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Eloquence non vaine: The Search for Suitable Style in Early Modern France

By

Stacey Elizabeth Battis

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

French

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Timothy Hampton, Chair
Professor Nicholas Paige
Professor Dylan Sailor

Fall 2014

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Stacey Elizabeth Battis

Abstract

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Professor Timothy Hampton, Chair

This dissertation examines the fate of Classical theories of eloquence in early sixteenth-century France. Eloquence is a treasured commonplace inherited by the humanists from ancient Greece and Rome. It denotes the potent combination of elegant speech and irresistibly persuasive power, whether in oral or written form. Early modern writers were eager to translate this linguistic force into their vernacular to strengthen both their language and their literature. The twin projects of fashioning a French eloquence and a strong French language— in other words, “making eloquence French” and “making French eloquent” – participate in a growing sense of nationalism that is mediated by discourses on national language and literature. At the same time, however, imaginative writing shows itself to be less interested in the success stories of an eloquent France and more in the failures of eloquence. The process of domesticating eloquence sparks an ideological divide between imaginative writing and prescriptive texts such as treatises on rhetoric and poetry. The writers of my corpus mostly evoke the tradition of rhetorical theory to undermine it and, in so doing, they expose the vanity of eloquence. What are the stakes behind the representation of such a failure in the larger scope of the humanist project, at the heart of which is this kind of language? What does the failure of eloquence tell us about vernacular literary production in the early modern period?

Taking these questions as a point of departure, this dissertation investigates how Classical and Renaissance concepts of eloquence are dissected in three major prose works published before the publication of Joachim Du Bellay’s *Deffence et illustration de la langue française* in 1549. These works cannot be defined by one, single genre: instead, they are textual hybrids, borrowing discursive practices from history, fable, chronicle, autobiography, romance, and novel. It is the contention of this dissertation that the writers of my corpus fully utilize the manifold possibilities of hybrid imaginative writing in order to question eloquence and, more specifically, to expose the impossibility of a perfect eloquence. Such writing provides both a defective and an ideal space for this exploration. It is defective in that imaginative writing cannot account for the traditional requirements of an oral eloquent speech, namely, persuading by adapting according to the needs of the moment and by exploiting proximity to the audience to gain sway over their affective response. An eloquent speech set into print cannot recreate the speech-act of the orator. However, imaginative writing uses its fixity precisely to create situations in which eloquence can be closely scrutinized. It becomes important to set the reading audience at a safe distance from

the performance of eloquence being read, for eloquence is often framed as a harmful contagion. The ideal reader of written eloquence is one who is in the know about how eloquence works, and is thus immune to its effects.

The dissertation consists of three chapters, each dedicated to a major prose writer of the early sixteenth century in France: Jean Lemaire de Belges, François Rabelais, and Hélienne de Crenne. An historical and conceptual introduction chapter precedes the analysis, and I end with a conclusion that looks forward to the later stylistic experiments of Michel de Montaigne. The dissertation contributes to the history of rhetoric in Renaissance France, and engages debates about the emergence of modern 'literature' from earlier rhetorical traditions.

For Mater and Pater,
and
in the memory of those we have lost

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Chapter One
Language Contests: Eloquence, Humanist Culture, and French Prose

I. Eloquence and Failure

In the middle section of Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Les Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitéz de Troie*, the part generally known today as the "roman de Troie," the gods designate the shepherd Paris Alexandre as the judge of the infamous beauty contest between Juno, Minerva, and Venus that instigates the Trojan War.¹ As Mercury informs Paris of this decision, the three goddesses make their arrivals on scene, rendering the shepherd completely mute by their divine beauty; Paris will remain silent until well after each of the three goddesses try to convince their "luge pastoral" to choose her as the most beautiful over the other two, plying him with gifts and promises befitting their natures (1: 230-249). Paris will, of course, choose Venus. Like other versions of this Homeric myth, Lemaire takes great care to describe each goddess's beauty, attire, and divine prerogative, meaning royal power, wisdom, and love, respectively. What is particularly striking about his retelling is how the contest becomes just as overtly about oratorical prowess as it is about physical beauty. As such, the contest brings to the foreground two of the questions central to this dissertation: how can a divine, idealized eloquence, as that represented by Minerva in this scene, fail to persuade its intended audience? What are the stakes behind the representation of such a failure in the larger scope of the humanist project, of which this language is the very center?

The goddesses make long speeches that are engineered to persuade Paris and to neutralize what the others will say. This tricky calculus involves standard rhetorical techniques, among which is the criticism of each speaker's character: Juno and Minerva each warn Paris against Venus's seductive lasciviousness, for instance. It also takes the form of three different positions toward rhetoric itself. Briefly, these positions are anti-rhetoric as a claim to sincerity and believability (Juno), an ideal, humanist-inspired eloquence that is ethically and responsibly used (Minerva), and a dangerous, ethically irresponsible, and sophistic eloquence (Venus). Each goddess is therefore beautiful and persuasive in her own distinct way, and has her own code of ethics represented in and by her rhetorical choices. Moreover, Lemaire targets Minerva's eloquence as the most vital of the three, the one that demands the most pointed attacks from the others and the one that pulls our focus. As part of her strategy, Juno, the first speaker, anticipates Minerva's speech by rejecting outright "verbale garrulité" that "rien mettre en realle efficace" (1: 235). Juno insists that the cataloging of different definitions of virtue and the other activities of the Minervan "philosophes" do not figure into the "Royale vocation" that is her purview; this is a rather bleak outlook on the humanists as represented by Minerva. Juno favors appealing to Paris's sense of action and his desire for royal power, both of which lay beyond the realm of philosophy, wisdom, and argumentation that Minerva will inevitably offer him. Juno's tactics also alert Paris to the perils of listening to empty promises gilded with pretty words, designed only to persuade and deceive. Juno thus takes the position of anti-rhetoric against the other two goddesses. This position claims to resist and even abhor rhetoric while still using its techniques;

¹ *Les Illustrations* was published in three installments between 1510 and 1513. The only modern edition, the one I shall reference here, is J. Stecher's *Œuvres de Jean Lemaire de Belges* (1882-1891). Of that edition's four volumes, *Les Illustrations* constitutes volumes one and two. Parenthetical references will refer to volume and page number.

it depends on an impression of sincerity and truthfulness obtained from a professed rejection of rhetorical tricks.²

The rhetorical contest plays out even more obviously when Minerva speaks. The second goddess offers Paris the services of “tous les soudars de ma famille,” militant personifications of the virtues associated with her. Among these “soldiers” are Virtue, Boldness, Military Discipline, Justice, Prudence, and, most importantly for the purpose of this dissertation, “Eloquence non vaine,” or a mode of persuasive speaking that is never weak, futile, or empty (1: 238). This particular companion of Minerva evokes an ideal kind of artful speech that will successfully persuade and unfailingly stir its audience to action. Minerva claims that her soldiers alone help men win battles, hold communities together, maintain monarchies, attain wisdom, and gain renown through “ma littérature [*sic*],” erudition and literature, which she reclaims from Juno as a means to glory and immortality for princes and not merely sources for quibbles (1: 239). Minerva presents to Paris an irresistible vision of his future princely glory, neatly tied to traditional representations of the power of eloquence as a civilizing force; this is a cultural and literary bundle inherited by the humanists from their ancient Greek and Roman predecessors and completely embraced by Minerva here. Minerva does not deny Juno’s charge that her eloquence can be deceptive but, instead, offers to impart that power to Paris as part of a larger scheme to guarantee the good of the state.

In spite of her claim that such an efficacious eloquence is hers to command, Minerva famously loses this contest to Venus. The goddess of love and beauty quite capably dismantles the rhetoric of the other two goddesses in a thorough manipulation of any and all “available means to persuasion,” an approach that means anything goes if it gets the job done.³ This includes persuasive measures that Minerva’s ethics and sense of civic duty would never tolerate, a devious take on Juno’s anti-rhetoric bias, and an upending of the commonplace that beautiful people who speak well have virtuous and honest souls. Venus first makes an appeal to Paris’s eyes more than to his ears, telling him to judge based on what he sees – where there is no contest – rather than on what he hears; this is a beauty contest, after all. She further undoes the rhetoric of Juno and Minerva by exposing it for what it is, namely, artful persuasion. Venus laments, in a lengthy nautical metaphor, that both Juno’s and Minerva’s rhetorical tactics seek only to drown Paris’s “Galee ingenieuse” in the seas and winds of their “promesses farcies,” “vagues sophistiques,” and “syllogismes politiques” (1: 246). Venus completes this careful neutralizing before making her own promises, that of removing “ton vaisseau hors de toute laboriosité spirituelle,” resulting in “mellifluence sans male influence, douceur sans douleur, autorité sans austerité, honneur sans horreur, et luisance sans nuisance” (1: 248). In short, Venus offers Paris a

² The *Heptaméron* famously takes this approach in the Prologue, where the use of rhetoric is in direct opposition to truth-telling (“de paour que la beaulté de la rethorique fait tort en quelque partye à la verité de l’histoire,” 9). This was a minority opinion in the Renaissance. For more about anti-rhetoric as a form of rhetoric, see Paolo Valesio’s reading of Cordelia from *King Lear* in *Novantiqua* 45-60 and Plett 429-432. For more on the period’s perception of rhetoric as potentially subversive and dangerous, see Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men’s Minds*. Very generally speaking, it is a discursive practice of Christian and philosophical writing to criticize rhetoric. Later in the dissertation I will speak more to rhetoric as a derogatory term, specifically in the context of the centuries-long debate between the straightforwardness and truth of philosophical discourse and the ornamentation and ostentation of rhetoric. See Seigel, chapter 1; Vickers, chapters 2 and 3; Kennedy, chapter 4. My interest here is primarily in secular writing, though Christianity’s historically oscillating relationship to eloquence is occasionally relevant. For a succinct overview, see Kennedy, chapter 7, and the volume of essays entitled *The Rhetoric of Saint Augustine of Hippo*.

³ “Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.2.1).

life without work, whether spiritual or physical. She convinces him he deserves this life on no other basis than himself as he is and not as an idealized vision of rigorous princely toil as that promised by both Juno and Minerva. The promise of Helen is an after-thought, representing only a fragment of the delights that await Paris if he “tourne donc à gauche” and flees the path of virtue more often traveled (1: 247). All three goddesses manage to silence and stupefy Paris, which is an expected result of effective speech-making, but with this verbal ravishment Venus takes the apple.

Why does Minerva’s failure matter? That’s how the story goes, after all. Lemaire’s retelling of Paris’s judgment reveals his valorization of a particular kind of eloquence, and a corresponding ethical code, over another. Minerva’s eloquence is the centerpiece of this scene, given with a specific invitation to attend to her language and its intended show of orality: “Or *oyons* maintenant par quel langage ladite tressage Deesse admonnesta Paris” (1: 237, emphasis mine). The second goddess evokes civic humanism in her appeals to personal virtue and duty to the state. Her eloquence cannot be disentangled from the humanist principles of learning, political responsibility, reputation, faith in man’s goodness, and proper conduct for princes, all of which had already gained traction in Italy via new modes of education and by this time were making their mark in France.⁴ Despite all this cultural weight, Minerva’s tactics seem all too easily unraveled by Venus, whose eloquence is artful, lamentably efficacious, and morally dangerous:

Leloquence artificielle de dame Venus, ses paroles delicates, et sa douce persuasion causerent telle efficace et telle emotion au cœur du ieune adolescent Paris, que encores en pourra il maudire les rhetoriques couleurs, qui luy seront retorquees en douleurs. (1: 249)

In the above prolepsis, where Lemaire announces Venus’s victory and Paris’s eventual shame at having fallen for her eloquence, Lemaire betrays a deep and abiding concern for the failure of Minervan eloquence when challenged by other methods of persuasion. This is a concern that pervades the *Illustrations* as a whole, but it is particularly in evidence in the “roman de Troie” and even more so in the person of the Trojan prince. After Paris makes his decision, Juno calls him a “chose si desnaturee” for choosing Venus’s “fard colouré et teint sophistique” that camouflages the emptiness (“vuide”) of her words (1: 258). Lemaire certainly encourages our understanding that Paris has become “dénaturé.” Prior to this episode in Paris’s life, Lemaire portrays the shepherd as capable and virtuous; later descriptions of him will show a weak and effeminate man, “tout transporté des merveilleuses visions” and “rauy en ecstase,” that is, completely taken over by the potent combination of Venus’s eloquence and sensuality (1: 276). Paris’s succumbing to this kind of eloquence will ruin him and will lead to the destruction of Troy and the near-annihilation of its people. Juno will call this a foolish choice of “la vie voluptueuse et inutile” over “la vie actiue et contemplatiue,” so the opposition between Venus and the first two goddesses is clearly mapped onto ethical discourses of the time (1: 258). It is therefore unsurprising that Minerva’s failure troubles Lemaire: her eloquence is so bound up in

⁴ On civic humanism and its emphasis on the individual’s patriotism and public service, ideas that emerged in the 1400s in the writings of Italian humanists, see Baron, Seigel, Garin, and the essay collection *Renaissance Civic Humanism* edited by Hankins. On civic humanism as a tradition particular to early modern political thought and to their conceptions of the ideal state, see Pocock. On the origins of civic humanism and of the concept of the ideal citizen in Cicero’s writings on rhetoric, see Connolly.

humanist ideology that her failure is the failure of the new learning to motivate and educate a prince who, instead, falls for an eloquence that inspires him to non-action in place of action. Minerva's failure exposes the undesirable ethical possibilities of an eloquence uninhibited by humanist ideology.

The judgment of Paris in the *Illustrations* provides us with a useful map for concepts concerning 'right' and 'wrong' language uses that prevail in early modern France, and indeed all of neo-Latin Western European culture. Minerva's eloquence is the literary-cultural ideal, a conception of language that led to the creation of a humanist cultural consciousness that believed wisdom was to be found via eloquence (Plett 73). Hanna H. Gray perceptively argues that the "pursuit of eloquence" is the "identifying characteristic of Renaissance humanism" (498) and that the "humanists' stand on eloquence implied an almost incredible faith in the power of the word" (503). Jerrold Seigel adds that the orator is humanism's "organizing ideal" that fully embodies all it seeks to accomplish (100). Guillaume Budé's *Institution du prince* of 1519 corroborates that connection between "science" and language, and adds that honor and reputation happen *in* language: "... l'honneur de nature humaine consiste en l'engin et en l'esperit de l'homme lequel toujours croist par l'exercice d'estude, et l'honneur et reputation de l'esperit consiste en l'éloquence et langaige disert" (83). What Lemaire shows us here is that the faith in the power of language found in the Minervan variety of eloquence has a demonic double: an apprehension about the kinds of language and language uses that should not be able to persuade successfully when in competition with this humanist centerpiece. Minerva's ideal eloquence and even Juno's anti-rhetoric are acceptable uses of language and methods of persuasion because they appeal to virtue and lay claim to sincerity; Venus's eloquence is objectionable because it seeks only to persuade, whether or not the cause is right or good.

Although Minerva's "eloquence non vaine" is the most valued iteration and the one that is most secured to humanist principles, it is also the one that is persistently seen as the most "vaine" in the imaginative writing of the sixteenth century. The paradox of an "eloquence non vaine" that nevertheless fails to do what it should is the central concern of this dissertation: how writers choose to represent eloquence failing more than succeeding, absent more than present, and eloquence that is heavily criticized and constrained in the internal dynamics of imaginative writing. I situate this study within the field of rhetorical and cultural studies that interrogates the role of rhetoric in humanist culture, and I do this via the lens of depictions of failures to persuade in roughly the first half of the sixteenth century in France. These are moments where the representation of eloquence is troubled, when its artifices are exposed as it futilely attempts to persuade, whether in overt contests like in the Lemaire example or in other scenes of persuasion where eloquence is rejected or even absent, meaning that a speech is described as eloquent but not made available for the reader to read. If the pursuit of eloquence truly represents the "identifying characteristic" and "organizing ideal" of this culture, it is startling to see the extent to which eloquence is seen to fail in the imaginative writing produced by and in that culture. Imaginative writing becomes a discursive response to the demanding nature of Classical eloquence and to its transfer to France and to the French language: the twin projects of 'making eloquence French' and 'making French eloquent.' What is more, as paradoxes often do, the paradox of this failed ideal "comments on its own method and technique" in a "profoundly self-critical" way that will allow us to interrogate the relationship of rhetoric and literature (Colie 7). In other words, I show that writers of this period were interested and invested in deploying the dismantling tactics of a Juno or a Venus in order to interrogate the eloquence of a Minerva, their literary-cultural beacon.

II. The Discourse of Rhetoric

While I do not provide here a history of rhetoric and eloquence from its beginnings in Greece and Rome up to the sixteenth century, a few things still need to be laid out, beginning with definitions.⁵ Most information to be found on rhetoric and eloquence in the Renaissance is contained within texts such as grammars, rhetorics, treatises on education or poetics, handbooks, and other such texts designed to instruct. I shall refer to such works jointly as “treatises.” The recovery and publication of certain texts from Antiquity led to a major revival in rhetoric’s role in education. Cicero’s orations had been studied since the Middle Ages; copies of his *On the Orator*, *Orator*, and *Brutus* were reprinted in 1465 (Kennedy 226). A full manuscript of Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, known only through a mutilated copy until its rediscovery in 1416, was published in 1470 and quickly became a valuable source for rhetorical technique alongside Cicero’s *On Invention* and *Rhetoric for Herennius*, which was attributed to Cicero during the Renaissance (Kennedy 229). Since the bulk of what Renaissance treatises have to say is inherited from these Classical texts and since rhetoric had been taught in schools for centuries, the same notions about eloquence and rhetoric pervade the nations of western Europe, with few distinctions. They thus all contribute to a widespread, highly developed, and virtually homogenous discourse of rhetoric.⁶ From these treatises, we know how eloquence should work and, with that understanding, we can better evaluate how eloquence fails to do what it is expected to do in imaginative writing.

Pierre Fabri maintains the standard discourse on rhetoric and eloquence in *Le grand et vray art de pleine rhetorique*. This is a “Rethorique tant prosaïque que rithmique,” meaning it lays out in detail the organization and parts of the closely allied ‘rhetorics’ of prose and verse (3). The first of its kind to be written in French, *Le grand et vray art* was published in ten editions between 1521 and 1544.⁷ Fabri distinguishes “eloquence” from “rhetoric” in a precise and systematic manner indicative of the time. I will adhere to Fabri’s distinctions in my own uses of those two terms.

Rhetoric is a “science politique, qui est appenseement bien dire et parler selon l’enseignement de l’art pour suader ou dissuader en sa matiere, et la disposer par parties, et chascune aorner par beaux termes, et la retenir par ordre en memoire, et bien la prononcer” (14). Rhetoric, therefore, refers to an art that has order and artifice (“elegance,” “beau parler”). It is divided into essential parts, in keeping with the Latin tradition of *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*,

⁵ Jenkins provides a useful and succinct summary of the history of the art of rhetoric from ancient Greece to mid-sixteenth-century France in his book *Artful Eloquence* (20-44). For a fuller history, see Kennedy. Mack provides the most recent and detailed discussion of rhetoric in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and he has valuable remarks on how Classical rhetoric came to be Renaissance rhetoric. Two debates over rhetoric are relevant to this present study: Asianism versus Atticism and the Ciceronians versus the anti-Ciceronians. The former, a dispute about style, began in Hellenistic Greece over which was better, a highly artful, sophistic ‘Asianist’ style influenced by Gorgias, or a style modeled on Attic orators, whose plain language was perceived as truer to Ancient Greek oratory at its height. The Ciceronian debate was over imitation as well as style, for the sixteenth-century Ciceronians believed that the only ancient authority worth imitating was Cicero, to the extent that the only lexicon permissible to their scholarly writing was his. Erasmus openly mocks the Ciceronians in his satirical *Dialogus Ciceronianus* of 1528. See Plett; Shuger.

⁶ Concerning France specifically, Kennedy estimates that rhetoric had become of particular pedagogical interest in French schools since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, beginning in Chartres (216). I will address the subject of rhetoric and education further in chapter 2.

⁷ The first treatise on rhetoric written by a French writer was the Latin *Rhetorica* (1471) of Guillaume Fichet, a librarian at the Sorbonne (Kennedy 237).

memoria, and *pronunciatio* (or *actio*). Rhetoric also follows a prescribed “enseignement” and involves careful study. By this point, rhetoric was seen as both an oral and a written art that should be learned by all “amis de bien publique” (7). We can clearly detect here the staples of civic humanism, wherein rhetoric is dutifully learned and employed to serve the greater community.

Fabri gives a complex and demanding definition of eloquence. We can discern in his remarks certain notions that are of particular import. They deal with form, substance, plausibility, *decorum*, and action; in sum, they create a full performance of language at its very best and most persuasive. I shall often refer to the “full performance of eloquence” as shorthand for a rhetorical interaction that is artful, eloquent, persuasive, and inclusive of the qualities listed below. Eloquence issues from harmonious unions between form and substance, “raison avec oraison” (5):

Eloquence est appropriation de suffisant langage a sa substance, laquelle fait donner louenge a l’orateur de gens entenduz et de langage vulgaire, sans laquelle l’orateur pert son nom, combien que beau parler sans sentence n’est que vent sans science, et parler par sentence sans mettre ordre en son langage, c’est puerillement fait... (21)

Rhetoric provides form, and eloquence, in its use of rhetoric, subordinates form to substance in its effort to achieve persuasion, which can be defined under these circumstances as the successful result of the use of rhetoric or eloquence to inspire action or decision (H. Gray 510). Without rhetoric’s art, eloquence is “puerillement fait,” so there is a distinction between rhetoric as an art and eloquence as something apart that relies on the parts of rhetoric. The naked substance of speech is “clothed” with “rhetorical colors” according to the rules of *decorum* (“appetit”):

Parquoy doncques, pour estre eloquent, il conuient les matieres nues reuestir de couleurs de rethoricque ioyeuses et delectables comme par transsumption [metaphor] de paroles ou substance, ou des aultres couleurs telz qu’ilz viendront a l’appetit du facteur... (Fabri 21)

Decorum means appropriately tailoring your speech to your audience, the occasion, and the substance of your speech. Cicero suggests that eloquence demands mobility and changeability, saying that the orator “can adapt his speech to fit all conceivable circumstances” (*Orator* 36. 123). In that regard, *decorum* also refers to the proper use of high, middle, and low styles.⁸

Eloquence deals in plausibility and not necessarily in the truth. Using *decorum* to coordinate his subject matter and style with his audience, the speaker strives to create a plausible reality, dealing with possibilities:

... car la force de eloquence n’est point seulement a mener les auditeurs a croire la chose comme elle est, mais a ce qui est et qui n’est mie, a la agrauer ou deprimer, et a conduire les auditeurs a croire qu’il peult estre vray. (21)

⁸ Guillaume Budé makes the connection between eloquence and style very clear: “Eloquence est une science qui peut honnestement, haultement et suffisamment parler de toutes choses, c’est assavoir des petites choses promptement et subtilement, des moyennes doucement et gravement, des grandes haultment et magnifiquement et en manière que les escoutants s’en émerveillent” (89).

Lastly, eloquence incites action in the real world. In these lines from *Le grant et vray art* we can glimpse parallels with Minerva's speech, for here as well eloquence is a civilizing force that can inspire even the "lazy" to act honorably:

Car éloquence est la royne des hommes, laquelle conioincte avec sapience et science, peult enflammer les paresseux a tous honorables perilz, restraindre les furieux courages, paciffier guerres de princes et seditions populaires et reduire tout en bonne paix et tranquillité... c'est celle qui descript les loix, les droictz et les iugemens. (6-7)

Thus the definition of eloquence that Fabri conveys is one of "aesthetic splendor" potentially combined with "psychological power" (Seigel 87).

Most treatises attest even further to the overwhelming power of eloquence to incite change and action. Jacques Amyot, in his *Projet d'eloquence royale*, claims that there is no will or passion so strong that it cannot be "mastered" by eloquence: "Aussi n'y a-t-il rien tel que de sçavoir par bien dire manier une multitude d'hommes, chatouiller les cœurs, maîtriser les volontés et passions, voire les pousser et retenir à son plaisir, et, par manière de dire, en porter l'éperon et la bride pendus au bout de la langue" (43).⁹ There is nothing so hard that eloquence cannot "soften" it: "Par où l'on voit qu'il n'y a rien si dur qui ne soit détrempe et amolli par l'éloquence: laquelle si elle demandoit jusqu'à notre propre vie il ne seroit pas en nous de l'éconduire" (52). These rather frightening depictions of eloquence's power over the mind and even over life and death can also be found in the figure of Hercules Gallicus. The ancient Greek Lucian of Samosata wrote of encountering images in Marseille of the Celt god Ogmios, which he mistook for Hercules (Budé 89-90). His mistake later resulted in a fortuitous representation of a particular eloquence native to France. Hercules Gallicus was depicted as dragging his joyful followers after him with chains of gold running from his pierced tongue to their ears, demonstrating that governing by eloquence is more potent than by force, since eloquence renders its audience passive and amenable. French rhetoricians and political thinkers alike seized upon this version of Hercules and made him a patriotic mascot for French eloquence and royalty, to the extent that certain French kings of the Renaissance – François I and Henri IV in particular – were associated with Hercules in their iconography and pageantry.¹⁰

To these facets of the definition of eloquence, I must add one more that Fabri does not treat explicitly but that is nonetheless one of the key features in the discourse of rhetoric: *ethos*. *Ethos* unites the person of the speaker to his speech, resulting in an effective means of persuasion via the appearance of sincerity.¹¹ The "ideal alignment" of "sapientia-res-verba" originates in Cicero's definition of eloquence as "copiose loquens sapientia" ("wisdom speaking copiously") (Cave, *Cornucopian Text* 6). This means that, ideally, the form and the substance of the speech complements the *ethos*, authority, wisdom, and style of the speaker, in keeping with the oft-cited Senecan formula "talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita," or the idea that a person's manner of

⁹ Amyot's *Projet* was probably written between 1570 and 1580; it was not published until 1805 (Rebhorn, *Debates* 128).

¹⁰ For the history of the Gallic Hercules, see Marc-René Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du 16e siècle*. For an analysis of the Gallic Hercules in emblem books and iconography, see Rebhorn, *Emperor* 66-74. For Hercules as the ideal exemplar for the French king, see Hampton, *Writing From History* 31-47.

¹¹ Aristotle contends that good character is the most potent means of persuasion (*Rhetoric* 1356a4).

speaking is a roadmap to how he lives his life, and his life informs how he should speak.¹² The alignment extends to writing and to the *ethos* of invented characters, and thus is particularly relevant to the study of eloquence in imaginative writing. Cicero says: “He [the poet] errs [*peccat*] if he puts the speech of a good man in the mouth of a villain, or that of a wise man in the mouth of a fool” (*Orator* 22.74). Often, the insinuation in the treatises is that speaking eloquently without wisdom and prudence is to speak recklessly: such speech is a bow with unfletched arrows, in Budé’s estimation (90).

Though most treatise writers stress the importance of good *ethos*, others play fast and loose with the impulsion to be sincere and honest in speech-making, particularly when it deals with the polity. Masking *ethos* by pretending to be something you are not, such as honest and good, is “an acknowledged and vital element in civic humanism” beginning with Cicero (Zerba 215). Cicero’s *De Officiis*, a favorite text among the humanists, endorses the “adjustment of the standard of truth to the standard of utility,” where utility refers to effectual persuasion, and thus sincerity becomes synonymous with credibility (Zerba 219). Any and all means of persuasion are encouraged, including “pantomimic morality,” a notion corroborated by such foundational texts as *The Courtier* and *The Prince*, wherein artful deception is motivated by public service more than private profit.¹³ Rhetoric, ethics, and interpersonal relationships are permanently bound together: from its beginnings, rhetoric was never exclusively about speech, but also about citizenship and thus it is a political art.¹⁴ Although rhetoric will, on occasion, be associated with mendacity and trickery in the language of the humanists, that is generally seen as a perversion of the primary, civic mission of rhetoric. Often, such depictions expose disenchantment with this particular aspect of humanist culture, a concern for the ‘right’ methods of persuasion, or evidence that the humanist project has gone awry if rhetoric is used to harm the state. Ultimately, representations in imaginative writing of a troubled use of rhetoric are more interesting and dynamic than ones in which a more straightforward use of rhetoric is apparent, and they provide productive spaces for exploring the nature of rhetoric, eloquence, ethics, and politics.

At this point in Renaissance studies, it goes without saying that rhetoric occupied a central place in Renaissance culture. Scholars such as Paul O. Kristeller, Marc Fumaroli, Nancy S. Struever, Heinrich F. Plett, Quentin Skinner, Patricia Parker, and Peter Mack, to name only a few, have all stressed how deeply implicated rhetoric is in the social and political order of the time, and how rhetoric simply *is* political and pervades all manners of discourses. Their studies often begin at the source for Renaissance thought on rhetoric: James J. Murphy estimates that over a thousand treatises, handbooks, and manuals were published on rhetoric during the Renaissance and these treatises would have circulated widely and been well known to writers educated within the humanist system (Rebhorn, *Emperor* 1). These treatises reveal a “discourse of rhetoric” that Wayne A. Rebhorn has thoroughly catalogued in order to establish “how Renaissance people represented rhetoric to themselves” (2). The representation of rhetoric is a

¹² Seneca *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* 114.1. For the Classical conception of *ethos*, see May. For more discussion of the orator as both bad and good, see Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men’s Minds*. Eden writes of the correspondence between style and *ethos* in her article “Literary Property and the Question of Style: A Prehistory,” published in the volume *Borrowed Feathers*. For the use of style in speech or in writing to foster intimacy as a source of persuasion, see Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*.

¹³ See Barish, 167-179.

¹⁴ See Connolly. In her exploration of the correlation between the ideal orator and the ideal citizen, Connolly argues that Cicero isolates eloquence as the “key connection between civic virtue and individual virtue” and “What rhetorical discourse shows is that fragility, multiplicity, and artifice are the ideal citizen’s greatest strength,” therefore making eloquence by definition a civic art (14-15).

troubled and paradoxical one that exposes rhetoric and the humanist faith in the power of the word to scrutiny in Renaissance writing: Rebhorn finds that rhetoric is a “fantasy of power” in which the orator is a ruler who maintains social order, but also a threat to the social order; rhetoric is both male and female, both angelic and monstrous (15).

What I intend to contribute to these studies is a reevaluation of the inseparability of rhetoric and literature: specifically, the project of making rhetoric contribute to a national literary endeavor that is on par with ancient models and is appropriate to the cultural aims of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ I pursue the limits of rhetoric’s identification with imaginative writing using moments where eloquence as an aggressive means of persuasion is challenged, counter to the more dominant reading of a success story in which humanist thought and humanist rhetoric are perfectly married. All writing at this time certainly retains oral and rhetorical elements, but imaginative writing exhibits the limitations of the discourse of eloquence it both cannibalizes and draws away from in order to make room for the text’s own persuasive maneuvers. Prose was the medium of many disciplines, not yet a “signifying practice” with features specific to imaginative writing alone (Fowler and Greene 3). The vanity of eloquence, then, shows a characteristic of the emerging discourse of imaginative writing, as it seeks to define itself against other forms of discourse and before it emerges as ‘literature.’¹⁶

In this line of inquiry, I am indebted to the work of Terence Cave, particularly in the methodology and terminology used in *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*. At once post-Saussurian and historical, Cave’s approach takes into consideration modern theory, Renaissance theory, and Renaissance practice to pinpoint moments of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity in Renaissance writing that result in the thematization of language problems. These are moments where language and wordplay, both deviant and devious, demand attention as autonomous sources for meaning and for investigations into how discourse operates (xviii). Like Cave, I am not delineating a boundary line of cause and effect that could be traced between theory and practice, where “theory” denotes what is found in treatises about rhetoric and “practice” means imaginative writing that employs that theory. Theory and practice have a productive relationship: practice can inform theory and even gain ground over theory’s confines so that contradicting theories about eloquence can be found in the performance of an eloquent speech (122).

As Cave says, “fictions... attempt to escape the space of the written text, to disrupt it or open it up, while yet retaining fragments of writing consecrated by tradition as an integral part of their movement” (*Cornucopian Text* 141). While I consider similar moments of disruption, where eloquence’s dislocating tendency is highlighted, I differ from Cave in my hesitation to

¹⁵ In this regard, the following from Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* is frequently cited: “Rhetoric has from the beginning meant two things: ornamental speech and persuasive speech. These two things seem psychologically opposed to each other, as the desire to ornament is essentially disinterested, and the desire to persuade essentially the reverse. In fact ornamental rhetoric is inseparable from literature itself, or what we have called the hypothetical verbal structure which exists for its own sake. Persuasive rhetoric is applied literature, or the use of literary art to reinforce the power of argument. Ornamental rhetoric acts on its hearer statically, leading them to admire its own beauty or wit; persuasive rhetoric tries to lead them kinetically toward a course of action. One articulates emotion; the other manipulates it... Most of the features characteristic of literary form, such as rhyme, alliteration, metre, antithetical balance, the use of exempla, are also rhetorical schemata” (245).

¹⁶ Terence Cave proposes that fiction “has yielded its meaning and performed its role as a servant of philosophy” and elaborates on the troubled relationship between fiction, philosophy, and morality in his “Epilogue” in *Philosophical Fictions and the French Renaissance* (128). On the circumstances in which literature and fiction acquired their present significance, originating in the seventeenth century, see Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism*; Chevolet, *L’idée de fable*; Duprat, *Vraisemblances*; and Paige, *Before Fiction*.

take for granted that Renaissance writers believed eloquence did what it claimed to be able to do. These moments of self-reflexivity may strive for copiousness and escape, as Cave argues, but a written eloquence is nonetheless a stuck eloquence that is bound to its page and unable to answer to the demanding and expectant terms ascribed to it. If *ars est celare artem*¹⁷ is the law of the land, the art of eloquence is difficult to hide when it is exposed to view and deprived of its usual immediacy with its audience: what is ‘eloquence’ when it has been stripped of its orality and visuality and set into print, for a reader in place of an auditor? Cave explains that for Quintilian, the speech-act of the orator mimics writing, but can this mimicry be multi-directional, so that writing can also recreate the speech-act of the orator? In his discussion of Du Bellay and imitation, Cave argues that the reader’s affective response, similar to that of an auditor, becomes a criterion for a given text’s eloquence, but such a response is not guaranteed (62). In fact, the writers of my study take measures to ensure that a reader does not react to eloquence in the way that Paris does in the example from the *Illustrations* discussed above. I argue that writers of the time acknowledged and played with this difficulty to bring to light the limits of their idealized vision of language and to rebrand literary productivity in terms of rejection.

Cave’s interest lies in figures of abundance, whose appearance in Renaissance imaginative writing discloses a certain anxiety about writing, language, and imitation. My interest is not so much in traditional figures for eloquence such as Mercury, Orpheus, and the Gallic Hercules, though they will frequently be relevant to the discussion. My interest is in how the limits of ideal language are exposed in imaginative writing. Since these limits are rarely united in one particular figure or kind of figure, my approach necessitates looking at persuasion in play, in a variety of ways. In that regard, I distinguish myself from the relatively current trend in rhetorical studies of tracing the history of a particular ‘figure,’ in both theory and practice, and how that figure serves as a site of innovation and for reflection on Renaissance writing.¹⁸

The writers I discuss in this dissertation, then, profit from the mediation of print as they translate the performance of eloquence into words on a page. Scholars such as Walter J. Ong and Roger Chartier have explored the history of media and how the medium by which something is communicated influences the relationships between orality, literacy, and culture.¹⁹ Ong and Chartier have both made vast contributions to our understanding of the physical object of the book and how it conveys meaning through its very organization and visual presentation. Providing necessary material form to convey what is immaterial, the book becomes itself an “aesthetic resource” for narrative, poetic, and dramatic ends (Chartier, *Inscription and Erasure* x-xi). While some oral techniques can be approximated, there are limits to expressing a full performance of eloquence in print. Eloquence often relies on proximity and affective response, neither of which is guaranteed by the experience of reading. A narrator, Ong reminds us, feels very keenly that he is not an oral performer and his reader is not a crowd (*Interfaces of the Word* 72-73). The distance between the writer and the reader could be seen as an insurmountable obstacle, both to the representation of persuasion and the text’s own persuasiveness. As Floyd

¹⁷ “If speakers do possess an art of these things [acting], its first rule is not to seem to be art” (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* I. 11. 3).

¹⁸ I call attention particularly to the volume *Renaissance Figures of Speech* (2007), where each article takes on a different rhetorical figure, including synonym, comparison, *periodos*, *ekphrasis*, and hyperbole, for this very purpose of joining a rhetorical figure to reflections on rhetorical practice. While some of these recent studies I allude to focus on figures of speech (or rhetorical figures) in that way, others concentrate on a figure for rhetoric, meaning a figure that allegorizes or otherwise illustrates how rhetoric works, such as Hercules Gallicus.

¹⁹ I refer particularly to Ong’s *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology* and *Interfaces of the Word* and Chartier’s *The Order of Books, Forms and Meanings*, and *Inscription and Erasure*.

Gray has shown, writers employ rhetorical techniques as a “protocole d’écriture et de lecture” that subordinates what Chartier calls the reader’s “freedom” to make meaning to the perspective of the text (Gray, *Renaissance des mots* 403; Chartier, *Order of Books* viii). Writers find ways around this distance to get at the readers and convince them through narrative means that eloquence may not be as desirable as it seems, since it seeks to persuade and transform forcefully.

In *Emperor of Men’s Minds* Rebhorn proposes a new kind of ‘rhetorical’ reading for literary texts that facilitates an analysis that does not divorce theory from practice and that does not privilege a discussion of rhetorical figures over one of concepts. A typical rhetorical reading focuses on how literature appropriates the techniques of rhetoric – its tropes, metaphors, *enargeia*, attention to *decorum*, etc. Like Rebhorn, I am not seeking signs of rhetorical technique or using my knowledge of rhetoric to judge texts and speeches for their eloquence. Rather, I seek signals that the writer is engaged with the discourse of rhetoric and with eloquence as a problem as opposed to an established ideal. Rebhorn’s methodology is indispensable in that regard. Rebhorn believes that literature has “an active and critical relationship” with the discourse of rhetoric and that we should, accordingly, focus our interpretative energies on how literature evaluates the concepts of rhetoric rather than its use of rhetoric’s tools (18). In Rebhorn’s terms, this means the exploration of power in the relationship between ruler/orator and subject/audience, the social mobility that rhetoric promises, the articulation of ‘proper’ rhetoric through the valorization of masculinity over femininity, and bodies as they literalize good rhetoric and bad through ‘civilized’ and ‘monstrous’ orators. Rebhorn’s method of reading seeks to show “how rhetorical situations are modeled in the liminary spaces of literary texts” in such a way that “allows authors to scrutinize the discourse of rhetoric even as they repeat it... . The literary text consequently becomes a representation not only of the world but of the discourse of rhetoric itself” (19).

I want to take Rebhorn’s rhetorical reading one step further. I suggest that literary texts not only reproduce the problems and paradoxes inherent to the discourse of rhetoric, but they also create new ones as a result of this straddling of the world of discourse and the world of fiction-making. Literature is indeed a “privileged discourse,” but it does not merely fill in the blanks for what a treatise on rhetoric would not dare say or model in concrete terms (*Emperor* 18). Rebhorn’s assumption that the discourse of rhetoric and literature form a kind of diptych is unquestionably a just one, but I wish to suggest that literature is as much in the pursuit of eloquence as is the discourse of rhetoric: both seek a better understanding of how rhetoric works, its limitations, and, at its very core, the problems of human communication. But where discourse is interested in the success of eloquence and in quelling any objections to it, the corpus of this dissertation is more interested in eloquence’s failure and in exaggerating those objections. Less interested in the justification of rhetoric, these writers dare to suggest that eloquence may be impossible or, if possible, not automatically desirable. That being said, this dissertation does not narrate an instance of humanism turning against itself because its praxis does not mimic its theory. Instead, I interrogate the assumed relationship that rhetoric has with literature and argue that, even when employing rhetorical procedures, these writers came to terms with the fact that their literature could not be eloquent.

Imaginative writing does indeed provide a “liminal” space for evaluating the discourse of rhetoric. It offers both a defective and an ideal space for this exploration: defective because the printed page cannot be held responsible for the traditional requirements of a mobile and adaptable eloquent speech, but ideal precisely because it is not bound by these constraints.

Decorum, delivery, and the capacity for extemporaneity become inflexible once set into print. While an eloquent speech can account for a diegetical audience, it cannot for a multitude of readers who can then see all its mechanisms at work without feeling its intended effect. In other words, print strips eloquence of its necessary mobility and its impact, thus rendering it ineloquent and unpersuasive. The reading experience makes eloquence ineloquent and eloquence's reputation suffers as a result. But imaginative writing responds to these issues by being mobile itself, creating multiple levels of audiences within the narrative, coming and going to mediate the experience of eloquence. The writer 'saves' the reader from the power of eloquence, in a way affirming eloquence's reputation even as it is undermined. The reader is put into the position of the clever observer of Castiglione's disguised courtier who is awed by the courtier's cunning and derives pleasure from the trick (*Il Libro del Cortegiano* II. xii). The reader of these texts becomes complicit in the deception of a failed eloquence rather than bothered by eloquence's ineffability, a nice sleight-of-hand to make the reader feel he is more in the know than the character seduced by language; it is the writer's 'pleasure' to divulge through indirection how such language works.

This process of complicity is clearly an example of what Kathy Eden calls the "charitable reader." In her *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, she discusses what Erasmus and other writers name the *interpres aequus* – a reader who reads and interprets in a non-adversarial way, looking at both the word (*littera*) and the author's intention (*spiritus*) before jumping to conclusions about the text's meaning (2-3). The Renaissance writer hopes for a reader who can "reconcile the discrepancies between the author's words and intentions" in order to understand the text as a whole rather than quibbling over a part of it (32). Reading charitably affirms the reputation of eloquence's power by allowing the reader to see the effects of eloquence without, on the one hand, being affected by it, and, on the other, without the writer actually having to be eloquent himself as the text's writer. This is how the complete and oral performance of eloquence, meant for a listening public, is accommodated to a reading public. But reading charitably will not always give us a full understanding of what is meant by 'eloquence' in this kind of writing. The same strategies that are used to undermine eloquence intensify the moment of the rhetorical interaction even as it is seen to fail. Our reading eye is not drawn away from the missing, oblique, or inopportune eloquent speech to see only its intention, and we do not fail to notice all the strategies in place for *not* representing eloquence in the traditional way. The 'uncharitable reader' will see the failure of eloquence and how the literary text narrates that failure in a particular way, one that leads to questioning rhetoric's place there, to the extent that literature can be produced even via a rejection of eloquence.

I return now to my discussion of the Judgment of Paris in the *Illustrations*. We can now fully see the dynamics of the rhetorical interaction: namely, how eloquence is meant to work, its effects on its audience, its relationship to ethics, and what Lemaire is doing by depicting eloquence in this light. So far I have mostly discussed two of the three main elements of the rhetorical interaction: the speaker and the speech.²⁰ Lemaire's three goddesses, their *ethos*, and the form and content of their speeches are aligned and are rooted in plausibility. We do not hesitate to believe that Juno's rhetoric would be riddled with imperatives; that Minerva, in her

²⁰ I will use the term 'speaker' to describe a figure in imaginative writing who seeks to persuade via speech; I will reserve the term 'orator' for the idealized figure whose qualities and skills are determined by the writings of Cicero, Quintilian, and the like. Though it must be said that the early humanists often called themselves 'orators,' among other designations meaning that their profession was to teach rhetoric and the humanities, to avoid confusion between the idea of the orator and the profession, I will keep these terms separate as much as possible.

thorough lists of all she has to offer, would take a level-headed, rational approach that depends on her authority as the goddess of wisdom; or that Venus would call attention to her body as a persuasive maneuver, even if that is a dubious card to play according to Juno's and Minerva's ethical codes. Each performance of eloquence works as expected and moves Paris in some way. In terms of narrative momentum, this lengthy, static moment of speech-making grinds the story of Troy to a halt. This is a moment of oratorical prowess, not action, and as such it demands attention to the inner workings of persuasion. Lemaire wants us to pinpoint how and when Minerva's "eloquence non vaine" fails. Imaginative writing of this kind allows for rhetoric to stall or halt production, to linger on the rhetorical interaction, especially when expectations of oratorical excellence are high, as is the case here.

There remains the third of the main elements of the rhetorical interaction: audience. The audience, as I have said above, is part of the problem of representing eloquence. A reading public cannot be directly manipulated in the same way that a diegetical audience can be, written to respond in a given way to prove eloquence's full power. Lemaire has Paris play his part by being overwhelmed and stunned into silence, a "statue immobile" transformed and persuaded by the full visual and oral performances of eloquence and beauty presented to him (1: 249). If these goddesses are so eloquent that they mute their diegetical audience, how can Lemaire 'save' his reading audience from the same eloquent, otherworldly ravishment to which he has exposed his hero? The mechanics of imaginative prose writing allow for a narrator who intervenes to comment upon the process, thus exposing, and in some cases even ridiculing, the poor person who falls for this kind of performance. This multiplying of audiences allows the writer to use the diegetic audience to influence how the non-diegetic reader interprets the scene of the rhetorical interaction. Such a reader takes pleasure not only in perceiving the rhetorical techniques of the three goddesses as the *Illustrations* lingers over them, but also in not being in Paris's position.

