquelles nous n'avons à rendre raison à personne; où il n'y a point d'estude, point d'artifice' (808).

specially drawn to. What this passage brings out clearly is the value for Montaigne of craftsmanship, understood as the right kind of closeness to the prime materials involved in artistic creation, no matter whether words or leather. In the case of language, getting too close means crossing into pedantry, whereas too much embellishment fails to allow the raw material to speak for itself. Michel Jeanneret discusses how, for Montaigne, the valency of nature/art depends on a careful balance. For Jeanneret, art and nature in Montaigne's view supplement each other: 'quand la nature est bonne, l'art est mauvais, mais quand la nature est mauvaise, l'art est bon'.[73] Jeanneret uses this insight to inflect his reading of 'Sur des vers de Virgile', through which he draws out a radically embodied understanding of the craftsmanship of poetry:

> [il] se pose en ouvrier de la langue et il illustre sa théorie, *hic et nunc*, en l'appliquant. Sous sa plume, les idées s'incarnent et, traitées dans un vocabulaire concret rapportées aux activités manuelles, à la réalité physique et biologique, elles prennent la consistance d'une manière'.[74]

Jeanneret's reading encapsulates what I see as the two central components of Montaigne's aesthetics: the emphasis on the 'craftsmanship' of artistic creation (understood as an enterprise that occurs through manual/physical action), and the primacy of bodily experience in aesthetic experience—both of which could, in the Renaissance, be comfortably accommodated within the experience of works of art. To see these elements at play, let us consider the following passage from II.ix, 'De la vanité', where Montaigne considers an object of use that recurs throughout his works, the fountain:

> [C] Le poete, dict Platon, assis sur le trepied des Muses, verse de furie tout ce qui luy vient en la bouche, comme la gargouille d'une fontaine, sans le ruminer et poiser, et luy eschappe des choses de diverse couleur, de contraire substance et d'un cours rompu. (995)

Added after his visits to the many fountains of Italian villas, Montaigne's description of a poet spilling forth verse like a fountain recalls descriptions and iconography of Mount Parnassus and the fountain of the Muses, mobilising a classical association between poetic inspiration and fountains. But in Plato's *Laws*, from which Montaigne takes this image, just after the comparison of the poet with a fountain, the philosopher writes 'and, since his art [*techne*] is that of imitation [*mimeseos*]' the poet is set to contradict himself frequently.[75] This passage, the only one in Plato's oeuvre that describes the activity of the poet as one of both imitation *and* inspiration, is a revealing late addition to Montaigne's chapter because it makes the body the site of the poetic process—the locus through which poetic language is both made and received. Witness the number of senses addressed: we have the words 'couleur' and 'bouche' and the verb 'poiser' and especially the onomatopoeic *gargouille*—which could mean a pipe, a gurgle, and a gargoyle, the kind found adorning the passageways of the gardens at Tivoli that so struck Montaigne on his visit. This C-text addition is in dialogue, I contend, with the descriptions of fountains found in the *Journal de voyage*. This is not only because Montaigne may have had in mind Italian gardens when, paraphrasing Plato, he penned the phrase 'comme la gargouille d'une fontaine', but because the description links literary creation with a designed object through a comparison based on

[73] Michel Jeanneret, 'Naturaliser l'Art?' in *Bulletin de la Société internationale des amis de Montaigne*, 55 (2012), pp. 143-53, (p.144).
[74] Jeanneret, 'Naturaliser l'Art?', p. 151.
[75] Plato, *Laws*, trans. by Robert Gregg Bury, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 719c, p. 305.

creation and proliferation: poetry here is imagined as an open-ended act of potentially infinite production.

When describing the waterworks at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, Montaigne is taken by the inventions of the famous *giochi d'acqua* or waterworks in the grounds of the Villa, particularly how they are able to convincingly replicate certain sounds (such as cannon fire, or organs) and even natural phenomena like rainbows.[76] But it is the fountains of the Villa at Bagnaia—now known as the Villa Lante—[77] some sixty miles from Tivoli, that make a particularly strong impression, about which, having switched to Italian in the *Journal*, he writes:

> Al Sabbato ultimo di Settembre la mattina io mi partii di Viterbo, e presi la strada di Bagnaio, loco del Cardinal Gambara molto ornato, e ben acconcio fra l'altre cose di fontane. Et in questa parte pare, che non solamente pareggi, ma vinca e Pratolino, e Tivoli. Prima ha l'acqua di fontana viva, che non ha Tivoli; e tanto abbondevole (che non ha Pratolino) ch'ella basta a infiniti disegni.[78]
>
> [Le Samedi, dernier Septembre, je partis de bon matin de Viterbe, et je pris la route de Bagnaia. C'est un endroit appartenant au Cardinal Gambara qui est fort orné, et surtout si bien fourni de fontaines, qu'en cette partie il paroît, non-seulement égaler, mais surpasser même Pratolino et Tivoli. Il y a d'abord une fontaine d'eau vive, ce que n'a pas Tivoli, et très-abondante, ce qui n'est pas à Pratolino; de façon qu'elle suffit à une infinité de distributions sous différens dessins].[79]

Montaigne writes that the fountain at Bagnaia, unlike the one at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, has its own fresh spring water. The term 'l'acqua di fontana viva' is an evocative phrase, as Montaigne shifts the descriptor 'viva', intended for 'acqua', to juxtapose it with 'fontana'—the order of his words means that it is the fountain, as much as the water, that is alive. Montaigne is also struck by the water at Bagnaia being so bountiful, unlike that at the Villa di Pratolino—there is so much of it in fact, that there 'is enough for infinite designs'. This passage is representative of one of Montaigne's patterns of thinking, which he calls *distinguo*: to praise the qualities of the fountains of Bagnaia, he first compares it to two other places famous for their fountains in order to bring out the merits of Bagnaia more strongly.[80] But of particular interest here is the use of the word 'disegni'. In hiis 1775 translation, Querlon he supplies 'dessins' for 'disegni', indicating that he saw Montaigne as referring to the visual plans of the fountains—we will recall here that Querlon is writing after the development of a separate term for drawing.[81] Querlon's translation suggests that he interprets Montaigne as

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[76] Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage*, pp. 128-29.

[77] During Montaigne's visit the villa belonged to Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara, Bishop of Viterbo. Isn the seventeenth century it passed to Duke Ippolito Lante della Rovere, hence its modern designation. It was designed by Giacomo da Vignola, one of the pre-eminent architects of what we now call the Mannerist style. For a description of the villa and the complex interplay of art and nature occurring in its gardens, see Claudia Lazzaro-Bruno, 'The Villa Lante at Bagnaia: An Allegory of Art and Nature', *The Art Bulletin*, 59:4 (1977), 533-60.

[78] Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage*, p. 209.

[79] Trans. Meunier de Querlon, *Journal de Voyage*, p. 283.

[80] On Montaigne's practice of *distinguo*, see Steven Rendall, *Distinguo: Reading Montaigne Differently* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Daniel Menager, 'Montaigne et l'art du distingo', in *Montaigne et la Rhétorique*, pp. 149–59.

[81] However, the two terms (*dessein* and *dessin*) are not yet entirely distinct: the 1762 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* still lists 'la représentation d'une ou de plusieurs figures, d'un paysage, d'un morceau d' Architecture, &c. soit au crayon, soit à la plume' among the definitions of *dessein* (design), and adds that *dessein* is also used when talking about the 'plan d'un bâtiment' (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th edn (1762)).

using the word *dessins* to refer to architectural plans or designs.[82]

The actual disposition and variety of sculptures and *giochi d'acqua* present at Bagnaia support Querlon's rendition. The gardens are arranged on tiered levels, as the contemporary engraving by Tarquino Ligustri (below) shows,[83] and Montaigne elsewhere comments on the skill of the Italians in making use of the irregular elements of the landscape so creatively. The different features of the garden, by turns playful, imaginative, and functional, testify to the full range of characteristics such gardens possessed.[84]

[82] On Montaigne and Renaissance architectural dynamics of infinity, see David Sedley, 'Infinity and Mechanical Arts in Montaigne's and Bacon's Essays', *Romanic Review*, 108: 1–4 (2017), 195–215 (esp. 198–208).

