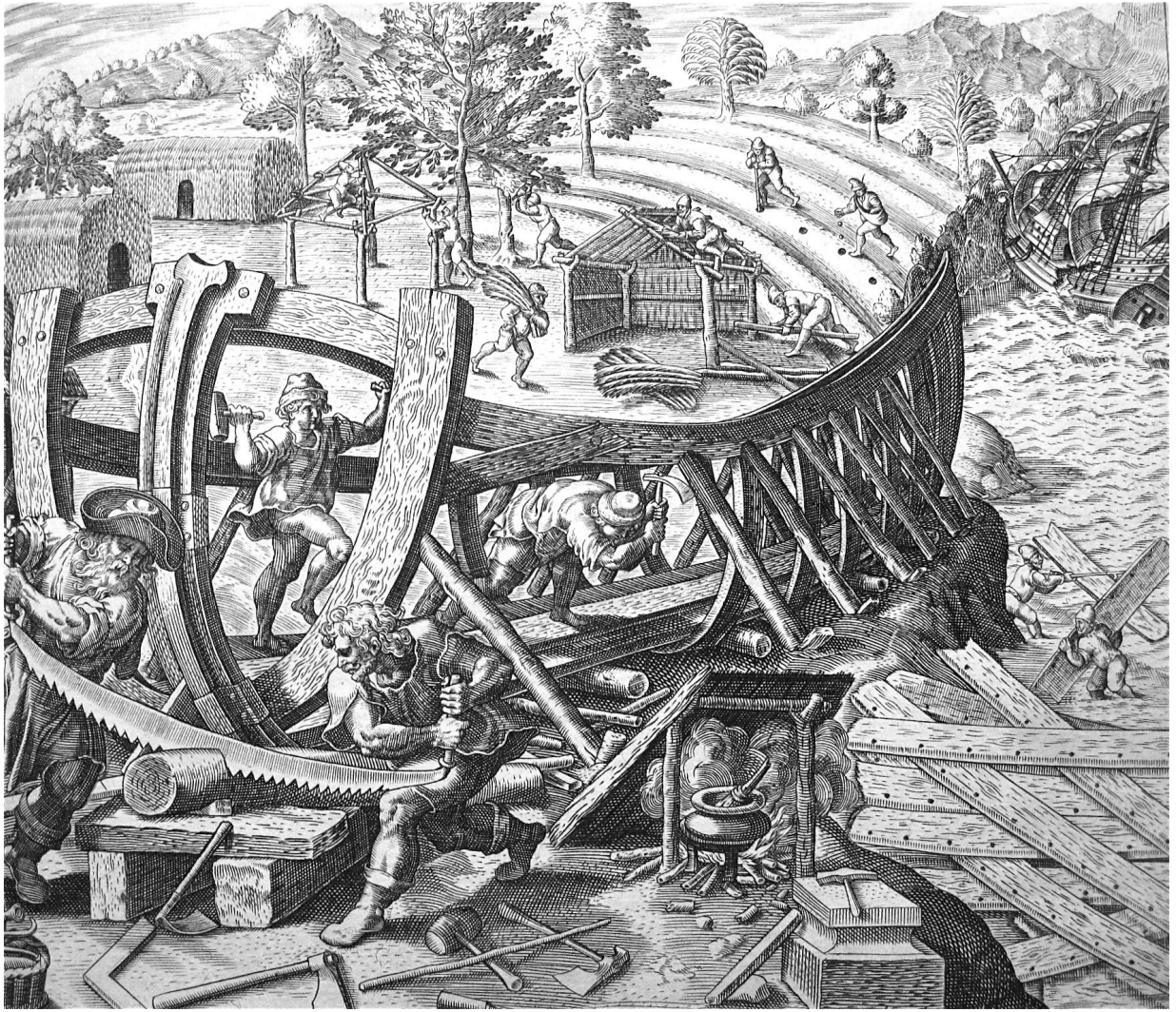




‘Au milieu d’un tel et si piteux naufrage’:
The dynamics of shipwreck in Renaissance France
(1498-1616)

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It is often said that writing a thesis is a lonely experience. While it is true that the hours, days and weeks spent mostly in the company of long-dead authors in conversation about topsails and poop decks can take their toll on one's social skills, it is also true that the production of this thesis has been an enormous team effort. I would like to take this opportunity to thank many of the people who have shared the journey with me.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Table of Contents	3
List of Illustrations.....	5
Notes on spellings and abbreviations	6
Introduction.....	7
Models.....	8
Approaches.....	13
The ‘shipwreckful’ family.....	27
Chapter One ‘Le naufrage de ce mortel monde’: Shipwreck and the <i>Nef</i>	33
I.1 Introduction.....	33
I.2 The <i>Nef(s) des Folz</i>	40
I.2.i ‘Comme pelerins navigans de ung pays en autre’: Negotiating translation and allegory in the prologues	40
I.2.ii ‘Souffrons perilz enormes et soudains’: The folly of navigation and the <i>Nauffraige des folz</i>	45
I.2.iii Interpretative shipwreck? Church, book and ship	57
I.3 The diversification of the <i>Nef</i> , and the embodiment of ‘naufrage’	66
I.3.i The beginnings of particularisation: <i>La Nef des folles</i>	66
I.3.ii Champier’s counterblast: Two <i>Nefs vertueuses</i>	75
I.3.iii Governing the body: Corporeal shipwrecks in the <i>Nef de sante</i>	80
I.4 Conclusion	85
Chapter Two ‘À deux doigtz près de la mort’: From shipwreck to storm scene (and back again).....	87
II.1 Introduction	87
II.2 The traveller’s tale and the stay-at-home listener: Erasmus’s ‘ <i>Naufragium</i> ’	92
II.2.i ‘Troubles over and done with are enjoyable’: The dynamics and pleasures of storytelling and reading.....	93
II.2.ii ‘Be careful what you promise’: Saints, superstition and satire	96
II.2.iii Bodies and boathooks: Disintegration and its affective impact	100
II.3 ‘Il nous convient evertuer sus poine de faire naufrage’: Rereading (in) the <i>Quart Livre</i> storm scene	103
II.3.i ‘O que troys et quatre foyz heureulx sont ceux qui plantent chous’: Panurge’s storm	105
II.3.ii ‘Ne tenoys je l’arbre sceurement des mains?’: The first retrospective reading	112
II.3.iii Macaronic readings? Unpicking allegory on the ‘Isle des Macraëons’	116
II.4 An alternative ending; or ‘de Scylle en Charyde’: Shipwreck in the <i>Cinquiesme Livre</i>	121
II.4.i ‘Nostre requeste importune’: The re-moralisation of seafaring	122
II.4.ii ‘La partie plus dangereuse et male?’: Revisiting the tongue.....	124
II.4.iii ‘Alchimie, jusques au cul’: Cotiral’s shipwreck remedy	127
II.5 Conclusion.....	130
Chapter Three ‘Cet universel naufrage du monde’: Shipwreck in a time of civil war	134
III.1 Introduction.....	134

III.2 ‘Tous devons tendre à mesme fin’: Michel de l’Hospital and the storm-tossed ship of state	136
III.2.i Problems of prudence in the civil wars	141
III.3 ‘Un si piteux naufrage’: Ronsard’s poetico-political shipwrecks.....	143
III.3.i ‘Haut dessus l’eau comme un liege’: The poetic manifesto of the ‘Ode à Michel de L’Hospital’	143
III.3.ii The storm breaks: The ‘Discours des Misères de ce temps’	146
III.3.iii ‘De flot en flot, de naufrage en naufrage’: The ill-fated <i>Franciade</i>	150
III.4 ‘Soubstraire ce coing à la tempête publique’: Montaigne’s engagement with shipwreck.....	154
III.4.i ‘Ces divisions et subdivisions qui nous deschirent aujourd’huy’: Montaigne’s ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’	154
III.4.ii ‘Rares, incroyables et prodigieuses’? The (in)significance of shipwreck in the <i>Essais</i>	163
III.4.iii Withdrawal reconceived: Montaigne as shipwreck survivor.....	167
III.5 Conclusion: ‘Nil securius est malo Poeta’.....	172
Chapter Four ‘Shipwreckful’ afterlives: ‘Naufrage’ and <i>Histoire</i>	176
IV.1 Introduction.....	176
IV.2 ‘[N]ous ressouvenans du premier naufrage’: Revisiting shipwreck in Jean de Léry’s <i>Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil</i>	182
IV.2.i ‘À la pratique de ce qui est dit au Pseaume 107’: Conventional beginnings.....	186
IV.2.ii ‘Nous ne craignons d’enfondrer de nous-mesmes’: The Brazilian ‘shipwreck’ scene and its spectators	192
IV.2.iii ‘Proche danger d’un naufrage’: The (newly narrateable) return	198
IV.3 The particularity of shipwreck in Capitaine Bruneau’s <i>Histoire véritable</i>	203
IV.3.i ‘Pour faire voir sa puissance aux incrédules’: ‘Merveilles’ and moralising.....	207
IV.3.ii ‘Avec peine et fatigue commune’: Rebuilding ships and communities	216
IV.3.iii ‘Une merveilleuse frayeur’: The shipwreck as spectacle	224
IV.4 Conclusion.....	227
Conclusion	233
‘The direful spectacle’: Shipwreck and theatre	233
The drama of shipwreck	233
<i>Les Portugais infortunés</i>	239
Bibliography	254

List of Illustrations

Cover Illustration: ‘Olandus caravellam, et casas ædificare curat’ (detail), Plate 19 in Theodor de Bry, *Americæ Pars Quarta* (Frankfurt am Main: de Bry, 1594)

Figure 1—‘Concertation de vertus avecques volupte’, Jean Drouyn, <i>La Nef des folz</i> (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. Niii ^v	37
Figure 2—‘De celluy qui veult descripre et senquerir de toutes regions’, Jean Drouyn, <i>La Nef des folz du monde</i> (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. Hii ^v	49
Figure 3—‘De antichristo’, Jacobus Locher, <i>Navis Stultifera</i> (Paris: G. de Marnef, 1498) sig. Piv ^f	57
Figure 4 —‘Du desprisement de son infortune’, Jean Drouyn, <i>La Nef des folz</i> (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. [Mv] ^v	64
Figure 5—‘Stultorum sensuum navis in exitium tendens’, Jodocus Badius, <i>Stultiferae naves</i> (Paris: T. Kerver, Marnef brothers, 1500) sig. 3 ^f	68
Figure 6—‘La nef divine’, Jean Drouyn, <i>La Grand Nef des folles</i> (Lyon: J. d’Ogerolles, 1583), p. 163	73

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Notes on spellings and abbreviations

Original spellings have been preserved, except that the use of *i* and *j*, *u* and *v* has been modernised, and standard early modern contractions have been expanded. Where punctuation and capitalisation has been altered to avoid confusion, or non-standard contraction or abbreviations have been expanded, this is indicated in square brackets.

The following abbreviations have been used for publishers and journals frequently cited:

CUP Cambridge University Press

OUP Oxford University Press

BHR *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*

ER *Études Rabelaisiennes*

MLR *Modern Language Review*

PMLA *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*

RQ *Renaissance Quarterly*

RR *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*

Introduction

bene navigavi, cum naufragium feci

— Zeno; Schopenhauer; Nietzsche

This thesis is, in part at least, built from the wreckage of another. The original research project, nominally an exploration of authorial and national identity as expressed through nautical metaphors in French Renaissance literature, proved too cumbersome to be seaworthy, and was abandoned early in the third year. I decided that shipwreck, rather than ships, would be my subject, and that a degree of dismantling, reworking and rebuilding would be necessary. The illustration on the front cover serves, among other things, to emblematised this story. It makes the background to this thesis its foreground, highlighting the stages of recuperation and reconstruction that follow the shipwreck, which is itself depicted in the background. In the thesis, the perspective is changed, and the shipwreck itself becomes the focus of enquiry, but the possibility—indeed the necessity—of co-operative reconstruction will play an important role.

The process of choosing a new title posed several questions. Firstly, what aspect of shipwreck was in question? Most important to me, above and beyond indicating the generic and discursive fields addressed (the ‘poetics and politics of shipwreck’, for example), or the increasingly salient concept of the ‘drama’ of shipwreck, was to convey the sense that shipwrecks change; both in the sense that they transform those that experience them and witness them, and that the ways in which they do so change, too, over time. Secondly, how to describe the time, place, and culture in question? Although the term ‘Renaissance’ has its disadvantages, and has fallen out of favour to an extent in recent

times, it does foreground one of the central considerations of this thesis: the rediscovery, reworking and reinvention of ancient models. Timothy Chesters writes evocatively of the benefits of persisting in using the word in the introduction to his recent book on ghost stories in late Renaissance France:

[O]ne obvious attraction of the term ‘Renaissance’ is its figurative proximity to notions of recrudescence or revival. The metaphor according to which Renaissance humanism ‘resurrected’ the language, texts, and ideals of the ancient world is commonplace in the period itself.¹

Such analogies—if not of rebirth, then of (re)generations of texts, commonplaces and metaphors—run through my thesis, as I will explain below. Having established this marker of time, it remained to be determined how I would describe the ‘location’ of my analysis. I was reluctant to define my scope as ‘French literature’, most importantly because the kinds of texts that make up my corpus are not all ‘literary’ in the modern sense. What is more, a significant proportion of the thesis is concerned with the notion of shipwreck as it was applied to the troubled ship of state in the period. Since this might, then, have been a thesis on the shipwreck *of* Renaissance France, the third question was a prepositional one. But, as I argue, shipwreck is very rarely allegorised on one level alone, and it is the multiple and often conflicting meanings with which symbolic—and sometimes real—ships are freighted that make the shipwreck such a privileged site of significance. In the light of these questions, my final title accurately describes and delineates my field and approach while affording the space for the multiple strands that I follow in this thesis.

Models

The repository of classical, biblical and medieval sources of nautical metaphor available to Renaissance writers for ‘resurrection’ and reworking was both vast and rich. Poetic and

¹ Timothy Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), p. 13.

political metaphors of sea travel date back as far as the earliest ancient Greek poetry.

Isidore Silver has written suggestively about the geographical context that informs this initial connection:

Greece is bathed on every side by the Mediterranean Sea. From the earliest times many of the inhabitants, and especially those of the Aegean archipelago, had an islander's acquaintance with every aspect of the sea—its tempests and its halcyon serenities, the problems related to navigation, the value of an experienced pilot, an understanding of the limits beyond which it was dangerous to sail.²

Homer's *Odyssey* provides the first major model of epic seafaring; Book 5 gives a foundational poetic account of shipwreck, and in Book 12 (lines 112-124) the deadly duo of Scylla and Charybdis—the sea monsters between which Odysseus must somehow navigate—are first introduced. Shipwreck plays an important role in ancient Greek romance (in the works of Heliodorus, and Achilles Tatius, for example), as indeed it does in early modern romance.³ Alcaeus's songs and hymns (handed down in the form of fragments and pieced together over many centuries) are believed to be the first to evoke a ship of state, and Pindar's odes set the standard for the idea of the poet's journey as one taken in a boat.

This symbolic potential is further elaborated in Latin epic and lyric; in the chapter 'Metaphorics' in his classic study *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Ernst Robert Curtius describes the continuation of the ancient tradition that links authorship to navigation in Latin poetry:

The Roman poets are wont to compare the composition of a work to a nautical voyage [...]. The epic poet voyages over the open sea in a great ship, the lyric poet on a river in a small boat [...]. The poet becomes the sailor, his mind or his work the boat.⁴

² Isidore Silver, *Ronsard and the Hellenic Renaissance in France II: Ronsard and the Grecian Lyre*, 3 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1985), vol. 2, 162.

³ On the latter, see for example the numerous entries under 'naufrage' in Frank Greiner and others, eds, *Fictions narratives en prose de l'âge baroque: répertoire analytique, première partie (1585-1610)* (Paris: Champion, 2007), p. 977.

⁴ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge, 1953), Chapter 7, 'Metaphorics', pp. 128-144 (pp. 128-129). Curtius notes that '[t]his class of metaphor is extraordinarily widespread throughout the Middle Ages', p. 129.

One of the most important classical models of shipwreck is drawn from the *proemium* to Book II of Lucretius's epic philosophical poem *De rerum natura*. In these lines, the pleasure of *ataraxia*—the philosopher's reward for withdrawal from the worldly sphere—is compared to that of the shoreline spectator to a ship out at sea, caught in a storm:

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.

[Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation: not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ill you are free from yourself is pleasant.]⁵

As I show below, these lines have attracted a great deal of critical attention, particularly in a recent storm of articles and books on the reception of Lucretius in the Renaissance. It is worth emphasising that 'shipwreck' does not, in fact, figure explicitly in the *suave, mari magno* moment. Rather, with a sense of anticipation, readers of Lucretius have often wound the scene forward and filled in the gaps, pushing the 'laborem' described to its worst possible conclusion. As we will see in my later chapters, the explicit moment of shipwreck is introduced by Cicero in his staging of a similar, though more malicious, scene.

There are actually three 'shipwreck moments' in Lucretius, and while this thesis explores the reception of the most famous of them in the shipwreck literature of Renaissance France, it will be useful here to consider the importance of the other two, which reflect on the relationship between land and shore in quite different ways. The disintegration of the ship is an apposite image for the Epicurean theory of randomly floating and colliding particles put forward in *De rerum natura*.⁶ Pondering the

⁵ Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, trans. by William Henry Denham Rouse (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1982; repr. 2006), Book II, ll.1-4, translation p. 95.

⁶ Stephen Greenblatt's latest book, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: Bodley Head, 2011), takes this theme as its narrative impulse, as it explores the incidents and accidents that led to the propagation and reception of Lucretius's text in early modern Europe.

fundamentals of materialist thought—that is, the nature and number of these particles—Lucretius argues that it is impossible that all matter could be created from a combination of a finite number of bodies, since if that were the case, particles would not combine as they do, but would float about separately:

[...] quasi naufragiis magnis multisque coortis
disiectare solet magnum mare transtra cavernas
antennas proram malos tonsasque natantis,
per terrarum omnis oras fluitantia aplustra
ut videantur et indicium mortalibus edant,
infidi maris insidias virisque dolumque
ut vitare velint, neve ullo tempore credant,
subdola cum ridet placidi pellacia ponti[.]

[as when many great shipwrecks have come about, the high sea is accustomed to toss asunder transoms, ribs, yards, prow, masts, and oars all swimming, so that the poop-fittings are seen floating around all the shores, and provide a warning for mortals, that they eschew the treacherous deep, with her snares, her violence, and her fraud, and never trust her at any time when the calm sea shows her false alluring smile[.]]⁷

In this instance, the shoreline is again, as in the *proemium*, the site of warning against taking to the seas. In Book 5, the moment of the shipwreck survivor washing ashore is used to allegorise the helplessness of the newborn human, who:

[...] ut saevis proiectus ab undis
navita, nudus humi iacet, infans, indigus omni
vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras
nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,
vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aequumst
cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.

[like a sailor cast forth by the cruel waves, lies naked upon the ground, speechless, in need of every kind of vital support, as soon as nature has spilt him forth with throes from his mother's womb into the regions of light, and he fills all around with doleful wailings—as is but just, seeing that so much trouble awaits him in life to pass through.]⁸

As we will see in the final chapter of this thesis, and in my Conclusion, this analogy is often reversed in Renaissance shipwreck texts: shipwreck survivors—and even those in the

⁷ Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, Book 2, ll. 547-559, translation p. 139.

⁸ Ibid., Book 5, ll. 222-227, translation pp. 393-395.

throes of the storm itself—are repeatedly cast as infantilised, dehumanised or animalised by their experiences.

While classical philosophical, political and poetic texts were widely plundered for models of shipwreck, the Bible, too, furnished a wealth of examples. Discussion of biblical shipwrecks in relation to their reworking in Renaissance texts poses the important question of which Bible to refer to, and quote from.⁹ While we may be fairly sure of the religious texts available to and likely to have been read and used by certain authors, it has not been practicable to establish this with any certainty for all of the writers discussed in this thesis. In the interest of consistency, therefore, I have quoted from the ‘King James’ version of the Bible throughout. The ideal Old Testament seafarer is Noah, whose salvation in the Ark is declared in 1 Peter 3. 21 to prefigure salvation through baptism. A second model of survival arises in the Book of Jonah; Jonah, cast out of his ship but spared by God, is taken as a model of providential ‘shipwreck’ survival. In the New Testament, easily the most striking nautical episode is that of Christ calming the storm:

And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he [Jesus] was asleep. And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.
(Matthew 8. 24-27)

The other New Testament figure who plays an important role in the conception of shipwreck in the Renaissance is Paul. Not only is Paul the survivor of three shipwrecks; he makes of shipwreck itself the model of tested faith:

This charge I commit to thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck [...],

⁹ Further fruitful work could be done, for example, in comparing Erasmus’s nautical Latin terms in the ‘Naufragium’ with the lexis used in his translation of and commentary on the New Testament, but limitations of space and time have prevented this here. A useful reference work in this regard is Jacques Paviot, ‘Le Latin comme langue technique: l’exemple des termes concernant le navire’, in *Tous vos gens à latin: le latin, langue savante, langue mondaine (XIV^e-XVII^e siècles)*, ed. by Emmanuel Bury (Geneva: Droz, 2005), pp. 257-263.

whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1 Timothy 1. 18-20)

As I will show in Chapter One, the major medieval model of shipwreck is that which threatens the ship of fools. This vessel might be conceived of as the dark underbelly of the Ark; whereas Noah and his family were spared by God, saving themselves from the great flood in their expressly constructed vessel, the presence of the fools on board their ship is a mark of their divergence from the path of virtue, and—if they fail to mend their ways—a portent of their own spiritual shipwreck.

Approaches

Though it has not before been the subject of a sustained research project, the topic of shipwreck in the French Renaissance has been touched on by scholars working in several disciplines. The topic of ‘Naufrage’ was the subject of a *colloque* held in Paris in 1998, a wide-ranging conference which attracted speakers in a variety of historical fields, and whose proceedings have since been published by Champion.¹⁰ But the text that has loomed largest on the critical horizon during the writing of this thesis is Hans Blumenberg’s *Shipwreck With Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*.¹¹ Blumenberg’s work is a cornerstone of the (largely German) critical tradition of *topos* history, as is evinced by his ground-breaking book *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966). This early work generated a host of studies both perpetuating and contesting its central claims, and the same could be said of his later *Shipwreck with Spectator*, which traces the reception of the Lucretian *topos* through European literatures and cultures from the sixteenth to the

¹⁰ *Le Naufrage: Actes du colloque tenu à l’Institut Catholique de Paris (28-30 janvier 1998)* ed. by Christian Buchet and Claude Thomasset (Paris: Champion, 1999).

¹¹ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck With Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press, 1997).

twentieth century. Blumenberg's title belies the range and complexity of concepts covered. His text is concerned not only with scenes of quasi-Lucretian spectatorship, but with the broader cultural significance of seafaring, and with a range of philosophical responses to the idea of shipwreck—and rebuilding from the wreckage. But this vast diachronic scope sometimes precludes any great degree of sensitivity to synchronic, or language- or culture-specific nuance. Neil Kenny, for example, writing in response to Blumenberg's first study, has challenged its portrayal of a teleological 'meta-narrative' of *curiositas*, arguing that 'the history and development of *curiosus* [...] cannot be reduced to a journey from pejorative to positive senses'.¹² Kenny proposes to elaborate an alternative to the Blumenbergian approach by 'provid[ing] several local narratives rather than a single grand one'.¹³

My work here responds to that of Blumenberg in a similar way, in that it pinpoints a small section of his thesis in *Shipwreck with Spectator*—that concerning shipwreck in the French Renaissance—and examines it in greater detail, and from a wider range of perspectives. Describing Curtius's treatment of nautical 'Metaphorics' in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Blumenberg observes that 'in all the risks run by sailors because of inexperience, the fragility of their boats, cliffs, churning seas and storms there seems to be no aesthetic shipwreck. That sort of thing is for philosophers'.¹⁴ In this thesis I argue that, on the contrary, the possibility of aesthetic shipwreck—or, as I characterise it, interpretative shipwreck—sparks an anxiety that haunts the dynamics of shipwreck in the French Renaissance. There is a further point made by Blumenberg that rewards closer inspection. In his discussion of Ferdinando Galiani's theories of theatre, Blumenberg claims that '[t]hrough the move from seashore to theater, Lucretius's

¹² Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), Chapter 3, 'Genealogies: The Emergence of "Curiosity"', pp. 33-49 (p. 47).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁴ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 107, note 12.

spectator is withdrawn from the moral dimension; he has become “aesthetic”¹⁵. There are two assumptions inherent in this statement; that Lucretius’s spectator was only linked with aesthetic or dramatic theories as late as the eighteenth century, and that any move towards the aesthetic is necessarily a ‘withdraw[al] from the moral dimension’. In what follows I challenge these assumptions, demonstrating that the dramatic potential of shipwreck is exploited repeatedly in sixteenth-century France, and, what is more, it is explicitly equated both with the dynamics of theatre and with the kind of moralising interpretation that is associated with seafaring from the ship of fools onwards.

Several French critics have studied the afterlife of the *suave mari magno* commonplace from early modern French literature onwards.¹⁶ Part of a recent resurgence of scholarly interest in Lucretius, Frank Lestringant’s articles on the incarnations of the ‘shipwreck with spectator’ *topos* in the Renaissance emphasise the figure of the (not-so) distant spectator, making claims for a kind of irony in the spectatorial gazes described by Ronsard and Montaigne, as well as reminding us of d’Aubigné’s reversal of this dynamic in *Les Tragiques* (see my Conclusion). More generally, the subject of sea storms and shipwrecks has also been addressed by Lestringant in an article that predates his later, more Lucretian work: ‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’.¹⁷ This theme has since been

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁶ Antoine Compagnon, ‘*Suave mari magno*: l’inflexion moderne d’un lieu commun’, in *Le Mythe en littérature: essais en hommage à Pierre Brunel*, ed. by Yves Chevrel and Camille Dumoulié (Paris: PUF, 2000), pp. 305-318; Michel Delon, ‘Naufrages vus de loin: les développements narratifs d’un thème lucretien’, *Rivista di letteratura moderna e comparata*, 41, 2 (1988), 91-119; Frank Lestringant, ‘La Tempête de près et de loin: la place du spectateur chez Rabelais, Ronsard, d’Aubigné et Montaigne’, in *L’Événement climatique et ses représentations (XVII^e-XIX^e siècle)*, ed. by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and others (Paris: Desjonquères, 2007) pp. 102-125; *idem*, ‘Trois épreuves du naufrage avec spectateur chez Ronsard’, in *La Poésie de la Pléiade: mélanges offerts au professeur Isamu Takata*, ed. by Yvonne Bellenger and others (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2009), pp. 19-42; *idem*, ‘Lucrèce, la Renaissance et ses naufrages: à propos du “*suave mari magno*...”’, in *La Renaissance de Lucrèce*, ed. by Emmanuel Naya (Paris: Presses de l’université Paris-Sorbonne, 2010), pp. 7-15.

¹⁷ Lestringant, ‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’: essai de généalogie (Rabelais, Thevet et quelques autres)’, *Études de Lettres*, 2 (1984), 45-62 (repr. with errata and addenda in Lestringant, *Écrire le monde à la Renaissance: quinze études sur Rabelais, Postel, Bodin et la littérature géographique* (Caen: Paradigme, 1993), pp. 139-157).

taken up by Normand Doiron and, more recently, Olivier Pot.¹⁸ Jean Delumeau's study *La Peur en Occident* explores the ways in which the sea has figured for centuries as a site —if not *the* site—of fear in Western culture: 'Pour quelques-uns, très hardis—les découvreurs de la Renaissance et leurs épigones—, la mer a été provocation. Mais, pour le plus grand nombre, elle est restée longtemps dissuasion et par excellence le lieu de la peur.'¹⁹ As Delumeau shows, fears and anxieties associated with the sea are both reflected and perpetuated in several related discursive fields:

Au sortir du Moyen Age, l'homme d'Occident reste prévenu contre la mer non seulement par la sagesse des proverbes mais encore par deux avertissements parallèles: l'un exprimé par le discours poétique, l'autre par les récits de voyages, spécialement ceux des pèlerins à Jérusalem.

Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud's article, 'La mer: un espace hors-la-loi?'²⁰ follows in this tradition of cultural history, and complements the rich section on storms at sea in her *Le Crépuscule du Grand Voyage*.²¹ The overlapping fields of geographical, spiritual and imaginative travel have also been mapped by Wes Williams in *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance*.²²

Finally, Josiah Blackmore's *Manifest Perdition: Shipwreck Narrative and the Disruption of Empire* provides a rich and vibrant example of what can be done, in terms of analysis, with early modern shipwrecks; Blackmore elaborates and explores the notion of the 'shipwreckful ship', examining the anxiety generated by the 'danger in potentia', in

¹⁸ Normand Doiron, 'Les rituels de la tempête en mer: histoire et voyage au seuil de l'âge classique', *Revue des sciences humaines*, no. 214 (1989), 43-70; Olivier Pot, 'Prolégomènes pour une étude de la tempête en mer (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles)', *Versants*, 43 (2003), 77-133 (p. 84).

¹⁹ Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident (XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles): une cité assiégée* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), Chapter 1, 'Omnipresence de la peur', pp. 31-74 (p. 31).

²⁰ Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud, 'La mer: un espace hors-la-loi?' in *Revue de littérature comparée*, 64.2 (1990), 385-407.

²¹ Gomez-Géraud, *Le Crépuscule du Grand Voyage: les récits des pèlerins à Jérusalem (1458-1612)* (Paris: Champion, 1999), Chapter 7, 'Le récit de pèlerinage, ou comme une petite liturgie de la présence divine', pp. 469- 559 (pp. 500-516).

²² Wes Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance: The Undiscovered Country*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

other words the ‘capacity for wreck latent in every seaborne ship’.²³ This concept is useful not only when considering texts in which the prospect of shipwreck is cause for anxiety, but is not explicitly realised, but also, I would argue, in those texts that do dramatise disaster. For, in narratives that explore the after-effects of shipwreck, the dynamics of fragmentation and rebuilding are constantly understood through the same moralising framework by which particular meaning is ascribed to the shipwreck itself.

‘Shipwreckfulness’ is not only projected backwards, as it were, from the (potential) moment of disaster, but also forwards, shaping the significance of what comes after shipwreck. As all of the works above demonstrate, the meanings ascribed to shipwreck are inflected by the cultural significance of the sea, and my work in this thesis traces the persistent moral anxieties concerning seafaring, while also pointing to the rhetorical strategies employed by certain writers in defence of exploration.

Further existing work, while not dealing expressly with the subject matter of this thesis, has shaped my critical approach. The work of Michel Foucault has informed my research here both directly and indirectly. Three texts, in particular, have shaped the field to which my work on shipwreck contributes. The first is his *Histoire de la folie*, which, in its first chapter, argues that the sea is the site most strongly associated, in Western culture and thought, with madness.²⁴ As I show in my response to it, this chapter, much like Blumenberg’s history of the shipwreck, is concerned with ‘grand narrative’ at the expense of a degree of local detail, but it is nonetheless a cornerstone of modern scholarship on the ship of fools tradition. In my thinking and writing about uses of analogy in the Renaissance, I have referred to Foucault’s notion of ‘similitudes’, as elaborated in *Les*

²³ Josiah Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition: Shipwreck Narrative and the Disruption of Empire* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 6.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972 (first published by Plon in 1961 as *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*)), Chapter 1, ‘Stultifera navis’, pp. 13-55.

Mots et les choses.²⁵ Thirdly, Foucault's writing on 'hétérotopies' has laid important groundwork in terms of thinking about spaces as 'sites' of particular significance. As described by Foucault, 'L'hétérotopie a le pouvoir de juxtaposer en un seul lieu réel plusieurs espaces, plusieurs emplacements qui sont en eux-mêmes incompatibles.'²⁶ Foucault uses this emphasis on the reality of 'hétérotopies' to distinguish them from utopias. In the very last paragraph of his article, it becomes apparent that the ship is an especially powerful example of Foucault's concept:

[S]i l'on songe, après tout, que le bateau, c'est un morceau flottant de l'espace, un lieu sans lieu, qui vit par lui-même, qui est fermé sur soi et qui est livré en même temps à l'infini de la mer et qui, de port en port, de bordée en bordée [...], va jusqu'aux colonies chercher ce qu'elles recèlent de plus précieux en leurs jardins, vous comprenez pourquoi le bateau a été pour notre civilisation, depuis le XVI^e siècle jusqu'à nos jours, à la fois non seulement, bien sûr, le plus grand instrument de développement économique [...], mais la plus grande réserve d'imagination. Le navire, c'est l'hétérotopie par excellence.²⁷

We can see in this work, first written and presented in 1967 but not published until 1984, some of the thinking that had informed Foucault's discussion of the ship in the *Histoire de la folie*. Foucault argues that it is in the Renaissance that the ship gains its particular 'heterotopic' status, and this is no doubt due in great part to the sense of 'otherness' afforded by the very first voyages and ventures in the New World.

Stephen Greenblatt's work on early European exploration and exploitation of the New World has been an important stimulus to some of my thinking in Chapter Four and the Conclusion of the thesis: in particular, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*.²⁸ In an article published in the same year, Greenblatt flirts with figuring the discovery of the Americas as a cultural shipwreck for Renaissance Europe:

²⁵ Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

²⁶ Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', in *Dits et écrits: 1954-1988*, ed. by Daniel Defert and others, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. 4, 752-762 (p. 758) (first pub. in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5 (1984), 46-49).

²⁷ Ibid., p. 762.

²⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

The shipwreck of the Santa Maria is a foundational symbolic moment [...], for it reveals in unequivocal terms the moral nature of the Indians, their charity and lovingkindness in response to the momentarily vulnerable invaders, just as the moral depravity of the Spanish is starkly disclosed by their cruel exploitation of the vulnerability and meekness of the Indians.²⁹

For Greenblatt, Columbus's journal entry on this shipwreck performs a kind of textual recuperation; it has 'a single, overarching rhetorical project: the transformation of disaster—this is an admiral whose ship has run aground when he was asleep—into triumph'.³⁰ The missionary purpose often claimed by New World colonisers plays a crucial role in underpinning this dynamic of rewriting: 'the shipwrecked hero will save the innocents from their cruel oppressors and will found a city [...]. What looked like a failure consequent upon a dangerous relaxation of the will—the sequence of events initiated by falling asleep—is revealed to be the operation of a higher will'.³¹ In my work here I take this idea further and make the analogy more explicit, showing that both shipwreck and the processes of rebuilding that follow its survival are used by French writers—notably Jean de Léry—to explore New World experiences. Unlike Greenblatt, however, I show that these texts do not succeed in any positive colonialist project of self-justification. On the contrary, they repeatedly stage and lament the failure of French, Spanish or Portuguese travellers to respond and adapt appropriately to the 'new' forms of culture they encounter. Specifically, I argue that the shipwreck, construed as a privileged moment of empirical experience, challenges cultural assumptions previously unquestioned by European travellers, and demands new and markedly unconventional modes of description.

²⁹ Greenblatt, 'Columbus Runs Aground: Christmas Eve, 1492', in *The Sheila Carmel Lectures, 1988-1993*, ed. by Hana Wirth-Nesher (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995), pp. 127-147 (p. 137) (first pub. in *Revista de história* (São Paulo), 123-124 (1990-1991), 117-133).

³⁰ Greenblatt, 'Columbus Runs Aground', p. 141.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

In my consideration of nautical metaphor in particular, the recent work of Kathryn Banks has been a particularly useful reference-point. In the introduction to *Cosmos and Image in the Renaissance*, she makes the case for her choice of terminology:

I do not assume a priori that poetic images—that is, the image in poetry of one thing as another thing—only repeat ontological ones, for example the poetic image of the divine as the sun might not simply echo the notion that the divine is ontologically imaged as the sun. Instead, such a poetic image might reflect upon—and affect—conceptions of the relationship between the divine and the cosmic sun. Indeed, I shall suggest that poetic images often explore such relationships[.]³²

This notion of mutual affect or contagion between the ‘image’ and the ‘imaged’ is one that emerges too in my consideration of shipwreck here. Secondly, this particularly sensitive reflection on the nature of Renaissance ‘images’ leads me to a class of shipwreck image that I do not address in this thesis: emblems. While the representation of shipwrecks in this rich visual field would doubtless reward further study—particularly insofar as it relates to commonplacing—it has not been of central concern to this thesis since, as I stated above, I am interested here in shipwrecks that change; that is, shipwrecks that form a part—or the whole—of a narrative. This being the case, the illustration that I have chosen to ‘emblematised’ this thesis is the closest, I think, that a static image can come to communicating what is at stake here, since it shows, as we move from the background to the foreground, the evolution of the shipwreck over time, and the various stages of recuperation and recovery.

Banks has also since published work that relates to my own more directly still; her article ‘Interpretations of the Body Politic and of Natural Bodies in Late Sixteenth-Century France’³³ explores the ways in which political thinkers of the period (including Bodin, whose *Six livres de la République* I refer to in my Chapter Three) think about politics

³² Kathryn Banks, *Cosmos and Image in the Renaissance: French Love Lyric and Natural-Philosophical Poetry* (London: Legenda, 2008), ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-28 (p. 21).

³³ Banks, ‘Interpretations of the Body Politic and of Natural Bodies in Late Sixteenth-Century France’, in *Metaphor and Discourse*, ed. by Andreas Musolff and Jörg Zinken (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 205-218.

through metaphor. As I show in my own chapter on the incarnations of the ship of state during the French civil wars, the images of body politic and ship of state are closely related in the minds of political and religious actors and commentators of the time. In her emphasis on thinking with and through metaphors, Banks provides a rich example of how cognitive theoretical approaches may be sensitively and fruitfully applied to the kinds of texts I am dealing with in this thesis. While I only rarely make direct reference to metaphor theory in what follows, my research has, in its early stages, been informed by foundational texts such as Paul Ricœur's *La Métaphore vive*, Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live by*, and Zoltán Kövecses's *Metaphor and Culture: Universality and Variation*.³⁴ Of course, since the purpose of a ship is to travel, nautical metaphors are more often than not extended into allegory. Jon Whitman uses the example of seafaring to set out what he calls 'The Allegorical Problem':

We might express a wise course of action, for example, [...] by describing the judicious navigation of a ship [...]. On the one hand, in order to preserve the correspondence between sound thinking and thoughtful sailing, we must restrict the narrative to brief parallels, such as reason and the rudder—and even they may seem strained. On the other hand, should we seek to expand the narrative, we risk an increasing divergence from the story's original point. Thus, it will be hard to match the ship's gunwhales with the configuration of wisdom [...]. In effect, the allegory seems trapped between constraint and license: unable to lift its anchor, on the one hand, and liable to go adrift, on the other.³⁵

Whitman argues that: 'The parallel between living and seafaring is one of the earliest examples of allegorical composition',³⁶ and in his exposition it embodies perfectly the tensions he identifies as inherent in all allegory: those between correspondence and divergence.

Shipwrecks feature in Renaissance writing not only in the forms of metaphor and allegory, but also as part of *topoi* and commonplaces. Ann Moss's work on commonplace-

³⁴ Paul Ricœur, *La Métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by*, rev. edn (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Culture: Universality and Variation* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005).

³⁵ Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), Chapter 1, 'The Allegorical Problem', pp. 1-13 (p. 7).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7, n. 5.

books in the Renaissance reminds us of their importance in shaping the thinking and compositional processes of writers in the period. She makes a particularly strong case for reading the work of Montaigne in this light:

Montaigne's constant quotation of excerpts mainly from Latin authors (as well as the evidence of books known to have been in his possession, marked up in the manner of the commonplace reader) points indubitably to the commonplace-book. Disingenuous as ever, Montaigne says that he does not keep notebooks to store quotations from his reading. The fact is that he transcribes them straight into his commonplace-book, and that most uncommon of commonplace-books is the book of *Essais*[.]³⁷

As I show in this thesis, shipwreck texts not only revisit and rework classical and other commonplaces; they generate new ones of their own. This story is emblematised by a transition that may be traced between my first and last chapters. In considering the treatment in the French versions of the ship of fools of the subject of exploration and description of the world, I show in Chapter One that the humanist commonplace 'Plinius erravit' is incorporated into the tension, itself articulated through seafaring, between curiosity and the sense that this *libido sciendi* is overweening. By the end of the century, as I show in my final chapter, Renaissance reworkings of shipwreck have generated a fictional character—Panurge—so striking that he becomes something of a nautical commonplace himself. Delumeau observes of Panurge that: 'l'affolement qui le saisit face aux éléments déchaînés peut être identifié comme un comportement collectif aisément retrouvable dans les récits de voyage'.³⁸ As I show in Chapter Four, Panurge reappears in two important accounts of shipwreck in travel writing; in both texts he is held up as an archetypal example, though he is made to stand for quite different things by the two authors. One of the things this thesis asks, then, is: what is 'commonplace', or conventional, about the shipwrecks narrated in the Renaissance, and what is particular, distinctive, and paradoxical? Given the ship's 'heterotopic' status, it bears relation to

³⁷ Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 213.

³⁸ Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident*, p. 35.

commonplacing in a further, specific way; ships, through the model of the Ark, perform a kind of compilatory function. This parallel is drawn out most strongly in my first chapter, but is perpetuated throughout the thesis as ships are shown to be freighted with multiple, often competing, significances in the texts they inhabit.

Throughout this research project, the question of the relationship between ‘real’ and ‘metaphorical’ shipwrecks has been central to my thinking. It is, occasionally, possible to trace the literary and cultural afterlives of historical Renaissance shipwrecks. The chronicler Guillaume de Marceilles (1530-1600), in his history of his home town of Le Havre (which, as his nineteenth-century editor remarks, was itself only fourteen years older than Marceilles himself), writes of a particularly striking example of a real ship that embodied much of the symbolism of the ship of state:

Viron [le temps] du commencement de ladite ville, sa Majesté auroit faict commencer à bastir en la fosse de l’Heure, distante de ce havre d’une lieue ou environ, une très grande nef appelée de son nom, la *Grande Française*, dont un surnommé le cappitaine Lespargne, gentilhomme du pays de Bretagne, avoit eu la charge de faire faire.³⁹

As Nicholas Rodger argues, the ship was intended as a show of France’s military, technological and naval prowess—not to mention wealth—to her European neighbours:

[T]he bigger the ship the more powerful and magnificent she seemed. The *Henry Grace à Dieu* was a symbol of Henry’s prestige [...], and the 1,500-ton *Grand François* of 1521, ‘the most triumphant thing that ever mariner saw’, was meant to be for Francis I. This imposing edifice with a crew of 2,000, equipped with a chapel, a tennis court and a windmill, unfortunately proved to be just what a Venetian visitor predicted: ‘so magnificent that it looks as though she will be incapable of putting to sea.’⁴⁰

³⁹ *Mémoires de la fondation et origine de la ville Française de grace composez par maistre Guillaume de Marceilles Conseiller du Roy, et son premier Procureur en ladite ville: publiés pour la première fois d’après un manuscrit authentique, et accompagnés de notes recueillies aux archives du Havre* [ed. by J. Morlent] ([Le] Havre: J. Morlent, 1847), p. 8. On the *Grande Française*, see also: Georges Fournier, *Hydrographie contenant la théorie et la pratique de toutes les parties de la navigation* (Paris: Dupuis, 1667), p. 41; Jacques-Olivier Pleuvri, *Histoire, antiquités et description de la ville et du port du Havre de Grace, avec un traité de son commerce, & une notice des lieux circonvoisins de cette place* (Paris: Dufour, 1769), p. 43.

⁴⁰ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain. Volume One. 660-1649* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 204.

Indeed, the grandeur of the construction—the largest ship that had ever been built in France—proved to be enormously hubristic. For, when it came to launching this magnificent vessel (François I having the intention to send it eastward, ‘affin de faire teste au Grand Turc’), it was only possible to move it as far as the end of the harbour jetty, at which point, Marceilles writes:

[L]es mariniers de ce pays auroient esté contraints la ramener dans ced[it] Havre, ce qu’ils auroient faict en une seulle marée et à sa mesme place dont elle estoit partie, qui estoit près le sault de la grant Barre dud[it] lieu, où elle auroit esté jusques au mois de novembre en suivant, qu’en la nuict du jour St. Clément d’une fort grande tourmente et impétuosité de vents, elle estoit tournée et accantée sur un de ses costez, et tellement emplie d’eau de mer qu’il n’avoit pas esté possible de l’avoir peu relever, et, partant, l’on auroit faict despescer, et du bois d’icelle, la plupart des maisons des Barres auroient esté faictes et basties. Cet inconvenient estoit procédé parce que les cables dont elle estoit amarée auroient lasché, qui estoient viron de grosseur de la jambe de la personne[.]⁴¹

Marceilles’s curious use of tenses here suggests that, just a single generation after the events themselves, they had passed into the territory of folklore, gaining an exemplary status that meant their retelling bordered on the allegorical.

The processes of tracing the iterations of such narratives in contemporary literature can yield some rather pleasing results for aficionados of Renaissance fictions, such as the observation by Lazare Sainéan in his monumental work *La Langue de Rabelais*:

[Rabelais] a vu peut-être [...] de ses propres yeux le navire gigantesque que François I^{er} fit construire au Havre, la fameuse *Françoise* [...], qui échoua avant d’avoir pu prendre la mer, car il fait allusion aux câbles ‘de la grand nauf *Françoysse* qui est au port de Grace en Normandie’ (I. II, ch. IV), c’est-à-dire au port du Havre récemment fondé par le grand roi.⁴²

As it transpires, this kind of textual treasure-hunt—however appealing—is not the kind of journey that this thesis takes us on, for the most part at least. But Sainéan’s example points to an important symbolic parallel that does, I argue, inform much of the dynamics of shipwreck in the Renaissance: that between ship and body. The passage of Rabelais referred to by Sainéan here (in *Pantagruel* 4) describes the measures taken to restrain the

⁴¹ Marceilles, *Mémoires*, p. 9.

⁴² Lazare Sainéan, *La Langue de Rabelais*, 2 vols (Paris: Bocard, 1922-23), vol. 1, pp. 93-94.

baby Pantagruel in his cradle. In Rabelais's adoption of the model of the *Grande Françoise*, Marceilles's corporeal description of the ropes holding the great ship at bay ('viron de grosseur de la jambe de la personne') is expanded; the ship is itself made flesh, and the original 'navire gigantesque', tossed by storms until its ties failed, becomes the unruly, gigantic infant thrashing against and bursting free of his own ropes.

My focus on the body in this thesis is twofold. In the first instance, I am concerned with the ways in which, as in the example above, the ship and the body are made analogous in Renaissance shipwreck writing; bodies are described and allegorised in nautical terms, or, conversely, ships themselves become animalised and humanised. Secondly, and in part as a result of this symbolic association, it is shown or anticipated in many of the texts in my corpus that the description, narration and dramatisation of shipwreck has an impact not only on the bodies of its victims, but on those too of readers, listeners, and spectators. Predicated on this emphasis on the somatic is my argument against the predominance of a purely Lucretian model of shipwreck in the Renaissance. As Lestringant argues:

Le *suave mari magno* a ceci de remarquable qu'il théâtralise l'expérience humaine à partir d'un point de vue supérieur et distant [...]. Il manifeste la supériorité de l'âme sur le corps, de l'intellect sur les passions. Non sans orgueil, il revendique la souveraineté inattaquable de l'intellectuel, détaché des servitudes de la réalité par la méditation philosophique.⁴³

In my work here, I argue that Renaissance shipwreck texts, both in their reception of the Lucretian model and in other ways, increasingly destabilise any such superiority, and repeatedly thwart any attempt to elaborate a spiritual or intellectual dynamics of shipwreck at the expense of a bodily one.

Running parallel with this insistence on the corporeal import of shipwreck is a second strand that views the kinds of textual processes performed in the generation of shipwreck texts through a particularly physical analogy: one of Lévi-Strauss's *bricolage*.

⁴³ Lestringant, 'Trois épreuves', p. 20.

In my readings here, I align the reimaginings and regenerations of shipwreck commonplaces and narrative models performed in the texts of my corpus with the idea of rebuilding from the fragments of a shipwreck. As elaborated in *La Pensée sauvage*, *bricolage* refers to the workings of the mythic imagination: ‘le propre de la pensée mythique, comme du bricolage sur le plan pratique, est d’élaborer des ensembles structurés, non pas directement avec d’autres structurés, mais en utilisant des résidus et des débris d’événements’.⁴⁴ Lévi-Strauss’s concept has proved appealing in a variety of subsequent contexts. It was taken up in cultural studies, most notably being appropriated by Dick Hebdige in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) for his discussion of punk aesthetics. Such ‘strong readings’, as Harold Bloom might term them,⁴⁵ of *bricolage* might have coloured its subsequent reception, leading us to see it as a concept anachronistically incompatible with the historically and culturally specific concerns of sixteenth-century French writers. In fact, the process of rebuilding from shipwreck is already alive as an allegory of rhetorical *inventio* and *dispositio* in the Renaissance. In the preface to his *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, dedicated to King Hugo IV of Jerusalem and Cyprus, Giovanni Boccaccio restages, in a more positive light, the Lucretian scene of littoral recuperation:

undique in tuum desiderium, non aliter quam si per vastum litus ingentis naufragii fragmenta colligerem sparsas, per infinita fere volumina deorum gentilium reliquias colligam, quas comperiam, et collectas evo diminutas atque semesas et fere attritas in unum genealogie corpus, quo potero ordine, ut tuo fruaris voto, redigam.

[To carry out your project, not otherwise than if I were collecting fragments along the vast shores of a huge shipwreck, I will collect the remnants of the pagan gods strewn everywhere in a nearly infinite number of volumes, and once found and collected, even if they are ravaged and half eaten by time and nearly worn to nothing, I will reduce them into a single corpus of genealogy, arranged to the best of my ability, to satisfy your wish.]⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), p. 32.

⁴⁵ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety Of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: OUP, 1973).

⁴⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, trans. and ed. by Jon Solomon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 18-19.

As the illustration on the front cover of this thesis shows, the best that can be hoped for in the event of shipwreck survival is the construction of a new craft, a means of escape, from the fragments of the wrecked vessel. As well as telling part of the story of the writing of this thesis, then, this image of reconstruction also emblematises the argument I hope to make for a kind of ‘shipwreckful’ poetics. This argument is made most strongly in my final chapter, but it takes root from the very earliest pages of the first.

The ‘shipwreckful’ family

The structure of the thesis is approximately chronological, for a number of reasons. A thematic approach—with individual chapters dedicated to religious or denominational, political, poetic, and other kinds of shipwreck—was initially considered, but seemed to require too much repetition of material, and would not, I felt, allow for the full exploration of the intertwining and overlapping of such themes I hoped to pursue. As a result, I began to research and write material with an author-based structure in mind, envisaging at first a six- or seven-chapter thesis, not necessarily arranged in chronological order, but according to the resonances shared between texts, or the tensions and contrasts generated by their juxtaposition. But, as the first chapter on the ‘ship of fools’ tradition took shape, it became apparent that this approach, too, would be found wanting. In this, as in later chapters, I found there was a story to tell about a ‘family’ of texts, some of whom were evidently very closely related, others more distant cousins, but all of them connected by a degree of shared shipwreck ‘genetics’. The kind of analysis I pursue here is not in itself ‘genetic’ criticism, for the most part. But this sense of generations and regenerations of shipwrecks is carried across the thesis as a whole, and goes a way to explaining the broadly chronological ordering of my chapters, as well as the choices made in the circumscription of my corpus. The potential scope even for this revised, more focussed topic is enormous,

and this thesis does not seek in any way to give an exhaustive account of real and metaphorical shipwrecks in the French Renaissance. Rather, it brings together groups of texts that serve to illustrate, through their similarities and differences, both the persistent modes of thinking and writing about shipwreck in the period and the particular shifts (some gradual, others more abrupt and radical) that took place.

While, in the first chapter and the beginning of the second, I set out many features that commonly characterised scenes of shipwreck in the Renaissance, the remainder of the thesis is concerned with the historically and culturally specific ways in which French writers reworked and redeployed such conventions. The analogy of family ties therefore also affords a useful way of thinking about how commonplaces and metaphors both persist and change across the century. Although, as I indicated above, material nautical history exerts only an indirect pressure on what I am here calling the ‘dynamics of shipwreck’ in sixteenth-century France, it is possible to trace responses to particular historical events as expressed through metaphors of shipwreck. This is another factor that was considered in the ordering of my material here; as I show, the religious and political storms of the sixteenth century were the catalyst of much nautically-inflected debate.

My first chapter is unique within the thesis in that it contributes, in a small way, to the field of word history. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Old French word for ship—‘nef’ (from the Latin ‘navis’)—gradually fell out of use, being replaced by ‘navire’ and ‘vaisseau’.⁴⁷ In Chapter One I explore an important strand of this story; the persistence of a symbolic, literary ‘nef’, whose origins can be traced from medieval tradition through to the first decade of the sixteenth century, and whose echoes are heard as late as the Wars of Religion, as we will see in later chapters. I show that a mini-genre, the *Nef* book,

⁴⁷ ‘Nef. Lat. *navis*. Propr. ‘navire’, sens disparu depuis le XVI^e s., sauf par archaïsme; a cédé la place à *navire*, *vaisseau*, qui ont plus de corps; on trouve souvent au XVI^e s. la forme *nauf*, d’après le prov. *nau*. Le sens architectural est attesté dès le XII^e s.’ Oscar Bloch and Walther von Wartburg, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*, 5th edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1968).

emerged from the popularity of the French vernacular versions of Sebastian Brant's *Narren Schyff*, and that, over the course of just a few years, this genre developed and changed, generating de-nauticalised compendia on a range of subjects.⁴⁸ These compendia play an important role within the tradition of commonplacing; two of the authors examined in this chapter (Jodocus Badius and Symphorien Champier), as well as Brant's friend Jacobus Wimpheling, all played major roles as 'midwives to the commonplace-book'.⁴⁹ In this family of texts, shipwreck at first represents the fate of the sinner's soul, but as the concerns of the *Nef* books become more worldly, and less spiritual, so too the significance of shipwrecks shifts. Over the course of this chapter, I show that the prospect of bodily shipwreck, in particular, comes increasingly to the fore. Besides identifying and analysing this previously neglected family of books, this chapter sheds light on several important conventions that will continue to inform the dynamics of shipwreck as explored in later chapters. In particular, it shows that, even as early as the turn of the sixteenth century, seafaring was the subject both of moral anxiety and of curiosity; it is this tension that makes the family of *Nef* books a particularly rich cluster of texts with which to open this thesis on shipwreck.

In the second chapter, I tackle perhaps the most salient example of 'shipwreckfulness' in Renaissance French literature to the modern reader: Rabelais's storm scene of the *Quart Livre*. In order to demonstrate its particular role within the broader family of Renaissance shipwreck texts, I situate it between two of its closest relatives: one of them familiar, the other perhaps less so. I first set out some important features of one of Rabelais's major sources (Erasmus's dialogue, the 'Naufragium'), both in order to tease out the ways in which it responds to the ship of fools tradition, and to establish the ways in which it too establishes conventions for writing about shipwreck. My analysis of the

⁴⁸ In this chapter, for reasons of brevity, I use the terms 'nauticalise', 'de-nauticalise', 'nauticalisation', and 'nauticality' when mapping the varying intensity of nautical detail in the texts explored.

⁴⁹ See Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, pp. 84-86 and 90-92.

famous Rabelaisian storm scene itself is focussed on the figure of Panurge, as I propose that it is this character more than any other element that sets Rabelais's near-shipwreck apart from its Renaissance relatives. In my analysis I argue against, on the one hand, readings of the scene that attempt to make perfect sense of Rabelais's text by bending it to fit the contours of a singular allegorical interpretation, while also, on the other hand, suggesting that such an approach need not entail a complete abandonment of interpretative confidence on the part of the reader. Staying with Panurge, I then turn to what may be thought of as a rewriting or re-imagining of the *Quart Livre* storm scene: the beaching of the Thalamège in the *Cinquième Livre*. In this third section, I show that the dynamics of co-operation may be seen to inform our understanding of shipwreck survival (both in the sense of narrowly avoiding it, and of recovering from it) both as it is dramatised directly in Rabelais's text(s), and as it, in turn, stages the relationship between author, text, and reader.

The third chapter addresses the prospect of political shipwreck in the troubled latter part of the sixteenth century in France by exploring not only incarnations and reconfigurations of the *suave mari magno* commonplace but also shipwrecks that are narrated from the inside. It explores the distinction between the struggling ship in Lucretius and the eagerly spectated shipwreck of a political enemy in Cicero's letters, taking account of the equally important model of the ship of state, as elaborated in Plato, Cicero and medieval sources. I argue that the role of the spectator was most often not at a safe distance, and that the ethical relationship between the spectator and those on board is significantly developed from that in Lucretius. Through the work of three writers (Michel de L'Hospital, Pierre de Ronsard and Michel de Montaigne), I show that the powerful metaphor of the ship of state struggling on troubled waters was itself articulated in a variety of ways during the political storm of the late sixteenth century—ways that,

ethically speaking, variously implicated or exonerated the politician, poet or author. This chapter poses a series of questions concerning the difference between public and private spheres, the unique moral implications of civil war, and the author or poet's own position, be it personal, political or philosophical—or all three—with relation to what Montaigne calls 'cet universel naufrage du monde'. It traces the various ways in which the relationship between spectators and those on board is construed, and the kinds of action advocated for the aversion of disaster. Besides engaging directly in such debates, L'Hospital is a figure who returns later in the century, in Montaigne's *Essais*, as an example of how the shipwreck metaphor is used not only aesthetically, in attempts to articulate, make sense of and respond to the trauma of religious schism and civil war, but also ethically and practically as a means of engaging in, and changing, the course of debate.

In the fourth and final chapter, I examine the dynamics of shipwreck as played out in Renaissance travel writing. Through my reading of the work of Jean de Léry and the lesser-known Jean-Arnaud Bruneau de Rivedoux, I argue that in eyewitness or recently passed-on first-hand accounts of shipwreck, very real events were marked and shaped by the conventions established earlier in the century by allegorical, fictional and polemic shipwreck texts. But the particularly extreme conditions of shipwreck place great strain on these otherwise persistent tropes, and both Léry's and Bruneau's *Histoires* generate new incarnations of once-familiar figures. For example, Léry offers both a conventional narration of the storm at sea modelled on Psalm 107 and Erasmus's *Naufragium*, and, later, several rearranged versions that point to the limitations of proverbial, classical and biblical commonplace in such extraordinary circumstances. These texts, both written by Reformists intent on foregrounding their empirical approach, present the most forceful vindications of sea travel of all the texts in my corpus. While they describe vividly and

shockingly the suffering endured by seafarers and the victims of shipwreck, they also emphasise the value of such experience, and its power to affect even those who are spectators to it from dry land. This final chapter leads me to a more detailed consideration, in my Conclusion, of the dramatic potential of shipwreck.

Although, as I have set out here, each chapter stands alone and explores a particular grouping of texts, there are several threads of continuity that can be traced through the thesis as a whole. Over the course of the chapters certain key terms and oppositions emerge with remarkable consistency. The ‘folie’ that is the concern of the French versions of the ship of fools examined in Chapter One returns throughout my corpus, later becoming associated with a more stubborn sin, that of ‘opiniâtreté’, which repeatedly leads to men’s downfall in Bruneau’s *Histoire*. These kinds of unreason stand in opposition to the ‘prudence’ espoused and discussed by the authors of Chapter Three; this is a virtue that is already advocated in the early French ships of fools and their immediate descendants. The moral anxiety associated with seafaring is also repeatedly countered by authors who place value in the empirical experience afforded by exploration; as we will see, the figure of Pliny the Elder is central to this ongoing debate. Finally, shared by all of the chapters, and related to my discussion of commonplacing above, is a particular focus on the relationship between the ‘commun’ and the ‘particulier’—or, to put it another way, between the community and the individual. As I will show, the dynamics of co-operation are an increasingly central concern in Renaissance shipwreck texts.

Chapter One

‘Le naufrage de ce mortel monde’: Shipwreck and the *Nef*

I.1 Introduction

The most important symbolic ship inherited by the Renaissance from the late Middle Ages was the ship of fools, the vehicle for a moralising account of mankind’s folly. Sebastian Brant’s *Das Narren Schyff* (1494), published in Basel a little after the first accounts of journeys by Europeans to the New World, contains 112 chapters describing a ship or fleet of fools, wandering without rudder or direction on a journey doomed to end in shipwreck.¹ The ship of fools was, in the words of one nineteenth-century editor, ‘the rage of the reading world at the end of the fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth centuries’; as I will show in this chapter, it had a particularly vibrant afterlife in French literary culture.² In just a few years after the first Latin translation by Jacobus Locher (*Stultifera navis*, published in Basel in 1497) came a whole fleet of French *Nefs*: vernacular translations and re-imaginings of the ship of fools. Indeed, so popular were these moralising books that in the early sixteenth century the marker ‘Nef’ began to be used in other French titles, compendia whose subjects ranged from political counsel to the *querelle des femmes*. As we will see, French translators and authors singled out and drew upon particular aspects of the original, German, ship of fools, as mediated by the Latin; in each case they adapted the model to

¹ See Edwin Zeydel in Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools, Translated into Rhyming Couplets with an Introduction and Commentary by Edwin H. Zeydel* (New York: Dover Publications, 1944; repr. 1962), p. 15: ‘[the ship of fools] is destined to be drowned, and all the fools will drown, thus atoning for their thoughtless, foolish lives. This notion is expressed by Brant himself in his introduction to Locher’s Latin translation’.

² Alexander Barclay, *The Ship of Fools*, ed. by Thomas Hill Jamieson, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1874), vol. 1, p. ix. See also Aurelius Pompen, *The English Versions of the Ship of Fools: A Contribution to the History of the Early French Renaissance in England* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1925; repr. 1967), and Anne-Laure Metzger-Rambach, ‘Le texte emprunté’: étude comparée du *Narrenschiff* de Sebastian Brant et de ses adaptations (1494-1509) (Paris: Champion, 2008).

suit their new purposes by what might be referred to as ‘strong readings’ of the central metaphor.

The first French *Nef* was a translation from Locher’s Latin by Pierre Rivière: *La Nef des folz du monde*, published in Paris in the same year. Rivière’s verse was then ‘translated’ by Jean Drouyn into a prose version with the same title in 1498.³ The Latin and French titles of ‘translations’ inspired, respectively, the misogynist *Stultiferae naves* (c.1500) of Jodocus Badius and its French translation, also by Jean Drouyn, *La Nef des folles du monde* (1498). The popularity of these texts, and Badius’s innovation, moving away from the general theme of folly and particularising the subject of his text, was the precursor to two works by Symphorien Champier, the *Nef des princes* (1502) and the *Nef des dames vertueuses* (1503), both published in Lyon. These latter two *Nefs* are no longer concerned primarily with folly but offer political and marital advice to their readers. The last, and least Brant-like, *Nef* in the sequence considered in this chapter is *La nef de sante* (1507), a treatise on diet and health published by Nicolas de la Chesnaye.