To varying extents and employing different devices, the writers of my study all place their readers in a position of immunity against eloquence, at least once removed from experiencing the 'dangers' of eloquence themselves. Paris becomes the screen through which we experience eloquence at a safe distance. For this purpose, Lemaire summons Mercury, the voice of the prologue to the *Illustrations* and the god of eloquence himself. Mercury rouses Paris from his extraordinary silence to tell him what must be done when confronted by such a performance: "Noble sang Troyen, combien que ceste aventure te soit autant douteuse, comme esmervueillable, neantmoins... il te faut icy desployer la tresample sagacit  de ton entendement, et la prudence de iuger, dont tu es renomm  par tout le monde..." (1: 249). Lemaire shows his readers how rhetorical power works and what it is about that power that concerns him, but he also encourages the exercise of prudential judgment, a form of self-defense that counteracts such attacks on the mind.²¹ This is the sort of writer-reader complicity that is a hallmark of representing eloquence in imaginative writing. Venus's eloquence is not meant to work on us because we are smarter than that; no chains drag us by our ears after an eloquent (and unscrupulous) speaker like Venus. Paris's example prepares us via juxtaposition to be more discerning about promises expressed in such potent language. Minerva's failure to convince consequently magnifies Paris's failure as a judge.

²¹ For Victoria Kahn, this is the "central assumption of the humanist rhetorical tradition," that "reading is a form of prudence or of deliberative rhetoric" that requires engagement with its reader's reason and judgment (*Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism* 11). See also Kinney, *Continental Humanist Rhetoric*. I will discuss the idea of judgment and the study of rhetoric as forms of self-defense in chapter 2.

Eloquence is usually at its best when we cannot see what it is doing. Humanist treatises aim to demystify rhetoric and make it a controllable tool by laying bare its underlying architecture of rules and principles, so that eloquence too becomes an exploitable art. Lemaire here exposes eloquence to view, allowing us to judge and pick apart the performance. He also tellingly directs us toward the kind of eloquence that he prizes most: Minerva's eloquence is the most valuable because it is good and right, even if it is not the most persuasive. His focus on Minerva's failure is carried out through Venus's triumph, resulting in a productive meditation on the uses and misuses of eloquence, an otherwise neutral tool, and how the rhetorical interaction becomes a battle of wills and ethics; we are called to fight against eloquence rather than fighting for it as an unquestioned literary-cultural ideal. As Paolo Valesio says in *Novantiqua*, any optimistic view of language, such as that found in humanist treatises, is "standing on its head" and "must be turned right up again" (22). The early directional poetics found in the *Illustrations* – not turning "gauche" with Venus when the "chemin" of Minerva or Juno is the better option – conveys an overall concern about language and writing problems of the early sixteenth century in France, ones that amplify the tricky relationship between a language ideal and a writing reality attempting to respond discursively to the demand of living up to that ideal.

III. French Prose and *Translatio imperii et studii et eloquentiae*

What does the failure of eloquence tell us about vernacular literary production in the early modern period? Investigating the Renaissance concept of eloquence involves not only what happens when eloquence is represented in written words, but also what happens when it is represented in written French. This dissertation addresses issues intimately tied to this problem: the French Renaissance's twin projects of 'making eloquence French' and 'making French eloquent' that correspond with the fine-tuning of both French literature and the French language. If eloquence as a humanist ideal is rejected from imaginative writing, is Classical eloquence no longer the end goal of French writing? In other words, is the failure of eloquence linguistic and literary as well as ideological, or does it rather signal a paradigm shift in criteria for a strong vernacular and vernacular writing? This section addresses the historical and cultural context of attitudes toward language in France in the sixteenth century, specifically the fear of linguistic and literary weakness and failure. This process involves the maturation of the French language into a proper vehicle for French literature, the quest for a French eloquence on par with its Greek and Latin predecessors, and shifts in literary forms that echo these attempts at eloquence.

The refinement of the vernacular became an explicitly national poetic mission with Joachim Du Bellay's 1549 *Deffence et illustration de la langue française*.²² However, there is earlier evidence of a desire for a strong French language to support French literature. My project therefore traces out the prehistory of the modernist linguistic ideals of the Pléiade that favor a strong vernacular over the culturally prestigious Latin and Greek. Whatever shape this vernacular takes, it is expected to also support France's national literature, specifically poetry in

²² For discussions of Du Bellay, *La Deffence et illustration de la langue française*, poetics, and nationhood, see Ferguson, "The Exile's Defense" and *Trials of Desire*, 18-53; F. Gray, *La poétique de Du Bellay*; Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* 59-76; Coleman, *The Chaste Muse* 5-26; Greene, *The Light in Troy* 189-196; Meerhoff, 49-172; Hampton, *Literature and Nation* 19-22, 150-158. Ferguson's contextualization of the *Deffence* by evoking Barthélémy Aneau's response to it in 1551 is especially useful in exposing Du Bellay's (and the Pléiade's) elitism. Aneau contends that the French vernacular is alive and well. He accuses Du Bellay of wanting to become a *Hercules factitius*, a man of letters masquerading as a man of arms without actual "noble labor" to pursue (*Trials of Desire* 18-19).

the case of the Pléiade but, by extension, prose as well. Classical eloquence, language, literature, and a sense of national identity find a connection in this moment in France's history. To borrow Terence Cave's terms once more, I take note of "fissures" visible in imaginative writing within this landscape, prior to any single great historical turning point, that portray a culture at odds with growing expectations surrounding its language and its capacity to maintain its literature.²³ Eloquence, the exercise of public language, must be transferred and adapted as new literary forms, particularly those written in prose, enter the mainstream of literary production in a way that they had not before in the vernacular. This clash then plays out in literary forms that are hybrid by nature, defying the characteristics of any one genre of writing. As such, eloquence extends to literature the very adaptability inherent to that classical ideal, just as French was in its first steps toward becoming more regulated and defined by use rather than by ornament and abundance.

The transfer from the highly Latinate language of the Rhétoriciens to the baroque vernacular of Montaigne is not an effortless one. Thus it is important to my study that I now situate my analysis within the context of discussions about national language and style: that is, conceptions of style and prescriptivist attitudes toward how French literary works should be written. 'Style' here refers to the distinctive appearance that the vernacular takes on in a particular text, whether it is riddled with regionalisms or weighed down by Latin constructions. Style also refers to delineations between high, middle, and low styles, the uses of which entail adapting substance and lexicon to the audience and the occasion; style is therefore a subcategory of *decorum*. Style is a topic that has concerned French writers since the Middle Ages. It becomes a singular focus in the sixteenth century, predominantly in debates on imitation that are integral to the humanists' relationship to the Classical past.²⁴ The debate between the Ciceronians and the anti-Ciceronians, for instance, centers on the extent to which a writer should imitate Cicero. Most modern scholars interested in style research texts published in the second half of the sixteenth century, where significant changes take place, but I focus on earlier attitudes toward eloquence that shape the style and imaginative writing to come. Ultimately, I interrogate how the demands of eloquence are adapted to prose styles and how they contribute to new ideas about language and literature; that is, not merely as a way to explore rhetoric but also a way to talk about the coming into being of a French eloquence that defines itself by limiting what classical eloquence can do. The styles of the writers of my corpus – Jean Lemaire de Belges and Hélienne de Crenne in particular – come into question in a post-*Deffence* world that defines its projects concerning language and literature as a reaction against their stylistic and formal choices. What is it about the pre-*Deffence* landscape that prompts changes to vernacular literary production made in the subsequent decades, where eloquence is increasingly equated with only style? I argue that the source is the stances toward eloquence evident in my corpus: these texts attempt to make eloquence French through restricting Classical eloquence, in a Latinized French and in persistent considerations given to the nature of language and persuasion. Their experiments with eloquence trigger a reevaluation of the demands of Classical eloquence, and they conclude that while French literature is indisputably rhetorical in nature, it cannot be eloquent consistent with Classical standards.

In light of recent studies on English Renaissance rhetoric and eloquence, it has become more and more pressing in Renaissance studies to distinguish one 'national rhetoric' from

²³ See *Pré-histoires*. Cave's "prehistory" denotes a place where traces of change are beginning to be sketched out. He also refers to such places as "fêlures" (fissures) that eventually break open into a "seuil" (threshold).

²⁴ Jenkins 35. See also Shuger; Plett.

another despite their common rhetorical heritage. England's story is particularly striking because, to begin with, English was not taken very seriously as a language. France at least had the advantage of having a prominent vernacular in the sixteenth century.²⁵ For England, both in treatises and in imaginative writing, it appears that both 'making eloquence English' and 'making English eloquent' involve figurations of violence, rape, theft, and, eventually, disenchantment with the power and utility of Classical rhetoric. This process also necessitated a virtual rejection of the idea of a Classical inheritance as literary endeavors leaned more toward prose, considered more English than the borrowed Continental poetic forms. There are many exceptional books available on English Renaissance rhetoric that have been invaluable to my own research. The following four have written on English eloquence specifically. They bring to light some of the important features of the confrontation between Classical past and Renaissance present that must be taken into consideration when investigating the early modern problem of eloquence and how Classical eloquence was eventually rejected or irreversibly altered. These scholars contribute to a growing field of eloquence studies that looks beyond the use of rhetoric to questions of nationality, national linguistic and literary characteristics, and the relationship of the Renaissance to the past. Sean Keilen argues that England is forced to come to terms with itself not as an 'heir' to Rome, but rather as its conquered and ravished former colony. Thus the process of making eloquence English occasions stories of territorial devastation and sexual violence. Jenny C. Mann focuses on Robin Hood as the figure par excellence for an imitative English eloquence that lives on the margins, stealing and transporting words from one place to another. English material thus struggles against Latin rule the way the outlaw famously did against the crown and the rich. Neil Rhodes discusses how faith in eloquence as a form of linguistic magic wanes in England between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a direct result of the rise of skepticism. Shifts in philosophical attitudes therefore diminish the sway that the ideal of eloquence held over English literary pursuits. Catherine Nicholson writes that the pursuit of eloquence resulted in England's alienation from the Classical world; English writers had to return to linguistic difference and eccentricity in order to find a properly English eloquence. Each of these scholars notes a general nervousness in English treatises about the capacity of the English language to attain the stylistic heights of Latin. This nervousness cannot readily be dismissed by the modesty topos that would excuse the writer of any linguistic or stylistic deficiencies. It certainly does not explain the extent to which English imaginative writing played out these scenarios again and again with such a focus on language.

What I have to say about France and vernacular literary production in France follows similar lines. The trajectory from Rome to France, from Classical eloquence to French eloquence, is not straightforward or untroubled, and its difficulty is explored in imaginative writing. Indeed, for Du Bellay, this trajectory is marked by "progression," but not progress (Ferguson, *Trials* 36). However, there is quite a bit more to say about it in addition to Du Bellay's mid-century command to create a new and invigorated French language that will, in turn, fashion a strong French literature and French nation. Any attempt at making eloquence French or making French eloquent is haunted by misgivings in imaginative writing. I am indebted to the studies mentioned above for obliging me to better articulate what a French eloquence, and the resultant French prose forms and styles, would be. The French narrative, however, is not as straightforward and such apprehension is not as altogether clear or universal in France in the decades under discussion here. In treatises, there is a firm belief in French's

²⁵ For more on the prestige of the European vernaculars, see *Cave, Pré-histoires II* 31, 43.

potential as a strong language in this period and, in some ways, French is treated as already eloquent in all but artfulness.

To begin with, France's relationship with Rome is also occasionally about subjugation, but still one of immense pride. The gallocentric view on rhetoric affirms France's right to rhetoric and eloquence, couched in the very language with which English writers took issue. Take, for instance, this remark on French strength that Fabri uses to illustrate one of his points about substance and style: "La force des Francoys est de merueilleuse admiration; parquoy c'est plus grant gloire a Cesar de les auoir subiuguez" (24). Du Bellay, too, refers to Roman subjugation in this way, reminding the readers of the *Deffence* that the Gauls gave the Romans "plus de honte et dommaige que des autres" (355). The humanist narrative of a more refined French language begins with this very image of conquered "Gaule facunde." The ancient Roman satirist Juvenal talks with disdain about the pervasiveness of the study of rhetoric in *Satire 15*: "Nowadays the whole world has its Greek and Roman Athens. Eloquent Gaul [Gallia facunda] has been teaching the lawyers of Britain" (110-112). The eminent humanist Guillaume Budé, secretary and librarian of François I, speaks of France's reputation for eloquence in his *Institution du prince*. He interprets Juvenal's remark this way:

Anciennement en France on faisoit grant cas d'éloquence comme on trouve en histoire, et à ceste cause Juvenal le satyricque du temps de Domicien le douzième Cesar, appelle France la 'gaule facunde,' et y avoit à Lyon sur le Rosne tous les ans des pris qui se mectoient pour ceulx qui mieulx auroient composé. (88-89)

Thus Juvenal's remark is taken as a sign of French exceptionalism: Rome itself had granted France her own rhetorical legitimacy and established her role and high status in the study of rhetoric in Western Europe.

French humanists writing on language frequently return to the colonizing moment to justify France's unique place in the trajectory of *translatio studii*, that is, the displacement of the intellectual center of Europe from Athens to Rome to Paris, each surpassing its predecessor. The conqueror-conquered relationship provides a sense of security for France in the line from ancient Greece to early modern Europe. French writers acknowledge without fully appreciating the stark colonial and geographic concerns that England confronts more directly. France labors under different assumptions about its relationship to her predecessor Rome, seeing herself as Rome's true heir and imagining the violence of colonization as an acceptable step in her maturation. After all, their most cherished image of eloquence, Hercules Gallicus, is one of force and subjugation. This image encapsulates the force of French eloquence without ever narrating how eloquence came to be French the way that Robin Hood does for England: this figure important to Rome simply came to France. The legend of France's connection to Troy through Francus, one that Lemaire explores in the *Illustrations*, allocates to France a higher position than their rival Italy in the grand scheme of the Classical inheritance, but it does not eliminate France's historical relationship to Rome and its implications. As we shall see in the texts discussed in this dissertation, French writers thematized the rhetorical interaction and were particularly interested in the idea of the transmission of eloquence from one rhetorically-inclined character to another, just as they were inspired by *translatio studii*. Becoming eloquent does not always take place in the classroom. The process is frequently expressed in terms of different forms of conquering, such as non-violent supernatural ravishment or life-altering exposure to a contagion. Eloquence

is often something that you ‘catch’ more than you learn, something you come by without necessarily seeking it out, like an unexpected inheritance.

There is thus a fundamental difference between how France sees her inheritance and language’s potential and how England sees hers. Roman rule gave form to a hardy French material. There is little resultant resistance or resentment in the early decades of the sixteenth century to the idea that Latin’s syntax and lexicon will enrich the French language. Pierre Fabri presents the imposition of Latin rule as a means to curb the native exuberance and abundance of the French vernacular. In other words, Latin, the “science uiverselle... applicable en tous langages,” lends art to French (9). Translating “en françoys toutes les rigles de rethorique” serves as a touchstone for proper French to measure itself (11). Speaking to style and the regularization of French, Fabri instructs French writers to be vigilant about how “ample et abundant” French can be. It is best to use proper terms, those “par noz peres imposez” (30) and language “approuvé par antiquité du temps qui fut dict, pour l’auctorité de celuy qui l’a dit, pour la raison ou sentence qu’il contient, et pour la commune acoustumance de parler de gens entendus” (22). There is no question that Latin will make French a stronger language.

This is still a culture that finds its value in looking to the past – and its vocation. Guillaume Budé’s *Institution du prince* largely spends its time elaborating on the perceived indispensable applicability of humanist studies, particularly the ancient languages. Eloquence is a promise made by humanists. Budé’s focus is to persuade François I of the vital necessity of thinkers who can both understand Greek and Latin and counsel the prince with knowledge acquired from texts in those languages. Budé, who becomes one of the first “lecteurs royaux” of ancient languages (in the future Collège de France) under François I in 1530, even proposes that eloquence may only truly be possible in Greek.²⁶ Therefore, it is imperative that Greek be learned in France so that, one day, a French eloquence can come about under the guidance of scholars such as him. Budé further makes the case for French eloquence by pitting Mercury, representative of Greek eloquence, against Lucian’s Hercules Gallicus: when the French evoke eloquence, they mean the strong, Herculean kind, and not that pretty, Greek kind (89-90). Making eloquence truly French is simply a matter of harnessing the vigor of French eloquence through careful study and knowledge of ancient languages. The number of treatises addressing French language and literature attest to the resolve in the 1540s and 1550s to create a strong prose style anchored in classical notions of eloquence, with force and art combined.²⁷ Prior to those publications, Budé praises François I for this surge of interest and foresees that the king will be known as the patron of this national enterprise: “Et [vous] retirerez [récupérerez] en France l’honneur des bonnes lettres et élégantes... Et serez ou temps avenir le roy surnommé ‘musagètes’... acompagné des neuf muses comme estant leur protecteur” (79). As David O. McNeil observes, the missing ingredient to a latent French eloquence has always been the generosity of patrons, a frequent theme in Budé’s works (43).

²⁶ “... laquelle [Greek] est la plus ample et la plus copieuse et abondante en termes et vocables, de toutes langues dont nous aions congnissance, et en laquelle seule langue, eloquence, qui par les anciens a esté appelée royne des hommes et des sciences, peut pleinement et amplement monstrer et exhiber sa grande puissance et soy estendre de toutes parts... ce qu’elle [eloquence] ne peult faire es autres langues, ne mesmes en la latine, car elle n’abunde copieusement en termes à beaucoup près tant comme sa mère la grecques...” (81).

²⁷ To cite only the major treatises: Thomas Sébillet’s *Art poetique François* (1548), Guillaume des Autel’s *Replique aux furieuses defenses de Louis Meigret* (1548), Du Bellay’s *Deffence* (1549), Barthélemy Aneau’s *Quintil horatien* (1550), and *La Rhetorique françoise* by Antoine Fouquelin, pupil of Ramus (1555). See Huchon, “La Prose d’art” 283.

In the *Institution*, Budé provides several examples from antiquity of men becoming invaluable to sovereigns thanks to their eloquence. These trace out how Budé himself finds an official position and begins a royally sanctioned academic movement thanks to his linguistic and historical knowledge, carving out a space for men such as him to be useful to the king. The example of the Athenian politician and general Themistocles is exceptionally telling. Themistocles, exiled from Athens after the second Persian invasion, eventually finds refuge at the court of the Persian king. There, after learning enough Persian to amaze the king with eloquence in a tongue foreign to him, Themistocles gives an eloquent speech about eloquence and “quelle estime il devoit faire d’élouquence” as a source for all knowledge (99). The Persian king is so pleased that he makes Themistocles very rich. The encounter between Athenian exile and Persian king plays out quite differently in Plutarch’s *Lives*, where Themistocles argues for his individual value in the king’s court. I have yet to find a source that confirms Budé’s version, where Themistocles makes a case for eloquence and not himself. Budé therefore transforms Themistocles’s story into the *Institution du prince* in miniature: the exchange between speaker and sovereign takes place in and about the importance of language(s). Most of Budé’s other stories involve similar trades of patronage and positions of authority for gratitude and knowledge; this kind of trade is presented as fair and equally beneficial to sovereign and subject. Thus when we read such treatises for attitudes toward eloquence and humanist learning, we must take into consideration that they, too, are acts of persuasion aimed at a given public. They wish to paint a specific picture of how the *studia humanitatis* serve the prince and the public good through the calculated creation of a French eloquence. We have, then, two opposing movements: one that seeks to legitimize humanism and the other marginalizes, in imaginative writing, the power of eloquence.

A few decades later, Du Bellay speaks more frankly than Budé about how precisely French can overcome its deficiencies in artfulness and ornamentation to become a stronger vernacular. The *Deffence* aims to create a French style built upon a modern process of imitation without slavish adherence to past models.²⁸ Du Bellay describes French as a poor and naked language, slow to mature but built to last (22). French has flowered but still has not yet born fruit: “... nostre Langue, qui commence encores à fleurir, sans fructifier” (23). He repeatedly refers to French as a language capable of the “elegance, & copie” of Greek and Latin, despite claims to the contrary that French is too plain and simple to be elegant (33). Du Bellay asserts that French can grow and produce but to do so it does need Greek and Latin, without which no great vernacular work can come about (42). Du Bellay cites only a few French models to imitate in place of Greek or Latin, though he looks forward to the day when there are more native sources for imitation than there are foreign ones (32). Of the oft-maligned Rhétoriciens, whom the Pléiade criticized for charlatanism, Du Bellay mentions only Jean Lemaire de Belges’s *Illustrations*. Interestingly for a treatise that pertains primarily to poetic production, Du Bellay calls more attention to Lemaire’s prose than his poetry, locating within the *Illustrations* a source for the enrichment of the language and the celebration of the French. He thus appears to sanction prose, though he does not speak of it directly, as a productive space for interrogating language and eloquence. Fashioning a strong vernacular involves measuring French against itself as well as against Latin rule, which is increasingly set aside as a means to enrich French.

Du Bellay thus follows Budé, Fabri, and others, though his stance magnifies the gallocentrism of the project for eloquence by making it a poetic movement. Du Bellay’s closing command to “pillage” the ruins of Rome evokes the activities of Robin Hood in England’s

²⁸ See Greene, *The Light in Troy*.

narrative of domesticating eloquence for the sake of the vernacular (89). Still, Du Bellay is more interested in figurations such as plant cultivation and digestion to describe his project. These figurations show two or more substances becoming one, as opposed to the clunky “masonry” effect that results from taking apart and piecing back together the edifices of the past: not theft like with Robin Hood, but absorption (43). Du Bellay’s metaphors for imitation are akin to the contagion and exposure metaphors I used earlier to describe how writers depict the transfer of eloquence in imaginative writing. Prose or verse without eloquence is “nudz, manques, & debiles,” and translated eloquence (say, a French edition of Cicero) is “contrainte, froide, et de mauvaise grace” (27-28).²⁹ Du Bellay’s focus is on the effects such an eloquent vernacular should have on the reader, frequently referring to the figure of the orator as a way to explain what he seeks for the poet or even the translator. He redeploys one of the criteria for eloquence – the reader’s affective response – as the gauge for good poetry:

Pour conclure ce propos, saiches Lecteur, que celuy sera veritablement le Poëte, que je cherche en nostre Langue, qui me fera indigner, apayser, ejouyr, douloir, aimer, hayr, admirer, etonner, bref, qui tiendra la bride de mes Affections, me tournant ça et la à son plaisir. (73)

In his design for future French poetic achievement, Du Bellay appropriates the discourse of eloquence: the ability to produce emotion is the talent of both the orator and the poet, a skill set endowed by both “rhétorique” and “seconde rhétorique.”

However, the very problem of representing eloquence in language – a resistant, desiring, feeling, thinking, reading audience – is still in play. An outright rejection of Classical eloquence in French does not take place in non-imaginative writing such as treatises until later in the century. Yet somehow French eloquence never does pass muster in this form. For some, French writers ignore Fabri’s warning against putting style before substance, resulting in a flowery but feeble French. Michel de Montaigne, one of several writers who express their extreme wariness of language instead of the usual optimism, while arguing for a vital shift in primacy from eloquence to action, writes: “Fy de l’éloquence qui nous laisse envie de soy, non des choses; si ce n’est qu’on die que celle de Cicero, estant en si extreme perfection, se donne corps elle mesme.”³⁰ Latin eloquence, then, somehow manages to find physical substance that can emerge from the page and deliver. French eloquence leaves readers unsatisfied with anything other than the notion of eloquence itself, as it can only pick up the pieces of the Latin text-body, “comme fit Esculape des membres d’Hippolyte,” and pray that they can give it life again (*Deffence* 43-44). The poet and treatise-writer Jacques de la Taille’s “Au Lecteur” (from *La maniere de faire des vers en François, comme en grec et en latin*, 1573) is particularly telling in this regard: “Mais que sçavons-nous si la hardiesse, le sçavoir et eloquence de notre temps ne mettra point nostre

²⁹ See also Cave, *Cornucopian Text*, 62-63.

³⁰ “Considération sur Cicéron” (246). The main detractors of rhetoric, such as Michel de Montaigne in France and John Jewel in England, insisted on rhetoric’s subversive potential in politics, one of the main points of contention in any debate on rhetoric (Rebhorn, *Emperor* 97). Valesio describes the primary objections to rhetoric quite succinctly: “In a classic instance of the ‘damned-if-you-do-and-damned-if-you-don’t’ principle, rhetoric ends up being attacked on the one side for its rigidity of stereotypes that allegedly constraint and imprison linguistic expression, and on the other side for its supposed frivolity, its skimming the surface of language” (36). Montaigne’s attitude toward eloquence is notably one of the few issues on which he is consistent; nonetheless, anti-rhetoric is also a form of rhetoric and employs many of the same strategies (Valesio 41ff).

langue hors de page, jusques à la depestrer [dégager, se débarasser] de ce qui l'engarde de voller aussi haute que la Grecque et la Romaine?" (Han 81).

But let us return to before the publication of the *Deffence*, before Classical eloquence starts to be reduced to style and delivery, when the path to a stronger vernacular was still a road leading to Rome. The English Renaissance scholars I mention above speak to how conflict and uneasiness about domesticating eloquence produces storytelling as well as reflections on language. The same goes for the writers of my French corpus. On the narrative level, characters act out the transmission of eloquence and put restrictions on its reputed power, such as showing Minerva's failure when confronted by Venus in the *Illustrations*. These texts single out states such as madness and love that are by nature resistant to persuasion. In the case of François Rabelais, characters such as the Limousin schoolboy render possible the performance of academic linguistic change and its effects on everyday communication.

On the stylistic level, these writers enrich the French language with Latin (and sometimes Italian) to varying degrees and in different discursive ways, sometimes even luxuriating in the ease with which they can pass from one style to another. The three authors of my corpus are concerned with style, and so are the people who criticize them. The Pléiade gave the Rhétoriciens a reputation for cultivating verbose styles. Lemaire, a late member of the Rhétoriciens and an early humanist, is simultaneously grouped with the Rhétoriciens and praised by Du Bellay. Hélisenne de Crenne borrows heavily from Lemaire's highly Latinate style, to such an extent that Étienne Pasquier erroneously claims that Rabelais's "écolier limousin" was based on her and that Rabelais's old poet Raminagrobis is Lemaire.³¹ (91). Thus a member of the Pléiade groups these three writers together because of language. To that end, I mention in passing the work of Alexandre Lorian, who performs a careful linguistic study of changes in the vernacular in *Tendances stylistiques dans la prose narrative française au XVI^e siècle*. Lorian signals two major tendencies in the decades under study in this dissertation: "emphase," or the desire to amplify and exaggerate that often leads to verbosity, and "imbrication," or wanting to tie everything together, often in long sentences (9). Eventually, such difficult constructions become simpler and lead to Jacques Amyot's injunction to use a French that is based on everyday usage. I shall discuss this further in the coda on Michel de Montaigne and his concepts of style addressed in the *Essais*, of the latter half of the sixteenth century.

On the formal and thematic levels, these writers engage with the procedures of eloquence and persuasion themselves. In all three of these cases, the texts become acts of persuasion. In doing so, they take on different forms and discourses as necessary to maintain their claims about eloquence, rhetoric, and language in general. Like an eloquent speech being adapted according to the requirements of *decorum* to maintain its affective hold over its audience, these texts borrow discourses from other genres to make their points. The Renaissance encouraged "textual promiscuity," after all, so this hybridity is just another arm in the arsenal of persuasion, wherein longer prose narratives build upon the study of rhetoric and eloquence (Cave, *Pré-histoires* 12). Lemaire, Rabelais, and Crenne operate in a liminal generic space between history, fable, chronicle, autobiography, novel, romance, and other kinds of discourses. Ultimately, I show that a feature of the beginnings of a discourse about imaginative writing is to interrogate the very place of eloquence within it.

³¹ *Choix de lettres* 91. Mireille Huchon explains Raminagrobis's Rhétoricien connection in Rabelais's complete works (1404 n. 5).

Chapter Two
Mercury's Band: Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Illustrations*
and Dangerous Persuasion in Epic/History

Ces choses ne sont pas feintes par maniere
poëtique: mais sont autorisees historialement
par vn tres-noble escripteur
(*Illustrations* 1: 325).

In many respects, Jean Lemaire de Belges and his *Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitéz de Troie* signal a beginning point in sixteenth-century discourses on French language and literature.³² One of the later Rhétoriqueurs, Lemaire is considered one of France's first humanists. He encountered Italian humanism in his voyages to Italy on behalf of his patrons in the first decade of the sixteenth century, returning with texts he claimed to have 'discovered' in Rome, texts he valued as vast historical storehouses that he applied to the *Illustrations* (2: 268; Doutrepoint xi). Paul Zumthor has demonstrated that the Rhétoriqueurs and humanism share similar features, particularly a sense of historical consciousness and the valorization of eloquence, so it is difficult to determine where one movement ends and the other begins (49, 102-103). Moreover, as Cynthia J. Brown has shown, the Rhétoriqueurs bridge changes in technology, shifting from manuscript to print as printing took over literary production (*Poets, Patrons, and Printers* 5). Printing changed the relationships between writers and their texts and between writers and their book producers and patrons, and Lemaire was one of the first to demonstrate an intense interest in printed book production and the potential uses of paratextual space to construct his authorial identity (47).

A few decades after Lemaire, two Pléiade poets designate him as the first in the line of 'modern' French writers to enrich the language. In the preface to his 1541 translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Jacques Peletier du Mans says that "... nostre langue François... commença à s'anoblir par le moien des *Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitéz de Troie*, composées par Jan le Maire de Belges... digne d'estre leu plus que nul qui escrit ci devant" (*Critical Prefaces* 114). Joachim Du Bellay concurs in his 1549 treatise on a national French poetic endeavor, the *Deffence et illustration*: "Bien diray-je, que Jan le Maire de Belges, me semble avoir premier illustré & les Gaules, & la Langue Francoise: luy donnant beaucoup de motz, & manieres de parler poëtiques, qui ont bien servy mesmes aux plus excellens de notre Tens" (49). Lemaire certainly influenced the writing of the other two primary writers of my corpus, François Rabelais and Hélienne de Crenne, both by the content of the *Illustrations* (giant genealogies and love stories particularly) and its distinct "prose inspirée et poétique" (Lecointe 14).

It is in this light that I frame my discussion of Lemaire and his *Illustrations*, as a beginning point for French humanism, for print culture, for the rising standards for the vernacular, and, most importantly, for an emerging discourse of imaginative writing that dramatizes anxieties about Classical eloquence as that kind of writing begins to define itself

³² I reference J. Stecher's four-volume *Œuvres de Jean Lemaire de Belges* by volume and page number. The "roman de Troie" portion begins in book one, chapter 19 and ends with the conclusion of book two (Stecher's volume one and part of volume two). It is likely that Lemaire had been working on this project since 1500. Book one was published in 1510, book two in 1512, and book three in 1513 (Doutrepoint xi). He wanted his patron Anne de Bretagne (the queen of France) to commission a fourth volume, about the Greeks and the Turks, but Anne was no longer enticed by crusade writing so the immense project of the *Illustrations* concluded with book three (Minois 454).

against other genres. I argue that Lemaire uses the “roman de Troie” section of the political and historical *Illustrations* to explore these anxieties in the context of the fate of the greater European community. Indeed, all three of my primary writers are concerned about community, in increasingly smaller scale, and the commonplaces about eloquence’s traditional civilizing role within the community. While both Rabelais and Crenne recount adventures around European space as part of their efforts to put pressure on the idea of eloquence within the parameters of a given community, Lemaire’s project is much vaster, in time as well as space. The redemptive project of the *Illustrations* – a complete history of Europe written in the name of a possible European unity in Lemaire’s day – amplifies the repercussions of eloquence’s failures and successes. He uses the past prophetically to address the present in terms of fate, national pride and even superiority, and ethics. The thematization of eloquence is a key component of the organization of his vast project of erudition.

I showed in my introductory chapter that Lemaire focuses on negative depictions of successful eloquence, thus conveying certain concerns about ethically appropriate uses of such speech. Paris, “par jugement abusif,” chooses Venus over Juno and Minerva at his famous Judgment (2: 2). Paris’s choice between three competing models of eloquence and persuasion instigates his personal downward spiral into corruption that ultimately ends in the destruction of Troy. Within the epic framework of the “roman de Troie,” even idealized eloquence cannot override fate. For Troy to be destroyed, Minerva’s “eloquence non vaine” must first fail. Lemaire therefore capitalizes on the foregone conclusion of Troy’s destruction to showcase just how dangerous and seductive eloquence can be. Rabelais and Crenne depict characters that make eloquent speeches at crucial moments that do not really change anything, thereby revealing eloquence to be a limited “fantasy of power” in which the forcefulness of words cannot always inspire people to action and virtue (Rebhorn, *Emperor* 15). This is the very hallmark of the literary discourse whose prehistory I trace in this dissertation, and its beginnings, I contend, are found in a discourse of eloquence in which the wrong kinds of eloquence succeed all too well. In the “roman de Troie” section of the *Illustrations*, speeches are made and everything changes. Eloquence is the mechanism by which fate operates and secures Troy’s destruction.

In this chapter, I will discuss what happens to eloquence when it is part of such a project of history and politics, located somewhere between, as my epigraph suggests, the “feintise” of poetry and the authority of history-writing and the histories that Lemaire consults: “Ces choses ne sont pas feintes par maniere poëtique: mais sont autorisees historialement par vn tres-noble escripteur” (1: 325). The stated purpose of the *Illustrations* is to recount European history and royal genealogy from the founding of the European kingdoms by Noah and his sons after the Flood to the death of Charlemagne in 814 and the coronation of Louis the Pious, king of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor. Between Noah and Louis, Lemaire lingers at length – indeed, most of the *Illustrations* – over the fall of Troy, establishing the Trojan origins of the great houses of Europe, particularly of France and Burgundy, the provenances of his two principal patrons. Alongside this genealogical flattery, history and mythology are put to political use. Lemaire argues for the reunification of France (“France Occidentale”) and Germany (“France Orientale”) based on their shared lineage (“extraction toute pure Herculienne et Troyenne”) and he pushes for a crusade against the Turks to reclaim Trojan lands (2: 469). Against the backdrop of the Italian Wars (both real and cultural), the Franco-Burgundian conflict, and tensions between France and the Holy Roman Empire, Lemaire elaborates on a vision of the greater European community united by blood and a common heritage. He does this under the very aegis of Mercury, god of eloquence, who ‘authors’ the prologues to each of the *Illustrations*’ three

parts. Therefore eloquence (figured by Mercury) presides over the text in addition to being as one of Lemaire's thematic interests, as it is used as the main catalyst for the events that unfold in the "roman de Troie."

I organize this chapter into two sections. In the first, I contextualize the Rhétoriciens and historiography in the early modern period to show that what we would consider genre mixing (history, epic, *roman de chevalerie*, mythological narrative) was common practice for history-writing and was used to suit political agendas. This is the necessary background information for understanding the *Illustrations* as a text very much bound to its time and the social status of its writer. As a result, we can detect more readily the multiple generic textures of Lemaire's project because, as I argue in the second section, Lemaire capitalizes on the enclosed world of epic and its teleology to develop his concerns about eloquence in a world where such speech is given free rein. The Trojan War is prime material for Lemaire to explore many extreme, ravishing powers of persuasion, of which Venus's triumph over Paris is just one example. Lemaire's text therefore inaugurates a reassessment of eloquence as a feature of literature itself.

I. "Forger une histoire totale": Rhétoriciens, History-Writing, and the *Illustrations*

The *Illustrations* is, first and foremost, a historical and political project. To read it, we must first understand the circumstances in which it was written, namely the politicized nature of the Rhétoriciens' literary production and of early modern historiography itself, to better understand how Lemaire puts the Classical notion of eloquence to use in such a necessarily hybrid text.

Lemaire belonged to a group of "orateurs et rhétoriciens" that lived and wrote from about 1460 to 1520 in France and Burgundy. Although the writers of this group do not constitute the same kind of unified movement that their poetic successors, the Pléiade, represent, they have been known collectively as the Grands Rhétoriciens since the nineteenth century for their adherence to the tradition of "grande rhétorique" (Rigolot, *Poésie et Renaissance* 83). The Rhétoriciens were poets, secretaries, historiographers, chroniclers, propagandists, translators, and clerks, attached to ducal and royal courts that increasingly took men of letters into their service. They are often divided into two generations. The first generation's prominent members are Georges Chastellain, his pupil Jean Molinet, Jean Robertet, Octavien de Saint-Gelais, and Jean Meschinot, all associated with the ducal courts of Burgundy, Brittany, and Bourbon. Those of the second generation – Jean Marot (father of Clément), Guillaume Cretin, Pierre Gringoire, and Molinet's nephew Lemaire – were attached to the French royal court (Brown, *The Shaping of History* 1). The Rhétoriciens are primarily known for their wordplay in poetry: for instance, puns, linguistic and typographic experimentation, etymological play, poems composed of only one- or two-syllable words, and riddles. This verbal ingenuity was understood as a sign of a lack of imagination and real talent following the rise of the Pléiade. This judgment of the Rhétoriciens as charlatans was encouraged by literary critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve in the nineteenth century, until modern scholars such as François Rigolot, Paul Zumthor, and François Cornilliat began to reappraise the Rhétoriciens' literary output.³³

³³ Rigolot, *Poésie et Renaissance* 84. See Rigolot, *Poétique et Onomastique* and *Le Texte de la Renaissance*; Zumthor, *Le Masque et la lumière*; and Cornilliat, *Or ne mens*. The early twentieth-century historian and literary critic Gustave Lanson's assessment of the Rhétoriciens is indicative of the kinds of studies that followed Sainte-Beuve: "Jamais décadence littéraire n'a produit de plus misérables, de plus baroques pauvretés, [ni]... en telle

The main task of the Rhétoriciens was in reality political, not playful: gaining public support for their patrons by controlling the country's "history-in-the-making" through writing in praise of the prince and his actions in verse and prose (Brown, *Shaping of History* 3). Gabrielle M. Spiegel has demonstrated that vernacular prose historiography had been "a powerful vehicle for the expression of ideological assertion" in France beginning with its rise in the thirteenth century (2). Rhétoricien history-writing is similarly meant to serve more than just the purpose of keeping historical records (annals, chronicles) or exploring deeper interests in the past by, for instance, tracing the history of a nation in a lengthy narrative (history).³⁴

For the purposes of propaganda and a burgeoning sense of nationalism, mythological *fabula*, like the Trojan War, are folded into *historia* and considered historical (Bietenholz 157). The processes of Euhemerism, a rationalizing approach to mythology, incorporate the 'facts' that have been transferred from the past to the present in fabulous garb. As Zumthor says, "Celle-ci [*fabula*], dans le récit historiographique, re-produit une 'vérité externe, façonnée, artificialisée, reconstruite en vertu d'une vraisemblance morale'" (78). This absorption of moralized mythological narrative occurs even though history was already in a centuries-long process of defining itself against the genres of epic and romance (Spiegel 3). As of Lemaire's time, there were no clear and firm delineations between the prerogatives of history and those of imaginative writing: each partakes of the other. For instance, Erasmus of Rotterdam may have been the only writer of the first half of the sixteenth century to distinguish historical persons from epic heroes, who "have no basis in fact," as he explains in *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum*, but this is a style guide and not a manual for historiography (Bietenholz 154). As a sign of change regarding the place of Troy in history-writing, we can consider Pierre Ronsard's 1587 *Franciade*: inspired by Lemaire to attempt a similar project of tracing France's legendary Trojan origins, Ronsard nevertheless frames it as a poetic, as opposed to a verifiably historical, glorification of France.

Early modern practices of writing history do not see the beginnings of codification or methodology until the second half of the sixteenth century. Until then, and to a lesser extent after, history is seen as a form of rhetoric and, as such, it partakes of most other genres to produce a history that is truthful, useful, and moving; history deploys rhetorical skills to educate a given readership (Momigliano 14). The focus of writing about the past, then, is the present and the reader, and not necessarily historical veracity and objectivity (Rothstein, "When Fiction is Fact" 366). As John Burrow has suggested, humanist historiography takes more from imaginative writing – its narrative structures, its turn to rhetorical art, its thematic coherence, and its emulation of classical models – than it does from the impartial methods associated later with the writing of history, beginning with Jean Bodin. History's association with literary arts and models therefore distinguish it somewhat from the more local record-keeping prerogatives of annals and chronicles.³⁵ History, in sum, is considered a rhetorical and literary art until it excludes, more aggressively, the literary and rhetorical prerogatives of persuasion in favor of

abondance toutes sortes de fruits monstrueux et grotesques, le plus étonnant fouillis de poésie naïve, aristocratique, pédantesque, amphigourique, allégorique, mythologique, métaphysique, un laborieux et prétentieux fatras où les subtilités creuses et les ineptes jeux de mots tenaient lieu d'inspiration et d'idées" (cited in Minois 453-454).

³⁴ However, as we know from Rabelais, "chronique" can also signal episodic tales of adventures.

³⁵ Burrow 219. For more on Bodin's classification and codification of history and histories, including his rejection of the use of rhetoric to make the reading of history pleasurable, see Kelley, *Faces of History* (197-200). For the differences between annals, chronicles, and histories, see Burrow, chapter 18. For the rise of the vernacular prose chronicle in France, see Spiegel. For the development of the *artes historicae* into its canonical form the second half of the sixteenth century, see Dubois, *La conception de l'histoire en France au seizième siècle, 1560-1610*; Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*; Grafton, *What Was History?*, chapter 1.

veracity.³⁶ This is therefore the culture in which Lemaire writes his history, where ‘history’ signifies a political, historical, moral, propagandistic, and rhetorical glimpse into the past. Lemaire stands firmly in this tradition of reading history allegorically and reading histories collectively as a means to educate.

The *Illustrations* was further shaped by influences beyond its writer, that is, the specific agendas of Lemaire’s two powerful patrons.³⁷ Lemaire participated first in the literary activities of ducal courts, as the “indiciaire,” or court chronicler, of Marguerite d’Autriche³⁸ in Burgundy and the Netherlands; the *Illustrations* is framed as something for her to read in peacetime (1: 11). Then, just as conflict was rising once more between Burgundy (and the Empire) and France, Lemaire became the historiographer of Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne³⁹ at the French royal court.⁴⁰ The *Illustrations* was originally titled *Les Singularitez de Troie*, intended to offer an account of only the Trojan War as a means to interpret the exemplarity of its participants. At the request of Marguerite d’Autriche, the text was expanded to support and encourage the peaceful rapport between Burgundy and France (Jodogne 405). For both Walter Stephens and Marian Rothstein, this adjustment accounts for the shift from the matter-of-fact tone of old chronicles in the beginning of the *Illustrations*, influenced by the findings of Annius of Viterbo, to the “ornate, elegant, and poetic” prose of the “roman de Troie.”⁴¹ Lemaire wanted to write a history of Troy and then had to incorporate that intent into a larger, slightly different project.

Lemaire’s history-writing in the *Illustrations* involves two principal procedures. The first is to weave together history and mythology (as we would call them) to elaborate on a political and moral point about a desirable European unity. He does this through the lens of a legendary nation’s destruction, prioritizing the Trojan cycle, or the rise and fall of Troy, the adventures and

³⁶ See Gossman 3-6, 227-256; Grafton, *What Was History?* 31.

³⁷ The *Illustrations* is dedicated to his patrons under the auspices of the three goddesses of Paris’s Judgment: book one, Marguerite d’Autriche and Minerva; book two, Anne’s daughter Claude de France and Venus; and book three, Anne de Bretagne and Juno. For more on Anne as a patron, see Brown, *Poets, Patrons, and Printers*; “Like Mother, Like Daughter: The Blurring of Royal Imagery in Books for Anne de Bretagne and Claude de France;” and *The Queen’s Library*.

³⁸ Lemaire’s employment under his first major patron placed him on the side of Burgundy and the Holy Roman Empire versus France. Marguerite d’Autriche (1480-1530) was the daughter of Holy Emperor Maximilian (a Hapsburg) and Marie de Bourgogne; she was the aunt of the future Emperor Charles V, who was her ward when Lemaire was in her entourage. When she was a child, her father and King Louis XI of France arranged a marriage between Marguerite and Louis’s son (the future Charles VIII) as part of the Treaty of Arras (1482) that was to resolve the Burgundian crisis of succession, giving Burgundy to France as part of Marguerite’s dowry. This marriage did not take place, and there was therefore some further resentment between Marguerite and the French court. Lemaire became her “indiciaire” (secretary, court poet, propagandist) at some point in or after 1501, when she was married to Phillibert II, Duke of Savoy, and while she was regent of the Hapsburg Netherlands (Doutrepoint xi).

³⁹ Anne de Bretagne (1477-1514) was, at one point, Marguerite d’Autriche’s stepmother. She was twice crowned queen of France. Charles VIII married her when he became king, even though he had been engaged to Marguerite since she was a child. After his death in 1498, Anne married his cousin and successor, Louis XII. Lemaire became historiographer for the French court in 1512; in France, he published the final two volumes of the *Illustrations* in 1512 and 1513 (Doutrepoint xi). The change in patronage influenced Lemaire’s project: it was begun when the idea of “Burgundian unity” appealed to his patron, but completed when France and Burgundy (and the Empire) saw each other once more as antagonists. See Rothstein, “Politics and Unity.”

⁴⁰ Doutrepoint xi. Marian Rothstein finds that “indiciaire” was the commonly used term for historians before the reign of Louis XII; during and after his reign, historians began to use “historiographe, historiens, orateurs, poète” (“When Fiction is Fact” 361).