[83] The legend calls the engraving a 'disegno et vero ritratto' ['design and true likeness']. The word *disegno* here denotes a viusal (architectural) plan, in the sense understood by Querlon. It is important to note that when Montiagne visited Bagnaia in 1581, the villa's gardens had not been completed, consequently Ligustri's engraving contains some elements Montaigne would not have seen.

[84] The Villa at Bagnaia is also an extraordinary example of the narrative qualities of the Renaissance garden—when walking through its pathways and across its levels, the visitor is invited to link together the various mythological and classical allusions, composing their own *historiae*, while also being guided by the formal narratives inscribed in the designs themselves, such as the Golden Age narrative (from the state of nature to present civilization) common to Renaissance gardens, that at Bagnaia is constructed from the top tiers to the bottom, via a middle region representing the Flood. See Lazzaro-Bruno, 'The Villa Lante at Bagnaia', p. 556-7.

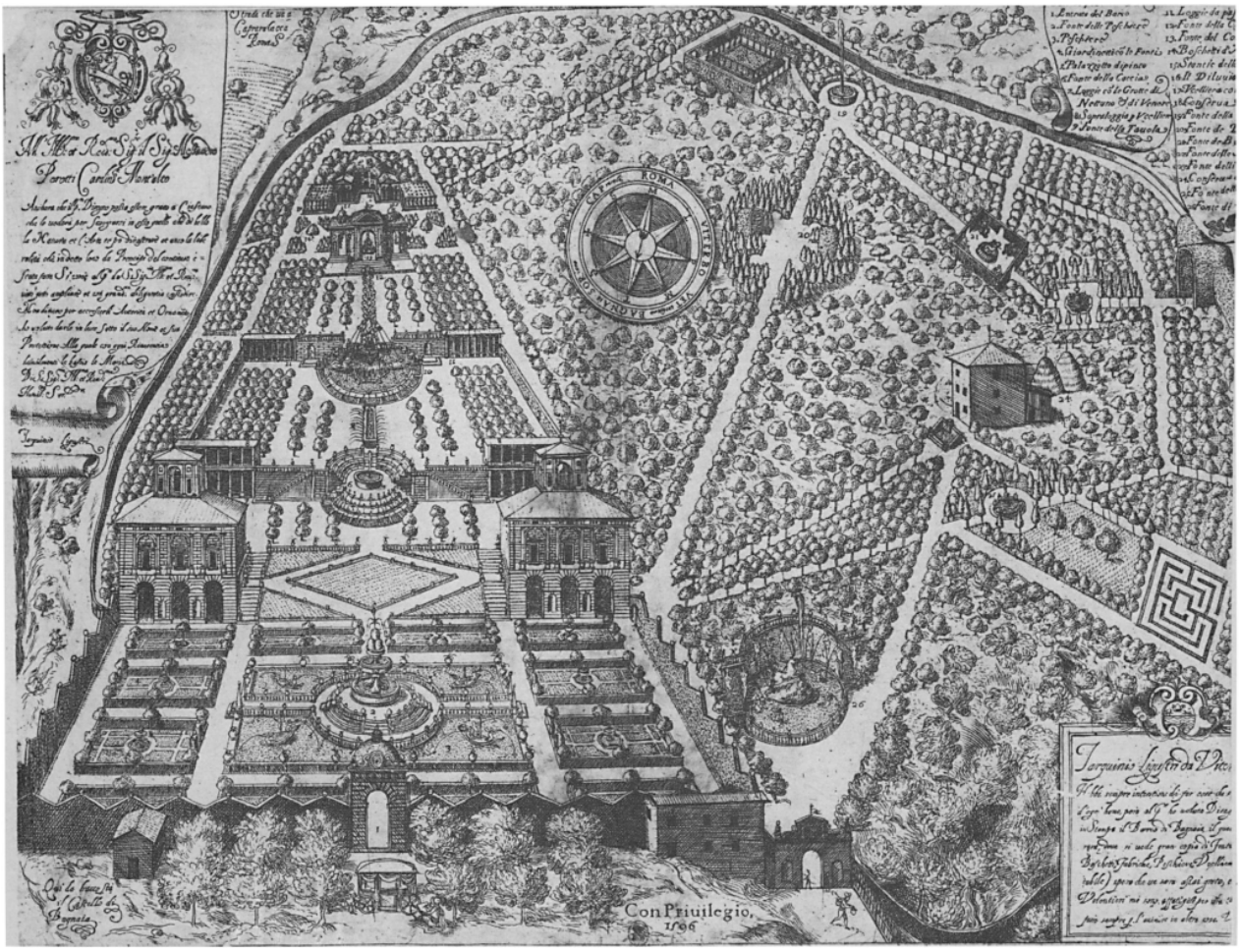


***Figure 22***: Detail of Tarquino Ligustri, *Villa Lante*, engraving (1596), Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

The artistic *disegni* of the Villa are no doubt various and diverse. But in Montaigne's Italian, *disegni* need not refer to a visual or architectural design. We have seen how, in 1580, the French *dessein* comes very close to the wide spectrum of meanings afforded by *disegno*: Montaigne may well have intended to use *disegni* here as an equivalent of the more intentional uses of *dessein*: the water is enough for infinite actions/plans/aims/designs. Following this interpretation, the architectural designs of the fountains could be only one of many kinds of designs that Montaigne envisions the water affording (alongside, say, viewing, drinking, or bathing). The ambiguity of the word *disegni* here reflects what we might call the 'underspecified' nature of the fountain, which does not contain within it its own ends but rather can be used in a variety of different ways depending on the particular dispositions of the user/viewer. If we consider the lines that follow the above passage in the *Journal*, we find a different word used by Montaigne to refer to the gardens and *giochi* of the Villa:

> Il medesimo Messer Tomaso da Siena, il quale ha condotto l'opera di Tivoli, o la principale, è ancora conduttore di questa la quale non è fornita: e così aggiungendo sempre nuove ***invenzioni*** alle vecchie, ha posto in questo suo ultimo lavoro assai più d'arte, di belleza e leggiadria.[85]
>
> [Le même M. Thomas de Sienne, qui a conduit l'ouvrage de Tivoli, conduit encore celui-ci qui n'est pas achevé. Ainsi ajoutant toujours de nouvelles inventions aux anciennes, il a mis dans cette dernière construction beaucoup plus d'art, de beautés et d'agrément.][86]

*Invenzione*, as we saw in Chapter 3, is an art-theoretical term that was used to describe the choice of subject matter in painting and other visual arts. Montaigne uses the term advisedly here, to refer to the myriad art objects and imaginative inventions found in the gardens, on which he lavishes aesthetic praise (they possess' 'arte', 'belleza' and 'leggiadria'). Theword *invenzioni* here is more akin to Querlon's interpretation of *disegni*: the term is used by Montaigne to refer to the artistic act of creation, thereby expressing a recognizably aesthetic response to the fountains. This response is mediated through an understanding of the designed nature of the objects before him that calls attention to the body. He explicitly calls the fountain-complex a *corpo*:

> Tra mille altre membra di questo eccellente ***corpo*** si vede una piramide alta, la quale butta acqua in assaissimi modi diversi: questa monta, questa cala. A torno a questa piramide sono quattro laghetti belli, chiari, netti, gonfi d'acqua, e la balestrano contra la piramide: et un trombetto in ciascuna, che tira ancora lui acqua. E si va a torno questi laghi e piramide per bellissimi viali, con appoggi di bella peitra, lavorati molto artificiosamente. Ad altri piacquera più altre parti.[87]
>
> Parmi les différentes pieces qui la décorent, on voit une pyramide fort elevée qui jette de l'eau de plusieurs maniérés différentes: celle-ci monte, celle-là descend. Autour de la pyramide, sont quatre petits lacs, beaux, clairs, purs et remplis d'eau. Au milieu de chacun est une gondole de pierre, montée par deux Arquebusiers, qui, après avoir pompé l'eau, la lancent avec leurs arbalètes contre la pyramide, et par une Trompette qui tire aussi de l'eau. On se promene autour de ces lacs et de la pyramide par de très-belles allées, où l'on trouve des appuis de pierre d'un fort beau travail. Il

[85] Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage*, pp. 209-10. Emphasis mine.
[86] Ibid., p. 283.
[87] Ibid., p. 210.