The commercial success of Brant’s original text, published in Basel by Johann Bergmann von Olpe as a work of moral instruction, was greatly enhanced by the accompaniment of each chapter by a woodcut depicting the fool in question. Thanks to his experience as an editor and corrector of proofs, Brant was familiar with the processes of illustration, and closely oversaw the production of the woodcuts to his own writing.⁴ The Latin ‘translation’ used copies of these woodcuts, which were then also largely replicated in the French versions by Rivière and Drouyn, with new illustrations also being drawn up for the chapters added. Since these images were common to the German, Latin and French

³ A third, anonymous, French verse version appeared concurrently, in 1499 or 1500. For the sake of brevity and clarity, in this chapter I refer primarily to Rivière’s and Drouyn’s texts. Metzger-Rambach gives an account of all three, including the ‘Anonyme de Marnef’, in ‘*Le texte emprunté*’.

⁴ See Vera Sack, ‘Brant et l’image’, in *Sébastien Brant: 500^e anniversaire de La Nef des folz, 1494-1994* (Basel: C. Merian, c. 1994), p. 101.

versions of the ship of fools, and contributed to the popular appeal of these texts, in this chapter I refer to certain woodcuts, reproduced here as Figures 1-6.

This chapter is concerned, then, with the threat of shipwreck as explored in this particular group of texts, all published around the turn of the sixteenth century in France. As didactic works they give an early indication of the extent and the limits of moral anxiety associated not only with folly in a general sense but also, more specifically, with the folly of seafaring. Perhaps more interestingly still, they also form—as noted in my Introduction—a family of texts not examined either in this configuration or in such detail before. This ‘family’ demonstrates in significant ways the productive tensions generated by the overlapping metaphors of ship and book. Much has been written about Brant’s text and its ‘descendants’ with respect to madness or folly, the *querelle des femmes*, medical discourse or courtly tradition, but little sustained interest has been afforded to the other shared aspect of these texts: the ship itself.⁵ This very localised story of books explicitly marked in their titles as ships has, until now, not been told. Since discussion has been dominated by subject-matter and genre, the shared nautical element has often being regarded as, at best, a functional ancillary to the ‘content’ of the works, and at worst a

⁵ On the ‘ship of fools’, and the theme of folly more generally, the critical field is vast, but two items in particular have been useful: ‘Stultifera navis’ in Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*; André Gendre, *Humanisme et folie chez Sebastien Brant, Erasme et Rabelais: Vorträge des Aeneas-Silvius-Stiftung und der Universität Basel XIV* (Basel; Stuttgart: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1978). On Badius Ascensus and female folly, see Sharon Assaf, ‘The Ambivalence of the Sense of Touch in Early Modern Prints’, in *RR*, 29.1 (2005), 75-98; Olga Anna Duhl, ‘Vernacular Translation and the Sins of the Tongue: From Brant’s “Stultifera navis” (1494) to Droyn’s “La Nef des folles” (c. 1498)’, in *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 32 (Rochester: Camden House, 2007), 53-67; Yona Pinson, ‘Led by Eve: *The Large Ship of Female Fools and the Five Senses* (1498; 1500)’, in *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 26.2 (2010), 214-227; Paul White, ‘Foolish Pleasures: The *Stultiferae Naves* of Jodocus Badius Ascensius and the Poetry of Filippo Beroaldo the Elder’, in *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 60 (2011), 65-83. On Champier’s *Nef des princes* and *Nef des dames vertueuses*, see Roger Dubuis, ‘Symphorien Champier pédagogue, moraliste et poète’, *Actes du colloque sur l’humanisme lyonnais au XVI^e siècle (Mai 1972)* ([Grenoble]: Presses Universitaire de Grenoble, 1974), 23-40; Thomas Hunkeler, ‘Symphorien Champier: logique(s) du compilateur’ in *Littérature et médecine: approches et perspectives (XVI^e—XIX^e siècles)*, ed. by Andrea Carlino and Alexandre Wenger, ‘Recherches et rencontres’, 24 (Geneva: Droz, 2007), pp. 49-63; Judy Kem, ‘Symphorien Champier and Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cité des dames*’, *Romance Notes*, 45.2 (2005), 225-234; Jacques Roger, ‘L’Humanisme médical de Symphorien Champier’, in *L’Humanisme français au début de la Renaissance: colloque internationale de Tours* (Paris: Vrin, 1973), pp. 261-272; Helen Swift, *Gender, Writing and Performance: Men Defending Women in Late Medieval France, 1440-1538* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), pp. 176-181. Swift also refers to Chesnaye’s ‘La Condamnation des banquetz’, part of his *Nef de sante*, on p. 135 n. 102.

meretricious embellishment, hastily tacked-on by opportunistic writers or printers. I argue, on the contrary, that the success of *Nef* books at this time points to a certain aptness of the ship image for these authors' purposes, thanks both to its classical and biblical incarnations and to its contemporary significance as the means for discovery in the New World. The precise relation between what might be termed material 'ship culture' and the language used in the nautical imagery and allegory of these texts is, of course, hard to determine. But it is possible to get some measure of this by, for instance, observing the emergence of early accounts of New World voyages in the 'cargo' of the symbolic ships in question. By exploring the thematic interactions of these 'vehicles' with their 'tenors',⁶ I will argue against the prevailing separation of the material from the allegorical, and in so doing demonstrate the central role of the ship—as *nef*, *navire*, or *bateau*—in the thinking in these texts.

What is in question in the case of these *Nef* books, therefore, is not only a word history, but also a metaphor history. In his study of architectural metaphor, *Building the Text*, David Cowling explores the ways in which spatial analogy is used to organise and express knowledge and narrative in medieval and early modern texts.⁷ Drawing on cognitive metaphor theory, he cites Eva Feder Kittay in support: 'Metaphor can, through a transposition of relations, structure an as yet unstructured conceptual domain or reorder another semantic field, thereby altering, sometimes transiently, sometimes permanently, our ways of regarding our world.'⁸ Neil Kenny goes further in *The Palace of Secrets*, arguing that the pertinence of 'metaphorical edifices', and of Bérolalde de Verville's 'palace' in particular, is historically grounded: 'Architectural motifs are especially rich [...]. These fictional figures are far from ornamental: they are part of philosophy itself,

⁶ See I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: OUP, 1936; repr. 1965), Lecture 5, 'Metaphor', pp. 87-112 (especially pp. 96-101).

⁷ David Cowling, *Building the Text: Architecture as Metaphor in Late Medieval and Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). See especially the Introduction, pp. 1-22.

⁸ Eva Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 37.

since the *mentalité* of the Renaissance can only conceive of knowledge in spatial terms'.⁹ This very strong claim is borne out, to an extent, by the *Nef* books examined in this chapter. But the ship is a very particular kind of 'architectural' metaphor which —not least through the threat of shipwreck—places distinct strain on the organisational aspect of this kind of image, as I show.



Figure 1—'Concertation de vertus avecques volupté'
Jean Drouyn, *La Nef des folz* (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. Niii^v

The journeys of these ships are often closely associated with another moral journey, one that involves the choice between the path of virtue and that of vice, or 'volupté'. One of the several chapters added in Jacobus Locher's Latin translation to

⁹ Neil Kenny, *The Palace of Secrets: Béroalde de Verville and Renaissance Conceptions of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Chapter 5, 'Fiction and Philosophy', pp. 158-209 (pp. 160-161). For an argument for the productivity of 'ornament' in Renaissance texts, see Chapter 1 in Rowan Tomlinson, *Inventive Inventories: Literature and Natural History in Renaissance France*, forthcoming, OUP.

Brant's original composition is the 'Concertatio Virtutis cum Voluptate', rendered in French by Drouyn as the 'Concertacion de vertus avecques volupte'; the woodcut shows a man dreaming of a forked path leading either to 'dame vertus' or 'vile voluptuosite' (Fig. 1). What the ship image adds to the idea of the journey through life is the spatial sense of a vessel, containing the knowledge offered by the compendium. The threat of shipwreck, aligned with vice, also implies the structural breakdown of the vessel, and the ensuing loss of that knowledge. As this chapter shows, the family of ship-books triangulate the organisational structuring of the architectural metaphors examined by Cowling and Kenny with the ancient and powerful metaphor of life as a journey, moralised in pre-Reform Christian tradition as one leading to either heaven, purgatory, or hell.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is the most vivid example of this trifold journey; the voyager-narrator, who himself likens his unique journey into the realm of the dead to shipwreck survival ('Inferno', Canto I, lines 22-27), is guided through hell by Virgil, who in turn relates the shipwreck of Ulysses. Though the narrator and Ulysses are connected by their shared association with shipwreck, as John Freccero shows, the two shipwrecks are of different orders:

[The] distinction between the two kinds of death is useful in explaining the difference between the natural death of Ulysses, largely irrelevant to Dante, and the death by shipwreck which he devised. The first is an organic fact of the body, but the second is a shipwreck of the soul, which can happen at any time and which, while there is life and grace, can be survived. [...] Virgil's question, 'how, when you were lost [*perduto*], did you arrive at death,' most likely refers to Ulysses' damnation, of which drowning is merely the figure, as it was for the fathers of the Church ever since St. Ambrose.¹⁰

The shipwreck of the body is inescapable and unsurvivable for all mortals (Dante's narrator being the notable exception), but it is the second, spiritual shipwreck that interests first Dante, and then Brant and his imitators. For perdition, or damnation, is represented by

¹⁰ John Freccero, *Dante and the Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 148-149.

drowning; Dante describes the ‘Inferno’ as ‘la prima canzon, ch’è de’ sommersi’¹¹ [‘this first canticle—of the submerged’].¹² Salvation, through shipwreck survival, is the alternative to be striven for, as we will see later in the ships of fools.

While Blackmore writes in *Manifest Perdition* that ‘[i]n the image of the shipwreckful ship pulses a collective anxiety about the inescapable proximity to, and negotiation of, the sea’,¹³ in the didactic allegorical works explored in this chapter, the anxieties articulated through the threat of shipwreck include moral failings, gender roles, political downfall and ill health. This chapter tells the story of the family of *Nef* books, as the marker ‘Nef’ moves across linguistic and generic boundaries, being shaped and reshaped according to context, with the ship always providing a structure for these books’ moral frameworks.

Over the course of less than two decades, the extended metaphor of the ship and the associated allegory of the sea journey threatened by shipwreck undergo a series of changes. As the material element of the original compound metaphor is enlarged, embellished, or reduced by each author in turn, so nuances of nauticality emerge among this ‘family’ of texts. The presentation of knowledge within the books, coupled with the navigational allegory, tells part of the story of the shifting status of curiosity in the period;¹⁴ through the competing impulses of the thirst for exploration and the ever-present possibility of shipwreck, the pleasure, profit or danger of reading and interpretation are mapped and elaborated. As this chapter shows, while the forerunners of this family of texts

¹¹ Dante Alighieri, *Commedia*, ed. by Emilio Pasquini and Antonio Quaglio ([Milan]: Garzanti, 1987), ‘Inferno’, pp. 43-340, canto XX, line 3, p. 205.

¹² Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Allen Mandelbaum (New York; London; Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 141.

¹³ Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition*, p. 6.

¹⁴ As Kenny has explained, ‘whereas from antiquity through the sixteenth century curiosity had most often—but not always—been a vice’, by the seventeenth century the balance had begun to shift to the opposite side; ‘it was often morally neutral or positive’. *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), Introduction, pp. 1-24 (p. 4).

are concerned with the spiritual fate of their readers, later incarnations of the *Nef* have more worldly, and particularly more bodily, objectives.

I.2 The *Nef(s) des Folz*

I.2.i ‘Comme pelerins navigans de ung pays en autre’: Negotiating translation and allegory in the prologues

The ship of fools underwent a long series of metamorphoses, as the *Narren Schyff* was loosely translated first into Latin, and then into French as well as several other vernaculars. In her comparative study, Anne-Laure Metzger-Rambach provides a publication history of the text and its adaptations, in German, Latin, French, English and Flemish, and draws up a ‘généalogie des *Nefs*’, showing the chronology and interweaving influences between the texts.¹⁵

The conceptual boundaries between translation and adaptation are difficult to make out; the text shrinks and grows, the order, length and number of chapters varies, and accordingly, with each new version, a different emphasis is produced.¹⁶ Even in the first Latin ‘translation’ by Jacobus Locher—*Stultifera navis* (1497), overseen and approved by Brant—the German source text is rather abridged, and its emphasis changed: ‘It has been calculated that Brant wrote 7034 lines and Locher 5672, but hardly a third part of Brant’s ideas can be traced in the Latin, and certainly not more than a tenth part of his grimmest sarcasm.’¹⁷ With this in mind, Metzger-Rambach refers not to translators, but to ‘adaptateurs’ and ‘auteurs en seconde’; each new version has its role to play in the shaping and reshaping of the ship-book tradition. I will argue in this chapter that the first French

¹⁵ See Metzger-Rambach, ‘*Le texte emprunté*’, ‘Présentation du corpus’, pp. 21–36, and Fig. 1, p. 42.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, Chapter 4: ‘L’art et la manière de traduire’, pp. 115–133.

¹⁷ Pompen, *The English Versions of the Ship of Fools*, p. 308.

Nefs, in changing the metaphorical emphasis of the text, paved the way for the later, particularised *Nefs* that followed.

Over the course of these multiple stages of adaptation, there occurred an increasing nauticalisation of Brant's original idea, as observed by Metzger-Rambach:

Chez Brant, le navire est essentiellement un coque immobile qui permet de réunir les fous, et il faut attendre les dernier chapitres du livre pour qu'elle prenne toute sa force symbolique [...]. L'attrait pour le motif introduit par le savant strasbourgeois se traduit ainsi par une évocation plus fréquente de la nef mais aussi par une évocation plus précise: [...] [l]es adaptateurs, tels des armateurs, prennent en effet la peine d'organiser et de préciser l'espace intérieur et extérieur de la nef: elle apparaît dotée de ses gréements.¹⁸

The 'translation' from one language to another, and from version to version, not only transforms the tone and emphasis of the work (with, broadly speaking, the emphasis moving from the 'folz' to their 'nef'), but also, as a result, triggers a metamorphosis of the metaphorical framework itself. Over the course of this chapter we will see how the *Nef* is first imbued by Rivière and Drouyn with additional nautical detail, and then returns gradually to something more like Metzger-Rambach's 'coque immobile'; 'nef', predominantly associated with symbolic usage, becomes detached from its material context, where it is replaced by 'navire'. Meanwhile, the significance of shipwreck in the *Nef* books is transformed from the metaphysical to the medical, matrimonial or political.

Brant's concern is with alerting each reader to his own sin, and urging him to mend his ways and to adhere to the true faith in order to be saved. In this sense, the ship of fools can be seen as a response to some lines of Psalm 107, which feature on the frontispiece of Brant's text:

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to heaven, they go down again into the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that

¹⁸ Metzger-Rambach, *Le texte emprunté*, pp. 363-364. See also pp. 356-358 on the steadily increasing number of instances of the ship image in the versions of Locher, Rivière and Drouyn.

the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. (Psalm 107. 23-30)

For Brant and his adaptors, the book is intended to function as a mirror, in the sense that any reader who cares to look into it will find themselves reflected in it, and will amend their behaviour accordingly: ‘Folz mondains, mires vous bien en mon mirouer, et vous verres vous faultes et pechez, et patemment vous cognoistres comment folie vous gouverne’.¹⁹ The idea of a mirror-book is a medieval one, exemplified by the tradition of *Fürstenspiegel* or *principum specula*: ‘mirrors’ offering counsel to princes and kings on how to govern well.²⁰ The ‘mirror’ of the ship of fools expands on the genre, insisting that we are all guilty of folly. In his contribution to the preface of the Latin translation by Jacobus Locher, Brant adds weight to the threat of shipwreck, reminding the reader that all are doomed to drown.²¹ This inescapable shipwreck would seem to correlate with that of the body, while the threat of spiritual shipwreck is the ill to which Brant’s text—along with those that follow it—purports to be the cure. The folly of this tradition is distinct from ‘madness’ in the sense we understand today: ‘À l’origine, le fou, le “Narr”, n’est pas le malade mental au sens que le clinique donne aujourd’hui à ce terme; “Narr” n’équivaut pas à “toll”, à “wahnsinnig”. Le fou de la Renaissance est celui qui s’écarte de la sagesse divine révélée par l’Ecriture.’²² Perhaps unsurprisingly, given Brant’s religious orthodoxy and evident zeal for correcting his reader, he makes no mention of any pleasure to be found in reading. The ship itself is conceived of as a logical and useful organising framework rather than a pleasurable addition that might, conceivably, risk becoming a distraction from the profitable message.

¹⁹ Jean Drouyn, *La Nef des folz* (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. Aiv^v.

²⁰ For more on this tradition, see *Le Prince au miroir de la littérature politique de l’Antiquité aux Lumières*, ed. by Frédérique Lachaud and Lydwine Scordia (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2007).

²¹ Jacobus Locher, *Stultifera navis, auctore Sebastiano Brant* (Paris: G. de Marnef, 1498), fol. VI^v. On Brant’s contributions to the Latin translation, see Metzger-Rambach, *Le texte emprunté*, p. 79-81.

²² Gendre, *Humanisme et folie*, p. 6.

The multiple transformations undergone by Brant's original text leave their trace in the form of a layering of prologues, forming a kind of prefatory Russian doll; Drouyn's prologue is followed by his translation of Locher's prologue, and finally his translation of Locher's translation of Brant's prologue. This twice-translated authorial introduction is prescriptive in tone:

Se aulcuns folz se mocquent de noz petitz escriptz, pource que plusieurs folz y sont comprins, ils ont lentendement petit: car le sens litteral nest pas le principal de la matiere[.] Telles gens sont comme ceulx qui cuident menger les amandes sans casser: car a qui veult en un noyau trouver saveur, il le faut briser, et alors on trouvera la saveur, aussy qui en ce livre veult trouver prouffit arrester se doit au sens moral qui est de folie couvert[.]²³

Readers of Rabelais might find themselves intrigued by what sounds like an antecedent to the doctrine of the 'sustantificque mouelle';²⁴ Brant, translated by Locher and then Drouyn, enjoins his reader to pass beyond the first, literal, sense: 'arrester se doit au sens moral'. This separating out of different senses, or ways of reading, is grounded in medieval exegetical tradition:

Following Quintilian, medieval writers [...] elaborated four levels of allegorical interpretation to be used in the study of the Bible: the *literal*, or historical; the *allegorical*, or spiritual; the *tropological*, or moral; and the *anagogical*, or mystical. In the New Testament story of Christ's raising of Lazarus from the dead, for example, the medieval exegete would recognize first that on the literal level, the story is a record of an event that actually took place. On the allegorical level, the story prefigures Christ's death, descent into hell, and resurrection. On the tropological level, it represents the sacrament of Penance, whereby the individual soul is raised from the death of sin. And on the anagogical level, it portrays the resurrection of the body after the Last Judgement.²⁵

It seems significant, then, that two senses are absent from Brant's injunction: the second (allegorical, or sometimes 'typological', in which events or persons of the Old Testament are seen to prefigure those in the New Testament) and fourth (anagogical) modes of

²³ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. [aiv]^v.

²⁴ François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 7: 'vous convient estre saiges pour fleurir, sentir et estimer ces beaulx livres de haulte gresse, legiers au prochaz: et hardiz à la rencontre. Puis par curieuse leçon, et meditation frequente rompre l'os, et sugger la sustantificque mouelle'. Further references to this edition will be given as page references, between parentheses, in the main body of my text.

²⁵ Vincent B. Leitch (ed.), in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd edn (New York; London: Norton, 2010), 'Introduction', pp. 1-33 (p. 9). See also Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), Chapter 8, 'Allegoria and Theoria', pp. 161-185.

allegorical reading. We might read this reflexive form of ‘arreste’ as prescribing simply an emphasis on the moral sense, to the exclusion of the others.²⁶ But if we understand the four modes of reading as forming a progression, and take ‘arreste’ to mean ‘stop’, the demarcation of acceptable interpretations becomes still more precise: by implication, only the anagogical reading is proscribed; the typological sense, like the literal sense, ‘n’est pas le principal de la matiere’, but is allowed to remain present. Some critical readings have drawn primarily on such a typological interpretation. We will return to such a reading later in this chapter.

Drouyn’s own prologue is markedly more flexible in its outlook: ‘qui voudra le sens moral le prendra, qui voudra le sens litteral le prendra: comme dit esopet, qui veut la fleur sy la preigne, qui veut le fruict sy le preigne, et qui veult le noyau sy le preigne [...]: et qui veult tout preigne tout’.²⁷ But the potentially diverting force of the ship metaphor does become an express concern in the French versions, along with promises of ‘prouffit’ which seek to minimise the danger.²⁸ For both Pierre Rivière and Jean Drouyn, having expanded the nautical aspects of the original text, go further than Brant; they make explicit the significance of each element of the allegory, and in so doing articulate an anxiety about the divergent possibilities of interpretation that expands on Brant’s original concern that his subject-matter be taken seriously. In Drouyn’s text in particular, where each chapter opens with an invitation to the reader to step on board—and to be quick about it—the call for this kind of guidance is most evident. In his prologue, Drouyn foregrounds the structuring nautical allegory, and—in order to ward off the threat of distraction, diversion,

²⁶ Randle Cotgrave’s 1610 dictionary offers: ‘s’arreste. To stay, rest, stop at, abide in, a place; also, to pause on; also, to resolve’. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Adam Islip, 1611).

²⁷ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. aii^r. The alignment of Brant with Aesop is an innovation by Locher: see Metzger-Rambach, ‘*Le texte emprunté*’, p. 100. Metzger-Rambach (p. 23) also gives details of Brant’s edition, with commentary, of Aesop’s fables, in 1501.

²⁸ See Metzger-Rambach, ‘*Le texte emprunté*’, Chapter 3, ‘Pour que la substance de ce livre soit profitable’, pp. 77-111.

and interpretative shipwreck—guides the reader’s interpretation of it: ‘Par la navire nous pouvons entendre les folyes et erreurs ou les mondains sont [...], les folz estant en la navire, sont les pecheurs, car nous sommes en ce monde comme pelerins navigans de ung pays en autre [...]: nous serons remuneres au port de salut’.²⁹ With this initial guidance in place, the disaster that seemed inevitable for Brant’s fools appears avoidable, as Drouyn paints the ‘utilité’ of the *Nef*’s contents as a means of avoiding spiritual shipwreck:

[O]n y peult trouver bonnes et saluberres doctrines contenues tant en la sainte pagine, que es oeuvres des saintz et prophetes, des loix et des decretz et dictz des saintz peres: lesquelz ont sy bien navigue en ce monde quilz sont venuz a bon port qui est la gloire eternelle, a laquelle nous vueille conduire le pere, le filz, et le saint esperit.³⁰

The correctional value of Brant’s original text is consolidated, through explicit reference to the imagery of the sea journey, in the prospect of safe arrival at the ‘port de salut’. The alternative—shipwreck and perdition—is nonetheless contemplated in later chapters, as I show below.

1.2.ii ‘Souffrons perilz enormes et soudains’: The folly of navigation and the *Nauffraige des folz*

Besides the spiritual significance of shipwreck outlined above, Brant’s choice of nautical metaphor has broader resonance. In the introduction to his 1944 verse translation of Brant’s text, Edwin Zeydel traces the various medieval models for the idea of a ship of fools, including the allegorical interpretation of St Ursula’s ship.³¹ The secular textual precedents, based on ‘the idea of placing careless livers, rakes, drinkers, and the like together on a ship’,³² included *Renart le Nouvel* (1288) by Jacquemart Gielée, *Das schif*

²⁹ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. aii^r.

³⁰ Ibid., sig. aii^r.

³¹ Zeydel, in Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, ‘Introduction II: The antecedents and genesis of the *Narrenschiff*’, pp. 8-15.

³² Ibid., p. 12.

der flust (c. 1360) by Heinrich Turner, and Jacob van Oestvoren's *Die blauwe schute* (1413). The theme was then taken up in the *Monopolium et societas vulgo des Liechtschiffs*, 'a humorous academic oration, delivered in Latin from a platform built in the style of a ship, by Jodocus Gallus in Heidelberg some time in the late 1480s at a meeting presided over by Brant's friend Wimpheling',³³ the text of which was published in Strasbourg in 1489.

Michel Foucault has argued that the roots of the relationship between fools and ships are also grounded in traditional cultural associations. In the opening chapter of his *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, he explores the significance of the ship in relation to medieval and early modern notions of madness: 'l'eau et la folie sont liées pour longtemps dans le rêve de l'homme européen'.³⁴ In particular, he describes records of medieval Northern Europeans packing off local madmen on boats passing through by river, to be transported abroad. For Foucault, this journey is one of literal and metaphorical imprisonment and isolation, and as such it is symptomatic of attitudes towards madness at the time:

[C]onfier le fou à des marins, c'est éviter à coup sûr qu'il ne rôde indéfiniment sous les murs de la ville, c'est s'assurer qu'il ira loin, c'est le rendre prisonnier de son propre départ. Mais à cela, l'eau ajoute la masse obscure de ses propres valeurs; elle emporte, mais elle fait plus, elle purifie; et puis la navigation livre l'homme à l'incertitude du sort; là chacun est confié à son propre destin, tout embarquement est, en puissance, le dernier.³⁵

The isolation and distantiation of fools is a purpose commonly attributed to Brant's ship. But Foucault's reading of the ship of fools here is itself performed, as it were, from a distance, since close engagement with the text itself reveals that in fact the ship of fools refuses any possible separation between the reader and the community of foolish subjects on board, as we saw earlier in this chapter. The impact of the association between madness

³³ Zeydel, in Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, p. 12.

³⁴ Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, p. 22. See also Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident*, pp. 31-42; Marie-Christine Gomez-Geraud, 'La mer: un espace hors-la-loi?'

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

and the sea does not therefore extend to the moral framework of the allegorical ship—or rather, it is not used in distinction to any negative corollary: for the authors writing in the ship of fools tradition, we are all fools, and always already at sea. Furthermore, while it is true that ‘la navigation livre l’homme à l’incertitude du sort’, there is an important distinction of type to be made between the river journey described in Foucault’s ship of fools (‘la Nef des fous, étrange bateau ivre qui file le long des calmes fleuves de la Rhénanie et des canaux flamands’)³⁶ and the dangers inherent in longer sea journeys. Foucault’s reading in ‘Stultifera navis’ understates the fundamental importance of shipwreck to the moral framework of these texts. As I show below, the *Nef des folz* is threatened with shipwreck on the open seas; potential disaster is a crucial feature of the book’s purpose of instruction.

While the tradition described by Foucault may have contributed to the aptness of the ship metaphor to the subject of folly, its bearing on the family of *Nefs* that becomes established in France is in fact fairly limited. I contend that the intersection of contemporary nautical, historical, and cultural discourses in these books is a function less of the navigation of fools than of the folly of navigation. The problematic connotation of the ship lies in what Hans Blumenberg calls ‘a frivolous, if not blasphemous moment [...], on a par with an offense against the invulnerability of the earth’.³⁷ In pagan as well as Christian tradition, seafaring is equated with a sacrilegious lust for knowledge beyond the natural reach of mankind, of the same kind that drove Eve to take a bite of the forbidden fruit, or Dante’s Ulysses to attempt to sail past the Pillars of Hercules.³⁸ The shipwreck, then, is only the natural consequence of such folly: ‘When the sea throws itself against the

³⁶ Foucault, *Histoire de la foile*, p. 18.

³⁷ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 10. See also my Introduction.

³⁸ ‘Inferno’, Canto XXVI, 90-142, in particular 94-99: ‘neither my fondness for my son nor pity | for my old father nor the love I owed | Penelope, which would have gladdened her, | was able to defeat in me the longing | I had to gain experience of the world | and of the vices and the worth of men.’ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, pp. 172-173.

fragile vessel, it is only protecting the original division established by the gods' wisdom and overleaped by human pride'.³⁹ It is striking that Brant published his *Narren Schyff* just two years after Columbus's first voyage to the New World, and more notable still when we consider that Brant's printer, Bergmann von Olpe, published the Latin translation of Columbus's letter on the newly discovered islands as early as 1493, the year before the *Narren Schyff* appeared.⁴⁰ In Brant's chapter on the folly of 'experiencing all lands' there is a brief, oblique mention of the new discoveries;⁴¹ but it is in Rivière's and Drouyn's French translations that the moral stakes of contemporary navigation find the greatest prominence.

³⁹ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ 'On March 14, 1493, Columbus wrote a Spanish letter of about 3500 words on the newly discovered islands in the 'Indian Sea', addressed originally to Luis de Santangel but in later editions to the royal Spanish treasurer, Lord Gabriel Sanchez [...]. This was translated into Latin by Leander de Cosco under the title *De Insulis in Mari Indico nuper inventis*. Seventeen editions of the letter were published before 1500, and, remarkably enough, two of these by Brant's own Basel publisher and friend Bergmann von Olpe.' Edwin Zeydel, 'Sebastian Brant and the Discovery of America', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 42.3 (1943), 410-411 (p. 410).

⁴¹ Brant's nineteenth-century German editor Friedrich Zarncke believed that it was only after the publication of Jodocus Gallus's satirical 'sermon' that Brant added his nautical theme to the text. See Jean-Marie Fritz, 'L'Eau et la folie au Moyen Age', in *Sébastien Brant: 500^e anniversaire de La Nef des folz, 1494-1994*, pp. 112-116, (p. 115, n. 1). It seems at least as likely that Columbus's letter might have played its part in this choice, particularly given the moral tension with regards to navigation and curiosity explored here.



Figure 2—‘De celluy qui veult describe et senquerir de toutes regions’
Jean Drouyn, *La Nef des folz du monde* (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. Hii^v

The woodcut accompanying the chapter—the same in the German, Latin and French versions—shows a foolish geometer, measuring a diagram of the earth with his compasses (Fig. 2). At the beginning of the chapter in Drouyn’s text, this fool ‘est remply de folye et tire a nostre nef voulant compasser tout le monde dung compass bien petit pour comprendre climatz, regions, et tous les peuples’.⁴² The metaphorical framework of the text is thus threatened with hijack as one of the fools on board seeks to steer it away from a moral, timeless, trajectory towards a real, contemporary voyage of discovery. This is the moment where the metaphorical *Nef* is most closely associated with its material

⁴² Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. Hiii^r.

counterparts, and is tainted by their problematic moral status. Whereas in Brant's text this chapter consists mostly of a long list of bygone fools (including Archimedes, Ptolemy, Pliny, and Strabo), the French versions, following the model of Jacobus Locher's Latin translation, contract the list of ancient fools and expand the formerly brief mention of recent discoveries. From four lines of verse in the Latin version are generated twelve in Rivière's French, which are then re-imagined in Drouyn's prose *Nef*:

Antea quæ fuerat priscis incognita tellus:
 Exposita est oculis et manifesta patet.
 Hersperiae occiduæ rex Ferdinandus: in alto
 Aequoræ nunc gentes repperit innumeras.⁴³

La terre qui fut incogneue
 Des prisces que hom navoit cogneue
 Fut elle pas magestee
 A loueil combien que avoit estee
 Long temps dom sans estre apparceue
 Or maintenant est elle sceue
 Sans molestacion de cueur
 Et si aucun hom ne ly cueur
 Ne tira voil a desarroy
 Avant ferdinandus le roy
 Sur mer neantmoins sont astables
 Et gens quasi innumerales[.]⁴⁴

La terre qui fut incogneue. Des pristres que jamais navoit este manifeste ne fut elle pas
 trouvee a loeil et sans molestation de cueur[.] Il fut ung qui cogneut que es illes despaignes
 avoit gens habitables[.] Il vint au roy nomme ferdinandus lequel luy bailla aide tellement
 quilz trouverent aulcunes isles de gens qui nentendoyent riens touchant dieu nostre
 createur. Et navoyent reigles ne loix mais vivoyent comme bestes.⁴⁵

In both cases the central question of knowledge and ignorance is repeatedly flagged up in the play of 'cogneue' and 'incogneue'; in Rivière's verse this is compounded by further language of witness ('apparceue' and 'sceue'). The positioning of this anecdote is important in shaping any moral reading of the chapters on 'celluy qui veult descrire et senquerir de toutes regions'. Whereas in Brant's German text the (unnamed) explorer is

⁴³ Locher, *Stultifera navis*, fp. LXXVI^v.

⁴⁴ Pierre Rivière, *La Nef des folz du monde* (Paris: Jean Lambert for Geoffroy de Marnef and Jean Philippe Manstener, 1497), fp. 59^v.

⁴⁵ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. Hiii^r. We note that Rivière's lines including the mysterious word 'dom' are omitted by Drouyn.

one of many fools listed, given no prominent position within the enumeration, the French texts build up to and conclude with their contemporary example of folly. Pierre Rivière describes the current vogue for exploration in pejorative terms: ‘ne tira voil a desarroy’, ‘[s]ur mer neantmoins sont astables’ (hastiness being a characteristic commonly attributed to the fool). Drouyn’s prose version, by contrast, does not frame the example of the unnamed Columbus in such explicitly condemnatory terms: Rivière’s ominous ‘astables’ and ‘innumerables’ are echoed only by Drouyn’s neutral ‘habitables’.

In Brant’s original German, as well as in the translations, sailing and exploring are explicitly equated with folly or sin. But Drouyn’s sensationalist reporting of giant fish⁴⁶ and strange people ‘qui nentendoyent riens touchant dieu nostre createur’, and ‘vivoyent comme bestes’, even as it implies moral condemnation, also bears witness to a rather problematic sense of wonder and curiosity even within this moralising text. While, as we have seen, the liminary material in the books promotes their instructive moral value, further strategies are employed to frame and, effectively, to constrain the interpretation of the ships of fools. In Locher’s Latin adaptation, and the two French texts that follow it, marginal annotations appear, referring the reader sometimes to philosophical texts, but mostly to Biblical passages.⁴⁷ This circumscription is symptomatic of a broader unresolved tension, expressed through the language of navigation in the French texts in the *Nef* family, between man’s desire for wisdom on the one hand and his insufficient capacity for it on the other.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The appearance of ‘pristes’ (‘A kind of Whall, or huge fish, whose snowt is verie long, and notched like a Saw’, according to Randle Cotgrave) in Drouyn’s text would seem to be the result of an odd (but perhaps ironically appropriate) series of metamorphoses through the process of translation: Jacob Locher’s Latin version uses the adjective ‘priscis’ (priscus, -a, -um: ancient, antique or former, previous) in reference to previous ignorance of the newly discovered lands, which Pierre Rivière nominalises to ‘priscas’ (perhaps to be understood as prizes or rewards), which is finally read by Drouyn as ‘pristes’.

⁴⁷ See Metzger-Rambach, *‘Le texte emprunté’*, Chapter 6, ‘La parole médiatrice: Commentaire et métadiscours dans les *Nefs*’, pp. 179-219, especially pp. 180-183.

⁴⁸ We note that Brant placed a translation of the pseudo-Virgilian poem *Vir bonus* (‘Der vis man’) at the end of his German text, by way of an alternative model to the examples of folly described and decried in the previous chapters.

Contemporary accounts of navigation are not the only ones whose role seems to shift in the French texts' discussion of 'celuy qui veult descrire et senquerir de toutes regions'. Ancient authority is reframed in terms of another contemporary debate centred around the person of Pliny the Elder, the natural historian whose scientific curiosity led him to make his fateful last journey by sea towards the erupting Vesuvius, believing that 'fortes fortuna iuvat' ('fortune favours the brave'). In Brant's text, Pliny's name may be found amidst the list of geometers, mathematicians and cosmographers who are mocked for their attempts to measure the size of the Earth. Locher's Latin version summarises this argument with the enigmatic statement 'Plinius erravit', thus transforming—or perhaps expanding—the moral framing of the ambition to measure and record of which Pliny is made the archetype. Alongside a moral indictment of curiosity, we now find a factual contestation of the results of that thirst for knowledge; evidence of a humanist debate that had begun to unfurl in Italy.

In an article on Antoine du Pinet's sixteenth-century vernacular translation of Pliny, Tomlinson describes 'the controversy that broke out at the end of the fifteenth century over Pliny's errors', which was played out in an 'exchange between the professor of moral philosophy and practical medicine at Ferrara, Niccolò Leonicensi, and the jurist and historian Pandolfo Collenuccio':

Leonicensi's opening shot [...] appeared in December 1492, a month after the *Castigationes Pliniana*, Ermolao Barbaro's influential critique of the sorry textual state of the *Natural History*. But where Barbaro attributed the almost 5,000 errors he claimed to be purging not to Pliny himself but to sluggish scribes and careless editors and printers [...], the errors Leonicensi flagged were not explained merely as lapses in transmission but were put down to Pliny's own shortcomings, both philological (he had misunderstood Greek nomenclature and botched his Latin translations) and methodological (he had failed to complement textual research and compilation with the authority of observation and experience). Shockingly, in the eyes of a defender of the text such as Collenuccio in his *Pliniana defensio adversus Nicolai Leonicensi accusationem* (Ferrara, 1493), Leonicensi's treatise called in question Pliny's very credibility as an authority on nature.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Tomlinson, "'Plusieurs choses qu'il n'avoit veuës': Antoine Du Pinet's Translation of Pliny the Elder (1562)", *Translation and Literature*, 21 (2012), 145-161 (pp. 146-147). For a more detailed account of the controversy, see Arturo Castiglioni, 'The School of Ferrara and the Controversy on Pliny', in *Science, Medicine, and History: Essays on the Evolution of Scientific Thought and Medical Practice Written in*

In Rivière's and Drouyn's *Nefs*, Pliny is at once held to be a great authority and the author of flawed work: 'O fol geometrien dy moy pourquoy as tu sy grant souccy de comprendre telles choses. [...] Veulx tu faire plus que plinius: qui fit son livre de ceste science, il estoit grant clerc mais encores il y mist plusieurs erreurs.'⁵⁰ Their texts, first published in Paris and Lyon respectively, demonstrate the ripples spreading from the humanist debate in Ferrara.

Rather than dismissing Pliny on the grounds of his moral error, Leonicensio was interested in correcting him factually: 'The criticisms turn on the correctness of the definitions. The whole discussion is therefore—especially in the first edition of the book—chiefly philological'.⁵¹ But in order to claim that Pliny erred, further investigation was needed, and carried out, as Brian Ogilvie has shown: 'Explicit references to particular observations and activities dispel any suspicion that these appeals to experience were merely rhetorical figures.'⁵² The criticism of Pliny, which began in Brant's text as part of the enumeration of folly, and in particular a denunciation of curiosity, is, then, transformed by emergent humanist debates; in time, it comes to suggest a stance of questioning authority, and the adopting of an *ad fontes* approach. As such, it replays, in a moralised nautical register, a broader movement underway, as 'From the criticism of the texts, which had its origin in the School of Ferrara, there arose criticism of the scholastic doctrines themselves.'⁵³ But the metaphorical coupling of intellectual and geographical exploration, which is seen in this 'geometer' chapter but is also more broadly foregrounded by the growing emphasis on the nautical in the journey from *Narren Schyff* to *Nef des folz*,

Honour of Charles Singer, ed. by Edgar Ashworth Underwood, 2 vols (Oxford, 1953), vol. 1, pp. 269-279; Brian Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 30-34, 121-133.

⁵⁰ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. Hiii^r.

⁵¹ Castiglioni, 'The School of Ferrara', p. 272.

⁵² Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing*, p. 129.

⁵³ Castiglioni, 'The School of Ferrara', p. 278.

generates a degree of moral anxiety. It is this anxiety that underscores the tension concerning the allegorical framework of the texts in the family of *Nefs*; the threat, alluded to earlier, of readerly diversion, leading to shipwreck.

The threat of actual, rather than interpretative, shipwreck, is explored in the chapter on ‘La nef latine ou barque sociale’, whose destination is Schlaraffia, the land of milk and honey, or ‘Coquaine’ in French. Drouyn describes the fools’ ship being tossed on stormy seas: ‘Souffrons [...] perilz enormes et soudains, en mer sans esperance de vivre, en passant alant venant de ca de la sans craindre en rien le grant peril de scilla, ou celluy de caribdis, mais nous comme indiscretz a regir la nef cheons en grans pertes’.⁵⁴ The chapter ends with a plea to the other fools on board: ‘garden que neptun ne englutisse voz navires et pierrisses a tout jamais’.⁵⁵ Metzger-Rambach has identified in this chapter an enrichment of the basic metaphorical framework of the fools’ journey: ‘parallèlement à la menace du jugement toujours présent dans les *Nefs*, le naufrage, destruction du navire par voie d’eau, met l’accent sur d’autres craintes que celle des tortures de l’enfer’.⁵⁶ Drouyn’s enumeration of the perils besides that of drowning (including ‘daufins’, ‘syrenes’, and ‘ciclopes’), echo those Mediterranean dangers that formerly loomed in the *Odyssey*, and which were alluded to even in Brant’s text. This multiplication of deadly obstacles enriches and further nauticalises the basic spiritual metaphor of drowning, which, as we have seen already, was a trend continued and expanded by the first French adaptors of the ship of fools.

In 1529, the ‘shipwreckful’ potential of the ship of fools became more prominent still, in a new French prose translation based on Locher’s Latin version, printed both in Paris (by Philippe Le Noir and Denis Janot) and Lyon (by François Juste). Mireille

⁵⁴ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. [Nvi]^{r-v}.

⁵⁵ Ibid., sig. [Nvi]^v.

⁵⁶ Metzger-Rambach, ‘*Le texte emprunté*’, p. 370. On pp. 371-372, the author sets out Brant’s redeployment of the Cyclops as a means to convince his reader to reform their ways.

Huchon, pointing to Juste's later publication of Rabelais and tracing the *poitevin* connections between Rabelais and Jean Bouchet (whose earlier plan to produce a French version of Locher's text was in the end completed by his friend Pierre Rivière), raises the possibility that this later *Nef des folz* might have been a collaborative project between the latter pair.⁵⁷ The full title of this new adaptation echoes earlier promises of pleasure and instruction, while making more explicit than ever before the text's purpose as a tool for moral discernment and as a guide to the right spiritual path:

Sensuyt la grant nef des folz du Monde en laquelle chacun homme saige prenant plaisir de lire les passaiges des histoires dicelle moralement et brievement exposées trouvera et cognoistra plusieurs manieres de folz et aussi pourra discerner entre bien et mal et separer vice et peche davec vertu a eulx contraire qui est ung œuvre excellente pour mener lhome en voye de salut.

In the 'barque sociale' chapter of this version, the threat of shipwreck is considered in closer detail even than before, as sin is linked directly with the potential for fragmentation: 'Touteffoys plusieurs discrimes vices et pechiez nous gectent en la mer grande tumide et enflee tant que leaue frape a grande roideur contre les borts du navire dont les pieces romproyent soudainement se elles nestoyent doubles'.⁵⁸ What is more, the metaphorical link between shipwreck and perdition is confirmed in an exhortation to the reader to abandon the folly of seafaring:

O miserables sodaulx, que nous prouffitte errer et tant adonner noz cuers aux vices en follies. Ostez les en et plus tost querez avecques pie stabile et ferme les rives de la mer et la terre ferme sans vous bouter ou grand dangier, affin que les monstres neptuniens ne ravissent point vos fragilles certaines et petites nacelles, que leaue de la mer aussi ne absorbis point et succombe noz nefes. Cestadire que les vanitez de ce monde ne corrompent point nos cuers noz sens et noz entendemens qui sont les nacelles qui vous conduisent aux vens et tempestes du monde, et se bien ne les gouvernons par le gouvernail de raison, et par les avirons et enseignemens de sapience, a chacune heure nous somme en dangier de estre noez entre les monstres horribles et espouvantables dedans la caverne denfer.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Mireille Huchon, 'Rabelais, Bouchet et la *Nef des Folz*', in *Les Grands Jours de Rabelais en Poitou: actes du colloque international de Poitiers (30 août-1er septembre 2001)*, ed. by Marie-Luce Demonet (Geneva: Droz, 2006), pp. 83-103. On the connection between Rivière's text and Bouchet's own project, see p. 85.

⁵⁸ Anon, *La Grant Nef des folz* (Lyon: François Juste, 1529), fp. xcviir.

⁵⁹ Ibid., fpp. xcviir-v.

In this late incarnation of the ship of fools, both the nautical aspect of the allegory and the circumscription of interpretation are pushed further than ever. In an attempt to quell the anxiety expressed in earlier *Nefs* about diversion leading to interpretative shipwreck, the nautical allegorical framework is itself further elaborated.

In 1530, extracts from Pierre Rivière's verse translation were published anonymously under a title that makes the most of this theme: *Le Grant Nauffraige des folz qui sont en la nef dinsipience nauigeans en la mer de ce monde. Livre de grant effect, proffit, utilite, valeur, honneur et morale vertu, a linstruction de toutes gens le quel livre est aorne de figures pour mieux monstrer la folie du monde*.⁶⁰ This reinvigoration of the original allegory capitalises on the popularity of the woodcuts in the first versions, reproducing 102 chapters each with just seven lines describing the type of fool, accompanied by the same woodcuts as the original, which, in this smaller format (a quarto, where Brant and Rivière's books were folios), dominate the page. The original *Nef* has by this stage literally as well as symbolically disintegrated, with the new title focusing on the eschatological perils of the allegorical journey. In particular, one of the original chapters is brought into greater focus by the reorganisation of material; that concerning the Antichrist. The woodcut from the original chapter (Fig. 3), which was in any case almost twice as big as most of the cuts for the other chapters, is in the *Grant Nauffraige* isolated and moved to the front, appearing after the (newly composed) verse prologue and before the chapters themselves. In the new, smaller format, this image fills a full page, demonstrating visually the shift in focus from ship to wreck. Crucially, the salience of the shipwreck scene of the Antichrist chapter is dependent not only on the threat of spiritual shipwreck, but on the threats posed by heresy to the ship of the Church.

⁶⁰ Pierre Rivière, *Le Grand Nauffraige des folz* [ed. by Denis Janot] (Paris: Denys Janot, c. 1530).



Figure 3—‘De antichristo’
 Jacobus Locher, *Navis Stultifera* (Paris: G. de Marnef, 1498) sig. Piv^r

I.2.iii Interpretative shipwreck? Church, book and ship

The Church was—and still is—commonly conceived of as a ship thanks to allegorical readings of the Old and New Testaments as well as patristic sources. The story of Noah’s Ark,⁶¹ read typologically in conjunction with New Testament references, is seen to

⁶¹ For more on conceptions and visual representations of Noah and the Ark in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, see Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Richard

prefigure the saving of those within the Church at the Second Coming. In Luke 17. 26 the story of Noah is aligned with the Day of Judgement: ‘And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.’ Similarly, 1 Peter 3. 20-21 compares the role of the Ark with the principle of being saved by baptism: ‘the ark [...] wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us [...] by the resurrection of Jesus Christ’. The account in Luke 5. 1-11 of Christ preaching from Peter’s boat, and performing miracles (‘And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship’) establishes the ship as a space analogous to the Church. St Augustine’s use of architectural language in *The City of God* compares the proportions of the Ark with the body of Christ. He describes Noah as ‘perfect, not as the citizens of the City of God are to be made perfect in the immortal condition in which they will become equal to the angels of God, but as they can be perfect during their pilgrimage on earth’; and of the Ark Augustine writes: ‘Without doubt this is a symbol of the City of God on pilgrimage in this world, of the Church which is saved through the wood on which was suspended the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.’⁶² Noah and his ark are therefore the ideal passenger and vessel, the positive allegorical corollary to the ship of fools.

The ships of fools focus not on the Ark of the Church, which will save those who are in it when the Day of Judgement comes, but on the Antichrist’s ship, a false kind of Church, which will be utterly destroyed. The woodcut depicts an apocalyptic scene, with the Antichrist portrayed on top of a wrecked ship, whose capsized hull is being torn to pieces by those fools who are not drowning in the sea. In the foreground, the truly faithful

Unger, *The Art of Medieval Technology: Images of Noah the Shipbuilder* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

⁶² Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 643.

are shown safe from harm in the ‘*Navis sancti petri*’, under Peter’s watchful eye. The two ships are compared in a passage of Rivière’s chapter:

Ceste nef ains tout en contemps
Sur horrible mer orgueilleux
Espoventable et perilleux
Sera subjuguée et destruite
Et tout ainsi quelle fut construite
Cherra son gouvernail et plaustres
Et demourra sur toutes aultres
Nostres honneste foy bien gardee
Saine et saulve contregardee
Et combien que la naviculle
Saint pierre soit en periculle
Pour ung grant tremblement de vent
Qui la rudoye fort souvent
Sique le mas de grant peur tremble
Et carbase ainsi me semble[.]⁶³

The same apocalyptic storms will shake both ships, but only St Peter’s can be trusted to survive the raging sea and winds. Here, then, is the ultimate demonstration of the fools’ error; the readers of the ship of fools must mend their ways, and seek to board the ship of ‘honneste foy’.

My reading of the French ships of fools here revisits and adds to that of Peter Skrine, who sees, in Brant’s text, essentially only one ship. In an echo of the medieval tradition of exegesis described above, Skrine ascribes four roles (each affording a different reading of the text) to Brant as author of the ship of fools: satirist, moralist, humanist and, finally and most importantly for Skrine, ‘religious and allegorical poet’.⁶⁴ According to this final interpretation, ‘the ship image is far from being a mere metaphorical embellishment: its function, when seen in this connection, is essentially typological. In other words, the image itself is subsidiary to the symbolic and religious significance which it represents’ (581). In Christian allegory as expounded in an Augustinian sermon, Skrine suggests:

⁶³ Rivière, *La Nef des folz*, fp. xcviiv.

⁶⁴ Peter Skrine, ‘The Destination of the Ship of Fools: Religious Allegory in Brant’s “*Narrenschiff*”’, *MLR*, 64.3 (1969), 576-596 (p. 578). Further references to Skrine’s article are integrated into the text.

[T]he ‘boat’ and the voyager in it are no longer identical as had been the convention; [...] the voyager becomes our weak and helpless selves, while the boat is identified with the Cross of Christ. Thus, the voyager, who in classical usage had tended to be a figure of heroic stature, is now reduced to almost nothing, whereas the boat, which in pagan metaphor had usually performed a subsidiary metonymic function, is now raised to allegorical pre-eminence. (581)

Turning to Tertullian’s *Homily on Baptism* for further, conclusive confirmation of the simple equivalence between ship and Church, and having described the many medieval nautical ‘ecclesiological allegories’, Skrine asserts that ‘to Brant, every single Christian was entitled to a passage on that ship which is captained by Christ himself’ (p. 582). In his conclusion, Skrine settles on a single interpretation that seeks to account for the allegory as a whole and all of the biblical allusions made: ‘Brant has been undertaking nothing less than a commentary on that biblical book [= *Ecclesiastes*] which, more than any other, was his precedent’ (596). As we have seen, the threat of shipwreck is a fitting apocalyptic analogy, posing as it does the question of who will be saved and who will drown. In this respect, Skrine is surely right to draw attention to the eschatological dimensions of this metaphor. But, as Metzger-Rambach has argued, Skrine does tend to smooth over the intricacies and even contradictions inherent in the mixing of the several metaphors set in motion by the family of *Nefs*:

[L]’interprétation de P. Skrine qui assimile la nef des fous à la nef du Christ doit être nuancée. Sans dénier son importance à la tradition des Pères, il nous semble que P. Skrine néglige la place centrale du Christ dans l’épisode de la tempête apaisée, après l’avoir pourtant clairement mentionnée dans son examen des sources possibles du symbole de la nef. Du fait, il n’est dit nulle part dans le *Narrenschiff* que le Christ soit le commandant du navire, et nul fou même dans le plus grand péril ne songe—encore—à se tourner vers lui.⁶⁵

Metzger-Rambach’s insistence on ‘nuance’ is crucial. I will now extend this argument further still, in re-establishing the intricacies of metaphor at play here.

As I suggested above, by using the rich field of nautical metaphor to represent the moral journey of the fools, the *Nefs* or ship-books do far more than exploit the image of

⁶⁵ Metzger-Rambach, ‘*Le texte emprunté*’, p. 351 n. 574.

the ‘coque immobile qui permet de réunir les fous’. For, in drawing attention to the differing kinds of significance that may be derived from texts, they also risk positing reading itself as a journey, undertaken in search of illicit, or at very least inappropriate or immoderately wished-for knowledge. To do so is to entertain the prospect of interpretative shipwreck. To obviate this risk, the process of interpretation is, as we saw earlier, steered and guided by the efforts of authors in their prologues to spell out the subject of allegory. It is also notable that, although there are more than one hundred kinds of fool described, the first fool on the ship, in the German original, as in the French versions, is the book lover who fetishises his library but cannot appreciate or understand the contents of his own collection: ‘A livres avoir me deduys [...] De ceulx que jay leuz faiz dedain | Ou ne les entendz’.⁶⁶ The primacy of this fool lies not only in his position at the top of the list, but in his status as the one in charge of the steering: ‘Le premier suis en la navire | Les cordes je tourne, je vire’.⁶⁷ From the outset, then, the reader is alerted to the necessity of understanding and interpretation; the *Nef des folz* demands what Montaigne would later call *un suffisant lecteur*.

Skrine’s flattening-out of nuance is, I suggest, most important in respect to the chapter on the Antichrist; for this is the chapter most explicit in addressing the tensions within the Church-ship at the time—that is, most related to the question of divergent interpretations of scripture. Rivière’s text stages a struggle between the author and reader on the one hand, and those who would seek to tear the ship apart on the other:

Te diray de ces indiscretz
Et affin que a propos contretz
Ne viennent les voilles destendre
Du navire qui est trop tendre
Au moien seroit corrompu
Perdu perille ou rompu[.]⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Rivière, *La Nef des folz*, fp. 1^r.

⁶⁷ Ibid., fp. 1^r.

⁶⁸ Ibid., fp. xcviiv.

The book's purpose and the potential fate awaiting the reader are intertwined in these few lines. Read about this Antichrist ship, Rivière urges his reader, in order to prevent your own personal ship from being destroyed in the same way; forewarned is forearmed, so make yours the indestructible ship. Textual corruption and the rupture of the ship are made analogous in the final rhyming couplet, for these fools are described as heretics, whose folly is their claim to be able to (re)interpret the Bible, as the following lines show:

Ce sont vanteurs de grans sciences
Interpreteurs de consciences
Qui veullent la loy juridique
Soueiller par leur facon inique
Et comme gens mal renommez
Ilz peuvent bien estre nommez
Les envoiez de lantechrist
Car contempnent les saintz escriptz[.]⁶⁹

To cement the analogy, in the woodcut books can be seen floating amid the flotsam and jetsam. In the German text, alongside the quasi-architectural metaphor of the Church-ship, we find a second symbolic ship, the 'bapyren schyff', which the heretics seek to submerge. In addition to the Church-ship, then, we have a Bible-ship, reminiscent of the 'papyrus vessels' described in Isaiah 28. 2. Maintaining his insistence on a singular reading of the text's symbolism, Skrine writes:

Here in Chapter 103 Brant is not as confused in his imagery as has often been maintained. The basic ship image is, as it were, the substance, while the 'paper ship' and St Peter's barque are merely accidents. The first may be taken to mean Holy Scripture, while the second is the Church seen as the supreme religious authority in this world, whose function is to guide humanity and preserve the teachings and articles of the Christian faith intact. (590)

But when we read the Antichrist chapter in conjunction with the first fool, the issue appears to be less clear-cut than Skrine would have us believe. By casting their own books as ships (with increasing emphasis on the nautical aspects, as Metzger-Rambach shows), and further drawing the readers' attention to the fact in the title and introduction, the

⁶⁹ Rivière, *La Nef des folz*, fp. xcix^r.

authors of the ships of fools invite comparisons to be made with the Church-ship, but propose different models of reading for each. The first fool idolises useless books, and serves to warn the reader to consider carefully the contents of the *Narren Schyff*, whereas the Antichrist chapter seeks to re-impose the Church's authority in establishing the limits of meaning. By collapsing the symbolic relationships between ship(s), Church and Bible, Skrine elides the significance of the book, and not only the Book, as a site of interpretative tension. I am arguing here that it is essential to recognise the interplay of ship, Church and book in the ship of fools as a form of metaphorical triangulation, rather than superimposition. That this triangulation yields productive tensions that are not easily resolved, but are in fact exploited by innovations of later adaptors of the *Nef*, is something which I will show later in this chapter.



Figure 4 — ‘Du desprisement de son infortune’
Jean Drouyn, *La Nef des folz* (Lyon: G. Balsarin, 1498), sig. [Mv]^v

Staying, for a moment, with the authors of the *Nefs des folz*, we note that the threat of interpretative shipwreck is managed through the promise of instruction, and through the exposition of the nautical allegory in the prefatory material. One chapter in particular points to the ways in which the reader is encouraged to steer his ship more sensibly. The chapter ‘Du desprisement de son infortune’ takes seafaring as its model for the description of mankind’s ‘outrecuidance’. The woodcut (Fig. 4) shows a lone fool in a small ship, whose sail is crumpled and whose hull is fragmenting beneath him. Rivière urges his reader, in effect, to sail prudently, and according to the wind:

Les prudens vieux et anciens
 Nous disent de leurs vouloirs siens
 Le proverbe quilz ont commun
 Et si nous vient mal au doy lun
 Devons en tout considerer
 Ce mal oultre et moderer
 Car par nostre deffault croistra
 Et plus grand mal apres ystra[.]⁷⁰

As we will see later in this chapter, prudence is a quality especially associated with the avoidance of political shipwreck. In Drouyn's version of the passage just quoted, the reader is warned to ensure the seaworthiness of his vessel:

Pour avoir son pied seur, il fault regarder ou on le met, car souvent fortune se cache dessoubz le pied de l'homme, car ainsy quil veult aller sur mer elle croist et senfle. [P]ar quoy celluy est a blasmer qui veult entrer en la navire qui se vire pour une petite vague, car pour une petite vent la navire submerge pour la vague et vent qui sur mer aulcunesfoys habonde. Dont le fol qui ne peut pas gouverner les avirons prent excessifz et grant dommage. Mais le sage se garde des dangiers predictz evitant les orages de la mer qui peuvent advenir[.] Pour ce chemin doit prendre bonne nef, affin contre les tempestez de la mer puist resister. Pource pecheurs consideres les infortunes de ce monde et amendes vostre vie, affin que vous soyes des bien fortunez au royaume de paradis.⁷¹

If, for the authors of the *Nef[s] des folz*, seafaring itself is a dangerous activity to be avoided where possible, on the sea journey through life it is nonetheless crucial that their readers pick the right ship; the one that will not disintegrate, leaving their souls 'entre les monstres horribles et espouvantables dedans la caverne denfer', but will transport them to the kingdom of heaven.

So far, we have seen that the correctional value of the ships of fools rests on the possibility of a salvational ship, in which souls may reach the 'port de salut' once they have passed beyond the bodily shipwreck of death. This ship of the virtuous, as we have seen, is read typologically as St Peter's barque, the Church, and the Ark. It is notable that both Ark and ship of fools share the idea of collecting and cataloguing every species or

⁷⁰ Rivière, *La Nef des folz*, fp. ciii^v.

⁷¹ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. [Mv]^v-[Mvi]^r.

‘type’.⁷² So, the broader potential of the metaphor—the notion of gathering all of mankind’s exemplary fools together in one place—also informs the later journey of the *Nef*, as the word becomes—as we shall now see—a marker for a compendium not only of sinners and fools, but also of other forms of knowledge.

1.3 The diversification of the *Nef*, and the embodiment of ‘naufnage’

1.3.i The beginnings of particularisation: *La Nef des folles*

It was not long before the popularity of the *Nefs* inspired authors to create their own ship-books. The Flemish author and publisher Jodocus Badius Ascensius, drawing on the title of Locher’s *Stultifera navis*, made his contribution to the *querelle des femmes* with his *Stultiferae naves* (c. 1500), translated into French by Jean Drouyn as *La Nef des folles* (1498).⁷³ Badius’s is the first adaptation that does not claim to be a translation, but is presented as a text in the new ‘tradition’ started by Brant; Angelbert de Marnef, who had published Jacobus Locher’s Latin version and Pierre Rivière’s French adaptation in Paris, had commissioned Badius to compose an additional piece as a supplement to Brant’s original.⁷⁴ Badius narrows the scope of his text, steering his ship (or rather fleet) away from Brant’s universalising sweep by focussing on feminine folly, specifically articulated through the temptations offered by the senses. Olga Anna Duhl has identified this as an astute conjoining of two popular ideas: ‘Badius achieved this new orientation by skilfully conflating the allegory of the ship of fools with a theological (and philosophical) argument holding sway during the late Middle Ages: folly as a sensory disorder to be found primarily in women.’⁷⁵ The *Stultiferae naves* takes the form of a fleet of six ‘ships’, as

⁷² The Ark was an image commonly used to describe the cataloguing function of the memory in medieval culture: see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), pp. 43, 253, 343 n. 40.

does its French version by Jean Drouyn, *La Nef des folles*, which was published almost simultaneously, apparently at Badius's request, for the benefit of women readers.⁷⁶

The moral castigation of the *folles* is centred on a popular fixation on Eve as the model for all women, as Badius's prologue, translated by Drouyn, makes clear:

Et ainsi qu'il n'est riens plus voluptueux ne plus delectable que le sexe femenin: nostre Seigneur dist, qu'il nestoit pas bon que l'homme fust seul, et pource dist, Faisons luy aide semblable à luy. J'ay doncques proposé par la nef des folz et aussi des folles faire arriver une petite nef: et de petit corps en ceste nef naufrage. Neantmoins si je ne suis deçeu d'une grande capacité: on y pourra comprendre et entendre toute follie humaine. Car toute la follie et fureur humaine principalement vient, pource que les sens de nature dominant sur raison par ordre mauvaise et inique.⁷⁷

The *Nef des folles* is, then, to the *Nef des folz* as Eve is to Adam; not only thematically, as the female counterpart to its male-dominated predecessor, but also structurally, in the sense that a part of the original has been taken and expanded to create a kind of same-but-different copy. Yona Pinson pinpoints Badius's narrowing of focus (and, effectively, blame) as his chief innovation:

Although Brant warns his readers not to be tempted and trapped by the corruptive power of women, his treatise does not promote a misogynist message. Badius's moralising supplement, on the other hand, was manipulated as a didactic, correctional vehicle for women's behaviour[.]⁷⁸

⁷³ Badius would also later produce his own (much transformed) Latin version of Brant's text, the *Navis stultifera* (1505); see Metzger-Rambach, 'Le texte emprunté', pp. 43-44. The edition of Drouyn's *Nef des folles* referred to here is *La Grand [sic] Nef des folles: Composee suyvant les cinq sens de nature, selon l'Evangile de Monseigneur S. Matthieu, des cinq vierges qui ne prindrent point d'huyllle avec elles pour mettre en leurs lampes. Avec plusieurs additions nouvellement adjoustees par le Translateur* (Lyon: J. d'Ogerolles, 1583). This edition seems to have been based on a slightly later version, *La Grant Nef des folles*, of which a copy is held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (estimated date 1510-1520, believed published in Lyon). The version of the *Nef des folles* held at the British Library (estimated date 1500) bears closer resemblance to the *editio princeps* of 1498, and so lacks the later addition of the chapter on the 'Nef divine'.