⁴¹ Rothstein, “When Fiction is Fact” 362; Stephens, *Giants in Those Days* 144ff. Stephens defines the *Illustrations* generically in this way: book one is apart Annian history, part pastoral prose romance; book two is an epic paraphrase; and book three is a historical treatise (144).

wanderings of Trojan and Greek heroes during the war and back at home. Troy is a useful narrative in that it contains manifold and rich possibilities of allegorical interpretation, as Lemaire acknowledges in his first prologue (1: 4). It provides a vast universe of exempla and opportunities for thematizing rhetorical interactions: in other words, the “fructueuse substance sous lescorce des fables artificielles” that Lemaire hopes to clarify (1:4). Lemaire’s second procedure is the evaluation and organization of *histories* to make one complete *history* (“forger une histoire totale,” 2: 59-60). There are multiple source texts to draw from in order to produce one ambitious and definitive document relating the story of Troy, and Lemaire has to prove that he can handle the immense amount of material that is already available.⁴² Walter Stephens and Judy Kem have both explored how Lemaire assesses, uses, and ‘corrects’ his source materials. They show how Lemaire is not just a passive compiler or translator of other textual authorities, but, instead, he alters and even falsifies those other versions for his own purposes and for the creation of his authority. One of the more striking of his citation practices is, as Stephens shows, to anonymize some of his sources, thus obscuring, for instance, the more negative conclusions that Annius of Viterbo makes about France.⁴³ As a historiographer, then, Lemaire employs some shady practices to ‘illustrate’ Gaul, including misrepresenting his sources.

In summary, then, Lemaire has several historiographical objectives in the *Illustrations*, which Judy Kem helpfully labels historical, political, moral, and linguistic (7). Lemaire approaches each of these connected objectives as a historiographer who, by virtue of his social status as much as his inclination and the practices of the time, must write politically in favor of a specific nation.⁴⁴ His historical objective is to trace European history and write a definitive version of the Trojan War, “clerement interpretee” in order to counter poetic “feintise” (1: 5). His political agenda involves praising his patrons, encouraging peace efforts between European nations, and pushing for a crusade against the Turks.⁴⁵ As Bietenholz points out, the Turks were also considered descendants of the Trojans until they became a military threat in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Lemaire for that reason removes them from the Trojan family tree and frames them as usurpers of the Trojan lands that rightfully belong to the Christian Western

⁴² Lemaire favors the accounts of Dictys and Dares, short narratives in prose that only survived in Latin translation and that were very influential to medieval versions of the Trojan legend, even challenging the authority of Homer and Virgil, as Sarah Spence argues. Kem shows that Lemaire, unlike his medieval predecessors in this endeavor, prefers Dictys to Dares and interprets poets (Homer, Virgil, Ovid) allegorically (42-43). For more on Dictys and Dares, see Frazer, introduction; Spence. The first extant text that gives France a Trojan back-story is the *Chronicle of Fredegar* from the seventh- or eighth-century (Kelley, *Faces of History* 113). In medieval and Renaissance Europe more broadly, a story of Trojan ancestry was generally embraced but periodically rejected, as it was by Leonardo Bruni in his *History of the Florentine People*, written during the first half of the fifteenth century (139). Burrow sees a correlation between the decline in popularity of Troy as an origin story for France and the rise of Tacitus as a model for history-writing in the second half of the sixteenth century; this change, notably, was inspired by Tacitus’s description of the Germanic and Frankish tribes as not having hereditary monarchies, therefore rupturing what was conceived of as an unbroken line of kings (285). As a sign of this new history-writing, for instance, Étienne Pasquier relegates ‘Trojan history’ to the domain of poetry (202).

⁴³ Stephens, 156-160. Annius of Viterbo (Giovanni Nanni) was an Italian Dominican friar who published ‘lost’ histories that he (falsely) attributed to Egyptian, Chaldean, and Roman historians. He provided commentaries to establish their credibility. This *Antiquitatum Variarum* established genealogical links between Noah and Priam that Lemaire used in the first part of his *Illustrations* after ‘discovering’ the text in Rome. See Grafton, *What Was History?* 99-105; Stephens, 146-149.

⁴⁴ For Lemaire’s awareness of his precarious situation and its effects on his poetry, see Kritzman, “The Rhetoric of Dissimulation;” Brown, *Poets, Patrons, and Printers*, chapter 3;

⁴⁵ For an exploration of how the *Illustrations* influenced ducal and royal art and iconography, see Mâle, *L’Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France* (342-346).

European descendants of Troy (192; *Illustrations* 1: 15). Lemaire's push against the Turks participates in a trend among the Rhétoriciens to call for the unity of Western Europe against the Turks.⁴⁶

Connected to his political objective is a moral project aimed at a prince and a linguistic project directed at Italy. Lemaire seeks to provide a moral education for his wider readership via his manifold processes of allegorical interpretation. The moral and didactic purpose is explicitly aimed at Marguerite d'Autriche's nephew, the future Emperor Charles V, in the first prologue. As I shall show in my next chapter, treatises on the education of the prince often frame reading as an exercise in which the prince encounters textual versions of himself. In this case, Lemaire applies Paris's example to "l'instruction et doctrine dun-chacun ieune Prince de maison Royale" such that, if Charles is a youthful Paris at that moment, with proper instruction he will become "vn second Hector" as an adult (1: 6-7). The *Illustrations* therefore participates in the market for discourses of conduct and education aimed at a noble and royal public.

Lastly, the objective concerning the French language plays out on cultural and historical rather than linguistic lines. Lemaire seeks to disprove the Italians' accusation that French is a 'barbaric' language (I: 11). Richard Cooper elaborates on this Franco-Italian cultural war in *Litteræ in tempore belli*: in their own writing during the Italian Wars, the Italians describe encounters with the French as between a civilized people and barbarian invaders (276). In response, Lemaire endeavors to establish France's origins as anterior to those of Italy; Gaul had laws and letters before Italy and even before Greece, and therefore the language of the current iteration of Gaul, France, cannot be barbaric (1: 67, 113). Anteriority combined with a love of letters guarantees civilization and primacy. By virtue of its political, cultural, and social embeddedness, then, the *Illustrations* has much more work to do than the other main texts of my corpus, where concerns about eloquence can play out on a smaller scale and in subtler ways. It is therefore quite difficult to discuss Lemaire's thematization of eloquence in the "roman de Troie" without acknowledging the greater project to which it belongs. Lemaire's take on eloquence is very motivated by the historical and political nature of the *Illustrations*.

To these four objectives (historical, political, moral, linguistic) laid out by Judy Kem, I add a fifth, which I will call 'literary.' This fifth objective participates in the moral objective, as "bonnes lettres" must do in this period, offering themselves up as valuable in some way.⁴⁷ As I explained above, each of the *Illustrations*' stated purposes participates in the politicized historiographical project that holds the text together ideologically. The *Illustrations* is indeed unequal parts history, epic, romance, allegory, and chronicle, all subordinated to the overarching category of history as it serves political and national ends.⁴⁸ Treating the *Illustrations* as such has

⁴⁶ Cynthia Brown finds a compelling juxtaposition of subject matter (crusade against the Turks) and the self-consciousness of the poet in Rhétoricien poems such as Jean Molinet's *La Complainte de Grèce* (1494), André de la Vigne's *La Ressource de la Chrestienté* (1494), and Lemaire's *La Concorde du genre humain* (1509) ("Rise of Literary Consciousness" 52).

⁴⁷ The early modern period did not have one unique way to designate 'literature.' The term *bonae litterae* ("bonnes lettres") connotes the period's perspective on textual authority as something to be restored and used as a source of wisdom; their own textual output was intended to contribute to that storehouse. I acknowledge that the term "bonnes lettres" is not exclusive to texts containing *fabula* and that it is not synonymous with 'literary' or 'literature.' I choose to call this fifth objective 'literary' for lack of a more stable term to describe imaginative writing's distinction from other kinds of writing. For more on *litterae* in the early modern period, see Marino (84-90).

⁴⁸ I recognize that 'epic' and 'romance' are unstable categories. 'Epic' was not a part of the Renaissance vocabulary, as Rothstein has shown, and it tended to signify the text's length ("long poëme") and the subject ("gestes héroïques") ("Le genre du roman" 37). Lemaire calls Homer's works "fictions," a designation that reveals both his anti-Greek bias and his privileging of non-verse over verse historical authorities on Troy (2: 169). As for romance,

produced many compelling studies about authorship, a rising rhetoric of nationalism, and the Rhétoriciens' own preoccupations with the aesthetics of language as it extends to their prose. Therefore, I am in no way disagreeing with François Cornilliat's assessment that Lemaire privileges his role of historiographer over any other role in the "roman de Troie" even as he writes within the Rhétoriciens' fervent approach to ornament and rhetoric (*Or ne mens* 844-845).

What interests me here is how, even as Lemaire maintains the historical agenda through such narratorial interventions as citing his sources and outlining the various 'sens' (literal, astrological, metaphorical, philosophical, physical, moral, etc.) to be extracted from the Trojan story, he is still attached to the idea of the narrative of Troy as a different kind of literary space, one that is a bit at odds with the rest precisely because it requires more allegorical work. Nevertheless, he has more freedom to be poetic, metaphorical, and eloquent in narrative than he does in the more chronological work of the sections that come before and after Troy, and the narrative is a less aggressive means to persuade his audience of eloquence's role in that city's fate without always having to pause to explain what every element in the narrative 'means.' The literary intent within the greater project of the *Illustrations* allows us then to see a burgeoning discourse of eloquence in imaginative writing, safely experimented on within the confines of an epic, remote past. Terence Cave maintains that fiction will always assert itself "in excess of any gloss... which may be added to it" and we can discern this assertion in the "roman de Troie" (*Cornucopian Text* 100). As history is defining itself against epic and romance, as Spiegel shows, we see here the literary trying to define itself against history.

II. Epic Containment: The Literary Space of the *Illustrations*

There is a palpable shift in tone and in content when Lemaire announces the birth of Paris in part one of the *Illustrations*. Suddenly, what was once only 'poetic fable' in the first, more chronicle-like, section of the book is now real. We get the impression that we have entered a different world from the one described in the purportedly historical recounting (by rather procrustean means) of the founding of the European kingdoms by Noah. In this world, the protocols of Euhemerism are often set aside: 'Jupiter' is no longer only a pagan royal title, as "tout homme de sain entendement peult bien congoistre," but rather a god again, exerting divine power in a heightened way not seen in Lemaire's source materials (1: 82). Prophets speak the truth, nymphs intercede in the lives of men, and metamorphosis, rather than an allegory masked by poetic language, is a threat to misbehaving mortals once more. The disjointed nature of the *Illustrations* – that, for instance, a nymph is a title for a noblewoman in one section but in the next she is an actual nymph attached to the Trojan landscape – may indeed be due to a lack of thorough editing and to the imbalanced amalgamation of two slightly different projects. However, this disjointedness serves Lemaire well when it comes to his anxieties about eloquence, which are most visible in the narrative of Troy where the divine and mortal mingle, where long stretches of narrative run uninterrupted by allegorical explanation, and where eloquence is relegated to a specific time and place. As the organizing principle for the Trojan narrative, eloquence facilitates the mediation between the project's different objectives, namely the details and correction of histories and the national project of illustrating the Gauls through their ancestors.

Christine S. Lee has shown that the term only applied to a small number of texts and its meaning changed drastically throughout the long early modern period (298).

I now turn to what I call the ‘epic containment’ of the “roman de Troie” and eloquence’s place within it. In this transitional moment in historiography, epic is often viewed as contaminated history. Located between oral, mythological accounts and written, verifiable prose histories, epic is an intermediary historical space in which there are kernels of historical truth to be found (Rothstein, “When Fiction is Fact” 371-372). In his quest for a “histoire totale,” Lemaire uses the enclosed space of epic to create a literary space in which he plays out the more alarming commonplaces about eloquence as a fantasy of total power while still attending to his other objectives. Lemaire shows very little interest in the power of speech in the sections before and after his Trojan narrative. Richard M. Berrong, who defines eloquence in the “roman de Troie” as an extreme emotional reaction that overwhelms the interlocutor’s intellect by the verbal and corporeal beauty of the speaker, speculates that Lemaire perhaps gives so much attention to eloquence in this section because he wants his readers to be too overwhelmed to discern the weaknesses in his historical argument (“Non est solum sophista” (32, 39). Michael F. O. Jenkins argues that Lemaire is somewhere between medieval and Classical notions of eloquence: for him, Lemaire is in the process of stripping away the medieval association of eloquence with style and restoring eloquence to its Classical definition of potent language, just as ‘style’ and ‘eloquence’ were beginning to be defined separately (90). François Cornilliat disagrees with Jenkins, seeing not a ‘prototype’ of the humanist orator in Lemaire’s works (both poetry and prose), but rather a poet fully aware of the renewal of rhetoric study, but nonetheless cautious about its use (742).

I propose that Lemaire reserves depictions of aggressive eloquence for the epic world so he can discuss it as such, making eloquence a priority of the literary and allegorical work that, by extension, serve the greater project. I think that Berrong, Jenkins, and Cornilliat all have essentially the same argument, just with slightly different emphases. Lemaire is certainly invested in showcasing eloquence as a potent force. The trouble, for me, is not the matter of where Lemaire ‘fits’ on a scale from Classical to medieval to Renaissance, since as a proto-humanist he is inevitably involved in some form of change or renewal, but rather of figuring out if Lemaire thinks eloquence is dangerous in and of itself, or if his subject matter (the fate of Troy) obliges him to use eloquence in this way. What comes across as anxieties about eloquence can also be understood as products of his project, which needs a narrative device – speech-making – to organize the “roman de Troie” and make history more dynamic, and therefore more didactically effective, to read. Furthermore, his allegorical explanation of Mercury’s accoutrements does not suggest that Lemaire is troubled about eloquence itself, but rather the kinds of people who use it without prudence or diligence.⁴⁹

The epic past can be made useful to the present precisely because its substance is remote and contained in another place and time, as foreign to the present as the story is familiar. Indeed, epic makes history more literary by its narrative, as does Lemaire’s main plot focus, that is, a love triangle: “les gestes de Paris, Heleine et Oenone” (2: 59-60). I cite Georg Lukács and Mikhail Bakhtin for their definitions of epic, as theorized against the novel, as an enclosed space. Epic contains a “homogeneous world,” a “rounded world” in which the movements of characters

⁴⁹ “... pour accomplir son commdement, affubla sa riche capeline, que les poètes nomment Galere, laquelle est garnie de belles plumes, *en signifiçance que lhomme eloquent est armé de deffence et de diligence*, contre tous ennemis: Puis chaussa ses talonnières de fin or, garnies de belles esles, qui luy seruent à voler parmy lair, *en denotant la grand velocité de la parole*, qui va legerement en diuerses regions loingtaines. Et print en sa main sa verge ou masse de heraut, que les poètes appellent Caducee, enuelopé de deux serpens entortillez, qui signifient prudence. De laquelle verge il enchanta et endormit iadis Argus le clervoyant. Car *prudence et beau parler* humain endort les plus rusez” (1: 204, emphases mine).

are generally carefully circumscribed and shaped by divine forces (*Theory of the Novel* 32). Epic's "ultimate principle" is the world itself and not any given individual within it (46). The epic hero is motivated by "his relations to others and the structures which arise therefrom... love, the family, the state... a long road lies before him, but within him there is no abyss" (33). In other words, the epic hero is "never an individual" and his destiny signifies the destiny of his entire community: "And rightly so, for the completeness, the roundness of the value system which determines the epic cosmos creates a whole which is too organic for any part of it to become so enclosed within itself... [for the hero] to become a personality" (66). For Mikhail Bakhtin, the epic past is absolute and complete; it is a closed circle with "no room for openendedness, indecision, indeterminacy" ("Epic and Novel" 17). This is the kind of space where the contingencies of exemplarity, by which the past can be made to apply to the present, can be somewhat anchored. The openendedness, indecision, and indeterminacy that do not belong in epic do appear in the *Illustrations*, but as gestures toward the uncertainties of Lemaire's present.

However, even within the contained and determined roundness of the idea of Troy, Lemaire cannot establish a clear taxonomy of eloquent speakers. Between the immortals, mortals, Trojans, Greeks, women, nymphs, and men that populate this epic landscape, Lemaire neither defines the possession of eloquence along firm lines, nor does he explain how these speakers became eloquent (with the exception of Paris, to which I shall return shortly). The eloquence of immortals is not manifestly superior to that of mortals, and both can and do use persuasion to suit their own desires and ends regardless of consequences. The Trojans appear to have a singular, native capacity for eloquence until the Greeks send in their eloquent heroes to negotiate for the return of Helen to Menelaus: for instance Ulysses, as an "orateur et legat," persuades the Trojans – including their own eloquent ambassador Antenor – that Paris is in the wrong (2: 141-143). Lemaire divides his female characters into mortal women whose eloquence contributes to the fall of Troy (the maternal concerns of Hecuba and the coy rhetoric of Helen) and supernatural or supernaturally-gifted women who try, and fail, to prevent disaster: namely, the natural eloquence of Paris's wife, the nymph Oenone, who uses eloquence to try to keep Paris attached to her, and the straightforward speech of Cassandra, who is cursed to speak prophetic truth but never persuade because what she says, no matter how plainly expressed, comes across as "langage obscure," even to figures like Oenone who are also privy to secret knowledge (2: 91).⁵⁰ Hector, Lemaire's clear favorite, is not eloquent: in fact, his one default is that "il estoit vn peu louche, comme escrit Dares de Phrygie, et beguayait de la langue quand il estoit course" (1: 313). Everyone, except Cassandra and Hector, is eloquent in the "roman de Troie."

Furthermore, Lemaire both values and discredits the use of ornamentation, whether literal or figurative. The natural, including natural eloquence, is often enhanced by the artificial: "rhetoriques couleurs" and "fleurs poëtiques" make a speech or a description beautiful and potent.⁵¹ The use of artifice to enhance is in keeping with the conceptions of language and rhetoric of the time: Pierre Fabri, for instance, says in his 1521 *Grand et vrai art de pleine*

⁵⁰ For more on Cassandra as an *alēthomantis* (a truthful prophetess) without persuasion, see Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Ancient Greece* (77).

⁵¹ Lemaire takes great care to describe beautiful artifices, whether found in his source materials (Homer's depiction of the combat between Menelaus and Paris is singled out particularly) or in the details of luxuries, particularly of the courtly environment of Troy. The attention to aristocratic accoutrements may be a holdover from thirteenth-century historiography, which was invested in describing such displays of wealth, as Spiegel demonstrates in *Romancing the Past* (22).

rhétorique that only the ignorant think there is no rhetoric beyond what is natural to language and that French does not need such linguistic enrichment (8). Yet artifice can also mask or deform nature, straining believability. At least, this is the reasoning Paris (seconded by Mercury) gives to the three goddesses at his Judgment when he requests that they strip, so that their “precieux ornements” and “precieux habillemens” do not distract him from the “pure verité” of their beauty (1: 251). Yet, even naked and silent, Venus’s one ornament of a rose gives her “vne grace singuliere” that augments her natural beauty, making her the most corporeally persuasive of the three goddesses (1: 255). Lemaire’s adamant privileging of ‘escrits autentiques’ over ‘fictions poëtiques’ follows similar lines as his ambivalent attitude toward ornament: he rejects the poetic fictions in order to find historical truth, but he still appreciates the beauty of a poetic fiction and uses it to embellish his own writing.

By developing a system in which eloquence can be possessed by anyone, used in any way for any purpose (usually nefarious), and be both lauded and criticized, both persuasive and not, Lemaire therefore stresses eloquence’s contradicting values and commonplaces, such that its definitions come undone: eloquence is natural and artificial, immortal and mortal, male and female, corporeal and verbal. Lemaire has so saturated the “roman de Troie” with eloquence and ornaments that we no longer know what eloquence is supposed to be or do. Ultimately, though, eloquence, possessed by everyone, finds its purpose as a narrative device, a form of rapture that keeps epic events on track to their end. Bakhtin’s openendedness, indecision, and indeterminacy that do not work in epic are resolved by speech-making. The epic (or, to put it another way, the divine, the supernatural, the mythological put to political use) coexists with the historical, which pins down epic to make it useful: Lemaire makes historical detail serve his redemptive history. Signs and prophecies are real, contributing to the full story that epic claims to present in its “end-directed narrative” by manipulating time to look forward to a future that is already past (Quint, *Epic and Empire* 34).

To illustrate these points, I turn now to the first meeting of Paris and the nymph Oenone. It is the first of many performances of eloquence that all serve as catalysts leading toward Troy’s destruction, an oversaturation of unbridled eloquence that leads to a literary discourse more interested in eloquence’s limitations than its successes. This meeting takes place before the Judgment of Paris, therefore before events leading to Troy’s fall are truly set in motion. Toward the beginning of the “roman de Troie,” Lemaire gives a great sweeping survey of Trojan lands, including the geographical (its mountains, its rivers, the city itself, the surrounding villages), the chronological (the building of Troy’s original walls, its destruction, later pilgrimages and reconstructions undertaken by Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar), and the textual (the authorities for all this information) (1: 133-141). These strata offer up Troy’s very history in great, well-researched detail. They also set the scene for Paris’s initiation into eloquent speaking. Lemaire lays down his researcher’s toolkit to zoom in closer on young Paris: “Or pour reuenir à lenfant Paris...” (1: 141). Paris lives in the middle of a pastoral paradise, bathing nude in the Scamander, unaware of the nymphs and fairies that leave their posts in the mountains, rivers, and forests to spy on him (1: 141-142). Pages are devoted without interruption to Paris’s pastoral life. With Lemaire’s “Or,” history opens up to the literary, where truth and falsehood are simultaneously possible: Jupiter both is a god and is not. But for pastoral to settle into the requirements of epic teleology, Paris needs a supernatural intervention. In this world where everyone seems effortlessly eloquent without training, Paris too must become eloquent.

Paris’s encounter with Oenone involves a transfer of knowledge and eloquence. Place is very important to this transfer, because it happens in an ideal, supernatural location. One of the

interests of this dissertation is the ways in which writers choose to stage a character becoming eloquent, and the conditions in which eloquence is made possible. Often in dramatizations of eloquence in imaginative writing of this period, eloquence can only work under certain conditions, without which it falls flat. Thus it is interesting that, for the only character that we see become eloquent in the “roman de Troie,” Lemaire sets this episode in another world, as if it could only ever happen there. It begins with Paris falling asleep by a fountain, the very source of the Scamander that Paris only comes across after days of hunting a stag in the forests of Ida. The topos of the hero falling asleep in the deep wilderness is, as Danièle Duport has argued, a signal of the passage from one world to another (121). When Paris wakes in this “secret et taciturne” place, he finds himself surrounded by a number of nymphs and fairies (1: 164-165). They run, and Paris gives chase. One of the nymphs, Oenone, daughter of the Scamander river, stops running to admonish Paris. Her indignation and eloquence bring Paris to his knees, “comme estonné et moitié ravy tant de sa merueilleuse eloquence, comme de sa souueraine beauté” (1: 166).

Yet there is something perplexing about Oenone’s eloquent speech, which is brief and angry. Paris seems more amazed by her sudden disclosure of his royal birth than ravished by her words or her beauty. Her eloquence is in the revelation of forbidden knowledge, of the sort that will influence events if it convinces. Paris then begs her to explain why she addressed him as “ô jeune adolescent Royal” (1: 165). Her response reiterates the historical details of the first section of the *Illustrations* by outlining in brief the family tree Lemaire has already described, a genealogy that exists both in *fabula* and *historia*. Oenone’s knowledge therefore straddles the multiple projects of the *Illustrations* itself. ‘Jupiter’ is suddenly a pagan title for a king again; it was the third Jupiter who spirited away Paris’s relative Ganymede (1: 169). Then Oenone transitions to prophecy: Priam thinks he has saved Troy by getting rid of Paris, but as far as Oenone knows (“si ie ne suis deceue”), Fate still has something in store for the shepherd (1: 170). Oenone wants to be part of it, as long as Paris is not insolent or proud: “Car toy mesmes te pourrois bien precipiter en abysme de mort” (1: 170). Oenone’s assistance entails giving Paris eloquence.

Following the transfer of knowledge, the transfer of eloquence is then literalized in the second part of the interaction as Oenone offers Paris a ritual meal to draw him further into the epic world. This interaction is a strange combination of Adam, Eve, and Persephone eating forbidden and divine fruit: Paris is enlightened by what he consumes, never to return to his former rusticity. With this meal, Paris must leave (pastoral) paradise. Out of all the fruits available near the fountain, Oenone gives Paris an intertextual fruit, “la lote,” which is what nymphs eat (1: 174). Lemaire intervenes at this point to mediate between his own time and two different points in the Trojan cycle. The fruit comes from “Afrique, (quon dit maintenant Barbarie).” Moreover, Oenone and Paris cannot possibly know that this fruit is an epic fruit belonging as well to the errancy of romance, but Lemaire adds that “la lote” is what will make Odysseus’s men no longer care about returning home after the Trojan War is over. Lemaire thus collapses, in a quick explanation, chronological points from before the war, after, and a time at which he wishes to restore Troy once again. He begins from the perspective of his present for the benefit of the reader, providing details about this fruit before getting to the fruit’s exceptionality and its place in epic. These kinds of narratorial interventions show us just how quickly Lemaire can move from one register (the budding love story of Oenone and Paris at the very moment where Paris becomes eloquent) to another (the details of the historical project).

The transformative, otherworldly site of the fountain literalizes an exchange of eloquent speech as a flow of water: the very fluvial landscape of Troy (Oenone's parents) grants Paris a "supernatural gift" for speech. After Paris eats "la lote," Oenone gives Paris "la liqueur maternelle," water from her mother, the fountain, in an elaborate ritual. The fountain's waters bubble in response to Oenone's prayer, "comme si elle auoit sentiment daccorder la requeste de la Nymphe" (1: 175-176). Nature responds to eloquence just as much as people do. Paris drinks and "plus eloquent que parauant," his body shifts to accommodate the new sensations and he takes into himself his new place. The water becomes a figure for eloquence, ravishing and transforming Paris, which he describes as a shift from rusticity and ignorance to a full sensory and intellectual awakening:

Car la seule vapeur nectaree et ambrosienne, est si penetrante et si vegetatiue, que des que le flair en ha esté prochain à mon sens odoritif, mon rude conceuoir sest esclarcy, mon gros entendement sest ouuert, et mes organes se sont ampliez, comme pour receuoir vn don supernaturel: tellement que ainsi comme tout enyuré de nouveau desir, ie suis rauy en ecstase: et aprens à speculer hautes choses. (1: 177)

After explaining how he has been changed, Paris then speculates that Oenone is Venus in nymph form because, as everyone knows, Venus has come to Troy before to seduce Trojans, most recently Anchises, father of Aeneas (1: 177-178). Paris's first eloquent speech, then, showcases the power of eloquence in a speech about powers of transformation and ravishment. Oenone applauds his speech as "parfonde eloquence... de telle efficace, quelle pourroit tirer en sa sentence mesmes vn cœur adamantin" (1: 179). At the fountain, Oenone shares her knowledge, prophecy, eloquence, and desire with Paris: the fountain is therefore a place of determinacy, where the nymph's speech act (her eloquence) and her ritualized meal function to resolve Paris's very identity as a handsome, skilled, but out-of-place shepherd by announcing his true self as a prince of Troy. As long as Paris was "ignorant [d]es hautes fortunes aduenir," epic was stalled in the land of pastoral, where hidden identity is a key topos (1: 146).

The setting of the fountain connects Paris's new eloquence with nature and solitude as opposed to civilization and community. Eloquence is here a gift from natural and supernatural forces: Paris does not learn eloquence – he drinks it. But however natural and remote a provenance they may have, Paris's new eloquence and knowledge are not good signs for Troy. Even a natural eloquence like that of Oenone is not a good thing in and of itself. As I will discuss in my chapter on *Hélisenne de Crenne*, love and desire often negate or neutralize any influence eloquence may otherwise have. Oenone's intervention here is motivated by desire for an "amoureuse alliance" with a man of "haute extraction" (1: 178). In a later apostrophe to Oenone, Lemaire calls her "aveuglee dambition" (1: 290). A woman's desire therefore calls into question the necessary prudence and diligence of the eloquent speaker, as figured by Mercury. It also leads to Paris's eye-opening experience, and the very thing that will lead to Troy's fall is Paris's wandering eye. Oenone sees his "pupilles errans et vagabondes" glimmering with possibilities just as the sunlight is reflected in the clear water of the fountain, and she muses about Paris's immoderate affection (1: 178-179).

Neither Paris nor Oenone know yet that Paris's eloquence acquired from the fountain will be the tool by which he achieves his desire, but Lemaire's readers do, as I shall discuss shortly. Eloquence used in the name of desire has amplified Paris's own "cupidineux appetit," therefore

priming him for Venus's persuasion at the Judgment (1: 179). It then becomes less of an issue that Venus is the most persuasive at the Judgment, and more that Paris himself is not as prudent a judge as he once was reputed to be: as a shepherd, Paris was exemplary, but as prince, he will be much less so. Oenone thus joins Paris's mother Hecuba in the group of women who unwittingly collaborate to destroy Troy out of love for Paris, deploying their female powers of persuasion to do so.⁵² As the "roman de Troie" unfolds, we see Paris use his eloquence to further the plot and fulfill the fate of Troy prophesized at his birth as he seeks out the prizes Venus promised at the Judgment. After being welcomed back into his birth family, Paris persuades the Trojans to recover Priam's sister Hesione, who has been enslaved by the Greek king Telamon since Hercules destroyed Troy a generation earlier (1: 264). Debates with the Greeks about Hesione serve as a pretext for Paris to meet, impress, and abduct Helen, and in Paris's rhetoric Lemaire certainly capitalizes on the recovery of Hesione as a figure for the recovery of Troy itself, taken and enslaved by foreigners. The rest of the story is well known, though it is important to note that Lemaire heavily emphasizes and thematizes ambassadorial interactions, which are often lengthier and composed in more detail than the famous war itself. It is without question that Lemaire is invested in rhetorical interactions as a kind of organizing principle of narrative.

Lemaire frequently interrupts the narrative to negotiate different versions of events that are available to him, and to state why he privileges some over others. Some of these justifications are aimed directly at the reader, such as the following, which Lemaire inserts as Paris enters Sparta pretending to be an ambassador:

Or ne sesmerueillent point les lisans, si ie narre toutes ces choses, mesmement le rauissement d'Heleine dautre sorte quilz ne lont en leurs liures communs et vulgaires. Car ie ne vueil ensuiure sinon la pure verité antique, et lordre historial de Dictys de Crete, et de plusieurs autres acteurs tressuffisans, lesquels seront mes guides et mes garans en ceste œuvre, sil plait à Dieu que ie la puisse mener à chef.
(2: 47)

What Lemaire here lays claims to is his own authority as a discerning reader of history. As a writer who needs to shift registers frequently in this text, he also needs to validate the choices about historical detail that he makes. The discerning writer requires a reader who, familiar with other versions, nonetheless sees the value in Lemaire's choices.

To conclude this chapter, I will talk about Lemaire's use of Mercury in the *Illustrations* as a means to communicate with the reader. As the writer of the *Illustrations*' three prologues, Mercury contributes as well to the epic containment of the "roman de Troie."⁵³ Mercury suits Lemaire's multiple roles. Mercury confirms the text's 'veracity' because he is an eyewitness to history, giving writing to men, arranging the Judgment of Paris, and witnessing the Trojan War. As a god of commerce, he offers up the book as a commercial object and, as the god of eloquence, Mercury presides over rhetorical activity and "bonne invention" (1: 3). For Lawrence Kahn, ambiguity and reversal are Mercury's very functions and powers (119). His name in Greek

⁵² Lemaire singles out Hecuba's "desordonnee affection de mere" for the corruption of the "bien publique," because she twice saves Paris's life despite the prophecies about him (2: 116). Mercury says in the prologue to the second part of the *Illustrations* that all women have persuasive powers over men, personified by Venus Verticordia, or Venus, Changer of Hearts (2: 4).

⁵³ For a history of Mercury, see Kahn, *Hermès passe*. For the place of Mercury in French Renaissance poetic endeavors, see Welch, *Ronsard's Mercury*.

brings to mind interpretation itself: Boccaccio provides *hermena* ('interpreter') as the etymology for Hermes, a god who is "maximum divinarum rerum interpretem" ("the greatest interpreter of divine matters," *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* 370-371). In several respects, Mercury maintains the delicate boundaries of the literary space of the "roman de Troie" by mediating between immortals and mortals, between the subject and the writing of history, and between different kinds of eloquence. It is he, after all, who arbitrates Paris's Judgment, calling Paris to choose between the three goddesses and their individualized approaches to persuasion, and demonstrating to the readers how powerful eloquence can be, thereby 'protecting' the readers through the screen of Mercury.

Notably, Lemaire makes Mercury responsible for summoning his readership and managing their expectations in a way parallel to the work of epic. The *Illustrations* opens with an address from Mercury to Marguerite d'Autriche and an adapted citation from Virgil's *Aeneid*: "*Quis genus Iliadûm? quis Troiæ nesciat vrbe[m]? Qui ne congnoit le noble sang de Troy, Et la cité, qui des Grecs fut la proye?*" (1: 3). These are Dido's words as she welcomes Aeneas and his men into Carthage: already the news of Troy has reached her and has become common knowledge (*Aeneid* 1.565). To better encompass the broader European displacement of the Trojans, Lemaire replaces "genus Aeneadum" (Aeneas's people, and, eventually, the Romans) of the original line with "genus Iliadûm" (Ilium's people, or the Trojans). Like Dido, the readers know the story of Troy but they await an authentic version: Lemaire is a new Aeneas, restoring Troy through writing. As Mercury urged Aeneas to leave Dido and Carthage behind, so he encouraged Lemaire to write this definitive history (1:4; *Aeneid* 4.219-278). Thus the readers are primed for an encounter with a "histoire totale."

These readers who, like Dido, want to hear the true version of the fall of Troy are given further characteristics in the first prologue. Mercury calls his readers those of "la bende Mercurienne," and he encourages them to be members of his troupe (1: 5). What does it mean to be a mercurial reader? It has much to do with the multiple registers, allegorical meanings, and objectives of the *Illustrations*. Walter Stephens demonstrates that Mercury complicates our understanding of the *Illustrations* because in the prologues Mercury holds up the text as simultaneously true and mythic (164). Stephens sees the third prologue as resolving, somewhat, the two opposing interpretational approaches by asking the readers to interpret the text as they would the Bible, the only other text that can be both *historia* and *fabula* (165). Ann Moss, moreover, contends that Lemaire was unequalled in his multiple approaches to the hermeneutic possibilities of mythological narrative in history (*Poetry and Fable* 15). She argues that in the *Illustrations* "... no intelligent sense can be made of either history or fable, unless related accurately and unless their full implications are developed in the telling" (19). She adds that Mercury's entry into the "roman de Troie" is a signal to interpret allegorically (29).

To these assessments, I append Lemaire's astrological 'sens' that occasionally peppers the narrative of Troy. This is an allegorical reading that involves treating the Olympic pantheon as figures standing in for personality traits. Lemaire frequently cites planetary influence as a way to read the events of the "roman de Troie." Through the example of Paris, Lemaire demonstrates that having Venus "en son horoscope" means he devotes his life to the "vie voluptueuse, et venerique" and despises "la vie actiue de Iuno, et la vie contemplatiue de Pallas" (1: 272). This is the "sens interiore" of the Judgment that Lemaire finds in his sources Fulgentius and Iulius

Firmicus, which he uses to corroborate Paris's negative exemplarity.⁵⁴ Mercury represents an altogether more positive influence. Those mercurial readers "de mon influence" are defined by their neutrality and, alongside their patron, their prudence and diligence (1: 5, 204). During Paris's Judgment, right before Mercury prods Paris to choose the most beautiful goddess, Lemaire reminds us that Mercury's planet is "neutre et indifferente, bonne avec les beniuoles, mauuaise avec les maliuoles, maistresse de vertu imaginatiue, fantastique et cogitante..." (1: 249). Unlike Paris, whose actions are motivated by his "natiuité... Venerienne," mercurial readers do not bend a given way (1: 247). They take "les choses en bonne part" (2: 245).

The very nature of the *Illustrations* necessitates mercurial readers. They can switch from one 'sens' to another, from metamorphosis to metaphor, from poetic language to historic truth. Like Classical eloquence itself, they are adaptable. This ability to change gears along with the text is best seen in the narration of Troy's destruction and through the role that eloquence plays in the perpetuation of that destruction. The god of eloquence presides over the text, mediates the different kinds of eloquence we encounter, fashions readers in his own image as neutral judges, and reflects his writer, who can oscillate with ease between the project of history and the singularities of Troy. The mercurial readers, in Renaissance writing more broadly speaking, will always be in the know, malleable, and adaptable to the demands the writer places on them, including holding up two competing interpretations as concurrently possible. We can detect in the variance of the "roman de Troie," which requires more allegorical work and more direct rejection of poetic "feintise" in favor of authentic history, a proto-humanist attention to historical consciousness, particularly in the authority of historical detail, and the simultaneous valorization and undoing of Classical eloquence, as Lemaire plays out every contradicting commonplace known to the rhetorical tradition. The thematization of eloquence is, then, a way to mediate meaning with the Renaissance reader that does not take on the qualities of aggressiveness and ravishment of Classical eloquence itself.

⁵⁴ As a Catholic, Lemaire does not, however, believe that such a planetary influence is unavoidable: the apple of Paris's Judgment is "son propre franc arbitre" and the Judgment itself signifies Paris's choice of a Venusian life over any other (1: 6).

Chapter Three

Poinct fin ny canon: Eloquence in François Rabelais's Educational Programs

O thou monster Ignorance, how deformed
dost thou look! (*Love's Labour's Lost*
4.2.24)

In François Rabelais's *Cinquiemesme et dernier livre des faicts et dictz heroïques du bon Pantagruel*, the giant Pantagruel, Panurge, Frère Jean, and their traveling companions continue their sea voyage to consult an oracle on the matter of Panurge's marriage.⁵⁵ They pass from island to island, encountering monsters and marvels along the way. The adventure on one of these islands illustrates in brief Rabelais's overall stance toward eloquence and his preferred method for undermining its traditional cultural weight. At the island of the Chats-fourrez, the travelers – minus Pantagruel, who refuses to join – are arrested and put on trial. A fellow prisoner informs them of the wickedness of their jailors: “Parmy eux regne la sexte essence, moyennent laquelle ils grippent tout, devorent tout, et conchient tout: ils bruslent, esclattent, decapitent, meurdriissent, emprisonnent, ruinent et minent tout sans discretion de bien et de mal” (750). Should the outside world ever discover the extent of the “inestimable meschanceté” of the Chats-fourrez, the prisoner continues,

... il n'est, et ne fut Orateur tant eloquent, qui par son art le retint; ne loy tant rigoureuse et drachonique, qui par crainte de peine le gardast: ne magistrat tant puissant qui par force l'empeschast, de les faire tous vifs là dedans leur rabuliere felonement brusler. (751)

Rabelais thus turns on its head an important humanist commonplace: that eloquence is a civilizing force. The traditionally held belief about eloquence, found in the opening lines of Cicero's *De inventione* and unfailingly reproduced in treatises on rhetoric up to the Renaissance, is that the orator's art can civilize any barbarism and turn the wicked back to the virtuous life. In fact, eloquence is the purported catalyst for the foundation of all civilizations, when a mythical hero-orator persuades wandering peoples to establish a city and abide by common laws; eloquence and law together create civilization.⁵⁶ In the *Cinquiemesme livre*, conversely, Rabelais creates a people whose aggression and wickedness cannot be reined in by either law or leader. Eloquence has no power here.

In the chapters describing the travelers' time on this island, Rabelais overturns the connection between eloquence and civilization in two specific contexts, both of which restrict the fantasy of power that eloquence represents in the traditional Renaissance discourse of rhetoric.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The *Cinquiemesme livre* was published in 1564, years after Rabelais's death in 1553, and its authenticity as Rabelais's own work has been heavily contested in the centuries following its publication. Some twentieth-century scholars have done important and convincing work establishing Rabelais as its author. This dissertation assumes that this is the case, with no qualifications, since Rabelais's treatment of eloquence across the five volumes is consistent. See Petrossian; Huchon's *Rabelais grammairien*; and Huchon's notice to the fifth book in her edition of Rabelais's *Œuvres complètes*, 1595-1607. All references here to Rabelais's works are to Huchon's Pléiade edition.

⁵⁶ For more on the history of the connection between eloquence and civilization, see Reborn, *The Emperor of Men's Minds*, chapter 2.

⁵⁷ I borrow Reborn's formulation of eloquence as a "... fantasy of power, in which the orator, wielding words more deadly than swords, takes on the world and emerges victorious in every encounter" from *The Emperor of Men's Minds* (15).

The first is the exploration of the New World. Rabelais's Chats-fourrez are anthropomorphized cats, part-monster and part-man, and he places them in the same discursive space between barbarism and civilization that most ethnographic accounts placed the newly discovered peoples of the New World. The Chats-fourrez are also cannibals, as some of the New World peoples were reported to be. Out there in the unknown parts of the globe, where the Chats-fourrez dwell, there are those who are beyond the bounds of Classical eloquence; their ways are the polar opposites of the customs and laws of sixteenth-century Europe. Through exploration, the world has opened up and become seemingly limitless, but eloquence's effectiveness has an increasingly smaller range as the very limits of humanist book learning are reached.⁵⁸ Ruled by a "sixth essence" beyond the long-sought-after alchemical *quintessence*, the Chats-fourrez live in a world beyond even the known unknowns.

The second context in which Rabelais diminishes eloquence's power in these chapters is judicial. The Chats-fourrez, though strange and unrestrained by laws, nevertheless have a law court that mirrors the reputed corruption within the European court system. In this court setting, Rabelais trivializes both eloquence and heroism – two great civilizing qualities – by reducing them to mere exchanges of talk and money: to win their freedom, the travelers have to answer the judge Grippe-minaud's riddle and pay tribute in gold. The Chats-fourrez do not actually devour, burn, or ruin anything in this adventure, which would offer the travelers an opportunity to show their mettle. Instead, the plight of the travelers amidst the natives takes the form of a trial, after which the Chats-fourrez extort bribes from the travelers, twisting the European quest for New World gold into a depiction of local usury. The only way out of the court and off the island is through talk and gold; the threat of violence and the strictly enforced question-and-answer format of the riddle do not leave room for heroism or oratorical prowess. Panurge reads the situation easily enough, answering the riddle and throwing gold coins into the middle of the court to ensure that "justice Grippe-minaudiere" (bribery) be served. Afterwards, in the safety of their ship, Frère Jean, ever contemptuous of language when it trumps something he considers more important, like faith or heroism, complains that this is not the kind of adventure he expected or wanted on this voyage: he cannot sleep at night if he does not perform a heroic deed every day. He wants to return and slay all the Chats-fourrez for their corruption, certainly, but also for not having satisfied his need for heroism. However, they all flee when he jumps back ashore and the travelers move on (758). Frère Jean cites the example of Hercules as an exemplar for what should have happened on the island. Unlike the ancient hero who civilizes by overthrowing tyrants and ridding the world of monsters, nothing is corrected here and (European) order and justice are not established in this strange land. The abuses of the legal system experienced on the island remain just as they were when the travelers arrived: the great, civilizing Europeans have had little to no effect on the island and its inhabitants.

The adventure on the island of the Chats-fourrez lays bare Rabelais's overall position toward eloquence in his five-book series on the giants Pantagruel and Gargantua. He magnifies the vanity of eloquence and its pretensions to better scrutinize this humanist ideal of language at its very best and most persuasive, language that is meant to maintain order and serve the public good; it is the ultimate political power figured as a specific kind of language. Rabelais both evokes the tradition of rhetorical theory and undermines it, using a variety of discursive practices borrowed from other genres of writing and placing them into the context of his satirical pseudo-chivalric romance. This results in a "textually promiscuous" work that suits his kind of

⁵⁸ See Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*.

spotlighting on humanism's core tenets and contradictions.⁵⁹ With his usual impulse to exaggerate and nitpick, both features of the genre of satire, Rabelais reveals his interest in the limits of eloquence. He is even more interested in the banal nature of those limits: the encounter with the Chats-fourrez ultimately suggests that eloquence will always be in vain when used against the greedy and corrupt. Indeed, as I shall discuss in this chapter, eloquence may only succeed within a specific ethical framework: how can eloquence inspire the Chats-fourrez to virtue if for them "vice est vertu appellée" (750)?