> y a d'autres parties qui plurent encore davantage à quelques autres Spectateurs.[88]

These descriptions betray the fundamentally spatial, physical ways in which Montaigne takes in the wonders of Bagnaia. Such villas invited this kind of interaction (and were designed for it) but Montaigne remains aware that different spectators nevertheless approach these objects in different ways—that his experience is not universal—as denoted by the final sentence: 'ad altri piacquero più alter parti'. 'Spectators' or, perhaps, 'users'; witness the final remark Montaigne makes of Bagnaia:

> Certo, s'io me ne intendo, porta questo loco di gran lunga il pregio dell'uso e servizio delle acque.[89]
>
> [Autant que je puis m'y connaître, cet endroit l'emporte de beaucoup [sur bien d'autres], par l'usage et l'emploi des eaux].[90]

The phrase 'uso e servizio delle acque' connotes function and functionality, relating it to the semantic pole of *disegno* (and *dessein*) concerned with human intention and its relationship to action. In both cases, the word *disegni* and *uso* draw attention to the embodied nature of the encounter between man and object: one can imagine that one of the many uses or *infiniti disegni* that Montaigne might be thinking of for the water at Bagnaia is hydrotherapy, alongside other uses such as drinking or bathing.[91]

In II.xxxvii, 'De la ressemblence des enfans aux peres', written before his Italian travels, Montaigne similarly creates a parallel between bodily ailments and infinity. When discussing the myriad options facing doctors in curing their patients, he points to the unknowability of the natural world: '[A] J'imagine l'homme regardant au tour de luy le nombre infiny des choses, plantes, animaux, metaux. Je ne sçay par où luy faire commencer son essay' (782). These words could just as easily be used for describing the process of writing the *Essais*. Montaigne is faced with an infinite number of possible subjects, including himself as an object of never-ending study. Indeed, Montaigne uses the word *infini* in to describe the nature of the writing of the *Essais*, in I.xl, 'Consideration sur Cicéron':

> [C] Et combien y ay-je espandu d'histoires qui ne disent mot, lesquelles qui voudra esplucher un peu ingenieusement, en produira infinis Essais.[92]

There is a connection to be made, I think, between this passage from 'Consideration sur Cicéron' and the passages from the *Journal*. The last phrase of the above paragraph echoes the phrase *infiniti disegni* used to describe the fountains at Bagnaia. In both cases, the image is one of copious excess and open-endedness, generated by interaction with human agents: whether 'users' of the fountains or imagined readers of the *Essais*.

The dual constructions *infiniti disegni/ infinis Essais* bring out the parallel between the *Essais* and the fountains at Bagnaia. In both cases the potential for endless proliferation is thought of in terms of a physical encounter: the potential *uses* of the water at Bagnaia, and the physical encounter between thought and page. Montaigne's encounter with the

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[88] Ibid., p. 283. The 'arquebusiers' that were featured in the fountain as described by Montaigne here are no longer extant.
[89] Ibid., p. 210.
[90] Ibid., p. 283.
[91] Interestingly, in his *discours* on the *Journal*, Querlon frames Montaigne's attitude to water on his trip in the language of *dessein*: 'L'usage des eaux minérales en bain, en douche, en boisson, étoit dans son opinion la médecine la plus simple & la plus sûre. Il avoit vu les plus célèbres eaux de France; il voulut voir celles de la Lorraine, de la Suisse & de la Toscane. Ce ***dessein*** régla principalement ses courses ; on le voit sans cesse occupé du soin d'une santé chancelante, se porter vers toutes les eaux minérales de quelque réputation, & en essayer: c'étoit là qu'il se plaisoit le plus', *Journal de Voyage*, p. 311. Emphasis mine.
[92] I.xl, p. 251.

fountains of the Villa, read in light of the two passages (from 'De la vanité' and 'Consideration sur Cicéron' above) reveals an analogy between the physical 'body' of fountains, the textual corpus represented by the *Essais* and Montaigne's own body. All three are situated social objects that possess or reflect physiological processes: the flowing of fluids (whether that be blood, urine or semen, fresh water, or indeed Montaigne's fluid, malleable sentences), procreation or proliferation (as in the uses of the fountain, the kidney stones perpetuating the shape of their penile channel, and the imagined infinite expansion of the chapters of the *Essais*).[93] Like the water of Bagnaia, in order to be put to various 'designs', so, too, Montaigne requires a material manifestation, an externalisation of his project. The *Essais*, are a material vessel through which the form of his thoughts is made to flow—and in this way Montaigne's thoughts, too, are 'acqua di fontana viva', coursing through the chapters of the *Essais*, both animating and being animated in turn by the essay form.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by looking at a critical commonplace that claims Montaigne seemed largely disinterested in the art of his day. Analysing some of the assumptions behind this claim, I argued that these tell us more about our own (modern, bourgeois) expectations regarding Montaigne as a writer than they do about Montaigne's actual responses to art objects. Comparing Montaigne to a fellow contemporary traveller and diary-writer, Nicolas Audebert, I teased out the reasons why Montaigne does not fit neatly into a generally accepted narrative of the development of aesthetic taste. I then turned my attention to what Montaigne *does* reveal about his own aesthetic approach through his descriptions of what I termed 'designed objects'. By looking at three examples, I reflected on the embodied dynamics of Montaigne's interaction with designed objects, analysing some of the elements of a Montaignian aesthetics and extrapolating from this an argument about how we might consider the *Essais* themselves a designed object, one animated by Montaigne's complex and subtle understanding of design which I explored in the previous chapters of the thesis. My discussion here has been limited to three case studies which I see as enmeshed in the dynamics of design, but it would be interesting to construct a broader map of Montaigne's interaction with other designed objects that are scattered throughout the *Essais* and the *Journal*. Some of these are *textual* objects such as Pierre Eyquem's two *papier journaux* (one a record of his military exploits, the other a log of 'l'histoire de sa maison') that Montaigne mentions in the *Essais*,[94] or the copy of Plutarch's *Opuscules* that Montaigne was so excited to handle at the Vatican Library.[95] We might think, too, of Montaigne's own version of his father's domestic diary, a copy of Michael Beuther's *Ephemeris historica*, which he used to record important family events. But there also many different kinds of objects that are worthy of our attention, down to, at the microcosmic level, objects such as piece of glass which, as Montaigne says in III.xiii, 'De l'experience', he sometimes places over the page to render its whiteness less blinding to his tired eyes.[96] These are worthy of greater attention because, as I have argued above, the author of the *Essais* thought with and through artefacts and objects. His interactions with such objects allow us to conceive of the *Essais* themselves as the product of a design process, and as involved in networks and varieties of use—their own *infiniti disegni*.

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[93] I thank Emma Claussen for a seminar question that sparked and informed my thinking on this.
[94] The domestic diary crops up in a C-text addition in I.xxxv, 'D'un defaut de nos polices', p. 224, the military diary is mentioned in II.ii, 'De l'yvrongnerie', p. 344.
[95] Michel de Montaigne, *Journal de Voyage*, p. 111.
[96] III.xiii, p. 1105.

# Epilogue

## *Essaying Design*

Nous nous promenons sur nos pas.

MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, III.vi, 'Des coches'

A writer is also a designer. A designer of words rather than of things.

DONALD NORMAN, *The Design of Everyday Objects*

I have written a thesis about design; now it is time to reflect on the design of this thesis. It is tempting, in doing so, to use as a strategy one of the ideas that I alluded to in the introduction, that design is something that emerges retrospectively (it's the shape we *assign* to a life lived, the story we tell about a painting *after* having put together its various elements)—and to interpret the various strands of the thesis according to an overarching vision. But, as we have seen, design is also intimately procedural, it is concerned with the transformation of something (mental) into something else (material); it is always also future-(if not ends-) directed. This epilogue combines these approaches, looking back at the paths taken as a way to open them outwards, towards other possible avenues of thinking that could arise therefrom.