⁷⁴ Marnef and his brother Geoffroy were involved in the publication of Pierre Rivière's French verse *Nef* and an anonymous prose version (c. 1499), as well as Badius's and Drouyn's new ships of female fools. For more on the importance of the Marnef family in the French adaptations of the ship of fools, see Metzger-Rambach, 'Le texte emprunté', pp. 33-34: 'Surtout, ils sont au cœur du mouvement qui fait éclore de nouvelles *Nefs* françaises ou latines.'

⁷⁵ Duhl, 'Vernacular Translation and the Sins of the Tongue', p. 54.

⁷⁶ In 'L'excusation de l'Acteur aux auditeurs', Drouyn explains: 'l'avons tourné en François à fin que les femmes le lisent plus à leur aise, et aussi pour leu[rs] disciplines salutaires et enseignemens de pure vie'. Jean Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 140.

⁷⁷ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. [6].

⁷⁸ Pinson, 'Led by Eve', p. 214.

By associating women in particular with the sensory disorders described in the text, the *Nef des folles* also plays on and perpetuates an ancient cultural binary; the association of the body with the feminine, and accordingly the mind with the masculine. The particular focus on the sins of the flesh also paves the way for later *Nefs* which are concerned more with bodies than with souls, as we will see later.



Figure 5—‘Stultorum sensuum navis in exitium tendens’
Jodocus Badius, *Stultiferae naves* (Paris: T. Kerver, Marnef brothers, 1500) sig. 3^r

Eve is given her own ship, which leads the way, followed by five smaller ‘nefs’, each dedicated to one of the senses and to its potential to lead the (female) reader astray; that is, to spiritual shipwreck.⁷⁹ In distinction to the earlier ships of fools, though, the reader is not always already on board; the moral outcome is to be decided by the power of the text to persuade or dissuade, as temptation and moral instruction are placed in direct

⁷⁹ Sharon Assaf has argued that ‘Badius’s treatise may be seen as the opening text in a centuries-long debate about the efficacy of the senses that engaged moralists, natural scientists, and artists’: ‘The Ambivalence of the Sense of Touch in Early Modern Prints’, p. 76.

confrontation. As the captain at the head of the fleet, Eve introduces the theme of the book, in an echo of the opening chapters of the *Nef des folz*:

La premiere folle je suis
Qui dois sur toutes dominer,
En ceste nef je me deduis
Voulant bas et hault gouverner.
Je scay sur toutes discerner,
Je cognois masts, cordes et voilles.⁸⁰

Eve's ship seems to be described in quite some nautical detail here, but 'mastz cordes et voilles' is a conventional formula. As Jean-Marie Fritz explains, this trio was a typical feature of medieval elaborations of the 'Church as ship' metaphor: 'le mâst représente l'espérance, la voile la charité, les cordages les vertus'.⁸¹ There is no sign here, as in Drouyn's *Nef des folz*, of Columbus. But in a move that confirms our distance from the real nautical world, inhabited entirely by men, it is shown that Eve knows how to steer her ship. A woman's desire to 'dominer' and 'gouverner' are the first signs of *folie*, but they are coupled with excessive knowledge, emphasised by the last two lines. In contrast with the case of the book-loving fool, who is not a *suffisant lecteur*, the problem here is of a woman who has an understanding that goes beyond the natural. There is a particular anxiety about the dangerous combination of women and knowledge, embodied by Eve and expressed in the verbs 'scay' and 'cognois'. It is this anxiety that informs the symbolic framework of the *Nef des folles*; women's curiosity, linked to their supposed tendency to be governed by the 'sens de nature' rather than reason, is what is constantly staged and condemned throughout the book. We might usefully turn here to Kenny, as he describes depictions of curious women in early modern narrative:

The purpose of making women into curious subjects was not, on the whole, to empower them, but on the contrary to show what disasters ensue when women are given leeway to act on the curiosity that storytellers attribute to them.⁸²

⁸⁰ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 9.

⁸¹ Fritz, 'L'eau et la folie au Moyen Age', p. 114.

⁸² Kenny, *The Uses of Curiosity*, Chapter 5, 'Discursive Tendencies: Narrating Sexes: Female', pp. 384-424 (p. 384).

In the *Nef des folles*, the ensuing disaster is, of course, shipwreck. To cement the connection between feminine seafaring and sinful curiosity, in the woodcut (Fig. 5) Eve's ship is shown to have as its mast the tree of knowledge, and entwined in its branches we see a female-headed serpent. Eve later addresses her audience ('O folles femmes miserables') with a warning against following her example:

Entree suis par ambition
 En ceste nef je vous promets,
 Et dis par bonne intention
 Ce morceau fut un mauvais metz.⁸³

Boarding the *nef* is thus explicitly equated with original sin, the step on board coming to stand for the first bite of the apple.⁸⁴ The physicality of the imagined ship is revealed by Eve's exhortation to the reader not simply to resist boarding, but to shatter its very structure; in Blackmore's terms, to realise its 'shipwreckful potential':

Il vous fault faire la bataille
 Contre la nef presentement
 En frappant d'estoc ou de taille,
 Et la fendre incontinent.⁸⁵

By enacting this kind of scuttling, readers will avoid following Eve's course towards moral and spiritual shipwreck. As the example of Eve—embodying both temptation and punishment, invitation and warning—demonstrates, there is a moral tension at play in each *nef* described, and this is also reflected in the presentation of knowledge within the text.

Each chapter consists of a section in prose, which describes the sense and sin in question, and warns against it, followed by a *chant* in verse, wherein those on board each *nef* tempt the reader to join them. That the profit of the book is provided by the moralising

⁸³ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 16.

⁸⁴ In Hieronymus Bosch's interpretation of the idea, original sin and gluttony are combined in the image of feasting fools overlooked by the serpent in the tree. *La Nef des fous* (c. 1490-1500), Musée du Louvre.

⁸⁵ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 18.

explications is clear, but the fact that pleasure is to be found in imagining the delights of the senses through these *chants* places writing, and poetry in particular, in a paradoxical position. In his detailed and convincing article, ‘Foolish Pleasures: the *Stultiferae Naves* of Jodocus Badius Ascensius and the poetry of Filippo Beroaldo the Elder’, Paul White refers to Badius’s own writing on the subject of poetry in order to elucidate the apparently problematic question of the use of verse in the *chants*. In his *Praenotamenta* to Terence (1502), as White has shown, Badius claimed:

[...] that the common run of people need austere poetry, that it may serve as direct moral instruction; but for a more educated and virtuous class of man, pleasurable poetry can serve as an aid to relaxation. The third class of person, evidently in the majority, who is still fighting the battle between virtue and error (‘adhuc militant’), may benefit from exposure to a ‘mixed’ type of poetry.⁸⁶

In practice, this ‘mixed poetry’ might take the form of a combination of prose and verse, as indeed we find in the *Stultiferae naves*. Parallels are drawn with mixing pleasure with utility; according to Badius, the prose provides the medicine and the verse something of a sweetener.⁸⁷ In fact, as White further shows, much of the verse in the *exhortations* is inspired by (and in some cases almost lifted from) the poetry of Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, whose sensual indulgence is inverted by Badius through a female re-voicing,⁸⁸ as in the example of the ‘Celeusma stultae contactionis’ (‘Imitation nautique touchant follement toucher’):

‘Osculum Panthiae’, an early example of the neo-Catullan *basium* genre, combines erudition with sensuality: it is the sophisticated and highly literary love poetry of a cultured humanist. But Badius puts it in the mouth of a female fool tempting her charges with vain promises of orgiastic indulgence.⁸⁹

A similar concern is demonstrated in Badius’s many commentaries, which evoke the contemporary tradition of ‘Ovide moralisé’: texts reframing the *Metamorphoses* in terms

⁸⁶ White, ‘Foolish Pleasures’, p. 68.

⁸⁷ Cf. Horace, *Ars poetica*, lines 333-334.

⁸⁸ The concept of ‘inversion’ here is much inspired by that elaborated by Chesters in *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France*, pp. 97-99.

⁸⁹ White, ‘Foolish Pleasures’, p. 74.

of Christian morality. As White explains: ‘Badius there had been anxious to “save” Horace’s Epicureanism by a turn of interpretation, converting the Roman poet’s celebrations of sensuality and ephemeral pleasures into an expression of the Christian imperative of contempt for the world.’⁹⁰ This kind of ‘strong reading’ is also required of Badius’s and Drouyn’s female reader, who must pick her way through the pitfalls of sensual temptation.

Furthermore, each *explication* spends some time detailing the theories of philosophers about the functioning of the sense in question: these sections perform a compilation, not of fools, but of knowledge, acting as a kind of summary of, and commentary on, a range of ancient sources. After his discussion of the sense of sight, Drouyn declares, with a degree of *praeteritio*, his ignorance and disinterest: ‘Mais de ceste maniere j’en delaisse la chose aux philosophes: car il suffise cy de declarer la puissance de veoir estre incongneüe’.⁹¹ Knowledge is simultaneously displayed and denied, in the same way that temptation is at once staged and condemned. The book therefore, like the ship, is a site of tension between a sinful thirst for knowledge on the one hand, and the moralising framework that seeks to contain such temptation, on the other.

⁹⁰ White, ‘Foolish Pleasures’, pp. 79-80.

⁹¹ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 21.



Figure 6—‘La nef divine’
Jean Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles* (Lyon: J. d’Ogerolles, 1583), p. 163

Among Drouyn’s additions, expansions and innovations is a final ‘nef divine’, in which he makes explicit the connection between ship and Church that was less clearly articulated in the ship of fools. The ‘Exhortation aux folles pour venir a la nef divine’ instructs the reader in the following terms:

Approuchez folles vistement
Du navire mout precieux,
Et vous verrez presentement
Crucifié le Dieu des cieux.
Qui est ung mirouër sumptueux
Pour mirer les sottes et sots[.]⁹²

The woodcut (Fig. 6) depicts Christ on the cross—which forms the ship’s mast—with the author himself (indicated by the inscription ‘maistre jehan drouyn’) shown sitting in the

⁹² Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 163.

ship's prow and inviting the foolish women standing on the shoreline to come aboard. The invitation to board is couched in language of knowledge, piquing the curiosity of the reader:

Approchez ceste navire
Et grand' science y apprendrez,
Despechez ce le vent vire
Rien ne comprendre vous n'y pourrez.⁹³

The dangerous potential of haste and curiosity is tempered by a repeated reference to the mother of Christ, who stands at the foot of the cross just as Eve stood next to the tree-mast in the first woodcut; here is the model of the ideal, wise female, the antidote to Eve and her sinful, inquisitive sistren:

Icy verrez Jesus en croix
Et sa mere bien fort pleurant,
Et puis saint Jehan comme je crois
Qui Marie y est confortant.⁹⁴

Drouyn is particularly fixated on the figure of Mary; in 'L'excusation de l'Acteur aux auditeurs',⁹⁵ as at the end of his *Nef des folz*, he draws on a traditional nautical conception of the Virgin as an 'estaille de mer': 'sentier et adresse de toute sagesse, laquelle nous veuille impetrer celle grace envers son cher enfant notre Sauveur qu'apres le naufrage de ce mortel monde, nous puissions tous parvenir au benoist salut'.⁹⁶ Whereas following the example of Eve will lead to spiritual shipwreck after the inevitable 'naufrage' of the body, Mary's star will guide souls safely to the heavenly port: 'dedans entrez | Et vous acquerrez

⁹³ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 164. This ship is referred to in the 'Exhortation aux folles, pour venire à la nef divine' as a 'navire' or 'naviere' (p. 163) rather than a 'nef', for a number of possible reasons. Its material aspect, emphasised by the connection made between the wooden mast and cross, calls to mind the construction of physical ships—such as those that might carry pilgrims to Jerusalem. As the Bloch and Wartburg dictionary definition showed, a 'navire' was also rather bigger than a 'nef', and so this final ship might serve as a more solid counterpart to the flimsy, female-piloted 'nefs'. Or perhaps, after all, the choice came down simply to a question of metre.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 163.

⁹⁵ The choice of 'auditeurs' rather than 'lecteurs' here reveals an expectation that this text might be read aloud to its intended female addressees.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

Paradis'.⁹⁷ In later *Nefs*, as we will now see, the concern shifts to the kinds of shipwreck that may threaten in this world, rather than in the next.

I.3.ii Champier's counterblast: Two *Nefs vertueuses*

The exploitation of the Brantian *zeitgeist* through fraudulent 'spin-offs' was common practice, as is evinced by the many plagiarised versions of the ship of fools, and the early editions of Jean Bouchet's *Regnars traversant les perilleuses voyes des folles fiances du monde*, 'qu'un Vérard rusé publiera sous le nom de (S.) Brant'.⁹⁸ Symphorien Champier, a Lyonnais schooled in both law and medicine, capitalised on the success of Brant's text and its French versions with his first published works in French: *La Nef des Princes* (1502) and *La Nef des dames vertueuses* (1503).⁹⁹ While Badius's text was the first that moved away from the tradition of 'translation', Champier was the first author to take on the organising idea of the ship without adopting too the accompanying theme of folly. Judy Kem writes of *La Nef des dames vertueuses*:

Champier apparently added the ship metaphor late in the work's composition, as he did to his *Nef des princes* a year earlier. The titling of both works presumably takes advantage of the popular vogue of Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* printed in Lyon in 1498 and 1499.¹⁰⁰

Here we have an even more localised sense of the spread of the *Nef*'s popularity: in the printmaking hub and cultural crossroads that was sixteenth-century Lyon.¹⁰¹ But Champier's adaptation of the *Nef* label was not only a commercially astute move. As we

⁹⁷ Drouyn, *La Grand Nef des folles*, p. 138.

⁹⁸ Jennifer Britnell, and Nathalie Dauvois (eds), *Jean Bouchet, traverseur des voies périlleuses (1476-1557): actes du colloque de Poitiers (30-31 août 2001)* (Paris: Champion, 2003), 'Introduction', pp. 7-17 (p. 8).

⁹⁹ See Paul Allut, *Étude biographique et bibliographique sur Symphorien Champier* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1972).

¹⁰⁰ Kem, 'Symphorien Champier', p. 226.

¹⁰¹ Henri-Jean Martin sees Champier, and these texts in particular, as emblematic of a 'génération de transition' towards humanism in Lyon. See Martin, 'L'Apparition du livre à Lyon', in *Le Siècle d'or de l'imprimerie lyonnaise*, ed. by Henri-Jean Martin and others (Paris: Editions du Chêne, 1972), pp. 31-112, particularly pp. 77-78.

will now see, Champier's 'strong readings' of the *Nef* engender a further diversification (through bifurcation) of the mini-genre, and a concomitant double transformation of the significance of shipwreck.

Champier's first *Nef* takes on the idea expressed in the ships of fools of a mirror-book, and reconnects this with the existing tradition of *Fürstenspiegel*, or 'mirrors for princes',¹⁰² offering advice to young rulers—though Champier broadens his audience at times to anyone and everyone:

Mondains au monde navigans,
Qui naviguez et jour et nuyt,
Advisez ce qui est soubscript.
Ce vous sera bon passe temps.¹⁰³

Champier does not conceive of his book as a correctional work; accepting that humans are by their very nature all at sea ('Tu es en la mer de misères remplie' (57)), he inverts the negative connotations of the ship of fools. The *Nef* is no longer associated with sin, but with virtue; the problematic connotations of navigation are absent from Champier's allegory:

Mais vous princes, qui avez la machine
A gouverner en vostre nef vertueuse
Pour Dieu gardes que vice ny domine
Et vous aurez la gloire tres heureuse. (35)

Whereas for Badius and Drouyn the nautical know-how of their ships' captains was the object of suspicion, Champier offers advice, allegorised as nautical techniques, to help the reader on his way—'devant que au port de beatitude venir' (37). Prudence, for example, is demonstrated by reinforcing the mast with wood; vice is not internalised as we saw in the

¹⁰² Andrea Wilhelmi places Champier's text in a continuation of that tradition, to be followed by Erasmus's *Institutio principis Christiani* (1515) and *Il Principe* (1530) by Machiavelli: Symphorien Champier, *La Nef des princes von Symphorien Champier: Textkritische und kommentierte Ausgabe der Haupttraktate*, ed. by Andrea Wilhelmi (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 29.

¹⁰³ Symphorien Champier, *La Nef des princes*, p. 35. Further page references are given in the main body of my text.

various ships of fools, but must be kept at bay, as the threat of shipwreck comes from the outside:

[L]en se doit tenir au milieu de la mer au quel ya grande affluence de eaue et impellir ses ennemys aux bors par quoy entendons les humains soy devoir tenir tousjours au milieu, cest assavoir en vertu laquelle moienne entre deux vices selon que dit Aristote en ses Ethiques et doivent iceulx impellir les ennemys dumaine nature aux bors cest adire aux extremitez vicieuses entre lesquelles reside vertu. (37)

We note that Champier, like the authors of earlier *Nefs*, makes explicit the interpretation intended for his nautical allegory, interrupting it constantly with pointers: ‘par quoy entendons’, ‘cest assavoir’, ‘cest adire’. The nautical imagery is not sustained throughout the length of the book, however, as the initial explanatory allegory of the introduction gives way to a collection of more conventional forms of advice: this is a fairly typical mirror for princes. But the final part, ‘Le droit Chemin de l’ospital’, would also seem familiar to readers of the earlier *Nefs*, as it is made up of a long list of ‘les gens qui le trouvent par leurs oeuvres et maniere de vivre’, ending with the assurance: ‘Tous ceulx qui feront le contraire de ce qui est dessus nomme, nauront jamais ne part ne quart ne heritaige audit hospital, mais en seront exens et quittes et aussi de lordre de bellistre et de maugouverne’ (154).

While the ship image of Brant’s text has disappeared by this stage, its influence is still felt in the cataloguing of foolishness, and in the imagery of the path to virtue or vice. In fact, we can trace this ‘chemin’ back to Jean Drouyn’s prologue to his *Nef des folz du monde*, where he explains:

[P]ar maniere de passe temps, je veulz icy parler de folz et folles et leur assigner guerison de vertus, science, et doctrine pour les faire a bien condescendre: car je neuz jamais aultre voulente que de vouloir le prouffit et utilite des jeunes jouvenciaulx qui jamais ne voulurent prendre le chemin de raison.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Drouyn, *La Nef des folz*, sig. [Aiv]^v.

Champier, like Drouyn, is concerned with the ‘prouffit’ of his book for the reader, but also repeats his promise of ‘passe temps’, hinting at a pleasure, less problematic than that proffered by Badius, to be taken from reading.

Champier’s second ship-book, *La Nef des dames vertueuses*, is often regarded as a riposte to Badius’s misogyny in the *Naves Stultiferae*; but, as Thomas Hunkeler has suggested, it also serves to counter accusations made against one of Champier’s own works: the ‘Opus admodum tornatum corruptos mulierum mores’ found in the *Nef des princes*. The second *Nef* is made up of four sections which include a list of virtuous women from biblical and classical sources (‘La fleur des dames’, redolent of the idea of an allegorical ‘garden’ popularised by the *Roman de la Rose*).¹⁰⁵ It only mentions in the briefest way possible the nautical theme; the list of ideal women, for example, is simply interspersed with the refrain ‘A nostre nef survienne’. The introduction suggests that the ship is nonetheless a useful emblem, in that it might remind women of their rightful role:

La nef des dames vertueuse
Où toute vertu est enclose.
Les gestes et le vasselaige
Des dames cy abbat la raige.
De cil qui les dames accuse.
Et affin que nul ne mesdise
Des dames par aulcune ruse
Des m[e]sdisans mord le langaige
La nef
Pour vous garder qu’on ne vous buse
Dames où bonté est infuse.
Ayés devant vous pour ymage
Ceste nef: car à mariage
Observer aprent qu’on n’y muse.
La nef.¹⁰⁶

The *Nef* is thus not merely an image but also a tool, or even weapon, which will ‘abbat la raige’ of those vicious critics (Badius, we imagine, included), and even neutralise their naysaying by ‘biting’ their language—and, by metonymy, their tongues. For Hunkeler, the

¹⁰⁵ See Kem, ‘Symphorien Champier’, p. 226.

¹⁰⁶ Symphorien Champier, *La Nef des dames vertueuses*, ed. by Judy Kem (Paris: Champion, 2007), p. 43.

Nef des dames vertueuses ‘contient quatre livres qui sont à considérer comme autant de défences des femmes; mieux, qui visent à fournir aux femmes une série de *topoi* pour assurer leur auto-défense’.¹⁰⁷ The second section of the *Nef*, ‘Le gouvernement de mariage’, is revelatory of Champier’s medical background, as it offers advice to women on all aspects of health, and in particular on the sexual responsibilities of a wife. As Helen Swift puts it: ‘the writer’s main concern here is simply a rehearsal of women’s conventional position under customary and canon law’.¹⁰⁸ This mode of defence operates by thematic and moral containment: only the virtuous (or as Swift puts it, ‘the sort of pitiful, mute, sheep-like women whom Champier sees himself defending’)¹⁰⁹ can be found on board. Furthermore, the third book is preceded by an address to another lyonnais doctor of medicine, André Briau, which is itself interspersed with Ficino’s writings on medicine. Though it is not an explicitly medical text, then, the *Nef des dames vertueuses* corroborates Jacques Roger’s suspicion that ‘la médecine préoccupe Champier même lorsqu’il parle d’autre chose’;¹¹⁰ what we might term the degree of nauticality of this particular ship is, as we have seen, minimal.

But in Champier’s *Nefs* we find, nonetheless, the shared ground between allegory, moral instruction and medicine located in the now distinctly de-materialised ship. There has, in other words, been a drift away from the specific ship of fools *topos*, by way of a stage where the chapters in each adaptation are referred to as individual *nefs*, to this point where essentially, it is only the ‘vessel’ idea that remains; the ship, like the book, is a space for the discussion of ideas. By divorcing the symbolic ship from moral concerns regarding overweening curiosity, Champier’s *Nefs* also transform the prospect of shipwreck from a spiritual to a more practical threat. As we will now see, this process is

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Hunkeler, ‘Symphorien Champier’, p. 57.

¹⁰⁸ Swift, *Men Defending Women*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹¹⁰ Jacques Roger, ‘L’Humanisme médical de Symphorien Champier’, p. 261.

furthered by the last in the ‘family’ of *Nefs* to be studied here, a text that reverses the original relation of causality that links moral, bodily and spiritual shipwrecks.

I.3.iii Governing the body: Corporeal shipwrecks in the *Nef de sante*

In 1507, Nicolas de la Chesnaye—professor of civil and canon law and husband of Guillaume Budé’s sister, Estiennette—published an heterogeneous collection of works on diet and health, under the title *La Nef de sante*.¹¹¹ This compilation of texts, which seems to have begun life as a translation of a work by St Benedict of Nursia, the *Pulcherrimum et utilissimum opus ad sanitatis conservationem*, has attracted little critical attention, except with respect to the third of its four components, a morality play condemning gluttony. The choice of ‘Nef’ for the French title might suggest a degree of opportunism on the part of Chesnaye, since the nautical theme, mentioned briefly in the introduction and in the title of the second text in the collection, the ‘Gouvernail du corps humain’ (which itself recalls Champier’s ‘gouvernement de mariage’), is not present in Benedict’s original, nor is the seafaring allegory much sustained beyond the prefatory material. Indeed, the first edition of 1507 was published by none other than the enterprising Antoine Vérard, who, as we saw above, had been responsible for attributing Jean Bouchet’s *Regnars traversant* to Sebastian Brant.

But the title is not altogether specious: though the nautical detail delighted in by Drouyn and Riviere has faded, the organising logic of the journey by ship remains. In the prefatory material, Chesnaye recalls the metaphor of the journey, and insists that his text will serve as a guide to readers in their travels through life. What has changed—and quite markedly—in comparison with the ships of fools, is the sphere of influence intended for

¹¹¹ For notes on La Chesnaye’s life, see Georges Doutrepoint, *La Condamnation de banquet de Nicole de la Chesnaye* (Brussels: M. Lamertin, 1931), pp. 4-5.

the book as an instructive work; while those earlier texts were concerned with warding off the threat of their readers' spiritual shipwreck, Chesnaye's *Nef* draws attention to the threat of bodily shipwreck that had underwritten the work of Brant and his earliest adaptors, but which they had all but ignored.

Despite this crucial shift in focus, there are significant continuities in the tradition, which sustain Chesnaye's claim to be writing from within the 'family' of *Nefs*. His text furthers the innovations of Champier, combining medical and political concerns in the prologue, where, in a dedication to Louis XII, he declares his intention: 'conserver la sante et prouffit | De tout le peuple'.¹¹² Thus ship, 'corps humain', and body politic remain symbolically linked, as a concern for public health evokes the fate of the ship of state. As such, Chesnaye's claim inverts the tradition, described by Lachaud and Scordia, whereby: 'Le miroir [du prince] peut [...] devenir thérapeutique, le corps du prince étant, au sens propre, le corps physique de l'État, dont les désordres sont liés aux conditions de la vie de la cour comme aux soucis provoqués par le gouvernement'.¹¹³ The *Nef de sante*, though addressed initially to the head of state, proposes instead to address the health of the body politic from the bottom up. Although his is essentially a medical book, Chesnaye perpetuates the moralising tone of his predecessors, as is made clear in the 'prologue', where the author declares that many people suffer from illnesses because their 'simplicite', 'ignorance' and 'curiosite' cause them to eat too much meat. But the hierarchy of corporeal, moral and spiritual concerns expressed in the early *Nef* books is restructured in the conclusion to Chesnaye's prefatory poem:

¹¹² Nicole de la Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante avec le gouvernail du corps humain* (Paris: Vérard, 1507), sig. Aii^v.

¹¹³ Frédérique Lachaud and Lydwine Scordia (eds), *Le Prince au miroir*, 'Introduction', pp. 11-17 (p. 13). On the relatedness of body politic and ship of state, see below, Chapter Three.

§A ceste cause ay mon entendement
 N.auffragateur en la mer des negoces
 I.ncessamment contraint par mes efforces
 C.ompassion avoir de tel dommage
 O.ultre assembler avec luy courage
 L.equel tout euvre fait valoir et reluire
 E.t exprimer, explaner et descrire
 D.es viandes la nature totalle
 E.t leur malice et leur bonte realle
 L.esquelles peuvent enerver corps humain
 A. celle fin que par vouloir divin
 C.ommuniquer luy soient paix et repos
 H.ors le gardans de tous mauvais impos
 E.nsemblement des grieves oppressions
 S.ortans de lame et des passions
 N.ourrissement dont provient mortifere
 A.maritude et langoureuse chere
 Y. dropisie qui noye corps et ame
 E. t a la fin de la vie est le terme.¹¹⁴

There are two kinds of shipwreck threatened here, at the beginning and end of Chesnaye's poem. The first lies in a reformulation of the familiar prefatory convention of authorial modesty; whereas earlier *Nef* adaptors wrote self-deprecatingly of their 'petit entendement' or 'petitz escriptz', Chesnaye's process of composition has itself absorbed the *Nefs*' allegory of perilous navigation. In his final lines, however, a more radical shift takes place. Whereas for Brant's adaptors, and most explicitly in Badius and Drouyn's *Nef des folles*, spiritual shipwreck was brought about by excessive corporeal sensuality, here the bodily shipwreck of physical death is hastened by 'grieves oppressions | Sortans de l[']ame'. More troublingly, the possibility of a second, spiritual journey after this shipwreck is thrown into doubt, as the kind of disease against which Chesnaye's text would warn, it is declared, 'noye corps et ame'.

The second of the texts in this collection, the 'Gouvernail du corps humain' recommends itself to the reader thus:

Je enseigne et demonstre ce present livre et traictie tres utile et necessaire a toute personne le quel jay extraict des livres et dicts des philosophes: Et baptise le gouvernail du corps humain. Toy qui veulx avoir sante corporelle je te demonstre et enseigne (Que se tu desires

¹¹⁴ Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante*, sig. Aii^v.

conserver longuement la vie humaine en sante et prosperite, et par ce moyen fuyr et eviter plusieurs perilz de ton corps) que tu entendes et retiennes diligemment ce qui sensuit.¹¹⁵

The description of the book's purpose ('par ce moyen fuyr et eviter plusieurs perilz') echoes Champier's promise, in the *Nef des princes*, of a toolkit of skills and knowledge that will help the reader in his journey through life. The singular danger of shipwreck has been transmuted into the plural 'perilz' to which the body may be subject, and these perils are corporeal rather than political or social; the 'Gouvernail' is intended 'pour la vie tranquille du corps humain'.

The third text in the collection that makes up Chesnaye's *Nef* is a morality play, the 'Condamnation des Bancquetz', which effectively dramatises the 'Imitation nautique touchant follement goustier' in Drouyn's *Nef des folles*. It takes the form of 'un traité d'hygiène mis en action ou en scène',¹¹⁶ composed, the author tells us:

[...] à l'intencion de vilipender, detester et aucunement extirper le vice de glouttonnie, crapule, ebreite et voracite, et, par opposite, louer, exalter et magnifier la vertu de sobriete, frugalite, abstinence, temperence et bonne diette, en ensuyvant ce livre nommé la nef de sante et gouvernail du corps humain[.]¹¹⁷

The characters include 'Banquet', 'Je boy a vous' and 'Friandise', but also, more ominously, 'Colique', 'Appoplexie', 'Pleuresie' and 'Paralisie'; all are introduced by 'Le docteur prolocuteur'. A few remaining traces of the earlier allegorical *Nefs* are found in the 'Le fol', who is often the butt of the joke, and 'Passe temps', a reminder of the promises of pleasure in the prefatory material to Drouyn's and Champier's *Nefs*. Indeed, there are further similarities, as La Chesnaye explains that although the text's first purpose is performance, he has also set out his work with the reader in mind, including 'petites gloses, commentacions ou canons tant pour elucidier ladicte matiere comme aussi advertir le lecteur des acteurs livres et passaiges, desquelz jay extrait les alegations, histoires et

¹¹⁵ Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante*, sig. Hiii^v.

¹¹⁶ Doutrepoint, *La Condamnation de banquet*, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante*, sig. I ii^v.

auctoritez inserees en ceste presente compilacion'.¹¹⁸ Even this deviation into dramatic form thus retains the vestiges of the compilatory function of the ships of fools, or Badius's and Drouyn's encyclopaedic discussion of the senses. Edwin Zeydel has argued that Brant's innovation with respect to his textual predecessors was to create a kind of 'rudimentary drama supported by woodcuts';¹¹⁹ here we find this dramatic potential fully realised. And as we will see in later chapters, the drama of shipwreck itself would be further exploited in texts drawing on the ship of fools.

The concluding, fourth part of the *Nef de sante*, the 'Traicte des passions de lame', makes explicit Chesnaye's inversion of the relationship between body and soul elaborated in the ship of fools tradition. Whereas the *Nef[s] des folz* condemned 'yvrongne[rie] et glouton[nerie]'¹²⁰ and 'voluptuosité corporelle'¹²¹ as sins of the flesh leading to spiritual perdition, here we find that the 'passions de lame' can hasten the shipwreck of the body:

Prins nous avons certaine experience
Des anciens bien pourvez de science
[Q]ue maintes gens par grant joye ou courroux
[P]ar crainte aussy qui laisse le cuer roux
Ont encouru diverse maladye
Tendant a mort plus souvent que la vie.¹²²

The final part of the 'Traicte', in particular, marks a departure from the moral censure of earlier *Nef* books, as the author considers the pleasures and health benefits of sex, and, far from decrying 'voluptuosité' and 'gloutonnerie', warns simply and without reproach against combining the two:

De charnelle copulation
Au present livre n'est faicte mention
Ne pour icelle est chose prohibee.
Instituee, ne aussi commandee
Tant pour honneur garder religieux
Que pour donner desir luxurieux

¹¹⁸ Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante*, sig. Iii^v - Iiii^r.

¹¹⁹ Brant, *Ship of Fools*, p. 10.

¹²⁰ Drouyn, *Nef des folz*, sig. c iii^{r-v}.

¹²¹ Ibid., sig. f iii^{r-v}.

¹²² Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante*, sig. q ii^r.

Mais des experts nous avons entendu
Que son usage (quand il est superflu)
Subitement et principalement
De lestomac apres le soulement
Repletion et apres gras morseaulx
Au corps humain induist de tresgrans maulx
Et son usage en moderation
De la sante fait conservation.¹²³

Such, barring a note from the printer on the final page, are the final words of the *Nef de sante*. Quite a contrast, then, to the dedications that conclude the *Nef des folz* or *Nef des folles*, in which the authors recommend themselves to the Virgin Mary and to the Holy Trinity, hoping for safe passage to the heavenly ‘port de salut’.

I.4 Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, shipwreck plays a crucial structuring role in the organising symbolism and allegorical logic of the family of *Nefs*. Even where the nautical detail revelled in by Brant’s French adaptors has faded, the underlying metaphor of (successful or disastrous) navigation remains central to the books’ promise of instruction.

Furthermore, as the significance of the ship and its journey shifts from text to text, and the generic and formal pressures to which the allegory is subjected vary, the implications of shipwreck itself are transformed. The spiritual shipwreck threatened by Brant’s text is at first associated with structural threats to the ship of the Church. Though it might, in retrospect, be tempting to read this anxiety as a proto-Reformist, internally directed examination of the ills of this institution at the turn of the sixteenth century, closer examination reveals that the ship of fools is concerned with the continuing threat posed by heresy.

¹²³ Chesnaye, *La Nef de sante*, sig. [q viii]^f.

The threat of spiritual shipwreck later fades from view, as from 1502 onwards, *Nefs* offer advice that is concerned entirely with the journey through the mortal life, and arrival at the ‘port de salut’ seems a less pressing concern. This shift to a more worldly purview for the ship-book is realised through both political and medical discourse; as we will see in Chapter Three and beyond, the related metaphors of ship of state and body politic persist, coming to present France as both a shipwreck-bound vessel and sick patient.

The proclaimed ‘utilité’ of the *Nefs* rests on their moral or practical instruction; the authors of the ship-books load their vessels with a cargo that, they claim, will help the reader to navigate the ‘perilz’ of their bodies and their world, so as to live a better—even a longer—life. In appealing to their readers to mend their ways, the ships of fools and their descendants perpetuate the tradition of the morality play, some in more explicitly dramatic forms; the repeated ‘exhortations’ of the *Nef des folles* are expanded and dramatised in the ‘Condamnation des Bancquetz’, when the *Nef de Sante* makes the ship into a stage. In the next chapter, we will see how the affective and theatrical potential of the ship—and the shipwreck—were later exploited by Erasmus and Rabelais.

Chapter Two

‘À deux doigtz près de la mort’:

From shipwreck to storm scene (and back again)

II.1 Introduction

If Brant’s *Narren Schyff* was the leading model of doomed seafaring at the turn of the century, the most vivid and celebrated mid-century exploration of the threat of shipwreck is surely the storm scene of Rabelais’s *Quart Livre* (chapters 18-24). Besides reworking, as I will argue, the hugely popular model of the ship of fools, Rabelais’s storm scene also draws notably on Teofilo Folengo’s macaronic mock epic *Baldus* and—in the revised version of 1552—on Desiderius Erasmus’s dialogue ‘*Naufragium*’.¹ Linguistically and intertextually rich, even by Rabelais’s standards, the episode has proved fertile ground for critics; it has often been a point of focus in broader Rabelaisian readings. In this chapter I argue, nonetheless, that much remains to be said about these chapters, but I will first address, at least briefly, the interpretative storm that has raged over the significance of these chapters.

Much scholarship on the subject has argued for singular, or at least dominant, readings of the storm scene, focused on one of three kinds of significance: theological, epic, or comic. Since the *Quart Livre* was published initially in 1548, and then in a much-expanded version of 1552, critics have also made much of the differences in tone and

¹ On the ancient and contemporary (mock-) epic precedents to Rabelais’s storm, see Mireille Huchon in Rabelais, *Œuvres Complètes*, p. 1524, n. 10. The ‘*Naufragium*’ was first published in 1523 as part of the *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae*. Folengo’s text appeared in several versions, of which the ‘*Toscolana*’ (1521) is most likely Rabelais’s source (see Barbara Bowen, ‘Folengo’, in *The Rabelais Encyclopedia*, ed. Elizabeth Chesney Zegura (Westport: Greenwood, 2004), pp. 78-79). See also Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative*, pp. 268-269: ‘[I]n chapters 18 to 22 of the *Quart Livre*, [Rabelais] incorporates themes and motifs from Lucian, The Acts of the Apostles, Folengo, and Erasmus’ *Naufragium*. All this is fair play according to the rules of Christian pilgrimage and classical *imitatio* which Renaissance poets and theorists resurrect and make their own’.

allegorical import between the two versions, particularly given that the storm scene itself was considerably changed in the intervening years. Michael Screech, for example, characterises the first version as ‘a mock-heroic classical storm’,² whereas, for him, the later scene stages a more precise Christian theological debate, in the light of certain conclusions of the Council of Trent. Edwin Duval, going further than Screech in his insistence on the difference of order between the editions of the *Quart Livre*, dismisses the 1548 version (in which the storm scene was the final episode) as ‘governed by no particular design at all’: only in the 1552 *Quart Livre* do we see ‘the constituent parts of a new and coherent *epic* design’.³ Dorothy Coleman, by contrast, is less convinced of Rabelais’s ‘serious’ pretensions (be they theological or epic). In her ‘Two Versions of the “Storm at Sea” Episode’,⁴ Coleman begins by minimising the religious significance of the scene: ‘there is only one positive point about religion’;⁵ ‘One must conclude that [Rabelais’s additions to the Storm scene] are not in themselves sufficient evidence for the view that Rabelais was using an episode like the *Storm at Sea* to focus the reader’s attention on the relation between human beings and God’.⁶ She then surmises that ‘Rabelais was working tentatively towards a comic romance’.⁷ While Coleman’s perspective no doubt provides a refreshing and stimulating counterpoint to the kind of analysis that might focus on Rabelais’s erudition at the expense of his farce, her reading, too, sacrifices the dialogic potential of the text in the interest of a monologic interpretation.

At the other end of the critical spectrum lies a concern for preserving multiple possibilities of meaning and resonance—what has been called the ‘plurality’ of the text—

² M.A. Screech, *Rabelais* (London: Duckworth, 1979), p. 341.

³ Edwin Duval, *The Design of Rabelais’s Quart Livre de Pantagruel* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), pp. 21-22 (my emphasis).

⁴ Dorothy Coleman, ‘Rabelais: Two Versions of the “Storm at Sea” Episode’, *French Studies*, 23.2 (1969), 113-130.

⁵ Coleman, ‘Two Versions’, p. 123.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

that emerged in the wake of Derridean concepts of ‘decentring’ and *différance*, perhaps most notably amplified in Terence Cave’s *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*.⁸ Cave explains that ‘[t]he notion of “plurality” is used to denote the character of a discourse which resists interpretative integration, not because it is obscure, or because it has several levels of meaning, but because it is set up in such a way as to block normal interpretative procedures’.⁹ Readings of Rabelais’s storm scene that have followed this example include those of Florence Weinberg in *Rabelais et les leçons du rire* which, as the title suggests, does not construe the ‘serious’ and ‘entertaining’ elements of Rabelais’s writing as distinct or opposed features, but indeed as closely interrelated and interdependent. With a similarly keen sense of nuance, Weinberg treats Screech’s claims as to the entirely transformed character of the 1552 scene with justifiable scepticism, arguing that ‘[l]e sens religieux fondamental se révèle derrière les échanges comiques entre Jean et Panurge, même avant les ajouts de 1552, adaptés du *Naufragium* d’Érasme’.¹⁰ Paul Smith’s reading of the storm scene is explicitly indebted to Cave’s cornucopian expositions, as well as to Weinberg’s, as his treatment of *copia* and *serio ludere* in ‘La tempête et les métamorphoses du vent’ makes apparent.¹¹

To embark on a reading of this episode that attempted to synthesise or respond to this wide range of voices (and the many more not mentioned here) would be beyond the scope of this chapter—even if such a synthesis were desirable. Instead, in what follows, I examine the storm scene of the *Quart Livre* in the context of other sixteenth-century

⁸ Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

⁹ ‘Introduction’, p. xx. For discussion of what was called the ‘guerre [...] contre les partisans de l’ambiguïté et de la pluralité de l’écriture de Rabelais’, see Terence Cave, Michel Jeanneret and François Rigolot, ‘Sur la prétendue transparence de Rabelais’, *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, 86.4 (1986), 709-716, and the response by Gérard Defaux, ‘Sur la prétendue pluralité du prologue de *Gargantua*: réponse d’un positiviste naïf à trois “illustres et treschevaleureux champions”’, which follows it (716-722).

¹⁰ Florence Weinberg, *Rabelais et les leçons du rire: paraboles évangéliques et néoplatoniciennes* (Orléans: Paradigme, 2000), Chapter 9, ‘Les Éléments comiques et religieux dans la *Tempête en mer* de Rabelais’, pp. 149-170 (p. 152) (first pub. in *ER*, 15 (1980), 129-140).

¹¹ Paul Smith, *Voyage et écriture: étude sur le Quart Livre de Rabelais* (Geneva: Droz, 1987), ‘Deuxième partie’, Chapter 2, ‘La Tempête et les métamorphoses du vent’, pp. 83-107 (pp. 86 and 88, respectively).

shipwreck narratives, seeking not to argue for any single ‘meaning’ or ‘message’ in the episode, but rather to explore how it subjects the commonplace of the storm-tossed ship to a particular set of generic, allegorical and descriptive pressures. Lestringant’s article ‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’ begins the work of situating the Rabelaisian narrative with respect to its contemporaries, identifying in the storm scene ‘l’entrecroisement de deux traditions; l’une, courtoise et amoureuse, assimilant l’amour au navigage; l’autre, évangélique et érasmienne, qui fait du péril en mer la pierre de touche de la vraie foi’.¹² My work here follows to some extent in the *sillage* of Lestringant, but it focuses in more detail on the relationship between the storm scenes of Rabelais and his predecessor Erasmus.¹³ The ‘family tree’ elaborated by Lestringant (which, he emphasises, is deliberately partial), recalls the genealogy of the ‘ship of fools’ texts set out by Metzger-Rambach, as seen in Chapter One, and which I sought to extend by including the texts of Champier and La Chesnaye. This chapter further examines the connections between these family trees; while much has been said about the importance of Brant’s text and the ship of fools tradition for Erasmus’s treatment of folly,¹⁴ there seems to have been little critical interest in Erasmus’s adoption of Brant’s vehicle, the ship itself, in the ‘Naufragium’. I argue that, through an increasing focus on the persons and in particular the bodies of those on board, Erasmus and then Rabelais elaborate new versions of the ship of fools, differentiating a range of strategies for responding to, and fighting against, the tempestuous elements.

¹² Lestringant, ‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’, p. 45.

¹³ Important works on this textual inheritance include Raymond Lebègue, ‘La tempête et les *Colloques* d’Érasme’ in ‘Rabelaisiana’, *BHR*, 10 (1948), 159-168 (pp. 162-166), and *idem*, ‘Rabelais, Last of the French Erasmians’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 12 (1949), pp. 91-100 (p. 98). Coleman (‘Two Versions’) gives a comparative account of the satirical and religious tone of the two scenes, pp. 120-121.

¹⁴ See, for example, André Gendre, *Humanisme et folie*; Ulrich Gaier, ‘Sebastian Brant’s “Narrenschiff” and the Humanists’, *PMLA*, 83.2 (1968), 266-270.

The growing focus on those on board instigated in the ‘Naufragium’ and the *Quart Livre* is matched by increasing attention to the material aspect of the ship as it disintegrates; as shipwreck ensues, the more richly elaborated nautical structure is subjected to a verbal picking-apart by Erasmus’s Adolph and then, more anxiously and more copiously, by Rabelais’s Panurge. The *Nef* books of Chapter One added greater and greater nautical detail to Brant’s ‘coque’, and then shifted from spiritual to bodily concerns; so, here, Erasmus’s and Rabelais’s storm scenes revel in material and bodily detail, establishing as they do so a kind of anatomy of shipwreck. What is maintained throughout is the satire of superstition and the theological allegory for which the scenes are so celebrated. Similarly, the concerns of the *Nefs* with modes of reading and with their own instructional and pleasurable value is revisited by Erasmus and Rabelais in the staging of various kinds of reading within the texts themselves, by the ‘strong readings’ performed by both authors on the commonplaces they inherit, and indeed in the ‘synergistic’ theology they both espouse and, in Rabelais’s case, dramatise. The theatrical terminology underwriting my analysis here is not mere ornament; it is part of the argument. For I want to keep the question of the spectatorial viewpoint constantly in view throughout this chapter. As first Erasmus restages the liminal (or rather littoral) position of the reader earlier explored in the *Nef* books, and then Rabelais removes the possibility of a secure perspective, the reader is drawn ever closer to the action. First hovering, as it were, off-stage, between the narration of the shipwreck survivor Adolph and the reactions and inquisition of his land-dwelling friend Antony, the reader eventually joins Alcofribas on board the stricken Thalamège, with no guarantee of escape or survival.

II.2 The traveller's tale and the stay-at-home listener: Erasmus's 'Naufragium'

Desiderius Erasmus's satirical dialogue 'Naufragium' describes a boat populated by sailors and passengers of various nationalities and religious orders, caught in a storm; as the winds and waves rage and they are confronted with their mortality, the passengers exhibit a panoply of superstitious religious and nautical practices. The Latin *Familiarium colloquiorum formulae* to which this belongs—a collection of dialogues intended initially to demonstrate good Latin usage to sixteenth-century schoolboys—were first published in Basel in 1518, though the 'Naufragium' was added later, first appearing in an edition of 1523.

It is possible to trace the flotsam and jetsam of the Erasmian shipwreck scene as it reappears consistently in early modern shipwreck narratives of many kinds. In their article on the 'fictionalising influence' of the dialogue on travel accounts of the period, Roger Stritmatter and Lynne Kositsky posit the 'Naufragium', 'perhaps the most vividly dramatic and readily available of such descriptions in Renaissance letters',¹⁵ as 'an influential storm template or paradigm that circulated in the literary milieu of Renaissance Europe',¹⁶ from Rabelais's storm scene through to the opening scenes of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Ariel's evocation of St Elmo's fire is just one of several elements of the Erasmian narrative that resurface again and again.¹⁷ In what follows, I will consider the most salient of these elements, dividing them into three categories—though, as will become apparent, all three are intertwined and interdependent, both in Erasmus's text, and in its 'shipwreckful' descendants.

¹⁵ Roger Stritmatter and Lynne Kositsky, 'Pale as Death: The Fictionalizing Influence of Erasmus' "Naufragium" on the Renaissance Travel Narrative', in *Discovering Shakespeare: A Festschrift in Honour of Isabel Holden*, ed. by Daniel Wright ([Montreal]: Concordia University Press, 2009) pp. 141-151 (p. 141).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁷ Ariel describes his 'performance' of the tempest in Act I Scene 2, lines 195-206. Stritmatter and Kositsky, 'Pale as Death', p. 148. See also my Conclusion.

II.2.i ‘Troubles over and done with are enjoyable’: The dynamics and pleasures of storytelling and reading

The colloquy itself begins *in medias res*; Adolph, an experienced traveller, has been recounting his adventures to a conspicuously land-dwelling companion, Antony, who exclaims, awestruck: ‘Terrible tales you tell! That’s what going to sea is like? God forbid any such notion should ever enter *my* head!’.¹⁸ The ‘Naufragium’ articulates the moral ambivalence associated with seafaring at the beginning of the sixteenth century (‘What fools are they that trust themselves to the sea!’ (140)), while also pointing, through Antony’s persistent questioning and evident fascination with the subject, to the pleasure still to be gained from witnessing—in narrative terms at least—the misfortune of others. His opening reticence—‘I’ve heard more than enough of disasters. When you’re recalling them I shudder as if I myself were sharing the danger’—is soon forgotten when Adolph hints at the next story to come; Antony responds ‘What, I beseech you?’ (139), and so the narrative begins. The tensions observed in Chapter One between the temptation of exploration and the folly of seafaring, or between the revelation and concealment of knowledge, are here dramatised in the conflicted responses of Adolph’s audience.

The dialogic form allows for a split perspective, presenting us with both the view of the secure ‘spectator’ (Antony) and, through the eyes of Adolph, those on board the ill-fated ship. Antony’s role as listener-spectator-‘reader’ of this scene also serves as a reminder of the connection in the ancient imagination between poetry and seafaring:

ADOLPH [...] Suddenly a fiery ball appeared beside him—a very bad sign to sailors when it’s a single flame, lucky when it’s double. Antiquity believed these were Castor and Pollux.

ANTONY What’s the connection with sailors? One was a horseman, the other a boxer.

ADOLPH This is the poets’ version. (139)

¹⁸ The colloquies were not translated into French in Erasmus’s lifetime. I cite the modern English translation here, referring to the original Latin only where a particular detail is to be highlighted. Desiderius Erasmus, ‘The Shipwreck’, in *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. by Craig Thompson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965), pp. 138-146 (p. 139). Further references to this text will be given as page numbers in the main body of my text.

Sea journeys, we are reminded, are part of a long symbolic tradition, being read for poetic and allegorical sense since the earliest Greek poets; accordingly, and as we might well expect, this great ‘storm template’ of the Renaissance is itself built upon earlier models and conventions. In one such commonplace, Antony—and by extension the reader of the dialogue—is drawn into the action by an invitation to compare his own experiences with what is being recounted: ‘Ever seen the Alps? [...] Those mountains are as warts compared with the waves of the sea’ (140). In this way reader and subject are bound together, but the dynamic of pathos in the text has been moved on from that of Brant and his adaptors. Whereas in the ship of fools tradition the readers are invited to empathise with those on board (being reminded of their common fate, since all of mankind is found on board), Erasmus’s reader is asked instead to sympathise, to do a different kind of imaginative work.

Not only is the reader emphatically *not* on board, but the ship’s community is given consideration in new ways, its characters and fates being made distinct by the detail of the narrative. Most importantly, not all of those on board may be classified as fools, as we will see later. Another distinct difference from Brant is that, in Erasmus, the shipwreck scene stages a very real danger of drowning, attested to by the account of the pitiful number of survivors at the end of the colloquy:

ANTONY How many [were rescued]?
ADOLPH Seven, but two of these died when brought to a fire.
ANTONY How many were you in the ship?
ADOLPH Fifty-eight.
ANTONY O cruel sea! (146)

Here again Antony’s character provides an affective response to Adolph’s narrative; he is an emotional and moral lens through which the tale is filtered. The role of the ‘spectator’—or more properly, in Erasmus’s case, audience—is given voice through

Antony's horrified exclamations, but also in the moments when the tale causes him to consider with some relief his own secure position, as at the end of the colloquy: 'I for my part would rather hear such tales than experience the events at first hand' (146). The pleasure of *ataraxia*, articulated in *De rerum natura* through the dynamics of spectatorship, as we saw above in the Introduction, and further explored in subsequent Renaissance storm and shipwreck scenes (as we will see in later chapters), is figured in Erasmus's dialogue as auditory pleasure, as articulated through the relationship between traveller-raconteur and stay-at-home listener. Crucially, the narrative (and the pleasure of both its telling and its reception) is made possible by Adolph's survival; for it is his presence as narrator of the scene which allows him to respond to Antony's horrified exclamations: 'To me, on the contrary, troubles over and done with are enjoyable' (139).¹⁹

For Antony, as for the readers that follow his example as 'listeners' to the tale, no small part of the narrative pleasure is derived from successfully decoding the generic and superstitious conventions littered throughout Adolph's story. First of all, those on board the ship are struck by fear, whose grounding is confirmed by the pallor of the captain's face:

ADOLPH Since the crew's struggle with the storm was hopeless, the skipper, pale as a ghost, at last came up to us.
ANTONY His pallor portends some great disaster. (140)

Antony's ability to correctly interpret this sign reflects both the superstitions of the nautical world and the existence of a conventional framework of markers in shipwreck narratives at the time Erasmus was writing. The colloquy is thus self-consciously both a satire on superstition and a pastiche of the type of narrative that perpetuated such superstition. The situation of the satirical scene on board a ship affords not only the

¹⁹ Erasmus's Latin, 'Imo iucundi sunt acti labores', recalls his *Adagia*, 1243: 'Iucundi acti labores'. See 'Naufragium', in *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami: recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrata* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen; Union académique internationale, 1969-), *ordinis* I, v.2, pp. 325-332 (p. 325, n. to line 9).

exploitation of the spiritual and bodily nautical metaphors seen in Dante and the *Nef* books, but a critique of (Catholic) credulity through a conflation with the time-honoured superstition of seafaring folk.

II.2.ii 'Be careful what you promise': Saints, superstition and satire

In their ignorance, misguided faith and superstition, the majority of the passengers described in the 'Naufragium' make up a new kind of ship of fools, whose inevitable shipwreck the narrator has survived. But Erasmus's critique of folly takes him beyond the critical scope of Brant and the authors of the French *Nefs*:

ADOLPH There you'd have seen what a wretched plight we were in: the sailors singing *Salve Regina*, praying to the Virgin Mother, calling her Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, Mistress of the World, Port of Salvation, flattering her with many other titles the Sacred Scriptures nowhere assign to her.

ANTONY What has she to do with the sea? She never went voyaging, I believe.

ADOLPH Formerly Venus was protectress of sailors, because she was believed to have been born of the sea. Since she gave up guarding them, the Virgin Mother has succeeded this mother who was not a virgin. (141)

The cult of the Virgin, whose popularity was apparent in Drouyn's closing declaration to the *Nef des folz* ('O glorieuse estoille de mer [...]. Je neuz jamais espoir quen toy mere de dieu et vierge immaculee'), is here aligned by Erasmus with a more general veneration of saints before God. Adolph himself rejects this course of action, and, just as he endorses direct reference to 'the Sacred Scriptures', he prefers to do without saintly intermediaries to his prayer: '[I] Went straight to the Father himself, reciting the Pater Noster. No saint hears sooner than he or more willingly grants what is asked' (142). In fact, Mary does help one passenger to safety, but in a rather more material sense: 'Since nothing else remained, one man seized a wooden statue of the Virgin Mother, now rotten and mouse-eaten, and, putting his arms around it, began to swim' (144). The 'Naufragium' might therefore be seen to represent a reclaiming of the ship of fools *topos* by Erasmus for the pre-Reform

evangelical cause. Where the authors of the ships of fools, as we saw in Chapter One, are concerned with defending the ship of the Church against the general peril of heresy, Erasmus's text is more precise in its critique of corrupt or useless practices inherent to Catholic culture in the period.²⁰

In particular, Erasmus's moral stricture is centred on the act of pilgrimage, which is imbricated in the frantic vows of the passengers:

ADOLPH Some promised many things to the wood of the Cross at such and such a place; others, again, to that in some other place. The same with respect to the Virgin Mary, who reigns in many places; and they think the vow worthless unless you specify the place.

ANTONY Ridiculous! As if the saints don't dwell in heaven.

ADOLPH Some pledged themselves to become Carthusians. There was one who promised to journey to St. James at Compostella barefoot, bareheaded, clad only in a coat of mail, begging his bread besides.

ANTONY Did nobody remember Christopher? (141)

As Antony's logic suggests, the more cogent response might have been to pray to the patron saint of sailors and travellers. Similarly, Antony suggests a biblical example that might more reasonably have guided these Christians in need: 'I'm surprised nobody thought of the apostle Paul, who was once shipwrecked himself, and when the ship broke leaped overboard and reached land. No stranger to misfortune, he knew how to help those in distress' (142). But for the keen-eyed reader, an echo of Paul's shipwreck is indeed present in the description of the attempts to save the ship: 'the skipper undergirded it with ropes both fore and aft, for fear it might break to pieces' (Acts 27:17, 'they used cables to undergird the ship').²¹ As we will see in later Renaissance storm scenes, Paul provides a particularly important model for the survival of shipwreck in both practical and theological terms.

²⁰ That this critique hit home is evinced by the censorship of the passage on the *Salve Regina* by the Sorbonne; see Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, p. 327.

²¹ Coleman notes that 'Erasmus [often] uses Latin words that have associations with the Vulgate: *naulerus* [= skipper] is used by Plautus, Terence and the Vulgate, Acts 27.11. The usual Latin word would be *gubernator*'. 'Two Versions', p. 130, n. 16.

Far from the ideal example of Paul, though, the passengers on Erasmus's boat demonstrate quite astonishing degrees of cupidity in spite of their perilous position, showing themselves to be unwilling to part with their goods even to save their own lives. One passenger, 'a certain Italian who had served as legate to the King of Scotland' (140),²² resists the captain's instruction to throw his treasured belongings overboard in order to lighten the ship, preferring to go down with his riches rather than surviving without them. This Italian passenger embodies the ancient connection between seafaring and grasping avarice, as described by Blumenberg; we will see in later chapters that this kind of character recurs with reliable frequency in the shipwreck scenes of late Renaissance travel narrative. But in respect of Erasmus's characters, the avaricious impulse is for the most part expressed not through an unwillingness to part with existing goods, but through a striking and often contradictory concern with promises of material goods in connection with particular saints. In particular, those on board exhibit a fervent belief that any and all saints—even an unnamed one at the moment of greatest desperation—will intercede on their behalf. One passenger did indeed call on Christopher, but only in the following, less than devout, terms:

ADOLPH I couldn't help laughing as I listened to one chap, who in a loud voice (for fear he wouldn't be heard) promised a wax taper as big as himself to Christopher in the tallest church in Paris—a mountain rather than a statue. While he was proclaiming this at the top of his lungs, insisting on it again and again, an acquaintance who chanced to be standing by nudged him with his elbow and cautioned: 'Be careful what you promise. Even if you sold all your goods at auction, you couldn't pay for it.' Then the other, lowering his voice,—so Christopher wouldn't overhear him, of course!—said, 'Shut up, you fool. Do you suppose I'm serious? If I once touch land, I won't give him a tallow candle.' (142)

While, elsewhere, Antony provides a model for the allegorical interpretation of and affective response to the tale, here Adolph himself indicates that, for all the pathos of the

²² For Preserved Smith, the presence of this character is what 'serves to clinch the matter' of Erasmus's 'shipwreck' being inspired by real-life events: 'Adolph mentions among the passengers an Italian ambassador to the king of Scotland, and [...] just at this time the Scotch [*sic*] government was carrying on a lively correspondence with the Holy See'. *A Key to the Colloquies of Erasmus* (Cambridge, MA; Oxford: Harvard University Press; OUP, 1927), pp. 19-20.

scene as it reaches its dramatic height, laughter is a sanctioned response to the folly and superstition of the sailors and passengers; on a par with this moment is Adolph's farcical description of an old priest, '[s]tripped to his underclothes': 'standing so in the middle of the ship, he preached to us a sermon [...] on the five truths concerning the benefit of confession' (143). In this, as in other respects, Erasmus offers a foretaste of what is to come in the Rabelaisian storm. He also anticipates Rabelais's exploration of faith and works through the example of a pair of priests who prioritise the finer points of confessional doctrine above practical efforts to survive: 'although they had confessed to each other on the ship, nevertheless some condition—I don't know what—had been forgotten. There on the edge of the ship they confess anew, and each lays his hands on the other. While they're doing this, the lifeboat goes down' (145).

The disingenuous passenger mocked by Adolph, though conforming to the narrative expectations of Antony in turning to Christopher, epitomises simultaneously the qualities of obsession with the material (associated with the continuing reliquary culture) and avarice, both seen by Erasmus to be prevalent in the Church at the time. Another of Erasmus's colloquies, 'Perigrinatio religionis ergo' ('A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake'), addresses these themes in greater depth. The pair of characters in dialogue are 'Ogygius—Mr Gullible—[who] returns to refute accounts of his death and to prove to the likes of Menedemus—Mr Stay-at-Home—the profits of pilgrimage'.²³ The perceived connections in the period between pilgrimage and merchant trade were later satirised in the *Livre des marchans* (c. 1534), which, as Williams notes, '[borders] on fiction, being ostensibly authored by the Lord Pantapole (one who can sell anything), "proche voysin de

²³ Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative*, p. 20. Williams describes the impact of Erasmus's critique of pilgrimage: 'Those who argue that the Renaissance saw lasting changes effected in the practice and writing of pilgrimage credit Erasmus with an exemplary understanding of the force of change, and more than one critic cites this text in particular as marking a decisive shift in the times' (p. 20).

Pantagruel”’.²⁴ The text offers a prodigious list of the things these *marchans* sell, including ‘De pain, de vin, d’huyle, de laict, de beurre, de fromage, d’eau, de sel, de feu, de fumigation, ceremonies, encensemens’ but also, more alarmingly, ‘des ames, et esperitz des vivans’, and ‘de petis enfans nasquis et non point encore naiz’.²⁵ As Williams observes: ‘It takes some time before the reader realizes that the merchants in question are in fact priests, and that the pamphlet is an attack on pilgrimage and the sale of indulgences.’²⁶ For the author of the *Livre des marchans*, as for Erasmus, ‘the Church has commodified perception, so that we now read the world no longer as scripture, but as if it were a shopping list’.²⁷ The futility of material offerings to spiritual entities is encapsulated in Erasmus’s ‘Naufragium’ by Adolph’s dry comment on the effect of the Italian legate’s treasures being, finally, thrown overboard: ‘Soon afterwards the winds, unappeased by our offerings, broke the ropes and tore the sails to pieces’ (140). These ‘pieces’ are described in detail by Erasmus, who demonstrates a particular concern for nautical language; to a greater extent than in any of the *Nef* books, the reader is given a sense of the parts of the ship, and the parts of the body, involved and at stake in the shipwreck scene.