The Chats-fourrez episode also signals Rabelais's preferred rhetorical techniques for dismantling eloquence: literalization and antithesis. Rabelais displays a proclivity for literalizing metaphors in his pentalogy on the giants Pantagruel and Gargantua, making the immaterial word material for comedic or satirical purposes. Thus Rabelais shows us, through literalizing proverbs, the childhood aimlessness of Pantagruel's father, Gargantua, who strikes while the iron is cold and puts the cart before the oxen (34). Rabelais's tendency to literalize often pushes language to the point of incoherence or even complete breakdown. Take, for instance, the language-related Renaissance idiom of "skinning Latin," which means to speak Latin improperly. The giant Pantagruel, in his rather infamous encounter with a Limousin student, threatens to skin him for having "skinned Latin" (234). In Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, this transfer to the material participates in the grotesque process of degradation in which the high is brought low: metaphorically skinned Latin is met with the literal threat of skinning to bring an end to the Limousin's linguistic affectations (*Rabelais* 19, 21). Gérard Defaux defines Rabelais's narrative poetics as one in which any storyteller, including Rabelais as author and as his narrator alter ego, relies on the art of sophistry and persuasion to have an effect on the reader or audience; the storyteller is "naturellement et nécessairement sophiste," whose art is "beau mensonge."⁶⁰ As a sophist "conteur" and master rhetorician, Rabelais frequently deploys oppositions to steer the reader toward one thing and away from its opposite, and often, puzzlingly, back again, making deeper meaning hard to decipher in his works. In his discussion of Renaissance writing as located between a past moment of ostensible 'fullness' and a desire for its own inexhaustibility, Terence Cave argues that distinctive to early modern writing is a "movement toward plenitude and presence" that is constantly "threatened by the possibility of inversion or subversion, whether thematically or rhetorically" (*Cornucopian Text* 199). "Thematically positive signs," such as an eloquence that works, become a "mirage rather than the affirmation of a value-system" when paired with its opposite. In his treatment of eloquence, Rabelais likewise pits one extreme against another, using binary pairs and literalizing to expose the limits of an ideal and break it down, turning 'eloquence,' whatever it may mean, into a mirage. In my discussion of Rabelais's take on eloquence, we will see such pairs as angel and monster, human and animal, barbarism and civilization, reason and madness, wisdom and ignorance, and eloquence and silence or stammering. I have already shown the techniques of literalization and antithesis at work with the example of the Chats-fourrez. The Chats-fourrez present us with literal monsters that stand in for the theoretical problem of eloquence's limitations. By inventing characters too

⁵⁹ This phrasing is adapted from Terence Cave: "Au niveau esthétique, le seizième siècle, au lieu de censurer la promiscuité l'encourage: il encourage le dialogue, les formes multiples, la prolifération des matériaux et la mixité des registres" (*Pré-histoires* 12).

⁶⁰ "Rabelais et son masque comique" 89-90. In "Rabelais et les cloches de Notre-Dame," Defaux defines the Rabelaisian text, most of all *Gargantua*, as one that is structured by opposites on all levels, whether stylistically, thematically, ideologically, or otherwise. Defaux revisits and expands this connection between opposition and sophistry in his book *Pantagruel et les sophistes* and in his article "Rabelais et son masque comique: *Sophista loquitur*."

wicked and barbarous for even eloquence to have an effect on, Rabelais undercuts the established reputation of eloquence as an indomitable political tool.

The representation of language in Rabelais's pentalogy has been much discussed in modern criticism. Each of his books testifies to Rabelais's increasing interest in language. Most of the attention to this interest has been given to the numerous scenes in which negative attitudes towards language and language use are direct and obvious, or how Rabelais himself gained the reputation of being one of the first masters of French prose. Rabelais often mocks the highly stylized speech of pedants that simply does not fulfill the purpose of language, that is, communication: they instead "skin Latin" or otherwise ostentatiously abuse speech. Such representations of language and communication breakdown regularly lead to the conclusion that Rabelais is satirizing the educational systems of his time that produce and encourage such language: the pretentious learned either know too much or not enough, and it influences their capacity for meaningful communication. However, Rabelais does not despise language. He finds great joy in depicting its abuses and exposing pretensions about speech. This joy, I argue, extends to eloquence as well. If by satirizing improper uses of language Rabelais intends to promote humanist learning with eloquence as its highest ideal, it still seems peculiar that he would not take the opportunity to show us an unquestionably correct use of eloquence. Instead, he constantly frames eloquence as a limited fantasy of power, even in moments where he deploys eloquence as a corrective to bad rhetoric and bad education. Rabelais's representations of eloquence refuse to be taken for granted as straightforward approvals of humanist commonplaces about such language; 'good' language and 'bad' participate equally in his overall investigation into language and humanism itself.

In my discussion of Rabelais, I call particular attention to eloquence's role in the education of the prince and how Rabelais uses the antithetical pairs native to Renaissance pedagogical discourse to call that role into question. I compare and contrast the education of the two giants: Pantagruel in *Pantagruel, roy des Dipsodes, restitué a son naturel* (1532), particularly as it is described in the famous letter from his father Gargantua, and Gargantua in *La vie treshorricque du grand Gargantua* (1534). The bulk of this chapter is a close reading of the scene from *Gargantua* in which a young boy, Eudemon, speaks eloquently as proof of the effectiveness of humanist education. It is therefore the book about the father, Gargantua, and not the son, Pantagruel, that tells more openly the story of eloquence's role in the education of the prince. I argue that the circumstances of the scene, combined with frequent allusions to contemporary discourses on education and placed within the satirical context of the pentalogy as a whole, confirm the theory that Rabelais's enthusiasm for humanist learning is not as wholehearted as it may first appear. The two chapters that seem to endorse humanism most heartily – the famous letter from Gargantua in *Pantagruel* and the scene with Eudemon in *Gargantua* – cannot be read out of context. Rabelais's pentalogy is resistant to traditional humanist commonplaces about the transformative power of eloquence, and Rabelais uses education as a means to locate weak points in humanist pedagogy. What is ultimately at stake here is the kind of prince that humanism is meant to shape: a comparative analysis of the educational programs described in these two books demonstrates that Rabelais, though playful in most respects, is quite serious about not associating his good, Christian princes with eloquence. I refer to Renaissance treatises on education and Michel Foucault's late lectures on ancient ethical practices of speaking and self-governance to draw out Rabelais's concerns about the education of the prince. I also employ Bakhtin's arguments on exaggeration and the body in Rabelais's work to elaborate on his use of antithesis and Cave's thoughts on early modern writing to connect

Rabelais's qualms about eloquence to the context of producing imaginative writing in this period.

Rabelais's narrator and alter ego Alcofribas Nasier informs us that before Gargantua is educated by a humanist, Gargantua's tutelage under the sophists was like his youthful binge-drinking, the "point fin ny canon" of my title: with neither end nor rule, neither clear objective nor restrictions in place to manage it (58). This is also an appropriate formulation for Rabelais's delight in taking every opportunity to talk about language and his issues with the educational models of his day. It encapsulates the limitless and manifold comedic and satirical possibilities of the subjects as he pushes both eloquence and education to their extremes. Yet in his enthusiasm for limitlessness and exaggeration, Rabelais is also interested in the rule that puts an end to such inexhaustibility. He lifted the phrase "point fin ny canon" from Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly*. Folly, willing to transgress boundaries of good taste by praising herself excessively, says that while her praises are unlimited ("nullus sit modus nequis finis"), all orations must end at some point (*Opera omnia* 4:3, 178). Even boundless, abundant speech eventually meets its limit and exhausts itself or ceases to be effective: even unparalleled eloquence must meet its match.

I. Expectations of Eloquence: Renaissance Education and the Study of Rhetoric

I turn first to the importance of rhetoric in humanist pedagogy and how Rabelais translates it into his versions of humanist educational programs in his books. Treatises on rhetoric and education from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries stress two essential points: the public usefulness of the study of rhetoric and the transformation of the student into a self-governing public figure.⁶¹ There were a number of treatises circulating European courts in the 1400s and 1500s detailing the marvels of the new humanist education, one that, like the humanist movement itself, was based on the revival, study, and imitation of ancient Greek and Roman texts. We are not sure to what extent humanist educational methods were as successful in reality as the humanists claimed them to be in their writing. In their excellent book *From Humanism to the Humanities*, Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine note that there was a "great gap between the zealous faith of humanism and the training gained by the humanities" (xvi). They argue that while "humanism emphasized the study of grammar and poetry in the context of Classical literature and learning, allowing a student to develop his potential as an active participant in active life" humanism was "primarily about obedience... Classical culture was something to be mastered, not questioned" (xii, xiii-xiv). Their argument echoes that of Thomas Greene, who says that the humanists often confused "formation," meaning education, with "transformation" ("Flexibility of the Self" 250, emphasis mine). Rabelais depicts this discrepancy between humanist ideal and humanist curriculum in his depictions of the education of his giants. I shall return to this discrepancy shortly and, for now, read his educational programs as straightforward counterparts to the treatises he undoubtedly knew alongside a discussion of Gargantua's letter to his son in *Pantagruel*. This will later help highlight the durability test to which Rabelais submits the overall scheme of humanist pedagogical architecture, laying bare some of the structural weaknesses of its claims even as he purports to support it, especially in regards to the prince's expected autonomy.

⁶¹ For discussions on medieval and humanist curricula, see Curtius 36-78; Murphy, *Latin Rhetoric and Education in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*; and the vast contributions by Paul F. Grendler to the history of early modern education.

In his letter to his son in *Pantagruel* chapter 8, Gargantua insists on the ultimately public and active purpose of his son's education. He accomplishes this in two fashions: first by emphasizing the indispensability of proving one's intellectual prowess in public, and second by associating that prowess with military aptitude. Gargantua asserts that no one will dare appear in public without having first acquired the kind of knowledge that Pantagruel must, affixing a sense of shame to any lack of learning.⁶² Then, after cataloging the precise subjects that his son must study and how he is to prove himself intellectually, Gargantua announces the eventual end of his son's life as a student and his debut as a prince:

Somme que je voye un abysme de science: car doresnavant que tu deviens homme et te fais grand, il te fault yssir de ceste tranquillité et repos d'estude: et apprendre la chevalerie, et les armes pour defendre ma maison, et nos amys secourir en tous leurs affaires contre les assaulx des malfaisans. Et veulx que de brief tu essaye combien tu as profité, ce que tu ne pourras mieulx faire, que tenent conclusions en tout sçavoir publiquement envers tous et contre tous: et hantant les gens lettrez, qui sont tant à Paris comme ailleurs. (245)

Gargantua's prompt leap from military exercise ("apprendre la chevalerie et les armes") back to intellectual defense ("tenent conclusions... envers tous et contre tous") is not as unexpected as it may appear. Gargantua's program of study for his son resonates with the contemporary debate of arms versus letters: in the dispute over which profession is nobler and more indispensable to the state, the soldier or the scholar, Gargantua eschews taking a side by framing letters *as* arms, at least for now, while Pantagruel is still young.⁶³ The humanist curriculum, based on books, chiefly offers training in verbal defensive weaponry. The "controversiae" or "disputatio" method of argumentation taught in humanist educational programs was considered essential to the revival of Classical rhetoric and to the creation of humanist students as ideal "orators," the figure that became the "organizing ideal" of humanism.⁶⁴ A prince's greatest instrument of power is the application of his wisdom, formed and informed by the best educational methods and teachers, and his eloquence, which in this letter points to his capacity for persuasive and knowledgeable

⁶² "Et ne se fault plus doresnavant trouver en place ny en compaignie qui se sera bien expoli en l'officine de Minerve" (244).

⁶³ Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortigiano* makes the arms versus letters debate a national matter: the Italians are all men of letters, the courtiers conclude, but the French only recognize arms: "i Franzesi solamente conoscano la nobilita delle arme e tutto il resto nulla estimino; di modo che non solamente non apprezzano le lettre, ma le aborriscono..." (89). However, the courtiers agree that if "monsignor d'Angolem" (the future François I) becomes king, then both arms and letters will flourish in France (90). It is interesting that the Italian courtiers discount here France's traditional understanding of its central place in *translatio studii*, or "letters," as I discussed it in my introduction.

⁶⁴ Grafton, Jardine 7-8. According to Pier Paolo Vergerio, "disputatio" "... sharpens the mind, educates the tongue, and strengthens the memory, and not only do we learn numerous things through disputation, but we also understand better, express more aptly, and remember more firmly the things we learn this way. But also, by teaching others what we learn, we will be of no small help to ourselves; teaching what you have learned is the best way to improve" ["acuit enim ingenium disputatio, linguam erudite memoriamque confirmat; ac non modo multa disputando discimus, sed et quae sic discimus, melius scimus, aptius eloquimur et firmiter recordamur. Sed et alios quoque docendo quae discimus, non parum et ipsi iuvabimur. Optimum namque proficiendi genus est, docere quae didiceris"] (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 64-65). For the orator as the "organizing ideal" of the humanists, see Seigel 100.

argumentation, to the benefit of his nation.⁶⁵ Defending “conclusions” in public presents in a sense a prelude to Pantagruel’s future responsibilities and this exercise is part of his formation as a sovereign led by virtue and wisdom, just as is envisioned for the ideal orator by Cicero, who similarly sees eloquence as a defensive weapon.⁶⁶ As we see in chapter ten of *Pantagruel*, the eponymous giant fulfills his father’s expectations, growing in reputation as a learned scholar and besting the majority of the Parisian population left and right in intellectual debates. Since Pantagruel conforms so perfectly to his father’s expectations, he therefore appears to be the perfect product of humanist education as it is outlined in this letter.⁶⁷

Rhetoric, framed as verbal defense in Gargantua’s letter, plays a major role in the shaping of the student into a scholar and model citizen in the tradition of treatises on rhetoric and education from which Rabelais draws his material. The student will deploy the skills he has acquired for the regulation, defense, and benefit of his city. Putting private study to public use is a commonplace in pedagogical discourse. It is worth examining further the connection between rhetoric and politics in educational programs outlined in several of the most influential treatises of the period, to better understand the context in which Rabelais constructs his own versions of these programs. In fact, as Maurizio Viroli has shown, the language of politics in the Renaissance is the language of civil philosophy; political education at this time entails a renewal of republican ideals, the most important of which is the public utility of rhetoric (9, 201). Cicero, above all, provides the ultimate model for the humanist man. He is cited in these treatises for making eloquence a vital part of statecraft and for attributing the establishment and maintenance of order and civilization to the orators.⁶⁸ The expectation is, therefore, that once all the effort of educating their students has been put in, they will repay the city by becoming active citizens; in Cicero’s terms, this means “persons competent to be retained as leaders and principals in civil actions and criminal trials and public debates” in a Republic (*De Oratore* 3.31.122). Pantagruel’s ability to prove his intellectual worth in public will be read as an indication of his potential as a political leader. Eventually, absolutist politics will oust Cicero in favor of Tacitus as an exemplar in the Renaissance: the latter, while still an orator, was a better fit for the change in regime and he marked a transition from the lauding of the active life to the praise of a more prudent mode of

⁶⁵ Inspired by Quintilian, who says that “perfect orators owe more to teaching than to nature,” humanists stress the fundamental necessity of training latent abilities (*Institutio oratoria* 2.19).

⁶⁶ “... but the man who equips himself with the weapons of eloquence, not to be able to attack the welfare of his country but to defend it, he, I think, will be a citizen most helpful and most devoted both to his own interests and those of his community” [“qui vero ita sese armat eloquentia, ut non oppugnare commode patriae, sed pro his propugnare posit, is mihi vir et suis et publicis rationibus utilissimus atque amicissimus civic fore videtur”] (Cicero, *De Inventione* 1.i.i).

⁶⁷ See Bauschatz, “From ‘estudier et profiter’ to ‘instruire et plaire.’” Bauschatz’s main point about Pantagruel’s education is that there is a one-to-one correspondence between theory and practice that is contingent upon the student’s compliance: “Reading (or studying) is for Pantagruel a simple process: effort leads to the desired result or ‘prouffit.’... But it is still not clear what this ‘profit’ really is. The positive effects of study appear to be taken for granted by the narrator” (38).

⁶⁸ “For my own part, after long thought, I have been led by reason itself to hold this opinion first and foremost, that wisdom without eloquence does too little for the good of states, but that eloquence without wisdom is generally highly disadvantageous and is never helpful” [“Ac me quidem diu cogitantem ratio ipsa in hanc potissimum sententiam ducit, ut existimem sapientiam sine eloquentia parum prodesse civitatibus, eloquentiam vero sine sapientia nimium obese plerumque, prodesse nunquam”]. (*De Inventione* 1.i.1). For remarks concerning the orator’s role in the creation of human society, see in particular *De Oratore* 1.8.33 and 1.33, *De Inventione* 1.2, and Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 2.16; see also Connolly for a thorough analysis of Cicero’s figure of the politically oriented orator-citizen.

political and social participation, without eloquence or a kind of speech particular to the prince.⁶⁹ Rabelais's orator-prince is not yet the absolutist or Bodinian monarch: he is still a public man and this is reiterated in the discourses of rhetoric and education from the early Renaissance that influenced Rabelais's writing.

The link between the humanist study of rhetoric and the practice of politics is found in influential Italian treatises of the fifteenth century. Pier Paolo Vergerio and Leonardo Bruni wrote two of the more important and widely-circulated treatises. Vergerio, in his *The Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth* (c. 1402), states that "eloquence, which is a distinct part of civics" should be added to philosophy and history as the primary studies of the public man. Eloquence, achieved through the study of rhetoric, is the necessary catalyst in the transformation of the private scholar to an ideal public figure. Like Pantagruel, the scholar must eventually leave his books and become useful to his city: "For someone who dedicates himself completely to theory and the delights of literature perchance becomes dear to himself, but whether a prince or a private citizen, he is surely of little use to his city."⁷⁰ Citizenship and public utility are crucial. The emphasis in these educational programs is that through the effort it takes to learn to speak well, the student will also learn to model his behavior on exemplary historical figures and therefore became a model for others. In other words, the mere possession of knowledge is insufficient, for knowledge without its application is a merely selfish enterprise: the binary pair that surfaces is, then, private/selfish versus public/useful. The adjustment of personal objective to public use is achieved through eloquence. Vergerio says,

Through philosophy we can acquire correct views, which is of first importance in everything; through eloquence we can speak with weight and polish, which is the one skill that most effectively wins over the minds of the masses; but history helps us with both... The outcome of these studies is to enable anyone to speak well and to inspire him to act as well as possible; this is the mark of the greatest men and the absolutely finest characters.⁷¹

Thus writers of these treatises answer the question of why we study the humanities: the purpose of any education is the benefit of the city. The student becomes a kind of sieve for the public, educating and guiding through his erudition and judgment.

Most treatises focus on the reasons why eloquence must be mastered, but not necessarily how or even the criteria by which the eloquence of others should be judged. The result is that the

⁶⁹ See Salmon. Jean Bodin was influential in divorcing eloquence from politics. He attests to the necessity of prudence for orators in his *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* of 1566: "Et de même que par l'heureux concours du gouvernement, de la magistrature, du barreau et de l'Église la société sera parfaitement entretenue si les soldats sont vaillants, les juges équitables, les pontifes pieux et les orateurs prudents – de même tout s'écroulera non moins aisément si l'on ne respecte pas les principes de la politique" (19). Bodin was of the opinion that commonplaces about eloquence appear to give the eloquent man more power than the monarch, and therefore such myths about language should be discouraged (Rebhorn, *Emperor* 72).

⁷⁰ "Nam qui totus speculationi ac litterarum illecebris deditus est, is est forsitan sibi ipsi carus, at parum certe utilis urbi aut principis est aut privatus" (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 58). The importance of the orator's active life is not a notion unique to Vergerio: Poliziano and Coluccio Salutati, among other prominent Italian scholars, equally advocate the orator's necessary utility to the state. See also Viroli and Seigel.

⁷¹ "... eloquentia, quae civilis scientiae pars quaedam est. Per philosophiam quidem possumus recte sentire quod est in omni re primum; per eloquentiam graviter ornateque dicere qua una re maxime conciliantur multitudinis animi; per historiam vero in utrumque iuvamur... Ex quibus id efficitur, quod est summi viri et omnino excellentis ingenii, ut et optime quis dicere possit et studeat quam optime facere" (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 48).

stakes of such study (the fate of the city) are magnified by the rhetoric particular to this kind of discourse without providing a firm structure or rules for what become an out-of-control curriculum of study and an impossible reading list; pedagogical discourse often simply becomes tautological, so that suggesting means for acquiring eloquence just reiterates how important it is to acquire eloquence. For instance, to master the art of eloquence, Leonardo Bruni, in his *The Study of Literature, to Lady Battista Malatesta of Montefeltro* (1420s), prescribes the reading of orators' speeches – literary study above all provides the backbone for humanist education – even to the rare female student who will nonetheless “leave the rough-and-tumble of the forum entirely to men,” again emphasizing the essentially public nature of this kind of study.⁷² So it is to be through reading and exposure to eloquent writing that the student acquires this special language power. Bruni further pursues the public utility of such study by distinguishing the humanist student, who is an orator, from the philosopher. Bruni explains that even though the philosophers also teach how to differentiate between good deeds and bad, the orators (civic humanists) have some indefinable special power in this regard that surpasses the philosophers' ability to convey their lessons. Bruni's remarks neatly imitate Cicero's *De Oratore* 2.35 in that Cicero too wants the educated man to speak with authority and to inspire his nation to virtuous action through his wisdom.⁷³ Thus the end of education, though its processes remain somewhat mysterious, is not merely to obtain knowledge, but to become an ideal public figure (the Orator) who applies his knowledge to the “rough-and-tumble of the forum.”

Since the stakes are so high, the public orientation of humanist eloquence necessitates the personal moral integrity of the orator (Grafton, Jardine 33, 123). Cicero asserts that while eloquence is one of the supreme virtues, it must be “combined with integrity and supreme wisdom” or else “we shall not have made orators of them but shall have put weapons into the hands of madmen.”⁷⁴ We see here the framing of letters as arms that Gargantua upholds. Instead

⁷² “... totam denique fori asperitatem viris relinquet” (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 104). Undoubtedly, even female scholars would utilize this reading of orators to serve the city, even if it were only within the domestic sphere by fostering civic pride in her children.

⁷³ “I will further urge her not to neglect the orators. Where else is virtue praised with such passion and vice condemned with such ferocity? It is the orators who will teach us to praise the good deed and to hate the bad; it is they who will teach us how to soothe, encourage, stimulate, or deter. All these things the philosophers do, it is true, but in some special way anger, mercy, and the arousal and pacification of the mind are completely within the power of the orator... In sum, all the richness, power, and polish in our expression, its lifeblood, as it were, we will derive from the orators” [“Oratores quoque ut legere non negligat, suadebo. Quis enim aut virtutes extollere ardentius aut vitia fulminare atrocious solet? Ab his et laudare bene facta et detestari facinora addiscemus; ab his consolari, cohortari, impellere, abstertere. Quae licet omnia a philosophis fiant, tamen nescio quomodo et ira et misericordia et omnis animi suscitatio ac repression in potestate est oratoris... Denique omnem opulentiam verborum, omnem dicendi vim et quasi ornatum, omnem orationis (ut ita dixerim) vivacitatem et sanguinem ab istis sumemus”] (*Humanist Educational Treatises*, 108-110).

⁷⁴ “For eloquence is one of the supreme virtues – although all the virtues are equal and on a par, but nevertheless one has more beauty and distinction in outward appearance than another, as is the case with this faculty, which, after compassing a knowledge of facts, gives verbal expression to the thoughts and purposes of the mind in such a manner as to have the power of driving the hearers forward in any direction in which it has applied its weight; and the stronger this faculty is, the more necessary it is for it to be combined with integrity and supreme wisdom, and if we bestow fluency of speech on persons devoid of those virtues, we shall not have made orators of them but shall have put weapons into the hands of madmen” [“Est enim eloquentia una quaedam de summis virtutibus – quanquam sunt omnes virtutes aequales et pares, sed tamen necesse est specie alia magis alia formosa et illustris, sicut haec vis quae scientiam complexa rerum, sense mentis et consilia sic verbis explicat ut eos qui audient quocumque incubuerit posit impellere; quae quo maior est vis, hoc est magis probitate iungenda summaque prudential; quaerum virtutum expertibus si dicendi copiam tradiderimus, non eos quidem oratores effecerimus, sed furentibus quaedam arma dederimus”]] (*De Oratore* 3.14.55).

of training in actual arms, humanism proposes rhetorical weapons, albeit sometimes warily because of the possibility of rhetoric's misuse. In an effort to reduce such moral objections to rhetoric, influential figures such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola wish language to be restrained by the study of philosophy and ethics.⁷⁵ This need to shape the private moral self of the humanist pupil reaches perhaps its fullest expression in the first decades of the sixteenth century in northern Europe, with Erasmus of Rotterdam and the education of the prince.

As humanism made its way north, in order to maintain its relevance it had to adapt from the republics of Italy to a different form of government, the monarchy. The subject of treatises shifts from the orator-citizen to an orator-prince. Though the public purpose of education is still emphasized, less importance is placed on republican virtues or civic values. Foucault takes note of this same phenomenon in his study of *parrhēsia* (truth-telling) as it evolves from Athenian democracy to the Roman Empire: he considers specifically what the prince, as opposed to the citizen, needs "to form an appropriate relationship to himself that will guarantee his virtue, and also such that, thereby and through this teaching, he is formed as a morally worthy individual" and "as a governor who takes responsibility for and care of others as well as himself" (*Government of Self* 47). This truth-telling is also found in Castiglione's ideal courtier (see 4.4). In the Renaissance, Christian morality and, most of all, concern for the person of the prince take precedence in discourses about the prince's education as the very conduit for the prince's government of himself and others. In a monarchy or an empire, there is only one man, as opposed to many, to persuade in order to enact change (*Government of Self* 224). The humanists imagine this concentration of power as the best kind of state, but it is also a problematic one. The prince and his state are often figured as one, and if one should weaken, so will the other. The following from Erasmus is particularly indicative of the greater stakes of the prince's moral education in the humanist scheme: "The corruption of an evil prince spreads more quickly and widely than the contagion of any plague. Conversely, there is no other quicker and effective way of improving public morals than for the prince to lead a blameless life" (*Institutio* 219). If the prince is too easily manipulated, whether by others or by his own vices, he cannot be a good self-governing sovereign and the state will be at the mercy of flatterers and counselors with questionable intentions; worse still, the state may descend into tyranny. The stakes of the prince's education is the state itself as an extension of his person.

Erasmus's reformulation of humanism into a decidedly Christian liberal pedagogy concerned with the prince's moral welfare was particularly influential on his friend Rabelais, as were Erasmus's overall works, in the creation of the Christian giant princes Pantagruel and Gargantua. Two of Erasmus's major treatises, *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis declamatio* (A Declamation on the Subject of Early Liberal Education for Children, first published in 1529) and *Institutio principis christiani* (The Education of a Christian Prince, 1516) outline Erasmus's Christian pedagogy and his concern for the prince's moral education. Erasmus tells the young dedicatee of the *Institutio*, the future emperor Charles V, to never forget that he is "the likeness of God and his vicar" and, as such, the prince should master "total power, total wisdom, total goodness... so far as you can" in emulation of God (220). Thus the prince's Christian kingdom will be preserved from tyranny and destruction. The Christian prince must govern differently from the collection of pagan precedents (mostly tyrants themselves) acquired

⁷⁵ "People who do not care for literary form are not civilized. People without philosophy are not human. Eloquence without wisdom can still be useful. But inane eloquence is like a sword in the hands of the fool: it can do nothing except damage" (cited in Garin 103).

from the prince's study of history, but this difference allows him to maintain his authority in better, more enduring ways:

It is the right of a pagan prince to oppress his people by fear, to compel them to do humiliating tasks, to dispossess them, to plunder their goods and finally make martyrs of them: that is a pagan prince's right. You do not want the Christian to have the same, do you? Or will his rightful power seem to be reduced if these things are denied him? Authority is not lost to him who rules in a Christian way; but he maintains it in other ways, and indeed much more gloriously and more securely... But when Christian charity binds prince and people together, then everything is yours whenever occasion demands. For the good prince does not make demands except when the country's interests demand it.⁷⁶

Inspired by Plato's figure of the philosopher-king, which also appears in the Rabelais's books, Erasmus notably desires orators that are modeled on Classical exempla but nonetheless checked by specifically Christian thinking and morals.⁷⁷ Such a juxtaposition emphasizes the historical and religious differences that separate sixteenth-century European monarchies from their multiple 'ancestral,' pagan, democratic, and imperial predecessors. The sense of Christian community to which Erasmus alludes here makes the prince responsible to his people in a way that pagan precedents do not. This Christian prince retains some of the duties and talents of the Ciceronian orator-citizen, but he has the most important exemplars in the Christian faith to ensure that the orator-prince and his state never descend into tyranny, ruled by anything outside the Christian ethical framework, such as the passions of ambition or greed.⁷⁸

Rabelais echoes Erasmus's insistence on Christian faith in Gargantua's letter. Gargantua exhorts his son to put all his faith in God, whose word remains eternal, and not in "les abus du monde" and "ceste vie transitoire" precisely because "science sans conscience n'est que ruine de l'ame" (245). In an interesting collapse of prince, orator, and God, Rabelais will insist in the *Tiers Livre* that "le dire" of God is "en un moment par effect représenté," meaning that God's words are instantaneously transformed into deeds (e.g., *fiat lux*) (345). God, then, is the ultimate model for the prince and for the orator, who fashions his word on the eternal Word in his attempts to persuade and inspire action from speech. Thus for Erasmus and for Rabelais the public usefulness of humanist education relies on private faith and a community united by faith, where goodness and charity have agreed upon definitions. The Erasmian image of a Christian community stands in stark contrast to my earlier example of the Chats-fourrez; this juxtaposition of opposites shows Rabelais's creative inversion of an idealized community. The Chats-fourrez

⁷⁶*Institutio* 236. "Ius est ethnic principi suos metu premere, ad serviles operas adigere, exigere possessionibus, expilare bonis; denique martyres facere ius est ethnici principis. Num idem vis esse Christiano? Aut ius illius imminutum videbitur, si minus haec illi liceant? Non perit suum ius ei, qui christianae gerit imperium, sed aliter possidet et quidem multo tum praeclarius tum tutius... Caeterum cum Christiana charitas conciliat populum ac principem, ibi tua sunt omnia quoties res postulat. Non enim postulat bonus princeps, nisi cum vtilitas patriae flagitat (*Omnia opera* 4:2, 166-167).

⁷⁷ "C'est (dist Gargantua) ce que dict Platon *lib. V. de rep.* que lors les republicues seroient heureuses, quand les roys philosopheroient ou les philosophes regneroient" (124). Stephens also notes the novelty of Rabelais's good giants in a literary landscape inclined to depict giants as unequivocally evil (11, 188).

⁷⁸ On Erasmus's formulations of Christian exemplarity and community, see Hampton, *Writing from History*, 48-62. For Erasmus's emphasis on virtue, see Tracy, *The Politics of Erasmus*, chapter 1. For Rabelais's now widely recognized Christian humanism, see Febvre, *Le Problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle: la religion de Rabelais*.

cannot be charitable if greed is their only true law, and they remain untouched by both eloquence and learning. The Chats-fourrez therefore stand firmly outside both the Christian and the humanist communities that Erasmus and others construct in their discourses according to certain ethical and intellectual parameters: for Erasmus, “vertu est vertu appellée.”

Erasmus’s writings related to instruction testify to shifts in his opinion on eloquence. Such changes were likely influential on Rabelais’s own attitudes on the subject, particularly in how Erasmus describes ways to protect the prince from rhetoric even as he studies it. Erasmus periodically questions the relevance of eloquence in the monarchies of northern Europe; this kind of objection comes through particularly in satirical texts such as *Ciceronianus* (1528) but is also visible in his educational treatises.⁷⁹ He eventually moves from advocating eloquence to wishing to teach the prince to judge discourses on the criterion of sincerity rather than on eloquence (Tracy, *Erasmus, The Growth of A Mind* 120-121). Erasmus’s main quibble with rhetoric is its tendency to misrepresent the truth in favor of similitude. It uses “conjurer’s tricks” and “spells” to persuade by deception or by flattery.⁸⁰ For instance, Erasmus encourages the prince to reflect on the sincerity of compliments before believing them: “Since you are the prince, see to it that you allow only such compliments as are worthy of a prince. If someone speaks highly of your appearance, reflect that that sort of praise is for a woman. If anyone admires your eloquence, remember that that is praise for sophists and orators” (242). Along with sincerity, he offers Christian morals as a way of reducing both the abuses of eloquence and the effects that such abuses can have on the prince. Indeed, the theme of “checking and diluting” (“temperari diluique”) becomes a commonplace in Renaissance writing on rhetoric and education aimed at princes so that the prince does not become a tyrant, unable to distinguish the honest man from the flatterer, and so that his “science” is always grounded in “conscience” (*Institutio* 231; *Opera omnia* 4:1, 162-3).

I mentioned earlier that the method the humanists propose to accomplish the crafting of a discerning scholar is primarily reading and interpretation. It was believed that without the literary study distinctive of humanist education, the prince will never be able to think or act for himself.⁸¹ Erasmus insists that no person can speak the truth the way books do, so the truth must be learned from the written word (*Institutio* 253). But this is certainly not the naked written word. In brief,

⁷⁹ As Erasmus says in the *Ciceronianus*, eloquence is not a proper activity for man if it, on the one hand, does not fulfill its purpose – such as addressing the public and arguing in courts of law – and if, on the other hand, such a skill necessary to republics is no longer applicable under monarchies (*Ciceronianus* 405): “Bulephorus: Eloquentia, quae nihil aliud quam delectate, non est eloquentia, nimirum in aliud reperta, quod nisi praestat, nec decora videri debet bono viro. Verum vt olim fuerit vtilis eloquentia Ciceronis, hodie quis est illius vsus? An in iudiciis?... Itaque cui tandem vsui Paramus hanc operosam ciceronis eloquentiam? Num concionibus? Vulgus Ciceronis linguam non intelligit: et apud populum nihil agitur de rep” (*Opera Omnia* 1:2, 654). We must, of course, take into the consideration the fact that the *Ciceronianus* is meant as a satire of those who stubbornly imitate only Ciceronian Latin and that Erasmus, through Bulephorus, may not mean everything in that work to be taken completely literally.

⁸⁰ “Bulephorus: One doesn’t need Ciceronian eloquence for that sort of thing. On the contrary, your rhetorical theorists allow the orator on occasion to misrepresent the truth, to magnify the unimportant and make the splendid look small, which is a kind of conjurer’s trick, to infiltrate the hearer’s mind by deception, and finally to carry his intelligence by storm through rousing his emotions, which is putting a kind of spell on him” (*Ciceronianus* 382). [“Ah hoc non est magnopere opus eloquentia Ciceroniana. Nam vestri rhetores permittunt oratori mentiri nonnunquam, res humiles verbis attollere, magnificas deicere, quod sane praestigii genus est, obrepere insidiis in animum auditoris. Postremo mouendis affectibus, quod veneficii genus est, vim adherre mentibus” (*Opera Omnia* 1:2, 636)].

⁸¹ For example, Piccolomini’s *The Education of Boys* lays out how the sequence of study beginning with grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, and leading to moral philosophy will teach the humanist student how to live rightly (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 244-259).

this process primarily entails different ways of reading exemplary lives and texts, but the most important strategy of crafting the self-governing, moral prince is the humanist tutor himself, who is the only one capable of interpreting texts for the prince. The rhetoric of fear for the prince's mind, frequent to treatises on education and customarily aimed at the prince's parents, professes to support and empower the institution of monarchy with its claims of care while equally, if not mostly, promoting itself by embellishing the talents of humanist tutors. Erasmus was, of course, acutely aware of this: his Folly is amused by the verbal trickery employed by "grammatici" to persuade parents of their talents.⁸² In a rather robust formulation of humanism's capacity for educating the prince, in a non-satirical context, Erasmus says that only a proper humanist education can transform the prince from a "shapeless lump... capable of assuming any form" into a "godlike creature" as opposed to an "animal" (*De pueris* 305) or even a "horrible monster" (*Institutio* 259). Along with the pair of private and public, the opposition of godlike creature and monster is one of the most important antitheses of humanist pedagogical discourse, setting itself up as the only means of creating such a divine prince.

Timing is, of course, everything. The prince's education must begin when he is young, still "shapeless," as it were, "while his spirit is still open to each and every influence and at the same time highly retentive of what it has grasped" (*De pueris* 297). Erasmus writes that "No other time is so suitable for moulding and improving the prince as when he does not yet understand that he is the prince" (*Institutio* 207). This clearly signals a problem of authority. The tutor is the subject of the prince but also his master. In his capacity as master, he must tell the truth, but as a subject, he must flatter in order to improve his charge. The only way to set aside this paradox of the master-as-subject is to begin the prince's education before he knows what he is, before it is impossible for him to have any master other than himself.

If the mind of the state, the prince, is healthy and virtuous, the body of the state will be as well, so all attention must be given to the prince's mind: in order to govern others, he must be able to govern himself, but in order to govern himself, he must first be governed and shaped by competent hands. A country may "owe everything to a good prince, but it owes the prince himself to the one whose right counsel has made him what he is."⁸³ The organic metaphor of stakes tied to plants so that the plants may grow properly, an image also common to discourses on the imitation of Classical authors, is often evoked to depict the tutor-pupil relationship.⁸⁴ Just as the plant owes its upward growth to the stake, the prince owes his development to his tutor. Obedience and dependence must be cultivated in the young prince. One of the tutor's duties is even to restrain "this excessive desire to know and learn" so that the student's enthusiasm does not become unmanageable.⁸⁵ Thus the ideal tutor joins the ranks of privileged intellectuals surrounding the prince, providing living, present examples of virtue and wisdom.

⁸² "Idque nescio quibus praestigiis mire efficient, vt stultis materculis et idiotis patribus tales videantur, quales ipsi se faciunt" (*Opera omnia* 4:3, 138).

⁸³ *Institutio* 207. "Omnia debet patria bono principi. At hunc ipsum debet ei, qui rectis rationibus talem effecerit" (*Opera omnia* 4:1, 138).

⁸⁴ "For as stakes are bound to young treeshoots to prevent them from being bent over by their own weight or by the wind, so also young people should depend on companions from whose advice they may learn, by whose conscience they be restrained, and in imitation of whom they may improve themselves" [Quemadmodum enim teneris arborum virgultis stipites alligantur ne aut propria mole aut vi ulla ventorum deflecti possint, ita et iuventibus adhibendi sunt comites quorum monitis discant et conscientia retrahantur et imitatione proficiant] (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 22-23). See also Erasmus, *Institutio principis christiani* 209 (*Opera omnia* 4:2, 140). This treatise addresses the instructor as much as his noble charge, as are others such as Piccolomini's *The Education of Boys* (135).

⁸⁵ See particularly Vergerio's text in *Humanist Educational Treatises* in which he compares restraining excessive curiosity to supervising proper eating and digestive habits (60-63).

Though Erasmus declares that there is no “truth more honest and more candid than that found in books,” he appends to this the need for the prince to surround himself with wise and frank friends and counselors to mediate between him and the text (*Institutio* 243). The humanist interprets the past for the prince through the reading of exemplary lives. He provides “living mirrors [vivum speculum]” in the present, good and wise men against which the prince can measure his virtue (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 13, 27). The prince *must* rely on other people and those other people must have studied a humanist curriculum, for only they can ‘read properly,’ whether interpreting the past, advising in the present, or speaking to the future in their own writing. Students deceive themselves if they rely too much on their own abilities.⁸⁶ Erasmus draws from Classical mythology to illustrate this point. Phaethon, a son of the sun god, gets a chance to drive his father’s chariot across the sky. He is unable to keep the horses on their daily track and so scorches the earth, so Zeus kills him to save the world. Erasmus says that the humanist tutor “should show that he [Phaethon] represents a prince who seized the reins of government in the headstrong enthusiasm of youth *but with no supporting wisdom* and brought ruin upon himself and the entire world” (*Institutio* 212, emphasis mine). We see here that reading, for the prince, is a passive activity. He does not read and interpret for himself, learning to exercise his own judgment. He is read to and interpreted for by someone established as an unquestionable authority to which he is obedient. His reading becomes a fable about himself, especially his own dependence upon others and how his unchecked behavior or curiosity can lead to total ruin. Erasmus’s allegorization of Phaethon is also a warning: will the prince be memorialized as a Phaethon or as a good prince? This promise of posterity looking upon him favorably also keeps the prince in check, so that he may be written into history and memorialized as an example to follow.

Most treatises addressed to princes, whether they aim their writing at a young prince or not, insist on the place of the humanist in the prince’s life, whether it is his personal life as a tutor or public life as a counselor. Since some treatises are addressed to adult princes, their tone tends to be less severe than that struck by Erasmus’s reference to the “monsters” that are created by bad education. For instance, Guillaume Budé, one of France’s first and more important humanists, writes in his *De l’institution du prince* that the prince has no need for a master, just the reading of exemplary lives, many of which he has kindly described and interpreted for his dedicatee’s benefit (85). Such treatises do not always insist on setting up a system of behavioral controls through textual interpretation for the prince, but rather they carve out opportunities for humanists in other ways. Yet, again, they do employ a rhetoric of dependence, of a similar species to that for younger princes, in which humanists create demand for what they alone can supply. Claude de Seyssel, author of *La grand monarchie de France* (1515), says that these kinds of checks are already embedded in the government itself, in the form of religion, justice, and polity.⁸⁷ But Seyssel gives other employment opportunities to humanists: he insists that the prince must never depend solely on himself for counsel: the prince “ought not to keep any matter

⁸⁶ Vergerio encourages the student to confer with his classmates to sharpen their minds, because there is nothing “so inimical to learning as the presumption of one’s own erudition or excessive reliance upon one’s own wits: the one takes away our interest in learning, while the other diminishes it, and in this way students unnecessarily deceive themselves” (65). Erasmus, of course, speaks to a prince who would likely be educated on his own and not in a classroom, but the idea of the student not relying on his own mind remains consistent from republic to monarchy.

⁸⁷ In his chapter entitled “The Authority and Power of the King is Regulated and Bridled in France by Three Bridles”, Seyssel describes how religion, justice, and polity (here meaning ordinances made by previous kings of France) are sufficient in regulating both the government and the king.

concerning his state, however secret it may be, to himself” (79). The rhetoric of dependence cultivated in such writing remains persistent even when some of its usual components are absent.

Moreover, Seyssel, unlike writers such as Budé, does not explicitly promote the dual nature of the prince – that he be, on the one hand, an Augustus, a true sovereign, and on the other hand, a Maecenas, a patron of the arts (Woodward 132). Seyssel is an exception. Most writers of Renaissance educational treatises tend to promote the prince’s role as patron, even referring to the prince’s own intellectual fecundity as responsible for the intellectual climate of the state. Budé says to the young François I: “Et ferez poètes et orateurs comme vous faictes contes et ducs, en leur inspirant vertu d’éloquence par votre libérale béginité, ainsi que au temps passé faisoient les princes de Rome en soy portent tuteurs des disciplines libérales” (79). The prince ‘makes’ poets and orators in recognition of their talents as readily as he would acknowledge military expertise with titles and lands. This idea of princely patronage echoes the double nature of the humanist as scholar and public man envisioned by Gargantua in his letter, who attends to arms and letters in equal measure.

Through literary study and through the production of effective discourse, the prince will learn how to ‘read,’ that is, make judgments of his own and evaluate his counselors’ advice. This kind of study becomes then both an instrument of power for the prince and a defense against that same power. As the sophist Janotus de Bragmardo puts it so neatly in *Gargantua* chapter 20, when he is demanding the gifts promised him by Gargantua only to be met with laughter and evasiveness: “ne clochez pas devant les boyteux” (54-55). No one can successfully use sophistry against a sophist; rhetorical tricks do not work on a rhetorician. Likewise, no one can manipulate a prince who has already been made aware of methods of persuasion and rhetorical tools of manipulation. At that point, the scholar no longer needs a teacher and he can readily instruct others.⁸⁸ In order to do so, he must employ eloquence, the instrument by which the prince “peut pleinement et amplement monstrier et exhibir sa grande puissance” (Budé 81). Eloquence is nearly always framed as a crucial political power, the method by which a prince proves himself: letters as arms, eloquence mightier than the sword.

All this discourse on the prince’s ‘shaping’ confirms the humanist’s main activity in the prince’s life: the mediator between the prince and history with eloquence as the prince’s instrument. The tutor interprets the past for the prince, introduces him to important contemporary intellectuals, and negotiates the prince’s posterity, his memorialization, and his place in the land of letters. “Your life is open to view: you cannot hide,” Erasmus tells the prince, now become a very public mirror.⁸⁹ The prince becomes text. Renaissance humanists affirm constantly that the purpose of education is “not merely to demonstrate the truth of given precepts, but to impel people toward their acceptance and application” and also that “men could be moulded most effectively, and perhaps only, through the art of eloquence, which endowed the precept with life, immediacy, persuasive effect” (H. Gray 500-501). Becoming a model for others is the moral prerogative of the application of humanist learning. The prince is therefore indoctrinated by the reading of exemplary past figures, the company of contemporary intellectual models, and the idea that, in the future, the prince must be wise and good enough to also be ‘read’ as exemplary. Thus the expectation for eloquence in humanist education is the transformation of the prince into a public model for virtue and learning, one who acts always with the polity in mind and with

⁸⁸ See Guarino, *A Program of Teaching and Learning (Humanist Educational Treatises 292-293)*.

⁸⁹ *Institutio* 218. “Tua in conspicuo vita est, latere non potes: aut mango omnium bono bonus sis necesse est aut magna omnium pernicie malus” (*Opera* 4:2 149).

language as his greatest instrument, that produces others in his image that are as vital to the nation as its noblemen, an equality between arms and letters embodied in the prince himself.

The goal of these educational programs is to form a prince who can think and act for himself, who can detect sincerity and tell if someone is faking a limp. The process by which this miraculous moment of autonomy comes about, however, is not described in discourses about education. As Grafton and Jardine have found, humanist education primarily fosters obedience and imitation. The prince described in these treatises obeys, but does not yet reason or self-govern; in Foucault's estimation, this is the very state of Kantian tutelage, wherein an external source, such as a book or a "spiritual director" (*Seelsorger*) is substituted for the prince's own judgment (*Government of Self* 30). The relationship of the prince with his tutor and counselor is that between "a sovereign, the one who has power but lacks the truth" and the counselor, "the one who has the truth but lacks power" (*Fearless Speech* 32). From the discourse of the prince's education, it becomes clear that the point of humanist pedagogy is transforming a prince into a sovereign who has both power and knowledge, but not necessarily independence or the ability to act on his own judgment.