My exploration of design has taken me from a reconsideration of Montaigne's famous metaphor of self-portraiture in light of the dynamics of the sketch, to Montaigne's interaction with objects such as fountains, by way of Montaigne's language of *dessein* and an exploration of the 'sketchiness', the embodied *maniera*, of his writing. I have followed these vagaries in the recognition that they were, themselves, indicative of design's discursiveness, and that the very act of following design's digressions would be a form of argument. Throughout the thesis, the word *dessein* (and its cognate *disegno*) have kept me company. They acted on the one hand as *puncta*, anchors to Montaigne's text and his historical context that have grounded me in the territory that I set out to trace; and on the other hand as objects of enquiry in and of themselves, that I have examined with a variety of different instruments, from philology to textual criticism, from art history to art theory. What might become of the different strands (and hands) I have laid out here? One of the hopes of this thesis is that *dessein* be taken seriously as a keyword of the *Essais*, a means of understanding—and testing—some of our long-held assumptions about this well-traversed text. This is not so much a claim that *dessein* should be added to the list of words comprising the *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*, or that *dessein* be listed alongside other, established, terms often analysed in conjunction with the *Essais*, as a call for a greater attunement to the dynamics of design in Montaigne's thinking and writing, which I have elucidated in this thesis.

Ian Maclean, writing about the transgressive-generative force of some Renaissance writers, states that, in his eyes,

> authors such as Girolamo Cardano and Montaigne […] did not encounter insurmountable barriers when seeking to find ways of exceeding the perceived limits of a given language but found ways to pass into the 'pays au-delà'. Montaigne himself refers to such cognitive moments, but he also confesses that the resources of French might be felt to be inadequate for the complete articulation of one's thoughts, and in need of support from ancient, more stable, languages.[1]

In part, this thesis has argued that, in describing the multiple and simultaneous nature of his writing project, which itself aimed to capture the multiple and simultaneous nature of thought, Montaigne at times found support from a term not in Latin or the language of his favourite poets. Instead, the French language offered him, in the form of a term that was still being excavated from its own future, the means to go 'au-delà' the mind/world binary and thus to capture the essential gerundive character of his own writing. But this claim is not limited to the *Essais. Dessein* and its European cognates afforded Renaissance writers, thinkers, artists, and theorists the means to conjure semantic 'elsewheres'—open, experimental spaces that allowed them, if not to perfectly describe, the means to capture the

[1] Ian Maclean, 'Afterword', in Neil Kenny, Richard Scholar and Wes Williams (eds), *Montaigne in Transit: Essays in Honour of Ian Maclean* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), pp. 253–61 (p. 255).

special ambiguous quality of a particular (dynamic) tension, that between inner and outer worlds, worlds that they sought to bridge through literary or artistic creation. The polysemy of these cognates grants them (or their users) this creative potential. While for *disegno* this potential has been widely mined, *dessein* remains still in the shadows of its Italian cousin. Just as 'Renaissance *disegno* theory may be seen as one big pun or perhaps zeugma […] between purposeful devising and physical drawing, between the intentional and the manual', so too can *dessein* be seen to operate along similar zeugmatic trajectories, paths worthy of greater exploration and delineation.[2]

My arguments, however, did not just pertain to the *semantic* range of the term *dessein* but stretched to include the *rapprochement* that design, understood conceptually, allowed between Montaigne's practice of writing and the sketch, and between the poetics of the *Essais* and designed objects. I have also paid attention to the relationship of design to chance and contingency, both as an expression of the human need to control contingency and as the result of the waywardness, the *fourvoyement*, that occurs when human plans inevitably collide with the vagaries of reality. I examined some of the ways in which Montaigne's writing pays tribute to this chancy interaction and attempts to map and mirror its movements, making the *essai* a genre to which 'luck and play are essential.[3] I found in the sketch a compelling analogue to design's natural ambivalence, and coupled my analysis of Montaigne's text with analyses of images, self-portraits on paper and studies of hands, that I proposed enacted some of the dynamics of the text. This comparative strategy was particularly apt to my arguments not just because 'image-making serves to make sense of the world',[4] helping us to elucidate concepts and ideas, but also because Montaigne himself is an image-maker—a writer who reaches for the visual and the metaphorical in the articulation of his most complex thoughts and in the attempt to put into writing not just their content but their form (as I argued in Chapter Two), and for whom visual metaphor forms a central part of the description of his own writing project (as discussed in Chapter One). In comparing his writing to images, I have thus sought to bring out a visuality that, I felt, was already latent in his text.

One of the key arguments of the thesis, put forward in Chapter Three, is that the design of the *Essais* is a textual one, it is not an authorial intention but is found instead at the level of the text, at the interface of mind and world. I think we can use this insight to go some way towards rethinking the kind of distinction posited by Colin Burrow between 'object-like' literature (for Burrow, that which represents 'single ideas' and is driven by a set of beliefs making up a philosophy) and 'open-ended, metamorphic writing'.[5] For Burrow, Michelangelo's *rime* are representative of the former and Shakespeare's sonnets of the latter but I think that Burrow would place Montaigne alongside Shakespeare in the second category.[6] Burrow characterises Michelangelo's poetic practice as akin to a sculptural mode of extraction of a *concetto*, a central idea or concept—it attempts to extricate a pre-exiting thought from a fixed form. Certainly Michelangelo's poetry is marked by attempts to crystallize complex thoughts and ideas that are often spiritual, to arrive at a 'manifestation of

[2] Michael Baxandall, *Words for Pictures*, p. 85.
[3] The phrasing is Adorno's ('The Essay as Form' in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 29–47 (p. 30)).
[4] Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, p. 257.
[5] Colin Burrow, 'Why Shakespeare is not Michelangelo' in William Poole and Richard Scholar (eds), *Thinking with Shakespeare: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Essays* (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), pp. 9–22.
[6] See Colin Burrow, 'Montaignian Moments: Shakespeare and the *Essays*' in Neil Kenny, Richard Scholar, and Wes Williams (eds), *Montaigne in Transit: Essays in Honour of Ian Maclean* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2016), pp. 239-52.

the divine' in the form of a 'supernatural grace'.[7] Yet the way the creative process was theorised in the Renaissance bears testimony to a different understanding of the interaction between humans and objects, and Burrow may, with this distinction, be retro-projecting onto early modern writing something of our modern understanding of man-made objects as final forms.[8] In arguing that texts can be designed, I have tried to show how design both as a process and as an outcome demands flexibility and fluidity, and that the modern origins of (Western) design in Renaissance artistic practice, with its emphasis on the experimentality of the sketch, reveals an intimacy with open-endedness and vulnerability. Perhaps what I object to in Burrow's distinction then, is the dichotomy between something being 'object-like' and something being open-ended, which is emblematic of a more general approach to texts that, I think, could be fruitfully reconfigured.[9] In part, such a reimagining of this distinction can be grounded in a better appreciation and understanding of early modern attitudes to the creative process, including a focus on *techne* as the procedural faculty underlying the creation of artistic or designed objects, which forces us to complicate the understanding of art objects as something always already externalised or 'finished'.[10]

Burrow's distinction leads me to a final point. In a world in which design is increasingly at the forefront of debates about the future of human society, from technology and artificial intelligence to urban planning,[11] I suggest it is not a stretch to think that our modern understanding of design has much to learn from early modern artists and writers. There is evidence that some of our modern thinking about design is starting to change in this direction. One of the central concepts that has dominated modern design studies is that of affordance. In his book about the psychology behind designed objects, Donald Norman describes affordances as follows:

> the term *affordance* refers to the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used. A chair affords ('is for') support, and, therefore, affords sitting. A chair can also be carried. Glass is for seeing through, and for breaking. Wood is normally used for solidity, opacity, support and, therefore, affords sitting.[12]

For Norman, an object is well-designed if its affordances are obvious. If we come across a door and don't understand how it opens (or closes), if we can't, in other words, see *how* it

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[7] Ita Mac Carthy, *The Grace of the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), p. 179.

[8] I explored a similar retro-projection in Chapter Four. Burrow professes his scepticism that texts like poems should be called 'objects' at all ('Why Shakespeare is not Michelangelo', p. 9).