II.2.iii Bodies and boathooks: Disintegration and its affective impact

Erasmus’s attention to nautical detail, with references to the ‘crow’s nest’ (*galea*), ‘topmast’ (*summo malo*), ‘middle hatches’ (*medios foros*), ‘spars’ (*antennis*) and ‘tiller’ (*clauo*), generate an *effet de réel*, or, as some consider it, *du réel*, attributing some of the

²⁴ Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative*, p. 280. For more on the *Livre des marchans* see Gabrielle Berthoud, *Anthoine Marcourt, réformeur et pamphlétaire du ‘Livre des marchans’ aux Placards de 1534* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), especially Chapter 5, ‘Le Livre des marchans’, pp. 111-156.

²⁵ Anthoine Marcourt, *Le Livre des marchans* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], c. 1534), fol. 7^r, quoted in Williams, *Pilgrimage*, p. 280.

²⁶ Williams, *Pilgrimage*, p. 280.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

detail to a real shipwreck of 1516.²⁸ This linguistic detail moves from the illustrative to the practical as the improvised use of materials to hand proves to be crucial in the desperate struggle to survive: ‘One person snatches an oar, another a boathook, another a tub, another a bucket, another a plank; and, each relying on his own resources, they commit themselves to the waves’ (144), and Adolph himself survives by clinging to the stump of the mast.²⁹ Here is perhaps another echo of the account in Acts of Paul’s survival of shipwreck:

[T]hey ran the ship aground; and [...] the hinder part [of the ship] was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners [...]. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land. (Acts 27. 41-44)

The sweep of Erasmus’s critique is not universal, as the possibility of positive modes of action is presented in the form of a few characters among the foolish throng. The skipper, in particular, takes practical action to ensure the best chances of survival, and warns the passengers, when he can do no more, to prepare themselves for the sinking of the ship and to put their faith in God. Like Adolph, who ‘confessed silently to God’, there is one other passenger whose behaviour escapes reproach: ‘none behaved more calmly than a certain woman who was suckling a baby [...]. She was the only one who didn’t scream, weep, or make promises; she simply prayed in silence, clasping her little boy’ (143). Besides providing an exemplary counterpoint to the histrionics of the other passengers, this woman provides a virtuous counterpart to the fetishised Marian figure of the sailors’ superstition. ‘[T]he first of them all to reach shore’ (144), having been cast off on a makeshift raft by Adolph and a group of fellow passengers, she also, from an affective perspective, adds a distinct note of pathos to the tale.

²⁸ See, for instance, Preserved Smith, *A Key to the Colloquies of Erasmus*, pp. 19-21.

²⁹ On the Homeric and Christian significance of clinging to the mast, see below, Chapter Two, II.3.ii.

The majority of passengers are not so lucky, and the violence of the scene is brutal: ‘While we were still tossing beside the ship, which was rolling from side to side at the will of the waves, the broken rudder smashed the thigh of the man who was holding on to the left end of the stump. So he was torn away’ (145). It is little wonder that Adolph’s tales make Antony shudder, and such affective responses are also dramatised within the primary narrative, as Adolph describes how, after much struggle, and having swallowed their fair share of saltwater, a lucky few are rescued by locals:

We were carried far enough in for the inhabitants of the place to see our plight. Groups of them rushed to the shore, and taking off hats and coats and sticking them on poles urged us toward themselves and by lifting their arms to heaven indicated their pity for our lot. (144)

Standing on the coast were men—hardy fellows and used to the water—who by means of extremely long poles, held out from one to the other, braced themselves against the force of the waves; so that the one farthest out held his pole to the swimmer. (146)

The locals’ emotional and physical shoreline responses to the scene anticipate the ‘framing’ of Adolph’s account with the responses of Antony, who in turn prompts and guides the reader’s interpretative work.³⁰

As we have seen so far in this chapter, the positioning of the narrator on board the ship, and the particular focus on the material culture associated with the Church, complicates the significance of the shipwreck as it was first elaborated in the ship of fools tradition. The ancient notion of the folly of seafaring, articulated by Antony in response to Adolph’s narrative, is bound up with contemporary concerns about the motivations for sea travel, most notably, as we have seen, in the close association of trade and pilgrimage. In the drama of the ‘Naufragium’, the spectator-listener remains on-shore, and is glad of his own security, but the framing scene of narration (which we know to be on land, since Antony has never been to sea) is contrasted with the distinctly embodied location of the narrative itself, firmly on board the stricken ship. Perhaps most telling of all is Antony’s

³⁰ Paul Smith suggests that Antony also provides an interpretative guide to the later *Quart Livre* storm scene: ‘Antoine indique au lecteur rabelaisien le chemin à suivre’, *Voyage et écriture*, p. 88.

own description of the stories' affective and corporeal effect; as we saw earlier, they make him 'shudder as if [he himself] were sharing the danger'. We turn now to one of the many descendants of Erasmus's shipwreck scene, in which the focalisation of the body, and the play on narrative perspective, is pushed further still.

II.3 'Il nous convient evertuer sus poine de faire naufrage': Rereading (in) the *Quart Livre* storm scene

Much has been written about the influence of Erasmus's dialogue on the storm scene in Rabelais's *Quart Livre* (Chapters 18-24). Some behaviour of those on board does, of course, echo the foolish panic narrated by Adolph, but the pathetic figure of Panurge, vomiting, gibbering and soiling his breeches, brings a new comic dimension, and draws a rich array of intertextual connections that move the *topos* on from Erasmus's satire. In particular, Erasmus's innovation in (partially) destabilising the spectatorial perspective is taken further still by Rabelais, whose reworking of the scene is narrated entirely from within the ship, with no land in sight. And, crucially, the central event of Rabelais's book does not conclude with a wreck; the crew's adventurous journey, and thus the narrative of the *Quart Livre*, continues. In what follows, I will consider the implications of these distinctions.

While the whole of the crew of the Thalamège is implicated in the drama of the storm scene, and indeed theirs is not the only ship in danger, the trio of Pantagruel, Panurge and Frère Jean have often formed the critical focus for interpretations of the episode.³¹ Such readings find in Panurge (who prays ineffectively, and does nothing to help) and Frère Jean (who labours ineffectively, and blasphemes constantly) polar opposites, extremes of excess or deficit between which Pantagruel forms an ideal, Christ-

³¹ See, for example, Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, pp. 88-89.

like, *aurea mediocritas*. Pantagruel demonstrates both fear and bravery,³² faith and works, as he begs for God's mercy, and holds the mast firm:

Pantagruel preablement avoir imploré l'ayde du grand Dieu Servateur et faicte oraison publique en fervente devotion par l'advis du pilot, tenoit l'arbre fort et ferme[.] (584)

Allors feut ouye une piteuse exclamation de Pantagruel disant à haulte voix. 'Seigneur Dieu, saulve nous. Nous perissons. Non toutesfoys advieigne selon nos affections. Mais ta sainte volonté soit faicte.' (590)

Pantagruel's kind of synergism, embodying the exemplary middle position between Frère Jean and Panurge, is shown by Screech to be derived from the biblical example of Paul.³³ Paul may thus be seen as a doubly crucial model in this story of shipwreck narrative; not only is his account of his own shipwreck an important model for Erasmus's dialogue (indeed, having survived no less than three shipwrecks (2 Corinthians 11. 25) he is something of an exemplary survivor), but his teachings, also in Corinthians, on *sunergoi* ('workers (or labourers) together with God') underpin the theological allegory read in Rabelais's storm scene.

The focus of my reading here, while addressing several interwoven allegorical strands in the storm episode, will be on the character of Panurge. This is because, unlike Pantagruel, who is held up in much twentieth-century criticism as embodying the syncretic ideal, it is the incompetent sidekick who seems to live on in the sixteenth-century imagination as the emblematic Rabelaisian seafarer.³⁴ The sixteenth-century readers of Rabelais who perpetuate Panurge's afterlife in travel writing, both para-Rabelaisian and beyond, can be seen to be responding to Rabelais's own direction and designs. For, of all the figures in *Quart Livre* 18-24, it is Panurge who is the locus of the tremendous

³² On Pantagruel's heroic fear in contrast with Panurge's, see Screech, *Rabelais*, pp. 309-310.

³³ See *ibid.*, pp. 345-340, especially p. 348.

³⁴ See not only the *Disciple de Pantagruel (Navigations de Panurge)*, ed. by Guy Demerson and Christiane Lauvergnat-Gagnière (Paris: Nizet, 1982), but also responses to Panurge offered by Jean de Léry and Jean-Arnaud Bruneau de Rivedoux, discussed in Chapter Four, below.

descriptive, phonetic and superstitious—not to mention excretory—excess that, I argue, transforms the sense and the outcome of the storm scene *topos* that Rabelais had inherited.

II.3.i ‘O que troys et quatre foyz heureulx sont ceux qui plantent chous’: Panurge’s storm

As the tempest mounts in Chapter 18, Panurge has, already, ‘du contenu en son estomach bien repeu les poissons scatophages’ (582), a play on the title of the Erasmian colloquy ‘Ichthyophagia’ (‘A Fish Diet’), yet another satire on superstitious practices. Like the passengers of the ‘Naufragium’, Panurge begs the mercy of all the saints he can think of, as well as the ‘sacrée Vierge’, and wishes to make his confession (‘*Confiteor*’); he even demands that the others help him to make his will. His fear, repeatedly manifested in bodily terms, makes Antony’s shuddering response to Adolph’s narrative look positively Stoic by contrast; even if the reader has never set foot on board a ship, Panurge’s queasiness might prove contagious, so vividly is it described.³⁵ At the end of the chapter, and in the beginning of the next, Panurge becomes incoherent—and incontinent—with fear:

Bou bou, bou bous bous. C’est faict de moy. Je me conchie de male raige de paour. Bou bou, bou bou. Otto to to to to ti. Otto to to to to ti. Bou bou bou, ou ou ou bou bou bous bous. Je naye. Je meurs. Bonnes gens je naye. (583)

As Paul Smith has observed, Panurge’s stasis and verbal excess is the inverse of Frère Jean’s fruitless labour: ‘Alors que le moine déborde d’une énergie qui est en fait peu efficace, Panurge, le cul sur le tillac, se lamente et sa peur s’exprime par une diarrhée qui

³⁵ While, to my knowledge, no in-depth study of the cognitive or bodily repercussions of literary nausea has (yet) been pursued, the potential for the application of cognitive theories of ‘kinésie’ and the functioning of mirror neurons to literary studies has been explored by Guillemette Bolens in *Le Style des gestes: corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire* (Lausanne: Bibliothèque d’Histoire de la Médecine et de la Santé, 2008); see, in particular, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-33.

ne reste pas seulement verbale.’³⁶ This overwhelming panic extends to Panurge’s

description of the physical effects of the storm on their ship:

Zalas les vettes sont rompues, le Proudenou est en pieces, les Cosses esclattent, l’arbre du hault de la guatte plonge en mer: la carine est au Soleil, nos Gumenes sont presque tous rauptz. Zalas, Zalas, où sont nos boulingues? Tout est frelore bigoth. Nostre trinquet est avau l’eau. Tout est frelore bigoth [...]. Pour dieu saulvons la brague: du fernel ne vous souciez. Bebebe bous bous, bous. (583)

In the mouth of Panurge, technical nautical language is mangled, as Robert Marichal observes in his commentary on the *Quart Livre*. Having established that ‘guatte’ in this context must indicate ‘le sommet du grand mâ’t’, he concludes that ‘il ne saurait y avoir de ‘m[â]t du hault de la guatte’ [...]. C’est Panurge qui parle, Panurge qui ne connaît rien à la marine et qui perd complètement la tête [...] il emploi un terme ridicule!’³⁷ Besides linguistically piling phallus upon phallus³⁸ (while fretting about their collapse), Panurge idiotically prioritises the ‘brague’ (the rope holding the cannon in place) while abandoning the ‘fernel’, which controls the rudder. The folly of the majority of the passengers in the ‘Naufragium’ is condensed into the character of Panurge; as François Rigolot has put it, ‘au lieu de mettre dans sa nef une multitude de gens insensés ou vicieux, [Rabelais] concentre la pluralité des manies en un seul personnage, Panurge, la nef des fous faite homme’.³⁹ In a transformation that echoes the shift observed in Chapter One from ship to body, this thematic concentration makes of Panurge the embodiment of folly. As we have seen, Panurge is charged with the reverence of saints formerly shared among sailors and passengers in the ‘Naufragium’, but his folly is primarily manifested in linguistic and technical terms.

³⁶ Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, p. 88.

³⁷ Robert Marichal, ‘*Quart Livre*: commentaires’, *ER*, 5 (1964), pp. 65-162, p. 80.

³⁸ The phallic significance of the mast is perhaps most vividly exploited in Lucian’s description, in the *True History*, of men ‘engaged in a strange form of sailing’: ‘They lie on their backs on the water, and erecting their organs—which are very large—they spread sails on them, holding the sheets in their hands, and as soon as the wind strikes them away they sail’. Lucian, ‘A True History’, in *Selected Dialogues*, trans. by C. D. N. Costa (Oxford: OUP, 2005), pp. 203-233, II.45, p. 232.

³⁹ François Rigolot, ‘Rabelais, rhétoriqueur?’, *Cahiers de l’Association internationale des études françaises*, 30 (1978), 87-103.

In fact, it might be argued that Panurge's nautically senseless acts belie, homonymically, a sound semantic and allegorical logic; it might for instance be too late to save Panurge's 'brague' (breeches), given his initial fearful reaction to the storm, but it would not be surprising if he were keen to preserve his codpiece and its contents. The significance of the *braguette* in Rabelais has itself been the subject of much discussion.⁴⁰ When Panurge abandons his *braguette* in the *Tiers Livre*, its lack is experienced as that of his source of security precisely against shipwreck: 'En tel estat se praesanta davant Pantagruel: le quel trouva le desguisement estrange, mesmement ne voyant plus sa belle et magnifique braguette, en laquelle il souloit comme en l'ancre sacre constituer son dernier refuge contre tous naufragees d'adversité' (372). For Panurge, we might understand that to lose the 'brague' would be to lose all sense of self, and all hope of survival; for the reader, who is encouraged by some critics to see in the *braguette* a symbol of plenitude and 'pluralité', the ensuing shipwreck might be an interpretative one. But this nugget of fool's wisdom, if it is one, is, as we have seen, submerged and overwhelmed by the rest of Panurge's nonsensical, onomatopoeic outpourings.

Critics have differed in their appraisal of Rabelais's nautical language as creating an *effet du réel* or, conversely, *de réel*. Philippe Denoix⁴¹ and Arthur Tilley⁴² seek to establish correlations between Rabelais's own encounters and the nautical terms he uses. Robert Marichal's comments on Rabelais's nautical language follow the pattern noted earlier of dividing firmly the 1548 and 1552 versions of the storm scene, arguing that in the first version his vocabulary is that of the *Levant*, whereas in the later, expanded storm scene, perhaps thanks to Jacques Cartier, the language is predominantly Western.⁴³ Denoix even argues that Rabelais had experienced a 'storm at sea' of his own, but rather

⁴⁰ See Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*, 'Rabelais', pp. 183-222.

⁴¹ Philippe Denoix, 'Les Connaissances nautiques de Rabelais', in *François Rabelais: Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort, 1553-1953* (Geneva: Droz, 1953), pp. 171-180.

⁴² Arthur Tilley, 'Rabelais and Geographical Discovery: II. Jacques Cartier', *MLR*, 3.3 (1908), 209-217.

⁴³ Marichal, 'Le Nom des vents chez Rabelais', *ER*, 1 (1956), 7-28.

surprisingly, given the amount of literature generated by this subject, concludes that ‘il est regrettable que Rabelais n’ait pas développé cette partie maritime, mais sans doute estimait-il que les questions maritimes étaient trop techniques et l’apanage de trop peu de gens pour mériter d’être longuement traitées’.⁴⁴ What seems constant among these appraisals is a frustration at the tension between the apparent ‘authenticity’ of Rabelais’s language and his inconsistency in mixing ancient with contemporary terms, and drawing on a wide range of regional and dialectal variations.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Screech sees the precise sources of Rabelais’s language as subsidiary to the overall effect: ‘Many of the words which Rabelais uses are so rare that few could have understood them all [...]; taken together they provide a general impression of stormy chaos and the fury of the tempestuous elements.’⁴⁶ As Sainéan writes of the storm scene in the conclusion to his chapter on Rabelais’s nautical language:

L’accumulation des termes et des détails nautiques y est tel qu’il a pu faire croire à un entassement à tort et à travers. Cependant chacun de ces termes, pris à part et confronté avec les documents de l’époque, se révèle exact et—quelques réminiscences de l’Antiquité mises à part—parfaitement en usage. Leur ensemble nous offre le tableau le plus complet, le plus vivant, le plus impressionnant de l’activité bruyante et confuse des matelots aux moments les plus critiques de leur vie de bord, en même temps qu’un recueil unique, d’une richesse incomparable, des termes familiers aux marins de l’Océan et de la Méditerranée, à l’époque de la Renaissance.⁴⁷

If it was unlikely that many readers could have known and understood all of the terms used, for those readers who did have the technical expertise to identify this nautical heteroglossia the linguistic patchwork effect would only serve to heighten the sense of Panurge’s confusion, and add to the comic, as well as the dramatic effect. Rabelais’s

⁴⁴ Denoix, ‘Connaissances nautiques’, p. 180.

⁴⁵ For a full account of this variety, see Sainéan, *La Langue de Rabelais*, vol. 1, Chapter 3: ‘Navigation’, pp. 93-125.

⁴⁶ Screech, *Rabelais*, p. 345.

⁴⁷ Sainéan, *La Langue de Rabelais*, vol. 1, p. 125. Sainéan credits Rabelais with introducing a huge range of nautical language to a non-specialist audience for the first time: ‘Des cent cinquante termes ou à peu près qui constituent le vocabulaire nautique de Rabelais, plus de la moitié trouve dans son livre, et tout particulièrement dans le “naviguaige”, leur premier témoignage littéraire’ (p. 123). Sainéan is particularly insistent in this passage on the deliberate and thorough nature of Rabelais’s research, contradicting in this the earlier opinion of Augustine Jal (*Glossaire nautique*, Paris, 1848) who, Sainéan reports, imputes Rabelais’s technical knowledge to ‘le “hasard” des rencontres sur les quais des ports’.

linguistic ‘inconsistency’ is unlikely to be, as Denoix seems to view it, the disappointing product of an incomplete research project, but rather a deliberate strategy of linguistic disorientation that contributes mimetically to the dizzying churn of the scene as a whole.

That this is so becomes especially clear when we re-focus our attention on Panurge, and on the words he uses to express his fear:

Pleust à Dieu et à la benoïste, digne, et sacrée Vierge que maintenant, je diz tout à ceste heure, je feusse en terre ferme bien à mon aise. O que troys et quatre foys heureulx sont ceux qui plantent chous. O Parces que ne me fillastez vous pour planteur de Chous? O que petit est le nombre de ceulx à qui Juppiter a telle faveur porté, qu’il les a destinez à planter chous. Car ilz ont tousjours en terre un pied: l’autre n’en est pas loing. (582-583)

Besides the parody of the doctrine of predestination enacted by these words, it is notable that, at the height of his panic, the figure with whom Panurge would give anything to trade places is none other than the *planteur de chous* previously encountered by Alcofribas inside the giant’s mouth in the infamous episode of *Pantagruel* 32.⁴⁸ Critics from Erich Auerbach to Terence Cave have identified this cabbage planter as the epitome of the familiar (though located in the most unfamiliar of settings): ‘tout comme chez nous’.⁴⁹ His return in the storm scene serves as a marker of how far from home, safety and certainty the crew of the Thalamège has travelled.

The juxtaposition between Panurge’s real situation and that of the imagined *planteur de chous* is informed by an ancient and fundamental conceptual opposition

⁴⁸ On the world in *Pantagruel*’s mouth, see Andrea Frisch, ‘*Quod vidimus testamur*: Testimony, Narrative Agency and the World in *Pantagruel*’s Mouth’, *French Forum*, 24.3 (1999), 261-283; Lestringant, ‘Dans la bouche des géants (*Pantagruel*, 32; *Gargantua*, 38)’, in *François Rabelais: Aurelien d’Aragon*, ed. by Françoise Charpentier and Marie-Claire Dumas (Paris: Université Paris VII, 1989), pp. 43-52; Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative*, pp. 273-288.

⁴⁹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Doubleday, 1957), Chapter 11, ‘The World in *Pantagruel*’s Mouth’, pp. 229-249 (p. 237); Terence Cave, ‘Travelers and Others: Cultural Connections in the Works of Rabelais’ in *François Rabelais: Critical Assessments*, ed. by Jean-Claude Carron (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), pp. 39-56: ‘planting cabbages is virtually a proverbial expression connoting the everyday and the domestic’ (p. 45). Cave notes the recurrence of the cabbage-planting image in Montaigne, I.20: ‘Que philosophe c’est apprendre à mourir’: ‘Je veux [...] que la mort me treuve plantant mes chous, mais nonchalant d’elle, et encore plus de mon jardin imparfait’, Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, ed. by Pierre Villey and Verdun L. Saulnier, rev. edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), p. 89. See also Julie Amerlynck, *Phraséologie potagère: les noms de légumes dans les expressions françaises contemporaines* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters, 2006), pp. 37-39, which, surprisingly, makes no mention of the sexual connotation of cabbage-planting.

between seafaring and agriculture: as Hans Blumenberg asks, ‘What could have motivated the move from land to sea but a refusal of nature’s meagre offerings, the monotony of agricultural labour?’.⁵⁰ Just as the *planteur de chous* in Pantagruel’s mouth throws the strangeness of his surroundings into relief by dint of his familiarity, the imagined *planteur de chous* in the storm scene is a reminder of all that is absent from navigation, and in particular, from the storm scene: stability, a limited horizon perhaps, but also a sense of rootedness. That this rootedness is, in *Pantagruel*, situated upon the tongue is surely no coincidence. Nor is it coincidental that the very moment in the *Quart Livre* when Panurge realises—and laments—his distance from all that is familiar and comfortable (what we might call ‘home’, or simply *terra firma*), that all linguistic competence is uprooted, and he begins to speak ‘in tongues’. As might be expected, Rabelais’s cabbage-planter has further bodily, and specifically sexual, connotations since, as Sainéan has noted:

‘L’agriculture, dès la plus haute antiquité, a été féconde en termes de comparaison érotique. [...] De là les métaphores tirées des notions *labourer* et *champ*’.⁵¹ If the well-established phallic symbolism of the ship’s mast is, as we have seen, richly exploited in Panurge’s panic, so too is his wish to be on dry land figured through a sexualised desire for survival. And if Panurge’s literal and spiritual panic during the storm is represented by a fear of sexual failure, then its counterpart lies in the expression a desire for the earthy, everyday ploughing of fertile fields.

Rabelais’s dually inflected cabbage-planter also, significantly, bears a close resemblance to a pair of characters encountered in Lucian’s *True History*. Their ship having been swallowed whole by a whale ‘about one hundred and seventy miles long’,⁵² the narrator and seven companions set off on foot to explore the landscape of the whale’s tongue: ‘So we went on eagerly and came across an old man and a youth working very

⁵⁰ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 9.

⁵¹ Sainéan, *La Langue de Rabelais*, vol. 2, pp. 302-303.

⁵² Lucian, ‘A True History’, 2.30, p. 213.

hard in a garden, which they were irrigating with water from the spring.’⁵³ When the travellers have told the old man their own story, he reciprocates:

Well, strangers, I am a Cypriot by birth. I set out from my country on a trading ship with my son [...] and I sailed for Italy with a mixed cargo on a large ship, which you probably noticed wrecked in the whale’s mouth. As far as Sicily we had an untroubled voyage; but there we were caught in a violent gale and carried out to the ocean for three days, where we encountered the whale and were swallowed up crew and all: the others were killed, and only the two of us survived. We buried our companions, built a temple to Poseidon, and now live this life, growing vegetables and living on fish and fruit.⁵⁴

The significant distinction between these men and Rabelais’s *planteur de chous* lies in a sense of belonging; Lucian’s tongue-farmers are not natives but the survivors of shipwreck, whereas the cabbage-planter in Pantagruel’s mouth has known no other place, and has only heard rumours of the world outside: ‘l’on dist bien que hors d’icy y a une terre neufve où ilz ont et Soleil et Lune: et tout plein de belles besoignes: mais cestuy cy est plus ancien’ (331). The pair encountered on the tongue in the ‘True History’, by contrast with the *planteur de chous*, who is perfectly at home, have had to rebuild themselves after the disaster of shipwreck: ‘Who are you, strangers? Are you sea-gods, or just unfortunate men like us? For we are men and bred on the land, but now we have become creatures of the sea and we swim around with this beast that contains us.’⁵⁵ The ‘True History’ thus offers, through the improvisational agency of the shipwrecked father and son, a glimpse of life going on beyond what is often the point of narrative climax, or the end of the story: the catastrophe of shipwreck. The attempt to recover a sense of ‘home’—or to atone for the sin of seafaring—is articulated through agriculture, but the pair cannot return to *terra firma*: their ‘land’ is not fixed, but rather like a purgatory state.

⁵³ Lucian, ‘A True History’ 2.33, p. 214.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.34, p. 215.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.33, p. 214.

II.3.ii ‘Ne tenoys je l’arbre sceurement des mains?’: The first retrospective reading

For Panurge, the loss of rootedness is not made permanent: the crew of the Thalamège are brought to the brink of shipwreck, but are able to save themselves from utter destruction. Terence Cave writes of Rabelais’s narrative being characterised by a certain kind of *peripeteia* or the possibility ‘of a return from the alien Other’,⁵⁶ and the ability of the crew to prevent the seemingly inevitable (indeed the fate effectively resigned to by Panurge) is of enormous importance to the allegorical sense of this episode. Raymond Lebègue argues that ‘Rabelais does not reproduce the tragic aspect of Adolphus’ narrative, in which only five out of fifty-eight lives are saved from the wreck, for this would be incongruous in a novel which sets out to entertain’.⁵⁷ But, as we have seen through Antony’s response to Adolph’s tale, the narration of a shipwreck *is* entertaining, for all its horror. I would argue that the positive outcome for the Thalamège is linked not only to the aim of readerly pleasure, but also, and perhaps more significantly, to the transformation of Erasmus’s allegory effected by Rabelais. To show this, I will explore in some detail two of the retrospective interpretations of the significance of the storm staged in the *Quart Livre*: the first on board ship, shortly after the storm has died down; the second on dry land, once the *Pantagruélistes* have come ashore.

In the first instance, the position of the ‘spectator’ or Erasmus’s embodied, shuddering listener is moved on as the narration is centred on the action on board, with no reassuring grounding of the narrative—as found in the Erasmian colloquy—on dry land. In fact, the narrative is (at first) entirely devoid of any interpretative framing. Michel Jeanneret, for whom ‘[l]a tempête [...] trouble l’ordre des choses et, par là, revendique en puissance la qualité du signe’, argues that the *Pantagruélistes* simply have no time to stop

⁵⁶ Cave, ‘Travelers and Others’, p. 55.

⁵⁷ Raymond Lebègue, ‘Rabelais, Last of the French Erasmians’, p. 98.

and ponder what it all might mean: '[l]a *praxis* précède le *logos*, l'exigence éthique renvoie à plus tard la question herméneutique'.⁵⁸ The ramifications of this initial deferral extend beyond the internal logic of the narrative, and are reflected even by the style in which the action is reported; the narrative voice of Alcofribas recedes from view, and what remains is, effectively, a dramatic dialogue between the other characters on board the Thalamège. As Paul Smith observes, 'c'est presque uniquement par les paroles des personnages, toutes en style direct, que le lecteur prend connaissance des manoeuvres du navire'.⁵⁹ For Smith, 'tout se passe comme si [...] le point de vue se déplaçait des personnages vers le *je* narrant, et, puisque celui-ci s'efface, vers le narrataire-lecteur. Le narrataire assume ainsi le rôle du spectateur'.⁶⁰ When we consider these observations in combination, it becomes clear that for this 'spectateur' the sense of destabilisation is profound; the reader is simultaneously stripped of interpretative apparatus and of the (illusory) omniscience that Adolph's retrospective staging of vignettes, duly decoded by Antony, previously provided.

While the 'Naufragium' is picked over for allegorical meaning as the narrative unfurls, the search for meaning only occurs after the event in the *Quart Livre*, and, as noted above, first of all while the crew are still at sea. At the moment when the rescue efforts of the locals on shore in the 'Naufragium' is echoed, the first claim is made as to the reason for the crew's salvation, as Pantagruel declares:

Voyez cy près nostre nauf deux Lutz, troiys Flouins, cinq chippes, huit volontaires, quatre gondoles et six Freguates, par les bonnes gens de ceste prochaine isle envoyées à nostre secours. Mais qui est cestuy Ucalegon là bas qui ainsi crie et de desconforte? Ne tenoys je l'arbre sceurement des mains, et plus droict que ne feroient deux cens gumes? (592)

⁵⁸ Michel Jeanneret, 'Rabelais, les monstres et l'interprétation des signes (*Quart Livre* 18-42)', in *Writing the Renaissance: Essays on Sixteenth-Century French Literature in Honor of Floyd Gray*, ed. by Raymond La Charité (Lexington: French Forum, 1992), pp. 65-76 (p. 67).

⁵⁹ Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, p. 86.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 87. The term 'narrataire' is adopted from Gérard Genette; see *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 265-267.

Panurge, Frère Jean argues in Chapter 24, had no reason to be afraid: ‘Car tes destinées fatales ne sont à perir en eau. Tu seras hault en l’air certainement pendu’ (596). Frère Jean’s retrospective confidence (which stands in marked contrast to his attitude during the storm, when he cursed Panurge, ‘Ce diable de fol marin est cause de la tempeste’ (587)) is echoed by that of Gonzalo in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, when, in the opening storm scene, he remarks of the boatswain:

I have great comfort from this fellow. Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows. Stand fast, good Fate, to his hanging; make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable.⁶¹

The original moment of this ‘reading’ of the body can be traced back to the common source of both scenes, Erasmus’s ‘Naufragium’: ‘the skipper, pale as a ghost, at last came up to us’; ‘His pallor portends some great disaster’. Panurge’s fear, though, is not manifested in any pallor but through weeping and another, more visceral, bodily reaction: ‘Je me conchie de male raige de paour’ (583). In the *Tempest*, as in Rabelais’s storm, the heightened danger provokes talk of the Fates, or of predestination (Panurge himself berates the fates, using the language of thread and binding that is carried over into Gonzalo’s reasoning: ‘O Parces que ne me fillastez vous pour planteur de Chous?’ (582)). But the senses of these readings are opposed; for Gonzalo, the signs are read at the moment of danger, and however irreverently meant, the outcome of the storm seems to confirm their supposed significance.⁶² For Frère Jean and Panurge, on the other hand, the *post hoc* reading of destiny serves as part of a narrative constructed after the storm, according to which Panurge need not have been afraid.

Indeed, as Panurge claims, rewriting his own history, he never was afraid (‘Non, non pas maille de craincte’ (593)), thus proving himself worthy indeed of the label

⁶¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (New York and London: Norton, 2004) I.1, 24-29.

⁶² On Gonzalo’s reading of the storm, and Miranda’s, see my Conclusion.

‘Ucalegon’ given to him by Pantagruel: a name derived from Homer and Virgil, ‘applied to a man who acts as though he has no cares—once the danger is over’.⁶³ This new-found bravery is compounded by a sudden urge to help the sailors, in contrast to Panurge’s lack of action during the worst of the storm: ‘Vogue la gualere (dist Panurge) tout va bien. Frere Jan ne faict rien là. Il se appelle frere Jan faictneant, et me reguarde icy suant et travaillant pour ayder à cestuy home de bien Matelot premier de ce nom’ (595). In light of the synergistic allegory of the scene as a whole, Panurge’s loud and sweaty show of co-operation after the event is analogous to the kind of theological and penitential works that Screech describes as being ‘championed’ by the Sorbonne at the time, and mocked by Rabelais in the storm scene.⁶⁴ During the storm itself, while others demonstrate what Screech calls ‘active virtue’,⁶⁵ Panurge’s only contribution is to attempt to flatter and bribe one of the crew to bring him to safety,⁶⁶ an echo of his empty promise, in the previous chapter, to Saint Nicholas—replicating the vows of Erasmus’s insincere passenger—to build ‘une belle grande petite chappelle ou deux entre Quande et Monssorreau’ (585) (that is, *en nul lieu*).

By concentrating, as Rigolot puts it, the foolish elements that abound in the ship of fools, or indeed the ‘Naufragium’, into the single, pathetic figure of Panurge, Rabelais swings the balance in favour of the giant whose might and faith are strong enough to save the Thalamège from destruction. Whereas in the ‘Naufragium’ Adolph manages to survive by clinging to the dislodged stump of the mast, here in Rabelais’s storm scene such disintegration is prevented when Pantagruel, ‘par l’avis du pilot’ (584), clings to the mast

⁶³ Screech, *Rabelais*, p. 311.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 347-348: ‘Whilst defending man’s cooperation with God against Calvin, Rabelais laughs wholeheartedly at the kind of superstitious, merely verbal, cooperation which he associated with the doctrines of the hypocrites of the University of Paris.’

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 347.

⁶⁶ Rabelais, *OC*, p. 587: ‘Nostre home scauriez vous me jecter en terre? Vous sçavez tant de bien, comme l’on m’a dict. Je vous donne tout Salmiguondinoys, et ma grande cacquerolliere, si par vostre industrie je trouve unes foys terre ferme.’

itself. Florence Weinberg reads this moment as a Christianised retelling of Ulysses clinging to the mast:

Dans la littérature patristique, se cramponner au mât pour éviter le danger signifie normalement s'attacher à la Croix pour être sauvé (le mât, après tout, prend la forme d'une croix dans les bateaux et les navires primitifs). Le rôle de Pantagruel est même plus 'crucial': il fait plus que cramponner au mât: il le maintient ferme.⁶⁷

In fact, the survival of the crew is imputed to the practical action taken not just by Pantagruel, but by the majority of those on board to mitigate the effects of the storm; Epistemon for instance, 'avoit une main toute au dedans escorchée et sanglante par avoir en violence grande retenu un des gumes' (594).⁶⁸ Upon reading this, we might well find ourselves, like Antony, shuddering. The margins of survival are slim, as Panurge discovers through his new-found interest in all things nautical: 'Vertus Dieu [...] nous sommes doncques continuellement à deux doigtz près de la mort'.⁶⁹ This commonplace observation on the thickness of a ship's hull is reinvigorated, in Rabelais's working of it, by the vivid sense of real hands, real fingers, on the line. But the discussion by the crew of the storm and their actions during it is not exhaustive, and not the last; a second, grounded scene of reading is to follow shortly afterwards.

II.3.iii Macaronic readings? Unpicking allegory on the 'Isle des Macraëons'

A second round of interpretations of the meaning of the storm is offered once the ship has safely reached port: 'L'étape chez les Macraëons [...] va fournir, dans un second temps, le calme et le recul qui favorisent l'interprétation'.⁷⁰ Pantagruel, acting as the ideal ship's

⁶⁷ Florence Weinberg, *Rabelais et les leçons du rire*, p. 158. For more on this *topos*, see Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* [trans. by Brian Battershaw] (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), Chapter 7, 'Odysseus at the Mast', pp. 329-386.

⁶⁸ For Screech, Epistemon joins Pantagruel in the ranks of the heroes of the storm scene (Screech, *Rabelais*, p. 308).

⁶⁹ Rabelais, *OC*, p. 595.

⁷⁰ Jeanneret, 'Rabelais, les monstres et l'interprétation des signes', p. 67.

captain, refuses to leave the Thalamège until all of the crew are safely ashore. On the ‘isle des Macraëons’ is found a community of long-lived people, where the ship is easily repaired, ‘par ce que tout le peuple de l’isle estoient charpentiers et tous artizans telz que voyez en l’Arsenac de Venise’ (598). The geography of the island is consonant with such a people, providing an abundance of the raw materials needed for shipbuilding: ‘l’isle grande seulment estoit habitée en troys portz, et dix Parœces, le reste estoit boys de haulte fustaye, et desert comme si feust la forest de Ardeine.’⁷¹ When the ‘vieil Macrobe’ asks how the crew survived, the reply is telling:

Pantagruel luy respondit que le hault servateur avoit eu esguard à la simplicité et sincere affection de ses gens: les quelz ne voyageoient pour guain ne traficque de marchandise. Une et seule cause les avoit en mer mis, sçavoir est studieux desir de veoir, apprendre, congnoistre, visiter l’oracle de Bacbuc, et avoir le mot de la Bouteille, sus quelques difficultez proposées par quelqu’un de la compaignie. (598)

The Macraeons’ way of living, in combination with Pantagruel’s reading of the significance of the crew’s survival, generates and reinforces a positive moral framing of seafaring done for the right reasons.⁷² This island people’s expertise in shipbuilding is married to near-immortality, and the rare tempests in the region are believed to be provoked only when one of their number dies. Prolonging this reading, and ‘bringing home’ its implications, Epistemon likens the elemental response (‘grans troublemens en l’air, tenebres, fouldres, gresles: en terre concussions, tremblemens, estonnemens: en mer fortunal et tempeste, avecque lamentations des peuples, mutations des religions, transpors des Royalumes, et eversions des Republicques’ (600)) to the reaction in France to the death of Guillaume du Bellay. The evocation of ‘mutations des religions’ suggests that there is a meaningful parallel to be drawn between the storm endured by the travelling

Pantagruélistes and the political and religious storm brewing in Europe. As Florence

⁷¹ Rabelais, *OC*, p. 598. We may note the use of ‘domesticating’ analogical comparison of the landscape prefiguring that prevalent in Jean de Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage*; see Chapter Four.

⁷² Lestringant suggests a link between this justification for sea travel and that made by André Thevet in his *Cosmographie du Levant* (‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’, p. 58); also in *André Thevet: cosmographe des derniers Valois* (Geneva: Droz, 1991), pp. 50-51.

Weinberg observes, this final ‘reading’ of the storm scene makes of the Thalamège a ship of state as well as the subject of theological allegory:

Il n’y a que très peu de *daemons* et de héros qui survivent dans ce temps de décadence et de déclin, et deux d’entre eux sont récemment morts: le héros Macréonique (dont la mort avait presque fait sombrer les vaisseaux de Pantagruel), et Guillaume du Bellay (dont le décès a presque fait sombrer le vaisseau de l’État avec l’espérance rabelaisienne d’un patronage fort de la cause évangélique).⁷³

The synergy of faith and labour that saves the Thalamège from shipwreck is a model for the kinds of co-operation seen by Rabelais as crucial for the survival of the Church.⁷⁴

It is important, at this point, to re-examine the synergistic actions of Pantagruel in the storm scene; for, while the image of the giant prince clinging, Christ-like, to the mast has been central to our understanding of Pantagruel as a theologically exemplary figure, the significance of the ‘arbre’ is perhaps not as singular as has generally been assumed. Georges Lote, citing Provençal expertise in navigational matters as well as the actions of the hero of Folengo’s *Baldus*, has argued that in at least some cases, the ‘arbre’ indicates the ‘barre de gouvernail’ as much as it does the mast.⁷⁵ The dual possibility of Pantagruel holding fast the mast or tiller seems to encapsulate perfectly Screech’s characterisation of Rabelais’s ‘baptized Stoicism’; he resembles at once the acceptance of Christ on the cross and the Stoic resolution of a figure later described by Montaigne: ‘Le marinier antien disoit ainsin à Neptune en une grande tempeste: O Dieu, tu me sauveras, si tu veux; tu me perdras, si tu veux: mais si tiendrai je tousjours droit mon timon.’⁷⁶ Ironically, the very person praised by Epistemon (and, we might surmise, Rabelais himself) as the ideal helmsman—Guillaume du Bellay—is also the kind of ‘hero’ whose passing might have triggered the storm itself. To follow this particular line of enquiry is, then, to go round in

⁷³ Florence Weinberg, *Rabelais et les leçons du rire*, p. 170.

⁷⁴ See Screech, *Rabelais*, p. 312: ‘curiously, the decrees of the Council of Trent on free will, reached after debates in 1546 [...] are not fundamentally opposed to the synergistic ideology which Rabelais espoused. He learned of this in time for the 1552 *Quart Livre* to be fundamentally rewritten at this point’.

⁷⁵ Georges Lote, ‘Arbre = barre de gouvernail, à propos d’un épisode de Rabelais’, *Humanisme et Renaissance*, 3.1 (1936), 52-57.

⁷⁶ Montaigne, *Essais*, p. 624. On Montaigne’s use of this Stoic figure, see below, Chapter Three.

circles; the logic of this allegorical sense comes to resemble the serpent that eats its own tail.

Jeanneret posits the episode on the 'Isle des Macraëons' as 'foncièrement optimiste', arguing that, there at least, 'un système de correspondances garantit l'intelligibilité des phénomènes'.⁷⁷ For him it is only later episodes such as the encounter with Quaresmeprenant or the Andouilles that demonstrate 'combien est partiale et appauvrissante l'explication de type allégorique'.⁷⁸ The reading of the storm offered on the island is certainly explicitly endorsed within the narrative. Pantagruel's acquiescence to the 'viel Macrobe's' explanation of the storm's likely cause ('Il y a (dist Pantagruel) de l'apparence en ce que dictez' (599)) is emphasised and expanded in his declaration that the wisdom of the 'reading' is reward enough for the suffering experienced during the storm: 'Je ne voudrois [...] n'avoir pati la tourmente marine, laquelle tant nous a vexez et travaillez, pour non entendre ce que nous dict ce bon Macrobe' (601). But rather than detecting optimism in this exaggerated claim for the value and satisfaction afforded by the singular explanation, I would argue that the seeds of discontent identified by Jeanneret in later chapters of the *Quart Livre* are here already being sown. For neither Pantagruel's explanation of God's clemency nor the 'vieil Macrobe's' assimilation of the extraordinary ordeal of the previous chapters to the natural order of things seems to account fully for what the crew, and the reader, have experienced.

Rather optimistically, perhaps, Jeanneret describes the humanist 'poursuite authentique du sens' as requiring 'une conquête de l'intuition, un effort de l'intelligence'.⁷⁹ But, in a paradox illustrated by Smith, the 'trop-plein de la tempête'⁸⁰ tips, at times, over

⁷⁷ Jeanneret, 'Rabelais, les monstres et l'interprétation des signes', p. 68.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 76.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, p. 100.

into nothingness, ‘le chaos pré-cosmique’:⁸¹ the mimetic and copious descriptions of the storm lead the reader back and forth, round and round, and potentially nowhere at all. I would argue that as readers of Rabelais we learn not to view the dynamics of reading as one-way traffic; as we have seen here, to read the storm scene for allegory alone is to forgo the richness of the narrative, to ignore its affective power, and to deny the role of the reader and the concomitant potential of what Cave, Jeanneret and Rigolot have called the ambiguity and plurality of Rabelais’s writing. As much as the storm scene invites interpretation, it often resists the kind of unified exegesis proposed by Coleman or Screech. As Williams has pointed out, besides seeking the religious message of the storm, ‘we have learned to read the scene as an allegory of reading’,⁸² and it is certainly an unsettling one. And yet, we might also read Epistemon’s instruction, ‘de nostre part convient [...] estre coopérateurs avecques luy’ (594), as an invitation to the reader to leave behind the kind of guided allegorical decoding exemplified in the prefaces to the ships of fools, or even in Erasmus’s dialogue, and to participate more actively in the process of meaning-making. In the final part of this chapter, we turn to an episode that tests and questions this readerly co-operation, pointing to a further set of possibilities for the reading of shipwreck scenes.

⁸¹ Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, p. 102.

⁸² Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative*, p. 269.

II.4 An alternative ending; or ‘de Scylle en Charyde’: Shipwreck in the *Cinquiesme Livre*

Chapter 17 of the fifth book (‘Comment nostre nauf fut encarrée, et feusmes aidez d’aucuns voyageurs, qui tenoient de la Quinte’) offers what is in effect a rather condensed reworking of many of the elements explored in the storm scene of the *Quart Livre*, as Huchon notes in her commentary to the complete works: ‘Cet épisode présente des analogies avec celui de la tempête: utilisation d’un vocabulaire technique maritime similaire [...], plaintes des Panurge selon des schémas de phrases identiques, attitude de frère Jean’.⁸³ Huchon has herself contributed much to the debate over the ‘authenticity’ of the *Cinquiesme Livre*,⁸⁴ falling into the camp who conclude that Rabelais was indeed the author, but that the text itself was something of a *brouillon*: either a precursor to or reworking of the *Quart Livre* with which we are now familiar. Others (notably Alfred Glauser)⁸⁵ have doubted or dismissed the likelihood of this conclusion. But the question of the authorship of the *Cinquiesme Livre* need not preclude any reading of these two episodes in conjunction, since, as Richard Cooper has argued in his appraisal of the debate:

Or, quoi qu’on en pense, le *Cinquiesme Livre* de 1564 est un texte authentique du seizième siècle écrit dans le sillage de Rabelais, qui prolonge une réflexion sur certains de ses grands thèmes. Même si le livre contient des fragments écrits par le Chinonais, il n’en est pas moins un exemple de la réception de Rabelais à la Renaissance et une interprétation plausible de ses écrits par un lecteur contemporain.⁸⁶

To adopt Cooper’s apt metaphor, the second storm scene, following in the wake of the first, does indeed encourage further consideration of ideas and problems raised in the fourth book; in particular, it plays an important part in the story, told in this thesis, of re-reading and re-writing shipwreck scenes. But if this second scene of peril is analogous

⁸³ Rabelais, *OC*, p. 1639, n. 1.

⁸⁴ See Huchon, *Rabelais grammairien: de l’histoire du texte aux problèmes d’authenticité* (Geneva: Droz, 1981).

⁸⁵ The title of his book leaves little doubt as to his stance: *Le Faux Rabelais; ou, De l’inauthenticité du Cinquième livre* (Paris: Nizet, 1975).

⁸⁶ Richard Cooper, ‘L’Authenticité du *Cinquiesme Livre*: état présent de la question’, *ER*, 40 (2001), 9-22 (p. 21).

with the first, its significance is entirely at odds with the exploration of epic heroism and theological synergism elaborated in the *Quart Livre*.

II.4.i 'Nostre requeste importune': The re-moralisation of seafaring

In the 1564 storm scene, the Thalamège escapes, through the intervention of the crew, the torment of a hurricane, only to become beached on sandbanks. Whereas the *Quart Livre* episode was marked by the absence of actual shipwreck (though staging a form of linguistic and allegorical disintegration), in this revisiting of the scene the adventurers' journey is brought more emphatically to a halt. The grounding of the ship might seem on first reflection rather a benign outcome to the storm; as Christian Buchet writes, it is the opposite of sinking, and yet:

[S]i le navire ne parvient pas à se retirer de sa position délicate, l'échouage se transforme en naufrage, le navire est démantelé par le ressac, couché sur les écueils puis démoli et brisé. Plus que tout autre circonstance l'échouement fait éprouver à un marin le sentiment d'un échec sinistre et complet.⁸⁷

In the *Cinquième Livre* episode the possibility observed by Cave of return (or a cure) persists, though it is articulated not through the synergistic model of faith and works, but in the inspired, generative and transformative language of music, sex and alchemy.

The storm itself is described in contrastive tone to that of the *Quart Livre*, not seeming at first to present any great threat to the ship:

[S]e leva un furieux tourbillon de vents divers, autour duquel avec le trinquet et boulingues quelque peu temporisasses, pour seulement n'estre dicts mal obeissans au Pilot, lequel nous asseuroit veüe la douceur d'iceux vens, veu aussi leur plaisant combat, ensemble la serenité de l'air, et tranquillité du courant, n'estre ny en espoir de grand bien, ny en crainte de grand mal. Partant à propos nous estre la sentence du philosophe, qui commandoit, soustenir et abstenir, c'est à dire, temporiser. (763)

⁸⁷ Buchet, 'Introduction' in *Le Naufrage*, p. 8.

This apparently harmless storm, described with some detachment, elicits at first a Stoic response of the kind exhibited through Pantagruel's Christian resignation in the *Quart Livre* storm scene, as Alcofribas refers (as Huchon points out) to Epictetus. If the 'serenité' and 'tranquilité' of the elements even within the 'furieux turbillon' recalls the paradoxical sense of chaos discussed by Smith in the earlier episode, the ship itself seems set on a course that embodies the principle of *aurea mediocritas*: 'ny en espoir de grand bien, ny en crainte de grand mal'. The crew's co-operation with the pilot appears to be an effort to save face rather than a matter of life or death; the 'trinquet' and 'boulingues', familiar from Panurge's panicked outbursts in the original Rabelaisian storm scene, are to be tinkered with to make a show of good faith, even to kill time. This superficial co-operation is not to last, however, as the crew become impatient with this passivity:

Tant toutefois dura ce turbillon, qu'à nostre requeste importune, le Pilot essaya de rompre, et suivre nostre route premiere. De faict levant le grand artemon, et à droite calamite du Boussole dressant le gouvernail, rompit, moyennant un rude cole survenant, le turbillon susdict. Mais ce fut en pareil desconfort comme si evitans Charybde, feussions tombez en Scylle.⁸⁸ Car à deux mile du lieu feurent nos naufs encarrées par-my les arenes. (763)

The significance of the storm has shifted here; its cause is not called into question, but the blame for disaster, it is implied, lies with the crew's own restlessness. That this action, provoked by the 'requeste importune', constitutes a violation of the balance of elements, is confirmed in the polyptotonic repetition of 'rompre'. In this reworking of the storm *topos*, an alternative outcome is contemplated, as excessive labour (coupled with a distinct absence of prayer) proves worse than the storm itself. The stasis enforced by the 'arenes' recalls the deadly calm of the still sea so dreaded by sailors, and seen in the *Quart Livre* (Chapters 63-65) in the waters near Chaneph. In that episode, it is through good

⁸⁸ Alcofribas here reworks words uttered by Panurge in the storm scene ('Nous allons de Scylle en Charyde'), restoring the order of the expression as recorded in Erasmus's *Adages*: I, v, 4, 'Evitata Charybdi, in Scyllam incidi. Having escaped Charybdis I fell into Scylla.' See *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974-), v. 31, 'Adages Iii to Iv100', trans. by Margaret Mann Phillips, p. 387. The reference, originally from Homer, also appeared in the ships of fools (both in Brant's original and Drouyn's adaptation); see above, Chapter One.

pantagruélique banqueting and conversation that the wind is roused again; as Pantagruel explains, ‘Nous haulsans et vuidans les tasses s’est pareillement le temps haulsé par occulte sympathie de Nature’ (694).⁸⁹ The remedy of the *Cinquième Livre* will be of a rather different order. Before we come to the resolution of the situation, however, we will first return to Panurge, and to his particular response to this turn of events.

II.4.ii ‘La partie plus dangereuse et male’? Revisiting the tongue

The (mis)reading of signs by Panurge and Pantagruel that heralds the storm in the *Quart Livre* is restaged in the *Cinquième Livre* through the response to the grounding of the ship. Panurge’s erroneously positive response to meeting the *Concilipetes* (‘Les voyant Panurge entra en excès de joye’ (591)), and Pantagruel’s opposing sense of foreboding (‘Pantagruel restoit tout pensif et melancholicque’) are in a sense blended and muddled together in the later episode by Frère Jean, who ‘onques ne s’en donna melancholie, ains consoloit maintenant l’un, maintenant l’autre par douces parolles: leur remonstrant, que de brief aur[aient] secours du Ciel’. In a specific echo of Epistemon’s reassurance during the *Quart Livre* storm (592), Frère Jean claims that he had seen ‘Castor sus le bout des antennes’ (763). Each of these interpretations of Castor as a good omen is a mis-reading, according to nautical lore; as Adolph tells us in the ‘Naufragium’, St Elmo’s fire is ‘a very bad sign to sailors when it’s a single flame, lucky when it’s double’. Yet both conclusions, though reached by faulty reasoning, are eventually vindicated by the arrival of help.

The echoes of the earlier scene continue as readers hear Panurge repeat almost word for word his original plea to be returned to *terra firma*. As in the *Quart Livre* storm scene, in concordance with his attempt to make a deal with St Christopher, he attempts to bribe the crew to deliver him to safety: ‘Plust à Dieu [...] estre à ceste heure à terre, et rien

⁸⁹ On the significance of the ‘calme plat’, see Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, pp. 99-107.

plus, et que chascun de vous autres, qui tant aimez la marine eussiez deux cens mille escus, je vous mettrois un veau en mue, et rafraischirois un cent de fagots pour vostre retour' (764). There is no mention here of his imagined alter-ego, the cabbage-planter. But Panurge's emphatic rejection of the 'tourmente marine' leads him to declare his willingness to abandon any hope of marrying, in exchange for a safe return to land. At this moment the very premise of the companions' voyage is jeopardised; the ostensible purpose of the crew's journey thus far has been to discover whether or not Panurge should marry.⁹⁰ Whereas Pantagruel declared on the 'isle des Macraëons' that it was worth enduring the storm to hear the wisdom of the 'vieil Macrobe', Panurge begs to differ: no, thank you very much, I'd rather go home! The price to be paid for this exploration and discovery is shown here, even more emphatically than in the *Quart Livre* episode, to pass Panurge's personal threshold.

But Panurge's demands extend beyond even his imagined arrival on dry land; the pilot and crew's mastery of the ship having led them from Charybdis into Scylla, he imagines making his escape by horse:

[F]aictes seulement que je sois mis en terre, et que j'aie cheval pour m'en retourner: de valet je me passeray bien. Je ne suis jamais si bien traité, que quand je suis sans valet: Plaute jamais n'en mentit, disant le nombre de nos croix, c'est à dire, afflictions, ennuits, fascheries, estre selon le nombre de nos valets, voire fussent-ils sans langue, qui est la partie plus dangereuse et male, qui soit à un valet[.] (764)

The apparently incongruous valets are attributed by Huchon to Seneca, Erasmus and Juvenal, but the combination in close proximity of valets, horses, and tongues also recalls a biblical passage that might further elucidate what seems at first to be something of a non sequitur on Panurge's part:

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same

⁹⁰ For an overview of critical approaches to Panurge and his question, and an examination of the implications of the structure of the *Tiers Livre* on our understanding of both, see Duval, 'Panurge, Perplexity, and the Ironic Design of Rabelais's *Tiers Livre*', *RQ*, 35.3 (1982), 381-400.

is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. (James 3. 1-4)

For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3. 7-8)

Panurge's pre-emptive rejection of a valet on the basis of the dangers of the tongue places horse, ship and tongue in a particular tension—one that is connected, it might be argued, to the multiple scenes of misreading or linguistic anxiety that we have seen so far; the problems encountered with governing the ship are as nothing compared with man's inability to tame the 'unruly evil' of the tongue. But it is not his own tongue that provokes Panurge's mistrust; his renunciation of a valet enacts from a reverse perspective the command 'be not many masters'. If we read this scene alongside its *Quart Livre* precedent—Panurge's longing for the (tongue-based) security of the cabbage-planter—we find that in both cases the discomfort of the storm triggers an anxious reappraisal of the reasons for travel, the dangers the journey entails, and the possibility of a satisfactory outcome. For Panurge, the storm temporarily renders his question, and thus the quest, null and void, as the possibility of successful navigation, and successful interpretation, appears beyond the reach of the *Pantagruélistes*. In James 2. 17, we find a passage that summarises Rabelais's synergistic position: 'So faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself'; later in the same biblical book, as we have seen, language seems to be the exceptional force that breaks away from the possibility of a synergistic interpretation controlling or containing the drama of the shipwreck. Rabelais radically reconfigures these scriptural commonplaces to the extent that Panurge renounces his part in the journey, and thus the possibility of resolution to his search for an answer; it is precisely at this point that help arrives, in the form of a friendly and co-operative ship.

II.4.iii 'Alchimie, jusques au cul': Cotiral's shipwreck remedy

Approaching the Thalamège is 'une navire chargée de tabourins', peopled by 'passagers de bonne maison' (764) recognised by Alcofribas. The phallic imagery of Panurge's panicked mangling of nautical language in the *Quart Livre* storm is more fully embodied in the figure of one of the passengers, Henry Cotiral:⁹¹

[...] lequel à sa ceinture un grand viet-d'aze portoit, comme les femmes portent pastenostres: et en main senestre tenoit un gros, gras, vieux et salle bonnet d'un taigneux: en sa dextre tenoit un gros trou de chou. De prime face qu'il me recognut s'escria de joye, et me dist: 'En ay-je? voyez cy', monstrant le viet-d'aze, 'le vray Algamana: cestuy bonnet doctoral est nostre unique Elixo: et cecy', monstrant le trou de chou, 'c'est *Lunaria maior*. Nous la ferons à vostre retour.' (764)

In the person of Cotiral, it seems that Panurge is presented with much of what he longed for at the height of the storm scene in the *Quart Livre*. The sexual connotation of the *planteur de choux* is confirmed by the 'gros trou de chou' in Cotiral's grip, a phallic object mirrored by another of Cotiral's accoutrements: 'à sa ceinture un grand viet-d'aze portoit, comme les femmes portent pastenostres'.⁹²

Indeed, the arrival of Cotiral and his suggestive 'navire chargée de tabourins' marks the arrival of a new symbolic focus to the episode. As Nan Carpenter explores in some detail in her book on music in Rabelais, the drum consistently '[implies] lovemaking in Rabelais's metaphorical language'.⁹³ Just as the *pastenostre* is supplanted by the *viet-d'aze* in Cotiral's belt, where Christian allegory was found in the previous storm scene, it

⁹¹ Huchon notes that 'cotal est utilisé pour designer le membre viril': Rabelais, *OC*, pp. 1639-40, n. 4.

⁹² Philibert-Joseph le Roux notes: 'On dit [...] d'une chose qu'on veut mépriser beaucoup, qu'elle ne vaut pas un tronc de chou': *Dictionnaire comique, satyrique, critique, burlesque, libre et proverbial: 1718-1786*, ed. by Monica Barsi (Paris: Champion, 2003), p. 155. The cabbage-stalk is thus a rather 'cornucopian' object, being associated both with generative alchemical potential and with nothingness; the spelling 'trou' (confirmed by Randle Cotgrave to hold both senses of 'hole' and 'stem' or 'stalk') seems to afford this kind of reading.

⁹³ Nan Cooke Carpenter, *Rabelais and Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), p. 6. Sainéan lists 'Tabour d'où tabourer' among the 'Erotica verba' of his *Langue de Rabelais*, noting the parallel with 'bedon, sexe (= tambour) dans les *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*.' *La Langue de Rabelais*, v. 2, p. 306. Cf. *Pantagruel* 26: 'C'est (dist Panurge) comment je pourray avanger à braquemarder toutes les putains qui y sont en ceste après dinée, qu'il n'en eschappe pas une, que je ne taboure en forme commune', Rabelais, *OC*, p. 307.

is replaced here by a burlesque play on phallic, alchemical and neoplatonic language. As Huchon's commentary notes, Cotiral's cry of 'En ay-je?' recalls the narration in the *Quart Livre* of Couillatris's return home brandishing his phallic *coingnées* of wood, silver and gold. The interweaving of sexual and alchemical allusion is perpetuated as Alcofribas interrogates Cotiral, his 'compagnon vieux' and fellow *abstracteur de quinte essence*:

"d'où venez, où allez, qu'apportez, avez senty la marine?" Il me respond, "de la Quinte, en Touraine, Alchimie, jusques au cul" (764). The enumeration of the passengers on board (which includes musicians, poets, alchemists and watchmakers) echoes the list of religious orders among those going to the Council of Chesil that augur the storm scene of the *Quart Livre*, though as Carpenter notes, by way of their association with alchemy they are 'classified among those who strive for the ideal, for perfection'.⁹⁴ This ideal crew take on the role of the fleet of Macraëonic ships that helped the ailing Thalamège in the *Quart Livre*:

Lors [Cotiral] feist deffoncer 7,532,810 gros tabourins d'un costé, cestuy costé dressa vers le guillardet, et estroitement lierent en tous les endroits les gumes, print nostre Cap en poupe et l'attacha aux bitons. Puis en premier hourt nous serpa des arenes avec facilité grande, et non sans esbattement. Car le son des tambourins, adjoint le doux murmur du gravier, et le celeusme de la Chorme nous rendoient harmonie peu moindre que celle des astres rotans, laquelle dit Platon avoir par quelques nuicts ouye dormant. (764-765)

We find here a burlesque homage to the 'music of the spheres' by way of the crunching of gravel, the chant of the oarsmen and, in the 'son des tambourins', a musical and sexual accompaniment; the fabled maritime traditions of singing and sodomy (alluded to by Cotiral, who has 'senty la marine', 'jusqu'au cul') join the mystical-alchemical symbolism of the music of the spheres as the soundtrack to the rescue of the Thalamège.

Ever good *Pantagruélistes*, the crew thank their rescuers with an abundance of sausage and wine: 'Nous abhorrans d'estre envers eux ingrats pour ce bien fait reputez, leurs departions de nos andouilles, amplissons leurs tabourins de saucisses, et tirions sur le

⁹⁴ Carpenter, *Rabelais and Music*, p. 87.

tillac soixante et deux aires de vin' (765). In an echo of the Thalamège's own monstrous encounter, two *Physeteres* then appear and flood the rescuers' ship with water: 'Ce que voyant Panurge, entra en joye tant excessive, et tant exerça sa ratelle, qu'il en eut la colique plus de deux heures. "Je leur voulois, dit-il, donner leur vin, mais ils ont eu leur eau bien à propos"' (765). Panurge's reaction to the misfortune of Cotiral's ship—another restaging of his misplaced joy upon meeting the *Concilipetes*—also echoes his play on drinking salt water as the tempest begins in the fourth book: 'Maigor dome hau, mon amy, mon pere, mon oncle, produisez un peu de sallé. Nous ne boirons tantoust que trop, à ce que je voy. À petit manger bien boire, sera desormais ma devise' (582).