Rabelais attempts to answer this problem of how and when the prince achieves autonomy in the second volume of his pentalogy. He narrates the moment when the prince is tested, where he is transformed, quite literally, in the encounter with his opposite. He does this through the intervention of a suspect literary form, the encomium, a vehicle for flattery, the very thing that Erasmus fears and hopes to keep in check. In what follows, I show that at the very points where Rabelais seems to be fully endorsing humanist pedagogy, the satirical elements and the absent eloquence force us to notice that even here, there is a refusal of integration: everything finds its opposite and undoes itself.

II. Out of Joint: Expectations and Gargantuine Realities

Gargantua's letter to his son portrays Pantagruel as an eager and diligent student meeting all the expectations laid out for him, both by his father and by the discourses on education that inform the writing of the letter. Pantagruel's tutor Epistemon, according to Gargantua at least, fulfills his duties by instructing Pantagruel and acquainting his pupil with important intellectuals who will spur the young giant on to further study and virtuous living (244). Pantagruel's virtue has already been tested to the satisfaction of his father: "Ce que je ne dis par defiance que je aye de ta vertu, laquelle m'a esté jà par cy devant esprouvée, mais pour plus fort te encourager à profiter de bien en mieulx" (243). Gargantua shows confidence in his son's ability to become a "living mirror" after such rigorous study, which is his sole wish and "thesor [*sic*] en ce monde, que de te veoir une foys en ma vie absolu et parfaict, tant en vertu, honesteté et preudhommie, comme en tout sçavoir liberal et honeste..." (243). Gargantua's letter gives Pantagruel "nouveau courage," and his passion for books is likened to a fire burning through brush, "tant il l'avoit infatigable et strident" (246). What remains for Pantagruel is to make his abilities public by defending "conclusions" on all subjects, which he does in Paris in front of important lawyers, doctors, bureaucrats, and lords. He "mist tous de cul" all the professors and orators; as for the Sorbonne theologians, he "feist tous quinaulx, et leurs montra visiblement qu'ilz n'estoient que veaulx engiponnez" (250-251). Even the Parisian women begin pointing out Pantagruel on the street, so great is his reputation for learning and debate. Nothing appears to undermine the educational program that Rabelais describes in *Pantagruel*.

At the same time, however, Pantagruel cannot be the ideal Orator outlined in the discourses of education and rhetoric. The proof of his successful and diligent study, defending “conclusions,” is ultimately selfish, almost a travesty of eloquence, as it serves no other purpose than the display of Pantagruel’s ability to argue against his intellectual equals and take pleasure in being recognized. This exercise does not speak to his ability as a prince, but rather his ability to consume and process his reading. More importantly, *Pantagruel* the book and Pantagruel the character both ideologically resist rhetoric altogether even as it is held up in such high esteem by Gargantua and the treatises that inform his letter. Indeed, the terms “rhetorique” and “eloquence” do not figure at all in the first of Rabelais’s books, though they are of increasing importance in the later books.⁹⁰ Instead, *Pantagruel* aligns itself with philosophy and exhibits the violence towards rhetoric characteristic of philosophic discourse that insists on truth and simplicity over rhetorical embellishment and deception.⁹¹ Though he might be seen on the surface as a figure for the idealized Christian humanist philosopher-king, Pantagruel rejects language, often violently, and exhibits a consistent mistrust of words.

Pantagruel contains many confrontations over language’s capacity to mask the truth. They suggest that, in this first volume, Rabelais uses Pantagruel to explore almost exclusively the negative commonplaces about rhetoric. Pantagruel forces the “écolier limousin,” who imagines himself to be a great orator by Latinizing his French, to speak “naturellement” by taking him by the throat (234). Pantagruel threatens two lords with beheading if they do not tell him the complete truth during a legal dispute (253). Along with forcing the truth out of his interlocutors, Pantagruel also, on numerous occasions, dries up the throats of anyone who would misrepresent themselves, misuse language, or transgress boundaries. This is a specifically language-oriented twist on the medieval tradition of Pantagruel as a little demon of salt and thirst. For instance, the young giant sends a box of “confitures” to the book’s primary antagonist Anarche that promptly burns his throat, the remedy to which is the silencing activity of continuous wine-drinking (313). Pantagruel’s sowing of salt into the mouths of other characters, whether literal or figurative, and generalized violence towards throats lead François Rigolot to conclude that the giant imposes silence rather than inspiring speech (*Les Langages de Rabelais* 37). Indeed, the constant attention given to throats maps out the book’s preoccupation with the idea that human communication is ultimately unreliable, if not always outright deceitful, if it must be stopped at its physiological source. In another undercutting of expectations, Pantagruel’s role as a patron and progenitor is limited to a race of pygmies who retain their creator’s quick

⁹⁰ Dixon’s concordance to Rabelais is exceptionally useful in seeing which of his five books show more interest in rhetoric and speech than others. I refer here to the entries on “Rétorique” (739), “Rhétorique” (743), and “Eloquence” (277), as well as their adjectival and adverbial variants. Related entries such as “Dire” (254), “Discours” (255), “Élégant” (277), “Langaige” (475), “Oraison” (593), “Parole(s)” (621), “Prononcer” (698), “Propos / Propous” (699) confirm a marked quantitative increase in the use of words about speech in the books after *Pantagruel*.

⁹¹ Foucault provides a succinct explanation of the long-standing rivalry between philosophy and rhetoric, between philosophers and rhetoricians. Drawing from Plato’s *Socrates’s Apology*, Foucault concludes that the line of demarcation between philosophy and rhetoric has to do with art and truth: “Rhetorical language is a language chosen, fashioned, and constructed in such a way as to produce its effect on the other person. The mode of being of philosophical language is to be *etumos*, that is to say, so bare and simple, so in keeping with the very movement of thought that, just as it is without embellishment, in its truth, it will be appropriate to what it refers to... Whereas the mode of being of rhetorical language is to be constructed according to the rules and techniques (according to a *technē*) and addressed to the other’s soul, philosophical language will be without these devices, without these *technai* (*Government of Self* 314-315). For more on the varying relationships between philosophy and rhetoric in the early modern period, see Seigel; Plett; Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn*.

temper and, in a form of Bakhtinian degradation, originate in quite the opposite end of Pantagruel's body than his throat.⁹² We have to wonder what would have happened on the island of the Chats-fourrez if Pantagruel had deigned to disembark and join his traveling companions there, if a figure so fiercely impervious to rhetoric could have had an effect on similarly resistant creatures. Alcofribas suggests that they could have won against the Chats-fourrez if they had had a good leader with them, but it seems that Pantagruel cannot even be bothered to deal with cases related to the very opposite of eloquence (759).

These interactions involving language and truth-telling suggest the distance that Rabelais deliberately places between his prince and rhetoric, especially the more negative commonplaces about rhetoric as a means to deceive your interlocutor or exaggerate your own learning. One explanation for certain incongruities between Pantagruel and the ideal product of humanist education is that Gargantua's letter awakens Pantagruel to his future responsibilities and, as Erasmus puts it, informs him that he is the prince and thus has power. However, Pantagruel's power is by no means latent and awakened by Gargantua's call to arms that resounds with superfluity. Even so, Pantagruel is associated more with power than with the powers of persuasion.⁹³ By imposing silence in an attempt to control language, Pantagruel nonetheless reveals his belief that language is indeed an instrument of power, just one that he chooses not to wield. The balance between arms and letters tips in favor of letters, and letters as arms, in humanist discourses on education. In *Pantagruel*, by contrast, arms (weapons and appendages) and the truth are weapons against the deceptiveness that can come as a by-product of learning letters. Pantagruel's "conclusions" in Paris come across as empty gestures, only undertaken for the sake of proving his intellectual prowess and not his ability to use eloquence in the place of force to persuade, unite, and defend. *Gargantua*, however, shows eloquence in action; there, Rabelais narrates more fully how the prince becomes an "abysme de science."

The giants' educations allow us to pinpoint shifting dynamics in Rabelais's thoughts on language from *Pantagruel* to *Gargantua*. Though father and son lead mostly parallel lives within parallel narratives (birth, education, letters from fathers, accumulation of friends, war), Rabelais uses eloquence in the second book as a productive theme for interrogating language and refrains from the violence characteristic of the first book. *Gargantua* appears to reestablish the faith in that particular humanist value from one book to the next, and with that renewed faith come the other trappings of eloquence's commonplaces. Rabelais's tendency to set extremes against each other may be responsible for this shift. The competing pedagogical systems at the heart of *Gargantua* (sophists and humanists) were not in play in *Pantagruel*. Defaux informs us that since *Pantagruel* is riddled with sophists who are not at all concerned with ethics, Pantagruel as philosopher-king, fully immersed in a humanist regime, must reject any and all sophistic tricks of language.⁹⁴ Gargantua, in contrast, was first indoctrinated by sophists, so *Gargantua* has to stage

⁹² "Ce que fist Pantagruel, et les nomma Pygmées. Et les envoya vivre en une isle là auprès, où ilz se sont for multiplies depuis. Mais les grues leur font continuellement guerre, desquelles ilz se defendent courageusement, car ces petitz boutz d'hommes (lesquels en Escosse l'on appelle manches d'estrilles) sont voluntiers cholericques. La raison physique est: par ce qu'ilz ont le cueur près de la merde" (310-311).

⁹³ For more on the association of Pantagruel and "puissance," see Berrong, "An Exposition of Disorder: From *Pantagruel* to *Gargantua*."

⁹⁴ See Defaux's *Pantagruel et les sophistes*, 19, 36. The only exception to rejecting sophistry is Panurge, who escapes Pantagruel's usual wrath; this is partly because Pantagruel loves him and is amused by him, and partly because Panurge at least tells his own truth. Take, for instance, Pantagruel's reaction to Panurge's praise of debt in the *Tiers Livre*. Pantagruel acknowledges Panurge's gift for speech and argumentation, but he remains utterly unmoved by it: "Mais preschez et patrocinez d'icy à la Pentecoste, en fin vous serez esbahy, comment rien ne me

how and why these predecessors to the humanists are rendered obsolete, as they are in Gargantua's letter when he claims to be uneducated by the standards of his son's education. By the rules of satire and Rabelais's employment of antithetical pairs, the verbal sophistry of Gargantua's first tutors has to be met with an equivalent humanist expectation for good language. Once Gargantua is given proper defensive tools, he is taught to better evaluate language use and not to see it always as a threat; he does not have to reject language outright. Why else is Janotus de Bragmardo rewarded by Gargantua for the same mangling of speech for which the "écolier limousin" was harshly punished by Pantagruel? Rabelais's renewed interest in the positive connotations of eloquence is one reason why Gargantua can respond with laughter and not rage to Janotus's speech-making. In fact, the replacing of misused language by eloquence involves an increased emphasis on sociability and community in *Gargantua*, culminating in the creation of the Thélème abbey. Rabelais's new attentiveness to eloquence is partly responsible for this adjustment, since eloquence traditionally involves civility and civilization.⁹⁵

I now return Gargantua's letter. Gargantua hints there that his son may not be the orator-prince that his education prepares him to be: "tel te laisser après ma mort comme un miroir representant la personne de moy ton pere, et sinon tant excellent, et tel de *faict*, comme je te souhaite, certes bien tel en *desir*" (243, emphases mine). The discrepancy hinted at between "faict" and "desir" combined with the idea that Pantagruel must expressly mirror his father seems to signal back to Gargantua as the ideal product of the education he has outlined. As I shall shortly show in my reading of *Gargantua*, he can certainly claim to have benefited more from humanist education than his son did, because he had so much further to go. Pantagruel may be a kind of "living mirror," just not the one his father truly wants, which in the letter is himself, age restored to youth, old modes of learning improved by the new, death overcome by immortality, father and son collapsed into one "garde et tresor de l'immortalité de nostre nom" (242). The fact that Pantagruel's education certainly does not fill as many chapters as that of Gargantua demonstrates that education as a theme is more important to *Gargantua* than it was in the earlier book. Rabelais takes an almost excruciatingly long time to narrate Gargantua's full transformation from "shapeless lump" to "divine being" and, as a result, is able to more successfully translate the discourse of education into narrative. Thus the expectations laid out for the son are fulfilled through the father.

In comparison to Pantagruel whose intellectual abilities are consistently superior, the expectations for Gargantua vacillate during his childhood. His birth, accompanied by remarkable signs, appears to signal his future greatness. For example, he was carried for eleven months in his mother's belly: we are reminded by our erudite narrator Alcofribas that eleven-month pregnancies are reserved for heroic masterpieces that require extra time for their optimal

aurez persuadé, et par vostre beau parler, jà ne me ferez entrer en debtes" (367). Defaux has argued that Rabelais uses Panurge to deflect negative qualities, such as this capacity for sophistry, away from Pantagruel (see *Le Curieux, le glorieux et la sagesse du monde*). For more studies on Panurge as a rhetorician, see Coleman, *Rabelais* 118-140; Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* 111-121, 183-222; Greene, *Rabelais: A Study in Comic Courage* 63-68; Demerson, "Tradition rhétorique et création littéraire chez Rabelais;" Bowen, *Enter Rabelais, Laughing* 102-128.

⁹⁵ This observation about civility in *Gargantua* versus *Pantagruel* is widely accepted. Hampton observes in his *Literature and Nation* that *Gargantua*, out of the five books, is the most politically- and patriotically-minded (67). Berrong sees an increase in emphasis on "civilized intercourse" in *Gargantua* ("Exposition" 21). Bauschatz frames the increase in attention to civility as a rise in the need for approval from the community; this kind of approval is congruent with what I have called the rhetoric of dependence characteristic of humanist pedagogical treatises ("From 'estudier et profiter' 41).

formation (15). Gargantua springs Minerva-like from his mother's head, but does not destroy her as his son's birth does Gargantua's wife (21-22). Grandgousier hails his son's intelligence in chapter 14, stipulating that Gargantua will attain "à degre souverain de sapience, s'il est bien institué," after which Grandgousier gives his son a sophist preceptor (43). In the letter to his son Gargantua affirms that not only did he meet with his own father's expectations with regards his learning, he even surpassed them:

Mais encores que mon feu pere de bonne memoire Grand Gousier eust adonné tout son estude, à ce que je profitasse en toute perfection et sçavoir politique, et que mon labeur et estude correspondit tresbien, voire encores *oultrepassast son desir*: toutesfoys comme tu peulx bien entendre, le temps n'estoit tant idoine ne commode es lettres comme est de present, et n'avoys copie de telz precepteurs comme tu as eu. (242, emphasis mine)

Here, there is no discrepancy between the father's desire and the end result, though Gargantua is nevertheless quick to qualify his final grade of 'exceeds expectations' with a comparison between the educational methods of his youth with those of his son: all that was lost during the "temps tenebreux" has been restored, and Gargantua, though he was "le plus sçavant dudict siecle," is now no more learned than the "petitz grimaulx" of Pantagruel's day (243). The conditions were indeed different. Whereas Gargantua's letter announces a seemingly uncalled-for intensification in his son's studies, the brutal switch in educational methods brought about by Grandgousier that we see in the second book was enormously crucial in reforming the young Gargantua – and with him the figure of the giant borrowed from the tradition of the *Les Grandes et Inestimables Chronicques* – into the kind of man who writes a letter often hailed as a very serious "hymn to the Renaissance" by modern commentators, a letter that contains the outline of Gargantua's own humanist educational program.⁹⁶ I turn now to Gargantua's education in an effort to understand how Gargantua is meant to replace Pantagruel as a living embodiment of humanist study.

III. "Thou monster Ignorance": Gargantua's Education Revised

Rabelais fleshes out Gargantua's epistolary description of his education over the course of several chapters in *Gargantua*. We see how Gargantua gains his reputation for learning under the sophists and how that reputation is undermined when juxtaposed with the new, humanist pedagogy. In brief, a series of events prompts Gargantua's father, Grandgousier, to make

⁹⁶ The phrase "hymn to the Renaissance" is from Abel Lefranc's 1922 *Œuvres de François Rabelais* (x, 98). The reading of Gargantua's letter in this positive light dominated criticism for the first half of the twentieth century (see Brault, "Abysme" 615-616). Perhaps the first to do so, Brault argued in 1966 that the letter is purposefully farcical, an "inside joke" between Rabelais and other humanists, a "serious matter presented in comic form" ("Abysme" 617). In the 1970s, Edwin M. Duval, in his article on Rabelais and the medieval curriculum, and Gérard Defaux, in his book exploring Rabelais's interest in sophistry, both situate the letter in Rabelais's project of satirizing university life and its pretensions; this reading of the letter as satire persists today. The letter may indeed be a satire or a farce. I am more interested in how the letter participates in Rabelais's overall scheme to dismantle shared cultural pretensions through exaggeration and less invested in the letter's generic or tonal status as a sincere (or insincere) cultural document that stands on its own. Pantagruel takes it seriously enough. What is more, the letter is very useful to my analysis: it permits the comparative study of the two giants' educations from a single point of view (Gargantua's), alongside the discourse of education of the time.

changes to his son's education. First, Grandgousier discovers his young son's "hault sens et merueilleux entendement" when he invents a "torchecul" (42). Then, Gargantua spends approximately fifty-four years under the tutelage of the sophist Thubal Holoferne, and an undisclosed amount of time under another, Jobelin Bridé. His time is spent being read to from medieval textbooks, memorizing them so he can recite them backwards and forwards. Lastly, despite all this reading and study, Grandgousier observes that Gargantua is making no intellectual progress whatsoever. Gargantua is instead "fou, niays, tout resveux et rassoté" (44). Upon the advice of Don Philippe des Marays, Grandgousier has a young page brought to court in order to demonstrate the efficacy of the learning of "le temps present," meaning humanist pedagogy. A language contest thus prompts a complete overhaul of Gargantua's education. Eudemon, who is not yet twelve years old, has only been studying under this new system of learning for two years but he is capable of producing extemporaneously an encomium of Gargantua that is so eloquent that Gargantua is rendered speechless. Grandgousier immediately hires Eudemon's humanist tutor Ponocrates to instruct his son. The true aims of education are therefore redirected from rote memorization to language, judgment, and comportment ("meilleur jugement, meilleures paroles, meilleurs propos... meilleur entretien et honnesteté," 44).

In modern criticism, *Gargantua* chapter 15, where Eudemon makes his speech and, by extension, the case for humanism, is typically read as a fairly straightforward suggestion of Rabelais's distaste for medieval educational methods ("vos resveurs mateologiens"⁹⁷ du temps jadis") and of his confidence in the new humanist learning ("les jeunes gens de maintenant," 44). Diane Desrosiers-Bonin, for instance, writes in her *Rabelais et l'humanisme civil* that Gargantua's second round of education joins theory with practice and produces the civically- and ethically-minded prince that humanism promises (chapter 3). Huchon notes in her edition of Rabelais that "Ce chapitre est central, célébrant l'avènement d'une nouvelle rhétorique humaniste" (1103 n. 1). More recently, E. Bruce Hayes argues that the Eudemon episode fits the usual framework for the farcical punishment of ignorance, but the real target of the farce is not Gargantua or the medieval pedagogy of the past, but rather the contemporary educational methods of the Sorbonne (117). I propose reading *Gargantua* 15 twice. I first examine Rabelais's use of antithesis to exaggerate, in humanism's favor, the differences between "le temps jadis" and "maintenant." Then I revisit those antitheses with specific attention to how eloquence – here the very sign of humanism's potential – is called into question and how it raises the stakes for the kind of prince humanist education is meant to produce.

Many of the details of *Gargantua* chapters 14 and 15 confirm Rabelais's intention of using binary thinking to elevate humanism over other institutions of learning. Even the names of Gargantua's multiple tutors encourage this reading. The name of Gargantua's first sophist tutor Thubal Holoferne tells this story in miniature. Huchon notes that "Thubal" means "confusion" in Hebrew (4101, n. 1) and "Holoferne" appears to be shorthand for the fall of the pretentious. Dante places the Biblical Assyrian general Holofernes in his *Purgatorio* as an example of "pride cast down" (*Purgatorio* 12:58-60; Book of Judith 10-13). Shakespeare employs this same name in *Love's Labour's Lost* for the court "bookman" (pedant) who speaks a convoluted mixture of English and Latin.⁹⁸ It is that Holofernes who voices the epigraph used in this chapter and in the title of this subsection, chosen for its uncanny similarity with what happens in these two chapters

⁹⁷ "Mateologien" is a New Testament term designating "des parleurs aux discours vains" (*Œuvres complètes* 1104 n. 8).

⁹⁸ This may even be Rabelais's influence, even if only distantly. See Prescott.

in *Gargantua*, where ignorance is equated with literal monstrosity: “O thou monster Ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!” (4.2.24). Shakespeare’s juxtaposition of his pedant with the “animal” Dull is another instance of a comic commonplace: that is, the exaggerated and ineffectual sophistry of the intellectual elite who seek to instruct. “Jobelin,” the name of Gargantua’s second tutor, simply means “sot” (Rabelais, *Œuvres* 1102 n. 21). By contrast, Eudemon and Ponocrates have Greek names meaning, respectively, “happy” or “fortunate”⁹⁹ and “power through hard work” (Hight 183).

Rabelais wishes to recount in detail, in the book of the father, the great transformation in learning that Gargantua applauds in the book of the son. Gargantua’s letter hyperbolizes the greatness of the new era, using the metaphor of shadows and light to pit the past against the present. The metaphorical language of the letter expands and become literal in *Gargantua*, drawing on even more of the Renaissance discourse on education to do so. Gargantua and Eudemon are clearly marked as diametrical opposites, each representing the ultimate products of their respective educations. Jean Plattard emphasizes the antagonism between the two methods as it is represented by Rabelais:

L’éducation ancienne était chargée de tous les défauts, responsable de toutes les misères physiques, intellectuelles et morales; l’éducation nouvelle, seule juste dans ses principes et son objet, pouvait seule provoquer et entretenir l’activité, seule produire de bons résultats. (79)

In order to fully emphasize the unique potential of the new educational program in his descriptions, then, to the extent that Eudemon embodies humanist perfection, Rabelais must reduce Gargantua to a sophist beast. Rabelais is insistent on the fact that Gargantua is as wise as he can be according to the educational methods available in his youth, such that he now stands in for those methods: “Et quelques aultres [livres] de semblable farine, à la lecture desquelz il devint aussi saige qu’onques puis ne fourneames nous” (43). His mother’s lengthy pregnancy and his prolonged sophist education ‘cook’ Gargantua as much as he can be cooked. Rabelais establishes an end point of that kind of learning beyond which Gargantua can no longer go: there are limits to how far memorization can actually inform and transform a student. These methods have long overstayed their welcome since Gargantua is now over sixty years old. In Bakhtinian terms, Gargantua, and the sophists who educated him, must be brought low. To do so, Rabelais turns to another extreme, that of perfection, to discredit the sophists as ignorant charlatans and push them further down the spectrum of pedagogical and ideological effectiveness. This is the point where Eudemon, the realization of the ideal orator, must appear to provoke a change and provide the new end goal of Gargantua’s education.

Rabelais applies Erasmus’s opposition of monstrosity to divinity as the possible result of educational systems to the confrontation between Gargantua and Eudemon in chapter 15. Here, we see a literal “godlike creature” facing an “animal” (*De pueris* 305) and “horrible monster” (*Institutio* 259). We have in one corner Gargantua, representing the sophists. In his reaction to Eudemon’s speech, Gargantua is figured as a monstrous and inarticulate body with no control over his own physicality and emotions. His reactions imitate the movements of livestock and he is unable to say a single word. He devolves into an Erasmian “shapeless lump:” “Mais toute la

⁹⁹ *Eudaimonia* is a tricky concept to parse. It is usually translated as “happiness,” but it really is a goal-oriented approach to ethics in which the *eudaimon* leads an authentic life by fulfilling objectively determined criteria for happiness, as distinct from pleasure. See Plato, *The Republic*, book 4; Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*; Asselin.

contenance de Gargantua fut, qu'il se print à plorer comme une vache, et se cachoit le visaige de son bonnet, et ne fut possible de tirer de luy une parole, non plus q'un pet d'un asne mort." Despite his extensive reading, Gargantua clearly does not know the prescriptions of Plutarch against the display of emotions. Plutarch writes in *De garrulitate* that Odysseus's eloquence went hand in hand with his self-control, notably over the physical expression of his emotions, such as tears, as well as control over his tongue.¹⁰⁰ Gargantua here prefigures the book's antagonist, Picrochole, the mad king, who is pushed into pursuing outrageous conquests by his greedy, obsequious advisers, driven *by* language rather than resistant to it. He has been taught to absorb language through memorization, but not how to put it to use, resist it, or control his reactions to it. In Janotus de Bragmardo's words, if a man faked a limp, Gargantua would believe that man was lame. In addition, Rabelais here puts the body to shame where he would otherwise revel in bodily functions, such as the chapter in which Gargantua's intelligence is measured by his curious invention of a "torchecul."

Eudemon, in the other corner, represents the humanists. He betrays no emotions and is manifestly in control of his entire person. His body does not betray him in any way; every gesture is contrived to convey sincerity. Even when confronted by (and made to praise) a monstrous and inarticulate body, he does not flinch or hesitate: he performs. Eudemon is held up as the embodiment of humanist eloquence. He is young, he comports himself well and in accordance with all the rules of courtly etiquette and propriety, and his education has been neatly condensed into only two years. Eudemon is "... tant bien testonné, tant bien tiré, tant bien espousseté, tant honneste en son maintien, que trop mieulx ressembloit quelque petit angelot qu'un homme" (44). There is a complete orderliness to Eudemon that contrasts with the emotional disorder of Gargantua. Even our knowledge of him is orderly. We know every gritty detail of Gargantua's upbringing, but we know virtually nothing about Eudemon. Our knowledge of Eudemon is contained in this chapter, just a hyperbole-saturated description of him and his speech. The implied narrative is that humanist education works swiftly, efficiently, and in an orderly fashion; it preaches discipline; it elevates man to the orders of angels.

We do, however, know that Eudemon hails from Villegongys. This hamlet is near Saint-Genou, a locale that comes up again elsewhere in *Gargantua* (1104 n. 6). I do not want to linger too long on this connection, but Rabelais's allusions to Saint-Genou and its environs are interesting in that they connect the theme of rescue to changes in the regulation of the body. They also suggest Rabelais's further uses of antithesis. The old woman who assisted in Gargantua's strange birth came from the area of Saint-Genou. When Gargantua's mother was having difficulty giving birth, this old woman gave her "un restrictif si horrible" that, once Gargamelle's lower orifices were closed up, forced her baby out of her left ear (21).¹⁰¹ The scene with Eudemon, similarly though less literally, portrays Gargantua on a vertical axis of upper and lower, where he is trapped in a lower stratum of human intelligence, figured by muteness and animal sounds and by the covering of his face. Lest we forget, it was the invention of a "torchecul," with its joyful attention on the care of the lower parts, that prompted Grandgousier to have his son educated in the first place (42). The movement that Rabelais suggests is up and away from lower orifices. The 'natural' path that Gargantua takes, whether through his mother's body or his education, has to be diverted in an upper, cerebral direction.

The direct result of Eudemon's speech is Gargantua's silent weeping, which results in another extreme emotion. Seeing his son in such an emotional and mute state makes

¹⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia VI*, 505f-506a; *Odyssey* 10.491, 210-212; 20.13, 16.

¹⁰¹ For an excellent reading of this scene, see Hampton, "The Fallen Fundament."

Grandgousier “tant courroussé” that he immediately wants to kill the tutor Jobelin Bridé (45). The Erasmian pedagogy that informs Rabelais’s depictions of education also helps to contextualize Grandgousier’s rage as a reaction born out of shame and fear. The study of eloquence establishes the self and hands over to the student the tools of mastering others. Eudemon is clearly in the position of power over Gargantua, but his eloquence does not civilize the giant: it bestializes him (Rhodes 41, 139). Gargantua’s selfhood is at risk. Erasmus places the burden of a child’s education on the father, and he would blame parental neglect for Gargantua’s state. It is in the hands of the father to correctly ‘shape’ the son. Without such care taken for the son, the father himself becomes less than a man:

There is no beast more savage and dangerous than a human being who is swept along by the passions of ambition, greed, anger, envy, extravagance, and sensuality. Therefore a father who does not arrange for his son to receive the best education at the earliest age is neither a man himself nor has any fellowship with human nature.¹⁰²

Grandgousier is therefore responsible for his son’s ‘unnaturalness.’ His anger also, less selfishly, originates in fear related to flattery and the manipulation of the passions. At the core of Eudemon’s speech is flattery and the young page has proven that Gargantua is highly susceptible to it. Erasmus is particularly vehement about the dangers of flattery, as I stated above, and insists that the prince learn to reject praise directed at him: “And when you [the prince] hear the same things from foolish eulogizers, then reflect all the more ‘What has this to do with being a prince?’”¹⁰³ Erasmus’ recommendation of ‘reflecting’ on flattery forces the prince to shrewdly juxtapose the praise offered with its purpose, so that the prince may gain critical distance and not be swayed by obsequious speech. Gargantua, then, is in dire need of the sort of education that promises defenses for the weak mind against praise. This scene in a sense proves the humanists right in showing their concern about the mental defenses of the prince. Don Philippe des Marays steps in again, mollifying Grandgousier who decides to get Bridé drunk and send him away instead of killing him. In *Gargantua*, drinking and laughter replaces punishment via thirst and violence to the throat.

Being susceptible to flattery connects Gargantua here to the book’s later description of the antagonist Picrochole, particularly in chapter 33 where Picrochole’s advisers use his greed and ambition to urge him to invade foreign lands. Grandgousier will continuously lament the downfall of his friend and fellow Christian monarch in this regard, so it is fair to say that this is a concern he has for his son (82-85). The connection between chapters 15 and 33 is corroborated further by the presence of “bonnets,” which Rabelais uses as an external and decipherable sign of sincerity. Eudemon’s speech is bookended with movements concerning caps. The young page removes his without prompting before he begins his speech, and Gargantua covers his face with his own at the end. Combined with Eudemon’s “face ouverte” and overall pleasant appearance,

¹⁰² *De pueris* 305; *Opera omnia* 1:2, 32. See also *Institutio* 259 (*Opera omnia* 4:1, 188) and Rebhorn, *Emperor of Men’s Minds* 218-219.

¹⁰³ “Cum sis princeps, videto, ne quam admittas laudem, nisi dignam principe. Effert aliquis formam tuam, cogita ad istum modum laudari foeminas. Si quis admiratur facundiam, memineris istam sophistarum ac rhetorum esse laudem... At cum audieris eadem a stultis laudatoribus, multo magis cogita: quid haec ad principem?” (*Institutio* 242; *Opera Omnia* 4:1, 172).

Eudemon's cap removal participates in an outward demonstration of sincerity and modesty.¹⁰⁴ This gesture is a sign of transparency as part of the speech's delivery and of the creation of a trustworthy orator persona or *ethos*.¹⁰⁵ The inverse image appears at the beginning of chapter 33 when Picrochole orders his advisers to cover themselves:

- Cyre aujourd'huy nous vous rendons le plus heureux, plus chevaleureux prince qui oncques feust depuis la mort de Alexandre Macedo.
- Couvrez couvrez vous dist Picrochole.
- Grand mercy (dirent ilz) Cyre, nous sommes à nostre debvoir. (91)

The fact that Picrochole's advisers have to cover themselves tells us that they were previously uncovered, perhaps in the same gesture of sincerity and transparency that Eudemon adopts, and their superficial obeisance masks their bad advice. Since the advisers will shortly be exposed to the readers as greedy and manipulative through their zealous rhetoric of invasion and empire, the appropriation of this gesture unveils the moral ambiguity of rhetoric and how the body can manufacture signs to convey trustworthiness. Rhetoric does what it must to convey the intended message and try to persuade. The body can be made to lie. Therefore Gargantua must be taught to fortify his mind against all rhetoric, so evil counselors and Eudemons alike cannot reduce him to indecorous behavior or make him a puppet of their political agendas.

What follows this chapter appears to verify the interpretation of Rabelais's representation of humanist education as straightforward and marked by earnest enthusiasm. Rabelais deploys more antitheses to signal the differences between sophist and humanist instruction. Like Pantagruel, Gargantua is sent to Paris "pour congnoistre quel estoit l'estude des jouvenceaulx de France pour icelluy temps," stressing once again in *Gargantua* the 'nowness' and 'newness' of humanist pedagogy (45). In chapters 21 and 22, Gargantua shows Ponocrates how his days were structured under the sophists. There is particular emphasis on an overall lack of discipline and physical exercise. When Gargantua does study for "quelque meschante demye heure," his body is poised for intellectual activity, eyes fixed on his book, but his mind lacks obedience, for it "estoit en la cuisine" (57). To recall the image of bread evoked in *Gargantua* 14, Gargantua has already been fully "cooked" by sophist bakers. Eudemon's speech succeeds in provoking the changes necessary to Gargantua's development. Now comes the "task of unteaching," which is more arduous than teaching itself.¹⁰⁶ In chapter 23 we see that Gargantua's days become heavily structured so as not to waste any more time. His body and mind must reach a kind of harmony, such that to talk of one is also to talk of the other. Vergerio, for instance, uses the language of the body to discuss the regulation of the mind and management of the appetites. The mind, curiosity,

¹⁰⁴ Erasmus is particularly adamant about this gesture of respect (*Colloquia – Monitoria Paedagogica*). Smith sees in certain passages of the *Colloquia* and the *Adagia* the basis for Eudemon's character (199-200). See also *Humanist Educational Treatises* 139-141.

¹⁰⁵ Another association that can be made here is Eudemon's cap with Gargantua's childhood codpiece from chapter eight. Figured as a cornucopia, "tousjours verdoyante, tousjour fleurissante, tousjours fructifiante, plene d'humeurs, plene de fruitz, plene de toutes delices," Gargantua's "braguette" is specifically noted for being unlike the codpieces of other young men "qui ne sont plenes que de vent, au grand interest du sexe feminin" (25-26). Like Eudemon's cap removal, Gargantua's codpiece represents sincerity and the lack of false pretense.

¹⁰⁶ Piccolomini is referring specifically to the vices of tutors that can be passed on to their pupils and to the difficulty of guiding those pupils away from vice again: "Non sint [praeceptores] austeritate tristes nec comitate nimis dissolute, quos nec odire nec contemnere iure possis, quorum sermo plurimum de honesto sit; ne ab his vitia discas, quae postmodum sit opus dediscere, in quibus eluendis magna difficultas est, et onus dedocendi gravius est quam docendi" (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 136-137).

and body of the humanist student must digest in a way that remains useful, allowing what is taken in to nourish and instruct, both figuratively and literally (60-63). Gargantua reads proper books and makes actual progress, and he begins to frequent “gens sçavans” to provide him with “living mirrors” to emulate. Very importantly, Gargantua learns to scrutinize the rhetoric and gestures of the sellers of quack remedies in the marketplace, the “theriacleurs,” whose persuasive tactics are likely far from subtle and therefore easier to see through (72). We see a connection between Gargantua’s education and the letter he writes to his son: unable to utter a word during a rhetorical contest, Gargantua becomes insistent that his own son be protected from rhetoric and be ready to defend “conclusions” in public.

It is of course problematic to say that Grandgousier’s anger and Gargantua’s shame provide an explanation for Gargantua’s encouraging Pantagruel to intensify his studies. The book of the son came before that of the father, so the problem of publication does complicate the relationship between the two books and their pedagogical programs. However, Rabelais reengineers the letter in retrospect by expanding on the adult Gargantua’s position on education. The first Gargantua, the ‘uneducated’ writer of the letter in *Pantagruel*, and the second Gargantua, the young humanist prince, are not completely irreconcilable. In both books, we see a giant who finds argumentation difficult. Rabelais’s figurative language signals this connection, using rhetoric to draw our eye to Gargantua’s relationship to language. In *Pantagruel*, Gargantua’s wife dies giving life to their son. In response, Gargantua, confronted with “argumens sophistiques qui le suffocoquent,” “pleuroit comme une vache, mais tout soubdain rioit comme un veau” (225). Gargantua suffers a moment of aporia in an attempt to support, logically and emotionally, both mourning his wife and celebrating his son’s birth. The association of Gargantua with animals, such as crying like a cow after Eudemon’s speech, will never truly escape him, no matter his education. It is simply part of Rabelais’s rhetoric surrounding the giant, even in the later books where he does not appear often. In the *Tiers Livre* of 1546, Panurge exclaims that it would be easier to “tirer un pet d’un Asne mort” than to get a straight answer out of the philosopher Trouillogan (466). Gargantua displays his disgust at the philosopher’s evasive tactics and quickly excuses himself. Gargantua may still have a particular sensitivity to this expression of impossibility that, for him, recalls a childhood humiliation. Rabelais merges the two versions of Gargantua through a consistent use of figurative language. As a result, *Gargantua*’s reimagining of its protagonist makes Pantagruel seem an even more novel version of the humanist prince, one who takes charge of his education and asserts his authority and autonomy precisely because he calls into question strictly upheld commonplaces about language.

However, it is rare that Rabelais would give unqualified praise to any topic brought up in his books, even, and perhaps especially, if it were something as important as eloquence is to his cultural milieu. Berrong asserts that since Rabelais does nothing in the chapters following *Gargantua* 15 to discredit Eudemon and Ponocrates, it is safe to believe that Rabelais wholeheartedly puts his faith in eloquence and that the overall presentation of eloquence and humanist education is positive (“Sophista” 40). Other scholars who have studied the curricula of the time say that the innovations depicted in *Gargantua* are largely superficial. Comparing the old methods with the new, some scholars of the Renaissance see in these chapters of *Gargantua* a mere matter of applying discipline to an already established program of study as opposed to a revolutionary change in regime, or of merging training in “chevalerie” with that of “clercs” to create a prince who can defend his nation but who is also of his time, learned in the sciences and arts (Plattard 81, 83). Others note Rabelais’s adherence to the humanist attention to reading well

and widely as opposed to the medieval period's reputation for rote memorization and for reading the wrong books (Rigolot, *Langages* 76; Highet 184). It is my contention that even though there is no explicit condemnation of what Eudemon represents, that does not necessarily equate to wholesale support. The speech itself demands our further scrutiny in order to determine whether or not Rabelais does not place the entire enterprise into question. In the next section, I will argue that Rabelais's attentiveness to Eudemon's speech and its aftermath makes legible Rabelais's interests in the limits of eloquence and calls into question the kind of prince that such an education creates.

IV. "Sweet smoke of rhetoric!" (*LLL* 3.1.64): Absent Eloquence and Angelic/Demonic Doubles

Eudemon's speech follows the organization for an encomium prescribed in detail by Aphthonius, an ancient Greek rhetorician and sophist who wrote a manual of exercises to be used by students of rhetoric. Though Rabelais would perhaps have known Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* from recent Greek editions or Latin translations, he would have certainly been aware of Erasmus's recommendation of the text as an excellent guide to the study and practice of rhetoric. Erasmus presides over much of Rabelais's pedagogy, and Philippe des Marays, the lord who brings Eudemon to Grandgousier's court, suggests an anagram of D. Erasmus.¹⁰⁷ Aphthonius offers the following outline for the praise of a king or a person in power: 1) exordium or introduction; 2) praise of ancestry, including nation, country, ancestors, and parents; 3) praise of education, including institutions, arts, and laws; 4) praise of deeds, including of the mind, body, and fortune of the speech's addressee; 5) comparisons of the addressee to historical figures; and 6) conclusion (Brault, "Significance" 313-314). Here is Eudemon's performance of eloquence, worth quoting in full:

Alors Eudemon demandant congïé de ce faire audict viceroy son maistre, le bonnet au poing, la face ouverte, la bouche vermeille, les yeulx asseurez, et le regard assis suz Gargantua, avecques modestie juvenile se tint sus ses pieds, et commença le louer et magnifier, premierement de sa vertus et bonnes meurs, secondement de son sçavoir, tiercement de sa noblesse, quartement de sa beaulté corporelle. Et pour le quint doucement l'exhortait à reverer son père en toute observance, lequel tant s'estudioit à bien le faire instruire, enfin le prioit qu'il le vouldist retenir pour le moindre de ses serviteurs. Car aultre don pour le present ne requeroit des cieulx sinon qu'il luy feust faict grace de luy complaire en quelque service agreable.

Le tout feut par icelluy proferé avecques gestes tant propres, prononciation tant distincte, voix tant eloquente, et language tant aorné et bien latin, que mieulx ressembloit un Gracchus, un Ciceron ou un Emilius du temps passé, qu'un jouvenceau de se siecle. (44-45)

Eudemon's speech suggests a full performance of methodically structured oratory. Eudemon's body, modesty, gestures, and voice all contribute to a material and completely legible and visible

¹⁰⁷ Brault was perhaps the first to notice this anagram ("Significance" 310). Huchon, however, sees Philippe Melanchthon's influence more than Erasmus's here, because Melanchthon's pedagogy sought to recuperate an art of Classical oratory that privileged invention over judgment; Melanchthon also had an association with the brothers Du Bellay, to whose retinue Rabelais belonged (Rabelais, *Œuvres* 1103-1104 n. 1).

eloquence. It is almost an afterthought that his language, “tant aorné et bien latin,” also contributes to his performance.

That being said, the immediate issue is the inappropriateness of Eudemon’s speech. The comedic purpose of this language contest is to startle readers with the discrepancy between Eudemon and his praise on one hand and the object praised on the other. The inarticulate Gargantua before our eyes is incompatible with the Gargantua imagined in the speech. Eudemon’s praise seems to refer back to the high expectations for Gargantua prior to his sophist education, assessing his potential in a very flattering light rather than conveying a truthful image of what he sees. In rhetorical terms, this speech, a model for epideictic oratory, uses the full performance of eloquence as an optimistic mirror to show what Gargantua should be in a sort of Nietzschean will to truth (Rebhorn, *Emperor* 107). Eudemon is clearly lying and he has been well-trained to flatter. His paradoxical *ethopoeia*, or ethical narrative, of Gargantua intimates rhetoric’s true nature: it will always do what it must. Eudemon, like treatises about education addressed to princes, performs a function, persuading his audience that this education forms the student in a certain way. In this manner, Eudemon’s speech fulfills its purpose in spite of its inappropriateness: he skillfully navigates the requirements of the encomium to maximum persuasive effect, and the result is that Grandgousier will have his son reeducated.

Moreover, Eudemon’s speech is *only* an outline, lifted directly from a manual. Contrary to his standard practice, Rabelais does not privilege his readers with a transcription of Eudemon’s speech as he does for ‘skinners’ of Latin, stutterers, and even those who use language as juridical weapons like the Chats-fourrez. François Rigolot says in *Les Langages de Rabelais* that Rabelais is more interested in shadows than in light (87). Examples of language abuse and verbal violence proliferate in the five books because they are openly and obviously funny, and they serve a satirical purpose. Though I think that a speech about Gargantua’s “bonnes meurs,” “noblesse,” and “beaulté corporelle” would certainly have been humorous to read, and Rabelais has the rhetorical skill to pull it off, Rabelais’s main focus is elsewhere: to make the angelic body and the monstrous body – as opposed to eloquence and inarticulacy – do the bulk of the work discrediting the sophists’ educational methods and praising those of the humanists. Though this confrontation is ostensibly *about* language, it is inscribed on the body more than it is *in* language. Given Gargantua’s emotional reaction, his embarrassment, and Grandgousier’s anger, the scene does not truly establish eloquence as a necessary skill to acquire, but rather as a skill that should be resisted because it unsettles so easily. The acknowledgement of eloquence’s central place in humanist pedagogy therefore takes place without eloquence, at the level of pure figuration.

It is possible that Rabelais resists writing Eudemon’s speech because of the difficulty inherent to translating into print an oral performance that depends on immediacy and proximity. Writing out eloquent speech strips eloquence of its essential mobility. In keeping with Paolo Valesio’s argument against ideology as decayed rhetoric, print petrifies what would otherwise be an example of energetic language, transforming it into an emblem or cliché, since it may be impossible to translate a necessarily multi-dimensional performance into sufficiently descriptive words (66). We have no proof that Eudemon’s speech is more than an outline or a set piece that he has memorized. He lies, and his eloquence is borrowed: this is the very anxiety at the heart of the humanists’ wish to match their ancient predecessors through imitation. Eudemon is an obedient automaton made to perform humanism as a show of body language, hygiene, formulaic speech, and emotional control in front of a king in order to prove a point. By deferring to

something that is not there, Eudemon's speech, such as it is, casts heavily ironic light upon the practicability and ideology of humanist pedagogy.

Eudemon may be one of the "jeunes gens de maintenant," but he is described as both out of place and out of time. The fact that we know so little about him contributes to this impression, but it emerges more in the types of comparisons Rabelais uses to depict him. Eudemon is "tant bien testonné, tant bien tiré, tant bien espousseté, tant honneste en son maintien" that he resembles an "angelot" more than a man (44). This is unquestionably an allusion to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's famous 1486 *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, a speech on human achievement and learning composed to open a debate of nine hundred theses that never took place.¹⁰⁸ According to Pico, man's place in the cosmic hierarchy is between animal and angel, partaking of the characteristics of both. Eudemon is slightly above man. It is striking that Eudemon is a little angel based on appearance and comportment alone. Clean, well-spoken, and angelic, Eudemon appears to represent a certain morality that is transcribed on and by the body. Yet, as I showed in my earlier discussion of caps, appearance and comportment are attributes that can be learned and manipulated to project a certain *ethos*, a speaking self worthy of belief. We later see that Gargantua has acquired this system of material, external signs, regulating and dressing the body so that cleanliness conveys mental orderliness (65). The commonplace of a handsome face as the exterior sign of a virtuous mind may no longer apply when students are encouraged to manufacture such signs.