[9] I think, too, that Michelangelo's poetry is less 'sculptural' than Burrow paints it to be (see, for example, the sonnet *S'egli è, donna, che puoi* and its use of the verb *disegnare*), although it is beyond the scope of this Epilogue to trace this particular line of argument.

[10] Henry Staten makes a similar point: 'Because today most of the time, in most contexts, we hear 'art' as referring to art's products, the question 'what is art?' (asked as one looks at a painting, or Duchamp's urinal) has become an endlessly tantalizing riddle rooted in mystery. But you can't understand art by staring at art *products* and repeating 'Art! Art!' to yourself; it's the nature of their *making* that needs to be plumbed' (*Techne Theory*, p. 4).

[11] See, for a number of examples, Adam Greenfield, *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 2017). Greenfield builds on an existing tradition of social and cultural criticism that acknowledges the fundamental role played by design in the organization—and alienation—of modern life (see, e.g., Hal Foster, *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)* (London: Verso, 2010)). At the time of writing, the building of Oxford's new Schwarzmann Centre for the Humanities had recently been announced, with a special investment in an institute for Ethics in AI. A re-imagined understanding of design would, I believe, have an important part to play in such future-oriented plans for the Humanities, although it remains to be seen what role humanistic disciplines like literary studies will be given in these initiatives.

[12] Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 9. Norman adapted the term 'affordance' from psychologist James J. Gibson.

is supposed to be used, how we ought to fulfil its function, then it has been badly designed. Norman sees design in teleological terms, as a solution to the chaotic or difficult nature of the world we inhabit: '[d]esign is the conscious effort to impose meaningful order'.[13] With this phrase, Norman succinctly summarises an approach that has, until fairly recently, been characteristic of design theory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In her recent book, Sara Ahmed shows how and why modern developments in design, and particularly Universal Design, with its focus on widening accessibility, complicate this picture.[14] She asks us to think about affordance not just as a straightforward marker of usability (we distinguish whether something is usable by whether it successfully affords the right uses) but as a marker of different *users* distinguished by different forms of accessibility: 'it is not just *whether* an object or environment can be used but *who* can use an object or environment *given* how it has been designed and who cannot.'[15] On this view, a well-designed object, one that takes into account the plurality of human users, is not, then, one whose affordances are fixed and narrow, but one which can be used by the widest possible range of users. This does not mean creating 'catch-all' affordances, in order to create objects that are more and more specialized for individual uses, but to try to build into design the plurality, simultaneity and contradiction of human life and experience. Chaos, contingency (and their flipsides: pluralism, multiplicity) aren't going anywhere fast; our response should be to build these into our design thinking. In this, as I hope to have shown, Montaigne and early modern design prove to be wonderful models and precursors. The *Essais* are also an apposite test-case for the kind of design theory that could fruitfully be applied to literary texts. While I did not approach this thesis through a design research perspective, I have followed paths that have been adjacent to this field by considering the *Essais* as the product of a design process, albeit one that differs in important respects from some modern understandings of such a process.[16] Building into design research the insights gleaned from one early modern view of design that has emerged from this thesis, would, I think, open interesting and fruitful perspectives. To start with, it might add an important corrective to Donald Norman's claim that writers design words rather than things:[17] texts (and the words they are made up of) *are* things, are designed objects in the sense that they afford functions and uses and can do things with and to each other, as well as to readers.

⋆ ⋆ ⋆

What is design? After a little over four years of asking myself this question, I can give no straightforward answer. In part, this is because the term around which I first posed this question, *dessein*, and the text that I read through the lens of this term, expanded to include the full range of its sixteenth-century meanings, are both slippery and multiple—both seem always to elude us, and to elude univocal interpretation, categorisation, definition. Indeed,

[13] Ibid., p. 17.
[14] Universal Design is design geared towards making things, particularly buildings, accessible to all people regardless of individual markers such as physical ability or age. On its history and a critique of current debates in Universal Design, see Aimi Hamraie, *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
[15] Sarah Ahmed, *What's the Use?*, p. 60.
[16] For an example of how design research can be applied to literary studies, see Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Thinking with Shakespeare: Essays on Politics and Life* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011). See also Julka Almquist and Julia Lupton, 'Affording Meaning: Design-Oriented Research from the Humanities and Social Sciences', *Design Issues*, 26:1 (2010), 3–14.
[17] Donald Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, p. 8.

I have suggested that *dessein* is simultaneous, restless, alive, and that it is precisely these qualities that make it such a natural lens through which to read the *Essais*.

I began this thesis with Hippolyte's *exordium*—'le dessein en est pris'—at the start of *Phèdre*. It is an announcement, I suggested, steeped in dramatic irony, one that could even be read as a cruel in-joke between the audience and the master-playwright, at the behest of his puppet-*personnage*. But *dessein* there is also a hook. Announced by a mythical young hero, it makes us sit up straight in our seats, ready for the action to unfold before us. Montaigne uses a similar strategy—via a typical reversal—in the *Essais*, at the start of one of his most well-thumbed chapters, II.xviii, 'Du dementir'. In pre-empting a possible critique of his project, he writes,

> [A] on me dira que ce dessein de se servir de soy pour subject à escrire, seroit excusable à des homme rares et fameux qui, par leur reputation, auroyent donné quelque desir de leur cognoissance. (663)

Montaigne does not consider himself *rare et fameux* like Caesar or Xenophon, he is quick to say, but his *dessein* is also not to be a 'statue à planter au carrefour d'une ville'. It is, instead, 'pour le coin d'une librairie, et pour en amuser un voisin, un parent, un amy, qui aura plaisir à me racointer et repratiquer en cett'image' (664). It has certainly been a pleasure to follow and trace some of the sketch-like lines of that image, to let that design speak from the page. I do not know if Montaigne would have gladly accepted me amongst his *amis* or literary *familia*. But the openness to a plurality of readers and uses is the special prerogative of the design of the *Essais*. After all: '[C] Nous […] pretendons plus de nostre conduite qu'il ne nous appartient. Pourtant fourvoyent si souvent nos desseins' (1061).

# Appendix

# Instances of *dessein* in the *Essais*

Au lecteur
' [A] Je n'y ay eu nulle consideration de ton service, ny de ma gloire. Mes forces ne sont pas capables d'un tel ***dessein***.' (3)

I.xiv, 'Que le goust de biens et de maux depend en bonne partie de l'opinion que nous en avons'
'[C] la plupart des philosophes se treuvent avoir ou prevenu par ***dessein*** ou hasté et secouru leur mort.' (51)

'[A] L'intelligence que a esté donnée pour nostre plus grand bien, l'employerons nous à nostre ruine, combatans le ***dessein*** de nature, et l'universel ordre des choses, qui porte que chacun use de ses utils et moyens pour sa commodité?' (55)

'[A] Chacun sçait l'histoire de Scevola qui, s'estant coulé dans le camp ennemy pour en tuer le chef et ayant failli d'attaincte, pour reprendre son effect d'une plus estrange invention et descharger sa patrie, confessa à Porsenna, qui estoit le Roy qu'il vouloit tuer, non seulement son ***desseing***, mais adjousta qu'il y avoit en son camp un grand nombre de Romains complices de son entreprise tels que luy.' (59)

I.xix, 'Qu'il ne faut juger de nostre heur, qu'apres la morte'
'[C] Je luy ay veu trancher le fil d'un progrez de merveilleux avancement, et dans la fleur de son croist, à quelqu'un, d'une fin si pompeuse, qu'à mon avis ses ambitieus et courageux ***desseins*** n'avoient rien de si hault que fut leur interruption.' (80)

I.xx, 'Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir'
'[A] Il ne faut rien ***desseigner*** de si longue haleine, ou au moins avec telle intention de se passionner pour n'en voir la fin.' (89)

I.xxiii, 'De la coustume et de ne changer aisement une loy receue'
'[B] Et quand on resiste à l'accroissance d'une innovation qui vient par violence à s'introduire, de se denire, en tout et par tout, en bride et en reigle, contre ceux qui ont la clef des champs, ausquels tout cela est loisible qui peut avancer leur ***dessein***'. (122)