This bathetic interruption to the celebratory banquet leaves the *Pantagruélistes* no choice but to continue more carefully on their journey, in the hope of avoiding such calamity in the future:

Et nous pria le Pilot que laissons d'orenavant la mer nous guider, sans d'autre chose nous empescher, que de faire chere lie: et pour l'heure nous convenoit costoyer cestuy turbillon, et obtemporer au courant, si sans danger voulions au royaume de la Quinte parvenir. (765)

The shipwreck of the fifth book thus revisits much of the allegorical significance constructed in its forebear of the *Quart Livre*. If the religious allegory of the original storm scene promotes a synergistic theology, the corresponding poetic reading points to a synergistic relationship between author and reader. Yet here, as the episode draws to a close and the beached ship and narrative are freed up to move closer to their destination, the pilot seems to call for the relinquishment of the wills of sailors and readers alike. The excessive force used when the pilot 'rompit [...] le turbillon' brought the journey to a halt, but creative action is needed to set the Thalamège on its way again. Smith's reading of the poetic significance of the 'calme plat' episode might usefully be brought to bear here:

[T]out se passe comme si le vent, à l'exemple du vin, symbolisait non seulement la production du texte mais aussi sa lecture *in-spirée*, lecture dont Pantagruel, en glosant la levée du vent, donne un exemple parfait. Dans une telle perspective, le bon vent devient

l'image même de la lecture *spirituelle* préconisée par le prologue du *Gargantua*: celle qui tient le juste milieu entre l'interprétation immobile ne dépassant pas la lettre et la lecture allégorique qui se perd dans le turbulence tempétueuse de l'arbitraire.⁹⁵

The reproductive and transformative potential of sexual and alchemical imagery in the *Cinquième Livre* poses a challenge to any attempt to impose a unified meaning on the stormy episode. But without the kind of 'plénitude' afforded by such musical, sexual or alchemical impulses (Cotirail and his men, after all, have already succeeded in reaching the 'royaulme de la Quinte', and are headed home), the ship, and the narrative, would remain grounded. If the *Quart Livre* storm scene confronts us with a tumult of elements that threatens to overwhelm and sink the ship, the excessive imposition of order by the pilot in the *Cinquième Livre* equally leads to the frustration of narrative desire: the ship runs aground.

II.5 Conclusion

Common to the Erasmian and Rabelaisian shipwreck scenes is a recurrent concern with reading, whether allegorised through the divergent actions of the characters during the storms, or performed—with varying degrees of success—by Antony, Panurge, or Frère Jean. As I have argued, both authors draw the reader into the telling of the story through an increasing attention to the material aspect of the ship and the individual bodies on board, eliciting shudders, flinches, and gasps in response to the perils and physical suffering described.

The dynamics of reading, staged and allegorised in both narratives, are also imbricated with the exploration of moral cases for and against seafaring. Just as, in Chapter One, we saw that French authors performed 'strong readings' of the ship of fools

⁹⁵ Smith, *Voyage et écriture*, p. 107.

allegory, adapting it to their own polemical ends and discursive designs. Erasmus and then Rabelais in turn address the commonplace of the ‘folly of seafaring’ through their own explorations of the shipwreck scene. In Erasmus’s narrative, Antony’s exclamation (‘What fools they are who trust themselves to the sea!’) and the critique of the links between pilgrimage and merchant trade are not countered with any attempt to defend seafaring; but Antony’s evident curiosity nonetheless frames the shipwreck tale as the site of intense narrative desire. In Rabelais’s crew’s discussion of the storm and its significance, a more explicit case is made for travel in its own right; in the reading of the storm episode on the ‘Isle des Macraeons’, Pantagruel proposes a positive model of navigation, motivated by their ‘studieux desir de veoir, apprendre, congnoistre’. The Thalamège may be some distant descendant of the ship of fools ‘family’, but the moment of taking to the sea is not, for Rabelais, a moment of condemnation; the inherent dangers are made clear, but navigation is what makes the companions’ quest possible. Rabelais’s readers are, we have seen, encouraged to follow an active and co-operative model, as suggested by the synergistic dynamics of the storm scene, though there is no guarantee of a comprehensive and coherent outcome. The threat of interpretative shipwreck remains real; indeed, it is all the more keenly felt.

One of the fundamental changes made by Rabelais to the Erasmian model is that the not-quite-shipwreck is now narrated from the inside. The mimetic qualities of the storm scene are multiplied, and in the move from Erasmus to Rabelais the partial stability afforded by the framing of the narrative on dry land is pulled from beneath us. We might well, like Panurge, wish to be more like the cabbage-planter; to have one foot, at least, securely on the ground. Writing about the cabbage-planter in the giant’s mouth, Auerbach proposes the following model for reading *Pantagruel*:

Rabelais’s entire effort is directed towards playing with things and with the multiplicity of their possible aspects; upon tempting the reader out of his customary and definite way of

regarding things, by showing him phenomena in utter confusion; upon tempting him out into the great ocean of the world, in which he can swim freely, though it be at his own peril.⁹⁶

Erasmus's focus on narrative desire, articulated through Antony's rapt attention, shuddering, and exclamations, is relocated by Rabelais out onto the open seas, where the reader battles alongside the crew of the Thalamège, against the threat of hermeneutic shipwreck; 'il convient evertuer'. Similarly, if we trace the progression of the scenes of witness and recovery from shipwreck, we find that they move progressively further from shore. Erasmus's compassionate shore-dwellers and 'hardy men' who rescue survivors on the edge of the sea are replaced, in the *Quart Livre*, by the Macraëons' rescuing fleet and, once on land, their technical expertise in mending the ships. By the time of the *Cinquiesme Livre*, the moment of Cavean return or cure is never located on dry land; indeed, it is stasis through contact with land (analogous with the kind of 'grounding' envied of the cabbage-planter by Panurge) that threatens to spell disaster. Finally, Cotiral's merry crew of seaborne *taboueurs* provide all that is needed for the journey of discovery to continue, while reinstating a ludic linguistic multiplicity that both rewards and resists sustained interpretation.

For all the anxieties, injustices and irritations explored through these stormy scenes, Erasmus and Rabelais remind us that—in particular circumstances, and for particular reasons—even shipwrecks can sometimes entertain. The power of laughter as a critical force (already established in the mocking tone of Brant and certain of his adaptors) is not to be overlooked in these otherwise wretched, unsettling, and occasionally grisly narratives.⁹⁷ And yet, in the second half of this thesis, we will turn to a series of authors for

⁹⁶ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 278.

⁹⁷ Barbara Bowen, in *Enter Rabelais, Laughing* (Nashville; London: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998), offers a rich reading of Rabelais's mock-epic comedy, pp. 45-53, and especially points to Rabelais's scatological borrowings from Folengo (p. 49).

whom the threat of shipwreck—be it poetic, theological or political—is no laughing matter.

Chapter Three

‘Cet universel naufrage du monde’: Shipwreck in a time of civil war

III.1 Introduction

By the latter decades of the sixteenth century, the political shipwreck presaged by the Macraeons’ reading of the tempest in Rabelais’s *Quart Livre* appeared close to realisation. The schism tormenting the *navis ecclesiae* threatened, in France, to translate into the wreck of the ship of state, as for more than thirty-five years, beginning with the massacre of Vassy in 1562, fragile periods of relative peace were repeatedly shattered by assassinations, sieges, and further massacres. This chapter explores how the impact of the religious and political conflict of the civil wars was articulated through the threat of shipwreck by writers engaged, in a variety of ways, in the navigation of the ship of state.

As the example of Rabelais shows, and as Florence Weinberg makes clear, even before the outbreak of civil conflict, the failure of negotiations between factions was viewed as a threat to the ship of state and in particular to the future of evangelism: the death of the diplomat Guillaume Budé, ‘dont le décès a presque fait sombrer le vaisseau de l’État avec l’espérance rabelaisienne d’un patronage fort de la cause évangélique’, is considered by Epistemon as a plausible cause of the storm survived by the crew of the Thalamège.¹ In *La Sagesse et le malheur*, Denis Crouzet argues that the storm was an analogy of especial import to evangelicals. For him, the ‘fascherie’ exhibited by Pantagruel (described as ‘tout pensif et melancolique’ after the encounter with the

¹ Weinberg, *Rabelais et les leçons du rire*, p.170.

Concilipetes) ‘exprimerait, dans cette attitude tranchant avec sa joie coutumière [...] le regret évangélique, face au climat de rigidification dogmatique’.²

As Lestringant has shown, the politically turbulent middle decades of the sixteenth century were accompanied by a sustained period of low atmospheric pressure that provoked ‘une famille de dépressions atmosphériques dans le ciel européen des années 1530 à 1550’.³ Crouzet suggests that one particular storm, survived by the evangelical, politically moderate, *chancelier de France* Michel de L’Hospital (while himself something of a *Concilipete*, travelling by boat to Bologna in 1547) was enough to set in place a nautically-inflected self image that led to L’Hospital’s use of shipwreck analogy in later years:

Ce fut peut-être durant une chaude et moite journée de l’été, sur le cours moyen du Pô, que la vie intérieure de Michel de L’Hospital voulut être traversée par la prise de conscience de ce que devait être, dans des temps désormais perçus comme difficiles, sa propre mise en scène, qu’elle commença à s’écrire et à se dire selon des motifs particularisés.⁴

This kind of deliberate self-dramatisation is entirely consonant with L’Hospital’s eye for poetic imagery, which was well established; besides being a protector of younger poets including Ronsard, he composed his own Latin poetic works, the *Carmina*.⁵ As Perrine Galand and Loris Petris illustrate in their commentary, L’Hospital describes his alarming near-death experience in the *Carmina*, where the narration of the storm ‘entremêle des éléments réalistes et symboliques, comme l’arc-en-ciel’, and evokes, ‘[p]ar une subtile synergie entre grâce et action’, L’Hospital’s ‘évangélisme civil’.⁶ Lestringant makes no explicit claim of causality between the real storms and those described by the likes of

² Denis Crouzet, *La Sagesse et le malheur: Michel de L’Hospital, chancelier de France* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1998), Chapter 1, ‘Une tempête évangélique’, pp. 27-100 (p. 43).

³ Lestringant, ‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’, p. 46.

⁴ Crouzet, *La Sagesse et le malheur*, p. 27.

⁵ For more on Michel de L’Hospital’s role as poet and protector, respectively, see Perrine Galand-Hallyn, ‘Michel de L’Hospital à l’école de Jean Salmon Macrin dans les *Carmina*’, *BHR*, 65.1 (2003), 7-50; Philip Ford, ‘An Early French Renaissance Salon: The Morel Household’, *RR*, 28.9 (2004), 9-20.

⁶ Perrine Galand and Loris Petris (eds, with David Amherdt), *Les Carmina de Michel de L’Hospital livre I, édition, traduction et commentaire*, forthcoming (Geneva: Droz, 2013).

Rabelais, but Crouzet pushes the connection between the allegorical and the meteorological further, suggesting that when L'Hospital underwent this 'Damascene moment' he might well have been in the company of Rabelais who 'est probablement, durant le mois de septembre, en Italie du nord [...]. Il est possible de présumer qu'il a suivi le même itinéraire que Michel de L'Hospital et ses compagnons'.⁷ The question of the impact or otherwise of the episode on Rabelais's narrative is of less interest in the context of the current study than the afterlife of what Crouzet calls the 'motif' in L'Hospital's own thought and writing, as well as in the political discourse of his time.

III.2 'Tous debvons tendre à mesme fin': Michel de l'Hospital and the storm-tossed ship of state

In the opening lines of his 1576 political treatise *Les Six livres de la République*, Jean Bodin develops an analogy between ship and state, imploring his readership to co-operate with their leaders in these troubled times:

[M]aintenant il nous est necessaire plus que jamais. Car pendant que le navire de nostre Republique avoit en poupe le vent agreable, on ne pensoit qu'à jouir d'un repos tres-haut ferme, et assuré [...]. Mais depuis que l'orage impetueux a tourmenté le vaisseau de nostre Republique, avec telle violence que le patron mesmes, et les pilotes sont comme las, et recruds d'un travail continuel, il faut bien que les passagers y prestent la main, qui aux voiles, qui aux cordages, qui à l'ancre: et ceux à qui la force manquera, qu'ils donneront quelque bon avertissement, ou qu'il presentent leurs veuz et prieres à celui qui peut commander aux vents, et appaiser la tempeste, puis-que tous ensemble courent un mesme danger[.]⁸

Bodin's imperilled ship of state is a direct descendant—though one that presents a more positive view of co-operative community—of that found in Plato's *Republic*. In the sixth book, Socrates illustrates to his interlocutor Glaucon the unfortunate position of

⁷ Crouzet, *La Sagesse et le malheur*, p. 33. As part of his supporting evidence for this rather fanciful hypothesis, Crouzet proposes that 'Macreons est un anagramme pour *Cremona*, la ville non loin de laquelle [...] Michel de L'Hospital s'arrête pour la nuit', [i.e. after the storm], *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁸ Jean Bodin, *Les Six livres de la République* (Paris: J. du Puys, 1576), sg. áii^r.

philosophers in any city-state. The captain or ship-owner, representing the people of the state, is vulnerable to the ruses of the crew of politicians:

[The Captain] is above all on board in stature and strength, but rather deaf and likewise rather short-sighted, and he knows navigation no better than he sees or hears. The crew are quarrelling about pilotage; everyone thinks he ought to be pilot, although he knows nothing of the art, and cannot tell us who taught him or where he learnt it. [...] [T]hey all keep crowding round the solitary captain, begging and praying and doing anything and everything to get him to hand over the helm to them.⁹

The desire to take control of the ship proves overpowering, and the crew turn on one another: ‘Sometimes one party fails but another succeeds better; then one party kills the other, or throws them overboard, and the good, honest captain they bind hand and foot by some opiate or intoxicant or some other means and take command of the ship’.¹⁰ In truth, none of them is experienced or fit to be in charge:

[T]he true pilot is nowhere—they won’t listen to him. They fail to understand that he must devote his attention to year and seasons, sky and stars and winds, and all that belongs to his art, if he is really to be anything like a ruler of the ship; but that as for gaining control of the helm, with the approval of some people and the disapproval of others, neither art nor practice of this can be comprehended at the same time as the art of navigation. With such a state of things on board the ships, don’t you believe the true-born pilot would be dubbed stargazer, bibble-babbler, good-for-nothing, by those afloat in ships so provided?¹¹

Unlike his ancient predecessor, however, Bodin construes the role of the people as co-operative passengers. The ship of state had also been theorised in medieval political writing, where, as Dora Bell has shown, the role of the king at the helm (*rex nauta*) was seen as being of central importance to successful political navigation.¹² Bodin’s ship of state adheres to this arrangement, depicting a team of ‘patron’ and ‘pilotes’ whose leadership, though stalling under the pressure of the storm, is unproblematic and not called

⁹ Plato, *Great Dialogues*, trans. by W. H. D. Rouse (New York: Signet Classics, 2008), ‘The Republic’, pp. 130-502 (pp. 333-334).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 334.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 334.

¹² Dora Bell, *L’Idéal éthique de la royauté en France au Moyen Age, d’après quelques moralistes de ce temps* (Geneva: Droz, 1962), pp. 61-62. Bell cites two fourteenth-century examples: the anonymous *Avis aux Roys*, and Philippe de Mézières’s *Songe du vieil Pelerin* (1389).

into question. The external threat posed by the malevolent, foreign spectators, rather than internal divisions (which are implicit, but minimised), is emphasised.

So apt was the analogy of the ship of state in the troubled waters of the religious civil wars that, even before Bodin employed it in his treatise on political theory, Michel de L'Hospital had used it in speeches that contributed practically to the steering of that ship. As Loris Petris has shown, L'Hospital's *Discours* constitute not only a record of the negotiations of the time, but, as an oral performance, shaped the course of debate: 'la parole est l'instrument persuasif qui permet au chancelier d'imposer les options de la politique royale et d'orienter de nouvelles décisions. La rhétorique déplace la pensée dans la politique et l'y incarne'.¹³ And, as we have seen in previous chapters, the adaptation of earlier shipwreck models to new contexts imbues them with new significance: 'Placées dans un nouveau contexte, les images sont individualisées par une *dispositio* qui déplace les sens. L'art oratoire personnalisé qui en découle concourt à l'inscription historique des idées de L'Hospital dans le présent.'¹⁴ Indeed, as we will see in this chapter, L'Hospital moves the ship of state on from the Platonic model, introducing and emphasising a mode of co-operation to which I have already drawn attention in Rabelais, and which is explicitly discussed in Bodin's treatise.

Bodin's storm scene is, in some senses, an inversion of the Lucretian 'shipwreck with spectator' *topos* discussed in my Introduction. Notably, before the position of the spectator is elaborated, the shipwreck is described first from the inside; pleasure—and stability—may be found *on board* the ship, in calm waters at least. It is in troubled waters that the crew and passengers must pull together, supporting their leaders; we, the people of France, Bodin argues, are all in this together. The spectators to this imagined shipwreck

¹³ Loris Petris, 'Causas belli praecidere eloquio, pietate: l'éloquence de Michel de L'Hospital dans ses discours de 1560 à 1562', in Thierry Wanegffelen, ed., *De Michel de L'Hospital à L'Édit de Nantes: politique et religion face aux églises* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2002), pp. 259-277 (p. 259).

¹⁴ Petris, 'L'éloquence de Michel de L'Hospital', p. 263.

are ‘ennemis qui sont en terre ferme, prenans un singulier plaisir au naufrage de nostre Republique, pour courir au bris, et qui ja pieça se sont enrichis du ject des choses les plus pretieuses, qu’on fait incessamment pour sauver ce Royaume’.¹⁵ They experience the pleasure not of *ataraxia* but of something closer to *schadenfreude*, and do not remain distant but hurry to plunder the wreckage. It is this opposition between internal and external viewpoints that reinforces the need for co-operation which Bodin attempts to impress on his readership.

As early as the first outbreak of the civil wars, the image of the ship of state had become a firm favourite of L’Hospital, who built his theory of good governance on the principle of sailing according to the behaviour of the winds and waters encountered. In his *discours* of 18 June 1561, he defends the changing of edicts:

[À] l’exemple du gouverneur d’ung navire, lequel calle la voile et la tourne çà et là selon que le vent est. Aussi les lois humaines et politiques ne peuvent tousjours demourer en ung estat mais les fault changer quelquefois selon que le peuple est. La comparaison du peuple et de la mer est propre pour l’inconstance de l’un et de l’autre. Quelquefois la loy severe est bonne, quelquefois la douce et quelquefois la mediocre.¹⁶

Denis Crouzet reads this speech as giving ‘la clef de son activité politique qui est une forme de gestion de l’incertain: il se veut comme le marin dans la tempête’. Aware that he cannot control the elements, he must nonetheless do what is within his power to help: ‘Le gouvernant se tient comme sur un navire qu’il doit mener au port, et il ne peut pas laisser son bâtiment aller au gré des flots déchaînés sans accomplir un travail, sans aider de toutes ses forces le navire à affronter les éléments.’¹⁷ This kind of political synergism replays, in the realm of statecraft, the actions of Pantagruel and Epistemon in the *Quart Livre*, who combine faith and works to weather the storm.

¹⁵ Petris, ‘L’éloquence de Michel de L’Hospital’, p. 263.

¹⁶ Michel de L’Hospital; Loris Petris, *La Plume et la tribune: Michel de L’Hospital et ses discours (1559-1562)*, ed. by Loris Petris (Geneva: Droz, 2002), p. 411.

¹⁷ Crouzet, *La Sagesse et le malheur*, pp. 408-409.

But one ruler cannot control the ship alone, even with the help of his loyal *chancelier*. Later in the same year, L'Hospital tries to rally the crew of his ship, offering a warning that echoes Plato and anticipates the introduction to Bodin's *Republique*: 'Tous debvons tendre à mesme fin. N'y a royaume qui puisse durer ny navire éviter le naufrage quant les uns qui les conduisent font d'une sorte, les autres au contraire.'¹⁸ The ancient lineage of L'Hospital's nautical imagery is confirmed and contested in a passage of his *discours* of January 1562:

Il ne faut considerer seulement si la loy est juste en soy mais si elle est convenable au temps et aux hommes pour lesquels elle est faite. Je me souviens que Ciceron accusoit Caton de ce que, estant en un siecle si corrompu, neantmoins en ses opinions il estoit si droit et roide comme s'il eust vescu en la Republique de Plato. [...]. Ainsi ceste edict en soy est beau, et l'experience a monstré qu'il estoit impossible, tout ainsi que les navires que Demetrius avoit fait bastir, de quinze à seize rames, estoient beaux à voir, et y accouroit-on pour les regarder, mais incommodes et inutiles à la navigation.¹⁹

Inherent to L'Hospital's argument is a classic opposition, staged in the contrast between Cicero (and behind him Aristotle) and Plato; one that tests theory against practice, or 'experience'. As Loris Petris elucidates in *La plume et la tribune*, navigational expertise is an especially apt analogue for political experience: 'le pilote, le "gouverneur d'un navire", est par excellence le technicien qui doit s'adapter aux circonstances, faire preuve de vigilance, de discernement et de souplesse et penser en termes d'action concrète plutôt que d'abstractions stériles'. This type of experiential knowledge, he argues, underpins the concept of political prudence or *phronesis*: 'Le domaine du *phronimos* [= prudent man] n'est pas celui d'un savoir établi et infaillible (*scientia*) mais de la *sapientia*, de l'expérience des choses. C'est cette même prudence qui est centrale pour l'homme d'Etat, *gubernator civitatis*'.²⁰ L'Hospital demonstrates an admiration for the *realpolitik* of Cicero

¹⁸ Michel de L'Hospital, 'Discours du 12 novembre 1561', in Petris, *La Plume et la tribune*, pp. 429-432 (p. 430).

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 438.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 253.

as elaborated in *De officiis*;²¹ *prudentia* (a concept derived from Aristotle, mediated in part by Cicero)²² forms part of the arsenal of the political pragmatists, of whom L'Hospital was a prominent example, often dubbed *politiques*.²³

III.2.i Problems of prudence in the civil wars

In *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance*, Victoria Kahn describes Renaissance humanists' 'belief in the importance of the active life, and the conviction that we are best persuaded to ethical praxis by the rhetorical practice of literature'.²⁴ She describes the conceptual parallels between rhetoric and prudence thus:

[P]rudence (*phronesis*) is that faculty of judgement which provides an internal rule of decorum or authoritative standard of interpretation, one that is not logical but pragmatic, and that enables us to act appropriately within a social and political context [...]. In the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition, rhetoric and prudence thus both involve an act of interpretation which is itself the precondition of action. It is probably because of this ideal capacity of rhetoric and prudence to mediate between theory and practice, interpretation and action, that the Renaissance humanists began to conceive of literature as a particularly persuasive form of prudence.²⁵

The Aristotelian concept of prudence was initially compatible with Sceptical philosophy: '[t]he activity of the Academic skeptic, who can argue on both sides of any philosophical question (*in utramque partem*), is considered to be analogous with that of the orator and the prudent man [...] for all three, the criterion of truth is not theoretical reason but probability'.²⁶

²¹ See Crouzet, *La Sagesse et le malheur*, p. 409; Petris, *La Plume et la tribune*, p. 438 n. 33.

²² See Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1985), Chapter 2, 'Humanist Rhetoric', pp. 29-54. The connection identified by Petris between *prudentia* and *sapientia* can be traced back to Cicero, who, as Kahn shows, confuses the two terms in *De officiis*: 'Accordingly, while Cicero borrows from Aristotle, he is philosophically less rigorous, and occasionally at variance with Aristotle', (p. 201, n. 19).

²³ On the history of this term, see Marie-Luce Demonet, 'Quelques avatars du mot "politique" (XIV^e-XVII^e siècles)', *Langage et société*, 113.3 (2005), 33-61. An excellent overall account of L'Hospital's role and status is given in Wanegffelen, ed., *De Michel de L'Hospital à L'Édit de Nantes* (as before).

²⁴ Kahn, *Rhetoric*, p. 9.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

The problem with prudence, as humanists of the later Renaissance saw it, was how to implement it in their own ever-changing times, and in particular under the peculiar pressures exerted by civil war. John O'Brien explains in 'Aristotle's Prudence, and Pyrrho's' that the cultural context of the late Renaissance, and especially the emergence of Pyrrhonian Scepticism, problematised the concept of prudence, confronting authors with 'the troubling difficulty of attempting to assert a proper sphere of action for a prudent man and his special cognitive powers while knowing that the traditional criteria for such an action are no longer readily applicable'.²⁷ In particular, he cites Justus Lipsius's *Politica* (1589) as a crucial text in the transformation of the application of prudence in the period; in the final book, on the subject of civil war, 'the shape of his work is determined by the necessity of discovering, describing and exercising the proper virtue when civil war comprises the example *par excellence* of the radical uncertainty that [...] [is] the primary source of difficulty for the operation of prudence'. According to Lipsius's conception, it is not only the appropriate action that changes according to circumstances (as in L'Hospital's analogy of adjusting the edict-sails according to the winds), but prudence itself: 'prudence changes along with circumstances to such an extent that it is never the same in the same matter. He thus introduces both a historical specificity and a relativistic note in the assessment of prudence'.²⁸ This shift in the understanding of prudence is also brought to bear on the nature and effectiveness of rhetoric, as Kahn explains: 'The easy alliance of rhetoric and Academic skepticism begins to be undermined by the arguments of Pyrrhonism [...]. Skepticism, in short, is no longer compatible with rhetorical persuasion; instead, it takes the possibility of persuasion itself as its object'.²⁹

²⁷ John O'Brien, 'Aristotle's Prudence, and Pyrrho's', in *Au-delà de la 'Poétique': Aristote et la littérature de la Renaissance*, ed. by Ullrich Langer, 'Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance', 367 (Geneva: Droz, 2002), pp. 35-45.

²⁸ O'Brien, 'Aristotle's Prudence, and Pyrrho's', p. 37.

²⁹ Kahn, *Rhetoric*, p. 20.

This chapter represents an attempt to explore first of all the endorsement of the persuasive potential of poetry in the political sphere through the thematics of shipwreck as elaborated in the poetry of L'Hospital's protégé, Pierre de Ronsard. Secondly, turning to the *Essais* of Michel de Montaigne, I will show how shipwreck can be used to reflect a Pyrrhonian Sceptical outlook both on the possibility of successful political navigation on the part of leaders, and on the co-operative intervention of authors and poets in matters of state.

III.3 'Un si piteux naufrage': Ronsard's poetico-political shipwrecks

III.3.i 'Haut dessus l'eau comme un liege': The poetic manifesto of the 'Ode à Michel de L'Hospital'

We begin with the most direct acknowledgement by Ronsard of the role of his great protector Michel de L'Hospital. In 1550, the young poet's position of courtly favour came under attack as 'les "rimeurs de cour"', irrités des prétensions de Ronsard, essayèrent de le perdre dans l'esprit du roi'.³⁰ By way of riposte, Ronsard set to work composing his ode 'À Michel de L'Hospital, Chancelier de France', in praise of his mentor, who had come to his defence during the controversy.³¹ The poem acts to describe and to demonstrate the ideals of poetry held by the *chancelier* and his protégé, and thus to restate and reinforce the position which had been attacked at court by Mellin de Saint-Gelais and his *rhétoriqueur* allies:

³⁰ Pierre de Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Jean Céard and others, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), vol. 1, Notes, p. 1500. Further references to this text (volume number, followed by page and, if applicable, line numbers) are integrated into the main body of my text, in brackets following quotations.

³¹ On the background to L'Hospital's intervention, and Ronsard's textual response, see Paul Laumonier, *Ronsard, poète lyrique: étude historique et littéraire* (Paris: Hachette, 1909), pp. 80-87, and Carol Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine: A History of the Ode* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 238-48, which also gives a structural overview and commentary of the poem.

Par art le navigateur
 Dans la mer manie et vire
 La bride de son navire:
 Par art plaide l'Orateur,
 Par art les Rois sont guerriers,
 Par art se font les ouvriers:
 Mais si vaine experience
 Vouz n'aurez de tel erreur,
 Sans plus ma sainte fureur
 Polira vostre science. (I.638, 399-402)

L'Hospital's role finds echo in the skills of the pilot and the politician (aligned, at odds with L'Hospital's view, with *scientia* rather than *sapientia*), which have been, historically, and may yet be, enhanced by the transcendence of poetry. But the 'sainte fureur' with which poetry is endowed elevates it above such 'science'. The distinction, argues Ronsard, between poetry and other *métiers* is that between art (or *labeur*) and *fureur*; his emphasis here is on inspiration rather than perspiration. This hierarchy might seem to place Ronsard above de L'Hospital, were it not for L'Hospital's role, elaborated in the Ode, in bringing the Muses back to earth, thus heralding the new age of great poetry.³²

The public, characterised by L'Hospital as the changeable sea on which the ship of state sails, are in Ronsard's vision 'La tourbe estonnée' (I.639, 420), a restatement of the 'mépris du peuple' noted by Lestringant in the *Hymne de la Philosophie*.³³ But the public aspect of the poet's role is crucial to Ronsard's valorisation of his work:

Après par tout l'univers
 Les responses prophetiques
 De tant d'oracles antiques
 Furent dites par les vers.
 En vers se firent les lois,
 Et les amitez des Rois
 Par les vers furent acquises:
 Par les vers on fist armer
 Les cœurs, pour les animer
 Aux vertueuses emprises. (I.642, 535-44)

³² See Carol Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine*, p. 239.

³³ Lestringant, 'Trois épreuves', p. 22.

Here we find a kind of manifesto for the humanist ideal described by Victoria Kahn: ‘the conviction that we are best persuaded to ethical praxis by the rhetorical practice of literature’.³⁴ Such salutary properties are, however, ascribed not just to any poetry. A mere *rhétoricien* will fail where Ronsard succeeds: without inspiration, ‘Ses vers naistront inutis | Ainsi qu’enfants abortis’ (471-472). In his gratitude to Michel de L’Hospital, Ronsard adopts the image that was later so favoured by his protector, imagining his poem, in an apostrophe to his Muse, as a ship gusting away by winds of inspiration:

Hâ, chere Muse, quel Zephyre
Souflant trop violement,
A fait escarter mon navire
Qui fendoit l’eau si droitement? (I.647, 693-6)

The Pindaric notion of the poetic ship swept off course is borrowed here within a broader symbolic framework of the sea. In the early strophes of the ode, the Muses are introduced under the sign of water, as Ronsard describes them travelling under the sea to visit their father. As he slows his ship down, heralding the approach of the ode’s end, Ronsard remarks upon the attempts of his enemies to scuttle his ‘nom’. The poetic ship is thus not only a private space of inspiration and composition, but a public, reputational vessel:

Haste toy donc de plier
Ta chanson trop poursuivie,
De peur (Muse) que l’envie
N’ait matiere de crier,
Qui seule veut abismer
Mon nom au fond de la mer
Par sa langue sacrilege:
Mais plus me voudroit plonger,
Plus elle me fait nager
Haut dessus l’eau comme un liege.
[...]
Je sçay que tes peines ancrées
Au port de la Felicité,
Seront malgré les ans sacrées
Aux pieds de l’Immortalité:

³⁴ Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence and Skepticism*, p. 9.

Mais les vers que la chienne Envie
En se rongant fait avorter,
Jamais ne pourront supporter
Deux Soleils sans perdre la vie. (I. 647-648, 705-726).

Ronsard's ship, he claims, is only ever buoyed by the vain attempts of Envy to ruin him; for all the attempts of his detractors to scuttle his ship, he floats like a cork on the water. Furthermore, his verse, divinely inspired, will endure beyond the petty squabbling of his detractors. The efforts of his Muse will ensure, after a resiliently watertight poetic voyage, safe and everlasting arrival in the port of public recognition. But such security, for Ronsard, is the exclusive privilege of the divinely inspired poetic community.³⁵ For the ship of state, by contrast, the threat of shipwreck is a more pressing concern.

III.3.ii The storm breaks: The 'Discours des Misères de ce temps'

As the first religious wars broke out in 1562, Ronsard implored Catherine de Medici in his *Discours des Misères de ce temps* to avert shipwreck by taking the helm firmly:

Las! ma Dame, en ce temps que le cruel orage
Menace les François d'un si piteux naufrage,
Que la gresle et la pluie, et la fureur des cieux
Ont irrité la mer de vents seditieux,
Et que l'astre Jumeau ne daigne plus reluire,
Prenez le gouvernail de ce pauvre navire:
Et maugré la tempeste, et le cruel effort
De la mer et des vents, conduisez-le à bon port. (II. 992)

We saw in Chapter One, in relation to the misogynist variants on the ship of fools, that the presence of a female at the helm was commonly shorthand for impending disaster. The circumstances surrounding the composition of the *Discours a la Royne*, by contrast, call

³⁵ In her D.Phil thesis, Anna Holland shows that, in the 'Isles fortunées', 'Ronsard borrows the frame of Horace's epode [16] in order to establish the special moral status of his own community, and to create a clear division between the identity of the group and the common run of humanity tainted by the corruption of political and social affairs', 'The Reception of Horace in the Poetry of Renaissance France (1543-72)' (Oxford, 2001), p. 191.

for urgent action, regardless of nautical gender norms.³⁶ As Williams shows in his discussion of Ronsard's response to the 'Monstrueuses guerres':

The *Discours*, published as a *plaquette*—which is to say a pamphlet, cheaply produced, for wide and speedy circulation: an intervention into a debate—is certainly *engagé*; but its aim is less to effect further conflict, than to encourage those who were working—even in the first months of wars that were to last for decades—towards a negotiated peace.³⁷

Williams finds in the *Discours* evidence of 'Ronsard's early reticence to adopt the engaged—let alone enraged—tone that characterises his [later] political poetry'.³⁸ But the emphasis in the passage above on Catherine's success *in spite of* the elements presents a different and more forceful navigational model than the prudent adjustments proposed and enacted in Michel de L'Hospital's own *Discours* of the same period. For Ronsard, a rather more firm hand on the tiller is what is required.

While the head of state is situated at the helm, her political entourage, and Ronsard's own supporters and allies, are also attributed nautical know-how, being characterised as benevolent forces or guiding stars guaranteeing the safe journey of the poetic ship.³⁹ In a sonnet of 1564, Claude Laubespine, a member of Catherine's inner circle and *secrétaire d'état* entrusted with naval affairs, is singled out for particular appreciation:

³⁶ Norma Thompson suggests that, despite the cultural traditions associating seafaring with masculinity, ancient textual precedents can be found for positive female agency: 'From the ancient world to admiralty law today, ships invariably are referred to as feminine. If the state is a ship and the ship is female, then the polis and state are female as well. But sailors are male; women on board are bad luck.' In Homer's *Odyssey*, however, '[a] story of ships and sailors often out of phase with each other and on the edge of forgetting their purpose and destination, is kept on course only by acts of cooperation by male and female at decisive moments'. Norma Thompson, *The Ship of State: Statecraft and Politics from Ancient Greece to Democratic America* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 167-168.

³⁷ Williams, *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), p. 91.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁹ See also Ronsard's sonnet to Laubespine's son-in-law, Nicolas de Villeroy, who inherited the position of *secrétaire d'état*, II.291, 11-14: 'Je ne crains plus la mer, puisque je voy | Comme un Castor sur le haut de ma poupe | Pour me sauver assis un Villeroy'. Ronsard, like Frère Jean in the *Cinquième Livre* (see above, Chapter Two), is ignorant of the bad fortune augured by a sighting of only one of the twins.

Je suis la nef, vous estes mon Pilote:
Sans l'Aubespine on ne peut voyager:
Sous vostre vent ma voile il faut ranger,
Au gré duquel il convient que je flote.

En pleine mer la tempeste trop forte
Pousse ma barque au rocher estranger:
De tous costez j'apperçoy le danger,
Et si pour moy toute esperance est morte.

Forcez le Ciel et la vague et le vent,
Et mon vaisseau conduisez en avant
Au port heureux du tranquille rivage.

"C'est bien raison que l'homme soit humain,
"Et qu'en voyant ses amis au naufrage,
"Au moins du bord il leur tende la main. (I. 508-509)⁴⁰

The precise nature of the danger threatening Ronsard might perhaps be revealed by closer inspection of the 'rocher estranger'. As Lestringant notes, '[la] nouveauté de la religion réformée, bien sûr, dans l'esprit des catholiques, s'associe intimement à l'étrangeté. [...] Le regard de Ronsard sur les protestants est un regard volontiers xénophobe'.⁴¹ The validity of this reading is further supported by the evidence—also put forward by Lestringant—that Ronsard characterised the forces of Reform as a 'tempête'. In the *Responce aux Injures* of 1563, 'le dernier et le plus ample des *Discours* composés à l'occasion de la première guerre de Religion',⁴² Ronsard describes his near escape, having once been tempted by the persuasive oration of Théodore de Bèze, with a twist on the Lucretian theme of shipwreck with spectator that, Lestringant declares, is 'assurément la

⁴⁰ The punctuation used in these last lines is explained by Ann Moss in *Printed Commonplace-Books* (pp. 211-212): 'Very specifically related to commonplace-books since their inception were the marginal markers, usually some form of "quotation mark", used to signal lines worth noting, memorizing, and extracting for insertion in the reader's private commonplace-book. Generally, passages thus marked were of the nature of sententiae, aphorisms, and any other of the gnomic forms of expression favoured [...] at the high point of the commonplace-book's evolution. "Quotation marks" used in this way proliferated in both Latin and vernacular literary texts printed in the late sixteenth century and early part of the seventeenth century, and did so for the very sound commercial reason that they served the habit of looking for excerpt-able material'.

⁴¹ Lestringant, 'La sensibilité catholique de Ronsard', in *Poésie et guerre civile: Pierre de Ronsard, 'Discours des Misères de ce Temps'*, ed. by Pascal Debailly and Jean Vignes, 'Cahiers textuel', 33 (Paris: Revue de l'UFR Lettres, arts, cinéma, 2009), pp. 19-27 (p. 22).

⁴² Lestringant, 'Trois épreuves', p. 29.

plus originale':⁴³ 'Je m'eschappay du Presche, ainsi que du naufrage | S'eschappe le marchant' (II.1060, 683-4). Whereas elsewhere, as Lestringant argues, Ronsard is only too happy to identify with the spectatorial position of the Lucretian philosopher, and adopts an attitude of disdain towards the 'mechant peuple [...] [qui s]e va noyant dans le mondain naufrage',⁴⁴ here the shipwreck victim is treated sympathetically.

In the complex analogy of the sonnet dedicated to Laubespine, the protector's role is fractured and multiple. In the first quatrain the *secrétaire d'état* is both pilot and the wind in the sails of Ronsard's ship. As the storm mounts in the second quatrain, the benevolent influence of Laubespine seems forgotten, but it reappears in the first tercet, where he is cast in a still more powerful role, controlling the elements themselves and guaranteeing safe passage to the poetic vessel. Finally, Ronsard imagines a shoreline figure in a position of safety, who, unlike Lucretius's spectator, feels kinship with those in danger, and physically reinforces this connection by offering a hand. Even as the final *rime croisée* opposes 'rivage' with 'naufrage', it joins 'humain' with 'main'; the ultimate gesture of humanity is not to remain detached in one's security, but to reach out: to be human is, to use the terms of my previous chapter, to co-operate.

This gesture is echoed in the final lines of a poem written by Ronsard for the treatise *Des sacrements de l'Église catholique et vray usage d'iceux* (1567) by Edmond Auger, where a spectator is able to avert the shipwreck of others:

Ô bien-heureux qui peut l'œil vers le ciel dresser,
Et ne laisse ses pas dans la fosse glisser:
Mais plus heureux celui, qui de la bourbe espesse,
Les pauvres desvoyez au vray sentier radresse:
Entre lesquels on void Auger tout le premier
Qui les appelle au bord, ainsi qu'un marinier
Desjà ancré au port de son signal retire
Des rochers recelez l'étrangere navire. (II.1124-1125, 67-74)

⁴³ Lestringant, 'Trois épreuves', p. 31.

⁴⁴ Lines from the second part of the 'Hynne de la Philosophie', which was left out of the edition of 1578 and does not feature in the modern edition quoted throughout this thesis. See Pierre de Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Paul Laumonier, 20 vols (Paris: Didier, 1914-1975), vol. 8, 202.

The image of a kind of prototypical lighthouse-keeper completes the encomium of Auger, who was a Jesuit priest famed for his aptitude for converting Protestants: ‘Bénéficiant de la faveur de la cour, [il] s’était fait connaître [...] par le zèle qu’il mettait à défendre, contre les protestants, les vérités de la foi catholique’ (II.1621). In contrast with the earlier sonnet, here it is not the ‘rochers’ but the ship itself that is ‘estrangere’; in conciliatory mode, Ronsard figures a Protestant Church-ship which may yet be saved from the rocks of false faith, and perhaps rehabilitated, if it follows the direction of the likes of Auger.

III.3.iii ‘De flot en flot, de naufrage en naufrage’: The ill-fated *Franciade*

Such reconciliation proved out of reach, however, by the time of publication of what was intended to be the first instalment (four books) of Ronsard’s *magnum opus*. *La Franciade*, Ronsard’s unfinished patriotic epic seems, in retrospect, to have been doomed from the start, not least by the timing of its first appearance in 1572, just weeks after the St Bartholomew’s Day massacre, as the editors of the *Œuvres complètes* note: ‘Par une singulière ironie, l’œuvre qui devait manifester l’unité nationale voyait donc le jour quelques semaines après l’un des plus sanglants massacres de l’histoire de France’ (I.1604). Securing the commission for this great epic was itself a slow process, as a pair of poems dedicated to Henri II reveals. In the wake of French victory at the battle of Renty in the Italian wars, Ronsard imagines his king meticulously checking over the ship of state for storm damage.

[...] bien qu’il soit au havre il n’a moindre souci
 De sa nef qu’en tempeste, et se rempare ainsi
 Que s’il couroit fortune au milieu de l’orage,
 Et ne se veut fier au tranquille visage
 Du ciel ny de la mer pour se donner à l’eau,
 Que premier il n’ait bien calfeutré son vaisseau. (I.589, 17-22)

Through a shared nautical metaphor, Ronsard endeavours to turn the king's assiduity to his own advantage; having done all this good political ship maintenance, Ronsard asks his king, will he now turn his attention to another ship, that of Francus, 'l'ayeul de tes ayeux'? Now that the ship of state has (Ronsard argues) been secured, its mythological and poetic counterpart may aptly be deployed, and Francus sent on his great journey, thus securing France's status as a great nation:

Puis qu'il [= Francus] trouve en mes vers le vent si à propos,
 Fay luy enfler la voile, et luy romp le repos
 Qui le tient paresseux au rivage d'Epire,
 Fraudé de son chemin par faute de navire,
 De vivres et de gens: ouvrier je suis tout prest
 De charpenter sa nef et dresser son apprest,
 Pourveu que ta grandeur Royale favorise
 À ton ayeul Francus, et à mon entreprise. (I.591, 93-100)⁴⁵

This first effort having apparently fallen on deaf ears, the next year Ronsard assures the king that the poetic vessel which is his projected epic will, with Henri's backing, be impervious to the threat of shipwreck:

Car si tu es sa guide, elle sera sans peur
 De trouver dessous l'eau, non le rocher trompeur,
 Non les bans périlleux des sablonneuses rades,
 Non pas Scylle, ou Charybde, ou les deux Symplegades:
 Mais seurement voguant sans crainte d'abismer[.] (I.722, 9-13)

When Henri's commission was eventually granted, such confidence proved ill-founded.⁴⁶

As Silver has shown, and as we saw in the 'Ode à Michel de L'Hospital', Ronsard, following ancient Greek tradition—and in particular the example of Pindar—often favoured nautical imagery when writing in reflexive mode about his compositions.⁴⁷ It could be claimed, then, that shipwreck imagery simply forms part of this poetic

⁴⁵ The conclusion to the original edition of 1555 was more direct still, playing on the 'raw materials' needed for the ship's construction: 'Pourveu que l'on me baille estoffes pour le faire, | Et qu'en le faisant bien je puisse complaire'.

⁴⁶ For a detailed account of the poem's protracted and ultimately disappointing emergence, see Ullrich Langer's (rather brilliantly titled) 'Boring Epic in Early Modern France', in *Epic and Epoch: Essays on the Interpretation and History of a Genre*, ed. by Steven M. Oberhelman and others (Lubbock: Texas University Press, 1994), pp. 208-229, particularly pp. 211-213.

⁴⁷ See Silver, *Ronsard and the Grecian Lyre*, vol. 2, pp. 162-172.

inheritance. But Olivier Pot argues that Ronsard's enormous, and perhaps overreaching, ambition for his epic project was significantly reflected in his copious treatment of the shipwreck theme:

La *Franciade* propose [...] un hypertexte de tempête: comme Rabelais, Ronsard solde tous les accessoires du magasin dans le genre. Les deux naufrages successifs dédoublent et combinent les deux tempêtes de l'Odyssée, les deux tempêtes de l'Enéide, etc... La description se généralise, se fait générique; elle transcende les catégories étendant ses comparaisons tantôt à l'orage qui s'abat en juin 'sur une campagne vague' et saccage 'les espriz eventez', tantôt à 'un torrent de montaignes' qui 'courbe tous les buissons en tombant'.

In another echo of Rabelais, Ronsard also tackles the vexed question of divine intervention, and its counterpart, human co-operation, albeit from a different perspective:

Si la première tempête reprend encore l'invocation traditionnelle aux dieux (Francus 'gemissant' rappelle au 'grand Jupiter' sa pitié: 'n'obly les sacrifices du pere mien'), lors de la seconde tempête en revanche, les Troyens trouveront leur salut dans la *pulsion de survie*: 'Là, le démon qui preside à la vie En tel dangier leur fit naître une envie De s'attacher à ces rochers bossus' (vv. 332-333).⁴⁸

This 'pulsion de survie' is not active; in opposition to the synergistic view of Rabelais (and even L'Hospital), Ronsard minimises the ability of those on board to work to save themselves: 'L'un court icy, l'autre court d'autre part, | Mais pour neant: le mal surmonte l'art!' (I.1049, 191-2). Prophetically, Francus, the mythical 'ayeul' and founder of France, is personally associated with shipwreck, seeming at times doomed to perish on the waves, as he laments in the third book:

Je suis (je croy) le maudisson des Dieux,
Sans demeurance errant de lieux en lieux,
De flot en flot, de naufrage en naufrage[.] (I.1083, 211-13)

Francus's curse follows him into the fourth book, where, in a striking and rare example of shipwreck as a metaphor for an individual, after the death of Francus's admirer Clymene he is described by her father, Dicée, as 'un vif naufrage à ma rive venu' (I.1111, 28). Three cognates, and three concepts, converge here. Like Francus, the *Franciade*—and France,

⁴⁸ Pot, 'Prolégomènes pour une étude de la tempête en mer', p. 84.

too—seemed unable to escape the prospect of shipwreck. The failure to launch of Ronsard’s projected epic implied a broader nonfulfilment of his own poetic manifestos and those of his Pléiade allies: the realisation in the French vernacular of a great poetic work to equal or surpass the greatest achievements of the greatest Greek or Latin poets. That this failure should have been borne out in a work that sought explicitly to tell the mythical history of the nation’s greatness, only made the irony more bitter as, after the St Bartholomew’s day massacre, the hope of civil reconciliation seemed more distant than ever.

The sense of increasing desperation at the persistence of the wars affected even the most pragmatic of minds. Towards the end of his life, and in the more intimate, poetic mode of his Latin *Carmina*, L’Hospital envisioned himself standing outside the ship, as a spectator to unfolding events. In an epistle on the death in 1571 of his close friend Jacques Du Faur, he conveys for the first time a sense of powerlessness: ‘Naufragium patriæ mœsti conspeximus ambo’ [‘The two of us gazed upon the shipwreck of our unhappy homeland’].⁴⁹ In a further turn of nautically-inflected pathos, a few months before his own death in 1573, L’Hospital wrote to Charles IX, withdrawing from service, likening himself to ‘les vieilles galleres au port de Marseille dellaissees, sans churme et equippage que l’on voit toutesfois volontiers’.⁵⁰ A few days later, he wrote to Catherine de Medici: ‘Je suis tantost au bout de mon grand voyage et n’auray plus affaire qu’à Dieu’.⁵¹ L’Hospital’s prudential project having stalled, the shipwreck of state seemed less a prophecy than an actuality.

⁴⁹ *Œuvres complètes de Michel de L’Hospital, chancelier de France: ornées de portraits et de vues*, ed. Pierre-Joseph-Spiridion Dufey, 6 vols (Paris: A. Boulland, 1824-1825), vol. 3, VI.9, p. 488. Translation my own.

⁵⁰ By likening himself to a ship here, L’Hospital triangulates the established metaphors of body politic and ship of state. As Petris shows (*La Plume et la tribune*, pp. 250-254), alongside nautical analogy, L’Hospital favoured medical imagery, often figuring France as a body ravaged by disease, and his political actions as the necessary medicine. For more on the overlapping use of the ship and body as metaphors for the state, see above, Chapter One, section I.3.iii.

⁵¹ Letters in Petris, *La Plume et la tribune*, pp. 492-493.

III.4 ‘Soubstraire ce coing à la tempête publique’: Montaigne’s engagement with shipwreck

III.4.i ‘Ces divisions et subdivisions qui nous deschirent aujourd’huy’: Montaigne’s ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’

The opening chapter of the third book of the *Essais*, ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’, explores and tests ‘[t]he relationship between ‘useful’ (that is, personally or politically advantageous) action and ‘honorable’ [...] action [that] was given canonical treatment by Cicero, in Book III of his *De Officiis*—probably the most influential work of classical moral philosophy for the Renaissance’.⁵² In what is probably the shipwreck moment most discussed in scholarship on the *Essais*, early in the chapter Montaigne quotes the opening lines of the second book of *De rerum natura*. This couplet forms the first part of the metaphor used by Lucretius to describe the position of *ataraxia*, or withdrawal from the world, of the Epicurean philosopher:

Suave, mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem. (II, 1-2)

[Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another’s great tribulation[.]]⁵³

Montaigne’s selective quotation, in neglecting to include the lines that follow and temper this sentiment (‘non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas, sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est’ [‘not because any man’s troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant’]), twists Lucretius’s original sense to emphasise what Montaigne describes as ‘je ne sçay quelle aigre-douce

⁵² Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 46.

⁵³ Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, p. 95.

poincte de volupté maligne à voir souffrir autrui’.⁵⁴ Typically for Montaigne, the quotation does not equate to unqualified endorsement; while Screech wonders what might be the significance of Montaigne’s choice of quotation for the ‘first chapter of his new book’,⁵⁵ Lestringant asserts that ‘l’hommage est plein d’ironie et frôle la trahison’.⁵⁶ As I shall show in more detail below, he demonstrates that Montaigne’s use of the *suave mari magno topos*, and his identification of the ‘volupté maligne’ of the onlooker, owes much to Cicero’s imagined scene of spectatorship in the *Letters to Atticus*.⁵⁷

Such a sense of *schadenfreude* is defended by Montaigne as an inherent part of human nature: ‘Nostre bastiment, et public et privé, est plain d’imperfection’ (790). These imperfect qualities—to continue the architectural analogy—form the groundwork, ‘les fondamentales conditions de nostre vie’ (791); indeed, since ‘il n’y a rien d’inutile en nature’ (790), such vices serve a purpose, not least in government: ‘en toute police, il y a des offices nécessaires, non seulement abjects, mais encore vitieux’ (791). It is here that a link between the ‘utile’ of Montaigne’s title and the Machiavellian concept of *raison d’état* becomes apparent.⁵⁸ Montaigne distances himself from the kind of political positions in which ‘[l]e bien publique requiert qu’on trahisse et qu’on mente et qu’on massacre; resignons cette commission à gens plus obeissans et plus souples’ (791). This tricolon, completed by the addition of ‘et qu’on massacre’ in the ‘C’ *couche*, clarifies the very real contemporary resonance of the question under discussion, but also, in the distinction

⁵⁴ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, as before (i.e. the ‘Villey-Saulnier’ edition), p. 791. Further references to the *Essais* are given in the main body of the text, indicated in brackets after quotations. On Montaigne’s ‘volupté maligne’, see also Lestringant, ‘Lucrèce, la Renaissance et ses naufrages’, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁵ M. A. Screech, *Montaigne’s Annotated Copy of Lucretius: A Transcription and Study of the Manuscript, Notes and Pen-Marks* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), p. 485.

⁵⁶ Lestringant, ‘La Tempête de près et de loin’, p. 118.

⁵⁷ Lestringant, ‘Lucrèce, la Renaissance et ses naufrages’, p. 12. For Lestringant, Cicero serves as ‘truchement’ for Montaigne in his reading of Augustine’s *City of God and Confessions* (ibid., pp. 11-13).

⁵⁸ On Montaigne’s treatment of *raison d’état* in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge: CUP, 1978), vol. 1, 253; and, writing convincingly against Skinner’s argument, Robert J. Collins, ‘Montaigne’s Rejection of Reason of State in “De l’Utile et de l’honneste”’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23.1 (1992), 71-94. For a Skinnerian reading of Montaigne, see Felicity Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

between the ‘on’ and ‘nous’ forms, emphasises Montaigne’s distance from such actions.

Montaigne’s own political commitment is, it seems, partial, as he borrows from Rabelais an expression of his engagement:

Je suivray le bon party jusques au feu, mais exclusivement si je puis. Que Montaigne s’engouffre quant et la ruyne publique, si besoin est; mais, s’il n’est pas besoin, je sçauray bon gré à la fortune qu’il se sauve; et autant que mon devoir me donne de corde, je l’employe à sa conservation. (792)

The ‘Montaigne’ in question here is the family château; the earlier architectural metaphor finds an incarnation close to home.⁵⁹

The evocation of fortune recalls the Stoic formulation in ‘De la gloire’ (II.17): ‘Le marinier antien disoit ainsin à Neptune en une grande tempeste: O Dieu, tu me sauveras, si tu veux; tu me perdras, si tu veux: mais si tiendrai je tousjours droit mon timon’ (624).

We note that the lexis of the passage from which this selection is taken, an insertion from the ‘B’ *couche*, resonates with that of ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’, meditating as it does on the incredible ‘souplesse d’esprit’ that would be required to follow ‘un guide si desvoyé et desreiglé’, ‘une fin si flottante et vagabonde’ (that is, public opinion), and advocating instead the path of reason, which proves to be ‘le plus heureux et le plus utile’ (624).

Montaigne follows the example of the ‘marinier antien’ with an oblique reference to his own lack of *souplesse*: ‘J’ay veu de mon temps mill’hommes souples, mestis, ambigus, et que nul ne doubtoit plus prudans mondains que moy, se perdre où je me suis sauvé’ (624-625).

In the example offered in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’, salvation seems to come not from constancy but from moderation: ‘Fut-ce pas Atticus, lequel se tenant au juste party, et au party qui perdit, se sauva par sa moderation en cet universel naufrage du monde, parmy

⁵⁹ On the structural parallels between the crumbling Montaigne chateau and the French state in the civil wars, see Williams, “Rubbing up against others”: Montaigne on Pilgrimage’, in *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, ed. by Jás Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (London: Reaktion, 1999), pp. 101–123 (pp. 105-106 and n. 10).

tant de mutations et diversitez?’ (792). Montaigne’s connection of Atticus to the theme of shipwreck would, as noted above, seem to be inspired by Cicero’s letters to the latter, his great friend; though Cicero was ousted from power, Atticus remained in favour and was not associated with his friend’s perceived misdemeanours. In his letters, Cicero describes his own political downfall in nautical terms, and in so doing generates his own version of the Lucretian shipwreck-with-spectator scene:

I had long grown tired of playing skipper [*gubernare*], even when that was in my power. Now, when I have—not abandoned the helm, but had it snatched out of my hands [*non abiectis sed ereptis gubernaculis*], I want to watch the wreck they’re making from terra firma. I want, as your friend Sophocles puts it,

beneath my roof
With mind asleep to hear the pattering shower.⁶⁰

This passage highlights the strong metaphorical link between governor and helmsman, centred on the Latin terms *gubernare* and *gubernaculum*, which, along with a wealth of mythological imagery, were favoured by Cicero when describing the troubled state.⁶¹ It will be fruitful to reflect here at greater length on the intertwined examples of Cicero, Atticus and Montaigne, not least since they demonstrate distinctly different inflections of the *topos* of the ship of state from those articulated by Ronsard, discussed above. They will also allow us to reflect further on the dynamics of spectatorship, audience and readership explored in previous chapters.

The Lucretian spectator is categorically defined by his distance from the ship; his pleasure is derived in part from the knowledge that he has chosen not to be the kind of

⁶⁰ Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, Edited and Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1999) 27 (II.7.iv), pp. 154-157.

⁶¹ Roger Brock credits Cicero with the survival of the term ‘government’ in political affairs today: ‘the frequency in Cicero of the image of the *gubernator*, the Latin helmsman, and of the shipwreck (*naufragium*) of the Roman republic, attests to its continuing appeal [in Latin literature], and it is doubtless through Cicero’s influence that it continues into post-classical literature and so comes down to us’. *Greek Political Imagery from Homer to Aristotle* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), Chapter 4, ‘The Ship of State’, pp. 53-67 (p. 62). See also Maridien Schneider, *Cicero ‘Haruspex’: Political Prognostication and the Viscera of a Deceased Body Politic* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2004), p. 151; Elaine Fantham, *Comparative Studies in Republican Latin Imagery* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 22-26.

person who would be so foolish as to venture out on the open sea. Cicero, by contrast, had at one time enjoyed the power of ‘being at the helm’, and this radically transforms the spectatorial viewpoint. Cicero expresses his pleasure at Atticus’s undiminished status after his own downfall in a later letter, where he writes of his ‘delectable rapprochement with Caesar’: ‘That does give me some satisfaction, the one plank left from the wreck. The way he treats my (and your) dear Quintus! Such distinction, such appreciation and favour! I couldn’t do more if I were G.O.C. [*imperator*] myself.’⁶² We note, however, that Cicero never explicitly places Atticus on board in his scene of shipwreck, nor paints him as a survivor. Pierre Villey, in his supplementary notes to III.1 (p. 1292 in the edition quoted), refers the reader to the sixth book of Cornelius Nepos’s life of Atticus, in which Atticus is judged to have withheld from engaging his own boat in the storms of the civil wars of his times. The more germane use of shipwreck analogy, however, occurs in the tenth book, where Nepos writes that Antony, remembering Atticus’s past services, spared him the punishment otherwise meted out to Cicero’s allies:

Quod si gubernator praecipua laude fertur qui navem ex hieme marique scopuloso servat, cur non singularis eius existimetur *prudentia* qui ex tot tamque gravibus procelis civilibus ad incolumitatem pervenit?⁶³

[But if the helmsman who saves the ship from a storm in a reef-filled sea is exalted with particular praise, why should not the prudence of a man who reached safety after such grave and numerous squalls of civil strife be thought remarkable?]⁶⁴

By following the example of Nepos rather than Cicero, and casting Atticus as a survivor, Montaigne widens the scope of Cicero’s political shipwreck to encompass not only the major players in civil conflict, those wrestling over the helm, but also the others on board the ship of state; those on the margins, whose fate, too, hangs in the balance.

⁶² Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 93 (IV.9.1), pp. 22-23.

⁶³ Cornelius Nepos, *Œuvres*, ed. by Anne-Marie Guillemin (Paris: ‘Les belles-lettres’, 1923), XXV, Atticus, 10.6, p. 158, emphasis my own.

⁶⁴ Nepos, *A Selection, Including the Lives of Cato and Atticus*, trans. by Nicholas Horsfall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 21. I have revised Horsfall’s translation to accommodate the significant term ‘prudence’, which he gives as ‘foresight’.

The example of Atticus saving himself through moderation appears at first to be exemplary, and although the prospect of ruin for the Montaigne estate is real, this historical example nonetheless provides a reminder of the timelessness of political shipwreck—what Montaigne calls ‘cet universel naufrage du monde’ (792). As Timothy Hampton explains:

[T]he category of the ‘universal’ [...] was often evoked rhetorically in practical political negotiations, as working diplomats sought to give their contingent actions greater meaning. Thus, for example, the negotiations between Francis I and Charles V [...] following the Battle of Pavia, are described by the French legate Jean du Bellay as a quest for ‘universal peace’.⁶⁵

Montaigne’s description of the shipwreck of state—the result of the abject failure of such negotiations—as ‘universel’ thus ironises the overly optimistic projections of such diplomatic discourse. In Montaigne’s discussion of the shipwreck of state, historically specific and personal circumstances dictate the acceptable response to shipwreck:

Aux hommes, comme luy [= Atticus], privez, il est plus aisé: et en telle sorte de besongne, je trouve qu’on peut justement n’estre pas ambitieux à s’ingerer et convier soy-mesmes. De se tenir chancelant et mestis, de tenir son affection immobile et sans inclination aus troubles de son pays et en une division publique, je ne le trouve ny beau ny honneste. (793)

Whereas the earlier description of ‘nostre bastiment’ diminished the degree of separation between ‘public’ and ‘privé’, this passage now appears to set the two in contradistinction. Further still, Montaigne specifies that it is less excusable to sit on the fence in the troubles of one’s own country than in foreign affairs. Yet the line of argument is itself ‘chancelant et mestis’,⁶⁶ and seems to come full circle, as Montaigne suggests: ‘de ne s’embesogner point, à homme qui n’a ny charge ny commandement exprés qui le presse, je le trouve plus excusable (et si ne pratique pour moy cette excuse) qu’aux guerres estrangeres’ (793).⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, p. 203, n. 26.

⁶⁶ David Schaefer refers, rather reassuringly I find, to this as a ‘complex and somewhat confusing passage’. *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 354.

⁶⁷ This passage, by turns, echoes and contradicts Machiavellian arguments on morality and politics: see Villey’s introductory notes, p. 789.

Earlier in the chapter, Montaigne describes his own practice in the political affairs of his own country:

En ce peu que j'ay eu à negotier entre nos Princes, en ces divisions et subdivisions qui nous deschirent aujourd'hui, j'ay curieusement evité qu'ils se mesprinssent en moy et s'enferrassent en mon masque. Les gens du mestier se tiennent les plus couverts, et se presentent et contrefont les plus moyens et les plus voisins qu'ils peuvent. Moy, je m'offre par mes opinions les plus vives et par la forme plus mienne. Tendre negociateur et novice, qui ayme mieux faillir à l'affaire qu'à moy! (791)

As Hampton argues, such a declaration of ineptitude constitutes, paradoxically, proof of Montaigne's aptitude:

In the place of the rhetorically adept ambassador, able to mold himself to a variety of situations, we get a Montaigne who celebrates his own inflexibility [...]. To the extent that Montaigne is not 'diplomatic' he can be diplomatic. To the extent that he affirms his limits, he can serve the larger cause of the public weal. This paradox finds practical application in Montaigne's description of his own negotiating approach. [...] 'Je ne dis rien à l'un que je ne puisse dire à l'autre, à son heure, l'accent seulement un peu changé; et ne rapporte que les choses ou indifferentes ou cogneuës, ou qui servent en commun. Il n'y a point d'utilité pour laquelle je me permette de leur mentir' [(794)] [...]. Here Montaigne controls the diplomatic message, but only in order to reaffirm the common relationship of both sides. Indeed, we might say, he brings both sides together by giving them both the same news.⁶⁸

The chaotic dynamic of constant flux, the disintegration and renewal of matter, that permeates Lucretius's text, when transferred to the political realm, is a deadly force against which Montaigne, like many of his contemporaries, sought to fight.⁶⁹ But Montaigne is not, he claims, one of the 'gens de mestier' who are able to mask or dissemble their true feelings and 'opinions' to their political advantage. As the storm of the ongoing civil wars looms overhead, Montaigne seems to settle on the successful

⁶⁸ Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy*, pp. 66-67. David Schaefer offers a slightly different interpretation of Montaigne's claims here: 'Montaigne's remarks about his negotiating technique actually suggest the speciousness of his professions of innocence: they indicate that he succeeded in convincing other people to believe in his honesty, not that he was scrupulously honest. Later in the chapter [...] Montaigne himself alludes to the charge...' ['que ce que j'appelle franchise, simplesse et nayfveté en mes moeurs, c'est art et finesse, et plustost prudence que bonté, industrie que nature, bon sens que bon heur', (795)']; Schaefer argues that: 'Montaigne hardly refutes this charge': *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, p. 353.