Rabelais's description of Eudemon after his speech further shows Eudemon's dislocation from the present by directing our attention to his language. Rabelais compares Eudemon to three famous Roman orators of the Roman Republic: Eudemon "mieulx ressembloit un Gracchus, un Ciceron ou un Emilius du temps passé, qu'un jouvenceau de se siecle" (45). Though Eudemon is initially brought before Grandgousier as a representative of "les jeunes gens de maintenant," the constant emphasis is on Eudemon's otherworldliness, first as a divine creature and then as ranking among the exemplary orators of Rome. He is not of "maintenant," because he incarnates an unrealizable ideal. Eudemon is pure text, and that text is a handbook for rhetorical study. In Bakhtin's terms, since "the rebirth of Cicero's Latin made it a dead language," the more the humanists stressed stylistic perfection and imitation, the more "beautiful but dead" Latin became (*Rabelais* 466-467). Where humanists betray a hope that their own eloquence will fly off the page, this eloquence remains petrified and locked in typographic space, empty exercises that borrow from past greatness but cannot help duplicate or master it. Eudemon represents an unattainable ideal of rhetoric's potential: he is a new Tantalus whose rhetorical abilities are as present and immediate as the water and fruit so tantalizingly near, but somehow they are never made accessible, though rhetoricians try to make a systematic science of it. Eudemon metonymically represents a previously established eloquence that is no longer available.

In one sense, this failure of eloquence was foreseen by rhetorical theorists in their discussions of audiences. Even Quintilian, the source for many of the ideas about rhetoric echoed in Renaissance treatises, accentuates the difficulty in any man becoming an ideal orator. He even goes so far to say that the "perfect orator does not yet exist" because "perhaps no art exists in perfection" and "no single form has pleased everybody."¹⁰⁹ Quintilian's objection to artistic

¹⁰⁸ Recall that Pantagruel argued "neuf mille sept cens soixante et quatre [conclusions] en tous sçavoir" (250).

¹⁰⁹ "Now these different kinds of work of which I am speaking have each their own masters and indeed their own admirers; and the reason why the perfect orator does not yet exist (and why perhaps no art exists in perfection) is not only that different qualities predominate in different individuals, but that no single form has pleased everybody, partly because of the conditions of particular times or places, and partly because of the tastes and aims of each

perfection is that there are too many variables: no single orator can please or persuade each of his auditors, because of the changing “conditions of particular times or places” and “the tastes and aims of each person.” This suggests that, in order for the ideal orator to exist, he must have before him an ideal audience, which would be homogenous by necessity, or at least made to be. Quintilian wants us to define a speech’s eloquence by its effectiveness on its audience, but this proves difficult when there are multiple audiences to account for (12.10.44).

In chapter 15 of *Gargantua*, we see three audiences. In order to convince his official audience (Grandgousier) of the effectiveness of humanist pedagogy, Eudemon must direct his speech at another audience (Gargantua). The test of Eudemon’s education and eloquence is to put his rhetoric on display, to convincingly and visibly prove the power language can have over another person. Grandgousier never loses sight of the artifice in the exercise precisely because his son is its focus. Gargantua’s reaction, discussed above, reveals his susceptibility to flattery. We can only guess why Gargantua has such an emotional reaction, if he believes Eudemon’s praise to be genuine and is flattered into muteness, or if he is ashamed at having his lesser qualities so exposed. In either case, we do not get a word from him, though his corporeal responses and silence seem to imply a reading of susceptibility over one of sudden self-awareness. Since Eudemon has such an effect on his immediate audience, he proves himself to be a master of this kind of speech-making. The source of persuasion for Grandgousier is therefore not the speech itself or the speaker’s *ethos*, but rather his son’s reaction, which proves to him all he needs to know about the uselessness of Gargantua’s former tutors.

The ultimate audience is the book’s readers. Rabelais situates us alongside Grandgousier in *Gargantua* 15. His gaze is our own, we look where he looks, from perceiving (“son pere aperceut”) his son as “fou, niays, tout resveux et rassoté,” to scrutinizing Eudemon’s appearance (“voyez vous ce jeune enfant?”), to the sight of his son weeping “comme une vache” (“dont son pere fut tant courroussé,” 44-45). Rabelais diverts our attention away from Eudemon’s absent eloquence to appearances and bodies in this chapter, to what Grandgousier sees, how he reacts to it in a way his grandson Pantagruel might, and how Philippe des Marays coolly engineers the event. Despite these distractions, our perception of the performance still pivots around the empty space left by the speech that we do not get to read. By aligning his reader with Grandgousier, Rabelais adapts the character of his audience to respond in a certain way, with alarm. If the character of the audience is that of the most suitable Rabelaisian reader – the charitable boozehound addressed in the prefaces and bonded together in “readerly solidarity”¹¹⁰ – then they must go even further than Grandgousier’s reluctant acquiescence and laugh, because we are ‘in the know,’ we are immune to rhetoric and to the manufactured *ethos* of the other. We can see Eudemon for what he is: pure text, even pure textbook.

The issue of engineering how the audience perceives the narrative involves in most respects changes in literary productivity in the advent of print. This dissertation is about a new regime in fiction-making where eloquence is staged but ineffective. It does not propel the narrative forward, but makes its audience linger on reading an often lengthy scene of speech-making. The audience is meant to believe that such speech has a kind of power even if it does not reach them through the page. It has been argued that writers in this period turn increasingly to rhetorical structures to control a fictional audience in an effort to make reading a similar

person” [“Suos autem haec operum genera quae dico ut auctores sic etiam amatores habent, atque ideo nondum est perfectus orator ac nescio an ars ulla, non solum quia aliud in alio magis eminent, sed quod non una omnibus forma placuit, partim condicione vel temporum vel locorum, partim iudicio cuiusque atque proposito”] (12.10.2).

¹¹⁰ The phrase is from Lydgate (356).

experience to that of an oral performance (Ong 71; C. Freccero 41). This may be especially so for *Gargantua*, which, as Carla Freccero and Barry Lydgate have both shown, is more of a “manifestly text” book whereas *Pantagruel* retains some of the quasi-oral mechanisms of Rabelais’s source text (C. Freccero 38-42). The consequence is a change in the intellectual habits of readers, giving them a more active role (Lydgate 346, 352). Readerly complicity and multiplicity of meaning become the very devices of a humanist poetics that tests humanism’s core tenets by setting them into narrative and into print (Kinney xiii). Actual readers have to learn “this game of literacy” and submit themselves to a narrative authority that subsumes them into a homogenous fictive reader, figuring out how “to play the game of being a member of an audience that ‘really’ does not exist” (Ong 61). As Walter Stephens has demonstrated, Rabelais’s fictive audience is quite erudite and would recognize that the source of his comedy and satire is rhetoric and rhetorical amplification (28). Using Grandgousier’s line of sight is just one of the written means by which Rabelais guides his readers through the labyrinth of multiple interpretations of this scene: because Grandgousier ignores Eudemon’s absent eloquence and reacts with anger, humanism ‘wins’ over medieval pedagogy. But if we look too closely at Eudemon, as I did above, the joke is just as much on humanism’s pretensions of Classical emulation that beget only empty exercises. Dorothy Gabe Coleman, in a comment pertaining to Rabelais’s prologue to *Pantagruel* that is also relevant here, says there is no “stable level from which the reader can view the story” (*Rabelais* 31). Readerly complicity here also entails an awareness and acceptance of a kind of writerly duplicity: readers are expected to agree on certain parameters for eloquence, all at once: that Eudemon’s eloquence is both present and absent, both perfect and empty; that eloquence in general is desirable but also dangerous; that it creates communities but cannot exist outside of a certain community; that it is a fantasy of power that is irresistibly persuasive but also quite fragile.

For Rabelais, the heart of the matter is the prince and what this kind of language is supposed to do for him. I turn now to the aftermath of Eudemon’s speech, both in *Gargantua*’s education and in *Gargantua* as a whole. The scene of two competing pedagogical systems provides the key for reading eloquence in the rest of Rabelais’s pentalogy, as an ideal, out-of-place form of language that has practical limitations concerning its ability to civilize and transform. Despite traditional commonplaces about eloquence’s power to inspire people to virtue and virtuous action, Eudemon’s eloquence does not, in fact, transform *Gargantua*. As I discussed in the previous section, Ponocrates insists on leaving *Gargantua* as he is so he can witness for himself how atrociously mismanaged *Gargantua*’s tutelage under the sophists was. These extended descriptions of *Gargantua*’s education allow Rabelais to develop further the advantages of humanist education in an exaggerated, prolonged way.

In the time between Eudemon’s speech and the giant’s transformation, *Gargantua* is again confronted with rhetoric. Having been sent to Paris with Ponocrates to study, *Gargantua*, still somewhat in a state of beastliness, pisses all over the city from the top of Notre Dame de Paris after stealing its bells to hang on his mare’s bridle. This episode offers a fake etymology for the name of Paris, as some of the denizens responded to the urine bath with laughter (“par rys”). This new etymology replaces that of the fake Joaninus de Baranco, who believed that Parisians derived their name from “Parrhesians” or “fiers en parler,” the approach to ethics called *parrhēsia* that Foucault discusses at length as steadiness and truth-telling (*Government of Self* 48-49). The representative that is sent in the Parisians’ name to retrieve the bells, however, is more associated with the lower, degraded version of Paris than fearless speakers who are ready to accept violence and death for having spoken truly (*Government of Self* 56). Though there is

some deliberation among the Parisians over whether an orator (perhaps a parrhesiast) should be sent instead of a sophist, the “Sophiste” Janotus de Bragmardo is delegated to plea for the bells’ return (49). This second scene of speech-making complements the first by putting sophistry on full display as Eudemon was exhibited. Rabelais again draws our attention to the language of appearances in order to bring sophistry low, this time more explicitly linked to the Sorbonne (“la faculté”), whose condemnations of *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* led to Rabelais’s replacing of ‘theologian’ and direct references to the Sorbonne with ‘sophist’ in later editions. Ponocrates is startled when Janotus and his retinue of “six maistres inertes bien crottez à profit de mesnaige” show up to retrieve the bells (50). Janotus’s hair is cut “à la Césarine” and he wears his doctor’s hood “à l’antique;” he believes himself protected from violence by a costume of rented rhetoric and a belly full of holy water and quince pastries. Whereas Eudemon delivered his speech with a “voix tant éloquente,” Janotus delivers his plea with bad rhetoric, a confusing mixture of French and Latin, and bad reasoning, “en toussant.” For instance, in a marvelous bit of Latin, Janotus repeats the French word for “bell” to present his main argument for their return: “Ça je vous prouve que me les doibvez bailler. *Ego sic argumentor. Omnis cloche clochabilis in clocherio clochando clochans clochatiuo clochare facit clochabiliter clochantes. Parisius habet clochas. Ergo gluc.* Ha ha ha” (52). Gargantua has learned to depend on Ponocrates’s advice. When Ponocrates and Eudemon find Janotus laughable but harmless, Gargantua does too, and agrees that they should give him something to drink (53). This interlude between Eudemon’s speech and Gargantua’s new education reinforces the new protocol of laughter and communal drinking, and not violence, for responding to bad rhetoric. Janotus even laughs with them and, because he amused them so much, he is rewarded with new clothes (“chausses”) and something else to fill his belly (“saulcisses”).

Rabelais reserves the scene of Gargantua’s actual transformation for a number of days after Eudemon’s speech. Ponocrates summons a doctor, Seraphim Calobarsy (an anagram of ‘Phrancoys Rabelais’) who gives Gargantua hellebore. This herb, reputed to cure madness, literally and easily purges him of all his corrupt habits and learning from before: “Lequel [medicin] le purgea canonicquement avec Elebore de Anticyre, et par ce medicament luy nettoya toute l’alteration et perverse habitude du cerveau” (64; 1125 n. 10).¹¹¹ In the end, it takes magic medicine rather than magic words to transform Gargantua into a studious humanist prince.

I described earlier the rigor of Gargantua’s education under Ponocrates, particularly how his days are structured and how the young giant learns to see through the art of rhetoric by visiting the marketplace. Much of the focus of the new regime is on language consumption and production, whether it is reading, discussion, singing, writing, or reciting. Similar to the scene of Eudemon’s speech, Rabelais establishes the perfect conditions for eloquence in these chapters. The setting of Gargantua’s new education is indeed idyllic: “Lequel combien que semblast pour le commencement difficile, en la continuation tant doux fut, legier, et delectable, que mieulx ressembloit un passetemps de roy, que l’estude d’un escolier” (72). We see here the same hyperbolic rhetoric of the descriptions of Eudemon. The hyperbolic “tant” and the expression “mieulx ressembloit” detract from reality through comparison to an impossible ideal: are humanism’s pedagogical methods really so good that they make such hard work seem like a pastime? Rabelais’s image of education gets lost in its own hyperbole, and eloquence with it. While being dressed and combed, Gargantua and his retinue “recitoient clerement et eloquemment quelques sentences retenues de la leçon” (65-66). If Eudemon’s eloquence is a

¹¹¹ This anagram name was replaced by “maistre Theodore” in editions of *Gargantua* beginning in 1535 (Rabelais, *Œuvres*, 1125 n. 10).

mere copy from antiquity, Gargantua's training in eloquence appears to be equally formulaic and derivative. Eloquent recitation suggests intellectual dependence and it, like Eudemon, also falls into the danger of being an excessive form of imitation. Moreover, we do not see Gargantua producing eloquence himself: he neither defends "conclusions" nor puts humanism on trial again before Grandgousier. Where is the "rough-and-tumble of the forum" where Gargantua puts his learning to use and proves himself? Despite the commonplaces about eloquence's role in the education of the prince, Rabelais does not seem invested here in showing a point at which Gargantua is expected to produce eloquence and find his own autonomy.

In these ideal conditions, Gargantua deals only with his angelic double, Eudemon, and his humanist tutor. The later chapters of *Gargantua* show that it is the confrontation with his demonic, rather than his angelic, double that transforms him into a proper Renaissance sovereign. Outside the ideal conditions created by education, Gargantua has to apply his learning in a much wider context, with greater stakes: pseudo-epic international diplomacy. King Picrochole of Lerné, a former friend of Grandgousier, has begun an invasion of Gargantua's homeland over a dispute between "les fouaciens de Lerné" and Grandgousier's people. Grandgousier summons his son home to help with their defense (83).

In the interim, Grandgousier dispatches his counselor Ulrich Gallet, "maistre de ses requestes homme saige et discret," to negotiate with Picrochole. This scene of speech-making recalls Janotus de Bragmardo and the bells of Notre Dame, but with much more than bells on the line (85). Whereas Janotus's speech was laughable, Gallet's speech is competent, moving, Ciceronian in its structure, and, like other scenes where eloquence is key, all action halts for the performance.¹¹² Gallet relies on antithesis, evoking specifically the "furie" that undoes friendship, faith, law, reason, and humanity, resulting in violence, grief, deception, disorder, and tyranny (105). Gallet's speech is a much better representation of good language than Janotus's clumsy reasoning and Eudemon's absent eloquence, but instead of appealing to the generosity of a Gargantua and his retinue, Gallet's speech unfortunately falls on mad ears. God has abandoned Picrochole to "son franc arbitre et propre sens" (84); he is "du tout hors du sens et delaisé de dieu" (89). The very "furie" that goaded Picrochole into invasion, aggravated by his counselors' rhetoric and flattery, also immunizes him to eloquence. Gallet's eloquence cannot transform or civilize in this case: madness is the catalyst for change here, and for the rupture within the Christian community that the Picrocholine war represents. A speech cannot convince a crazy person to be sane. Gallet fails to bring Picrochole back to the fold. Though the study of letters is, as Vergerio says, "a great help to those who were born for virtue and wisdom," letters and the application of learning "take away neither madness nor wickedness" (*Humanist Educational Treatises* 37). Rhetoric, sometimes, is only "a means of persuading people of what they are already persuaded" (Foucault, *Government of Self* 229). Picrochole's madness, like the greed of the Chat-fourrez, removes him from a communal commitment to abide by a certain ethical, and here also religious, code, one in which eloquence is believed to work. Picrochole is not persuaded by persuasion.

Meanwhile, Gargantua makes his way home. Grandgousier has reluctantly interrupted his son's studies and, in language reminiscent of the public emphasis of humanist pedagogical discourse, has told Gargantua in a letter that it is time to put his learning to use. In his call to arms, Grandgousier summons his son to a new kind of test of his learning, and a very different one than the rhetorical contest arranged under specific conditions between Eudemon and

¹¹² For readings of Ulrich Gallet as an ambassador, see Desrosiers-Bonin 35-37; Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy* 29-35; Lanham, chapter 8.

Gargantua. Grandgousier writes: “Car ainsi comme debiles sont les armes au dehors, si le conseil n’est en la maison: aussi vaine est l’estude et le conseil inutile: qui en temps oportun par vertus n’est executé et à son effect reduict” (84). He thus explains the exact relationship between arms and letters: arms are useless without counsel and study is selfish without application. The final proof of Gargantua’s successful study will not be a speech. It will be applying his learning to the defense of his people, “à moindre effusion de sang que sera possible” and “par engins plus expediens, cauteles, et ruzes de guerre,” in such a way that avoids the overuse of arms (85). Learning and respect for international borders are prioritized over arms and invasion.

However, Gargantua remains in a state of Kantian tutelage as he travels to his father’s castle. Faced with an imminent confrontation with Picrochole’s captain Tripet, we find Gargantua speechless once again: “Tant qu’il luy feist paour, et ne sçavoit bien que dire ny que faire” (96). It is his tutor Ponocrates who has to tell him what to do; in this case, he says to seek the advice of a local lord and ally. This sequence of acquiring advice from different sources shows that, when multiple consultations are necessary, learning does not necessarily translate to real-world action or initiative. Though he has been summoned to princely defensive duties, Gargantua does not yet exhibit the qualities of the prince that humanism is meant to shape. Gargantua is only convinced to advance when his scout Gymnaste returns with intelligence about the enemy’s lack of “discipline militaire,” which would make it easy for them to “les assommer comme bestes” (100). Again we see the use of figurative language relating to animals to strengthen our impression of the enemy as lesser and wicked (“maraulx, pilleurs et brigans”) but also easy to vanquish. As effortlessly as Gargantua was to manipulate with good language, the enemy will be brought down with the arms of the righteous.

Gargantua leads his father’s armed forces to victory against Picrochole. Now that he has proven himself capable of defending his home, the prince turns back to letters. Gargantua makes a speech that displays his learning, his rhetorical ability, and his generosity. This is also a performative speech that does something with his learning, applying it to the world. Rabelais marks Gargantua’s transformation from student to autonomous prince with a speech, a fully transcribed “concion” or harangue, given by Gargantua to his assembled armies and friends after Picrochole’s defeat. In this speech, Gargantua essentially passes humanism on to Picrochole’s young son, who is now king. Gargantua concludes that Ponocrates should be made “sus tous ses gouverneurs entendant, avecques auctorité à ce requise, et assidu avecques l’enfant: jusques à ce qu’il le congnoistra idoine de povoir par soy regir et regner” (135). The moment of autonomy, of self-government, is here literally a moment of command and entrusting. Gargantua reestablishes his guardian as the guardian of someone else until the other prince can “par soy regir et regner.” He thus removes Ponocrates’s hold over him and reasons for himself that Picrochole’s country needs a better leader. He does not offer himself, but rather repeats the cycle of educating the prince begun with him, in a symbolic but also material gesture in the form of Ponocrates, who is also given Picrochole’s chateau fort as a reward for his service, both in arms and in letters. A call to arms and a transfer of letters make the prince. Special language did not transform Gargantua; instead, he uses it to transform himself. The moment of autonomy, when the prince sets aside his guardian and becomes his own master, has to be decided by the prince.

It is significant that this change is occasioned by a confrontation with Gargantua’s demonic double and not his angelic double. Eudemon, however empty his gesture of eloquence, nevertheless represented what Gargantua should be. Picrochole, by contrast, is what Gargantua could have easily become. Gargantua and Picrochole are both seen as susceptible to flattery and eloquence. Picrochole allows flattery to send him down a spiral of madness and international

conflict, but Gargantua is trained within a humanist, Christian code where flattery is an enemy and the mind must be armed against an onslaught of rhetorical weaponry. The real demonic double is, then, rhetoric put to use for wicked purposes, resulting in war, ruin, and madness. In this Rabelaisian system of antitheses, Picrochole's madness brings Gargantua to Eudemon's level, but with more authenticity and originality as well as respect for borders and Christian charity. The intrusion of eloquence into *Gargantua* informs the giants' approach to conflict, reestablishing civilization and civility in the world of the pentalogy by removing the person in power who is immune to eloquence, to reason, and to God, and by replacing him with someone who can be educated within the Christian humanist code that holds the community together.

We can briefly expand this inquiry into Rabelais's attitude toward eloquence beyond *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, outside the specific context of education and its importance to statecraft. Unlike the examples of the Chats-fourrez, Eudemon, and Ulrich Gallet that I have discussed so far, Rabelais gives us an example of eloquence being used effectively in the prologue to the fourth book, published in 1552. Although eloquence is seen to work in this case, Rabelais makes it difficult to accept as eloquence, as defined by Seigel as "aesthetic splendor" combined with "psychological power" (87). While discussing modest wishes ("la médiocrité... dicte aurée," 525), Rabelais narrates two stories about lost hatchets.¹¹³ They call into question what eloquence really means to Rabelais. The first story comes from the Bible: "un filz de Prophete en Israel" loses the iron off his hatchet handle in a river and he prays to God for its return. Rabelais tells us that if he had asked for something beyond his reach, coveting that which God had given to another, this man's prayer would not have been answered.¹¹⁴ The tale is intended to be read as an allegory for humbleness.

Rabelais pairs this Biblical story with an Aesopian fable that tells the same story, but transferred to the landscape of Greek mythology. A poor woodsman, Couillatris, loses his hatchet and implores Jupiter to replace it: "En cestuy estrif commença crier, prier, implorer, invocquer Juppiter par oraisons moult disertes (comme vous sçavez que Necessité feut inventrice d'Eloquence)..." (526). Normally a woodsman would be a man of few fine words, but because he is in great need he can suddenly articulate himself 'disertement,' or with fine elocution. His eloquent plea, however, seems more concise than "diserte:" "Ma coingnée Juppiter, ma coingnée, ma coingnée. Rien plus, ô Juppiter, que ma coingnée, ou deniers pour en achapter une autre. Helas, ma pauvre coingnée" (526). It is not the woodsman's elocution that gets Jupiter's attention, but rather his annoying and repetitive shouting: "Quel diable est là bas, qui hurle si horrifiquement?" Thus Rabelais once again offers up the possibility of eloquence and puts it into question, for the woodsman's howling is a far cry from "aesthetic splendor" and Jupiter's annoyance is not testament to Couillatris's "psychological power." But Couillatris gets his hatchet back, and gold and silver ones as well for not demanding more from the gods than the one he had lost. This scene, combined with Eudemon's encomium, calls into question the reading (and writing) practices that designate a given text as eloquent. By what criteria does Rabelais define these speeches as eloquent? Eudemon's speech is eloquent because of its effects on its diegetical audience and not because its language is special. In a sense, Couillatris's eloquence is more honest than Eudemon's, for it is prompted by necessity rather than ritual and

¹¹³ For a reading of "médiocrité aurée" in its Aristotelian context, see Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's Quart Livre de Pantagruel*, chapter 4.

¹¹⁴ "S'il eust soubhaité monter es cieulx dedans un chariot flamboyant, comme Helie: multiplier en lignée, comme Abraham: ester autant riche que Job, autant fort que Sanson, aussi beau que Absalon: l'eust il impettrié? C'est une question" (525-526).

the quasi-judicial artifice of making a case for humanism. That being said, Rabelais calls Couillatris's plea eloquent precisely it is not.

I have shown that satire deflates eloquence by pairing it with its opposite or with something that is immune to it because it is outside the context in which eloquence is believed to work. Though Couillatris's eloquence is far from ideal, it is his imitators who bear the brunt of satire in this fable. The men who hear of the woodsman's good fortune can only repeat his brief words in order to attempt the same result, but they cannot duplicate the honesty of his impassioned plea. When Mercury shows these imitators three hatchets in a lineup (iron, silver, gold), they greedily choose the gold ones. Mercury beheads them for using the woodsman's eloquence perversely and for choosing literal gold over figurative "mediocrité aurée." Couillatris's first instance of eloquence was successful in the moment, but his imitators fail. Couillatris works within the ethical framework of honest labor; necessity and humility are the guides for his eloquence. His imitators do not operate within the same parameters, for with "ces perdeurs de coignées" Couillatris's desperation becomes greed and his eloquence becomes a hollow formula for deception (533). One of the pitfalls of binary thinking and imitation combined is that the imitator is brought low when juxtaposed with the original. The hatchet-losers cannot repurpose Couillatris's eloquence to make it work for them; his eloquence in the past is no longer available to them in their present. One man's eloquence is another man's hollow exercise in wicked rhetoric.

V. Conclusion: "lisons en nostre langue Gallique"

Rabelais's first dramatization of eloquence in action, in *Gargantua* chapter 15, is accompanied by the collapse of an ideal kind of language into an empty, ritualized form that causes concern rather than celebrating eloquence's potency. Eloquence becomes an art that, in attempting to conceal itself and its persuasiveness, ends up betraying itself. Each time Rabelais evokes eloquence it behaves in the same fashion: he simultaneously holds up the desirability and possibility of eloquence while also insisting on its limitations and the conditions that must be met for it to work. Eloquence can civilize and call people back to the virtuous life, but the Chats-fourrez are too greedy and wicked for it to work on them. Orators and princes use eloquence to hold communities together, but if the prince is beyond reason, no persuasion can get him to rejoin the community. Desperation can make eloquent speakers out of the most humble, but eloquence cannot be imitated or duplicated, so fables about eloquence's power reduce it, to borrow Cave's formulation again, into a "mirage rather than the affirmation of a value-system" that esteems such language (*Cornucopian Text* 199). As sociologist Erving Goffman has astutely said, often the most productive moments for understanding communication are those in which communication fails (125). The satirical genre allows Rabelais to exaggerate and nitpick this image of eloquence, removing it from the prevailing thoughts and practices of humanism and placing it in narrative situations where it is doomed to fail or falter. He has demystified eloquence as an inaccessible force from the past, a cliché, a commonplace, a complete mythology of man's capacity to impose his will on his environment, but it does not necessarily represent meaningful communication. Rabelais's rhetoric of eloquence turns out to be quite persuasive, and we readers are made wary.

What remains to be discussed is what kind of bearing this status of eloquence has on the French language for Rabelais. Rabelais's books suggest that Classical eloquence's overly idealized success becomes inaccessible and unattainable in sixteenth-century France; in his push

to make eloquence something out of place and out of time, he also seems to remove the possibility of an eloquent French. The first volume, *Pantagruel*, proposes that language should refrain from artfulness, since most efforts to use fancy language fail or are met with violence: the Limousin, for instance, is warned to speak “naturellement,” avoiding “mots espaves en pareille diligence que les patrons des navires evitent les rochiers de mer” (234-235). Even Panurge, an expert rhetorician himself, says upon first meeting Pantagruel that rhetoric is only necessary when the facts are not clear; the fact that Panurge says this in Greek, though French is his “langue naturelle, et maternelle,” confirms the idea that words only engender more words, but recognition of a ‘natural’ language puts an end to an excessive flow of speech.¹¹⁵ Rabelais’s attentiveness to a language’s ‘naturalness’ speaks to humanism’s admiration for Classical eloquence, desire to appropriate it, and yet still be native to France and respectful of its increasing distance, in official terms, from Latin. As Richard Cooper attests in his study of Rabelais’s Neo-Latin works and letters, there is a shift in Rabelais’s writing towards French and away from Latin, but with it an increasing anxiety about whether or not French can equal Latin in style and substance (67). In *Gargantua*, we see the French language taking on form as Gargantua and his retinue compose “rondeaux et ballades en langue Françoise” from Latin epigrams that they had read (73). Translation and transfer was to be the method of bringing Classical learning and letters to France. In this case, a Latin form known for its biting brevity transforms into longer, French forms known for repetitive refrains that Du Bellay will tell the French poet in 1549 to avoid because “ces vieilles Poësies Françoyes... corrumptent le goust de nostre Langue: & ne servent si non à porter temoingage de notre ignorance” (54). Rabelais locates French between a rich, Latin past and a disorderly present state.

To conclude, I would like to discuss Rabelais’s survey of French literature described in the prologue of the fifth book. Both the fourth and fifth books of the pentalogy were published after Du Bellay’s famous patriotic and poetic manifesto, and its influence on Rabelais is quite clear. In this prologue, Rabelais places himself on the margins of French literary productivity, both in terms of style and subject matter. Rabelais calls himself a goose among the swans, excluding himself from the great French poets and writers that he lists here. However, this is not merely self-deprecation, though he leaves behind Alcofribas Nasier (a persona very proud of his own skill) and signs this prologue with his own name. He prefers to be counted among the unskilled rather than be just another imitator lost in a faceless crowd of other imitators. In other words, he would prefer to have the maddening but effective eloquence of Couillatris if it means not performing lesser imitations like the hatchet-losers:

Et combien que maintenant nous lisons en nostre langue Gallique, tant en vers qu’en oraison soluë plusieurs excellens scripts et que peu de reliques restent de capharderie et siecle Gottis, *ay neantmoins esleu gasouiller et siffler oye*, comme dit le proverbe, entre les Cygnes plustost que d’estre entre tant de gentils poetes et facons orateurs mut du tout estimé. Jouer aussi quelque villageois personnage entre tant disers joueurs de ce noble acte, *plustost qu’estre mis au rang de ceux qui ne servent que d’ombre et de nombre*, seulement baailans aux mousches,

¹¹⁵ “... ce homos philologi pamdes homologusi tote logus te ce rhemata peritta hyparchin, opote pragma asto pasi delon esti. Entha gar anancei monon logi isin, hina pragmata (hon peri amphibetumen) me prosphoros epiphenete” [“Pourtant tous les amis de lettres reconnaissent que les discours et les paroles sont superflus quand les faits sont évidents pour tous. Les discours ne s’imposent que là où les faits sur lesquels nous discutons ne se montrent pas évidents”] (248-249; 1277 n. 1).

chouans des auresilles comme un asne d'Arcadie, au chant des musiciens et par signe en silence, signifians qu'ils consentent à la prosopopée. (726, emphases mine)

Rabelais goes on to say that these minor “ombre et nombre” writers are “un grand tas de Collinets, Marots, Drouets, Saingelais, Sallets, Masuels, et une longue centurie d'autres poètes et orateurs Galliques” (726). Uniqueness in literary productivity produces sometimes unfortunate multiplicity.

Rabelais begins his survey of the state of French literature, and its impact on the French language, by implying that these imitators of French poets bring nothing new to French literature and “l'éternelle fabrique de nostre vulgaire” (726). And yet, the text slips without warning back into praise for what these writers have produced, which is “nectar divin, vin precieux, friand, riant, muscadet, delicat, delieieux,” “le tout en rethorique armoisine, cramoisine.” This is a luxurious feast of writing. Still, it is altogether unclear whether Rabelais makes this remark about the singular originals (Collinet, Marot) or their plural copycats (Collinets, Marots). The “longue centurie” of French writers collapses the good with the less good. What began as a discussion of Rabelais's distinction from lesser writers of his time, and the happiness that he enjoys from such distinction, ends as wholehearted approval and desire for what his time and his country have produced: “et m'auront puis que compaignon ne puis estre pour auditeur, je dis infatigable de leurs trescelestes escripts” (727). Rabelais fluidly shifts from writer to reader, from producer to consumer, who eschews his previously established criteria for producing writing (that it must “gasouiller et siffler”) in order to consume French reading with neither end nor rule (“infatigable”), French writers measured against themselves alone. Rabelais concludes the prologue with some characteristic verbal violence that plants him firmly on the side of French over Latin. He promises that he will prove to anyone, in a Pantagrueline set of “conclusions,” especially those “rappetasseurs de vieilles ferrailles latines, revandeurs de vieux mots latins tous moisés et incertains,” that “nostre langue vulgaire n'est tant vile, tant inepte, tant indigente et à mespriser qu'ils l'estiment (727). He then humbly offers up his book as a gift for our use, until something better comes along, “en gré attendant mieux à la prochaine venue des arondelles” (728). Again we see antithesis at work: for French writing to be made “tresceleste,” Latin has to be brought low. The “armoisine, cramoisine” color and texture of a French textual feast have to leave behind the “moisi” and “ferraille” of Latin.

Chapter Four
Reserved for Mercury: Hélienne de Crenne's Broken Quill and Borrowed Eloquence

... ὁ Ἔρως ποιεῖ σοφιστὰς...
(Love makes expert rhetoricians)
Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.18

So far I have discussed eloquence as it is conceived of by male writers in the first half of the sixteenth century. I have shown that Jean Lemaire de Belges depicts specifically female eloquence as an inherently malicious force that ultimately topples cities; he, like many other Renaissance writers, has nothing nice to say about female speech. Now I turn to how women writers envisage female powers of persuasion, concentrating principally on Hélienne de Crenne, to see how women perceive their gender's ability to speak (and write) effectively: do women write about good women who speak well? I am interested in how Crenne's desire to be eloquent and her concern for her 'weak' style are inseparable from her literary productivity and construction of her authority as a woman writing against certain Renaissance ideas about women. This chapter will uncover the discursive strategies Crenne uses to produce a mediating space to engineer her own authority, between the models and methodologies of female authorship that are available to her and the models of male rhetoric that would otherwise count as the most authoritative, but which she cannot claim outright as her own. The argument of this chapter is that Crenne self-authorizes – that is, both acquiring authority and becoming an author through the act of writing – by distinguishing her relationship to persuasive language from that of contemporary female writers and, instead, by aligning herself both with and against the rhetoric of men, in the process revealing how humanist clichés about eloquence are challenged by new types of writing, such as that produced by women. Eloquence in the traditional sense of the term is reserved “à la divine eloquence de Mercure,” making room for new means of persuasion by explicitly excluding and showing the limitations of that ideal form of persuasive language.¹¹⁶ While eloquence's disruptive and corruptive influence on the nation and on the prince are not Crenne's prerogatives as they were for Lemaire and Rabelais, she does capitalize on the traditional notion of eloquence as a means to create a community for herself. Crenne's attention to the mechanics of persuasion takes place on two levels: between rhetorical interactions that Crenne dramatizes in her work, as in between characters on a diegetic level, and the rhetorical interaction she stages with her community of “lisantes,” her compassionate women readers.

The production of fiction and authority in Crenne's works is complicated by the narration of her first publication, *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* (1538), which will be the main focus of this chapter. 'Hélienne de Crenne' is a pseudonym as well as the name of the protagonist and narrator of the *Angoysses*. Thus 'Hélienne' denotes three figures, each the extension of the next but also distinct from one another: Hélienne, the character who experiences love; Dame Hélienne, the narrator who writes about her experience of love, addresses her readers directly, and explains how the *Angoysses* came to be written; and Crenne, the persona of the historical author who comments on the *Angoysses* in her other writing. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the attitude Crenne has towards persuasion, eloquence, and her own believability changes depending on which of these three is in question. The *Angoysses* is a project of persuasion in which the main thesis is that love should be avoided, as stated by its very

¹¹⁶ *Angoysses* 130. All references to the *Angoysses* come from Christine de Buzon's critical edition, unless otherwise specified.

title page: “Les angoyssees douloureuses qui procedent d’amours: Contenantz troys parties, Composée par Dame Helisenne: Laquelle exhorte toutes personnes à ne suyvre folle Amour” (94). Crenne offers herself up – body and text – as proof that love is folly. The multiple versions of Hélisenne end up being a happy narratological complication because they contribute to the persuasive nature of the text by making it agonistic: the incorrigible Hélisenne exalts love even as Dame Hélisenne, in her asides to the readers, glosses her experience as reason enough to vilify love. In other words, Crenne’s production of fiction relies on the writer and the narrator augmenting their authority and believability, and they accomplish this by undermining the character, her rapturous love, and her relationship to language. I shall explain shortly how the *Angoyssees* as a whole is as “textually promiscuous”¹¹⁷ as it can get, shifting first-person narrative voices as well as genres to argue for and against this primary assertion about love. Crenne thus uses multiplicity and textual hybridity to carve out her own authority, using techniques of argumentation to make the case both for Hélisenne as a negative exemplar and for Dame Hélisenne as worthy of believability.

The connection between fiction and authority is further complicated by how the historical identity of the writer shapes discussions of her in modern criticism. It is now widely accepted that the historical person behind these texts was Marguerite (de) Briet.¹¹⁸ Some scholars have speculated on the historical truth behind Crenne’s works and on the fictionalization of any real conflict Briet may have had with her estranged husband. It can be said that the presentation of the *Angoyssees* does little at first to discredit a reading similar to Philippe Lejeune’s “pacte autobiographique” in which a writer (sharing her name with her protagonist) pledges to tell the truth about herself and in which a reader can believe that what is written has really happened.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Crenne stages this within part one, only to deny it later. The title page announces its writer (“Composée par Dame Helisenne”) and the opening address to her readers switches from the third person to the first, thereby eliding “Dame Hélisenne” with the ‘je’ of the rest of the book. The speaking voice claims to have lived the experience she recounts and is therefore a believable source on matters of love.

That being said, we must question the relevance of an autobiographical interpretation that tends to restrict the scope of any discussion of early modern women’s writing and ask how Crenne wants us to read the text. I do not feel it necessary to a discussion of the thematization of eloquence in Crenne’s writings that there be an unmasked historical figure behind them or historical veracity to them. The writer disallows any historical interpretation of her fiction in her first “epistre invective,” where she admonishes her husband for thinking the *Angoyssees* tells a true tale of an illicit love affair she herself experienced.¹²⁰ Instead, I shall focus on the multi-layered construction of ‘Hélisenne’ that we can gauge from her writing, for it speaks greatly to the problems inherent both to female authorship of the period and to how we read women’s writing. Too much attention to an autobiographical intent dismisses the production of Crenne’s authorial and literary identity according to the terms she lays out in the *Angoyssees* and elsewhere.

¹¹⁷ I borrow this phrase from Terence Cave (*Pré-histoires* 12).

¹¹⁸ J.M. Guichard first connected Hélisenne to Marguerite (de) Briet. Since his 1840 article, no one has questioned this identification. See his article “Hélisenne de Crenne” and Jérôme Verduyssen’s article “Hélisenne de Crenne: notes biographiques.” I place Briet’s *particule* (noble particle) in brackets because scholars are divided on the exact nature of her title and full name. Christine de Buzon, for instance, calls her “Marguerite Briet de Crenne,” after some bills of sale found in her husband’s name that read “Philippe Fournel ecuier sieur de Crenne et Damoiselle Marguerite Briet sa femme” (10).

¹¹⁹ See Lejeune, 13-46.

¹²⁰ *Epistres* 126. All citations from the *Epistres* come from Jerry C. Nash’s 1996 Honoré Champion critical edition.

Such a reading forces us to consider her only as a historical woman who may or may not be telling the truth about herself. The tendency to read for autobiographical openness is not often the case for male writers, as Constance Jordan has pointed out in a discussion of Renaissance feminism and Crenne's artistic autonomy: "Her claim is revolutionary in its implications. Doctrine governing the conduct of women in public held that the resources of the imagination – feigning and fictionalizing – ought to be denied them."¹²¹ Thus, reading these works autobiographically participates in the facet of Renaissance misogyny that presupposes that women cannot help but write in an autobiographical mode, and thus both their writing and their behavior are subject to moral censure.

Crenne is, in fact, overtly defiant of this autobiographical assumption and very conscious of the fictionality and literariness of her writing. The name of the writer certainly constitutes a kind of pact in the case of Crenne, but one of fiction, a construction of a fictional identity that makes this kind of woman-authored writing possible. In Gérard Genette's terms, her pseudonym is "... already a poetic activity, and the pseudonym is already somewhat like a work. If you can change your name, you can write" (*Paratextes* 41; cited in Bromilow 140). The fact that Crenne maligns herself as an adulterous character and defends her right to write about it, as both narrator and writer, is perhaps only possible because Briet adopted both a pseudonym and a persona. The creation of 'Hélisenne de Crenne' allows her to react (with more indignation and even aggression) to Renaissance misogyny than decorum or modesty would normally permit, defending women's right to write.

Studies of Crenne have been turning in this direction in the past few decades. Pollie Bromilow points out in a recent article on Crenne that there has been much more critical attention paid to the quasi-autobiographical nature of the *Angoysses* (part one) and to the problematic (and, for some, distasteful) 'unity' of its three parts than there has been about Crenne's construction of a writing persona or her promotion of women's writing ("Fictions" 144). This is the tradition of Gustave Reynier, whose 1908 study of the sentimental novel set the tone for both critical work and critical editions. For instance, Paule Demats – answering Reynier's call to ignore parts two and three of the *Angoysses* by publishing in 1968 a critical edition of only part one – believes that Reynier's objection was not the text's unity, per se, but rather the "contraste violent" between the "vécu" of part one and the "fictif" of the rest (xxv). More recently, scholars have been finding other aspects of Crenne's works to be more productive sites for exploring the writing practices of women in the early modern period. The English translator of the *Angoysses*, for instance, believes that the text's intertextuality is a more compelling subject than its autobiographical potential, saying that the *Angoysses* is not a "mimetic representation of the author's life" but rather a fictive and very literary creation based on "details not of her past life but rather of her past reading" (*Torments* xxv). The tension between fact and fiction is, unquestionably, an important feature of these texts as well as any interpretation of them.

My contention is that Crenne orients this tension in a slightly different direction, one that takes up the distinct persuasive goals of rhetoric. The persona that serves as a defensive gesture also contributes to Crenne's overall persuasive tactics. Crenne does not just want her readers to see her works as located somewhere between fact and fiction. Her attention to persuasiveness and language evokes eloquence's very claim to plausibility. Eloquence leads people to believe

¹²¹ *Renaissance Feminism* 178. Jordan devotes pages 177-181 to evidence of Crenne's feminism in the *Angoysses* and the *Epistres*. See also Conley; Ching. For the impact of feminist theory on early modern studies, see the volume of essays *Feminism and Renaissance Studies* edited by Lorna Hutson.

something could be true. Pierre Fabri defines this aspect of eloquence in his 1521 *Le grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique*: "... car la force de eloquence n'est point seulement a mener les auditeurs a croire la chose comme elle est, mais a ce qui est et qui n'est mie, a la agrauer ou deprimer, et a conduire les auditeurs a croire qu'il peult estre vray" (21). In the *Angoysses*, Dame Hélienne asserts to her readers that she writes the absolute truth of her experience; part of her construction of authority is her claim to first-hand knowledge of her subject. But there is periodic insistence to her husband (representative of male social and institutional authority) that her writing is just an exercise, safely inscribed in the moral activity of avoiding idleness. Crenne thus lays claim to intellectual activity and fictionalizing, as Jordan says, within the same discursive space as her claims to truth. The *Angoysses* is concerned with believability and lies, beginning with the lies lovers tell each other and the world. Hélienne is one such liar, and Dame Hélienne translates her lies into moral lessons through her plausible narrative for the benefit of her "lisantes." Crenne, then, is a persona who becomes an arbiter of truths, as she persuades her readers that the self-conscious fiction she crafts could be true, depending on who is reading it.

In this chapter, I use the term 'fiction' loosely, as an antonym to 'historical fact' the way that Hélienne de Crenne is the fictional counterpart of Marguerite (de) Briet. 'Fiction' did not have the same definition in the early modern period as it does today, as Timothy J. Reiss and Nicholas Paige have shown.¹²² To avoid inaccurately using historically complicated terms such as 'fiction' and 'novel,' which is also relevant to this chapter, I have used 'imaginative writing' as shorthand for prose works that exhibit fabrication and invention, as 'fiction' implies in the early modern period. The term 'fiction,' moreover, suggests dissimulation: for instance, François Rabelais's Pantagruel, in response to a request to arbitrate a dispute between lords, says: "... je vous en diray mon opinion sans fiction ny dissimulation quelconque" (253; cited in Greimas and Keane 290). It is important to distinguish Crenne's use of fiction in this way, as a mask and as a persuasive and defensive tactic, especially with regard to the generic status of the *Angoysses* as a sentimental novel, because it helps us reorient our critical discussions of Crenne.

It is tempting to read the confessional nature of the *Angoysses* (part one) as autobiographical, and Crenne certainly would like us to believe in that possibility to make it all the more persuasive, but the text remains inscribed in earlier literary traditions of imaginative writing even as it is seen to gesture toward the later emergence of the novel. Much critical work has been done to trace the development of the novel and define it against other genres. I find useful Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of the novel as a unique, fluid, constantly-developing genre that can borrow from other (more rigidly defined) genres without losing itself ("Epic and Novel" 8) and Patricia Yaeger's recasting of the novel as a liberating and productive space for female self-expression precisely because of its lack of firm formal constraints (*Honey-Mad Women* 6). The very formlessness of the *Angoysses* makes it more intimate. The sentimental novel, as well, is not defined by form but by subject matter. As I said earlier, Reynier named the *Angoysses* France's first sentimental novel in 1908, 'sentimental' because he was hesitant to call it 'psychological,' which for him is too modern a term (101-102). Reynier defines the sentimental novel by its main plot characteristic: "... le caractère distinctif est qu'il attache moins d'importance aux aventures, aux éléments extérieurs de l'action qu'à l'analyse et à l'expression des sentiments" (3). The genre's influences include Ovid, *Le Roman de la Rose*, chivalric romance, and especially the vogue of Italian and Spanish "écriture amoureuse" from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Understanding the *Angoysses* with these definitions of fiction as a rhetorical instrument and novel as an unfixed genre and form can help us redirect our discussions

¹²² See also Duprat, *Vraisemblances*; Chevrolet, *L'idée de fable*.

away from this tendency to read for autobiographical truth and, furthermore, away from its troublesome generic disparity, that is, the fact that while its first part is sentimental (and therefore given pride of place in modern discussions), the rest is chivalric.¹²³ The *Angoysses* is a deliberate and self-conscious fiction and, in it, Crenne convenes other genres – completely within the standards of the time – to maintain that fiction and her arguments against love.