I.xxiv, 'Divers evenemens de mesme conseil'
'[A] Vous sçavez bien telle chose et telle (qui estoyent les tenans et aboutissans des plus secretes pieces de cette menée); ne faillez sur vostre vie à me confesser la vérité de tout ce ***dessein***.' (124)

'[A] Les saillies poetiques, qui emportent leur autheur et le ravissent hors de soy, pourquoy ne les attribuerons nous à son bon heur? puis qu'il confesse luy mesme qu'elles surpassent sa suffisance et ses forces, et les reconnoit venir d'ailleurs que de soy, et ne les avoir aucunement en sa puissance: non plus que les orateurs ne disent avoir en la leur ces mouvemens et agitations extraordinaires, qui les poussent au delà de leur ***dessein***'. (127)

'[A] S'il en est mes-advenu au premier, il ne s'en faut pas prendre à ce sien bon ***dessein***; et ne sçait on, quand il eust pris le party contraire, s'il eust eschapé la fin à laquelle son destin l'appeloit; et si eust perdu la gloire d'une si notable bonté.' (128)

I.xxvi, 'De L'institution des enfans'
'[C] De faire ce que j'ay descouvert d'aucuns, se couvrir des armes d'autruy, jusques à ne montrer pas seulement le bout de ses doigts, conduire son ***dessein***, comme il est aysé aux sçavans en une matiere commune, sous les inventions anciennes rappiecées par cy par là.' (148)

'[A] Et si, de soy mesme, il n'est assez familier des livres pour y trouver tant de beaux discours qui y sont, pour l'effect de son ***dessein***, on luy pourra joindre quelque homme de lettres, qui à chaque besoing fournisse les munitions qu'il faudra, pour les distribuer et dispenser à son nourrisson.' (160)

'[A] Mais, comme les pas que nous employons à nous promener dans une galerie, quoy qu'il y en ait trois fois autant, ne nous lassent pas comme ceux que nous mettons à quelque chemin ***desseigné***, aussi nostre leçon, se passant comme par rencontre, sans obligation de temps et de lieu, et se meslant à toutes nos actions, se coulera sans se faire sentir.' (165)

'[A] Quant au Grec, duquel je n'ay quasi du tout point d'intelligence, mon pere ***desseigna*** me le faire apprendre par art, mais d'une voie nouvelle, par forme d'ébat et d'exercice.' (174)

I.xxviii, 'De l'amitié'
'[B] Si y a il bien à dire, que ce ne soit le mieux qu'il peut faire; et si, en l'aage que je l'ay conneu, plus avancé, il eut pris un tel ***desseing*** que le mien, de mettre par escrit ses fantasies, nous verrions plusieurs choses rares et qui nous approcheroient bien pres de l'honneur de l'antiquité: car, [C] notamment [B] en cette partie des dons de nature, je n'en connois point qui luy soit comparable.' (184)

I.xxxii, 'Qu'Il faut sobrement se mesler de juger des ordonnances divines'

'[C] Il advient de là [A] qu'il n'est rien creu si fermement que ce qu'on sçait le moins, ny gens si asseurez que ceux qui nous content des fables, comme Alchimistes, Prognostiqueurs, Judiciaires, Chiromantiens, Medecins, id genus omne. Ausquels je joindrois volontiers, si j'osois, un tas de gens, interpretes et contrerolleurs ordinaires des ***dessains*** de Dieu, faisans estat de trouver les causes de chaque accident, et de veoir dans les secrets de la volonté divine les motifs incompréhensibles de ses œuvres.' (215)

I.xxxiii, 'De fuir les voluptez au pris de la vie'
'[A] Son ***dessein*** estoit de luy faire perdre l'appetit et l'usage des plaisirs mondains'. (219)

'[A] La femme de Sainct Hilaire, ayant entendu par luy comme la mort de leur fille s'estoit conduite par son ***dessein*** et volonté, et combien elle avoit plus l'heur d'estre deslogée de ce monde que d'y estre, print une si vive apprehension de la beatitude éternelle et celeste, qu'elle solicita son mary avec extreme instance d'en faire autant pour elle.' (219)

I.xxxix, 'De la solitude'
'[C] Il semble que ce soit raison, puis qu'on parle de se retirer du monde, qu'on regarde hors de luy: ceux-cy ne le font qu'à demy. Ils dressent bien leur partie, pour quand ils n'y seront plus: mais le fruit de leur ***dessein***, ils pretendent le tirer encore lors du monde, absens, par une ridicule contradiction.' (245)

'[A] Comme les hommes qui se sentent de long temps affoiblis par quelque indisposition, se rengent à la fin à la mercy de la medicine, et se font ***desseigner*** par art certaines regles de vivres pour ne les plus outrepasser: aussi celuy qui se retire, ennuié et dégousté de la vie commune, doit former cette-cy aux regles de la raison'. (245)

I.l, 'De Democritus et Heraclitus'
'[A] Là il fait son jeu à eslire la route qui luy semble la meilleure, et, de mille sentiers, il dict que cettuy-cy, ou celuy là, a esté le mieux choisi. [C'] Je prends [A] de la fortune [C'] le premier argument. [A] Ils me sont également bons. [C'] Et ne ***desseigne*** jamais [A] de les [C'] produire entiers.' (302)

'[C] Semant icy un mot, icy un autre, eschantillons despris de leur piece, escartez, sans ***dessein*** et sans promesse, je ne suis pas hazarderoy de traitter à fons quelque matière, si je me conoissoy moins' (302)

I.lvi, Des prières
'[A] J'avoy presentement en la pensée d'où nous venoit cett'erreur de recourir à Dieu en tous nos ***desseins*** et entreprinses, et l'appeller à toute sorte de besoing et en quelque lieu que nostre foiblesse veut de l'aide, sans considerer si l'occasion est juste ou injuste; et de escrier son nom et sa puissance, en quelque estat et action que nous soyons, pour vitieuse qu'elle soit.' (318)

II. I, 'De l'inconstance de nos actions'
'[A] A quoy faire la provision des couleurs à qui ne sçait ce qu'il a à peindre? Aucun ne fait certain ***dessain*** de sa vie, et n'en deliberons qu'à parcelles. L'archier doit premierement sçavoir où il vise, et puis y accommoder la main, l'arc, la corde, la flesche et les mouvemens.' (337)

II.ii, 'De l'yvrongnerie'
'[C] Et commit on aussi fidèlement qu'à Cassius beuveur d'eaue, à Cimber le ***dessein*** de tuer Caesar, quoy qu'il s'envyrast souvent.' (341)

[c] 'Pareille cause, mais non du propre ***dessein***, suffoca aussi les forces abattues par l'age du philosophe Arcesilaus.' (345)

II.iii, 'Coustume de l'ile de Cea'
'[A] à force de l'éloquence qui luy estoit merveilleusement à main, et de persuasion de la detourner de ce ***dessein***, souffrit en fin qu'elle se contentast.'