⁶⁹ On Montaigne's role as a go-between during the wars, see David Maskell, 'Montaigne médiateur entre Navarre et Guise', *BHR*, 41.3 (1979), 541-553; Daniel Ménager, 'La Diplomatie de Montaigne', in *Montaigne politique: actes du colloque international tenu à University of Chicago, Paris, les 29 et 30 avril 2005*, ed. by Philippe Desan (Paris: Champion, 2006), pp. 139-152.

comportment of Atticus, or something very much like it, as the best way forward: ‘ceux [...] qui s’y engagent tout à fait, le peuvent avec tel ordre et attenance que l’orage devra couler par dessus leur teste sans offence’ (793).

This peculiar kind of engagement that somehow absolves the one engaging from personal risk dramatises the status of prudence in Montaigne’s writing, and in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’ in particular. The paradoxical dual movement of retreat and engagement is bound up with Montaigne’s conception of prudence, as John O’Brien has shown in two articles: ‘Retrait’⁷⁰ and ‘Aristotle’s Prudence, and Pyrrho’s’. In both articles, O’Brien highlights a passage from ‘Que nostre desir s’accroit par la malaisance’ (II.15), in which Montaigne considers his ‘retraite’, the Montaigne house and the civil wars:

[C] A l’aventure sert entre autres moyens l’aisance, à couvrir ma maison de la violence de nos guerres civiles. [...] C’est la retraite à me reposer des guerres. J’essaye de soustraire ce coing à la tempeste publique, comme je fay un autre coing en mon ame. Notre guerre a beau changer de formes, se multiplier et diversifier en nouveaux partis; pour moy, je ne bouge. (616-617)

This ‘coing’ can be usefully aligned with the stance, described above, that allows the storm to pass overhead. O’Brien shows, in his discussion of the ‘prudential household’, that the particular kind of openness (here characterised as ‘l’aisance’) practiced by Montaigne is what guarantees his security:

[Montaigne’s] friendships coalesce into what I have termed the *familia*, in other words the whole network of social, political and intellectual contacts by which the writer maintains his precarious position in a volatile age. Such a network constitutes both a geopolitics and a form of political prudence that uses the open, accessible house as the paradoxical guarantor of the essayist’s prized independence.⁷¹

⁷⁰ John O’Brien, ‘Retrait’, in *Montaigne Politique*, as in previous footnote, pp. 203-222.

⁷¹ O’Brien, ‘Aristotle’s Prudence, and Pyrrho’s’, p. 41. Cf. ‘De l’experience’ (III.13): ‘Mon Dieu! que mal pourroy-je souffrir la condition où je vois tant de gens, clouez à un quartier de ce royaume, privés de l’entrée des villes principales et des courts et de l’usage des chemins publics, pour avoir querellé nos loix! Si celles que je sers me menassoient seulement le bout du doigt, je m’en irois incontinent en trouver d’autres, où que ce fut. Toute ma petite prudence en ces guerres civiles où nous sommes, s’employe à ce qu’elles n’interrompent ma liberté d’aller et venir’, p. 1072.

Kahn shows in *Rhetoric, Prudence and Skepticism* that Montaigne reconnects the concept of prudence with the ancient notion (inscribed in the Delphic aphorism ‘know thyself’) of knowledge of one’s own limits, quoting Pierre Aubenque’s *La prudence chez Aristote*: ‘Le “connaiss-toi-même” ne nous invite pas à trouver en nous-mêmes le fondement de toutes choses, mais nous rappelle, au contraire, à la conscience de notre finitude: il est la formule la plus haute de la *prudence* grecque, c’est-à-dire de la sagesse des *limites*’.⁷² Similarly, O’Brien shows how Montaigne turns prudence back on itself, emphasising the all-important element of doubt:

[L]a prudence n’est plus une méthode philosophique pour traiter de la contingence des choses, c’est un phénomène lui-même contingent, sujet aux aléas de la fortune; ce qui pousse Montaigne à déclarer également sans ‘De l’art de conferer’, ‘C’est imprudence d’estimer que l’humaine prudence puisse remplir le rôle de la fortune’ (III, 8, 934).⁷³

For Kahn, ‘Montaigne’s remarks support [Aubenque’s] equation of prudence with a continual profession of ignorance rather than with a spectacular act of self-reflection’.⁷⁴ It is clear, then, that Montaigne’s deliberate performance of rigidity, his self-declared lack of ‘diplomacy’, as Hampton puts it, is itself a function of his Sceptical prudential outlook.

In ‘Montaigne and the notion of prudence’, Francis Goyet argues his case by reworking the model of navigation favoured by Michel de L’Hospital: ‘The “prudent” leader, like a good helmsman, knows how to steer the ship of the state amidst all the reefs and guide it to a safe port’.⁷⁵ In a chapter that has many strengths, not least a useful consideration of the personal circumstances that prevented Montaigne’s remaining ‘chancelant et mestis’ (pp. 122-127), Goyet nonetheless rejects all too strongly the role of Montaigne’s Pyrrhonian Scepticism in shaping his ‘notion of prudence’; Goyet associates the ‘radicaliz[ation] of Pyrrhonism’ with ‘the post-modern *doxa*’ which views Montaigne

⁷² Pierre Aubenque, *La Prudence chez Aristote* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 166.

⁷³ O’Brien, ‘Retrait’, p. 221.

⁷⁴ Kahn, *Rhetoric*, p. 138.

⁷⁵ Francis Goyet, ‘Montaigne and the Notion of Prudence’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne*, ed. by Ullrich Langer (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 118-141 (p. 118).

through a lens ‘more ideological than scientific’.⁷⁶ Emphasising by contrast the Aristotelian-Ciceronian concept of prudence, Goyet’s conclusions relate more strongly to the practical, positive mode of Academic rhetorical prudence elaborated by Kahn. Less circumspect than Kahn (or indeed Hampton or O’Brien), Goyet asserts that: ‘in the organization of his book Montaigne demonstrates the supreme skillfulness of a *prudens* [prudent man]’; he characterises Montaigne as ‘a good Christian helmsman’ whose aim is to present his readers with ‘ways of saving themselves’.⁷⁷ In the final parts of this chapter, I challenge further this optimistic reading of didactic Montaignean prudence.

III.4.ii ‘Rares, incroyables et prodigieuses’? The (in)significance of shipwreck in the *Essais*

In this chapter that examines the privileging of shipwreck metaphors during the French civil wars, it is useful to pause for a moment to consider several particular arguments made by Montaigne for the inconsequentiality of shipwreck. These are all the more remarkable for their discordance in relation to the rich culture of significance we have seen here and in previous chapters. In ‘De l’aage’ (I. 57), Montaigne undermines the cultural and textual traditions that constitute shipwreck as a richly meaningful and symbolic moment. Arguing that it is extremely rare to die of old age—or what we might now call ‘natural causes’—he continues:

[A] Nous l’appellons seule naturelle, comme si c’estoit contre nature de voir un homme se rompre le col d’une cheute, s’estoufer d’un naufrage, se laisser surprendre à la peste ou à une pleuresie, et comme si nostre condition ordinaire ne nous presentoit à tous ces inconveniens. Ne nous flatons pas de ces beaux mots: on doit, à l’aventure, appeller plustost naturel ce qui est general, commun et universel. (326)

⁷⁶ Goyet, ‘Montaigne and the Notion of Prudence’, p. 119; p. 136.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 136; p. 137.

The risk of dying in a shipwreck is for Montaigne part of ‘nostre condition ordinaire’; its very position within the enumeration of possible causes of death, between accident and illness, underlines its purported mundanity. Shipwreck, seen in ancient tradition as the revenge of nature against those flouting its laws, is accordingly reinterpreted as part of nature itself. The universality of shipwreck seen in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’ is already, in the first edition of the *Essais*, established as a function of the constant uncertainty and precarity of human existence.

The assertion that deaths by shipwreck are part of what is ‘general, commun et universel’ also anticipates a late addition to ‘Des prognostications’ (I. 11) that juxtaposes the rare with the common. Dismissing the supposed ‘autorité’ of predictions made on the basis of almanachs, Montaigne remarks that ‘[C] personne ne tient registre de leurs mescontes, d’autant qu’ils sont ordinaires et infinis; et fait on valoir leurs divinations de ce qu’elles sont rares, incroyables et prodigieuses’ (43). He expands on this theme by staging a conversation between two men considering the significance of shipwreck:

[C] Ainsi respondit Diagoras qui fut surnommé l’Athée, estant en la Samothrace, à celui qui en luy montrant au temple force voeuz et tableaux de ceux qui avoyent eschapé le naufrage, luy dict: Et bien, vous qui pensez que les dieux mettent à nonchaloir les choses humaines, que dittes vous de tant d’hommes sauvez par leur grace? Il se fait ainsi, respondit-il: ceux-là ne sont pas peints qui sont demeurez noyez, en bien plus grand nombre. (44)

The survival of shipwreck, which, as I show elsewhere in this thesis, is overwhelmingly interpreted as a form of election and a sign of God’s ‘miséricorde’, is here brutally—and humorously—recontextualised; through the figure of the ‘Athée’, Montaigne ventriloquises words that, more so even than those of Erasmus before him, undermine the culture of superstition built up around shipwreck.

Whereas Montaigne argues in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’ (III.1) that spectating the shipwreck of others may serve a useful purpose, in ‘De la phisionomie’ (III.12), he warns against fruitless meditation on such torments;

[C] *Exilia, tormenta, bella, morbos, naufragia meditare, ut nullo sis malo tiro*. [‘Meditate upon exile, wars, diseases, shipwreck, so that you may not be a novice to any misfortune’]⁷⁸ [B] A quoy nous sert cette curiosité de preoccuper tous les inconvenients de l’humaine nature, et nous preparer avec tant de peine à l’encontre de ceux mesme qui n’ont à l’avanture point à nous toucher? (1050)

Not only is demise in a shipwreck so common an occurrence as to be quite unremarkable, such risks (now, significantly, in the context of my discussion here, including ‘wars’) are inherent to the human condition itself. The element of doubt expressed in the phrase ‘à l’avanture’ perpetuates the thread established in ‘De l’aage’ that situates shipwreck within a discourse of unpredictable ‘inconvenients’.⁷⁹ Read together, these three examples suggest that the metaphor of shipwreck, employed in Lucretius to emblemise the superior moral position of the philosopher, and in Christian tradition to allegorise perdition or salvation, comes in Montaigne to express the impossibility for the Pyrrhonian Sceptic of imposing such an organising logic on existence. As O’Brien suggests in ‘Aristotle’s Prudence’, the unsettling of the earlier, Academic-Sceptical conception of prudence by the rise of Pyrrhonism is not only coincidental to, but perfectly expressed through the peculiarly unstable political atmosphere of civil war.

Though he is dismissive of any fixation on shipwrecks, earlier in ‘De la phisionomie’ Montaigne admits that his own ‘curiosité’ prevents him from averting his gaze when confronted with ‘ce notable spectacle de nostre mort publique’ (1046). Blumenberg links this moment back to the *suave mari magno* scene of ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’: ‘One can almost feel how the skeptic approaches the secure position of the spectator, by raising higher and higher the conditions under which he would still be prepared to allow himself to go down, in what was then a thirty-year-old political

⁷⁸ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, trans. Donald M. Frame (London: Everyman, 2003), p. 978. Further references to Frame’s translations of Montaigne’s Latin quotations are integrated into the body of my text.

⁷⁹ For an in-depth study of Montaigne’s use of ‘à l’avanture’ and other such doubtful expressions, see Kirsti Sellevold, *‘J’ayme ces mots...’: expressions linguistiques de doute dans les Essais de Montaigne* (Paris: Champion, 2004).

situation.⁸⁰ In this instance, the spectacular political shipwreck of the civil wars is distinguished from the ‘accidents moderez et communs’ of more peaceful times. Yet, over the course of several decades, it has become a constant: ‘en cette confusion où nous sommes depuis trente ans, tout homme françois, soit en particulier soit en general, se voit à chaque heure sur le point de l’entier renversement de sa fortune’ (1046). The opposition elaborated between ‘public’ and ‘privé’ with respect to Atticus in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’ appears to have been dissolved by the enduring ‘confusion’ in France. In such desperate times there seems to be no possibility of a secure vantage-point, but if Montaigne is to succeed in saving himself, his position as a witness may prove not only pleasurable but valuable: ‘les bons historiens fuyent comme une eau dormante et mer morte des narrations calmes, pour regagner les seditions, les guerres, où ils sçavent que nous les appellons’ (1046). Storms, and the threat of shipwreck, are *useful*, in narrative terms, at least. Having revealed that, as a reader of ‘histoires’, he regrets not having witnessed the ‘confusions’ of other states, Montaigne hints that the upheaval of his times is grist to his mill.

⁸⁰ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 16.

III.4.iii Withdrawal reconceived: Montaigne as shipwreck survivor

Still visible today above the doorway leading from Montaigne's *arrière-boutique* into the library is 'une scène maritime (dominante des bleus), très détériorée, [qui] laisse toutefois entrevoir la tête d'un nageur et ce qui pourrait être la mâture d'un navire'.⁸¹

Accompanying the painted scene (probably completed in 1571) is an inscription from Horace, lines that Montaigne would later use again, in 'Sur des vers de Virgile' (III. 5):

me tabula sacer
Votiva paries indicat uvida
Suspendisse potenti
Vestimenta maris Deo. (890)

[A votive candle shows
I hung my dedicated clothes
Dripping with brine,
Here in the sea-god's shrine. (825)]

In their context within III.5, these lines imply Montaigne's withdrawal from the active sexual life of his youth, when '[j]amais homme n'eust ses approches plus impertinemment genitales'; nowadays, Montaigne assures his reader, 'je n'y ay plus que perdre' (890). As Legros suggests, the choice of metaphor is perhaps surprising: 'La citation pourrait faire croire qu'il vit cette évolution comme un naufrage, mais le tableau votif d'Horace dit précisément le contraire: le naufrage a été évité'.⁸² Montaigne's example stands in contrast to that of Panurge, whose fear of sexual failure is expressed in 'shipwreckful' language, as I showed in Chapter Two. A precedent for the sexual association of this shipwreck moment lies, I contend, in Ronsard's own votive offering; in a sonnet of the 1552 *Amours*,

⁸¹ Alain Legros, *Essais sur poutres: peintures et inscriptions chez Montaigne* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2000), p. 121. See also Legros's article, 'Sentences peintes et autres inscriptions de la bibliothèque de Montaigne', in Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. by Jean Balsamo and others (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), pp. 1892-1903. As Legros explains (notably on pp. 1901-1902), although the shipwreck scene and Horatian quotation are almost impossible to make out today, written descriptions and transcriptions from as early as the eighteenth century give invaluable clues as to how the walls might have appeared in Montaigne's own time.

⁸² Legros, *Essais sur poutres*, p. 139.

he reworks the same Horatian moment central to Montaigne's own personal shipwreck narrative:

Ô de repos et d'amour toute pleine
Chambrette heureuse, où deux heureux flambeaux
De deux beaux yeux plus que les Astres beaux,
Me font escorte après si longue peine!

Or' je pardonne à la mer inhumaine,
Aux flots, aux vents, mon naufrage et mes maux,
Puis que par tant et par tant de travaux
Une main douce à si doux port me meîne.

Adieu tormente, adieu tempeste, adieu
Vous flots cruels, ayeux du petit Dieu,
Qui dans mon sang a sa fleche souillée:

Ores encre dedans le sein du port,
En vœu promis j'appan dessus le bord
Aux Dieux marins ma despouille mouillée. (I.449)

This, like Montaigne's, is a sexual form of shipwreck, the poet's 'despouille mouillée' suggesting the recency of his escape. But the 'repos' here is not enjoyed in solitude; nor do the lover's eyes, positive analogues of Castor and Pollux, so often part of the shipwreck narratives seen in Chapter Two, suggest that it is definitive. While Montaigne maintains the symbolic link between sex and shipwreck, his arrival on *terra firma* is not to be reversed. Legros hints, persuasively I think, that Montaigne's use of the Horatian quotation points to a deeper connection between the two forms, personal and public, of withdrawal: 'Lorsque l'inscription fut tracée sur ce mur [...], était-il déjà dans ces dispositions d'esprit? Existerait-il par hasard un rapport entre ce possible adieu aux amours et son installation dans la tour?'.⁸³ In his twin use of the poetic scene of shipwreck survival, Montaigne likens his *retraite* from sexual and public life not to the *ataraxia* of Lucretius' philosopher-spectator, but to the relief of the shipwreck survivor, offering up a votive in thanks for his narrow escape.

⁸³ Legros, *Essais sur poutres*, p. 139.

Ten years after the completion of this *tableau*, Montaigne, now definitively barred from sexual life (‘degars[é]’ by his excruciating gallstones),⁸⁴ would offer not a poem, nor yet a candle, but a votive *tableau* of his own. In his ‘Journal de voyage’ he describes his participation, at the Italian town of Loreto, in the convention and ritual expected of pilgrims:

Le lieu de la devotion, c’est une petite maisonete fort vieille et chetifve [...]. Là se voit, au haut du mur, l’image Nostre Dame, faite, disent-ils, de bois; tout le reste est si fort paré de vœux riches de tant de lieux et princes, qu’il n’y a jusques à terre pas un pousse vuide, et qui ne soit couvert de quelque lame d’or ou d’arjant. J’y peus trouver à toute peine place, et avec beaucoup de faveur, pour y loger un tableau dans lequel il y a quatre figures d’arjant attachées: cele de Nostre Dame, la miêne, cele de ma fame, cele de ma fille.⁸⁵

His is an offering that only serves to underscore, as Williams argues, the impossibility of Montaigne’s relief or cure from the stones that would eventually—though not as soon as he imagined—be the end of him. This inescapable bodily shipwreck is of the order of that presaged by Nicolas de la Chesnaye in the *Nef de sante*. The offering of riches, precisely the kind proscribed in Erasmus’s *Naufragium*, is accordingly hollowed of any devotional weight, as Montaigne merely goes through the motions, producing the ‘sanctioned sacred signs’ required.⁸⁶

In the light of both his *retrait(e)* and of the impossibility of his escape from bodily shipwreck, Montaigne’s further textual *tableau*, the fruit of solitude and reflection that is the *Essais*, is cast in a new light. Montaigne’s secure footing as a spectator is not definitive; the processes of composition and editing seem at times to cast him back out on the waves. Quoting Catullus, Montaigne describes his own creative journey—returning to his earlier writing, and attempting to pick up the thread of the argument—as disorientating: ‘Je ne fay qu’aller et venir: mon jugement ne tire pas toujours en avant, il flotte, il vague,

⁸⁴ Montaigne, *Essais*, II.37, p. 762. See Williams, ““Rubbing up against others””, pp. 119-120.

⁸⁵ ‘Journal de voyage’ in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), pp. 1247-1248.

⁸⁶ Williams, ““Rubbing up against others””, p. 117.

velut minuta magno | Deprensa navis in mari vesaniente vento’ (566) [‘Like a tiny boat, Caught by a raging wind on the vast sea’ (517)]. For the most part, though, his installation at the château, and in the *arrière-boutique* in particular, seems to afford Montaigne a degree of distance from the world. Alain Legros proposes a further connection between the painted shipwreck *tableau*, with its Horatian inscription, and Montaigne’s decision to retreat from public life: ‘Une addition d’E.B. [= *Exemplaire de Bordeaux*] au chapitre “De la solitude” (I, 39) laisse en tout cas entendre que le thème du “naufrage” était, pour Montaigne, intimement lié à celui de la vie solitaire.’⁸⁷ The passage in question, like that of ‘Des prognostications’ (I.11), stages the questioning of a philosopher:

Stilpon, estant eschappé de l’embrasement de sa ville, où il avoit perdu femme, enfans et chevance, Démétrius Poliorcetes, le voyant en une si grande ruine de sa patrie le visage non effrayé, luy demanda s’il n’avoit pas eu du dommage. Il respondit que non, et qu’il n’y avoit, Dieu mercy, rien perdu de sien. C’est ce que le philosophe Antisthenes disoit plaisamment: que l’homme se devoit pourvoir de munitions qui flottassent sur l’eau et peussent à nage eschapper avec luy du naufrage. Certes l’homme d’entendement n’a rien perdu, s’il a soy mesme. (240)

As Blumenberg has noted, Montaigne here adds ‘his unmistakable twist’;⁸⁸ his ‘certes’ joins together two different ideas as though one followed quite naturally from the other. In fact, the mention of Antisthenes’s shipwreck is a later insertion of the ‘C’ *couche*; before its interpolation, this gloss referred to Stilpon’s, not Antisthenes’s, model of self-sufficiency. For Legros, the addition of the advice attributed to Antisthenes ‘servait à illustrer un propos qui paraît bien concerner Montaigne lui-même et sa décision de “retraite” aux alentours de 1571 (date de l’inscription votive du “cabinet”) ou 1572 (hypothèse de Villey pour la rédaction de ce chapitre)’.⁸⁹ The recontextualisation of the shipwreck reference colours the ‘munitions’ of Antisthenes’s counsel with new significance: ‘What can be salvaged from the shipwreck of existence proves to be not a

⁸⁷ Legros, *Essais sur poutres*, p. 140.

⁸⁸ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 14.

⁸⁹ Legros, *Essais sur poutres*, p. 140.

possession withdrawn, in whatever way, into interiority but rather the self-possession achievable through the process of self-discovery and self-appropriation'.⁹⁰ The implication that if one were the sole survivor of a (metaphorical) shipwreck, there would be 'rien [de] perdu' has wider significance with respect to the events unfolding as Montaigne writes; he, like Stilpon, stands before a 'grande ruine de sa patrie'.

To return to the discussion of *tableaux* in 'Des prognostications', and remembering his evocation of 'bons historiens' in 'De la phisionomie', it might be argued that Montaigne's arrival on intellectual *terra firma*, hidden away in the *arrière-boutique*, earns him the kind of spectatorial position that allows him not only to give an account of shipwreck survival, but also to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, those 'qui sont demeurez noyez, en bien plus grand nombre'. We have seen that Montaigne's use of the *suave mari magno* commonplace, besides adding a pique of Ciceronian *schadenfreude* to the Lucretian scene, further complicates the relationship between shipwreck and spectator. Montaigne's withdrawal from society does not afford him the kind of ethical distance enjoyed by the Epicurean philosopher-spectator. In the same way that '[c]ontrairement aux assertions nonchalamment affichées par les *Essais*, le retrait n'est pas une retraite, une aversion, une renonciation à la vie politique, mais un recul par lequel le médiateur réserve son jugement',⁹¹ Montaigne's spectator is not entirely detached from the scene he sees before him. In an inversion of the advice given in 'De l'utile et de l'honneste'—to commit to one side, but with 'modération', keeping one foot on dry land at all times—Montaigne paints himself as the rare and lucky survivor, who has made it to land, but whose clothes are still wet.

⁹⁰ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, p. 14.

⁹¹ O'Brien, 'Retrait', p. 206.

III.5 Conclusion: ‘Nil securius est malo Poeta’

Some thirty years after the publication of the ‘Ode à Michel de L’Hospital’, Montaigne, like Ronsard, muses on the political importance of the poet as an emissary of the state in ‘De la præsumption’ (II.17), and launches a similarly scathing attack on bad poetry:

On peut faire le sot par tout ailleurs, mais non en la Poesie, *mediocribus esse poetis Non dii, non homines, non concessere columnae*. [‘For Gods and men and booksellers refuse | To countenance a mediocre Muse’] Pleust à Dieu que cette sentence se trouvat au front des boutiques de tous nos Imprimeurs, pour en deffendre l’entrée à tant de versificateurs, *verum Nil securius est malo Poeta*. [‘No man has more assurance than a bad poet’ (585)] (635).

In an addition of the ‘C’ *couche*, Montaigne then moves from his own poetic inadequacy (‘je fay, à la verité, l’enfant quand j’y veux mettre la main’ (635)), the admission of which substantiates his claim to be free of ‘præsumption’, to another mediocre poet who, by contrast, held himself in high regard:

Que n’avons nous de tels peuples? Dionysius le pere n’estimoit rien tant de soy que sa poesie. A la saison des jeux Olympiques, avec des chariots surpassant tous autres en magnificence, il envoya aussi des poetes et des musiciens pour presenter ses vers, avec des tentes et pavillons dorez et tapissez royalement. Quand on vint à mettre ses vers en avant, la faveur et excellence de la prononciation attira sur le commencement l’attention du peuple; mais quand, par apres, il vint à poiser l’ineptie de l’ouvrage, il entra premierement en mespris, et, continuant d’aigrir son jugement, il se jetta tantost en furie, et courut abattre et deschirer par despit tous ses pavillons. Et ce que ses charriotz ne feirent non plus rien qui vaille en la course, et que la navire qui rapportoit ses gens faillit la Sicile et fut par la tempeste poussée et fracassée contre la coste de Tarente, il tint pour certain que c’estoit l’ire des Dieux irritez comme luy contre ce mauvais poeme. Et les mariniers mesme eschapez du naufrage alloient secondant l’opinion de ce peuple. (635-636)

Dionysius the elder, who ‘n’estimoit tant en soi que sa poësie’, at once embodies the notion that ‘No man has more assurance than a bad poet’, and develops it further. Not only is he a remarkably self-assured man, but the thing in which he has the most confidence is his poetry. The results of this ‘præsumption’ are politically catastrophic: three times the wooden structures (reminiscent of the ‘bastiment’ of ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’) representing Dionysius’s state—‘pavillons’, ‘chariotz’ and finally ‘navire’—fail or are destroyed. In the climax of the anecdote, the poetic envoy of the state is wrecked on the

sharp and unyielding rocks of public opinion. Indeed, over the course of the passage it becomes clear that its true, determining subject is not the poet Dionysius but the ‘people’ who refuse to tolerate his versification; as he introduces the subject, Montaigne asks ‘Que n’avons nous de tels peuples?’. The ‘opinion de ce peuple’ is, at least partially, validated when the most privileged witnesses, ‘les mariniers mesme eschapez du naufrage’, attribute the blame for the disaster they have survived to his execrable verse. Dionysius’s judgement is twice proven to be faulty, as he first has too high an opinion of his poetry, and secondly ignores its fatal potential, augured by the shipwreck off Sicily; his ‘excessive joye’ (636) at victory (over superior opponents) in a poetry competition is partly credited with causing his sudden demise. It is not war that brings about the collapse of his rule, but his misplaced confidence in his poetic ability; his shipwreck is primarily personal and poetic before it is political. Montaigne’s account of Dionysius thus constitutes a negative inversion of Ronsard’s optimistic humanist poetic manifesto in the ‘Ode à Michel de L’Hospital’. If good poetry can inspire men to great and virtuous deeds and warriors to victory in battle, then bad poetry can have just such transformative outcomes. Dionysius lacks the kind of prudence that teaches us of our own limitations, and such limitations, as a Pyrrhonian conception of prudence shows, should be brought to bear on rhetoric as on politics.

War and poetry are close bedfellows in ‘De la præsumption’, since they are fields that inform a hierarchy of contemporary figures elaborated in the concluding part of the chapter. Those singled out for praise include, ‘pour le faict de la guerre et suffisance militaire, le Duc de Guyse’, and ‘[p]our gens suffisans, et de vertu non commune, Olivier et l’Hospital, Chanceliers de France’; both, in alignment with the ‘modération’ endorsed in ‘De l’utile et de l’honneste’, political moderates. Poetry is given pride of place in Montaigne’s tricolon, and earns a more lengthy consideration:

Il me semble aussi de la Poesie qu'elle a eu sa vogue en nostre siecle. Nous avons foison de bons artisans de ce mestier-là: Aurat, Beze, Buchanan, l'Hospital, Mont-doré, Turnebus. Quant aux François, je pense qu'ils l'ont montée au plus haut degré où elle sera jamais; et, aux parties en quoy Ronsart et du Bellay excellent, je ne les treuve guieres esloignez de la perfection ancienne. (661)

Of all those praised, Michel de L'Hospital is unique in featuring twice, in different categories: both as statesman and as poet. Montaigne had earlier given L'Hospital the particular honour of being the dedicatee of La Boétie's poetic works, in 1570, seven years after his friend's death.⁹² Montaigne's respect for the politician-poet was also reflected in a more material homage, seen on the *poteaux* of his library, where 'le chancelier est le seul auteur contemporain à voisiner avec les cinquante-six sentences empruntées à l'*Écriture* et aux auteurs grecs et latins de l'Antiquité'.⁹³ But the praise apportioned in 'De la præsumption' is of a different order, as Sue Farquhar has argued:

Montaigne condemns [the] conventional practice of epideictic when he singles out a few deserving contemporaries for laconic praise at the very end of *De la præsumption* [...]. His 'failure' to deliver a convincing encomium in honour of his renowned contemporaries is a success in disguise, for it proves the superiority of his private introspective method over any ethical approach that looks exclusively to external marks of virtue.⁹⁴

Read in this light, Montaigne's praise certainly appears less glowing; each morsel of commendation is sufficiently qualified to give it a double meaning. It is precisely the kind of encomium practiced by Ronsard in the ode to Michel de L'Hospital or the sonnet to Claude Laubespine that is here punctured by Montaigne's damnation through faint praise. Direct flattery of political leaders in the Ronsardian mode is, equally, the antithesis of Montaigne's indirect, distant and rather indefinite approach. The ship of state is eclipsed in such moments by a smaller, and rather crowded, courtly vessel. Whereas Ronsard's obstinate response to critics at court is to insist, in 'À Michel de L'Hospital', on his

⁹² Anne-Marie Cocula, 'Michel de L'Hospital, Étienne de la Boétie et Michel de Montaigne: histoire d'une filiation', in Thierry Wanegffelen, ed., *De Michel de L'Hospital à l'édit de Nantes*, pp. 565-573 (p. 565).

⁹³ Ibid., p. 567.

⁹⁴ Sue W. Farquhar, 'Irony and the Ethics of Self-Portraiture in Montaigne's *De la præsumption*', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 26.4 (1995), 791-803 (p. 794).

increased poetic and political buoyancy, Montaigne's strategy, throughout 'De la praesumption' and more extensively in the *Essais*, is to enact a kind of deliberate self-scuttling, as we saw in his claim to lack the 'souplesse' of the skilled negotiator.

If the three writers who have been the focus of this chapter play at times on Lucretius's scene of distant spectatorship, none succeeds in extricating himself entirely from the crew on board the ship of state; as the shared use of the shipwreck image demonstrates, the public and private spheres collide in the stormy seas of civil conflict. Even the very figurehead of political prudence, Michel de L'Hospital, practices his moderation not through withdrawal, but on board the ship itself. As this chapter has shown, the literary *topoi* of sea storm and shipwreck do not constitute means purely of response to the events of the civil wars, but are used to engage actively in those events, as well as to air anxieties about the possibility of successful intervention.

Chapter Four

‘Shipwreckful’ afterlives: ‘Naufrage’ and *Histoire*

IV.1 Introduction

As we have seen so far in this thesis, sixteenth-century French humanist writers drew on a copious array of classical and biblical sources of shipwreck imagery in their rhetorical *inventio*. But what we might think of as the learned reconfiguration and redeployment of such material also extended to supposedly ‘factual’ accounts of seafaring generated by merchants, soldiers and shoemakers. The fictive and allegorical (near-)shipwrecks examined in the previous chapters of this thesis find echoes, over the course of the century and beyond, in early-modern travel writing. This chapter traces the ways in which the cultural and confessional significance of shipwreck was developed and exploited by two Reformist writers, Jean de Léry and Jean-Arnaud Bruneau de Rivedoux, at least partly in the light of and in response to the events and disputes of the wars of religion. As such, it explores and further elaborates on what Kositsky and Stritmatter have called the ‘fictionalizing influence’ of writers such as Erasmus on travel accounts of the period:

[E]arly modern travel narrative [...] was constructed not from the unmediated experience of actual travelers but by a process of filtering factual events through literary conventions and idioms, characteristically resulting in a text which reflected both the practical needs of the author for colourful material and the ideological preconceptions of his society.¹

These seafaring narratives are of importance and interest beyond their status as late members of some Renaissance shipwreck ‘family’, descendants of the likes of Erasmus or Rabelais. Among many other things, they offer new perspectives on the moral status of sailors, explorers and merchants. The first author to be addressed here, Jean de Léry, is

¹ Kositsky and Stritmatter, ‘Pale as death’, p. 143.

increasingly well-known; Lestringant's modern editions of the *Histoire d'un voyage en la terre du Brésil* have drawn this work to the attention of students and scholars of French New World writing.² On the other hand, Jean-Arnaud Bruneau de Rivedoux, whose collection, the *Histoire véritable de certains voyages périlleux et hasardeux sur la mer*, is the subject of the second part of this chapter, remains relatively obscure.³ This pair of texts is marked by striking similarities: their authors' Reformist leanings, much of their subject matter, and their status as *Histoires*. But they also display important differences: the singularity or plurality of testimony, the directness or indirectness of witnessing, and the degree of moralising or allegorisation of the narrative. Before beginning a 'close-up' and particularising study of these two texts, it will be useful to first give an overview of at least some of the common ground they inhabit and explore.

The first apparent connection between the texts is one of genre; one of the ways in which Bruneau's text pays tribute to that of his predecessor Léry is in the choice of marker in his title. But the titles of Renaissance *Histoires*, and in particular *Histoires véritables*, invoke a further, and important, textual lineage. In particular, the title given to Bruneau's collection calls to mind the work by Lucian of the same name—the ironically-titled *True History*—that famously proclaims its distance from the truth:

² Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (1578): 2^e édition, 1580, ed. by Lestringant (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994). Further references to this edition are given as pages references in the main body of my text. The full title of the second, 1580 edition used by Lestringant is: *HISTOIRE D'UN VOYAGE FAICT EN LA TERRE DU BRÉSIL, AUTREMENT DITE AMERIQUE. CONTENANT LA NAVIGATION, et choses remarquables, veuës sur mer par l'auteur. Le comportement de Villegagnon en ce pays-là. Les moeurs et façons de vivre estranges des Sauvages Ameriquains: avec un colloque de leur langage. Ensemble la description de plusieurs Animaux, Arbres, Herbes, et autres choses singulieres, et du tout inconnues par deçà: dont on verra les sommaires des chapitres au commencement du livre. REVUE, CORRIGÉE, ET BIEN augmentée en ceste seconde Edition, tant de figures, qu'autres choses notables sur le sujet de l'auteur. Le tout recueilli sur les lieux par JEAN DE LERY, natif de la Margele, terre de saint Sene, au Duché de Bourgogne*. See also Michel de Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), Chapter 5, 'Ethnographie: l'oralité, ou l'espace de l'autre: Léry', pp. 245-283. Lestringant's work on Léry is extensive; major works beyond his editions of the *Histoire* include *Le Huguenot et le sauvage: l'Amérique et la controverse coloniale en France, au temps des Guerres de Religion (1555-1589)* 3rd edn (Geneva: Droz, 2004), and *Jean de Léry; ou, L'Invention du sauvage: essai sur l'Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (Paris: Champion, 2nd edn. 2005).

³ Capitaine Bruneau de Rivedoux, *Histoire véritable de certains voyages périlleux et hasardeux sur la mer: 1599*, ed. by Alain-Gilbert Guéguen (Paris: Éditions de Paris, 1996). Further references to this text are given as page numbers in the main body of my text.

So, as I too was vain enough to want to leave something to posterity, and didn't want to be denied the right to flights of fancy, and since I had nothing truthful to report (not having experienced anything worth recording), I turned to lying. But I am much more honest in this than the others: at least in one respect I shall be truthful, in admitting that I am lying [...]. So, I am writing about things I neither saw nor experienced nor heard about from others, which moreover don't exist, and in any case could not exist. My readers must therefore entirely disbelieve them.⁴

In a lecture expanding on the critical presentation of Bruneau's text offered in the modern edition referred to in this chapter, Lestringant showed that Bruneau's *Histoire* may be seen as a continuation of, or response to, two emergent genres—French (and largely Catholic) *histoires tragiques*, and the Portuguese tradition of nautical literature that culminated in the *História Trágico-Marítima*—as well as stories circulated in *canards*.⁵ Such an appraisal of the intertextual relationships in play here is further supported by the observation that the *histoires tragiques*—collections of extraordinary narratives complete with moralising glosses—often exploited what Hervé Thomas Campangne has called 'l'imaginaire du voyage et de la découverte' in their framing logic.⁶ As Campangne shows, authors such as Boiastuau and Belleforest use seafaring analogies to describe and explore the emotional state of both their characters and their readers, as well as the 'journey' of composition itself. As I show in this chapter, the metaphorical parallel between life and journey is triangulated by the *Histoire*, the narrative that allows both to be told. Léry's narrative, for instance, reflects on the possibility of its own extinction at the height of the famine on the return journey: 'nous pensions estre au bout de nostre voyage' (531).

⁴ Lucian, 'A True History', 1.4, (p. 204).

⁵ Lestringant's lecture (12 December 1999) on Bruneau's *Histoire véritable* is available at the website of the Centre de Recherche sur la Littérature des Voyages: <http://www.crlv.org/conference/lhistoire-v%C3%A9ritable-de-certains-voyages-p%C3%A9rilleux-et-hasardeux-sur-la-mer-1599-du>. On the history of the *histoire tragique*, see Thierry Pech, *Conter le crime: droit et littérature sous la contre-réforme: les histoires tragiques (1559-1644)* (Paris: Champion, 2000), and the earlier, and less complete, Sergio Poli, *Histoire(s) tragique(s): anthologie/typologie d'un genre littéraire* (Fasano; Paris: Schena; Nizet, 1991). The title of the *História Trágico-Marítima* appeared only in the eighteenth century; before then, narratives circulated as 'relações'. On the Portuguese tradition of *literatura de cordel* that lead to the composition of the *História Trágico-Marítima*, see Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition*. The French reception of one of the Portuguese narratives is the subject of part of my Conclusion, below; see also Michel Bideaux, 'Chroniques de l'infortune et naufrages organisés', *Cahiers d'études romanes*, 3 (1999), 91-103.

⁶ Hervé Thomas Campangne, 'L'Imaginaire du voyage et de la découverte dans les histoires tragiques (1560-1630)', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 103.4 (2003), 771-787.

Thankfully, as we know, it isn't in fact the end of the road, or the story, for L  ry. But the threat of shipwreck, in particular, generates a moment of heightened tension in which the interrelatedness of journey, life and narrative take centre stage. Particularly interesting for our purposes here is the preface to Poissenot's *Nouvelles histoires tragiques*, where the author expects the response of his reader to their 'lecture des accidents d'autrui' to be:

Tout ainsi que quand d'un port nous voyons quelque navire ou vaisseau perir en haute mer, nous nous sentons en mesme heure esmeus diversement, estant et joyeux et fachez tout d'un coup: joyeux, pour ne participer au naufrage de ceux qui devant nos yeux descendent au Royaume de Neptune; et fachez de l'inconvenient et malheur auquel les voyons, sans leur pouvoir donner secours et les soulager, ainsi que volontiers desirerions s'il estoit en nostre puissance de ce faire.⁷

The affective response of Poissenot's projected reader to the quasi-Lucretian spectacle of shipwreck is redolent of Montaigne's 'aigre-douce poincte de volupt   maligne    voir souffrir autrui' (see above, Chapter Three). At the same time, and as Williams has argued, the label 'Histoire' also claims for the text in question a part in a particularly Protestant textual tradition that valorises the role of the eyewitness:

The *guerres intestines* may officially be over by the time Rivedoux's collection is published—1599—but the context of the true stories of travel he retails is, clearly, at once confessional and conflictual. Similarly, the generic marker '*Histoire veritable*' might bring to mind ancient fictions (most obviously those of Lucian), but it also has a distinct, and distinctly confessional contextual resonance in early modern travel writing. Like the *Wahrhaftige Historia* of Hans Staden, and like L  ry's own *Histoire*, Rivedoux's narrative concerns Protestant truth.⁸

As I show in this chapter and in my Conclusion, the distinction between the roles of eyewitness and spectator, in these travellers' tales, becomes increasingly blurred by the narrative and dramatic spectacle of shipwreck, as do the varying ethical implications these narratives present to their readers.

⁷ B  nigne Poissenot, *Nouvelles histoires tragiques* (1586) ed. by Jean-Claude Arnould and Richard A. Carr (Geneva: Droz, 1996), p. 45.

⁸ Williams, "'L'Humanit   du tout perdue?': Early Modern Monsters, Cannibals and Human Souls", *History and Anthropology*, 23.2 (2012), 235-256 (p. 241).

In addition to—and perhaps countering—Lucian, Pliny’s *Natural History* is a further discernible precedent to both texts, and is notable in part because of Pliny’s reputation for insisting on his own status as an eyewitness. In the 1599 edition of the *Histoire*, Léry uses Pliny as an emblem of the kind of strangeness that proves to be true when experienced first-hand: ‘ne fault trouver estrange ce que Pline dit’, writes Léry, for ‘ces grandes extremitez [...] ne se peuvent comprendre que par l’experience’.⁹ For Léry and Bruneau, a great deal of the valorisation of their texts rests on the foundation of empirical analysis, and the shipwreck is held up as the archetypal example of experiential learning. For Bruneau, especially, the extremes endured on the high sea make of seafarers both a rich subject of theological allegory and reliable empirical witnesses. Hence, he presents the reader with his ‘discours des voyages hasardeux fort véritables recueillis des propres personnes qui ont fait les voyages, la plupart encore vivants, gens crédibles, et que pour rien du monde ne voudraient avoir rapporté choses fausses’ (43).

This Plinian insistence on lived experience is what places a strain on the ‘literary conventions’ described by Kositsky and Stritmatter. The ancient stock of images is inadequate to the task of modern representation; existing models, as we will see, often prove inadequate for describing and explaining the extraordinary ‘merveilles’ witnessed by those travelling at sea. In what follows, I also propose a new thematic model for understanding Léry’s and Bruneau’s textual approaches. Whereas some scholarship on sixteenth-century New World encounters has—powerfully and convincingly—employed the dynamics of cannibalism as a means of exploring intertextuality, as well as intersecting historical and religious concerns,¹⁰ I argue here that shipwreck, or, more specifically, the process of rebuilding that it can generate, is an especially pertinent analogy for the kinds of

⁹ Léry, *Histoire d’un voyage*, p. 531, n. 2.

¹⁰ See, for instance, George Hoffman, ‘Anatomy of the Mass: Montaigne’s “Cannibals”’, *PMLA*, 117.2 (2002), 207-221; Janet Whatley, ‘Food and the Limits of Civility: The Testimony of Jean de Léry’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 15.4 (1984), 387-400.

testing and remodelling to which the *topos* of shipwreck is itself subjected. Léry's New World encounters challenge him to reconsider critically the structures by which he interprets and understands the significance not only of travel in general, but also of shipwreck in particular.

As I explained in my Introduction, this argument is inspired by Lévi-Strauss's concept of 'bricolage', as elaborated in *La Pensée sauvage*. I argue that, in his exploration of the shipwreck commonplace over the course of the *Histoire d'un voyage*, Léry performs a particularly careful and deliberate kind of *bricolage*, revisiting and revising his first model according to the learning experiences of storm and shipwreck he encounters along the way. Lévi-Strauss's language of 'résidus' and 'débris' is especially apt for the subject of the 'pensée mythique' in this case; that of shipwreck. Like the *charpentier*, the hero of his final 'shipwreck' encounter, as we will see, over the course of the *Histoire d'un voyage* Léry adapts his narrative model according to the reality facing him. He uses parts of the existing models (the ship of fools, Erasmus, Rabelais) available to him, but reconfigures them according to what he witnesses for himself. This analogy also has wider implications, evoking the dynamics in play in the use of commonplaces or *topoi* more generally in new contexts. Existing models founder on the rocks of contemporary and particular experience, or simply prove to be not quite watertight; they demand the collaborative input of authors and readers in the work of reconstruction. Later in this chapter, these processes of salvaging and rebuilding return in still more explicit forms in Bruneau's *Histoire véritable de certains voyages*. In the transition from one *voyage* to several, and from one man's experience to the collected testimonies of many, the emphasis on particularity—but also on co-operation—becomes heightened.

IV.2 '[N]ous ressouvenans du premier naufrage': Revisiting shipwreck in Jean de Léry's *Histoire d'un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil*

Jean de Léry, a twenty-three-year-old member of a Calvinist colonising party that travelled to Brazil in 1556, documented his travels and encounters—including, as the full title makes clear, the peoples, plants, animals, customs and languages he observed—in the *Histoire d'un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil*, not published until 1578. In the intervening years between the expedition and his publication, Léry became a Reformist pastor and gained first-hand experience of the horrors of the wars of religion. In particular, the siege of the Huguenot town of Sancerre in 1572-3 had a lasting impact that may be traced in his writing. Léry's account of the siege, the *Histoire memorable de la ville de Sancerre*, was published in 1574, and his experience was still painfully fresh in his memory as he wrote his second *Histoire*.

Even the composition of the *Histoire d'un voyage*, Léry tells us in the preface, was twice interrupted by the volatile political climate:

[...] j'avois derechef le tout mis au net. Mais quand je l'eus achevé, moy estant pour lors en la ville de Charité sur Loire, les confusions survenantes en France sur ceux de la Religion, je fus contraint, à fin d'éviter ceste furie, de quitter à grand haste tous mes livres et papiers pour me sauver à Sancerre: tellement qu'incontinent après mon départ, le tout estant pillé [...], je fus pour la seconde fois privé de mon labeur (62).

Andrea Frisch has situated the move performed by Léry here within a broader history of the role of the eyewitness, and written and oral testimonies:

Léry positions this errant manuscript as the authoritative source for his book. Léry's prologue thus resurrects the medieval 'found manuscript' topos where we would least expect it—in an eyewitness account of the New World. [...] The very substance of Léry's testimony is a document which has acquired an existence independent of the witness who supposedly produced it.¹¹

¹¹ Andrea Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France*, 'North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures', 279 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 130.

Léry's text is both located amidst the turmoil of the wars of religion in France and, in note form at least, linked materially—through the 'ancre de Bresil' (61)—to the site of narration. The combination of almost two decades of deferral and this geographic dislocation of the writing create an effect of layering, generating multiple connotations and relationships between the events and objects described.¹²

Perhaps the richest consideration of this function of Léry's writing is to be found in an article written in response to Michel Jeanneret's exploration of analogy in 'Léry et Thevet: comment parler d'un monde nouveau?'.¹³ Frédéric Tinguely's 'Jean de Léry et les vestiges de la pensée analogique'.¹⁴ As part of a nuanced argument for an 'analogie différentielle' in Léry's text, Tinguely argues that the author of the *Histoire* evokes a series of symmetries between the Old World and the New: 'le recours à l'analogie n'est pas rare dans ce texte pourtant si ouvert à l'altérité, et le monde décrit par l'auteur apparaît même parfois comme un gigantesque jeu de miroirs où chaque élément semble trouver son reflet'.¹⁵ In particular, Tinguely points to the sea as a central axis of comparison: on either side are 'les deux facettes d'une même réalité, les deux côtés du miroir de la mer'.¹⁶ Tinguely shows that this mirror has both horizontal and vertical planes, manifested respectively in Léry's description of diving birds and their marine counterparts, flying fish, and in his comparisons of New World customs to and with more familiar European *mores*. To speak of a 'pensée analogique' is also, of course, to recall Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology of Brazil, by way of *La Pensée sauvage*. But Tinguely's article also evokes (though with an insistence on differential relationships) a form of analogical thinking not far from that theorised in Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses*:

¹² See Lestringant, *Jean de Léry; ou, L'Invention du sauvage*, pp. 34, 104-106; *Le Huguenot et le sauvage*.

¹³ Michel Jeanneret, 'Léry et Thevet: comment parler d'un monde nouveau?', in *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone: France et Italie dans la culture européenne*, 4 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, [1983]), vol. 4, *Tradition et originalité dans la création littéraire*, pp. 59-72.

¹⁴ Frédéric Tinguely, 'Jean de Léry et les vestiges de la pensée analogique', *BHR*, 52.1 (1995), 25-44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Jusqu'à la fin du XVI^e siècle, la ressemblance a joué un rôle bâtisseur dans le savoir de la culture occidentale. C'est elle qui a conduit pour une grande part l'exégèse et l'interprétation des textes; c'est elle qui a organisé le jeu des symboles, permis la connaissance des choses visibles et invisibles, guidé l'art de les représenter. Le monde s'enroulait sur elle-même: la terre répétait le ciel, les visages se mirant dans les étoiles, et l'herbe enveloppant dans ses tiges les secrets qui servaient à l'homme.¹⁷

The 'Renaissance episteme' described by Foucault often proves rather too rigid to describe the wealth and variety of expression across literary genres and forms in the period, and indeed has been deftly dismantled by Ian Maclean.¹⁸ But the notion of *ressemblance* remains a useful starting-point when considering how early modern writers addressed the questions posed by encounters with the New World. To adopt and adapt Tinguely's terminology, it might be useful to think of the Atlantic sea as a distorting mirror, one which offers the European protagonist, or reader, some unexpected views of once-familiar ideas. For Léry, travelling across the Atlantic is akin to stepping through the looking-glass; it entails a change of perspective that calls into question concepts and conventions that had once seemed universal. As Tinguely puts it: 'Le monde renversé n'est dès lors plus à inventer, mais à découvrir, et ce au prix d'une redoutable navigation'.¹⁹

The importance of this 'redoutable navigation' is not to be underestimated. Much of the scholarly literature devoted to the *Histoire* focusses on the chapters that describe Léry's time in Brazil, with a resultant tendency to overlook the accounts of the journeys, 'en s'imaginant qu'elles ont pour unique fonction de circonscrire la matière américaine'.²⁰ This textual 'blind spot' means that critics have neglected some of the richest passages of the text: '[d]ans l'attente du Nouveau Monde, l'océan constitue déjà un monde nouveau où l'oeil et la plume du voyageur écrivain peut s'exercer à merveille'.²¹ For Tinguely, the

¹⁷ Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, p. 32.

¹⁸ See Ian Maclean, 'Foucault's Renaissance Episteme Reassessed: An Aristotelian Counterblast', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59.1 (1998), 149-166; *idem*, *Le Monde et les hommes selon les médecins de la Renaissance* (Paris: CNRS, 2006), Chapter 5, 'Postface post-foucaldienne', pp. 111-121.

¹⁹ Tinguely, 'Jean de Léry', p. 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

interest lies in L  ry’s descriptions of flying fish, sharks, and so on on the way to Brazil, but in this chapter I argue that the narration of both journeys, outbound and return, gives a crucially important account of life on board for the community of mariners and passengers, and not only of the external marvels witnessed from the deck. In an interview with Lestringant that prefaces the edition of L  ry’s text used here, L  vi-Strauss—who famously opens his *Tristes Tropiques* with the declaration ‘Je hais les voyages et les explorateurs’²²—gives an account of L  ry’s experiences at sea that seems both to substantiate that statement and attest to the very gripping kind of narrative that such journeys can produce:

Au cours du voyage aller, qui dure pr  s de trois mois, ce ne sont que temp  tes, arraisonnements, canonnades, pillages. Au retour, c’est plus terrible encore: cinq mois de travers  e, durant lesquels on frise le naufrage    plusieurs reprises, des br  ches se sont ouvertes dans la coque du navire qu’il est impossible de colmater, un incendie ravage le pont et d  truit voiles et filins, la r  volte gronde chez les marins, le pilote se trompe de route, les temp  tes se multiplient, enfin, pour couronner le tout, les vivres finissent par manquer et une famine terrifiante d  cime l’  quipage. (13-14)

As we will see, there is one kind of shipwreck narrative that is situated in the Brazilian context, but in this chapter my reading is equally focussed on the journeys that facilitate L  ry’s New World witnessing. When it comes to shipwrecks, L  ry’s transatlantic journeys do not provide a ‘frame’ that serves only to give context to the Brazilian chapters, but form rather the first and third parts of a triptych, each part of which stands in tension with the others. This first part of the chapter follows this tripartite structure, tracing the development of the ‘shipwreck scene’ over the course of L  ry’s *Histoire* as each new instance of (near-) shipwreck forces a revisiting and re-evaluation of previous accounts, authorities and experience.

²² L  vi-Strauss, *Les Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), p. 13. As Williams points out, L  vi-Strauss’s text is itself a ‘revisiting’ of L  ry’s *Histoire* (“‘L’Humanit   du tout perdue?’”, p. 236).

IV.2.i ‘À la pratique de ce qui est dit au Pseaume 107’: Conventional beginnings

The rivalry between Léry and the Catholic cosmographer André Thevet is well documented, and Léry goes to great lengths to emphasise that he, unlike Thevet, has seen and experienced all that he writes about.²³ Thevet, a cosmographer or compiler of others’ accounts of the world, ‘avoit envie de mentir [...] Cosmographiquement: c’est à dire, à tout le monde’ (67). For Léry, writing and publishing what he has seen and learned on his travels is the only way to combat the (admittedly persuasive) rhetorical techniques of his rival: ‘à fin, di-je, de repousser ces impostures de Thevet, j’ay esté comme contraint de mettre en lumiere tout le discours de nostre voyage’ (63). The dynamics of revelation here cohere with the Reformist project of combatting the textual and interpretative corruption effected by institutional and clerical mediation. Readers, Léry argues, will be able to judge for themselves on the basis of the evidence he will present. This kind of journey is not for the faint-hearted—that is, we may infer, the likes of Thevet. Léry does not dwell on the moral anxieties surrounding seafaring, but portrays it as a test of endurance:

Tous ceux, di-je, qui aymans mieux la theorique que la pratique de ces choses, n’ayans pas volonté de changer d’air, d’endurer les flots de la mer, la chaleur de la Zone Torride, ny de veoir la Pole Antartique, ne voulurent point [...] s’enroller et s’embarquer en tel voyage. (111)

Léry presents here not simply an opposition between theory and practice, but rather a forceful validation of travel through narrative: ‘diray des choses que nul n’a possible jamais remarquées si avant que j’ay fait, moins s’en trouve-il rien par escrit’ (98). Léry’s story is his reward for making the perilous journey, and he promises his reader the prize of ‘choses [...] non seulement véritables [...] mais aussi aucunes, pour avoir esté cachées à ceux qui ont précédé nostre siècle, dignes d’admiration’ (98-99). Such textual treasures compare favourably with the more conventional rewards for travel—like, for instance, the

²³ See, in particular, Lestringant, *André Thevet*, pp. 171-173.

weighty riches reluctantly thrown overboard by the Italian passenger in Erasmus's 'Naufragium'. This journey, made not for trade or pilgrimage, but to expand the realm of the Reformed faith and 'pour attirer les sauvages à la cognoissance de leur salut' (109), delivers, ultimately, a poetic cargo: the *Histoire d'un voyage*. Crucially, in his claims to represent the 'pratique' rather than the 'theorique', Léry promises to overturn the kind of received wisdom and conventional thinking represented by Thevet.

The lines of opposition drawn by Léry between Thevet and himself (Catholic and Protestant, lies and truth) are also articulated through the distinction between cosmography and topography. In his edition of the *Histoire*, Lestringant summarises the importance for Léry of distinguishing his practice from that of Thevet:

En se refusant à parler de 'toute l'Amerique en general', pour se cantonner à la description particulière de 'l'endroit' qu'il a visité, Léry se pose en *topographe*, et non pas *cosmographe* comme Thevet. En cela, il annonce directement Montaigne, qui, au début du chapitre 'Des Cannibales', condamne l'outrecuidance des cosmographes et appelle de ses vœux, au rebours, 'des topographes qui nous fissent narration particuliere des endroits où ils ont esté' [...]. Lorsque Montaigne, en 1580, expose ce programme, celui-ci vient d'être exactement rempli deux ans plus tôt par Léry. (98, n. 3)

The kind of 'narration' offered to the reader of the *Histoire d'un voyage* is itself 'particuliere' in two important ways. Léry is interested in representing the particular, rather than the general, but he is also, insistently, offering the testimony of a *particulier*; that is, an individual witness. As we will see, this aesthetic and rhetoric of particularity is brought to bear on the tradition of shipwreck narrative into which Léry's *Histoire* enters. In other words, his role as topographer encompasses an exploration of the narrative commonplace, or *topos*, of shipwreck. As we will now see, on the outbound journey to Brazil, Léry's encounters with the prospect of shipwreck conform to convention. The kind of shipwreck that is encountered—or at least evoked—in the early part of Léry's journey is both geographically and poetically familiar.

Before arriving at this first moment of crisis, however, it is important to establish some of the complex and shifting significances of the ship in the *Histoire d'un voyage*. Léry is a passenger on board the Saint Jacques, one of three ships that set sail from Honfleur for the Reformist colony in Brazil founded by Nicolas de Villegaignon, and named for the Protestant leader Gaspard de Coligny. Villegaignon would later renounce the Reformed faith, and force Léry's party to leave the colonised island, and eventually to return to France. Five of those who set out to return to France with Léry would be captured and tried by Villegaignon, and three who refused to abjure their faith were martyred by drowning.²⁴ This, in conjunction with Léry's experience of the Wars of Religion, means that the question of confessional allegiance is particularly fraught in the *Histoire d'un voyage*; from the outset, a distinction is made between the Reformist travellers whose aim is a missionary one, and the 'matelots papistes' who facilitate their journey. Through these lines of internal division, the Saint Jacques comes to form a peculiar kind of allegorical ship of state, as it transports the factional tensions of the homeland on to the high seas, and beyond, to the New World. But the harsh realities of life at sea also generate a moral code of their own, and although Léry alludes in marginal notes to the 'Cruauté des mariniers' (124), the sense of community among those on board appears to be stronger in accounts of capturing foreign ships:

Les François soustenans [...] qu'ils ont leur part en ce pays nouvellement cogneus, non seulement ne se laissent pas volontiers battre aux Espagnols, moins aux Portugais, mais en se defendant vaillamment rendent souvent la pareille à leurs ennemis: lesquels, pour en parler sans affection, ne les oseroyent aborder ny attaquer s'ils ne se voyoyent beaucoup plus forts, et en plus grand nombre de vaisseaux. (117)

Léry's sense of national pride seems to override any misgivings articulated elsewhere, as he aligns himself without qualification with 'nos mariniers [...] fiers et forts' (115) as the crew hold out against the threat posed by a foreign ship. We saw in Chapter Three, in

²⁴ *Histoire d'un voyage*, pp. 510-511, and p. 511 n. 1.

Bodin's preface to *Les Six livres de la Republique*, that the internal conflicts threatening to tear apart the French ship of state stood in tension with international rivalries. As L  ry's *Histoire* shows, in the race to build empires in the New World, such ships of state are no longer only metaphorical.

Such are the symbolic resonances of L  ry's ship as it makes its voyage, and these are further probed and tested in those moments when the integrity of the ship is threatened, and the 'shipwreckfulness' of the Saint Jacques is most apparent. Significantly, these first storms are encountered in and around the Canaries or 'Isles fortun  es', an area already known to European travellers, and the terms in which the dangers are described are equally familiar. On the outbound journey, the fragile unity of the crew is compounded by their keen sense of the ship's vulnerability when confronted with the mighty sea and the elements:

[C]ombien que les navires soyent basties de gros bois bien li  , chevill  , et bien godronn  , et que celuy mesme o   j'estois peust avoir environ dix-huict toises de loing, et trois et demi de large, qu'est-ce en comparaison de ce gouffre et de telle largeur, profondeur et abysmes d'eau qu'est ceste mer du Ponent? (115)

L  ry's evident admiration for the technological advancements of the age ('on ne sauroit assez priser, tant l'excellence en l'art de la navigation en general, qu'en particulier l'invention de l'Eguille marine, avec laquelle on se conduit' (115)) is tempered by this awareness of the relative powerlessness of the vessel. The fury of the seas can only be tamed by God, as L  ry's account recalls the Gospel accounts of Christ calming the storm: 'navigeasmes avec grandes difficultez jusques au trezieme jour apres nostre embarquement, que Dieu appaisa les flots et orages de la mer' (115).

When the ship encounters more stormy weather, the tempest is subjected to a further Christian allegorical reading by L  ry, who assimilates his experiences to the description of seafaring in Psalm 107 (also a source of inspiration for the ship of fools, as

we saw in Chapter One). In the second edition of 1580, the anecdote is given the explicit gloss: ‘estant lors à la pratique de ce qui est dit au Pseaume 107’ (118). But whereas in the ship of fools tradition the Psalm was read as an emblem of the folly of seafaring, Léry foregrounds the possibility of a positive reward for the seafarer, as the marginal note summarises: ‘Grandes merveilles de Dieu se voyent sur mer’. This shift in emphasis is borne out when, in the second edition, as if in homage to the ship of fools family, Léry inserts into his account a few lines of his own poetry on the subject:

Quoy que la mer par son onde bruyante,
 Face herisser de peur cil qui la hante,
 Ce nonobstant l’homme se fie au bois,
 Qui d’espaisseur n’a que quatre ou cinq doigts,
 De quoy est faict le vaisseau qui le porte:
 Ne voyant pas qu’il vit en telle sorte
 Qu’il a la mort à quatre doigts de luy.
 Reputer fol on peut donc bien celui
 Qui va sur mer, si en Dieu ne se fie,
 Car c’est Dieu seul qui peut sauver sa vie. (119)

In these lines we find, densely summarised, several of the seafaring commonplaces encountered in Chapters One and Two of this thesis. In this aspect, Léry’s first encounter with the prospect of shipwreck seems to belie his earlier claims to put right the ‘impostures de Thevet’.