So that I can elaborate further on the complexities of Crenne's project of persuasion, I must now briefly summarize her works. Briet published four texts under the name Hélienne de Crenne: *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* (1538), published in nine editions by 1560; *Les Epistres familiares et invectives* (1539), published in six editions by 1560; *Le Songe de Madame Helisenne* (1540); and the first French prose translation of books one to four of Virgil's *Aeneid*, called *Les quatre premiers livres des Eneydes du treslegant poete Virgile, traduictz de Latin en prose Françoisse par Ma Dame Helisenne, à la traduction desquelz y a pluralité de propos qui par maniere de phrase y sont adjoustez: ce que beaucoup sert à l'élucidation & decoration desditz livres, dirigez à tresillustre et tresauguste Prince François, premier de ce nom, invictissime Roy de France* (1541), to which she appends her own glosses.¹²⁴ It is noteworthy that Dido, Queen of Carthage, is featured prominently in these books of the *Aeneid*, as Crenne takes her as a literary model who, like Crenne, engages in "œuvres viriles."¹²⁵ The range of texts – sentimental novel, letters in the Ciceronian tradition, medieval dream allegory, translation of epic poetry, and hermeneutical commentary – also speaks to Crenne's self-authorizing since some are atypical of women writers. This range can also be likened to the rhetorical exercises representative of a humanist education, in which a similar theme is translated across different genres; in this case, that theme is the maligned woman fighting ineffectually against love.

The *Angoysses* provides the general thematic backbone of Crenne's works. The overall project of the book, as Dame Hélienne affirms in the "epistres" that precede each of the book's three parts, is to warn her (female) readers against the dangers of love. The *Angoysses* is a narratologically and generically complex book. I have already described the multiplicity of Hélienne, who is a character, a narrator, and a writer, each with distinctive characteristics. In the first part of the book, Dame Hélienne describes falling in love with Guenelic and writing about the "angoysses" of love and the faithlessness of lovers; Guenelic commits several cardinal sins as a lover, such as spreading gossip about Hélienne's love for him and even telling her husband that he has violated her chastity. Her husband finds her writing and destroys it before locking her in a secluded tower. There, she rewrites the first part of the text in the hopes that the document will find its way to Guenelic. That moment in the tower is where Hélienne the character merges into Dame Hélienne the narrator-writer. This first part of the *Angoysses* constitutes the 'roman

¹²³ For the evolution of the modern novel, see Lukács; Watt. For the differences between novel and romance, see Frye, 303-326. For an insightful discussion of the *Angoysses*, feminist theory, and modern considerations of the history of the novel, see Conley.

¹²⁴ For the *Songe*, I cite the 2007 critical edition of Jean-Philippe Beaulieu and Diane Desrosiers-Bonin. There are no modern editions of Crenne's translation of the *Aeneid* and it has received little critical attention. The only extant copies are housed in Paris's Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal and Geneva's Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire. For a chronological list and description of available editions of Crenne's works, see Buzon's edition of the *Angoysses*, 44-69.

¹²⁵ For more on the connection between Crenne and Dido, see: Nash, "'Exercant œuvres viriles': Feminine Anger and Feminist (Re)Writing in Hélienne de Crenne" and "Renaissance Misogyny, Biblical Feminism, and Hélienne de Crenne's *Epistres familiares et invectives*;" Scollen-Jimack, "Hélienne de Crenne, Octavien de Saint-Gelais and Virgil;" and Wood, "Dido as Paradigm of the Tragic Heroine in the Works of Hélienne de Crenne."

sentimental' portion of the text. It gives us a psychologically rich portrait of a woman in love trying to express her experience in words.

Besides Hélienne, there are two more first-person character-narrators. Guenelic narrates the second part of the *Angoysse*, in which he and his friend Quezinstra travel outside of France. The many exploits of the two friends prove their worth as knights and redeem Guenelic's behavior from part one. At the beginning of part three, Guenelic and Quezinstra return to France to find Hélienne. Guenelic sneaks into her tower and tells her of his adventures, which she writes down after he leaves, shifting the original narrative 'je' from herself to him. Thus Guenelic 'writes' the second part and a portion of the third through Hélienne, and with this narrative transvestitism the genre of the book shifts from sentimental novel to chivalric romance, with epic undertones. When the two lovers die mid-escape, Quezinstra takes up the pen, borrowing Guenelic's 'je' to record their last words. In the "ample et accommodee narration" that concludes the text, Quezinstra writes, in the first person, of the supernatural intervention by Mercury to get Hélienne's 'little book' published in Paris. The book is, presumably, the text we have in our hands. Thus the *Angoysse*, employing several narrators and borrowing from multiple genres, stages the process of its events being lived, narrated, written, and finally published.

The *Epistres familiares et invectives* is a collection of eighteen letters on diverse topics. They belong to the same literary universe as the *Angoysse* and participate in Crenne's project of persuasion and self-authorization begun in her first publication. In the fifth, eighth, and ninth 'familiar' letters, in which Crenne takes up the tone of advice and conduct literature, Crenne tries to persuade two different female friends against love affairs on the grounds that men are untrustworthy and that passion is all too often based on error rather than on true love. She advises them to keep their passion concealed until it dissipates with time. In a true carry-over of the confessional nature of the *Angoysse*, Crenne reveals her own secret illicit desires to a friend in the tenth, eleventh, and thirteenth letters. The first three 'invective' letters are a conversation between Crenne and her husband, where they argue over the *Angoysse*'s believability and its status between truth and fiction. The fourth and fifth letters, addressed to a friend and to the small-minded denizens of a small town, respectively, concern a woman's right to read and to write. Lastly, the *Songe* describes a dream in which Venus and Minerva appear to a Lover and his Lady. The same exhortation to virtue from the *Angoysse* resurfaces here and is mapped out along even more distinct lines. The title page reads: "Le Songe de madame Helisienne composé par ladicte dame, la consideration duquel, est apte à instiguer toutes personnes de s'alliener de vice, et s'approcher de vertu" (43). Each goddess tries to persuade the two mortals to either embrace or reject love. Crenne also tackles the topics of the relative benefits of reading, the importance of exempla, and the weakness of men's minds when confronted by persuasion, for the Lover is easily swayed by both Venus and Minerva.

It is clear from these summaries that Crenne's main concerns are persuasion and women's right to intellectual activity. These two preoccupations play out in a discourse of illicit desire, which allows her to capitalize on the resulting tension between defaming and defending herself, both as a woman and as a woman writer. Thus these summaries add a new dimension to my focus on Crenne as a writer concerned throughout with crafting her own authority through agonistic language about love in a range of formats. To illustrate these points further, I turn now to the scene of Hélienne's confession, which takes place at about the halfway point of the *Angoysse*, part one. In the Catholic sacrament of confession, the repentant sinner lays bare all their sins to a representative of the Church to receive absolution. It is a site of truth-telling in

which sins are exposed but remain secret, since the confessor cannot divulge those sins to anyone else. It is one of the moments where we can clearly see Hélienne's response to authoritative male discourse, Dame Hélienne's retrospective and interpretative gloss, and the status of language in "écriture amoureuse." In other words, this incident of disclosure stages Crenne's project in miniature. Hélienne appropriates the confession as a restorative exercise of unburdening her heart. Dame Hélienne extends the confession to the *Angoysses* as a whole, aiming it not at a male authority but rather at a community of women readers. The confession inspires a mode of persuasive writing in which the truth is shared and believed: the process by which Hélienne becomes a writer begins with a confession.

I. "En confession et sans difficulté": Speaking and Writing as Unburdening

Hélienne's confession is a scene in which the humanist faith in words confronts one of its limitations. In my previous chapters, I discussed how madness, greed, and ambition make eloquence ineffective and even powerless. In the *Angoysses*, love is the force that no eloquence can affect. Indeed, love makes all rhetorical interactions suspect, creating an alternative economy of communication in which words cannot be trusted. It is abundantly clear in "écriture amoureuse" that, as Paolo Valesio suggests, language is itself a "struggle for power" (99). In the *Angoysses*, this struggle transpires in language and about language. Crenne holds up the possibility of eloquence as a "fantasy of power" only to negate that power and exclude it from the text as a viable means to resolve talk into action (Rebhorn, *Emperor* 15). Eloquence in the *Angoysses* is used two ways: as a signal of hyperbole (as in, not even Mercury, god of eloquence himself, can describe Hélienne's beauty) or a trigger for immediate confrontation, a struggle for rhetorical dominance in a given interaction (lovers' words are sweet and efficacious without ever being persuasive). Persuasion plays out agonistically: instead of dramatizing one character yielding to the rhetoric of another, Crenne's characters are equal and opposite rhetorical forces. This is the very nature of Crenne's writing as a whole: agonistic struggles for rhetorical control that never fully find resolution between two incongruent entities (such as fact and fiction), an irresolution from which Crenne produces her fiction and authority.

In the confession scene, three clichés concerning the relationship between love and language come together and demonstrate language truly is a struggle for power in the *Angoysses*. These clichés are: love turns lovers into liars, love makes it difficult for lovers to speak, and love immunizes lovers to verbal persuasion. I would like to elaborate quickly on this system of communication, specifically the first two aspects, before I turn to Hélienne's confession, to demonstrate more efficiently how that scene stands out as a valuable mode of exchange. This scene marks the first moment in the *Angoysses* where Hélienne decides to refrain from feigning and fictionalizing. Not only does she disclose the truth of her love to another person, but she also advocates for herself against a male authority. Thus the scene of truth-telling is also an agonistic scene of argumentation. Though the monk fails to persuade Hélienne to resist her forbidden love, the confession gives rise to the initiative to share the truth more broadly.¹²⁶

Dame Hélienne makes a point of establishing Hélienne and Guenelic as liars. Hélienne instinctively becomes a liar after Guenelic catches her eye: she crafts an "artificielle mensonge" to convince her husband that her altered state is not inspired by the handsome neighbor, but

¹²⁶ Virginia Krause contextualizes this scene by discussing both the confessional practices of the sixteenth century and the use of confession in texts Crenne imitates, especially *Il Peregrino* by Jacopo Caviceo and *L'Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* by Giovanni Boccaccio (*Idle Pursuits* 113-120).

rather the litigations that had brought them to that town (106). Forbidden love moves Hélienne to feign and fictionalize as gestures of self-protection against her husband, the social and legal authority of her domestic life who sees through such fabrications, such as when he finds a love letter written in her own hand and does not believe it was written only “par exercice” (136). Dame Hélienne frames love as a corrupting force, the opposite of eloquence’s traditional civilizing powers: love has made Hélienne “hardye et audacieuse” where she had previously been famously chaste and “timide” (114). For her part, Hélienne constructs Guenelic as a liar in her own speeches and letters, accusing him of feigning love through deceptive words. The following represents a typical exchange:

mais peult estre que voz douces et attractive paroles sont fainctes et simulées: car le plus souvent, vous aultres Jouvenceaulx usez de telles fainctises et adulations, pour circonvenir la simple cr[e]dulité fœminine, aulcunefoys peu constante et trop liberale, et ne tendez à aultre fin, sinon qu’à priver d’honneur celles que vous dictes tant aymer. (175-176)

The rhetorical interaction in the context of love involves not just exchanges of words. It also seeks to bargain for desire (concealed or disclosed) and honor (maintained or ruined). The fear of being deceived and losing honor make the lover want, and even endeavor, to mistrust what he or she hears. Though “Amour n’est aultre chose, qu’une oblivion de raison,” when it comes to language, there is an excess of reasoning that favors doubt and suspicion (203). What is more, though honor and chastity skew more towards the lady’s side of the discourse of love, this reticence to believe the lover appears to be relatively ungendered in the *Angoysses*, as Hélienne and Guenelic share many qualities and discursive practices in this regard. Guenelic responds to Hélienne’s calling out of young men with a similar accusation of the female sex. Guenelic claims that Hélienne and her husband are colluding together so that they can laugh at his efforts to woo her: “n’estoit une chose qui me conforte, c’est que je ne suis seul abusé de ce variable sexe fœminin...” (183). No one in love is worthy of trust, especially when they talk about their love and desire: more talk is equated with less sincerity, more attempts at persuasion imply less real feeling and thus they can be easily disregarded. This is the very game of love, which both resists and depends on language. Failed persuasion means deferring the resolution and its consequences (ruined reputation). Prolonging the verbal romantic encounter increases longing: “Car la continuelle conversation est cause d’augmentation d’amours,” the monk will tell Hélienne (153). Language and persuasion therefore are intensely called into question in the *Angoysses* precisely because its subject is love.

The real currency in the communication of love in the *Angoysses* is not, in fact, words, but rather sighs, silence, and trembling. These are visible and audible signs produced by the body of the person in love, more honest and persuasive evidence of powerful love than words. Hélienne and Guenelic have a tête-à-tête shortly after the confession, for instance, where this economy of love, language, and silence is plainly mapped out. Hélienne sets aside Guenelic’s speech about facing any peril for her (except for her husband, who may be lurking in the vicinity and from whom he has already fled several times), and she considers his body language instead. In this round in the game of love, Hélienne gambles on an exchange of speech with silence to increase his desire: “mais en considerant ses gestes exterieurs, je comprenois qu’il estoit fort espris et attainct de mon amour, qui fut cause que pour ceste fois ne luy vouluz declairer le secret de mon cueur, non pour le bannir ne chasser: mais pour plus ardemment l’enflamber” (167).

This is a manufactured silence, a strategy for augmenting desire by not answering amorous talk with more talk. More often, however, Héli-senne is seen to be involuntarily silenced. Excesses of feeling inhibit speaking and cut off her voice: “Et quand je voulois prononcer quelque propos, par manieres de plaintes et exclamations, l’extreme destresse de ma douleur interrompoit ma voix, je perdis l’appetit de manger, et de dormir m’estoit impossible” (107). Love, then, is a fully corporeal experience that cuts off speech by shutting down the body. Physical signs of desire and emotional distress are privileged over verbal declarations of love in the *Angoysses*. Such is the status of communication in “écriture amoureuse:” it is a complex system of persuasion, fear of deception, words, physical signs, and silence.

Language is, however, necessary to writing about the experience of love. A reader will not always be satisfied with the topos of inexpressibility, or the idea that something is beyond the descriptive capacity of the writer. Dame Héli-senne often represents a separate, more rational voice than that of her past self who suffers the pangs of love fiercely, stubbornly, and physically. She frequently steps in to interpret Héli-senne’s actions in a moralizing way to show the painful and undesirable physiognomy of love. Descriptions of Héli-senne’s emotional silences are for the benefit of the readers. This play between narrator and character is precisely what John Freccero calls the “logical contradiction” of any autobiography or autobiography-like text: there is an implied continuity between Dame Héli-senne and Héli-senne but also a discontinuity “... providing an Archimedean point from which the story of that former self may be judged with apparent objectivity and detachment” (20). Periodically, Dame Héli-senne interrupts the discontinuity to reclaim her continuity with her past self. This continuity occurs in the body, which is the site of both of these Héli-sennes.

Dame Héli-senne interrupts the narrative to call attention to the writing experience as a difficult process of remembering and reliving her past pain. Narrative interruptions such as “je demeuray tant chargée de tristesse et amaritude, que impossible seroit le scavoit relater, ne reciter,” in which Héli-senne and Dame Héli-senne fuse together to communicate the incommunicable, are quite frequent in the *Angoysses* (112). The pain that Héli-senne experiences bodily and emotionally extends to Dame Héli-senne’s writing experience. Her writing hand makes itself visible from the outset, in the opening letter of the *Angoysses*: “ma main tremblante... ma debile main...” (97). Certain memories – such as ones that recall her husband’s physical violence – are so strong that they even cause her to break her quill: “... m’intervint diverses et merueilleuses fantasies si cruelles et ignominieuses, que la recente memoire rend ma main debile et tremblante, en sorte que par plusieurs foys y laissay et infestay la plume...” (140). The emotional and physical aspects of experiencing love, in which the voice breaks and is cut off, reaches the hand that writes. Such moments take her readers out of a narrative about the body of a suffering lover to linger on the body of the suffering writer.

Dame Héli-senne utilizes these breaks in the narrative to persuade her readers of her emotional authority on affairs of the heart. The broken quill becomes an emblem of that authority and the pact she has with her readers to share this experience. The writing process involves pain, but it is a pain that must be surmounted for writing to be produced. Héli-senne sometimes cannot get her voice back, but Dame Héli-senne always picks up another quill. It takes courage to write what is difficult to share, and attention paid to that courage increases Dame Héli-senne’s authority on her subject, which is both love and herself. After telling her readers that her quill is broken, she continues: “... mais pensant qu’il me seroit attribué à vice de pusillanimité, je me veulx efforcer de l’escrire” (140). The shame of writing her illicit desire, subject to the social obstacle of moral censure and the personal obstacles of inexpressibility and talent, is overpowered by the

shame of not writing, of not sharing her experience. The logical contradiction of the *Angoysses*, then, works to separate Dame Hélienne from Hélienne to create a more objective, moralizing narrative, which we will see in the confession scene. Moreover, by dramatizing the writing process, Crenne also minimizes the loss of emotional impact – her site of authority – that would result in too great a distance between character and narrator.

I turn now to the scene of confession itself. Hélienne’s extreme love for Guenelic and her fear of her husband have driven her to attempt suicide (142). Her husband is advised by a servant to take her to “... quelque scientifique personne, qui avecq l’efficace de ses paroles la pourra corroborer et conforter, et par ce moyen pourra retourner à sa premiere coustume” (144-145). This is the very promise of eloquence, that it can turn or return someone to a virtuous state. Thinking she would be more disposed to reforming if taken to a religious institution, her husband brings her to “ung auctentique religieux, lequel estoit fort bien famé et renommé” (145). Hélienne “premeditates” her confession as soon as she learns that the “scientifique personne” will be a monk. In other words, she decides to use this situation to her advantage. This premeditation, in the form of an inner monologue (“disoye en moymesmes”), involves persuading herself to tell the monk the truth. She gives herself two reasons. The first is that it will be a relief to tell the truth instead of wasting energy on lying (145). The second concerns the parameters of a confession: she has to speak, she would like to tell the truth, and the monk cannot reveal what she says in confession, so there is no danger, only comfort, in telling the truth (146).

Hélienne begins to dismantle the monk’s authority even before she encounters him. Having entered the monastery “sans aulcune devotion,” Hélienne turns to the courtly register to counter his predictably Christian discourse.¹²⁷ The monk is old, she reasons to herself, and “... du tout refroidy, impotent, et inutile aux effectz de nature” (146). This is a literary topos about the exclusion of old age from the experience of love, as Vieillesse is kept outside the “vergier” in *Le Roman de la Rose* (lines 339-406). The monk has never suffered love or, if he has, he is now a hypocrite for reprimanding others for what “aultrefois luy a esté plaisant” (146). The monk, then, may have the authority of the Church behind him, but Hélienne frames authority as something based on experience, not an institution. It is therefore not “folye” to divulge her secrets to him, because he has no power to change her. The confession consists of three speeches, two by the monk and one by Hélienne. The monk speaks first, encouraging her to repent and to think of the horrors of hell as cures for the emotional distress that led her to attempt suicide. In her response, Hélienne counters each of the monk’s arguments by again referring to her own experience. Hélienne’s body serves as her evidence, and her experience in her body inspires her to blaspheme: hell cannot be worse than her soul’s torment in her body and, even if she wanted to resist love, she would not, for Guenelic is both her poison and the remedy (150-151).

When Hélienne turns away from her body as a site of authority in the middle of her confession, she refers to history, biblical history, and mythology, conventional locations for mining exempla for an argument. Hélienne inserts herself into a long line of male exempla who similarly found love irresistible. She redefines madness as the presumption of thinking she can overcome love when King David, King Solomon, Aristotle, and Hercules could not, and they were “les plus experimentez en science” (150). Hélienne therefore discards the “science” of the

¹²⁷ *Angoysses* 145. For Crenne’s use of Christian and Classical references, see Conway. She finds that Crenne prefers Classical allusions to Christian ones in articulations of sensuality and seduction. Christian references are mainly reserved for advocating chastity (112).

monk because he lacks experience and the “science” of these male exempla because even if they knew better, they still succumbed to love. Thus Hélienne aligns herself with male models and the right to be captured by love even if it means sin (David’s homicides for the sake of Bathsheba; Solomon’s idolatry) or humiliation (Remya/Hermya riding Aristotle like a horse; Hercules dressing as a woman to woo Iole). If men are reduced to such actions for the sake of love, Hélienne argues, she cannot be expected to resist love either, for her virtue (both in the moral sense but also *virtus*, courage and manly vigor) is only “pusillanime” (150). By aligning herself with these male models, then, Hélienne summons all the authority of learning just to point out its limitations and make her case for a confession that must take place without repentance. In her own words, Hélienne is irredeemable, and by her argumentative stance in an interaction (the confession) which should let go of the rhetorical and the persuasive, she shows herself reluctant to leave behind the powers of rhetoric that reign in the system of amorous communication whose main mark is its game of deception.

The monk is adept both at being firm in his ethical stance (against the perils of extramarital love and excessive passion) and at adapting his speech to his audience. The monk first tries the tactics of fear, shame, and duty, evoking hell, Hélienne’s husband, and the promise of relief via contrition to get Hélienne to confess and repent. His “bonnes parolles” offer Hélienne “... peu de fruit, ou de nulle valeur, pource que ma pensée estoit occupée de venimeuse amour” (148). The monk’s second attempt is gentler, offering soothing words and concrete advice on how to mitigate “l’ardeur d’amours” to remove her from the brink of death (152). He counters Hélienne’s evocation of male exempla with female models of chastity that preferred death to dishonor: Penelope, Oenone, and Lucretia were famously devoted to their husbands (154-155). Rather than summon them to talk about their similarity, as Hélienne did in her justification for not resisting love, the monk chooses these models for their “contrariété et différence” from Hélienne (155). The monk thus returns Hélienne to the domestic sphere, reminding her to fear her husband’s wrath and remember her place: her lord is not love, her lord is her husband. The monk’s misogyny, however gently worded it may be, serves to remind us how difficult it was for Renaissance women to speak and love. Hélienne’s appeal to male examples subverts a tradition that aligns female behavior with female precedents and compels absolute female chastity. The monk restores the gender balance by convening female examples Hélienne should model rather than male examples she may resemble, but whose different morality excuses love (“car entre eulx cela [love] n’est estimé pour vice mais au contraire s’en ventent et glorifient,” 153). In turn, if successful, his advice would return Hélienne to her proper place in the community and, in so doing, end both her suffering and her narrative potential.

The confession scene maintains the troubled system of communication discussed above, namely, the lies, silence, and inexpressibility involved in the experience and expression of love. The scene is bookended with lies Hélienne tells her husband; she retains her emotionally charged silence, sighs, and weeping; she claims that even if all the “langues desertes” were to combine their talents, it would still be “... difficile de narrer les insupportables passions, dont mon ame est continuellement agitée et persecutée...” (149). The revelation of the truth in this religious context, however, slightly shifts the dynamics of this system. The key to this shift is the monk’s compassion. It leads him to believe Hélienne, thereby removing the “difficulté” of giving voice to something hidden and of the desire to “descharger mon cuer” (145). When her husband and Guenelic believe Hélienne, it is rarely and cautiously. The monk, by contrast, responds to this manifestation of emotion and her blasphemous argumentation with “douceur et clemence” and words of comfort. He periodically affirms in his response that he believes what

she says to be the truth of her state (“je croy... je croy... je croy...,” 152). He even immediately acknowledges receipt of the complete truth in her confession: “Ma dame, je croy selon ma conception que vous m’avez du tout exhibé le secret de vostre cueur, sans riens reserver...” (152). The monk’s compassion and the truth-telling act of confession mean that there is no need for aggressive persuasive or fictionalizing maneuvers on either party’s part (145). Rather than interacting in a system that requires suspicion, the monk creates a new mode of communication that turns on compassion and belief.

One aspect of the system of communication in “écriture amoureuse” remains firmly in place despite the monk’s compassionate concern for Héloïse: the failure of persuasion in the context of love. Since Héloïse clings to the old system and resists being brought into the new, believing her does not heal her. Given that lovers always suspect ulterior motives hidden in sentimental language, love immunizes lovers to persuasion. Avoiding the trap of “polides, elegantes et suaves parolles” thus becomes part of the game of desire between lovers (133). There is another aspect to this immunization, in which someone (usually someone not in love) tries to persuade a lover away from love. Dame Héloïse couches this in terms of an illness with an undesirable cure, undesirable precisely because it runs counter to desire. Lovers do not *want* to be persuaded not to love; they have already persuaded themselves to defy persuasion. The first step toward healing is to want to be healed: “c’est ung grand commencement de guarison, que de vouloir estre guarie” (162). But lovers are both incapable of resisting love and also do not want to resist. The passive form of resistance glides into a more assertive form, as it does in Héloïse’s own words: “m’est impossible d’y scavoir resister: car j’aime si ardemment que j’auroys trop mieulx estre privée de vie que de la vœu de mon amy...” (149). Héloïse relishes the pain she suffers for love and would rather die than part from it, to the extent that she immediately wishes to flee because the monk “me p[er]suaivoit d’expulser amour de mon cueur,” but his advice is just “temps perdu” (157). Héloïse does not fight back with more rhetoric, but instead withdraws from the interaction altogether. The monk’s compassion and persuasiveness cause Héloïse to respond with cruelty in the only manner she can: she retreats into herself, into a fantasy (“si cruelle et furieuse fantasie”) in which the monk trades places with Guenelic (still in the monk’s habit) and, in that “petit lieu secret et devotieux,” they talk of love in a manner “plus plaisante et solacieuse” while the monk suffers the faraway perils of Scylla or Charybdis (156). In other words, Héloïse recoils from a new system of communication in which persuasion can succeed into a fiction that supports the old system whose very mechanics involve multiple scenes of failed persuasion, of talk with no resolution into action.

Héloïse’s flight from persuasion participates in Dame Héloïse’s construction of her past self as a negative exemplar. Héloïse exalts her love and her powerlessness over it; she even takes a sort of pride in being resistant to persuasion, claiming to Guenelic, for example, that not even princes can seduce her (168). Dame Héloïse typically makes use of monologue (introduced by such phrases as “disoye en moymesmes”) to distinguish Héloïse’s discourse from her own, to show through Héloïse’s speech how far she has fallen and the lengths to which she will go to justify herself and her actions. Héloïse may enjoy how the monk’s words are wasted on her, but Dame Héloïse sees this as a lamentable situation. She makes the case that being immune to persuasion is not an impressive quality to have: her current state is beyond the realm of eloquence and that is a bad sign. When the monk fails to persuade Héloïse, Dame Héloïse writes that her obstinacy is to blame (“car j’estoys si obstinée,” 157). Dame Héloïse intersperses the confession scene with similar comments, not allowing Héloïse’s exaltation of

love to go beyond the bounds of the primary assertion of the *Angoysses*: Hélienne's resistance is safely inscribed in Dame Hélienne's moral censure.

Dame Hélienne also accomplishes the presentation of Hélienne as a negative example by aligning herself with the rhetorical model of the monk, whom she re-authorizes through his compassion and then, in dialogue form, enacts her own relationship to Hélienne through a male figure of authority. The monk dismantles Hélienne's argumentative confession by amending her stance of experience as authority into a display of willfulness that does not equate to wisdom: "... vous comme plus volontaire que sage, voulez suyvre vostre sensualité..." (155).

Furthermore, Dame Hélienne shows that the monk's advice is sound: intense feeling can be mitigated with distance and time. As soon as Hélienne is away from the monk she feels better (157). Dame Hélienne's descriptions, the monk's words of comfort, and his persuasive tactics combined set up Hélienne as a negative exemplar, which is the point of the entire book. The confession allows Crenne to dramatize Hélienne's antagonism to male authority and Dame Hélienne's alignment with that same male authority, the very agonistic process through which, I contend, Crenne triangulates her own authority through male and female voices.

The combination of Hélienne's truthful (though confrontational) confession and the monk's compassionate (though ethically firm) response provide the practices of writing and reading crucial to the project of the book as a whole. The confession is where Hélienne begins to unburden herself, and the secularized confession that is the *Angoysses* (part one) offers itself without any repentance. Fictionalizing is a torment to her, Hélienne says before meeting the monk: "O mon Dieu, que c'est chose fatigieuse et penible de faindre et simuler les choses" (145). The monk himself informs Hélienne that "il est possible que la grand destresse que vous souffrez croist et multiplie par la taire et cacher..." (152). So the confession folds back to the book's first epistle, where Dame Hélienne's opening gambit includes the idea of therapeutic talk, that the communication of pain to "quelque sien amy fidele" helps diminish its severity (96). When Hélienne is again inspired to convey her pain, this time in writing, a memory of Guenelic recalls the connection between health, talk, and believability: "... vous estes destituée de vostre santé: mais si vous me vouliez croire, en brief temps vous seroit restituée" (219). Hélienne is quick to specify that Guenelic made this remark "par maniere de recreation" but his words are still "veritables" (219). In other words, Guenelic told Hélienne he was the cure to all her woes without expecting her to believe it, within the system of communication that favors a sometimes playful game of deception and persuasion. Hélienne now believes it, as her "lisantes" are called to believe and "considerer quel est ou peult estre mon mal," the plausibility engineered by such a complex persona (220).

Restorative glances from Guenelic, then, are replaced by restorative talk and, eventually, by restorative writing that is aimed at a wider public than one man. In addition to expanding readership, the emergence of the *Angoysses* out of the text's own concluding pages entails a formulation of authorial control over her text previously absent. In many respects, the beginnings of the text-within-the-text are defined by a lack of control. Hélienne, locked in her tower at the end of part one, decides that the best way to communicate with Guenelic is to rewrite "... la piteuse complainte que paravant j'avoye de ma main escripte: laquelle mon mary avoit bruslée par l'impetuosité de son yre" (218). This "complainte" is the outcome of a long process in which Hélienne had no say on how her "amours trop publiées et vulgarisées" were circulated, whether in the form of town gossip, Guenelic's showing his friends her letters, and her husband reading and destroying what she had written.

In a striking assertion of authorial control, Dame Hélienne now concludes the first part of the *Angoysses* with an address to the “Tres chieres et honorees Dames” that constitute her intended readership. Here, she rejects the idea that her loves should not be published but should, instead, be withheld and hidden. Moreover, she articulates this in the terms of Hélienne’s confession. Like Hélienne, Dame Hélienne offers up her text “sans riens reserver” (152) and with Hélienne’s audacious refusal of repentance:

... en considerant dont me procede la hardiesse de m’ingerer d’intituler l’œuvre presente, faisant mention d’Amours impudiques, ce que selon l’opinion d’aulcunes Dames timides, se pourra juger plus digne d’estre conservé en profonde silence que d’estre publié ne vulgarisé... *de nulles je ne seroys increpée*, et avec ce (comme j’ay predict) et ayant par plusieurs foys laissée la plume, l’affectueux desir que j’ay envers vous, mes nobles dames a esté occasion que me suis evertuée de vous declarer le tout, *sans riens reserver*: car par l’experience de ma furieuse follie, vous puis adviser et donner conseil qui vous sera *utile et profitable* pour de tel embrasement vous conserver (221, emphases mine)

Hélienne’s removal from the community because of moral censure and her immunization to persuasion allows Dame Hélienne to gesture toward the integration into a new one. Dame Hélienne formulates an early feminist ideology, in which a community of women, removing Hélienne from her near-constant solitude, finds utility and profit from a female-authored narrative about female experience. This ideology interacts with the specific rhetorical device of full disclosure in a writing practice in which persuasion materializes with ease out of courage, intimacy, and secularized confession, to which the “lisantes” respond with compassion and belief, convinced of the plausibility of such a tale of love’s torments. Thus the indeterminacy of truth and fiction is resolved by the proposed moral value of this fictionalized form of truth-telling. A new rhetorical tradition, a new eloquence even, emerges from pieces of the old to create a rhetorical space for women’s writing.

The rest of this chapter will unfold in three further movements. First, I will put Crenne into the context of early modern women’s writing by discussing the obstacles to female speech and the commonly used defensive strategies of other women writers. Second, I will talk about Crenne’s borrowed eloquence, that is, her dialogic relationship with three male writers. These two sections will help illuminate Crenne’s own discursive strategies beyond what I have already discussed by placing them in the broader field of early modern writing practices. Lastly, I will turn to one of Crenne’s other strategies for carving out her authority as a published writer. There she stages the ultimate triumph of her broken quill.

II. The Defensive Tactics of Marguerite de Navarre, Jeanne Flore, and Louise Labé

When a Renaissance woman wanted to write and to publish, she had two opposing forces with which to contend: an injunction to be silent and a warning against risky exposure. A text written by a woman is understood as a stand-in for her body: to write, as a woman, is also to be written, to call attention to what should be silent and invisible, so both text and body are in danger if exposed to public scrutiny (Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* 138). In male-authored rhetorics against women, a loose tongue or pen is equivalent to the unrestrained desire of a dangerously unruly female body. Margaret W. Ferguson calls this connection between female

behavior and writing the “ideologeme of chastity-silence-obedience” (“A Room Not Their Own” 97, 103). Francesco Barbaro’s *De re uxoria (On Wifely Duties, c. 1416)* is the oft-cited source for this opposition between silence and chastity and speech and lasciviousness: “It is proper, however, that not only arms but indeed also the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs” (205). It is preferable, above all, that women be eloquently silent, mere mute bodies that are as controllable as they are controlled (206). Some proto-feminist writers, however, argue that the eloquence of women is greater than that of men, but they are often lone voices in the wilderness and, at times, their praises are dubious. Cornelius Agrippa, one of these staunch supporters of women, marvels at their ability to express themselves clearly and eloquently in his 1529 *De Nobilitate et praecellentia foemini sexus*.¹²⁸ However, he proposes as evidence the fact that the lowliest of prostitutes has more eloquence than the most talented of orators, so in his project of ‘redeeming’ women and establishing their talent he rehearses some of the worst stereotypes about women – their relentless garrulity and the equation of their speech to sex and promiscuity – in his very praise of them.¹²⁹

This prejudice against female speech derives partly from theology. Juan Luis Vives, in a treatise about women’s education written in 1523 for Queen Catherine of England and intended for the future Queen Mary, writes of female virtue and women’s capacity for learning. Yet he also emphasizes the necessary silence of women, insinuating, as Saint Paul does, that women are genetic carriers of deception. Since Eve was easily misled by the serpent and she in turn deceived Adam, no woman should be allowed to teach “lest when she has convinced herself of some false opinion she transmit it to listeners in her role as a teacher and easily drag others into her error” (*De institutione feminae christianae* 41-43).¹³⁰ Women are thus cast as deceivers and liars and, what is even more dangerous, they are often ignorant of their deception. If indeed the impulse of humanist writers is to inform and reform readers, as Arthur F. Kinney has amply demonstrated, then the fear is that a woman writer could, unintentionally perhaps, misinform and corrupt her readers, and to a much broader public than her speech alone can access.¹³¹

A succinct example of the ideological complications of female speech is in the final scene of William Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, when the titular king asks for the hand of Princess Catherine

¹²⁸ “Nonne sermone mulier viro facundior, magisque diserta et abundans?” (*De Nobilitate et praecellentia foemini sexus* 64) [“La femme ne s’exprime-t-elle pas avec plus de facilité, d’habileté, d’abondance que l’homme?” (105)]. I cite R. Antonioli’s critical edition of *De Nobilitate*, which supplies a modern French translation of the Latin original.

¹²⁹ “Jam uero nonne et Poetae in suis nugis et fabulis, ac dialectici in sua contentiosa garrulitate a mulieribus uincuntur? Orator nuspian adeo tam bonus aut tam felix ut suadela uel meretricula superior sit. Quis Arithmeticus falsum supputando mulierem soluendo debito decipere potest?” (*De Nobilitate* 80) [“Venons-en maintenant aux propos frivoles et aux fables des poètes, ainsi qu’aux disputes verbeuses des dialecticiens: les femmes ne les surpassent-elles pas en tous ces domaines? Il n’existe nulle part un orateur doué d’un talent assez heureux pour avoir plus de persuasion que la dernière des prostituées. Quel arithmeticien peut tromper une femme s’il fait une erreur de calcul en luy payant une dette?” (114)].

¹³⁰ Here is the quote in full: “The Apostle Paul, vessel of election, imparting holy percepts to the church of Corinth, said ‘Let your wives be silent in church, for it is not permitted them to speak, but to be subject, as the law commands. If they wish to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.’ And writing to his disciple Timothy, he says ‘Let a woman learn in silence with all subjection. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over her husband, but to remain silent. For Adam was created first, then Eve, and Adam was not seduced but the woman was seduced and led astray.’ Therefore since woman is a weak creature and of uncertain judgment and is easily deceived (as Eve, the first parent of mankind demonstrated, whom the devil deluded with such a slight pretext), she should not teach, lest when she has convinced herself of some false opinion she transmit it to her listeners in her role as a teacher and easily drag others into her error, since pupils willingly follow their teacher.”

¹³¹ See Kinney’s *Continental Humanist Poetics*.

to seal a peace treaty between England and France.¹³² Here the danger of female speech collapses into that of the female body, namely her lips, resulting in the woman's necessary silence. This scene is also an excellent example of what Ann Rosalind Jones means when she notes that "the proper [Renaissance] woman is an absence," that she neither talks nor is talked about, that she neither writes nor is written about ("Surprising Fame" 74). Any narrative about love will also, more often than not, contain talk of language, as I explained above. Lovers must, often at length, persuade each other that they feel what they say they do: love is a game of persuasion. In *Henry V*, the linguistic differences between Henry and Catherine – neither speaks the other's language very well – obliges them to talk about language alongside their talk of love. This explicit attention to language and understanding unveils some of the facets of the Renaissance concept of proper womanhood, namely, chastity, obedience, and silence, though it is complicated by Catherine's initial resistance to Henry's proposal of marriage; this resistance is only permissible up to the moment she agrees to become his wife. Catherine's answer, and subsequent silencing, is crucial to the play's conclusion, however: she, as the personification of her country, must acquiesce to taking him as her husband and as the future king of France. Though the exchange of love occurs in sentimental terms, it is in fact transactional.

Despite his reputation for excellent oratory developed in *Henry IV Part 1, Part 2*, and earlier in *Henry V*, in this scene Henry insists that he speaks only as a soldier: "But, before God, Kate, I cannot look greenly nor gasp out my eloquence, nor I have no cunning in protestation... I speak to thee plain soldier" (140-145). His stance against rhetoric is a common rhetorical ploy: any moment where someone calls attention to the artlessness of his or her speech is meant to convey an alignment with honesty against sophistry and the idea that the 'plain truth' is persuasion enough. Catherine, who speaks only a broken English, nonetheless sees through Henry's anti-rhetoric and turns it against him, marveling at the "tromperies" of the "langues des hommes" (115) and at how he has enough "faux French" to "deceive de most sage demoiselle dat is en France" (205). Henry says that his "wooing is fit for [her] understanding" (121), meaning if Catherine's English were better she would immediately be suspicious of his assertion that he is a king and not a farmer, but he is off the mark. Though she remains unable to appreciate the meaning in Henry's sexual puns, her understanding of language games in matters of love is greater than he anticipates: she has been trained to resist, and he does not want to play this game ("I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say 'I love you,'" 125-126).¹³³ Henry construes understanding as linguistic and sees it in terms of the success of "broken" English and French. Catherine, for her part, concentrates on intentionality and whether or not she can gauge the truth hidden between Henry's "false" language and his claims to "true English" (206), neither of which she trusts. This linguistic issue is never resolved.

Henry grows impatient with her resistance. He says that they should stop talking about language altogether: "But thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most truly-falsely, must needs be granted to be much at one. But Kate, dost thou understand thus much English? Canst thou love me?" (180-184). She responds not with "I do not know," but rather with "I cannot tell," an ambiguous answer that hints at her lingering uncertainty but also at the injunction against women

¹³² References to *Henry V* are given by line number from the *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 1542-1547.

¹³³ For instance, Catherine does not likely follow King Charles's and King Henry's purposeful use of the language of warfare (the unconquered "maiden cities" of France) to talk about sex and marriage (the seduction of virgins) (281-307). Shakespeare's sense of sexual wordplay also surfaces in Act 3, Scene 4, in which Alice tries to teach Catherine some English words, resulting in Catherine's repetition of innocuous English words that evoke homonymic obscenities in French (3.4.44-54).

to speak their desire. She never responds unequivocally to his questions about love, for no woman can speak openly and frankly about her desire without such a declaration being equated with lasciviousness. Indeed, when she finally does say yes to Henry, it is tellingly not in answer to a question about love but instead to one about obedience to her father's wishes for her marriage (229-232). Silence, chastity, and obedience, in other words, resolve what language could not.

Henry and Catherine's betrothal turns to physical rather than linguistic connection, as it is literally sealed with a kiss. The custom is that French women are not kissed until their wedding day, but Henry is a king to whom "nice customs curtsy," and he will not be refused: "Therefore, patiently and yielding. [*He kisses her*] You have witchcraft in your lips, Kate: there is more eloquence in a sugar touch of them than in the tongues of the French council; and they should sooner persuade Harry of England than a general petition of monarchs" (255-260). The only way to power for women is sorcery, here in the form of bodily witchcraft and not speech, which is the domain of men.¹³⁴ Speech thwarts male desire: Catherine is able to call Henry out for his rhetoric of anti-rhetoric, but once she capitulates to him, she ceases to question his language. Then, when she is kissed, she is silenced for the rest of the play, for Henry's rhetoric has succeeded. She is made 'absent' and therefore 'proper' through this process of restraining her speech and questioning of his language. Her eloquence, tied only to her lips, is restrained by her chastity, for only her husband will ever touch them. As Katherine Ann Jensen astutely points out, there is a "double bind" for women writers of this period: a woman should not speak and she has nothing to speak about, for a woman only has a story to tell "to the extent that she defers or deviates from marital union" (64). Princess Catherine has ceased to delay her marriage, so her story is complete and her voice is cut off in this narrative of the mastering of female speech and the body/nation.

There were strategies for skirting the requirement of chaste silence and denying the accusation of being deceptive or sexually and textually wanton. These strategies do not require female silence but, instead, qualify female writing in order to reduce any adverse effects it may have. Since it is the act of writing itself, as well as the content of female writing, that is considered dangerous, these strategies make excuses for both the female authorial voice and the status of what is written. Jones calls this women's "partial obedience," a compromise between a submissive silence and the full agency that is granted through writing ("*Surprising Fame*" 80). These strategies include the topos of modesty and appeals to patrons, but I wish to concentrate on the following: a strict adherence to truth and rejection of rhetoric, claims to complete fictionality, and using proxies to speak on the woman's behalf. I have chosen three female authors as representative of these strategies. I am not suggesting that these three women directly influenced Crenne's writing or even that they deliberately made these defensive gestures as such. However, they provide necessary context for a discussion of female authorship, its direct relationship to language and writing, and how these authors assert hermeneutical control over their texts. Considering women's writing in this period as a whole articulates an answer to the question I posed earlier: women do *not* write of good women who speak well, and Crenne is not an exception.

¹³⁴ For more on the sorcery and sensuality of rhetoric and its relationship to women, see Reborn, *Emperor of Men's Minds*, chapter 3.

Marguerite de Navarre's "veritables histoires"

Hélisenne de Crenne thought very highly of Marguerite, Queen of Navarre and sister of King François I. In her fourth invective letter, Crenne isolates Marguerite as the most accomplished and incomparable woman of the past, present, and future – “la splendeur d’icelle à la condition femenine donne lustre” – in order to silence her husband’s “langue pestifere” that never ceases to defame women (*Epistres* 152). Many scholars have pointed out that Crenne specifically attributes ‘masculine’ accomplishments to Marguerite by equating her with Plato, Cato, Cicero, and Socrates; this is the same admiration Crenne has for Dido.¹³⁵ Marguerite’s status as a learned woman and as a queen undoubtedly granted her more allowances as a woman writer than other women had; for instance, her brother interceded on her behalf when the Sorbonne condemned as heretical her 1521 poem *Miroir de l’âme pécheresse*. So with her authority less in doubt, it is interesting to see that she, too, used defensive strategies in her works, though they are more theologically grounded than they are determined by her gender.