II.v, 'De la conscience'
'[B] Et je puis dire avoir marché en plusieurs hazards d'un pas bien plus ferme, en considerations de la secrete science que j'avois de ma volonté et innocence de mes ***desseins***.' (368)

II.vi, 'De l'exercitation'
'[C] Mais, quand il seroit vray que ce fust necesserement presumption d'entretenir le people de soy, je ne doy pas, suivant mon general ***dessein***, refuser une action qui publie cette maladive qualité.' (378)

II.viii (De l'affection des pres aux enfans)
'[A] C'est [C'] le seul livre au monde de son espece, d'un [A] ***dessein*** farouche et [C'] extravagant.' (385)

'[C] Il ne void en fin ses affaires que par une image disposée et ***desseignée*** et satisfactoire le plus qu'on peut, pour n'esveiller son chagrin et son courroux.' (394)

II.x (Des livres)
'[C] Ez raisons et inventions que je transplante en mon solage et confons aux miennes, j'ay à escient ommis parfois d'en marquer l'autheur, pour tenir en bride la temerité de ces sentences hastives qui se jettent sur toute sorte d'escrits, notamment jeunes escrits d'hommes encore vivants, et en vulgaire, qui recoit tout à en parler et qui semble convaincre la conception et le ***dessein***, vulgaire de mesmes.' (408)

'[A] Mon ***dessein*** est de passer doucement, et non laborieusement, ce qui me reste de vie.' (409)

'[A] Quant à Cicero, les ouvrages qui me peuvent server chez luy à mon ***desseing***, ce sont ceux qui traitent de [C'] la philosophie signamment morale'. (413)

'[A] Que peut-on esperer d'un medecin [C'] traictant [A] de la guerre, ou d'un escholier traictant les ***desseins*** des Princes?' (418)

II.xii (Apologie de Raymond Sebond)
'[A Je trouvay belles les imaginations de cet auteur, la contexture de son ouvrage bien [C'] suyvie, [A] et son ***dessein*** plein de pieté.' (440)

'[A] il n'est occupation ny ***dessein*** plus digne d'un homme Chrestien que de viser par tous ses études et pensemmens à embellir, estandre et amplifier la vérité de sa creance.' (441)

'[B] Pourtant eust raison nostre bon Saint Loys, quand ce Roy Tartare qui s'estoit faict Chrestien, ***desseignoit*** de venir à Lyon baiser les pieds au Pape et y reconnoistre la sanctimonie qu'il esperoit trouver en nos meurs, de l'en destourner instamment, de peur qu'au contraire nostre desbordée façon de vivre ne le dégoustast d'une si saincte creance.' (442)

'[A] Or, nostre coeur et nostre ame estant regie et commandée par la foy, c'est raison qu'elle tire au service de son ***dessain*** toutes noz autres pieces selon leur portée.' (446)

'[A] Son ***dessein*** est de rechercher la verité, la science et la certitude.' (502)

'[C] Et, quand il monte en mer, il suit ce ***dessein***, ignorant s'il luy sera utile.' (505-6)

'[A] Il est ainsi de la plus part des autheurs de ce tiers genre: [B] comme les anciens ont remarqué des escripts d'Anaxagoras, Democritus, Parmenides, Zenophanes et autres. [A] Ils ont une forme d'escrire douteuse en substance et un [C'] ***dessein*** [A] enquerant plustost qu'intruisant, encore qu'ils entresement leur stile de cadances dogmatistes'. (509)

'[A] Quelque bon ***dessein*** qu'ait un juge, s'il ne s'escoute de prez, à quoy peu de gens s'amusent, l'inclination à l'amitié, à la parenté, à la beauté et à la vengeance, et non pas seulement choses si poisantes, mais cet instint fortuite qui nous faict favoriser une chose plus qu'une autre, et qui nous donne, sans le congé de la raison, le chois en deux pareils subjects, ou quelque umbrage de pareille vanité, peuvent insinuer insensiblement en son jugement la recommandation ou deffaveur d'une cause et donner pente à la balance'. (565)

'[A] et les Pyrrhoniens ne se servent de leurs argumens et de leur raison que pour ruiner l'apparence de l'experience, et est merveille jusques où la souplesse de nostre raison les a suivi à ce ***dessein*** de combattre l'evidence des effects'. (571)

'[A] et ne se peut aysément departir de cette opinion, que ce ne soit le ***dessein*** de Homere'. (586)

II.xiii, De juger de la mort d'autruy'
'[C] D'autant que j'en ay veu mourir, la fortune a dispose les contenances, non leur ***dessein***'. (607)

'[A] De vray ce n'est pas si grande chose d'establir, tout sain et tout rassis, de se tuer; il est bien aisé de faire le mauvais avant que de venir aux prises: de maniere que le plus effeminé homme du monde, Heliogabalus, parmy ses plus laches voluptez, ***desseignoit*** bien de se faire mourir [C'] delicatement [A] où l'occasion l'en forceroit'. (607)

II.xv, Que nostre desir s'accroit par la malaisance'
'[C] J'ay affoibly le ***dessein*** des soldats ostant à leur exploit le hasard et toute matiere de gloire militere qui a accoustumé de leur servir de tiltre et d'excuse'. (616)

II.xvi, 'De la gloire'
'[A] Voyla ce qu'il y peut avoir de plus excusable en ce ***dessein***'. (626)

II.xvii, 'De la presumption'
'[C] où il advient, si je rencontre louablement en une besongne, que je le donne plus à ma fortune qu'à ma force: d'autant que je les ***desseigne*** toutes au hazard et en crainte.' (634)

'[B] Et n'est chose dequoy plus souvent et ouvertement il entretient chez luy les survenans, que de ce sien ***dessein***'. (645)

'[A] Un homme qui pense ailleurs, ne faudra point, à une pousse pres, de refaire tousjours un mesme nombre et mesure de pas au lieu où il se promene; mais, s'il y est avec attention de les mesurer et conter, il trouvera que, ce qu'il faisoit par nature et par hazard, il ne le faira pas si exactement par ***dessein***'. (650)

'[A] Tant y a que, sans l'avertissement d'autruy, je voy assez ce peu que tout cecy vaut et poise, et la [C'] folie [A] de mon ***dessein***'. (653)

II.xviii, 'Du démentir'
'[A] Voire mais, on me dira que ce ***dessein*** de se servir de soy pour subject à escrire, seroit excusable à des hommes rares et fameux qui, par leur reputation, auroyent donné quelque desir de leur cognoissance'. (663)

[c] '[C] Quant de fois, estant marry de quelque action que la civilité et la raison me prohiboient de reprendre à descouvert, m'en suis je icy desgorgé, non sans ***dessein*** de publique instruction!' (665)

II.xx, 'Nous ne goustons rien de pur'
'[B] Je ne scay s'il vouoit dire autre chose; mais moy, j'imagine bien qu'il y a du ***dessein***, du consentement et de la complaisance à se nourrir en la [C'] mélancholie'. (674)

II.xxi, 'Contre la faineantise'
' [C] Mille ont proposé de vaincre ou de mourir en combatant, qui ont failly à l'un et à l'autre: les blessures, les prisons leur traversant ce ***dessein*** et leur prestant une vie forcée'. (677–8)

[c] 'lequel, par ***dessein***, il employa et reserve à cette grande journée'. (678)

II.xxviii, 'Toutes choses ont leur saison'
'[C] Le plus long des mes ***desseins*** n'a pas un an d'estandue, je ne pense desormais qu'à finir; me deffay de toutes nouvelles esperances et enreprinses; prens mon dernier congé de tous les lieux que je laisse; et me despossede tous les jours de ce que j'ay'. (703)

II.xxix (De la vertu)
'[A] C'est bien autre chose des femmes Indiennes: car, estant leur coustume, aux maris d'avoir plusieurs femmes, et à la plus chere d'elles de se tuer apres son mary, chacune par le ***dessein*** de toute sa vie vise à gaigner ce point et cet avantage sur ses compaignes'. (707)

II.xxxii. 'Defence de Seneque et de Plutarque'
'[A] Pour son ***dessein***, j'eusse plustost choisi l'exemple du jeune Caton comparé à Phocion'. (726)

II.xxxiii, L'Histoire de Spurina'
'[C] Le ***dessein*** en fut beau et consciencieux, mais, à mon avis, un peu manque de prudence'. (734)

II. xxxiv, 'Observations sur les moyens de faire la guerre de Julius Caesar'
'[A] Il accoustoumoit surtout ses soldats à obeyir simplement, sans se mesler de contreroller ou parler des ***desseins*** de leur capitaine, lesquels il ne leur communiquoit que sur le point de l'execution'. (736)

II.xxxv, 'De trois bonnes femmes'
'[A] Et ce que, contre son ***dessein***, elle vesquit dépuis ce fut tres-honorablement et comme il appartenoit à sa vertu, montrant par la couleur blesme de son visage combien elle avoit escoulé de vie par ses blessures'. (749)

'[A] il faut par fois nous prester à nos amis, et, quand nous voudrions mourir pour nous, interrompore notre ***dessein*** pour eux'. (750)

II. xxxvi, 'Des plus excellens hommes'
'[A] L'autre, Alexandre le Grand. Car qui considera l'age qu'il commença ses entreprises; le peu de moyen avec lequel il fit un si glorieux ***dessein***'. (754)