As Lestringant shows in his ‘Famille des “tempêtes en mer”’, Thevet’s eyewitness accounts of sea storms in the *Cosmographie de Levant* and *Cosmographie Universelle* conform to a number of conventions. Much as we have just seen in Léry’s account, Thevet’s journey, and the storm scene in particular, affirms his spiritual devotion: ‘Le navigage, au péril des éléments et des hommes—la tempête est précédée d’une attaque de corsaires—devient [...] la figure tangible de [l’]abandon total et confiant à la bonté du Très-Haut’.²⁵ This conformity extends to classical tradition, too; in the *Cosmographie de Levant*, the storm scene narrative concludes ‘en parfait accord avec la légendaire méfiance

²⁵ Lestringant, ‘La famille des “tempêtes en mer”’, p. 55.

des Anciens à l'endroit de l'élément marin'.²⁶ Finally, Lestringant shows that Renaissance texts, too, contributed to Thevet's pool of sources; his interpretation of St Elmo's fire in the *Cosmographie Universelle* is 'rigoureusement le même que chez Erasme', and 'Rabelais, qui n'est nulle part nommé dans le *Cosmographie de Levant* [...] a fourni à son insu tout un membre de phrase'.²⁷

Léry's *Histoire* presents his early seafaring experience according to existing Biblical and poetic tradition, though in a more deliberate, self-reflexive mode than that of Thevet. We will see below that Rabelaisian and Erasmian models had their parts to play in Léry's shipwreck narratives, too. But it is striking that in the pages that follow his first storm scenes, Léry reflects back on an example that restates the importance of experience:

[J]'ay veu un de nos Pilotes nommé Jean de Meun, d'Harfleur: lequel, bien qu'il ne sceut ny A, ny B, avoit neanmoins, par la longue experience avec ses cartes, Astrolabes, et Baston de Jacob, si bien profité en l'art de navigation, qu'à tout coup, et nommément durant la tormente, il faisoit taire un sçavant personnage [...] lequel cependant estant dans nostre navire, en temps calme triomphoit d'enseigner la Theorique. Non pas toutesfois que pour cela je condamne [...] les sciences qui s'acquierent et apprennent és escoles, et par l'estude des livres: rien moins, tant s'en faut que ce soit mon intention: mais bien requerry-je, que, sans tant s'arrester à opinion de qui que ce fust on ne m'alleguast jamais raison contre l'experience d'une chose. (141-142)

The figure of the wise and experienced sailor is, as Lestringant reminds us, is a 'nouveau *topos* de la littérature cosmographique' (141 n. 1), and one employed by Thevet himself. But by framing the substantiation of de Meun's expertise, retrospectively, in the moment of the storm, Léry makes specific the locus of this valued competence; it is particularly in the moment when shipwreck threatens that the lessons learned by experience prove their worth. The shipwreck *topos* is thus confirmed to be a privileged one within Léry's broader argument against the likes of Thevet. In the early part of the journey, book-learning does not stand in opposition to experience. Indeed, as we have seen, Léry's treatment of the *topos* in the account of his outbound journey seems to corroborate the kind of shipwreck

²⁶ Lestringant, 'La famille des "tempêtes en mer"', p. 57.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

models that would be learnt ‘par l’estude des livres’. As we shall see now, however, the subsequent lessons of the *Histoire* undermine the conventionality of these initial encounters.

IV.2.ii ‘Nous ne craignons d’enfondrer de nous-mesmes’: The Brazilian ‘shipwreck’ scene and its spectators

In his account of the time spent in Brazil, Léry presents a short but disconcerting anecdote that challenges his and his readers’ assumptions about shipwreck. Almost as an afterthought, relating to his description of ‘la façon de pescher des sauvages’ (299),²⁸ Léry describes a group of local Brazilians coming to visit the colony in a ‘barque d’escorce’, which capsizes and sinks before they arrive, causing Léry and his compatriots to hurry to the rescue: ‘en grande diligence avec un bateau les pensans secourir, nous fusmes aussi tost vers eux’. But what he finds when he reaches them confounds him, and no doubt his reader too: here we find that some of the pivotal elements we have, by now, come to expect from a shipwreck narrative have been subverted. There is no sign of the pallor induced by fear in the Erasmian model, nor of Panurge’s panic: the ‘shipwrecked’ Brazilians laugh, and are entirely unconcerned by being thrown into the water: ‘se prindrent si fort à rire, que comme un troupe de Marsouins nous les voyons et entendions souffler et ronfler sur l’eau’. This description of laughter is strangely both humanising and animalising. In his prefatory essay to his edition of the *Histoire*, ‘Léry ou le rire de l’Indien’, Lestringant remarks that ‘Léry sait, pour avoir lu Rabelais, dont il désapprouve au demeurant les “saletés” et “l’épicurisme”, que “le rire est le propre de l’homme”’ (16). Yet the almost amphibian insouciance of the Brazilians in and around the water is a mark of their distinct otherness: their children, learning to fish, ‘grenouillent [...] comme petits

²⁸ Since discussion in this section refers extensively to a short passage, in order to avoid repetition further individual page references will not be given; all quotations are drawn from pp. 299-300.

canards'. They do not fear drowning but being eaten by fish (we might here be reminded of Panurge feeding the 'poissons scatophages'):

Vrayement, dit-il, nous vous en savons bon gré: mais au reste, avez-vous opinion que pour estre tombez dans la mer, nous soyons pour cela en danger de nous noyer? Plustost sans prendre pied, ny border terre, demeurerions-nous huict jours dessus de la façon que vous nous y voyez. De maniere, dit-il, que nous avons beaucoup plus peur, que quelques grans poissons ne nous traisnent en fond, que nous ne craignons d'enfondrer de nous-mesmes.

In contrast with the European passengers of the 'Naufragium', Léry's Brazilians are not attached to material goods; listing the belongings that were lost when the barque capsized, Léry marvels that 'ils ne s'en soucioyent certes non plus que vous feriez d'avoir perdu une pomme. Car, disoyent-ils, n'en y a-il pas d'autre au pays'. The Brazilians' capsizing is closer to Lucian's representation of shipwreck, seen above in Chapter Two; it is not the end of a story, but an event from which it is possible to recover, and to rebuild. As such, it also calls for a second kind of 'rebuilding'; the interpretative models according to which Léry and his men attempt to make sense of what they witness are confounded by these laughing, splashing Brazilians.

Perhaps themselves already culturally predetermined by the shipwreck narrative of Erasmus, or Rabelais's storm scene, Léry and his men read the situation as requiring their assistance. They see themselves (ironically enough) as akin to the locals on the shore who rescue Adolph's shipmates, or the islanders who come to the aid of the stricken Thalamège in the *Quart Livre*. In fact, Léry and his men are far less 'hardy fellows and used to the water' than their Brazilian counterparts, who 'tous nageoyent voirement aussi aisémens que poissons'. The intended charity of the French party is met with mild bewilderment. The dynamics of this scene might usefully be considered in the light of an article on 'Humanism and Literary Knowledge', by Timothy Hampton. Hampton identifies a schematic parallel between the dynamics of reading and charity: 'charity [...] includes the thematics of reading—both the staging of reading inside the text and our own relationship

to it'.²⁹ Hampton argues that a 'mis-reading', in humanist terms, is akin to the Erasmian notion of misguided charity: 'it is a fault to perform a good action in an improper way'.³⁰ Léry's charity is like the example, used by Hampton, of the lion in *Pantagruel* who, having been injured with an axe and had the wound treated kindly by a carpenter, then mistakes an old woman's vagina for an axe wound and attempts to clean it and stuff it with moss:

If charity is by its very nature universal—as Christ's parable suggests, with its staging of the 'outcast' Samaritan helping the fallen man—then the charity of the lion is a charity that seems to parody that universalism. For it is based on the presumption that everything is the same.³¹

Léry's attempt at charity ignores the incompatibility of his cultural viewpoint with that of the subjects of his reading. If Panurge's and Frère Jean's misreadings of nautical signs in the Rabelaisian shipwreck scenes flag up the importance of fully understanding an interpretative model, this misreading by Léry's men points to the insufficiency of the model itself. Readerly expectations and the assumption of universality of certain concepts—not least the shipwreck itself—are subverted as we measure the distance between the existing models and the messy, surprising reality. The notion of the New World being 'the same, but different' is inflected through this rather unsatisfying shipwreck episode.

That the 'shipwreck' in this scene is not the disaster expected by the French spectators can be linked to the quasi-prelapsarian nature of Brazilian culture as described by Léry. As Joan-Pau Rubiés has argued, Léry's text presents 'a savage who was in some ways a "good savage", that is, a natural man whose virtues were uncorrupted by

²⁹ Timothy Hampton, "'Comment a nom': Humanism and Literary Knowledge in Auerbach and Rabelais", *Representations*, 119.1 (2012), 37-59 (p. 43).

³⁰ Erasmus, 'Enchiridion', 61, quoted by Hampton, p. 47.

³¹ Hampton, "'Comment a nom'", p. 44.

civilization while at the same time an idolater heading for eternal damnation'.³² The supposedly 'savage' culture has no seafaring technology to speak of; their boats are designed to navigate only in calm, shallow waters. While shipwreck is the risk invited by Léry and his compatriots in return for their transatlantic journey of discovery, the Brazilians take no such risk, keeping close to the coastline. In this light, their confidence ('nous ne craignons d'enfondrer de nous-mesmes') might seem justified indeed; not for them the Blumenbergian 'mis-step' of seafaring. But Léry offers no further commentary on this unsettling turn of events, moving instead to another anecdote. The moralising perspective we might expect is deferred until a later episode.

A few pages after the capsised 'shipwreck' account, Léry reports a conversation with an elder of the tribe he is staying with, who, as Lestringant points out, proves so archetypal a figure that he inspires numerous later accounts including Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*. The exemplary nature of the episode is indicated in the margin: 'Colloque de l'auteur et d'un sauvage, monstrant qui'ils ne sont si lourdeaux qu'on les estimoit'. The choice of the word 'colloque' here is not accidental; Léry is certainly consciously imitating another Erasmian model: the *Colloquies* of which the 'Naufragium' dialogue forms a part. Indeed, here we find, as with Antony and Adolph, another conversation, taking place firmly on dry (though unfamiliar) land, about ships, wealth and death.

The nameless *vieillard* asks Léry, 'Que veut dire que vous autres Mairs et Peros, c'est à dire François et Portugais, veniez de si loin querir du bois pour vous chauffer? N'en y a-il point en vostre pays?' (310-311). Here we find the kind of glossing language ('c'est à dire') familiar from the allegorical ship of fools tradition turned to the purpose of glossing and analogising the New World for the French audience of the *Histoire*. Léry

³² Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Texts, Images, and the Perception of "Savages" in Early Modern Europe: What We Can Learn from White and Harriot', in *European Visions: American Voices*, ed. by Kim Sloan (London: British Museum Press, 2009), pp. 120-130 (p. 120).

responds that the Brazilian redwood is not burnt but is prized for its value as a dye. The *vieillard* then asks:

[M]ais vous en faut-il tant? Ouy, lui di-je, car (en luy faisant trouver bon) y ayant tel marchand en nostre pays qui a plus de frises et de draps rouges, voire mesme (m'accommodant tousjours à luy parler des choses qui luy estoyent cognues) de cousteaux, ciseaux, miroirs et autres marchandises que vous n'en avez jamais veu par deça, un tel seul achetera tout le bois de Bresil dont plusieurs navires s'en retournent chargez de ton pays. Ha, ha, dit mon sauvage, tu me contes merveilles. (311)

Léry's focus on his 'domesticating' approach, phrasing his explanation in terms that will be familiar to his Brazilian addressee, restages the processes by which, as Tinguely shows, he attempts to make sense of the New World for his European readership, through a system of analogy. But, despite his efforts, Léry fails to convince the 'vieillard' of the values of commerce. As the misreading of the 'shipwreck' episode has already dramatised, and as Tinguely himself argues, Léry's attempts to accommodate and analogise also draw attention to cultural difference; the European practices of seafaring and trade, relatively familiar to Léry's readers, become the 'merveilles' afforded by the intercultural encounter to Léry's Brazilian interlocutor.³³ In *Marvelous Possessions*, Stephen Greenblatt points to the 'radically unequal distribution of power' that underlies any such New World exchange, but also points to the potential for such linguistic encounters to lead to a *redistribution* of power:

Indians who learned the language served as intermediaries, informants, and guides, but they could not always be counted upon to serve the colonists' interest. For there was always the possibility [...] that language learning will undermine the exploitative relation. At what point will the native, initiated into the European language and system of exchange, begin to realize that his people are being robbed? When will he counsel them to demand more for their goods and services? When will he cease to marvel and begin to curse?³⁴

³³ Cf. Williams, "Out of the frying pan ...": Curiosity, Danger, and the Poetics of Witness in the Renaissance Traveller's Tale', in *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. by Robert John Weston Edwards and Alexander Marr (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 21-42, on another of Léry's 'self-conscious ethnographic quip[s]': 'it giggles "look how strange and curious we look to them!"' (p. 38).

³⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 108 and 106, respectively. In Greenblatt's example, John Brereton's New World account marvels at the ability of his 'Indian interlocutor' to repeat back to him the words 'how now, sirra, are you so sawey with my tobacco?', 'so plaine and distinctly, as if hee had long beene Scholar in the Language'

The ‘native’ in our example falls somewhere between marvelling and cursing; Léry’s justification, grounded in the vocabulary of materialism and entrepreneurship, is met bluntly with a familiar and thorny question:

Vrayement, dit lors mon vieillard (lequel comme vous jugerez n’estoit nullement lourdaut) à ceste heure cognois-je, que vous autres Mairs, c’est à dire François, estes de grand fols: car vous faut-il tant travailler à passer la mer, sur laquelle (comme vous nous dites estans arrivez par-deçà) vous endurez tant de maux, pour amasser des richesses ou à ceux qui survivent après vous? La terre qui vous a nourris n’est-elle pas aussi suffisante pour les nourrir? (311)

The ancient opposition between the fruits of the land and the temptation of riches to be gained by taking to the seas arises here, as in Rabelais’s storm scene. Léry and his men, implies the *vieillard*, have abandoned the ‘terre qui [les] a nourris’ for another *pays*, uprooting themselves in their quest for the prized *bois de Brésil*. Though in Léry’s eyes the Brazilians’ priorities are misguided, ‘attribuant plus à nature et à fertilité que nous ne faisons à la puissance et providence de Dieu’ (312), their condemnation of the avaricious motivations of the European colonisers is clear-eyed. The *vieillard* through whom Léry ventriloquises a critique of European *mores* confirms what the earlier Brazilian scene might have led us to suspect: that Léry and his compatriots (and, for that matter, Léry’s readers) do not have all the answers. In the old man’s words we hear an echo of the exclamations reported of the ‘shipwrecked’ Brazilians; in both encounters, Léry and his men find their assumptions about the risk of death, and about the worth of material goods, called into question. Each time, the Brazilian viewpoint that confounds European assumptions is introduced by a ‘vrayement’. Léry hopes that this *vieillard* (‘suyvant ce que j’ay dit ailleurs, que les Toüoupinambaoults haïssent mortellement les avaricieux’ (312)) will serve as a moralising reminder to his readers. The wisdom of old age, it seems, is to

(p. 105). As Greenblatt argues, the apparent ease of communication erases from view the problematic dynamics of colonialism that have facilitated the exchange itself.

be found in this New World, as acknowledged by the note in the margin remarking on a ‘Sentence notable et plus que philosophale d’un sauvage Américain’ (311). This New World *sententia* is of the order of that which, with the overturning of the Brazilian barque, overturns European textual tradition, making ‘opinion’ of its former authority. Léry’s reliance on the convention by which seafaring, and brushes with shipwreck, bring the faithful closer to God, is tested to breaking point. In his narration of the journey home, he must find new ways of demonstrating the value of the lessons afforded by the experience of the journey.

IV.2.iii ‘Proche danger d’un naufrage’: The (newly narrateable) return

The return journey is peculiarly traumatic, and the destination is not particularly welcoming: Léry declares that he was unwilling to return to his homeland ‘où les difficultez estoyent [...] sans comparaison beaucoup plus grandes’ (507). In this respect, Léry’s ‘Amerique’ resembles a site of pilgrimage, from which the traveller is loath to return.³⁵ As Williams has argued, ‘[t]he models for telling of return are not immediately available within pilgrim literature’, and Léry’s tortuous telling of the France-bound crossing might seem to relate to the struggle of sixteenth-century pilgrims ‘to find generically and theologically acceptable ways of doing so’.³⁶ The difficulty of returning is, of course, firstly material, but it is equally a spiritual and a representational challenge, as Léry struggles to account for his extraordinary ordeal.

³⁵ For Michel de Certeau, Léry’s *Histoire* tells of a ‘[p]èlerinage à rebours: bien loin de rejoindre le corps référentiel d’une orthodoxie (la ville sainte, le tombeau, la basilique), l’itinéraire part du centre vers les bords, en quête d’un espace où trouver un sol’, *L’Écriture de l’histoire*, p. 250.

³⁶ Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative*, p. 261. See also Gomez-Géraud, *Le Crépuscule du Grand Voyage*, p. 516: ‘À la précision d’évocation des rituels du départ, s’oppose, dans de nombreux récits, un procédé d’ellipse du récit de retour.’

The titles of the chapters reflect this shift in perspective: L  ry’s Chapter 2 promises an account of the ‘ensemble des tormentes, rencontres, prinses de navires, et premieres terres et Isles que nous descouvrismes’ (113), but the focus in the later account is on ‘naufrages’ and ‘perils’ (504). Early on in their journey home, the crew encounter the ‘grandes Basses’, a stretch of rocky waters and sands ‘lesquels les mariniers craignent fort’ (508), where, in the middle of the night as most of the crew are asleep, the ship becomes badly damaged. The laconic marginal inscription, ‘Proche danger d’un naufrage’, belies the affective strength of L  ry’s description, which seems to tell of an awakening that goes beyond the merely literal: ‘il ne faut pas demander, quand tous furent resveillez, cognoissans le danger o   nous estions, si cela engendra un merveilleux estonnement entre nous’ (509). The imbrication of the fate of vessel and crew is illustrated in the animalising description of the ship; L  ry tells of how the water gushing into the hull, coloured by the cargo of ‘bois de bresil’, ‘en sortoit par les canaux aussi rouge que sang de boeuf’ (509). The mariners and carpenter make repairs to the ship with ‘du lard, du plomb, des draps et autres choses qu’on n’estoit pas chiche de leur bailler’ (510); the crew prove themselves, having little regard for their possessions in the face of real danger. In this shipwreck encounter, then, the ‘insouciance’ of the ‘shipwrecked’ Brazilians towards their material goods seems to have been absorbed by the Reformist travellers. The ship’s master, by contrast, clings to his avaricious motivation:

Neantmoins le maistre mettant en avant, qu’il voyoit bien s’il retournoit en terre que ses matelots l’abandonneroyent, et qu’il aimoit mieux (tant peu sage estoit-il) hazarder sa vie que de perdre ainsi son navire et sa marchandise: il conclut    tout peril de poursuivre sa route. (510)

The captain thus exemplifies the folly seen by the *vieillard* as characteristic of the French, and indeed the kinds of folly seen in Chapters 1 and 2; he is also the opposite of the prudent helmsmen of ships of state exalted by the likes of Bodin and L’Hospital in Chapter

Three. Later in this chapter we will see how this kind of obstinacy formed part of a new kind of maritime moral framework, in Bruneau's *Histoire véritable*.

The tension between *maistre* and crew is emblematic of this chapter's pervasive sense of suspense between dangers, as those on board agonise over whether to persevere in the seemingly doomed vessel or risk an attempt at returning to the unwelcoming shore: 'considerans le naufrage d'un costé, et la famine qui se preparoit de l'autre' (510). In an echo of the biblical overtones of his earlier journey, Léry frames his decision not to return to the mainland, where three of his comrades would be martyred, as providential. Of course, this 'election' only authorises him to endure the many trials of the return journey: 'nous nous rejettasmes derechef en mer dans ce vieil et meschant vaisseau, auquel, comme en un sepulchre, nous attendions plus tost mourir que de vivre' (511). More so even than in the storms of the outbound journey, the 'shipwreckful potential' of the Saint Jacques is keenly felt; Léry insists that without their constant efforts to pump out the water leaking into the ship, 'nous fussions (par maniere de dire) peris cent fois le jour' (512).

The fragility of the vessel and of the bonds between the community on board is once again foregrounded when a foolish disagreement between the *Contre-maistre* and *Pilote* leads to a temporary abdication of responsibility, resulting in yet another catastrophe. A storm approaches, and the pilot has neglected to furl the sails, leaving the ship vulnerable to the winds. The situation is, eventually, rectified by the efforts of the crew, who must cut free the sails to steady the ship. Soon afterwards, when the ship appears to be damaged beyond hope of repair, the Captain, Pilot and Maître, in their haste to free the *barque* in which to escape, throw overboard 'grande quantité de bois de Bresil et autres marchandises jusques à la valeur de plus de mille francs' (519). The Captain's earlier reluctance to part with his cargo is reversed only in the context of extreme self-interest. At the height of the drama, Léry's narrative reflects back on earlier experience:

[N]ous ressouvenans du premier naufrage d'où Dieu nous avoit delivrez, autant resolu à la mort qu'à la vie, et neantmoins pour soustenir et empescher le navire d'aller en fond, nous employans de toutes nos forces d'en tirer l'eau, nous fismes tant que elle ne nous surmonta pas. Non toutesfois, que tous fussent si courageux, car la plus part des mariniers s'attendans boire plus que leur saoul, tous esperdus apprehendoyent tellement la mort, qu'ils ne tenoyent conte de rien. (520)

If attitudes of those on board are shaped by the remembrance of their own previous experience, the narrative also remembers and replays—with some crucial adjustments—some of the fictive shipwreck narratives discussed above, in Chapter Two. The division between the 'courageux' passengers and stupefied sailors (no longer 'fiers et forts') is a revisitation, though with roles reversed, of Erasmus's shipwreck scene, by way of a shipful of labouring Frère Jeans and panicking Panurges.

As water gushes in uncontrollably, the 'mariniers' who were down in the hull 'abandonnerent le charpentier, [et] quand ils furent remontez vers nous sur le tillac, sans nous pouvoir autrement declarer le fait, crioient, Nous sommes perdus, nous sommes perdus' (519).³⁷ Thankfully, when the danger of shipwreck is at its closest, the actions of one prudent workman are enough to save them all:

Nostre charpentier qui estoit un petit jeune homme de bon cœur, n'ayant pas abandonné le fond du navire comme les autres, ains au contraire ayant mis son caban à la matelote sur le grand pertuis qui s'y estoit fait, se tenant à deux pieds dessus pour resister à l'eau [...] criant en tel estat, tant qu'il pouvoit, à ceux qui estoient en effroi sur le tillac, qu'on luy apportast des habillemens, lits de cotton et autres choses propres [...] estant di-je ainsi secouru nous fusmes preservez par son moyen. (521)

The distinction between the approach of this 'petit jeune homme' and the useless panic of his companions is compounded by the spatial separation of the two: the carpenter must call the others to action, and is almost thwarted (we sense the tension in 'tant qu'il pouvoit') by

³⁷ Léry's scorn for these 'matelots papistes' later reaches its zenith when, in an echo of Erasmus's insincere passenger in the *Naufragium*, he remarks of the sailors' response to further storms endured on board: 'ne demandez pas si nos matelots papistes se voyans reduits à telle extremité, promettans, s'ils pouvoient parvenir en terre, d'offrir à S. Nicolas une image en cire de la grosseur d'un homme, faisoient au reste de merveilleux vœux: mais cela estoit crier apres Baal, qui n'y entendoit rien' (528). In this later scene, Léry and his Reformist companions adopt instead the attitude of Adolph in the *Naufragium*: 'trouvans bien mieux d'avoir recours à celuy duquel nous avoins jà tant de fois experimenté l'assistance [...] c'estoit à luy et non à autres que nous nous adressions' (528).

the contrast between his own exertions and the distance of the other crew members.

Whereas Rabelais condenses the folly of Erasmus's panicking passengers into the person of Panurge, and suggests that the Thalamège might have been saved by Pantagruel's strength and piety, Léry focuses the salvational labour of the scene on one, very human, figure, stating unequivocally that this carpenter is to thank for the survival of the ship. This heroic figure is at once Pantagruel-like and markedly different from his gigantic forebear: he labours effectively but is an expert craftsman rather than a prince; he helps his ship but does not pray (until later, perhaps).³⁸ And, perhaps most interestingly, his shipwreck is not threatened by storm (as convention would dictate) but by grounding.

Rabelais's influence is detectable throughout the *Histoire*, yet it is treated with deep suspicion, as Lestringant has shown.³⁹ This problematic relationship is married with the question of the risk or value of seafaring, as articulated in Léry's conclusion to the episode:

Et de fait comme je m'asseure que si les Rabelistes, mocqueurs et contempteurs de Dieu, qui jasant et se mocquent ordinairement sur terre les pieds sous la table, des naufrages ou perils où se trouvent si souvent ceux qui vont sur mer y eussent esté, leur gaudisserie fust changé en horribles espouvantemens: aussi ne doutay-je point que plusieurs de ceux qui liront ceci (et les autres dangers dont j'ai jà fait et feray encore mention, que nous experimentasmes en ce voyage) selon le proverbe ne disent: Ha! qu'il fait bon planter des choux, et beaucoup meilleur ouyr deviser de la mer et des sauvages que d'y aller voir. (520-521)

As Lestringant argues, Léry aligns these blasphemous 'Rabelistes' with the position of the distant Lucretian spectator, in contrast with the traveller who knows the true dangers of the sea. There is a further distinction to be made clear here. The Lucretian spectator sees a tableau before him, but at a distance and with no sense of change over time; what Léry offers is a sense of narrative—and, as we have seen, the possibility to revisit and rework the shipwreck *topos*. Panurge, who as we saw in Chapter Two wishes to be a 'planteur de

³⁸ See footnote above.

³⁹ Lestringant, *Jean de Léry*, pp. 161-169. See also Hampton, 'Turkish Dogs', p. 81, n. 36.

chous' rather than experience the storm at sea, misunderstands the value of what he is enduring. For Léry, by contrast, experiencing the threat of shipwreck becomes the paradigmatic way of really witnessing something for himself. We may also detect in Léry's last sentence an echo of Antony's exclamation at the end of the 'Naufragium': 'And I for my part would rather hear such tales than experience the events at first hand'. Léry's position, as one who is prepared 'd'y aller voir' is vindicated, as crisis is averted: 'voici comme nous fusmes delivrez du danger present' (521). In the end, then, the complacent, mocking (though imagined) 'Rabelistes' are repudiated by the wealth of Léry's experience. If the 'Rabeliste' figure is in actual fact something of a straw man, he is nonetheless emblematic of Léry's insistence on correcting 'impostures', and on claiming his eyewitness account—shipwrecks and all—for his own. The process of *bricolage* employed by Léry in the *Histoire d'un voyage*, borrowing but changing and reshaping fragments of earlier shipwreck scenes in order to build a new narrative worthy of his true and marvellous experience, might be seen to be figured by the improvisational brilliance of his heroic carpenter. He is emphatically not 'sur terre les pieds sous la table', but in the bowels of the ship, damming the gash in the hull, 'à deux pieds dessus'.

IV.3 The particularity of shipwreck in Capitaine Bruneau's *Histoire véritable*

If Jean de Léry's writing of shipwreck in the *Histoire d'un voyage* is characterised by a singular, personal perspective, or 'narration particuliere', this is not the definitive mode of shipwreck writing for travel writers—even Protestant travel writers—in the latter part of the sixteenth century. In the first part of this chapter, I have argued that Jean de Léry's revisiting of the shipwreck *topos* paints a rich picture of shipwreck as the archetypal eyewitness experience. As a Reformist pastor, Léry often posits a providential aspect to his

experience and foregrounds his own ethical duty to bear witness to that experience, as well as the value to his reader of that testimony. A second Protestant writer publishes an *Histoire* at the end of the sixteenth century, one that—like L  ry’s—appears long after the events recounted took place, and bears the marks of its textual predecessors. Unlike the *Histoire d’un voyage*, however, Jean-Arnaud Bruneau de Rivedoux’s collection of eight stories is concerned with the heterogeneity of seafaring experience, offering a panoply of examples that demonstrate, the author proclaims, ‘les merveilles de Dieu’. In the early twentieth century, Geoffroy Atkinson’s appraisal of the text and its claims to readerly attention was dismissive:

L’auteur raconte laconiquement et sans la moindre   motion la m  chancet   des naufrag  s les uns envers les autres, leur   pret   inconsciente, la capture successive par les pirates de vaisseaux de plus en plus grands. On rencontre dans ce livre sans art tant  t le meurtre, tant  t l’abandon sur des c  tes d  sertes de compagnons par ceux-l   m  mes qui avaient eu l’occasion de passer par une m  me exp  rience. Mais l’absence de tout commentaire sur de tels   v  nements fait de ce livre un document qui nous para  t atroce.⁴⁰

By contrast, the editor of the modern edition, Alain-Gilbert Gu  g  n, has shown in his presentation of the text, as well as in two journal articles, the importance and appeal of Bruneau’s text for those interested in sixteenth-century French culture and literature.⁴¹ Bruneau’s work comprises tales that, though fantastical and ‘merveilleux’, purport to be ‘v  ritables’, and part of their interest lies in the richness of their practical and historical detail. As Gu  g  n notes, ‘[d]ans l’*Histoire v  ritable*, on trouve, de mani  re presque exhaustive, les causes des accidents et des naufrages qui survenaient    l’  poque’.⁴² The narratives are also strongly allegorised, a fact which is less surprising given the context of their printing history: ‘les vingt-six autres ouvrages sortis de l’imprimerie niortaise de 1594    1600, sont des textes de pol  mique religieuse,   crits par des contemporains’ (31, n.

⁴⁰ Geoffroy Atkinson, *Les Nouveaux Horizons de la renaissance fran  aise* (Geneva: Droz, 1935), p. 114.

⁴¹ Alain-Gilbert Gu  g  n, ‘L’*Histoire v  ritable* de capitaine Bruneau et le Nouveau Monde’, in *Coligny, les Protestants et la mer*, ed. by Martine Acerra and Guy Martini  re (Paris: Presses de l’Universit   de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997), pp. 247-258; *idem*, ‘Duplessis-Mornay et l’*Histoire v  ritable*’, *Bulletin de la Soci  t   de l’histoire du protestantisme fran  ais*, 136 (1990), 209-218.

⁴² Gu  g  n, in Bruneau, *Histoire v  ritable*, p. 102, n. 19.

35). That such allegorisation might be equally pertinent to social or political spheres is made clear by Louis de La Blachière in his dedication of the collection to the Calvinist polemicist Philippe Duplessis-Mornay:

Monseigneur, c'est une maxime très véritable que tout homme né de femme est sujet à beaucoup de misères et calamités [...]; soit qu'il marche sur terre, soit qu'il voyage sur la mer. Car tout autant de vents contraires qui s'opposent au cours de son voyage en la mer, autant ou plus rencontre-t-il de traverses sur la terre par la malice envieuse des autres hommes qui s'efforcent de renverser les cours de ses desseins, tant soient-ils saints. (37)

These lines are a remarkable echo, almost a century later, of Symphorien Champier's words of advice to his reader in the *Nef des Princes*.⁴³ In a realisation of Champier's 'nef vertueuse', what Blumenberg calls the 'mis-step' of taking to the water is not in itself a source of moral anxiety in Bruneau's accounts; quite the opposite is true.

From the *Histoire d'un voyage* to the *Histoire véritable de certains voyages*, we take a step closer to the seafaring community, with the singular experience articulated through Léré's first-person narrative being replaced by a network of nautical connections. At the centre of this web is Bruneau, a 'fidèle serviteur' of the Huguenot leader Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, to whom those returning from the sea have 'récité fidelement' their testimony. The geographical context to Bruneau's narrative, the Protestant town of Niort, and the wider area around the Île de Ré and La Rochelle, informs one of the salient distinctions between his portrayal of seafaring folk and that of Léré; whereas Léré's experience is of *matelots papistes*, Bruneau writes, at the end of the century, from within a predominantly Huguenot community encompassing soldiers, merchants and mariners: 'Au début, il semble que la réforme y ait été accueillie plus ou moins froidement [...], mais rapidement, elle conquiert l'ensemble de la population, et plus particulièrement les artisans, les gens de guerre et les commerçants'.⁴⁴ Bruneau himself is not in fact a man of

⁴³ See above, Chapter One, section I.3.ii.

⁴⁴ Pierre Dez, *Histoire des Protestants et de l'Église Réformée de l'Île de Ré* ([n.p.]: F. Pijolet, 1926), p. 26, quoted by Guéguen, p. 112, n. 110.

the sea, though he has made his home on the coast; his captaincy relates to his military experience ‘à l’expérience des guerres intestines de ce royaume’ (38). This distinction, far from threatening his nautical credibility, only serves to reinforce Bruneau’s role as a ‘fidèle’ link in the Reformist chain of dissemination. The reliability of the information relayed is further expressed through emphasis of social and communitarian bonds; La Blachière declares himself to be ‘étroitement allié’ to the compiler of the *Histoire*, and Bruneau’s use of ‘nous’ and ‘nos’, when traced through the *Histoire*, tells of the dynamics of association and bonding that connect the stories’ protagonists, through Bruneau and La Blachière, to their eventual readers. The declared trustworthiness of Bruneau’s narratives is also built upon the assumption, found more famously in Montaigne’s ‘Des Cannibales’, that simple seafaring folk are reliable witnesses, by virtue of their lack of education. La Blachière vaunts Bruneau’s qualities of ‘candeur’ and ‘fidélité’ (38) quite lacking in Montaigne’s ‘fines gens’. For Bruneau in turn, there is no contradiction inherent in his description of one witness as ‘un fort honnête homme, marchand marinier’ (71). The narratives of the *Histoire véritable* are passed on by those who, like Adolph in Erasmus’s colloquy, have survived to tell the tale, and Bruneau presents his stories with assurances of the trustworthiness of their sources: ‘la plupart encore vivants, gens crédibles, et que pour rien du monde ne voudraient avoir rapporté choses fausses’ (43).

Rather than drawing a moral distinction between seafarers and ‘terrestriens’, or even between those setting sail for commercial gain and those claiming a higher exploratory or missionary purpose—as is a chief concern in Rabelais, and in Léry’s prefatory remarks—Bruneau’s text describes and develops a complex system of ethical codes; the communities on board these ships endure experiences that test the social bonds between men. Indeed, as his first lines demonstrate, Bruneau (inverting, we note, La

Blachière's introductory hierarchy) valorises the nautical itself as a mark of authentic human experience:

Il est certain qu'entre les dangers qui se rencontrent au passage de cette vie humaine, il n'y en a point de tels, de pareils, ni de si fréquents et ordinaires, que ceux qui arrivent et adviennent aux hommes qui fréquentent la navigation de la mer; tant en nombre et diversité de qualités, qu'ès violences rigoureuses, cruelles et inévitables, à eux communes et journalières, et telles qu'ils ne se sauraient assurer une seule heure du jour d'être au nombre des vivants. (41)

This peculiar kind of everyday, ordinary extraordinariness is what defines seafaring as the archetype of the trials and suffering of human existence. Its variety and diversity are vital to its educational value; accordingly, in Bruneau's text, the shipwreck takes centre-stage, and is narrated more fully, more richly, than ever before. Though all eight narratives tend towards a unified Protestant message, each teaches the protagonists, and the readers, something different. In this second half of the chapter, I will show how Bruneau testifies to the usefulness of shipwreck through moralisation, scenes of rebuilding, and the staging of affective responses to shipwreck and shipwreck narrative. As Bruneau declares: 'Je veux donc vous faire voir des particularités merveilleuses et épouvantables en ce discours' (84).

IV.3.i 'Pour faire voir sa puissance aux incrédules': 'Merveilles' and moralising

It is striking that, of Bruneau's eight *récits*, four include in their titles the term 'merveilleux', and that this word and its cognates recur with remarkable frequency throughout the *Histoire*. The affective significance of the term is considerable, as Jean Céard has explained: 'au XVI^e siècle, *merveilleux* signifie souvent à la fois "admirable" et "terrifiant", comme *effroyable* et *espouvantable* ne sont pas dénués de toute idée d'admiration'.⁴⁵ *Effroi* and *espouvantement* are indeed equally familiar terms to the reader

⁴⁵ Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges: l'insolite au XVI^e siècle en France* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 'Avant-propos', pp. vii-xiv (p. ix).

of Bruneau's *Histoire*, as they often serve to describe the responses of victims, or spectators, of shipwreck. But the function of this group of terms in the period is more complex still: 'l'admiration [...] tâche d'attirer à elle le plus laid des monstres pour le faire concourir à la beauté du monde'.⁴⁶ Bruneau's richly *merveilleux* narrative attempts, in much the same way, to perform a particular kind of accommodation of the extraordinary—and in particular of shipwreck—within the broadly Protestant discursive field of the *Histoire*. As Gueguen puts it: 'Au milieu de cette mer de misères, se fait [...] jour la dualité des destins: soit la rédemption, effet de la miséricorde de Dieu, pour les justes, soit la punition réservée aux "méchants"' (24).

In a work on monstrous births and their interpretations, Julie Crawford explains the confessional significance of marvels for Protestant writers of the period.⁴⁷ Like the Catholic tradition of moral *exempla*, 'Protestant stories of marvelous happenings similarly claimed pedagogical and catechistical aims'.⁴⁸ But these claims were problematic, not least since 'Protestant *exempla* often addressed the more controversial aspects or unresolved questions of reformed religion'. Despite the marked Protestant rejection of miracles along with what they saw as other such Catholic forms of superstition, 'many people who wanted to prove the divine truth of their doctrine or beliefs, including Protestants, claimed miraculous or marvelous signs as vindicating messages'. This tension between the

⁴⁶ Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges*, p. ix.

⁴⁷ Important and useful works on marvels and the marvellous in the period include Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*; Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Robert John Weston Edwards and Alexander Marr, eds, *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). As Crawford's title (below) suggests, much discussion of the marvellous and the miraculous is bound up with medical and other forms of monstrosity. See, for example, Timothy Hampton, 'Signs of Monstrosity: The Rhetoric of Description and the Limits of Allegory in Rabelais and Montaigne' in *Monstrous Bodies/ Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 179-199; Ian Maclean, *Logic, Signs and Nature in the Renaissance: The Case of Learned Medicine* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 269-273; *idem*, *Le Monde et les hommes selon des médecins de la Renaissance* (Paris: CNRS, 2006), Chapter 3: 'Délimiter la nature: le naturel et le surnaturel dans les jugements des médecins', pp. 55-78; Williams, *Monsters and their Meanings*.

⁴⁸ Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 12. The quotations that follow are all taken from the same page.

miraculous and the marvellous is borne out in Bruneau's *Histoire*, where the extraordinary tales related hover on the very edge of interpretability. Gomez-Géraud has pointed to this tension in her appraisal of Bruneau's *Histoire*:

Le dénouement de ces aventures ne répond guère aux exigences d'une stricte justice rétributive. Outre l'émergence d'un discours pragmatique sur les nécessités du commerce qui semblent parfois souffrir quelques accommodements avec l'éthique, il semble que l'auteur ait voulu affirmer le caractère insondable du mystère de l'Élection et de la volonté divines.⁴⁹

On the one hand, we may see in Bruneau's narration and commentary a presentation of 'vindicating messages' of the kind described by Guéguen and Crawford, while, at the same time, the causes of contradictory or confusing events and behaviours remain mysterious. At these moments, Bruneau refers judgement either to God or to his reader, incorporating the latter into an interpretative as well as a confessional community, united by the common cause of wonder.

The hero of the first story of Bruneau's collection is Jean Samson, who, 'ayant fait construire une barque', sets off from Marennes 'pour s'exercer en son art de marchand marinier' (45). When this ship is wrecked:

[T]ous par la permission de Dieu se sauvèrent sur la roche, dénués néanmoins de toutes commodités et moyens pour se sauver en telle nécessité, courts de vivres, outils, habillements et autres choses servant à maintenir cette vie humaine. (45)

Shipwreck thus strips the men of all cultural context and practical apparatus; with no hope of saving themselves through their own labour, they are left entirely at God's mercy. It appears that the Samson is indeed destined to be an exemplary figure:

Samson vit devant lui en peu de jours mourir tous ses compagnons en attendant une même fin à l'avenir. Cependant, soit que Dieu le voulut réserver pour faire voir sa puissance aux incrédules, et la manifester au monde, Samson demeura sur ladite roche trente-trois jours et trente-trois nuits[.] (46)

⁴⁹ Gomez-Géraud, *Le Crépuscule du Grand Voyage*, p. 502, n. 3.

The theme of election raised by L ry in his own *Histoire* is made explicit in this, Bruneau’s opening narrative, as: ‘Dieu lui suscita deux moyens pour le sauver’ (46). But, for all the biblical echoes of the passage (most notably in the repetitious phrasing that recalls the temptations of Christ), the subjunctive mode of interpretation above leaves the final moral reading in the hands of the reader. Bruneau closes the narrative with a reference to his own position as a witness to Samson’s experience: ‘Voil  ce qui advint de ce p rilleux voyage   Samson, lequel j’ai depuis vu plus de dix ans apr s, continuant toujours son trafic et commerce de la navigation’ (47). The dangers of the sea, Bruneau contends, are not in themselves reason enough to remain on land, quite the opposite; the *Histoire v ritable* has as its epigram part of Cl ment Marot’s translation of Psalm 107:

Ceux qui dedans gal es dessus la mer s’en vont,
Et en grands eaux sal es maintes trafiques font:
Ceux-l  voient de Dieu les  uvres merveilleuses,
Sur le profond milieu des vagues p rilleuses. (33)

This psalm—the *devise* of the ship of fools—and its translation by Marot were, as we have seen, paraphrased by L ry in his first narration of near-shipwreck. But whereas L ry retains in his account a vestigial sense of the folly of seafaring, Bruneau emphasises instead the sense of wonder, affirming the centrality of this ‘reading’ of the sea as he concludes this introductory narrative:

Et qu’est-ce autre chose que les merveilles du Dieu vivant, les forces duquel garantissent contre toute opinion humaine ceux qu’il lui pla t conserver [...],  tant besoin en cela s’accorder au Psalmiste qui dit que quiconque se retire en la garde du Dieu vivant est en une tr s grande s ret . (47)

The weakness of ‘opinion humaine’ is consistently thrown into relief by the divine ‘merveilles’ of Bruneau’s tales, much as the ‘opinion’ of L ry and his men is found wanting by their Brazilian experience. Human failings are often articulated in an excess of greed and temerity that win out over reason and experience, as in Bruneau’s final tale, where sailors ‘ne se contentant de ce qu’ils avaient fait, se mirent   la mer pour passer

outré' (94), leading ultimately to their downfall. But most strikingly of all, 'opinion' and its cognates ('opiniâtre', 'opiniâtreté') recur throughout the *Histoire*, marking out hubris, and thus displacing the act of setting sail that in earlier tradition was itself the sin or flaw that invited punishment.

The fourth of Bruneau's *récits* ('Voyage déplorable de la perte d'un navire allant à Terre-Neuve...') opens by introducing: 'un fort honnête homme, marchand marinier, nommé Pierre Houé, ayant de beaux moyens, lequel [...] avait toujours quelque navire en bâtissure, soit qu'il y prît plaisir, soit qu'il en reçût du profit' (71). But even this 'honnête homme' is not immune to 'opiniâtreté': 'ayant fait bâtir un très beau navire [...] pour l'envoyer aux Terres-Neuves à la pêche de la moule, qui était son trafic plus ordinaire, se mit en fantaisie d'y faire le voyage dedans, contre les remontrances que plusieurs de ses amis lui faisaient pour l'en divertir' (71). At this mid-point in the *Histoires*, amid such tales of horror, a hint of gallows humour creeps in, as Bruneau remarks that Houé insisted on making the voyage against the warnings of his friends, 'les assurant toutefois que ce serait pour le dernier voyage qu'il y entreprendrait jamais (comme il fut à la vérité; non toutefois en la signification qu'il le prenait)' (71).

For Houé's journey is indeed doomed, as the risky process of stopping a leak, which required the boiling up of 'du goudron, de la résine et de l'huile de poisson' (72), leads to a fire on board. In this state of emergency, as in the near-shipwreck scene narrated by Léry, any material object to hand will be used to prevent disaster: 'ils coururent tous à devoir de l'éteindre, n'y épargnant leurs habillements, paillasses, et autres hardes qu'ils pouvaient attraper pour se jeter dessus le feu' (72). But the crew's efforts cannot stop the fire from enveloping and destroying the vessel, and the sailors—of whom few can swim—begin to abandon ship, jumping overboard. Houé's nephew, Chambereau, comes to the rescue in another ship: 'approchant le plus qu'il peut, jeta une infinité de cordages à la

mer, au bout desquels il avait fait attacher tous les barils, seilleaux, et bouts de bois qu'il put trouver' (73). Adolph's account of the parts of the wreckage (oars, boathooks, tubs, buckets, planks) used as floats in the *Naufragium* is replayed in this deliberate attempt to provide flotsam to the desperate sailors. In this pitiful account, though, there is only one survivor, who is viewed by Bruneau as being spared by God precisely because of his vulnerability:

[I]l faut reconnaître la merveilleuse puissance de Dieu, qui au milieu d'un tel et si piteux naufrage voulut sauver le plus impuissant de toute la troupe, et y laisser un grand nombre de jeunes gens marinières dispos et bons nageurs; que quelque industrie qu'ils pussent déployer, ne leur servent d'aucun remède contre les décrets de sa Majesté, la vertu desquels est inviolable. (74)

In the tension between 'industrie' and 'décrets' here, we find replayed the question of faith and labour that is resolved through synergism in the *Quart Livre*. Indeed, it is at this moment in the *Histoire* that Bruneau most explicitly recalls Rabelais's storm scene, transforming the absurd response of Panurge to the danger into a sympathetic stance:

Voilà de merveilleux hasards communs à tous ceux qui font le métier de la navigation; et crois que Panurge n'avait pas grand tort de dire que bienheureux étaient ceux qui plantent choux, pour avoir un pied en terre, et l'autre qui n'en est pas loin. (75)

Bruneau's response to Rabelais's storm scene, though articulated, like Léré's, through the apparently exemplary figure of Panurge, is markedly more sympathetic to his distress. But, like Rabelais (whom Léré chooses to misunderstand in this instance), Bruneau understands that Panurge's attitude to seafaring is not, ultimately, to be shared; Bruneau's text stages a resolute defence of seafaring even as it enumerates the risks and dangers run by those who brave the oceans.

Seafaring does not, however, escape entirely its less admirable connotations. In his sixth tale, Bruneau presents an example in which the 'folie' traditionally associated with seafaring is replaced only by the fabled maritime fondness of 'ivrognerie':

[L]’équipage de la barque de guerre un peu démesurés en leur joie et ayant volontiers bu quelque peu plus qu’il ne fallait, ne se soucièrent [...] de faire honneur, comme disent les marinières, à un coup de vent qui les trouva à la mer; mais le dédaignant et faisant porter voile par force, cuidant que l’or qu’ils avaient, était suffisant pour apaiser et Boréas, et tous les vents, et les rigueurs de Neptune, se virent à fin tellement enveloppés de la bourrasque, que voilà en un moment la sauce renversée; et navire et marinières, et lingots engloutis dans la mer [...]. Tellement que la grande folie de ces misérables, ou plutôt leur ivrognerie, leur apporta la ruine totale de la bonne fortune qu’ils avaient rencontrée. Ce sont fautes merveilleusement communes à la plupart des marinières qui abusent de leur métier, par l’opiniâtreté desquels j’ai vu advenir beaucoup d’inconvénients depuis que je suis demeurant en cette île [...]. (82)

In this instance, the failure of material riches to placate ‘les rigueurs de Neptune’ recalls Adolph’s description, in the ‘Naufragium’, of ‘the winds [that], unappeased by our offerings, broke the ropes and tore the sails to pieces’ (140). But the kind of reassuring allegory that always spares the truly faithful and the innocent (namely Adolph and the silent mother with babe in arms in Erasmus’s colloquy) is not always perpetuated by Bruneau’s troubling tales.

As is often the case in the *Histoire véritable de certains voyages*, one anecdote recalls another in a process of amplification and variation. As a supplement to this sixth voyage, Bruneau recounts a disastrous story involving a ‘bateau de passage’ taking passengers from La Rochelle to the Île de Ré. The passengers, alarmed by the force of the winds, beg the mariners to lower the sails, ‘mais l’opiniâtreté de ces maraudeurs qui ont accoutumé contre toute remontrance s’opposer à la raison, fit que le coup de vent s’étant mis dans leurs voiles, apporta la ruine et d’eux et de tout ce qui était dans le bateau’ (82). The result was that all but one on board drowned, passengers and sailors alike. As for the lone survivor, Bruneau’s judgement is severe:

Savoir si ce marinier, qui était l’un des chefs du bateau, ne méritait pas d’être pendu après qu’il fut revenu à soi, vu que de sa folie et témérité, tant d’honnêtes gens étaient périés. Quant à moi, je crois que c’eût été justice, vu que de sa méchanceté et des autres, ce naufrage était arrivé et de pauvres gens, qui avaient comme leurs vies entre leurs mains. Toutefois si a-t-il vécu depuis longtemps, sans qu’il ait été recherché de personne. (83)

In these words we find, reconfigured, the assurances of Frere Jan to Panurge after the storm scene: ‘tes destinées fatales ne sont à périr en eau. Tu seras hault en l’air certainement pendu’ (596). But in this instance, ‘folie et témérité’ go unpunished; divine retribution does not always cohere with the authorial conception of justice.

Bruneau’s third narrative (‘Autre voyage fait au Pérou, où il se voit la violence d’un coup de vent appelé houraquan, avec les périls que passent ceux qui le rencontrent’) provides a rather liminal case, wherein hubris is met with both retribution and mercy. A mutinous crew force their captain to set sail for France, despite his protestations that it is too dangerous to travel during hurricane season. When, as they were warned, calamity strikes, ‘il n’y avait lors pièce d’eux qui eût osé se vanter d’échapper le naufrage, reconnaissant lors combien leur témérité leur avait apporté de péril et de dommage’ (68). As a result of their complacency: ‘il leur fut de nécessité couper tout les mâts de la galiote, jeter à la mer toute leur artillerie, leur victuailles [...] pour alléger leur navire, lequel fut tout brisé devant et derrière des coups de mer’ (68). Bruneau’s moral judgement of this outcome is forthright:

Voilà donc nos opiniâtres punis selon le démerite de leurs fautes; le plus vaillant desquels en eût voulu être quitte pour un bras, encore en eût-il pensé avoir bon marché, n’ayant recours qu’aux pleurs et lamentations, et s’accusant d’avoir cru leurs folles fantaisies, et forcé celui qui les conseillait fidèlement. Il en advient volontiers toujours ainsi par juste punition à ceux qui, s’égayant de l’obéissance due et promise à leur supérieur, les forcent à leurs déraisonnables volontés. (68)

This fatal ‘déraison’ echoes the misjudged insistence that jeopardises the Thalamège in the *Cinquième Livre*, when the crew urge their pilot to ‘rompre’. But the lesson of this example might also be applied to the political sphere; in alluding to hierarchical obligations, Bruneau evokes the relationship between prudent pilot and crew aboard the ship of state explored in Chapter Three.

The punishment of the crew’s temerity is expressed not only through the destructive violence of shipwreck, but also in the subsequent prolonged struggle for

survival: ‘commencèrent à ramasser tout ce qu’ils purent des fragments de leur bris de navire et les miettes de biscuit’ (68); ‘reprirent un mât qu’ils avaient attaché le long de leur navire, et en firent un d’avirons et de quelques bois restés, employant leurs chemises et habillements à raccourter leurs voiles toutes cassées et brisées’ (69). In this example, desperate and improvised rebuilding (here, literally ‘bris-collage’) form part of the sailors’ atonement, as God eventually delivers the men to land at the depths of their despair, only just sparing one of their number from contributing corporeally to the cause of ‘ramassage’, as a victim of cannibalism (69).⁵⁰ But the dynamics of rebuilding are shown by Bruneau to go beyond the purposes of penitence, as the next section will show.

⁵⁰ Far from being, as I assumed at first, merely a terrible pun of my own invention, the notion of ‘bris-collage’, and its relationship to Lévi-Straussian or Certolian *bricolage*, has been elaborated and debated in the contexts of structuralism, postmodernity, sociology and religious syncretism: see André Mary, ‘Bricolage afro-brésilien et bris-collage postmoderne’ in *Roger Bastide ou le rejouissement de l’abîme*, ed. by Philippe Laburthe-Tolra (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994), pp. 85-98; Carmen Bernand, Stefania Capone, Frédéric Lenoir and Françoise Champion, ‘Regards croisés sur le bricolage et le syncrétisme’, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 114 (2001), 61-66.

IV.3.ii ‘Avec peine et fatigue commune’: Rebuilding ships and communities

In Bruneau’s second narrative, ‘Voyage fait au Pérou, où s’est passé de merveilleux accidents et dangers’, an account of the suffering endured by shipwreck victims provokes a sustained consideration of the dynamics and dysfunctions of community, and the subsequent process(es) of rebuilding. Retold by Bruneau in the context of very recent civil conflict, this tale comes to articulate the uneasy legacy of the ‘guerres intestines’ of which the non-nautical ‘admiral’ *did* have first-hand experience, as Williams has argued: ‘the treachery, disloyalty and plotting of the French civil wars have made new and far grimmer sense of the themes of [this] story’.⁵¹ As such, more than in any other tale, ships, wreckage, debris and rafts may be seen to figure the French state in its various stages of stress, disintegration, and tentative, fragile reconciliation.

At the beginning of the tale the ships setting out are described as ‘bien armés et avitaillés pour un an à faire le voyage du Pérou’, and political relationships between France, Spain and Portugal are dramatised throughout the narrative—as in Léry’s *Histoire d’un voyage*—in the capture and recapture of ships, goods and men. The central ship in question is a ‘navire de guerre’, its crew made up of ‘tant soldats que mariniers’ (49). The first of its encounters to be focussed on by the narrator is the capture of a Spanish ship, ‘chargé de sucres et de cuirs’. The capture of other—always foreign—vessels, a frequent occurrence in Bruneau’s narratives, is not framed critically or in moral terms, but seen as par for the course for life on the waves: the French crew ‘se content[ent] de ce butin’, and are ‘joyeux d’avoir fait si bonne rencontre, vu que ledit navire était estimé à bien dix mille ducats’ (49). Fifty-seven of the men are transferred to the captured ship, which sails ahead of the warship, but their jubilation is short-lived when they come into rocky waters:

⁵¹ Williams, “‘L’Humanité du tout perdue?’”, p. 240.

[Q]uelque remontrance que fissent les mariniers au pilote de ladite prise, qu'ils se mettaient en danger de toucher, son opiniâtreté néanmoins gagna leur raison, et en moins de rien ne faillirent d'aller frapper sur une roche à pleine voile[.] (50)

The cause of the shipwreck is clearly moralised; in another echo of the shipwreck of the *Cinquième Livre*, where the 'requeste importune' of the crew persuades the pilot to change course against his better judgement, and the pig-headed argument between the ship's pilot and *maître* that leads Léry's ship into danger in a storm, the *pilote* of the captured ship fails to show the sea the respect it deserves, and this pride comes before a fall. It might seem that in the excitement of international conquest, the basic needs of the ship of state have been neglected. The disaster of hitting the rocks spells the end of harmony among the crew, which splinters into factions, some of whom attempt to save themselves at the expense of the others: 'il y eut douze hommes de l'équipage de ladite prise qui au déçu des autres furent si subtils qu'ils s'emparèrent du bateau d'icelle prise' (50). The condemnatory tone adopted here by Bruneau announces the moral framework of the narrative as a whole; group loyalty is paramount, and individual or factional interests lead to betrayals that endanger the interests of the community.

The captain of the 'navire de guerre', Mesmin, immediately faces a dilemma; to bring the stranded crew of the captured ship on board the main vessel, with the overcrowding and scant rations that would entail, or simply to head back to France, leaving them behind. Having consulted his trusted advisors, 'ses plus favoris qui comandaient sous lui audit navire' (50), he settles for the second option: 'il fut conclu qu'il valait mieux que quarante-cinq périssent, que tout le reste' (51). The foregrounding of Mesmin's deliberation and the difficulty of the dilemma spares him the kind of condemnation dealt out elsewhere in the *Histoire* to those who abandon their companions. Indeed, his assiduity is consonant, if not with the *prudentia* of L'Hospital, then with the related doctrine of *raison d'état* (see above, Chapter Three).

Bruneau's interest lies with the group left behind, and the tensions that arise when they are forced to improvise a new kind of community in order to survive. At first, the abandoned group resemble forty-five panicking Panurges:

[R]eviendrons à nos pauvres malautruts, lesquels ne pouvant assez blâmer la déloyauté de leur capitaine et compagnons, ne se mettaient dedans la fantaisie ni au courage aucune invention, ne aucune volonté d'essayer à se tirer de là; et avec pleurs et lamentations passèrent sur le côté dudit navire [...]. Ils passèrent donc aussi le reste du jour et toute la nuit ensuivante en complaints et quérimonies, pendant que la mer brisait sous leurs pieds leur navire. (51)

The quarrelling of these 'pauvres malautruts'⁵² is associated, by collocation, with the inexorable disintegration of their ship. But one nameless sailor steps into the leader's role, firstly instructing them to direct their cries for help to a more appropriate end, and then rallying them to work. This remarkable figure proves to be able to transform not only the minds but also the bodies of the other men:

[C]estui-ci leur ayant remontré que ce n'était plus le temps de faire des complaints inutiles en l'air vu qu'il n'y avait personne qui leur en pût faire raison, que c'était désormais à Dieu à qui il fallait adresser par oraisons et prières affectionnées d'avoir pitié d'eux, et même de reprendre courage de rechercher tous les moyens dont l'on se pourrait aviser à les sauver de ce naufrage, et non pas s'arrêter en ces pleurs et gémissements, qui ne servaient qu'à les efféminer. Finalement, il leur remit tellement le courage au ventre avec l'assurance qu'il leur donnait, que Dieu leur assisterait pour leur délivrance, qu'au lieu de leurs pleurs et regrets, chacun commença à mettre la main à la besogne pour bâtir du bris et fragments du navire un cageux ou rat, ainsi qu'aucuns appellent, pour étant mis dessus, ils pussent aller à terre. (51)

The inspirational spiritual and practical leadership of the nameless leader is enough to turn around the fate of the group; the 'pleurs et lamentations' and 'complaintes inutiles' of the stricken, Panurgean men are transformed into the synergistic combination of correctly directed prayer and labour epitomised by Pantagruel in Rabelais's storm scene. As in Léry's *Histoire*, the role of the carpenter is valorised, and through collaboration in the reconstruction the 'malautruts' themselves come to resemble him:

⁵² Cf. Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 30, OC p. 327.

Ainsi nos quarante-cinq rompent avec leur charpentier qui avait ses ferrements, le gaillard de derrière dudit navire, et avec quelques pipes les lient tellement ensemble, qu'en peu de temps voilà le cageux parachevé, prêt de recevoir les constructeurs. (52)

Having at first proved themselves, the men discover that this raft will not take them all, but, not despairing, set to work building another. The process of raftbuilding re-establishes order and, crucially, the crew's masculine identity: 'ils firent en diligence et avec merveilleux travail, tellement que de lâches et efféminés qu'ils étaient, à la voix d'un seul, les voilà revenus forts et encouragés à chercher leur moyen de leur salut' (52).⁵³

Their work complete, the men split up, 'se disant les uns les autres les adieux, comme se disent ceux qui vont à une bataille, lesquels, incertains de leur retour, se recommandent chacun à leurs compagnons' (52). But even their marvellous labour is not enough to save them without God's assistance: 'Ces cageux [...] sont conduits comme il plut à Dieu par les vents et la mer, qui, de bonne fortune pour eux, battait à terre' (52). Their reliance on God's help highlights the vulnerability of all men at sea, but especially these, on their primitive, Ark-like rafts: 'ils n'avaient câbles, ne ancres, ne voiles dont ils pussent aider [...], et toujours en l'eau jusqu'en moitié de la jambe sur lesdits cageux' (52). Bruneau's attention to the bodily proximity of water echoes the ancient maxim, repeated in Rabelais, Léry, and Bruneau's own preface, that 'ceux qui vont sur la mer, [n'ont] entre la vie et la mort que l'épaisseur d'un table de planche, qui n'est que de trois ou quatre travers de doigts' (41). More interestingly still, these simple and fragile constructions, which remind Bruneau of river rafts he has seen at Saumur ('des hommes dessus poussent cela avec perches' (52)), are to the 'navire de guerre' as the Brazilian 'barques' and 'rateaux', used only in shallow waters, are to Léry's Saint Jacques; shipwreck has placed these men on a different cultural and technological scale.

⁵³ On what Blackmore calls the 'gender-bending' effects of shipwreck, see *Manifest Perdition*, 70-72.

The two rafts, one carrying twenty-five men, the other twenty, eventually wash up on the same island, though each is unaware at first of the fate of the other. The *récit* traces the (mis)adventures of the twenty-five, who set off on foot to discover what has become of the others. Bruneau continues to scatter allusions to biblical and spiritual journeys throughout the narrative, referring to this group as ‘nos pèlerins’ (53). The insurmountable physical barrier they soon meet—‘une rivière [...] qui avait bien trois cents pas de large’ (53)—only serves as a reminder of their unhappy change in fortune. Where their original ship had been patently seaworthy, and their first rafts at least capable of resisting the waves long enough to get them to shore, by now even a river crossing seems almost beyond them. The group is forced, gallingly, to retrace their footsteps, and return to (what remains of) their raft:

[...] ou à tout le moins aux fragments et pièces d’icelui, dont ils ne pensaient jamais avoir affaire, ressemblant en cela nos destructeurs soldats, lesquels passant dans un village, dévorent, pillent et détruisent entièrement ce dont ils se peuvent aviser, faisant leur compte de n’y retourner jamais; néanmoins pressés quelquefois des ennemis, autres fois commandés par leurs colonels, sont contraints faire le même logis, où ne rencontrant aucune commodité de vivre, sont bien heureux de ramasser les pièces de pain dont leurs chevaux ne faisaient compte; de même façon nos pauvres et misérables réchappés ayant laissé leur cageux à l’abandon, et même démoli quelques pièces pour en faire du feu à leur arrivée [...] furent contraints par nécessité de retourner audit cageux; et rassemblant ce qu’ils purent de ses pièces l’emmenèrent jusques à ladite rivière, afin de s’en servir pour la passer. (53)

Bruneau’s insistence on the military parallels of this episode is not accidental; theirs was, after all, a ‘navire de guerre’, and a good number of the crew were soldiers by trade. The reflection on the sailors’ ‘ressemblance’ makes transparent the analogy at work here. The image of the returning soldiers desperately picking over previously rejected crumbs is also a reminder of the ever-present threat of famine on Atlantic crossings; it recalls, notably, the vivid description in Léry’s *Histoire* of the depths of desperation endured on the return voyage—which itself is a way of retelling his account of the famine in Sancerre.