II.xxxvii (De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres)
'[A] il a besoing de trop de pieces, considerations et circonstances pour affuter justement son ***dessein***'. (773)

'[A] je trouve bien plus rare de voir convener nos humeurs et nos [C'] ***desseins***.' (786)

III.i, De l'utile et de l'honneste'
'[B] A la verité, et ne crains point de l'advouer, je porterois facilement au besoing une chandelle à Saint Michel, l'autre à son serpent, suivant le ***dessein*** de la vieille'. (792)

'[C] Ce seroit une espece de trahison de le faire aux propres et domestiques affaires, ausquels necessairement [B] il faut prendre party [C'] par application de ***dessein***'. (793)

'[B] Et notamment la cause des loix et defence de l'ancien estat a tousjours cela que ceux mesmes, qui pour leur ***dessein*** particulier le troublent, en excusent [C'] les defenseurs, [B] s'ils ne les honorent'. (793)

III.ii, Du repentir'
'[C] A voir la sagesse de Socrates et plusieurs circonstances de sa condamnation, j'oserois croire qu'il s'y presta aucunement luy mesme par prevarication, à ***dessein*** ayant de si pres, aagé de soixante et dix ans, à souffrir l'engourdissement des riches allures de son esprit et l'esblouissement de sa clairté accoustumée'. (817)

III.ii, 'Des trois commerces'
'[B] Là, je feuillette à cette heure un livre, à cette heure un autre, sans ordre et sans ***dessein***, à pieces descousues; tantost je resve, tantost j'enregistre et dicte, en me promenant, mes songes que voicy'. (826)

'[B] Je vis du jour à la journée; et, parlant en reverence, ne vis que pour moy: mes ***desseins*** se terminent là'. (826)

III.v, 'Sur des vers de Virgile'
'[B] Parquoy je me laisse à cette heure aller un peu à la desbauche par ***dessein***; et emploie [C'] quelque [B] fois l'ame à des pensemens folastres et jeunes, où elle se sejourne'. (841)

'[B] De mon ***dessein***, j'eusse fuy d'espouser la sagesse mesme, si elle m'eust voulou. Mais, nous avons beau dire, la coustume et [C'] l'usage [B] de la vie commune nous emporte. La plus part de mes actions se conduisent par exemple, non par chois' (852)

'[B] Ceux qui entreprennent ce marché pour s'y porter avec haine et mespris, font injustement et incommodéement; et cette belle reigle que je voy passer de main en main entre elles, comme un sainct oracle, Sers ton mary comme ton maistre, Et t'en guarde comme d'un traistre, qui est à dire: Porte toy envers luy d'une reverence contrainte, ennemie et deffiante, cry de guerre et deffi, est pareillement injurieuse et difficile. Je suis trop mol pour ***desseins*** si espineux'. (852-3)

‘[B] Ce sont deux ***desseins*** qui ont des routes distinguées et non confondues’. (853)

‘[B] Pour ce mien ***dessein***, il me vient aussi à propos d’escrire chez moy, en pays sauvage, où personne ne m’ayde ny me releve, où je ne hante communéement homme qui entende le latin de son patenostre, et de françois un peu moins’. (857)

‘[C] Cette autre faculté de representer ingenieusement les gestes et parolles d’un autre par ***dessein***, qui apporte souvent plaisir et admiration, n’est en moy non plus qu’en une souche’. (876)

III.vi, ‘Des coches’
[b] ‘On luy apposta une fauce accusation et preuve, qu’il ***desseignoit*** de faire souslever ses provinces pour se remettre en liberté. Sur-quoy, par beau jugement de ceux mesme qui luy avoient dressé cette trahison, on le condemna à estre pendu et estranglé publiquement, luy ayant faict racheter le tourment d’estre bruslé tout vif par le baptesme qu’on luy donna au supplice mesme’. (912)

‘[B] S’ils se fussent proposés d’estendre nostre foy, ils eussent consideré que ce n’est pas en possession de terres qu’elle s’amplifie, mais en possession d’hommes, et se fussent [C’] trop [B] contentez des meurtres que la necessité de la guerre apporte, sans y mesler indifferemment une boucherie, comme sur des bestes sauvages, universelle, autant que le fer et le feu y ont peu attaindre, n’en ayant conservé par leur ***dessein*** qu’autant qu’ils en ont voulu faire de miserables esclaves pour l’ouvrage et service de leurs minieres’ (913)

III.vii, De l’incommodité de la grandeur’
[b] ‘Bien me semble il que nous la faisons trop valoir, et trop valoir aussi la résolution de ceux que nous avons ou veu ou ouy dire l’avoir mesprisée, ou s’en estre desmis de leur propre ***dessein***’. (916)

III.viii, ‘De l’art de conférer’
‘[B] J’ay autrefois employé à la necessité et presse du combat des revirades qui ont faict faucée outre mon ***dessein*** et mon esperance: je ne les donnois qu’en nombre, on les recevoit en pois’. (936)

III.ix, ‘De la vanité’
‘[B] Autant que je m’en rapporte à elle, je me mets hors de moy, jusques à essaier ma contenance; et me suis veu quelque jour en peine de celer la servitude en laquelle j’estois entravé, là où mon ***dessein*** est de representer en parlant une profonde nonchalance et des mouvemens fortuites et impremeditez, comme naissans des occasions presentes’. (963)

‘[C] Si je suis au delà de tout exemple moderne, ce n’est pas grande merveille, tant de pieces de mes moeurs y contribuants: un peu de fierté naturelle, l’impatience du refus, contraction de mes desirs et ***desseins***, inhabilité à toute sorte d’affaires, et mes qualités plus favories: l’oisifveté, la franchise’. (969)

‘[B] Mon ***dessein*** est divisible par tout: il n’est pas fondé en grandes esperances; chaque journée en faict le bout. Et le voyage de ma vie se conduict de mesme’ (978)

III.x, 'De mesnager sa volonté'
'[B] Qui desirera du bien à son païs comme moy, sans s'en ulcerer ou maigrir, il sera desplaisant, mais non pas transi, de le voir menassant ou sa ruyne ou une durée non moins ruyneuse, Pauvre vaisseau, que les flots, les vents et le pilotte tirassent à si contraires ***desseins***'. (1016)

[b] 'J'avois assez disertement publié au monde mon insuffisance en tels maniemens publiques. J'ay encore pis que l'insuffisance: c'est qu'elle ne me desplaict guiere, et que je ne cerche guiere à la guerir, veu le train de vie que j'ay ***desseigné***'. (1024)

III.xii, De la phisionomie'
'[C] Mais il m'est advis que c'est bien le bout, non pourtant le but de la vie; c'est sa fin, son extremité, non pourtant son object. Elle doit estre elle mesme à soy sa visée, son ***dessein***; son droit estude est se regler, se conduire, se souffrir'. (1051)

'[B] Certes j'ay donné à l'opinion publique que ces [C'] parements [B] empruntez m'accompaignent. 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; et si je m'en fusse creu, à tout hazard, j'eusse parlé tout fin seul'. (1055)

'[C] J'ay veu faire des livres de choses ny jamais estudiées ny entendues, l'autheur commettant à divers de ses amis sçavants la recherche de cette-cy et de cette autre matiere à le bastir, se contentant pour sa part d'en avoir projetté le ***dessein*** et empilé par son industrie ce fagot de provisions incogneues; au moins est sien l'ancre et le papier'. (1056)

'[C] Nous faillons, ce me semble, en ce que nous ne fions pas assez au ciel de nous et pretendons plus de nostre conduite qu'il ne nous appartient. Pourtant fourvoyent si souvent nos ***desseins***'. (1061)

III.xiii, 'De l'experience'
'[B] Je l'avois lors, non seulement exempte de trouble, mais encore plaine de satisfaction et de feste, comme elle est le plus ordinairement, moytié de sa complexion, moytié de son ***dessein***'. (1098)

'[B] Et fut céte raison pourquoy aussi il me donna à tenir sur les fons à des personnes de la plus abjecte fortune, pour m'y obliger et attacher. Son ***dessein*** n'a pas du tout mal succedé'. (1100-01)

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