The dynamic of *bricolage* is pushed to its limits in the repeated process of transformation of the wreckage; the deliberate destruction and burning of the original material has left the men with even less to work with than before. The resulting raft is ‘si défectueux’ that five men must be left behind if the rest are to make it across the river; those on the raft ‘ne furent chiches de promettre aux autres cinq, de les envoyer requérir’ (53), but Bruneau reads this abandonment as a violation of the social bonds of duty between the men:

C’était pourtant une grande déloyauté aux vingt d’abandonner ainsi ces pauvres cinq hommes [...] et ne m’ébahis pas beaucoup des maux qu’ils endurèrent encore puis après, et du danger où ils se virent tous d’un même inconvénient; pource que Dieu qui est le juste Juge ne délaisse point les iniquités impunies. (53-54)

The river crossing turns out to be only the beginning of the trials awaiting the group, who find the way ahead ‘tant pleine de bois, ronces et épines, qu’il leur fallut par nécessité couper leurs chapeaux et en faire les semelles à mettre sous leurs pieds, à cause que leurs souliers s’y percèrent tous’ (54). Leather, the very commodity that formed the cargo crowded over by the crew when they captured the ill-fated Spanish ship, is turned to a new and life-sustaining purpose, showing its true value in the depths of hardship, much as it provided Léry and his companions with sustenance in the famines of which his *Histoires* tell.

When, finally, the forty-five are reunited, and ‘réconciliation [...] faite entre eux de toutes offenses passées’ (55), the men work together to build a more substantial vessel to carry them onwards. The description of the men at work models an ideal co-operative community, with a role for each:

[C]hacun commença à prendre charge, les uns de couper bois, les autres de l’apporter, les autres de sauver ce qu’ils pouvaient des fragments du navire et cageux, autres aller à la pêche pour nourrir les ouvriers et finalement firent tel devoir, que deux mois après du jour de leur arrivée en ladite île, la barque fut entièrement faite et parfaite puis calfeutrée du mieux qu’ils purent des vieilles étoupes qu’ils tirèrent des pièces de leur navire, et de mousse qu’ils prenaient en la dite île. (55)

The processes of *bricolage* are perfected by this newly reunited and reconciled community, and a tone of optimism might be discerned. But the trouble is not yet over, as once again a small number of the group jeopardise the safety of the others, in a plot ‘plein de trahison et de déloyauté’ (55): a group including the pilot, *maître* and a few others, plot to steal the vessel for themselves.

In accordance with the providential framework of the *Histoire*, Bruneau reads the foiling of the plot as part of God’s plan: ‘Dieu permît que leur conjuration fut découverte par un de la troupe qui peut-être poussé de quelque compassion de ceux qui resteraient, ou de crainte de tomber en punition, la chose révélée par quelque autre, avertit de ladite conspiration’ (55). Whatever the motivation of the whistle-blower (this element being once more referred to the reader’s judgement), his actions allow for an improvised form of communitarian justice to be done:

Par la pluralité des voix qui à cette fin en furent recueillies, arrêt en intervient (car ainsi le doit-on appeler, parce qu’il n’y avait point d’appel) par lequel le maître, le pilote, et un autre leur compagnon, Normands de nation, sont condamnés à la même peine qu’ils avaient délibéré leur faire souffrir; et sans beaucoup de délai, et retardement, l’exécution faite d’icelui. Car le premier jour de Carême [...] voilà nos aventuriers embarqués dedans leur arche, avec si peu de tristes victuailles qu’ils purent recevoir, fors toutefois les trois relégués, qui demeurèrent. (55-56)

The main group appears increasingly—despite previous misdemeanours—to form some kind of elect, being repeatedly spared by God, while by contrast the three chief plotters (now disambiguated from the rest of the group by way of their regional identity)⁵⁴ are left marooned in Bermuda. The earlier transformational and quasi-utopian co-operation of the group in their raft-building labour only heightens the sense of betrayal, and the weight of the crime:

Certes je trouve selon mon jugement que encore en eurent-ils bon marché, vu les crimes qu’ils avaient commis en cette conjuration; savoir de la trahison qu’ils commettaient à

⁵⁴ It seems that the function of the marker ‘Normand’ is essentially only to differentiate the villains of this piece from the sympathetic community formed between Bruneau, the persons described in his *Histoire*, and the intended readership; as Guéguen points out, in the 1600 edition printed in Rouen, ‘les conspirateurs normands sont devenus poitevins!’ (104 n. 36).

l'encontre de leurs compagnons de fortune [...]. Est-il possible qu'au coeur des hommes il y ait une si malheureuse et si damnée opinion, de trahir de la façon ses compagnons, qui avec peine et fatigue commune s'étaient employés après tant de périls à construire la barque qui les devait sauver tous? L'humanité était-elle du tout perdue en ces gens-là? (56)⁵⁵

To break the kind of bond created by the extraordinary perils and physical co-operation shared by the shipwreck survivors calls for expulsion from the community. But the further symbolic significance of the 'barque' as ship of state, and of the Church, adds further weight to the episode, weight that might shed light on Bruneau's hyperbolic and affective anacoenosis. The betrayal of the 'Normands' is akin to the particular types of betrayal of which the religious and political factions of the French civil wars accused one another. As Bruneau's use of Homeric military similes throughout the *récit* reminds us, 'la barque qui les devait sauver tous' was precisely what was at stake. In contrast with the statesmanlike deliberation of Mesmin, which exonerated him from such condemnation, the treachery of the 'Normands' seems to test the bounds of humanity itself.

The rest of the group, now explicitly termed 'nos guerriers' (simile having slipped into metaphor, or the military background of some coming to stand for the group as a whole), continue on their 'pérégrination' (59), and despite travelling in 'un si misérable bateau', 'sans aucune arme, si ce n'était les outils du charpentier', they somehow succeed in capturing first a Portuguese, then a Spanish ship, both carrying precious cargo. As they approach the second ship, armed only with 'deux vieilles épées rouillées, et quelques ferrements de charpentier' (58), they are undeterred by the attempts of the better-armed Spanish crew to defend their ship. There is something of a David and Goliath dynamic played out in the recounting of the crew's success against the odds, and the fantastical narrative explicitly echoes Rabelais's own epic adventure stories: 'mais nonobstant tout cela ne des coups de canon qu'ils leur tiraient, ils ne laissent de continuer leur entreprise,

⁵⁵ Cf. Williams, "L'Humanité du tout perdue?", especially pp. 240-241.

sans faire non plus de compte des coups de canon que faisait Gargantua' (58). When they succeed in capturing a valuable ship, Bruneau invites the reader to consider the balance of emotions in play, not failing to note the cargo on board:

[N]os assaillants, qui se voyant montés à l'avantage d'un bon et grande navire avitaillé suffisamment pour le retour de leur voyage, chargé de sucres et cuirs, je vous laisse à penser, si la joie leur fut moindre que la tristesse de leur première perte leur avait été[.] (58-59)

But the final relief comes when, two years after setting out, the men return safely home:

'Je ne sais à quoi accorder la joie de ces pauvres gens-là, s'étant vus arriver à La Rochelle à port de salut, après avoir tant de fois échappé la mort qui les suivait journallement' (59). As the reader is invited to imagine, the trajectory of these men's fortunes, from the elation of conquest, to the depths of desperation and back again, is made all the sweeter for the sense of 'peine et fatigue commune' that has earned them this happy ending. This readerly referral also betrays, though, a failure of description; whereas, earlier, Bruneau revelled in similes of war when evoking hardship, when it comes to analogies of joy and relief his armoury of comparisons is found wanting.

IV.3.iii 'Une merveilleuse frayeur': The shipwreck as spectacle

The moment of homecoming is repeatedly exploited in the *Histoire véritable* as a privileged moment of spectatorship, as those on shore respond to and reproduce the emotions of the returned—or, as in the following case, those who fail to reach port safely.

In the sixth narrative, the pathos of a shipwreck account is doubled in Bruneau's description of its retelling:

[I]l fut impossible à tous ceux qui étaient au bateau d'y pouvoir remédier, quelque labeur qu'ils y employassent; et en peu de temps virent leur bateau fondre et abîmer sous leurs pieds, réduits à la merci de ondes et de la fureur de la mer, avec telle pitié de voir les cris des mourants, que ceux qui en réchappèrent faisaient pleurer tout le monde à qui ils le rapportaient. (83)

This physical reflex echoes, in more emotive terms, the involuntary shuddering of Erasmus's 'audience figure', Antony. The position of the witness to the disaster is further highlighted by Bruneau's description of the event in terms of seeing and hearing:

Car en ce spectacle y mourut de soixante-dix personnes, soixante-six [...], en ayant échappé quatre hommes seulement, avec tant de péril et de hasard, que c'est un miracle des les avoir vus venir à port de salut [...]; et certes si je n'avais vu les sauvés, et ceux qui les amenèrent, je mettrais en doute l'histoire; mais je n'en puis douter pour en avoir ouï la vérité et des uns et des autres. (83-84)

Here it seems that the conventional Reformist rejection of the possibility of miracles is overturned by the affective force of the narrative; having witnessed the arrival of the survivors with his own eyes, Bruneau himself appears to be swept along with the story. The deliberately hair-raising and toe-curling nature of Bruneau's narrative reaches its height in the tales of the four survivors, one of whom describes being dragged under the waves by 'une infinité [...] de noyants', as he struggled to swim and keep afloat:

[C]e pauvre homme en tremble encore quand il lui en souvient; lui ayant ouï jurer que vous eussiez dit qu'il y avait cent chaudières sur le feu qui bouillaient pour les ondes que faisaient ce pauvre peuple. Lui n'espérant point autre issue de ce mal que le moyen qu'en prenaient les autres, ne savait (comme l'on dit) à quel saint se vouer si ce n'était le Tout-Puissant qu'il implora à ce besoin; lequel l'ayant ouï, le dêmêle de telle façon de cette multitude effroyable, qu'il le ramène sur l'eau, vivant, où il ne s'épargna de continuer son exercice manuel et corporel, avec lequel il demeura sur l'eau deux heures et plus, premier que d'être sauvé. (84)

In a remarkable echo of the shipwreck scenes of Erasmus, Rabelais, and Léry, the *naufragé* is saved by a combination of works and faith, which in its true form is defined in opposition to superstitious saint-worship; God hears his prayer directly and, in collaboration with the man's 'exercice manuel et corporel', saves the true believer. Meanwhile, perdition is figured by the hellish 'boiling' of the seas as the drowned sink into the abyss.

Bruneau's focus turns once more to the response of the local community to these traumatic events, and again the affective power of the spectacle is described in forceful, bodily terms:

Par ainsi soixante-six personnes péries, englouties au fond de la mer, par le moyen de ce naufrage qui apporta par quelque espace de temps une merveilleuse frayeur aux habitants de l'île, à mesure qu'il leur convenait monter sur mer. Mais comme ils sont comparés aux femmes en leurs enfantements promettent et jurent ne retomber jamais en pareils maux, leur épouvante ne dura que trois jours, et puis après passèrent aussi librement et avec aussi peu de souci des coups de vent ne de mer qu'auparavant. (85-86)

This 'merveilleuse frayeur' (the double of the 'multitude effroyable' in the water itself), though it fades with time among shore-dwelling folk who must accustom themselves to such spectacles, nonetheless underlines the peculiarly affective power of the spectacle; one that Bruneau hopes will be reproduced in the imagination of the reader.

This spectacular aspect is what makes marvels effective as signs from God, as Bruneau's comment on his seventh tale attests: 'Vraiment cette histoire n'est point dépourvue des merveilles que notre Dieu a accoutumé de faire paraître parmi son peuple' (90). The visual phenomenon of the shipwreck is staged more explicitly still at the end of this narration, as Bruneau describes his own vivid memory of two ships thrown by the force of the waves onto rocks, tantalisingly close to the safety of the port, yet 'hors de la puissance de tous ceux qui étaient à terre de les pouvoir secourir, quoique nous n'en fussions pas à vingt pas' (91). This spectacle, rather than conforming to the Lucretian paradigm, provokes those on shore into action, an effect made all the more immediate by a shift of tense into the historic present: 'Toutefois quelques mariniers désespérés se jettent dans une chaloupe, et malgré le vent et la mer, font tant qu'ils parviennent jusques auxdits navires, et avec un merveilleux hasard sauvèrent tous les mariniers sans qu'il s'en perdît un seul' (91). In this most extraordinary scene, even among Bruneau's array of extraordinary scenes ('je ne pense jamais avoir vu un jour de ma vie les vagues si

impétueuses à ladite côte' (91)), the community's response, and not only the shipwreck itself, proves worthy of marvel.

IV.4 Conclusion

My reading of Léry's and Bruneau's texts here shows that, the best part of a century after the publication of Erasmus's *Naufragium*, shipwreck tales remain fundamentally moralised narratives. The suspicion of those travelling by ship articulated in Erasmus's text, but countered by Rabelais's account of an ideal community of seafarers motivated by their 'studieux desir de veoir, apprendre, congnoistre', is revisited by Léry, whose dichotomy of 'matelots papistes' and Huguenot would-be colonisers becomes complicated both by the dynamics of co-operation in the face of catastrophe, and by the status of those experts in whose hands the lives of those on board rest. For neither writer is setting sail in itself an act of 'folie', contrary to the suspicions of Léry's *vieillard*, but—as we see in Bruneau's text in particular—those on board can put others at risk by exhibiting 'folie', 'témérité', and above all 'opiniâtreté'.

What emerges through the texts explored in this chapter is the opportunity to revisit the shipwreck scene; to understand (as Rabelais first suggested) that the end of the story is not a foregone conclusion. If, in Chapter Two, we saw that the telling of shipwreck narratives could make the listener 'shudder as if [he himself] were sharing the danger', the travellers' tales of Chapter Four have offered still richer and more explicit accounts of the effects of shipwreck on the bodies of those involved—and, conversely, of how bodies are laid on the line in the battle against the elements, sometimes having a tangible impact on the outcomes of the narrative. In Léry, this bodily aspect is encapsulated in the opposition between, on the one hand, the 'Rabelistes', who 'se mocquent ordinairement sur terre les

pieds sous la table, des naufrages et perils où se trouvent si souvent ceux qui vont sur mer’, and, on the other, the *charpentier*, who saves the ship from sinking, ‘ayant mis son caban à la matelote sur le grand pertuis qui s’y estoit fait, se tenant à deux pieds dessus pour resister à l’eau’ (521).

In Bruneau’s tales we find an even stronger sense of bodies and lives transformed by seafaring experience. Léry’s experiences of famine, and as a witness of cannibalism, first facilitated by the sea journey, however fantastical, are comparable to what he later experienced in Sancerre. For Bruneau, as his preface makes clear, these experiences are in a class of their own. The forms of witness presented differ, and although both texts are Protestant *Histoires*, Bruneau’s collective, compilatory methodology might seem to embody precisely the ‘cosmographic’ approach denounced by Léry in the works of Thevet. But, as we have seen, Bruneau takes a particular care in vouching personally for his witnesses, combining his privileging of eyewitness testimonial with a strong communitarian principle and focalisation of the position of the spectator (or audience). In this way, he creates a synthetic ethics of experience that binds witness, author-interpreter and reader together, whilst insisting on the ‘particularités merveilleuses’ of lives at sea. The descriptions of pains endured, bodies transformed, labour and exhaustion, food consumed or lacking, are mirrored by an increasingly detailed account of the community on the shore, who are so frequently witnesses to such suffering, and whose empathetic responses are most powerfully couched in corporeal terms. Unlike Lucretius’s spectator, Bruneau’s on-shore audience never fail to be moved by the spectacle before them, and where they can, put themselves at risk in attempting to help those in danger.

While, as we have seen, the effort of rebuilding from shipwreck serves as an educational and transformative experience for those directly involved in the work, it may also figure the productive affective and didactic impact on the audience, and readership, of

the shipwreck spectacle. The fifth story of Bruneau's *Histoire* recounts a devastating explosion on board a ship, 'dont il en mourut bien quatre-vingts, et trente qui en échappèrent, si brûlés et défigurés qu'en la plupart vous ne reconnaissez aucune forme humaine' (78), that leaves behind the 'pitoyable' sight of the drowned floating on the surface of the sea. This horrific image reminds Bruneau of his own extraordinary first-hand experience; he justifies weaving in his own story about a wounded whale by claiming its value as a rarity: 'peut-être ceux qui pourront lire ce discours n'ont point ouï parler au vrai de ce monstre marin, pour n'être avoisinés des côtes de la mer' (78). According to Guéguen, Bruneau's description of the whale 'se démarque tout à fait du portrait que l'Antiquité faisait de la baleine'; we will find '[n]ulle exagération dans les proportions de l'animal, nulle considération qui ne soit de l'ordre de l'observation faite sur le terrain' (15). Yet Bruneau's narrative, delivered though it is as an account of personal experience, is in fact—like the *Histoire* itself—a form of compilation, as it recalls both ancient and more recent versions of this naval *topos*.

Bruneau's description of the whale, Guéguen notes, recalls that of Pliny in the *Natural History*, the *Physetere* episode in Rabelais, Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle*, and Jean de Léry's own description in the *Histoire d'un voyage*. The vantage-point from which Bruneau first witnesses the scene is a Lucretian position of relative security; his house is situated 'du côté de la mer sauvage, ainsi appelée à cause que [...], à raison des bancs de roches et écueils qui y sont, il y a toujours très grande émotion, et le plus souvent y voit-on périr et navire et marchandise' (79). Bruneau re-stages Lucretius's scene almost exactly, though, significantly, with no demonstration of *ataraxia* ('j'étais à la fenêtre de ma maison regardant directement sur la mer avec un mien neveu, dont il fut au commencement étonné, cuidant que ce fût quelque corps de navire renversé qui se fût perdu à la mer' (79)). In a further rejection of Epicurean distance, and much like Pliny

upon hearing of the eruption of Vesuvius, Bruneau deploys a boat to investigate at closer quarters ('quelque mauvais temps qu'il fît'), whereupon it is discovered—as he suspected—that the strange 'corps' is in fact that of a whale.

While Bruneau's thirst for learning here seems to recall that of Pantagruel, for whom the insight gained on the 'isle des Macraëons' was worth the ordeal of the storm, the initial misreading of the whale as a 'navire renversé' recalls another Rabelaisian scene of strong allegorical reading. As Timothy Hampton has shown, in the Physetere episode of *Quart Livre* 33-34, Panurge 'allegorizes and makes the natural object into a sign of something greater than itself'.⁵⁶ One of the possible readings afforded by the body of the beast is that of another ship, as Pantagruel's deadly aim places a row of fifty arrows along each flank: 'De maniere que le corps du Physetere sembloit à la quille d'un guallion à troys gabies emmortaisée par competente dimension de ses poultries, comme si feussent cosses et pourtehausbanks de la carine'.⁵⁷ In Bruneau's account, the familiar regularity of witnessing shipwreck from the local shoreline, coupled with the Lucretian precedent, seems to predetermine what he (or at least his nephew) sees, or reads, in the whale.⁵⁸ What Bruneau finds when he returns to the scene the next day also resembles accounts in other shipwreck tales of locals gathered on the shore in an effort to help an ailing vessel, or to rescue *naufragés*. But there is no feeling of kinship towards the beast, and the carcass is treated as wreckage from which there are goods to be salvaged:

Le bruit de sa venue manifesté par l'île, émut tellement le peuple à la venir visiter, que vous n'avez jamais vu telle presse de dévotion de quelque saint en Poitou ou à quelque préveil [...] je crois fermement qu'il y avait cinq cents personnes qui travaillaient à l'entour; les uns pour avoir de la chair, les autres le lard, les autres les barbillons, travaillant avec haches, hachereaux et couteaux tant qu'ils pouvaient. (80)

⁵⁶ Hampton, 'Signs of monstrosity', p. 191.

⁵⁷ Rabelais, *OC*, p. 620.

⁵⁸ The misreading of whales is itself something of a nautical *topos*; see Williams, *Monsters and Their Meanings*, p. 33, Fig. 4.

It's a messy, smelly job: 'ceux-mêmes qui travaillèrent à la [= la chair] couper, et qui y avaient touché, furent contraints de jeter les habillements qu'ils avaient sur eux, et prendre d'autres'; but the rewards are easily worth the trouble: 'néanmoins, quelque vieille, morte ou puante qu'elle fût, elle valut au peuple plus de deux cents écus, de l'huile de poisson qu'ils en firent de ce qu'ils en avaient coupé' (80). But as much as Bruneau lingers on the grisly detail, this scene of opportunistic dissection, in demonstrating the productive outcomes of this whale-wreck, re-enacts the textual processes by which the *Histoire véritable* itself functions; firstly, at the level of *inventio*, the narrator dramatises his own plundering of historical and literary sources. Secondly, by highlighting the value of the goods to be extracted from such a shocking spectacle, Bruneau reinforces his own stated aim of demonstrating 'des particularités merveilleuses et épouvantables en ce discours'. Finally, and relatedly, the differentiation of the by-products and the variety of their uses mirrors the aesthetic of particularity that distinguishes this *Histoire* from its predecessors ; like the body of the whale, Bruneau's shipwreck narratives describe and engage both the community and the individual, while highlighting the ethical and practical relationships between them. It is through the affective responses of these communities to the spectacle of shipwreck that Bruneau also anticipates, and directs, the responses of the wider readership to his *Histoire*.

Towards the end of his fourth *récit*, Bruneau recounts an episode that stages his own strategies of *montage*, and points towards the theatrical aspect of shipwreck spectacle that would later become a commonplace of dramatic tragedy. In 1565, when Charles IX was visiting Brouage, a port town a little south of La Rochelle, '[c]eux du pays des îles lui voulaient faire voir de quelle façon un navire marchand étant trouvé à la mer par un navire de guerre ou pirate, est attaqué' (75). The planned spectacle goes awry when gunpowder thrown on board the merchant ship causes an enormous (and spectacular) fire, but the

sailors are able to escape by jumping into the water. In another instance of maritime dark humour, one of them, ‘ayant attendu jusques au dernier, faisant mine de savoir nager, se précipita à la mer; et fit tellement le plongeon, que la plupart pensaient qu’il se fût noyé’ (76). A visiting German, ‘M. le compte de Rhingrave’ is so affected by what he sees that he attempts to save the man by riding his horse out towards him: ‘mais il n’y fut sitôt lancé que lui et son cheval se perdirent de vue sous l’eau; et eut bien besoin que lui qu’il voulait sauver, le sauvât de ce péril éminent’ (76). Despite the fire, or perhaps because of it, the spectacle has the desired effect of staging not only the kinds of experience familiar to seafaring people but also the relative ignorance of those on land. In the reversal of the dynamics of ‘saving’, as the actor rescues the spectator, is prefigured the redemptive value of theatre. Those performing on the ‘stage’ of the ship, provoking the fear and pity of those on the shore, exploit the inherent spectacle of nautical disaster, and so anticipate the affective dynamics of shipwreck tragedy that would emerge at the turn of the seventeenth century, not long after the publication of Bruneau’s *Histoire*.

Conclusion

‘The direful spectacle’: Shipwreck and theatre

The drama of shipwreck

One of the central aims of this thesis has been to show how, over the course of the sixteenth century, the affective power of shipwreck was increasingly associated with the theatrical dynamics of spectatorship. In the latter decades of the century, the trauma of the French civil wars was articulated in both political and poetic discourse through metaphors of shipwreck with spectator and, as Andrea Frisch has shown, through ‘the privileged theatrical mode of the ancients’.¹ It was perhaps thanks to this particularly intense period of introspection in France that, through metaphorical triangulation, the dynamics of spectated shipwreck and those between the stage and its audience became twinned. By way of conclusion, I will now examine the ways in which the theatricality of shipwreck found its fullest expression in the early seventeenth century. As I will argue, these theatrical shipwrecks did indeed reflect back on the all-too-recent catastrophe of the wars of religion, but they also do important work as stagings of other relationships predicated on fellow-feeling, whether among particular confessional, familial, or other groups, or between plays and spectators, authors and readers. As such, the dynamics of shipwreck may be conceived of as political not only in the context of statecraft, but in a broader sense, as they relate to both individuals and communities.

Agrippa d’Aubigné’s epic poem *Les Tragiques* (1616) replays the violence of the previous century’s wars, both in its unflinchingly graphic imagery and, as Lestringant has noted, in its style: ‘[d’Aubigné] violente la syntaxe, emporte les vers, en des suites

¹ Andrea Frisch, ‘French Tragedy and the Civil Wars’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 67 (2006), 287-312 (p. 289).

d'enjambements forcenés, dans une déferlement prosodique, où plus rien ne retient le sens ni la rime, réduit souvent à une pure assonance'.² In the first of the seven books ('Misères'), d'Aubigné allegorises France's civil conflict in bodily terms; as siblings fighting over the body of the mother, who reproaches them: 'Vous avez, félons, ensanglanté | Le sein qui vous nourrit et qui vous a porté' (I.127-128). This corporeal laceration is soon refigured in the form of a ship, which, though threatened by external dangers, is torn apart from the inside:

La France [...] est pareille au vaisseau
 Qui outragé des vents, des rochers et de l'eau,
 Loge deux ennemis: l'un tient avec sa troupe
 La proue, et l'autre a pris sa retraite à la poupe.
 De canons et de feux chacun met en éclats
 La moitié qui s'oppose, et font verser en bas,
 L'un et l'autre enivré des eaux et de l'envie,
 Ensemble le navire et la charge, et la vie:
 En cela le vainqueur ne demeurant plus fort,
 Que de voir son haineux le premier à la mort
 Qu'il seconde, autochire, aussitôt de la sienne,
 Vainqueur, comme l'on peut vaincre à la Cadméeenne. (I.179-190)

The folly of seafaring is displaced in d'Aubigné's poetic account of the ship of state by the self-destructive impulse—encapsulated in the viscerally potent coinage 'autochire'—that characterises the civil conflict. The final line quoted here recalls the myth related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the soldiers that sprouted from the serpent's teeth sown by Cadmus set to fighting among themselves in 'civil strife': 'That prime of youth [...] lay writhing on | Their mother's bloodstained bosom'.³ The hull of the ship, animalised (as I showed in Chapter Four) by Lély's description of water 'aussi rouge que sang de boeuf', becomes body-like once more in d'Aubigné's shipwreck scene—and furthermore takes on a human aspect. The ship-body is both drowned and fragmented in the moment of victory, when the shipwreck allegory returns in 'Les Fers':

² Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, ed. by Lestringant, 2nd edn (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), p. 8. References to the text will be given in the main body of my text, in the form of book and line number.

³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville, Oxford World's Classics Series (Oxford: OUP, 2008), Book III, pp. 51-73, (p. 54).

C'est le vaisseau noyé qui, versé au profond,
 Ne laisse au plus heureux que l'heur d'être second:
 L'un ruine en vainquant sa douteuse victoire,
 L'autre au débris de soi et des siens prend sa gloire. (IV.377-380)

Whereas Bruneau repeatedly focuses on rebuilding from the 'débris' of shipwreck as a means of (re)building community, in *Les Tragiques* there is no such prospect of return from disintegration. For d'Aubigné, the wars of religion, figured through the embattled body politic and the shipwreck of state, belie the Lucretian scene of shipwreck with distant spectator:⁴

Financiers, justiciers, qui opprimez de faim
 Celui qui vous fait naître ou qui défend le pain,
 Sous qui le laboureur s'abreuve de ses larmes,
 Qui souffrez mendier la main qui tient les armes,
 Vous, ventre de la France, enflés de ses langueurs,
 Faisant orgueil de vent vous montrez vos vigneurs;
 Voyez la tragédie, abaissez vos courages,
 Vous n'êtes spectateurs, vous êtes personnages:
 Car encor que vous pourriez contempler de bien loin
 Une nef sans pouvoir lui aider au besoin
 Quand la mer l'engloutit, et pourriez de la rive,
 En tournant vers le ciel la face demi-vive,
 Plaindre sans secourir ce mal oisivement;
 Mais quand, dedans la mer, la mer pareillement
 Vous menace de mort, courez à la tempête,
 Car avec le vaisseau votre ruine est prête. (I.163-178)

Lestringant points to d'Aubigné's use of a 'métaphore voisine' to that of the Lucretian scene of spectating: that of the *theatrum mundi*. This concept was exploited by Pierre Boaistuau in *Le Théâtre du monde* (1558), a compilation and study of commonplaces unified by an overarching theatrical metaphor: 'Plutôt que plongés dans la calamiteuse "mer du monde",' explains Michel Simonin, 'les acteurs du *Théâtre* sont juchés sur une scène. Boaistuau [...] contemple et nous invite à être spectateurs de nous-mêmes (on notera les multiples invitations à *regarder* au fil du texte)'.⁵ While in its moralising and

⁴ See Lestringant, 'La tempête, de près et de loin', pp 115-117; *idem*, 'Lucrèce, la Renaissance et ses naufrages', pp. 9-10.

⁵ Pierre Boaistuau, *Le Théâtre du monde* (1558), ed. Michel Simonin (Geneva: Droz, 1981), p. 21.

didactic tone the *Théâtre* bears relation to Boaistuau's own *Histoires tragiques* and *Histoires prodigieuses*, we might also trace its lineage back to the *Nefs* of Chapter One. As a compilation of exemplary figures, the *Théâtre* recalls the Ark-like function of those early texts, while at the same time realising more fully the 'staging' effect of the *Nefs*. Boaistuau's description in the *Théâtre* of the 'Misères de ceulx qui vont sur la mer', which gathers together many of the proverbial, biblical, and classical seafaring commonplaces rehearsed in the chapters of this thesis, makes of sailors emblematic figures of the broader subject of his 'theatre':

Ilz sont tousjours vagabons et en continuel exil, sans aucun repos, agitez des vens, des pluyes, des gresles et des neiges, en la miséricorde des pirates et des escumeurs de mer, des rochers et tempestes, et en hasard de estre ensepultrez au ventre des poissons.⁶

Of course, in the early seventeenth century, the theatrical relationship between shipwreck and spectator is not only a metaphorical one; it would be impossible to write about the drama of shipwreck without reference to Shakespeare's *Tempest* (first performed in 1611, and first published in 1623). Stephen Greenblatt highlights the shipwreck as a crucial Shakespearean dramatic device:

Again and again in his plays, an unforeseen catastrophe—one of his favourite manifestations of it is a shipwreck—suddenly turns what had seemed like happy progress, prosperity, smooth sailing into disaster, terror, and loss. The loss is obviously and immediately material, but it is also and more crushingly a loss of identity. To wind up on an unknown shore, without one's friends, habitual associates, familiar network—this catastrophe is often epitomized by the deliberate alteration or disappearance of the name and, with it, the alteration or disappearance of social status. Shakespeare's characters repeatedly have to lay claim to a gentility that is no longer immediately apparent, all of its conventional signs having been swept away by wild waves.⁷

While, in the texts examined in this thesis, the 'loss of identity' described by Greenblatt is less strongly articulated through social class, I have shown (most strongly in Chapter Four) how shipwreck is transformative; it may be disfiguring, dehumanising, and animalising, or

⁶ Boaistuau, *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 122.

⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 85.

it may prove to be a test of character that leads ultimately to redemption. In particular, the transformative power of shipwreck on victim and spectator alike is inflicted on the body. In such moments, Renaissance shipwreck narratives recall and replay Lucretius's likening of the helpless newborn infant to a shipwreck victim.

The opening scene of *The Tempest* is densely populated with the conventional tropes of the sixteenth-century storm scene. In 'Pale as Death', which traces the 'fictionalizing influence' of Erasmus's shipwreck dialogue on later storm accounts in travel literature as well as Shakespeare's island play, Stritmatter and Kositsky read Gonzalo as a superstitious figure, likening him to the duplicitous bartering character of the 'Naufragium':

Gonzalo, in the *Tempest*, imitates both the diction and sentiment of Erasmus' dialogue: 'Now *would I give* a thousand furlongs of sea *for an acre* of barren ground: long heath, brown furze, anything. The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death.'⁸

Similarly, Gonzalo's exclamation about the boatswain, '[h]is complexion is perfect gallows', is taken as an example of 'the motif of the shipmaster who turns pale with fear'.⁹ This reading of a 'motif' simply transferred from one text to another is not completely satisfactory, for several reasons. Firstly, Gonzalo places emphasis on the boatswain's criminal appearance, with no explicit mention (except by a kind of punning association) of pallor. In Erasmus, the skipper only appears 'pale as a ghost' when he has lost control of his ship, whereas here the boatswain is in the midst of directing the crew in the fight against the storm, and expresses irritation at the interference of the passengers. Above all, the interpretation of the sailor's expression is inverted; while in the 'Naufragium' Antony concludes that '[h]is pallor portends some great disaster', Gonzalo proclaims that according to the proverbial saying ('He that is born to be hanged shall never be drowned'), the boatswain, and by association the other passengers, will be safe from harm. The signs

⁸ Stritmatter and Kositsky, 'Pale as Death', p. 148.

⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

to be interpreted by those on board—or by the reader or audience—may remain constant (St Elmo’s fire; the sailor’s pale face) but Shakespeare’s playful twist on this nautical commonplace further highlights the arbitrary rules, or superstitions, by which the signs are read. In this regard, we might see Gonzalo as a more direct descendant of Rabelais’s ‘strong reader’ of nautical signs, Frère Jean, or indeed of Erasmus’s knowing narrator, than of the superstitious passengers in the ‘Naufragium’.¹⁰

More than any particular detail in the storm scene, though, *The Tempest* shares with Erasmus’s dialogue a sense of the drama of shipwreck, and the premise that shipwreck, with its spectators, exemplifies the dynamics of narrative desire, and the functions of theatre itself. The two shipwrecks of *The Tempest* have parallel functions. The first, experienced by a helpless Prospero and Miranda long before the opening of the play, throws them, ‘[b]y Providence divine’, upon the shores they now inhabit. The shipwreck—the inevitable conclusion, other than starvation, to the casting adrift of the pair on the ‘rotten carcass of a butt’—removes material comforts (though not, crucially, Prospero’s books) but also the duties and pressures of the Milan court. This wreck is not staged, and so not witnessed by the audience, but is ‘read’ by Prospero in his explanation to Miranda, who links it to the second, dramatised, storm:

PROSPERO

Sit still, and hear the last of our sea-sorrow.
Here in this island we arrived, and here
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
Than other princes can, that have more time
For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful.

MIRANDA

Heavens thank you for’t. And now I pray you sir,
For still ‘tis beating in my mind, your reason
For raising this sea-storm?¹¹

¹⁰ Gonzalo is already known to ventriloquise Montaigne’s ‘Des cannibales’, in his speech on ‘plantation’: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, II.1, 147-169.

¹¹ Ibid., I.2, 170-177.

This second storm and shipwreck, conjured up by Prospero, provokes a reaction in Miranda (‘beating in [her] mind’) that gives the lie to Lucretius’s model of impassive spectatorship: ‘O I have suffered | With those that I saw suffer’.¹² If not pleasure, then passion and pity are provoked by what Prospero calls ‘The direful spectacle of the wrack, which touched | The very virtue of compassion in thee’.¹³ The shipwreck thus serves both moral and aesthetic functions in the play, as it takes on the role that the ‘play within a play’ does elsewhere in Shakespeare’s work. Shipwreck and spectatorship thus come in *The Tempest* to model the ideal compassionate relationship, as we saw too in the scenes of shoreline distress in Bruneau’s *Histoire véritable*. In fact, the dynamics of compassion in response to shipwreck had been explored more fully still in French dramaturgy, just a few years earlier.

Les Portugais infortunés

In 1552, the Portuguese colonist Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda and his wife and children, along with a crew and prisoners numbering almost six hundred, were shipwrecked off the (then uncharted) east coast of Africa. The party were returning home from a Portuguese colony in India, their ship, the *São João*, overloaded with a cargo of precious merchandise including highly prized pepper. Going against contemporary maritime wisdom, the ship—whose progress had been held up by its excessive weight and the inexperience of its captain—attempted to pass the Cape of Good Hope in the storm season. When caught in a tempest, the crew attempted to turn back and head for safer waters, but were eventually forced to abandon ship as it disintegrated just off the coast. Around a hundred were killed

¹² Shakespeare, *Tempest*, I.2, 5-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I.2, 26-27.

immediately, but those who survived this first catastrophe would be faced with injury, starvation, and exposure, as well as the hostile response of the local king.

The story of Sousa's misadventures circulated throughout Europe, figuring in Luis Vaz de Camões's *Os Lusíadas* (1572), before the Italian Jesuit Giovanni Maffei included it in his *Historiarum Indicarum libri XVI*, published in Florence in 1588.¹⁴ The narrative was printed in Lyon as part of the vernacular translation of Maffei's text, François Arnault de La Borie's *Histoire des Indes* (1603), and in Cologne and Geneva in Simon Goulart's *Thrésor d'histoires admirables et memorables de nostre temps* (1608). These diverse prose accounts, which form part of the afterlife of the *Histoires tragiques* discussed above in Chapter Four, offer moralising glosses on the disaster, blaming the outcome variously on the greed, complacency, folly or inexperience of the travellers. But, as La Borie's rendering of Maffei's narrative concludes, the extraordinary and horrific experiences of Sousa and his companions seemed to have little lasting impact: 'ceste calamité si grande de Sosa fort publiée en beaucoup de lieux excita bien quelque misericorde des hommes: mais ne diminua pas leur convoitise et audace'.¹⁵

In 1608, the poet and dramatist Nicolas Chrestien des Croix published *Les Portugais infortunés*, a tragedy in which the author claims to present 'sous le déplorable état de ces pauvres Chrétiens, les Inconstances des grandeurs mondaines'.¹⁶ Chrestien cites several source texts in his prefatory 'Sujet de la tragedie', but singles out Maffei's account

¹⁴ On the Portuguese account of Sousa's shipwreck in the *História Trágico-Marítima*, and its Portuguese literary afterlife see Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition*, pp. 64-76 and p. 123, n.1.

¹⁵ *Histoire des Indes, de Jean Pierre Maffee Bergamesque, de la Societé de Jesus, où il est traité de leur decouverte, navigation, et conquête faicte tant par les Portugais que Castellans: ensemble de leurs mœurs, ceremonies, loix, gouvernemens, et reduction à la Foy Catholique* [2nd edn] (Lyon: Jean Pilehotte, 1604), p. 916.

¹⁶ Nicolas Chrestien des Croix, *Les Portugais infortunés* (1608), in *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France (XVI^e-XVII^e siècle)*, ed. by Christian Biet (Paris: Laffont, 2006), pp. 703-824 (Dedication, p. 711). See also Bideaux, 'Les Portugais infortunés: Nicolas Chrestien des Croix et la mémoire de l'âge des découvertes', in Maria Alzira Seixo, ed., *Travel Writing and Cultural Memory*, Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association 'Literature as Cultural Memory', Leiden 16-22 August 1997, 'Textxet: Studies in Comparative Literature', 33 (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 221-236.

for particular praise, written as it is ‘en termes latins si choisis, et élégants, qu’on ne les peut lire sans épandre des larmes de pitié, y voyant les révolutions, et misères de la vie humaine, et les traits d’une puissante prospérité paraître en un tableau vivement rehaussé de ses couleurs’.¹⁷ Though it is not known whether the play was performed in Chrestien’s lifetime, the ‘tableau’ brought to dramatic life in the *Portugais infortunés* represents in many ways the culmination of the moralised, but also increasingly corporeal and dramatic depictions of shipwreck that have been the subject of this thesis. As we will see, the tragedy itself posits shipwreck as a privileged dramatic subject, exploring through it the affective impact of theatre that would later become a centre of debate in seventeenth-century dramatic theory.

Chrestien foregrounds the moral stakes of seafaring, and of his tragedy, by prefacing the play with an allegorical debate between the angel Raphaël (representing European interests) and the Génie (‘ou Démon du cap de Bonne-Espérance’), who defends his territory by summoning, Prospero-like, sea-storms and shipwrecks. The Portuguese—who, as the only nation capable of passing the cape, epitomise European ambition and navigational prowess—are not condemned on the basis of seafaring itself, as the Génie does not resent equitable trade: ‘Mais je me déplaïs fort de la subjection | Où réduire me veut si grande ambition’ (51-52). The moral anxiety surrounding the folly of navigation has, by the early seventeenth century, and thanks in no small part to the likes of Léry, Montaigne and Bruneau, become explicitly focalised on the ethical implications of colonialism, and on encounters with the Other.¹⁸

This shift in perspective does not, though, entail a complete abandonment of established poetic and narrative shipwreck conventions; the Génie boasts that his storms and rocky shores ‘[d]e crainte font pâlir les superbes nochers’ (68). The archaic term for

¹⁷ Chrestien des Croix, *Les Portugais infortunés*, p. 713. Further references to the play will be given in the main text, as line numbers.

¹⁸ See Biet’s ‘Notice’ to *ibid.*, especially pp. 705-108.

the ship, ‘nef’, which was generally superseded in the sixteenth century by ‘navire’, is preserved in Chrestien’s poetry, as in Ronsard’s, despite its real-world referent. In a further echo of Ronsard’s symbolic ships, the Génie alludes to the vessel as an emblem of ‘renom’, explaining his motivation for destroying another Portuguese navigator, Bartolomeu Dias: ‘[Il] voulait que son nom sur le mien eût victoire, | Mais en le submergeant, j’ai submergé sa gloire’ (79).¹⁹ Dias’s ‘gloire’, unlike that of Ronsard, is insufficient to keep him afloat. The sins of ambition and avarice remain closely linked with seafaring, as the Génie echoes Léry’s *vieillard*: ‘Que vont-ils recherchant? leur pays n’est-il pas | Riche d’assez de fruits pour leur donner repas?’ (99-100). European travellers, rather than the Africans they encounter, are characterised as ‘barbares’, not least because of this unnatural tendency to ‘forcer la nature et de rames et de voiles’ (121). The *curiositas* of European explorers is condemned as a ‘folle ambition’ (135), a desire to discover the secrets of God’s creation (123-128), and to pass the natural boundary described by the pillars of Hercules (150). If the Génie’s chief concern is with defending Africa against European ‘subjection’, it is nonetheless articulated through longstanding moral concerns grounded in European culture. But by ventriloquising these anxieties (as in Léry’s *Histoire*) through an archetypal non-European figure, Chrestien accommodates the new moral challenges to seafaring and exploration posed by the discovery and exploitation of the New World(s). Significantly, the coast on which Sousa and his compatriots find themselves washed up is part of the *terra incognita* of the east coast of Africa. The compassion of locals on the shoreline, central to shipwreck narratives from Erasmus and Rabelais to Bruneau, is no longer guaranteed.

¹⁹ The Génie’s words here rework those of Adamastor in Camões’s *Lusiadas*, Canto V, 44: ‘Here, in my reckoning, I’ll take sweet revenge | On Dias who betrayed me to the world, | Nor is he the only Portuguese | Who will pay for your foolish persistence; | If what I imagine comes to pass, | Year by year your fleets will meet | Shipwreck, with calamities so combines | That death alone will bring you peace of mind.’ (Luís Vaz de Camões, *The Lusiads*, trans. by Landeg White, Oxford World’s Classics Series (Oxford: OUP, 1997; repr. 2008), p. 106).

In response to the opening tirade of the Génie, Raphaël makes an impassioned defence of seafaring, praising in particular the ‘invaincu courage’ of the French (189), who have braved the ‘orgueilleux rage’ of Neptune (190). According to this reading of seafaring, the tables are turned, and moral castigation is transferred to the sea itself; Raphaël paints a picture of virtuous seafaring, entreating the Génie to guarantee ‘libre passage’ (217) for missionaries. While the Génie intends to make an example of ‘Sose, ce pauvre fol’ (209) for his lack of reverence, Raphaël claims that Sousa’s death will bring him ‘une parfaite gloire’ (262), and passage into heaven. Though the Génie wins the battle, and unleashes the storm (‘Écoute, écoute ce grommeleux tonnere’ (317)), Raphaël claims victory in the war, the cape being henceforth passable to those seeking to ‘prêcher en chacun lieu | De ce rond univers l’Évangile de Dieu’ (325-326). This opening struggle between Raphaël and the Génie (who, as the ‘superbe ennemi de la race chrétienne’ (257) is assimilated to Lucifer) thus frames Sousa’s shipwreck as a Christ-like sacrifice, a reparation for the sins of seafaring that will exonerate those who come after him.

This sense of atonement is carried over into the opening scene of the first act, in which the pilot of the shipwrecked *São João*, André Vasco, seems to echo the sentiments of Panurge in the *Quart Livre* storm scene: ‘Que l’homme est bienheureux qui content de sa terre, | Ne va chercher errant ou la mort ou la guerre’ (337). Here, the architectural parallels between ship and house only serve to underscore the opposition between land and sea: ‘Sa champêtre maison est son vrai brigantin’ (355). The very language of seafaring is tainted by its moral status:

Il n’a jamais appris les mots du navigage,
 Ramer, cingler, gauchir, mât, voiles et cordage,
 Il ne va chacun jour nouveaux noms apprenant
 Des vents de l’Est, du Sud, de l’Ouest, du Ponant.
 Il ignore ce que c’est de la marine aiguille,
 De boussole, d’aimant, de pompes, et de quille. (349-354)

Whereas Rabelais delighted in playing with a bewildering array of nautical terms and their regional variants, Vasco appears at first to argue that, when it comes to sailing, ignorance is bliss. But, after some thirty lines in this vein, Vasco changes tack: “‘Mais une âme hardie altièrément dédaigne | ‘Ce que d’oisiveté lâchement s’accompagne’ (369-370). According to the convention observed by Moss and alluded to above in Chapter Three, quotation marks are used throughout the tragedy to denote *sententia* and proverbial or particularly aphoristic phrases, and here Vasco’s lines are remarkable for their inversion of the Lucretian scene of spectatorship. It is those on board the ship, and not the spectator on land, who display admirable impassivity:

Semblable à ces rochers que les filles des ondes
Battent incessamment sur leurs rives profondes
[...]
Ils demeurent constants, immobiles et forts,
Contre la mer, les vents et leurs rudes efforts. (377-384)

Guided by ‘vertu’ and ‘valeur’ (390), the quasi-Stoic sailor gains heroic stature. The first act, which establishes the background of the narrative and stages the first encounter between the Portuguese and the local community, ends with an encomium of navigation by the ‘Chœur de matelots’ (617-664). As though in reply to the Génie’s condemnation of overambitious seafarers in the prologue, the chorus declares of the ‘connaissance’ of sailors: ‘C’est avoir un esprit bien plus divin qu’humain’ (634). The example of Noah is taken as a validation of the arts of shipbuilding and navigation, but the praise moves from the general to the particular when Vasco is singled out as an extraordinary ‘patron’ (647-652), notable even for the great seafaring nation of Portugal. The particularity of this episode is also marked out by the chorus’ declaration that none of the usual portents of a storm were seen (653-655); Chrestien here declines to subscribe fully to the Erasmian model of shipwreck augured by St Elmo’s fire. But in the second act, a more typical poetic storm scene is recounted; Vasco allegorises the fortunes of the shipwreck survivors

through the journey of a ‘nef’ tossed on stormy seas, a pale-faced and trembling sailor, and ‘Un Saint-Elme’ (877)—this time presaging the calming of the sea. This allegorical ‘shipwreck within a shipwreck’ narrative is a self-conscious evocation of the tradition of moralising shipwreck writing of which Chrestien’s tragedy forms the latest instalment. But the grim physical reality of the survivors’ situation is never far from view, as the shipwreck is shown to take a transformational toll on the bodies of the Portuguese characters.

As Biet remarks of *Les Portugais infortunés*, ‘ce théâtre de la cruauté est aussi celui de la corporalité’.²⁰ The survivors of the shipwreck are subjected to a series of physical trials; after days of starvation, they are disarmed and stripped naked by order of the local king, Mocondez. Sousa’s wife Éléonor resists this humiliation until the last, preferring to be killed outright by her captors, as Chrestien describes in his prefatory remarks: ‘Éléonor femme honorable [...], voyant les barbares dépouiller son mari, ses enfants, et elle, oubliant sa sexe, et sa dignité, les provoque à coups de poing, et de soufflets, les irritant par tous moyens pour la tuer’ (712). Just as, in Bruneau’s *Histoire véritable*, male shipwreck survivors become ‘effeminés’ in their panic, their masculinity only being restored by co-operative reconstruction, Éléonor is here masculinised by her shipwreck experience. Finally, ashamed of her nudity, she buries herself up to the waist in the sand, covering the rest of her body, Godiva-like, with her long hair. In this desperate, mortified concealment, as in the repeated descriptions of the African land as ‘sterile’, the ‘new’ world discovered by Sousa and his compatriots is cast as a kind of horrific, inverted garden of Eden.

The drama of the shipwreck and its after-effects is also marked by repeated structural parallels between the ship and the body; in the Génie’s opening tirade, ships

²⁰ Biet, *Récits sanglants*, p. 708.

coming to plunder the shorelines of Africa are described as ‘ventres creux’ (129). As the shipwreck survivors find their feet on the shoreline, they contemplate a conversion of the ship and its cargo into food:

Tâchons à découvrir quelque ville, ou village,
Pour en vivre échanger le reste du naufrage,
Nos pierres, nos bijoux et les clous arrachés
Des tables du navire en cent parts recherchés.
Ici les Cafres noirs nous donneront peut-être
En échange la chair dont ils se doivent paître. (469-474)

This planned trade, transforming inedible goods into flesh, recalls the animalised shipwreck of Léry’s narrative (and his later experience of boiling up leather goods to eat), and, conversely, the moments in Rabelais and Bruneau when the bodies of whales, picked over for meat and blubber, are likened to the hulls of ships. But this dynamic of exchange is reversed in Éléonor’s perceptive remark to Sousa: ‘Si vous vous désarmez, hélas! j’ai belle peur | Que soyons le butin de ce peuple trompeur’ (1450-1451). As ships and their cargo come to resemble or stand in for flesh in the desperation of shipwreck, so the bodies of survivors risk becoming only so much matter to be traded.

But the body is notably the site in which affective response is imagined and figured in *Les Portugais infortunés*: ‘Une profonde détresse serre de douleur le cœur et la bouche de Souse,’ writes Chrestien in the ‘Sujet de la tragédie’, ‘si bien qu’il est comme frappé d’un éclat de foudre, ou comme une statue’ (713). The dynamics of spectatorship are foregrounded from the very opening of the play, as the Génie relishes the prospect of the spectacle of shipwreck: ‘J’aurais plaisir de voir ces rivages affreux | Faire perdre cent naufs dedans leurs gouffres creux’ (231-232). In particular, spectatorship is conceived of as the dynamic that will save the Portuguese. Sousa and his men plan to evoke compassion in Mocondez by recounting their ‘piteux naufrage’:

[...] s’il n’est né d’un rocher
Ou que d’une ourse fière il n’ait tiré sa chair,
Notre nécessité lui sera si sensible

Que de nous repousser ne lui sera possible.
Peut-être Dieu fera qu'ayant de nous pitié
Il nous témoignera quelques traits d'amitié[.] (853-858)

Mocondez's anticipated compassion is inscribed on his flesh; unlike the impassive, heroic sailors, whose resilience was praised in Vasco's speech, Mocondez will be un-rock-like, and 'sensible'. The theme of piercing evoked by 'traits' finds its fullest expression in Éléonor's response to her children's desperate pleas for food:

Ha! Mes petits mignons, vous me percez le cœur,
Pour vous voir tendres d'ans supporter ce malheur!
Mes fils! Mes nourrissons! Ma plus soigneuse cure!
Rien ne m'afflige tant que votre peine dure. (1386-1389)

This kind of declaration is echoed over the course of the play, as Vasco, Sousa and Éléonor repeatedly privilege one another's suffering, and that of the children, as more painful than their own (415, 725-736, 917). In particular, it is their powerlessness to help that heightens this piercing pain: 'Ce deuil me point si fort qu'immobile je suis | Alors que je les vois tant accablés d'ennuis' (997-998).

The Portuguese group's retelling of their suffering, like the descriptions of their affective responses to one another's misery, repeatedly figures and anticipates the compassionate response of the audience of *Les Portugais infortunés*. The pleasure for a French audience as spectators of Portuguese misfortune is also prefigured in Vasco's hope that, when Éléonor has an audience with Mocondez's wife Mélinde: 'Ce lui sera plaisir une étrangère voir | Réduite pauvrement sous son alme pouvoir' (1146-1147). Twice in three lines Vasco begs the king to have compassion (1139-1141), and the Pontife advises Mocondez: 'Il conviendrait avoir pitié de leur misère' (1189). The power of restaging the shipwreck and its aftermath is described by Éléonor:

S'ils entendent au long nos langueurs raconter
 À la compassion les pourrons exciter.
 "L'âme la plus cruelle est de douleur atteinte
 "Quand d'une autre elle entend la piteuse complainte. (1366-1369)

At first, it is Éléonor who is called upon to tell the tale to Mélinde, who, it is assumed, will be more compassionate than her husband. The relationship between the women is initiated through Mélinde's fascination with Éléonor's body; Mélinde, having heard that '[l]es femmes blanches ont petites les mamelles', asks to see Éléonor's breasts, to see for herself (1605-1617). With an explanation of her own culture's attitude to nudity, Éléonor refuses, but when she begins her account of the shipwreck it seems that this moment of bodily comparison colours her choice of analogy: 'La mer semblait bonace à notre partement, | Mais elle enfle, ô malheur! Son sein en un moment' (1638-1639). Éléonor's pain at retelling the shipwreck is overwhelming, and another of the Portuguese party, Pantaléon, takes up the narrative thread, promising Mélinde: 'Puisqu'il vous plaît entendre, ô Reine sans pareille, | Le récit de nos maux, ce vous sera merveille' (1648-1649). The (re)performance of the shipwreck, like Bruneau's *Histoire*, promises marvels, but the true value of shipwreck lies in preparing the audience for the trials of life: 'Il faut tous se résoudre à supporter constants | Les volontés d'en haut et l'injure des temps' 741-742. In this way, shipwreck forms the ideal model of tragedy, with the aristocratic family at the heart of *Les Portugais infortunés* fulfilling the conventional (Aristotelian) role of royalty:

L'inconstance du sort à toute heure est sur l'eau.
 Ainsi consolons-nous en ce que la fortune
 Est autant aux grands rois qu'aux petits importune,
 Sose et sa femme en sont un exemple nouveau. (661-664)

Though the pleasure of the spectacle is repeatedly foregrounded, the tragedy anticipates a didactic, rather than a cathartic outcome. If the 'tragedy' performed by the Portuguese for the pleasure and compassion of their captors fails in its purpose, Pantaléon's closing couplet points to a more hopeful moral: 'Pour le moins que chacun

l'un l'autre se soulage, | Dieu nous renforcera s'il lui plaît le courage' (2740-2741). The much-repeated lexis of pity and compassion threaded through the play—and even alluded to in its title—enjoins readers and spectators to relate to the unfortunate victims of shipwreck, and, ultimately, to one another. Katherine Ibbett has shown that, while seventeenth-century French theatre 'is, famously, premised on the necessity of distance', not least through a desire to expunge the memory of recent, civil, tragedies, '[t]he language of theatrical compassion troubles the notion of a distanced theatre, redrawing the line between self and other, proximity and distance'.²¹ As *Les Portugais infortunés* shows, though the distinction identified by Ibbett in neo-classical French dramatic theory between pity and compassion was yet to crystallise in Chrestien's tragedy, the affective power of spectating a shipwreck—even be it that of a rival nation—undermined the notional, quasi-Lucretian, ideal of spectatorial distance.

* * *

²¹ Katherine Ibbett, 'Pity, Compassion, Commiseration: Theories of Theatrical Relatedness', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, 30.2 (2008), 196-208 (pp. 198-199).

As I recalled in my Introduction, at the outset of this project I imagined that this research project would, broadly speaking, be concerned with the impact of material history (shipbuilding and seafaring, and textual accounts of them) on cultural and literary history. In fact, what emerged over the course of researching and writing about ships, and then shipwrecks, in Renaissance France was a far more complex picture. While seafaring technology underwent extensive change and transatlantic travel proliferated, the dominant metaphorical and allegorical structures for thinking and writing about shipwreck persisted and were slow to change. Although, as I showed in Chapter One, news of contemporary exploration of the New World figured in very early texts concerning the ship of fools, the suspicions of overweening curiosity and avarice associated with seafaring persisted throughout the century, shaping the broader significance of the shipwrecks examined in this thesis, and informing too the defences of seafaring articulated in texts from the *Quart Livre* to *Les Portugais infortunés*. Similarly, classical and biblical commonplaces and proverbial expressions associated with seafaring survived and flourished, whether in mock-epic, poetic or eye-witness accounts of shipwreck. Where what might tentatively be called the ‘influence’ or ‘afterlife’ of historical shipwrecks may be traced, the channels and means of transmission were complex and slow-moving. The literary reception and retelling of the shipwreck of Sousa and his compatriots provides a rich example of these processes; the journey traced above, from the shipwreck itself to Chrestien des Croix’s tragedy, took place over some fifty years, and traversed linguistic, generic and confessional boundaries. Nonetheless, what I have termed the dynamics of shipwreck did change in several significant ways over the course of the period examined.

The dramatic potential of shipwreck was inherent to the early texts examined in Chapter One. Sebastian Brant’s *Narren Schyff*, itself inspired in part by a sermon, was emulated by French *Nefs* that made use of the pleasures of poetic performance in their

‘chants’ and ‘exhortations’. In the last of these, La Chesnaye’s *Nef de sante*, the similarity between the ‘ship of fools’ and morality play was fleshed out in the drama of the ‘Condamnation des Bancquetz’, where the listing and discussion of earlier texts were combined and ‘mis en action ou en scène’. The transition from list, or compilation, to drama was also marked by a growing focus on the bodily aspect of shipwreck; Champier and La Chesnaye offered advice pertinent to prolonging the corporeal journey of life, rather than steering the spiritual ship safely to the ‘port de salut’. In La Chesnaye’s preface was also apparent an underlying concern for the ‘métaphores voisines’ of body politic and ship of state, an anxiety that would emerge all the more strongly in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

The effects of shipwreck—whether experienced or witnessed through narration—on bodies became a more central consideration in chapters Two and Four. The theological allegory was not displaced, as in La Chesnaye’s *Nef*, by bodily concerns, but was instead accompanied and reinforced by a greater focus on the grisly and disfiguring impact of shipwreck. As the figures on board the ship suffered physical torment, and the ship itself took on animal or even human corporeal qualities, so the affective response of readers, witnesses and spectators was staged within the narratives. Whereas the *Nefs* of the turn of the century urged their readers to act, to mend their ways, and save themselves, later shipwreck narratives privileged emotive and affective *reaction* to the marvellous and pitiful events they recounted. Though the accounts and predictions of political shipwreck explored in Chapter Three often urged readers to take particular courses of (evasive) action, their persuasive power was grounded in a refutation of the Lucretian model of impassive spectatorial distance.

This thesis has been concerned for the most part with the shipwreck as a form of narrative, rather than as an emblem, image, or motif. As I have shown, the place of

shipwreck within the broader narrative scope of the texts examined changed over the course of the century. Whereas, in the *Nefs* discussed in Chapter One, shipwreck served as the potential end-point to life's journey, later texts examined the shipwreck as an episode that could itself form the basis of a narrative. At the latter end of my corpus, in Bruneau's *Histoire véritable* and then in *Les Portugais infortunés* as in *The Tempest*, shipwreck moves to the beginning of the narrative; shipwreck is no longer simply the just punishment for overweening curiosity, but an allegory of the trials of life, or *miseria hominis*. Whereas in the ship of fools tradition shipwreck is the inevitable outcome of the sinful life, and in Rabelais's *Quart Livre* storm scene the reason for the sparing of the Thalamège forms the crux of debate, in later texts the response of men (and women) to the predicament of shipwreck comes to form a moment of *peripeteia*. Bruneau's second *récit* tells of a community of men who rebuild their ship—and themselves—several times over, while in Chrestien's tragedy the failed attempt of the Portuguese shipwreck survivors to provoke the compassion of their captors results in their eventual deaths.

The dynamic of rebuilding, or *bricolage*, is particularly pertinent to Renaissance shipwreck narrative, as I suggested in my Introduction. In the latter texts of my corpus, it forms part of the narrative itself, as in Léry's and Bruneau's *Histoires*. But through all of the texts examined in this thesis, I have traced a common thread of textual *bricolage*; whether in the 'strong readings' of the central shipwreck metaphor in the *Nefs* of Chapter One, or in the reappropriation and reorientation of commonplaces and nautical conventions seen in later chapters, I have demonstrated that the significance of shipwreck is constantly debated and contested. Furthermore, the possibility of rebuilding, and the suggestion that shipwreck is not always the end of the narrative—anticipated by Montaigne's wet-clothed survivor figure—also affords a new way of thinking about shipwreck, one in which it offers redemption, either to its victims, or to the witnesses and spectators of their stories.

This last point brings me to the final thread of my Conclusion. While, in the earliest of my shipwreck texts, the relationship between author and reader was conducted through a morally prescriptive text, whose allegorical interpretation was firmly policed, later shipwreck narratives—while arguably equally didactic—focussed ever more strongly on the interpretative process itself. Affective responses, rather than behaviour, became the target of shipwreck narrative and poetry, as the relationships of co-operation among communities on board, and between seafarers and shore-dwellers, came to replace the individualised focus of the *Nefs*. In the shift that removed shipwreck from its terminal role, and made it the subject of narrative itself, both author and reader were removed, effectively, from any stable spectatorial vantage-point. As shipwreck becomes the figure of *miseria hominis*—in today’s language, the human condition—the question of boarding the ship becomes obsolete.²² The progressive theatricalisation of shipwreck, as shown in this thesis, affords readers and spectators a fleeting moment of reflection on their own, inescapable, reality. While the kind of precise moral instruction offered by the authors of the *Nefs* is notably lacking in Bruneau’s *Histoire* or Chrestien’s *Portugais infortunés*, the promises by both of ‘merveilles’, along with their vivid staging of compassionate responses, point to the possibility of restoration, progress, and a life beyond shipwreck.

(c.77, 000 words)

²² See Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*, pp. 18-19.

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