Marguerite de Navarre’s relationship to language has been long established as a slightly antagonistic one. This is not, however, an animosity related strictly to gender. Robert D. Cottrell argues in *The Grammar of Silence* that in her poetry – which was published before the *Heptameron* – Marguerite rejects ‘fallen,’ human speech in favor of the silent contemplation of the transcendent Word. For Marguerite, then, speech is intimately tied to faith and is, in a sense, an obstacle to faith and to truth. This attitude also emerges in her prose. The collection of short stories that we know now as the *Heptameron* was not published until 1559, though its composition was certainly earlier.¹³⁶ The main defensive strategy of the *Heptameron* is anti-rhetoric. The *Heptameron*, by establishing an opposition between truth and rhetoric, becomes a refusal of humanist rhetorical poetics and of attention to language in favor of an unembellished truth, which then precludes any accusation of deception. The prologue of the *Heptameron* famously outlines the rules of the game of storytelling at the heart of the collection. Each story must be true (“c’est de n’escrire nulle nouvelle qui ne soit veritable histoire”) and either personally witnessed by the storyteller or by a reliable witness (“quelque histoire qu’il aura veue ou bien oy dire à quelque homme digne de foy,” 9). Learned men will be excluded, “de paour que la beaulté de la rhethorique fait tort en quelque partye à la verité de l’histoire.” Thus Marguerite de Navarre firmly places this text on the side of truth-telling versus fiction. Marguerite prefers the “nudity,” “simplicity,” “truth,” and “austerity” of history to rhetorical ornaments and artifices. The claim to veracity secures the hermeneutic compliance of the readers: they cannot criticize truth-telling and the ‘authority’ of the text as a whole rests on the verifiable truth of its contents. Furthermore, by maintaining ‘clarity’ and ‘purity’ of the story, the *Heptameron* aligns itself with the project of the Évangéliques, a group of Catholic reformers who sought to simplify the practices and teachings of Christianity through unambiguous preaching and vernacular translations of the Bible.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ For more discussions of Marguerite and Crenne, see Nash, “Exerçant œuvres viriles,” and “Renaissance Misogyny;” Wood, “Les lettres d’Hélisenne de Crenne et Jacopo Caviceo: lecture et stratégies scripturaires;” and Smarr’s *Joining the Conversation: Dialogues by Renaissance Women*, 154-166.

¹³⁶ All references to the *Heptameron* are from Michel François’ 1967 Garnier Classiques edition.

¹³⁷ For more on the Évangéliques, theology, and the Sorbonne, see Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform*; for more on the Évangélique influence on Marguerite de Navarre, see Randall, “Scandalous Rhetorics;” Vance, *Secrets*, chapters 3 and 4; Berthiaune, “Rhétorique et vérité chez Marguerite de Navarre.”

But anti-rhetoric is, nevertheless, rhetoric.¹³⁸ Every moment that tries to convince readers, both internal and external, of the story's authenticity is a rhetorical strategy designed to reassure and persuade both the game-playing *devisants* and the reader. The tales themselves are not devoid of rhetorical and narrative strategies. The frame narrative and debate-like structure do not allow it, for the dramatization of the storytelling obliges the *devisants* to persuade as well as to narrate, even if their performance does not succeed in winning anyone over to their side. In essence, Marguerite's setting aside of stylistic concerns does not erase narrative concerns that include the use of language in persuasion. However, anti-rhetoric provides Marguerite with a means of authorizing her text while also striking a compromise with her position against the superfluities and inconsistencies of language.

In terms of representing women speaking, the *Heptameron* appears to rehearse the traditional connection between a woman's speech, her chastity, and her obedience. Patricia Francis Cholakian maintains that the silence and silencing of female desire is present from the opening pages. In Parlamente and Hircan's preliminary negotiations over the group's activities in the prologue – a decision to be made between Bible study, sex, and storytelling – Cholakian writes,

The man [Hircan] falls silent in the face of what he doesn't know about the woman's desire. The female [Parlamente] rejects the *sex act* in favor of the *speech act* and substitutes dis-course for inter-course. But although female desire will become one of the principal subjects of this discourse, it will continue to be encoded as problematic and ambiguous, the mysterious question for which no answer is provided, the gap over which (like the bridge across the raging river) the woman's text must be constructed. (37)

In other words, female desire is at the heart of the *Heptameron* as a whole and it is crucial to its illustration of female speech. Since these female characters primarily speak only their desire, they need to be silenced. Both linguistic and bodily unruliness must be contained. In the stories, women who refuse desire are lauded; women who speak their desires are humiliated, chastised, or killed. The duchess of tale 70, for instance, having been thwarted in her desire for her husband's servant, sought to humiliate her rival by exposing her affair with that same servant; the duchess is then violently killed by her husband.¹³⁹ After hearing the story of Jambicque of tale 43, Parlamente declares that such women who put pleasure before honor lose the right to be called women and must be called men, whose honor is in conquering: "mais celles qui sont vaincues en plaisir ne se doibvent plus nommer femmes, mais hommes, desquelz la fureur et la concupiscence augmente leur honneur" (301). The novelty of the *Heptameron*'s treatment of the ideogeme of chastity-silence-obedience resides in its multiplicity and its internal agonistic mechanism, which allow for variations on the same theme and thus different judgments on the part of the *devisants* (McKinley 151). The stance against female speech in the *Heptameron* is therefore not as harsh as it is in conduct books intended for women but it is still resonant with that kind of writing.

¹³⁸ See Valesio, 45-60; Plett 429-432.

¹³⁹ For an excellent reading of this novella in the context of writing and violence, see Cholakian, 182-206.

Of the contemporary women writers in this brief survey, it is perhaps Jeanne Flore who is closest to Crenne, at least stylistically. Crenne most likely read either the *Contes amoureux* (publication date unknown), or a modified version entitled *La Pugnition de l'Amour contempné* (1540), both attributed to Flore.¹⁴⁰ It has been suggested that Crenne copied material from Flore or vice versa; some scholars believe that the *Contes amoureux* was published only a year before the *Angoysses*, so a connection between the two works seems likely (*Contes* 22). Like Crenne, Flore was heavily influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio and Jean Lemaire de Belges, both in terms of her language and the content of her stories. Flore's French is erudite and Italianate, and several passages have been adapted from Lemaire's *Illustrations de Gaule* as well as from his poetry (see 28, 82, 204). The *Contes amoureux* loosely follows the format of the *Decameron*: six women share and discuss stories about love. What the *Heptameron* resists – the explicit discussion of female desire and sexuality without subsequent violence – the *Contes amoureux* openly embraces.

Both Crenne and Flore make similar claims about their works' status as fiction. Crenne writes in her first invective letter, published a year after the *Angoysses*, that no one should read the novel as fact: indeed, she finds it hard to believe that her husband believes the *Angoysses* to be true. The *Contes amoureux* likewise finishes with this defensive gesture. In a poem entitled "Jeanne Flore au lecteur," the writer states "Je t'ay voulu pour la conclusion / Bien advertir que tout ce est fiction / De poësie" (225). Flore includes in her text a self-defensive poetic gesture that dismisses any and all "gloses" that would be "à mon desavantage," not at the beginning of the text, but at the end, a preemptive strike against those who have already finished reading the book: whatever the readers believed about the text's status as fact or fiction as they read is overturned by Flore's closing argument that 'this is just fiction.' The claim that "tout ce est fiction" suggests frivolity and thereby dismisses any malicious interpretation of the text as true tales meant to deceive women readers into following their desires. Furthermore, this erasure also allows Flore to write what she wishes, in the manner she chooses, even if it is a subject like desire. Flore candidly resists any alliance with truth-telling.

In overall tone and content, however, the *Contes amoureux* is markedly different from the *Angoysses*. Whereas Crenne uses writing as a means to confess and to express her suffering, Flore's heroines only suffer if they do *not* submit to the desires of their lovers (34). This difference in didactic tone is also reflected in the writers' addresses to their female readerships. Whereas Dame Hélisenne directs her words toward a compassionate, sisterly audience, Flore pushes any overly prudent readers to love or else be punished for not pursuing pleasure. There is no guilt; pleasure reigns supreme. Discussing this perplexing message in the *Contes amoureux*, Cathleen M. Bauschatz suggests that the text is a parody of the didactic discourse addressed to women in order to keep them chaste and silent.¹⁴¹ If it is a parody, and Bauschatz is quite convincing, then the instances of female eloquence in the *Contes amoureux* should be taken as parodic as well, an exaggerated reproduction of the image of women described by male didactic writers seeking to prescribe female behavior. It is nonetheless worthwhile to examine this image of women on its own terms, to see how Flore imagines female eloquence.

¹⁴⁰ I will be citing the original edition, the *Contes amoureux*, republished by the Presses Universitaires de Lyon.

¹⁴¹ See both "Cebille/Sebile: Jeanne Flore, Reader of Christine de Pizan?" and "Parodic Didacticism in the *Contes amoureux* par Madame Jeanne Flore."

Flore's *Contes amoureux* produces an opposition between female beauty and female speech in which beauty is privileged over speech. These heroines can have divine beauty, indeed they should, but they cannot have divine powers of speech as well: their eloquence is physical, not rhetorical. Towards the middle of the first story, Venus appears to a knight – fittingly named Andro or ‘male, masculine’ – to help him “conquerir sa belle amye,” Rosemonde Chiprine; her husband, advanced in years, has been so consumed with jealousy over his young bride that he has constructed a “Chasteau jaloux” in which to imprison her (116-117). The storyteller, Madame Melibée, interrupts this divine visitation with an apostrophe to Beauty. She says that Beauty has “plus de force en ung seul moment devant les yeulx des amoureux, que n’a pas la douce Eloquence seulle de soy” (117). The Lady Eloquence, Madame Meribée continues, could not change a lover’s heart even if she had a hundred years to do so. As I argued above, this is one of the rules of persuasion in narratives about love, that eloquence bears no weight. It cannot make someone love or make someone fall out of love. In fact, silence is preferable to speech. Words, though expressed with sincerity, often undermine the sentiments expressed, but physical beauty speaks convincingly without words. Words in the *Contes amoureux* distract from the contemplation of bodily splendor and “persuasions artificielles” are quickly forgotten when the prepared speaker is confronted with overwhelming beauty (172). When Venus finally leads the two lovers to their bedchamber, it is in silence. The lovers are so overcome with emotion that they are unable to speak and, instead, each contemplates the other’s beauty at length (125). Lovers are always reduced to silence; speech only gets in the way of the successful resolution of amorous discourse, namely, love-making.

The second story in the *Contes* treats female language more explicitly. The story relates how a beautiful young woman named Meridienne is punished by Venus for not reciprocating the love of any of her male admirers. Meridienne is a dangerous, and dangerously eloquent, beauty. The connection between her appearance and destruction is not made with any subtlety. Meridienne’s arrival at the ceremony in honor of Venus is compared to that of Helen at Troy, bewildering the Trojans with the beauty that will lead to their downfall (139-140). Looking into Meridienne’s eyes is likened to being instantly killed by the “regard venimeux” of the basilisk (140). The dangers of her speech are described just as explicitly as her beauty is, in particular in our first look at Meridienne. In fact, one of her major sins is that she speaks too much and too well.

Ignoring a dream in which Venus threatens her for her audacity, and attributing that dream to the goddess’s envy, Meridienne rises from her bed and removes her clothing, not fearing in the slightest to exhibit her nudity (136). She chats (“causait et devisait”) with some young men who are present in her chamber, strategizing to herself on how best to seduce them: “par maniere d’essay comment elle pourroit tres promptement naufrager quiconques ce jour là aborderoit la nef de son desir sur le roch de sa beaulté... comme estoient les Syrenes voulantz submerger le saige et prudent Ulixé” (137). The storyteller Andromeda continues this description of the dangers Meridienne poses to men by adding that her eloquence would surpass even that of Cleopatra when she tried to “à soy rendre captif qui venoit pour la subjuguer soubz l’empire Romain [Octavian].” This siren wants these men to drown in desire and to completely lose their autonomy. It is not her beauty that Andromeda, or Flore, objects to, but rather Meridienne’s cruelty that she purposely carries out through her speech. Beautiful women are dangerous enough; eloquent seductresses are worse. Such a narrative typically demands, at the very least, the public humiliation of the female orator. A statue of Venus falls on Meridienne and, by the order of the young ladies of the city, her body is thrown to the fields to be devoured by wild

animals until it is unrecognizable and “espoventable à regarder” (152-153). Her body that was once refused to all men as an object of pleasure is now given to ravenous animals as nourishment. The message about female speech as an obstacle to pleasure is made abundantly clear.

Louise Labé and Folly's Public Defender

Louise Labé's complete works were published in 1555, well after Crenne's last work, which appeared in 1541. Yet a discussion of her *Débat de Folie et d'Amour* is relevant to a discussion of women who write prose. Labé's strong poetic voice has been well established by François Rigolot in *Louise Labé Lyonnaise ou la Renaissance au féminin*. His discussion of Labé's ambiguous appropriation of Orpheus as a poetic model – since, as a woman, her only other option is Eurydice's muteness – is certainly indicative of the other subterfuges that women writers had to use in order to write.¹⁴² This without doubt seems to be the typical dilemma of the women writer: choose a male literary model or figure (Boccaccio for Marguerite; Orpheus for Labé) or choose silence. Labé amply demonstrates this to be the case and it carries over into her *Débat*.

The strategy that Folly adopts in order to speak against the god of Love in the *Débat* is, in fact, a technique that silences. Folly chooses Mercury to speak in her defense at the court of Olympus against Cupid and his defender, Apollo. This act of ‘being spoken for’ is a scenario that we also see in the male-authored texts that Crenne imitates: the speech of female characters is either ventriloquized by a male writer, sanctioned by a male writer or narrator, or mediated by a male character, as one way of tempering sexual and/or linguistic licentiousness. In Labé's *Débat*, language itself is the most apparent and significant problem that is addressed. A debate that takes place between the god of eloquence and the god of poetry cannot be otherwise.

Apollo's argument against Folly rests on the assumption that Folly's language, like her person, is unruly, inappropriate, and dangerous, and that she violates the order of the universe.¹⁴³ Cupid/Love, however, maintains order and is the origin of speech (*Complete Poetry and Prose* 70; 82). However, Folly's crime is not speech, but rather action. She told Cupid that she has the power to take his eyes and then she does: “Amour ha voulu montrer qu'il avoit puissance sur le cœur d'elle. Elle lui ha fait connoitre qu'elle avoit puissance de lui oter les yeus” (96). In these parallel actions, Cupid instigates with words, leaving his “vouloir” latent, and Folly follows up with action. But she is not on trial for what she did. Apollo makes this a trial about who Folly is and the kind of language that she represents, precisely because Folly is not an ‘absence’ or a ‘proper’ woman. Mercury, then, also has to account for language in his rebuttal. For Mercury, Folly, “comme elle est tousjours ouverte, ne veut point que j'en dissimule rien: et ne vous en veut dire qu'un mot, sans art, sans fard et ornement quelqconque” (96; 100). So not only does Folly have to be spoken for, but her defender must also insist on a refusal of humanist poetics or any language of the forum where the trick is to “conter tousjours à son avantage,” as Apollo knows from frequenting it. This tripling of defensive strategy – being spoken for, refusing

¹⁴² See, in particular, chapter 6, “Être une Orphée lyonnaise.”

¹⁴³ For more on the unruliness seen as native to women in the early modern period, see Natalie Zemon Davis's essay “Women on Top” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 124-151. Davis argues, “... the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first and foremost, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and, second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest” (131).

rhetoric, and associating linguistic wordplay with her opponent – shows the extent to which unruly Folly needs to be tempered by means of a much more competent man.

For Tom Conley, the *Débat* offers a “concise poetics” for women’s side of narrative, in which pleasure is taken from sharing the experience of love from the woman’s perspective (“Closed Room” 329-330). He cites Apollo in particular, who says that “le plus grand plaisir qui soit apres amour, c’est d’en parler” (*Complete* 88). Here, Conley sees the “restructuring process of storytelling – that brings real and fictional realms together, permitting mundane experience to clothe itself in a far more ornate and pleasing fabric” (“Closed Room” 330). I agree that being allowed to speak of female desire in a way that partakes of both fact and fiction constitutes a viable poetics for women’s narrative. It is a process that Crenne claims for herself. However, the circumstances of Apollo’s statement upset this poetics. Apollo says this on behalf of Cupid, against Folly, and though he includes Sappho in his list of lyrics poets, he limits the “pleasure of talking about love” to men. Apollo does not see talking or writing about desire as an option for women. Mercury, too, focuses on the follies of men in love and the resistance women build up to men’s words and sighs. Love provides opportunities for men to speak and for women to be silent: “Il leur [men in love] semble que la place qui parlemente est demi gaignee. Mais s’il avient, que, comme les femmes prennent volontiers plaisir à voir debatre les hommes, elles leur ferment quelquefois rudement la porte...” (114). Women keep desire a secret: they “se laissent bruler dedens le corps avant que de rien avouer” (118). Women’s pleasure is, then, in resisting speech and narrative. But with Folly, Mercury adds, women’s madness gradually extends to writing and singing about their passions (120). Nothing is resolved, however: any poetics of women’s side of narrative is claimed by men. The verdict of the case is postponed as well, and Folly must accompany blind Cupid as his helper in the interim, silent and ancillary to his work, as Mercury has argued all along. Eloquence was never truly on Folly’s side.

Hélisenne de Crenne’s “Rude et obnubilé esperit”

These three basic strategies (stance of anti-rhetoric, claims to fiction, speaking by proxy) are therefore means of circumventing the demand for female silence, though they are also implicated in the process of silencing women. Crenne, for her part, does not fully adopt any of these strategies but instead uses similar ones to further her construction of fiction and authority. Strategies used for defense and for silencing are, for Crenne, ways of amplifying her own voice and asserting control over her literary output.

Crenne’s exclusion of eloquence from the *Angoysses* – eloquence is “reserved for Mercury” – is not the same as Marguerite de Navarre’s stance of anti-rhetoric. Crenne’s attitude toward rhetoric is far less severe than the Queen’s. It never reaches the point of resisting humanist rhetorical poetics altogether by insisting on artlessness or of refusing to intermingle fact and fiction in an effort to convince readers of the writer’s or the text’s believability. Most tactics are fair game. She never strays from her project of persuasion, in which rhetoric is deployed to create plausibility. The prevailing notion about early modern women’s writing is that it tends to deny its own rhetoric, primarily in prefatory discursive practices, promoting a modest artlessness that seeks to prove that eloquence can derive from somewhere other than the study and application of rhetorical science (*La Charité* 8). Thus women’s writing style is often called ‘plain’ or ‘natural,’ coming from the heart and in a sense attuned corporeally to the writer’s modesty and sincerity. Crenne, interestingly, stages in sartorial terms how concern for public opinion influences women’s style: Hélisenne, having received too much attention for her beauty

while garbed in “habillementz riches et sumptueulx” (Guenelic scandalously steps on her cloak as her husband is watching), then decides it would be more prudent to dress “plus simplement” (125). Style becomes a question of public scrutiny, in which clothing and rhetorical clothing broadcast to the world an image of a moral, interior self. Plain clothes are more pleasing to her husband; ornament pleases her public too well and makes Hélisenne’s unchaste body more visible. Therefore while Crenne does not dramatize a position of anti-rhetoric in her writing as the *Heptameron* does, we can still talk about anti-rhetoric in terms of gender-specific stylistic artlessness.

Crenne exhibits some concern about her writing style being perceived as unintentionally weak and artless because, as a woman, she never learned a more robust, rhetorical style. Her consideration of the quality of her rhetoric unites the process of finding a strong writing style with Renaissance attitudes towards women. Crenne insists that her style is, in fact, her good faith effort to emulate better writers, though she is not so presumptuous as to claim the right to join their ranks. In the epistle preceding *Angoysses* part one, Dame Hélisenne implies that her inability to write is due to physical and emotional, rather than intellectual, weakness: she prays to “celle qui est mere et fille de l’altitonant plasmateur [Mary, Mother of God] de vouloir ayder à ma triste memoire, à soustenir ma debile main, pour vous le scavoir bien escrire” (97). In this first section of her first published work, Crenne does not seek a higher style, but just one that is *suitable* to her subject matter – “pour vous le scavoir *bien* escrire.” She does not call it suitable for its ability to express a bare, verifiable truth, but rather because it is a fitting register for the expression of *her* truth according to her parameters: not eloquence, but her effort and care that originate in her very self, which is “studieuse et affectée” (222). In other words, her style is suitable in that it shares a complete experience, “sans riens reserver.”

The attention Crenne gives to the potential inadequacy of her language to convey her sentiments accurately is usually meant to highlight the intensity of her experience of suffering. The pact of her broken quill – the courage it takes to write something painful for the sake of someone else – often takes on the valence of insufficiency across her works. In the twelfth familiar letter, for example, Crenne admits to Quezinstra that she fears he will see “ingratitude ou negligence” in “l’insuffisance de mes escriptz” (111). At the end of the first part of the *Angoysses*, Dame Hélisenne similarly addresses her style, but this time in terms of the greater stylistic expectations her larger readership may have:

Bien suis certain que ceste mienne petite œuvre se trouvera de *rude et obnubilé esperit*, au respect de celles que povez avoir leu, qui sont composés par les *Orateurs et Hystoriographes*, lesquels par la sublimité de leurs entendements composent livres: mais en cela me doibt servir d’escuse, que *notre condition fæminine n’est tant scientifique que naturellement sont les hommes*. Et encore ne suis, ny ne veulx estre si presumptueuse que j’estime superer, ne seulement à apparier aucunes Dames en science de literature : car comme je croys il y en a qui sont de si hault esperit douées, qu’elles composeroient en *languaige trop plus elegant*, qui rendroit (aux benevolles Lecteurs) l’œuvre plus *acceptable*. Mais si *mon debile scavoir* est cause qu’il n’est en languaige plus aorné et modeste, à *luy se doibt attribuer la faulte, et non au deffault de mon vouloir et aspirant desir*, comme celle qui totalement est studieuse et affectée pour *vous faire congnoistre mon affection*. (221-222, emphases mine)

Dame Hélienne here makes several statements about her writing style. The style of the *Angoysses* is not like that of “Orateurs et Hystoriographes.” Her work derives from a “rude et obnubilé esprit” (“a rough and clouded mind”) and a “debile scavoir” (“weak knowledge”), the same words she uses in the fourth invective letter to describe how misogynists imagine the female mind, too clouded and weak to pursue intellectual activity (*Epistres* 150). Her style is a product of her mind and it is, in that sense, ‘natural’ to her rather than artificially crafted. Since women are not as “naturellement scientifique” as men are, women have to fabricate their own style. Other women may be able to write in more “elegant” language, which would be more “acceptable” to readers, but it is more important to Dame Hélienne that her language suit her desire to communicate her “affection”: “à luy [mon debile scavoir] se doit attribuer la faulte, et non au default de mon vouloir et aspirant desir.” What could be conceived as a posture of modesty intended to prevent a hostile response – we should forgive the apparent weakness of her style because Dame Hélienne is not an orator, a historiographer, or one of the great learned women – additionally advances the idea that she does not seek a “sublime” language, but only one that is suitable to her project of making an experience known (“pour vous faire congnoistre mon affection”). Its ‘weakness’ is in the mind of the reader who either perceives something in the language that is not there or denies the right for it to be written based on style and not substance. Thus the cloudy mind that expresses itself negates the intended misogyny of that description by authorizing such language for which desire and not ornament is the main object.

Crenne anticipates, then, readers who will criticize her style and readers who will censure her subject as facts that should be kept secret. I have already established how Crenne creates hermeneutical confusion by claiming to one kind of reader (represented by her husband) that her work is “composée seulement par exercice” (*Angoysses* 136) and that to believe otherwise is to “continuelement prendre les choses de la plus deterieure partie” (*Epistres* 126). Her husband’s response to this accusation, also penned by Crenne, participates in the agonistic, persuasive character of her writing by calling into question and also showcasing her believability and persuasiveness (135). Fact and fiction cede to plausibility: the “lisantes” see plausibility where most male readers see fact. As I argued above, persuasion is severely limited between characters because love makes language suspect. The real persuasion is intended to work on the readers precisely because they, like the monk, are outside that troubled system of communication that turns on disbelief. What Crenne covets is, then, not necessarily a refined language imitated from more polished writing. Instead, she wants competent (female) readers.

Like Flore, Crenne uses the excuse that “this is only fiction” as a direct part of her project of persuasion. The difference between the two writers is that Crenne’s gesture toward fictionality constitutes an accusation of actual (dramatized) – as opposed to potential – bad reading practices more than a self-protective dismissal of her work. In her first invective letter, she expresses frustration that her husband believes the events of the *Angoysses* to be factual, “pour faire perpetuelle commemoration d’une amour impudicque. Et d’avantaige tu crois que telle lascivité se soit en ma personne experimentée” (125-126). Crenne rejects her husband’s autobiographical reading of her novel and his indignation at her perceived audacity, for having “experienced” such a love and for having “commemorated” an illicit love in writing. Not having aligned herself completely with truth or fiction allows her to play with the boundaries between the two, to use the *Epistres* to complicate reading practices and protect herself, as a woman writer, from accusations of writing something forbidden. The fourth invective letter speaks more generally about male readership and the kind of competent reader she would prefer to have. Addressed to a misogynist, Elenot, Crenne claims that if he were better read (“bien studieux en diversitez de

livres”), his opinion about women and women writers would be vastly different and he would be less adamant about women’s lack of intellectual competency (150-151). She also laments his sudden malicious whim to read the *Angoysses*: “certainement ces parolles tiennes sont du tout contraires à mon desir, pource que bien vouldroye que mes livres fussent tousjours exhibez aux scavantes personnes” (153). Crenne wants well-read, charitable readers who will not accuse her of misinforming or corrupting them, or of misrepresenting herself.

These readers are also persuadable and can parse these distinctions in their reading practices. Whether confronting male authorities or when addressing her lady readers, it is clear that Hélienne de Crenne’s voice is always the dominant one. Unlike Folly, Hélienne is her own advocate in the *Angoysses* and her voice is even doubled for that purpose, creating an extra level of writing authority for Dame Hélienne as her character becomes more of a negative exemplar. In a choice between male model and feminine silence, Crenne decides on neither. She asserts narrative control over the *Angoysses* and a certain degree of hermeneutic control over it in her *Epistres*, uncompromisingly responding to the voices of her potential male detractors. The construction of her authorship and the writing of her desire is all her own, not reassigned to more competent male speakers within the text or elsewhere. She is the authority on her desire and the language in which it is written.

Crenne’s stance on female speech is therefore altogether different and more complex than the three defensive strategies discussed above allow. We would think that women writers would want to reclaim what had been denied them in conduct literature or other writing against women. However, a female character that is both morally upright and eloquent does not seem to have much narrative or moral potential. Good women are not eloquent, and eloquent women are not good. It appears that female authority operates on a principle of exclusion: for one woman to be granted permission to write, there must be a woman who moves back into silence. One woman’s writing precludes other women’s speaking. Hélienne’s silence in death gives her book life and produces for Dame Hélienne (and Crenne) the agency and authority the character lacked. The circumstances of Hélienne’s death in the *Angoysses* is certainly indicative of this divergence: far less violent than any of the deaths of garrulous heroines such as Meridienne, Hélienne merely fades out of the physical world in which she suffered so she can join the divine afterlife in spirit and the textual world through her book. Her triumph signals on the whole a different representation of female loquacity, as it is welcomed into the world of intellectual pursuit and print. As a result of her literary output, Hélienne de Crenne makes many early modern lists celebrating the triumphs of the day by inventorying female writers. François de Billon, in his 1555 *Le Fort inexpugnable de l’honneur du Sexe Feminin*, offers her works to all “les Francois se delectans de Prose.”¹⁴⁴

III. Theft and Correction: Crenne’s Dialogic Eloquence

Regrettably, Crenne’s attention to her style turns into her worst nightmare: for some of her contemporaries and for some modern scholars, her suitable style comes across as bad rhetoric and bad French. Crenne makes excuses for her artlessness, but she was in fact criticized for her erudite, Latinate, often overwrought language that, admittedly, does not make for easy reading. In this section, I will discuss the reception of Crenne’s writing in terms of her linguistic and

¹⁴⁴ *Fort inexpugnable* 36. Mathieu-Castellani discusses these proto-feminist lists throughout *La Quenouille ou la lyre*; I call attention particularly to the section entitled “L’argumentation et ses modalités: une poétique de la liste” (30-37).

imitative practices. ‘Style,’ as discussed above, refers to Crenne’s manner of presenting her subject, “sans riens reserver,” and her conception of how such a style will be perceived. Within her writing, this conception takes the form of a defensive articulation of her style as it suits the expression of desire. Now I turn to ‘style’ as the distinctive appearance of Crenne’s language, which I will call her (erudite, Latinate, Middle French) ‘idiom.’

In his 1549 *Défense et illustration de la langue française*, Joachim Du Bellay exhorts poets to digest Latin properly and fully according to the ‘nature’ of the French language. *Prosateurs*, likewise, seek an equally strong “prose inspirée” (Lecointe 14). However, there is a fine line between “enrichir la langue française” with foreign words and “eschorcher” the language by stuffing it with too much foreignness. The French humanist, lawyer, and historian Étienne Pasquier rather infamously branded Crenne an “escorcheur du latin” in a letter published in a collection from 1586. Pasquier, a devotee of Du Bellay’s linguistic project, expressed frustration about the state of the French language: “molle,” “corrompue,” and based on a “Grammaire toute effeminée,” the “vray françois” was nowhere to be found and, instead, everyone “ineptly Italianizes” (*Choix de lettres* 88-89). He also, erroneously, claims that Crenne (who published her first book in 1538) was the inspiration for Rabelais’s “écolier limousin” of *Pantagruel* (published in 1532). This Limousin pretentiously Latinizes his French. Pasquier says:

Le semblable [adapting foreign words properly to French] devons nous faire chacun de nous en nostre endroit pour l’ornement de nostre langue, & nous ayder mesmes du Grec & du Latin, non pour les escorcher ineptement, comme fit sur nostre jeune aage Helisaine, dont nostre gentil Rabelais s’est mocqué fort à propos en la personne de l’escolier Limosin, qu’il introduit parlant à Pantagruel en un langage escorche-latin. (91)

Thus Crenne is accused of overplaying her erudition through a performance of difficult language. Pasquier was not the only one to point out Crenne’s idiom. Later editions of Crenne’s complete works remove some of the overt signs of linguistic erudition from the text. These ‘corrections’ are framed as a question of understanding, but within the context of defining the national language by common usage. For the 1550 edition, the editor Claude Colet felt obligated to correct Crenne’s idiom (her “motz obscurs, & trop aprochans du Latin”) to “rend[re] en motz plus familiers (et maintenant usitez entre les François) grande partie des termes trop scabreux & obscurs” (*Angoysses* 664). He describes this process in a letter to some women readers who, at a dinner party, had read to him from Crenne’s works to show their utility (“bien belle et d’edification a toutes gens qui ayment la Vertu”). They had complained about how difficult these texts were to read. Colet believes that this obscurity was perhaps intentional, that Crenne “... peult estre, avoit usé d’un tel stille, pour ne vouloir estre entendue, fors des personnes plus doctes (en frustrant par ce moyen celles de mediocre sçavoir)...” (664). Colet claims to have translated Crenne’s writing into a “français usité” while still maintaining “... beaucoup de motz et propos deduitz selon le stille poétique,” that is, making the idiom more accessible without losing its pleasing ‘poetic’ quality. He does, however, admit that some of these “propos” are untranslatable into “mots familiers” (665). Colet implies in his letter that Crenne suffers no “mescontentement” from this translation (664).

Scholars of our time, too, have dismissed Crenne in part because of her idiom. Jean Plattard, notably, says “D’un bout à l’autre du volume, la banalité des pensées et la médiocrité de l’invention cherchent à se parer de ce style prétentieux” (57). It is as though we are supposed to

understand from such criticism that Crenne believed her choice of idiom to be vital cosmetics in a scheme to obscure and smarten a mundane subject matter, the inner workings of the female desiring mind; Colet, too, suspected this. Crenne's highly rhetorical idiom would also be seen, in the Renaissance imagination, as a consequence of her gender and as a map of her morals. After all, Quintilian labels "effeminate" and "extravagant" any expressions that are cosmetically unnecessary to the speech or text (2.5.10-12). It could be concluded then that Crenne, rather than finding a style appropriate both to her and to her subject, naively coats her writing with discourse she does not understand but blindly reproduces in an effort to lend her text more art.

Despite these harsh criticisms, Crenne's works enjoyed considerable success and were published in multiple editions up to 1560. Their success may be precisely because they were associated thematically and linguistically with other popular works of the time (Conley 323). For I must confess now, "sans riens reserver," that Crenne's discursive practices – ones that produce her own authority – are in fact plagiarized from the texts of male writers, to the extent that her authorial self may be construed as solely built upon cobbled-together fragments of other, better textual precedents: today, we would find such a practice distasteful. Entire passages of the *Angoysses* can be found in Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Les Illustrations de Gaule et singularitez de Troie* (1510-1513), Jacopo Caviceo's *Il Peregrino* (1508; translated into French in 1527), and Giovanni Boccaccio's *L'Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (ca. 1343; translated into French in 1532). These are all texts that are, like the *Angoysses*, invested in the place of female eloquence within the vogue for the "écriture amoureuse" of Italian and Spanish sentimental novels. I will not dwell at length on the specifics of Crenne's borrowings. Paule Demats's critical edition of part one of the *Angoysses* highlights (typographically, in italics and footnotes) the sentences and fragments Crenne plagiarizes from the *Illustrations*, *Peregrino*, and *Fiammetta*. They do not overwhelm Crenne's own words by any means. Yet consulting an edition that visually indicates slippages between Crenne's pen and the words of others serves as a patent reminder that Crenne's work, style, and idiom are dialogic in nature and must be understood in the broader field of early modern writing practices, particularly the Renaissance theory of imitation. To appreciate this dialogic quality of her work, I will now contextualize Crenne's troubled system of communication in "écriture amoureuse" and her idiom: in other words, what her thefts contribute to her subject (what she writes and how she writes about it) and to her corrected idiom.

Crenne appropriates several structural devices and plot points from *Peregrino* and *Fiammetta*, most importantly the confession and the limitations of language's usefulness in the context of love. The tension between exalting love and vilifying it is central to the *Angoysses*, *Fiammetta*, and *Peregrino*, though the latter two applaud the intensity and constancy of their lovers more than Crenne's text does. *Fiammetta* unfolds much like the *Angoysses* and it heavily influences part one: an older Fiammetta gives an account of a love affair she had when young and how her passion was a kind of madness that immunized her to reason. Both texts open with summoning readers to therapeutic talk: "Les anxietez et tristesse des miserables (comme je peulx penser et conjecturer) se diminuent, quand on les peult declarer à quelque sien amy fidele" (*Angoysses* 96) is an elaboration on *Fiammetta*'s opening "Flamette aux dames: Les douleurs des miserables croissent habondamment, quand ilz congoissent ou sentent que aucune a compassion" (fo. ii). The monk's advice to Hélienne that she share her pain so that it will not "croist et multiplie par la taire et cacher" is, likewise, quoted from *Fiammetta* (Demats 45). The Italian *amoureuse* is usually seen surrounded by lady friends, being diverted by their songs and their love stories. This is an important divergence between *Fiammetta* and the *Angoysses*: the only women Hélienne encounters, excepting her female servants, are "mesdisantes" and she

turns to her female readership to compensate for her solitude. The *Peregrino* is less tonally significant to the *Angoysses*, as it recounts the adventures of Peregrino as he tries to woo Genevera; this text's influence is more salient in parts two and three of the *Angoysses*, as they are in the chivalric mode and written from the perspective of the male protagonist. Though it is less confessional, *Peregrino* stages the deaths of its two lovers, who die under similar circumstances as Hélisenne and Guenelic, that is, regretting what love has done to their lives. Thus these three texts are thematically bound together.

Both Boccaccio and Caviceo filter women's experience of desire through their own voices. Boccaccio takes on Fiammetta's narrative first-person to communicate the female experience of desire; unlike his *Decameron*, there is no objective narrator to mediate between this feminine voice and the reader, which gives the illusion of autobiography. It is notable that the 1532 translation, *Flammette*, does not name an author, so Crenne may have understood the text as a project similar to her own in more ways than plot if she was unaware of its provenance. The conceit of *Peregrino* is that the ghost of Peregrino appears to Caviceo and begs him to write his story for him and share it with the world (3-4). Thus Genevera emerges out of a mediation between a real man and his apparition-like creation: Genevera is the product of two men's imaginations. This triangulation is striking: Crenne transposes it into the *Angoysses* and makes it exclusively female.

Both of these Italian texts also demonstrate a keen interest in the rhetoric of women; they seem to have given shape to Crenne's own conception of female speech more than Lemaire's outright antagonism, as discussed in my chapter on Jean Lemaire de Belges.¹⁴⁵ Genevera is perfect in every way: a good woman who speaks well. Genevera is a master rhetorician, often astonishing her interlocutor with lively, articulate, intelligent responses in an expanded world beyond that limited to two lovers who, like Hélisenne and Guenelic, exchange praises for each other's speech without ever being persuaded by it. For example, when Genevera decides to join a convent to escape the amorous pursuits of Peregrino, she convinces her mother of this plan with a "prompta e composita risposta cum tanto acume de intellecto, ornate de parole e gravità de sententia... Pur cum parole modeste e dolce la persuadeva" (187). Genevera extols the virtues of speaking frankly and not feigning or dissimulating; her acts of persuasion are often successful (20).

Fiammetta, by contrast, is a liar. The lying lover is a topos inherited from the likes of Ovid, whose *Ars amatoria* instructs the lover on how to feign and lie to win the beloved, and to speak in secret codes with her.¹⁴⁶ Fiammetta learns the coded language of lovers from Panfilo

¹⁴⁵ See Migiel's convincing study of women's rhetorical power in the *Decameron*.

¹⁴⁶ Here is a telling example of Ovid's prescriptive love language:

Disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuventus,
 Non tantum trepidos ut tucare reos;
 Quam populous iudexque gravis lectusque senatus,
 Tam dabit eloquio victa puella manus.
 Sed lateant vires, nec sis in fronte disertus;
 Effugiant voces verba molesta tuae.
 Quis, nisi mentis inops, tenerae declamat amicae?
 Saepe valens odii littera causa fuit.
 Sit tibi credibilis sermo consuetaque verba,
 Blanda tamen, praesens ut videare loqui. (1.459-470)

(Young men of Rome, I advise you to learn the arts of the pleader, not so much for the sake of some poor wretch at the bar, but because women are moved, as much as the people or senate, possibly more than a judge, conquered by eloquent words, but dissemble your powers, and don't attempt to look learned, let your periods shun rancorous terms

such that “... in brieve spazio... io con una finta novella non dessi risposta dicevole” (34). This is a deliberate instruction in fiction-making, where a specific rhetorical skill set is transferred from one person to another. In the *Angoysses*, there are no lessons in lying. Love’s effects on Hélienne and her language use are more immediate and framed as far less playful than in *Fiammetta*. The virtuous, chaste Hélienne, who “... jusques à ce temps avoi[t] usé de regards simple et honnestes [towards men],” upon seeing Guenelic for the first time, instantly falls for him (106). After one restless night following her exposure to love, when her husband notices a change in her “contenance,” Hélienne resorts to a quick lie about the legal matter that had brought her and her husband to that town: “en grand promptitude trouvoy une artificiele mensonge.” Unlike Fiammetta, Hélienne learns this skill of fictionalizing from no one: it just comes to her as a response to male questioning. Hélienne will always, to varying degrees of success, try to fabricate lies to disguise what her body, face, and gaze threaten to expose: her physicality provides the “indices evidens, gestes exterieures, et mouvemens inconstans” that give the truth away. Hélienne has become a liar, though not a very capable one, as her husband rarely believes her. Indeed, I would suggest from this congruence between Fiammetta/*Fiammetta* and Hélienne/*Angoysses* that it is likely a prerequisite of the confessional mode of writing that the character-narrator begin as a dissimulator: that she must be a sinner of some stripe before she can take up a practice of truth-telling, that she must first become familiar with rhetorical masking before she can endeavor to write. The idealized Genevera may be frank precisely because she is not a writer nor does she become one.

Crenne’s idiom – its erudite, Latinate, ‘artful’ quality in Middle French – is actually quite common for the first half of the sixteenth century. The linguist Alexandre Lorian says that the tendencies to amplify and to complicate sentence structure are, in fact, two of the major hallmarks of sixteenth-century prose and Crenne is a representative of that accepted “style fleuri” (9). Eric MacPhail too sees Rabelais’s “écolier limousin” as a figure for the “European vogue of Latinate diction and obscure and archaic styles” that “belongs to a context of lexical experimentation and linguistic hybridism... in the debate over the meaning and authority of usage” (875). So it is somewhat perplexing that Crenne’s idiom receives such criticism when it is quite conventional artful writing that was, on occasion, ‘corrected’ via translation into a more legible idiom. The idiom of *Peregrino* is just as criticized as Crenne’s. Its obscure Latinate terminology was significantly corrected in Italian editions subsequent to its republication in 1513 and its French translation appears to have been edited as well.¹⁴⁷ Its idiom reflects, however, common practices in the literature of the time: a “lingua cortegiana” for a “letteratura cortegiana” (*Peregrino* vii). Correction is, then, a sign of linguistic shifts, reading practices, and a widening readership that wants to read in an idiom more like their own.

I propose that Pasquier’s objection to Crenne’s idiom was instigated more by a generational conflict than a linguistic one. In a sense, Pasquier is reacting to the pastness of Crenne’s idiom. His loyalties were to the Pléiade who, in many respects, sought to define themselves by rejecting the previous generation of poets, the Rhétoriqueurs. Crenne owes her style partly to Jean Lemaire de Belges, a late Rhétoriqueur who represents “un jalon important

of abuse. You would be out of your mind to declaim to your darling; even in letters beware using litigious terms. Let the style you employ be natural, easy, familiar, coaxing, also, of course, so that she thinks you are there (I cite Humphries’s translation 119).

¹⁴⁷ Griffin 143 n.1. *Il Peregrino*’s full French title is *Dialogue treslegant intitule le Peregrin, traictant de lhonneste et pudique amour concilie par pure et sincere vertu traduit de vulgaire Italien en langue Francoyse par maistre Francoyse Dassy*. Dassy was secretary to Henry, King of Navarre, husband of Marguerite (Griffin 134, 143 n. 5).

dans l'introduction en France d'un type de prose à caractère poétique" (Lecoite 43). Studies of Crenne's translation of the *Aeneid* expose her great debt to Lemaire's poetic prose. Crenne's translation of an epic turns out to be an elaborate paraphrase of a paraphrase. Christine M. Scollen-Jimack concludes that Crenne's "latinizing style, her extraordinarily obsequious dedication to François I, her reliance on medieval commentators, and on the version of the events of the Trojan war by Dares and Dictys, her glosses" are writing practices of the Rhétoriciens (210). Crenne's *Aeneid* is the *Angoysses* in another form, using Virgil and Lemaire as a foundation for showcasing her own rhetorical prowess (202). Scollen-Jimack also believes that Crenne's Latin was probably not strong, and that she frequently consulted the Rhétoricien Octavien de Saint-Gelais's verse translation of the *Aeneid* (209).

Crenne's theft and idiom inspire a number of questions relevant to my discussion. What does it mean for Crenne's eloquence if it is borrowed? Does knowledge of her plagiarism alter how we are to read her construction of authority? Why is she maligned for writing the same way as these earlier authors? Why are they not labeled "eschorcheurs" as well? It is, however, easy to justify setting these questions aside. The principle of Renaissance practices of imitation often means that "toute écriture est d'abord réécriture" (Rigolot, "Écrire au féminin" 6). This is a period in which attitudes toward literary tradition and imitation allow the construction of authority through, for instance, gathering from other sources and organizing fragments into a commonplace book as a means to "authoritative self-fashioning" through consultation, as Mary Crane has demonstrated (3). David Quint has shown how 'origin' (the allegorical source of a text) is more crucial to authority than originality in this time (x). Terence Cave's seminal work on Renaissance writing practices, *The Cornucopian Text*, singles out one of the topoi of imitation and translation (both acts of transfer) as the "desire to appropriate or naturalize an alien discourse."¹⁴⁸ Crenne thus participates in the writing practices common to the period. Her sources therefore lend her literary authority by their words and association.

In their work on Crenne, scholars have found her borrowings to be productive sites for investigating literary and generic developments and women's writing more generally. I have already mentioned Lisa Neal's argument that Crenne's writing is a product of her past reading rather than her past experience.¹⁴⁹ Jean-Phillipe Beaulieu, an astute Crenne scholar, argues that intertextuality, as well as being a common practice of the time, becomes a "... justified product of a *démarche scriptuaire féminine*, the first step of which would be imitation of male texts" ("Erudition and Aphasia" 37). Robert D. Cottrell has an alternative explanation. Rather than assume that female erotic desire has no creative language of its own and that therefore it must mimic or steal from male discourse, Cottrell posits that Crenne deploys a "male pathology" to depict a woman and her idiom exactly as men imagine them to be in order to prove her mastery over male discourse ("Female Subjectivity and Libidinal Infractions" 14).

I have been arguing that each choice Crenne makes participates in her project of persuasion against love. These choices establish her as the dominant voice in and of her text by staging agonistic encounters on the narrative, generic, and thematic levels. Essentially, my argument is that Crenne culls from literary and rhetorical tradition to create a persona who rules

¹⁴⁸ *The Cornucopian Text* 35. Cave's remarks in pages 35-77 elaborate on an early modern theory of imitation, in which "The reader must devour his models, destroying their alien substance so that they may be regenerated in his living utterance as a product of his own essential nature" (45-46).

¹⁴⁹ *The Torments of Love* xxv. Along similar lines, Tom Conley suggestively proposes that Crenne's borrowings are signs of her "urgency of writing" (327). Her reading existence disguises her writing existence: Hélienne scrapes out a "vicarious existence... via writing itself" as she lifts passages from male writers. In this scenario, she hides her words in between theirs such that her husband cannot differentiate them (330).

her textual universe by diverse procedures of methodical argumentation: in other words, as a rhetorician partially camouflaged by the confessional mode of writing that she develops between truth and fiction. Diegetic persuasion and eloquence are staged but ineffective, leaving Dame Hélienne (and thus Crenne) to be the true persuasive voice of not only the text's primary assertion, but also of her own undoubted authority. I hesitate to go as far as Cottrell, because an adoption of "male pathology" could be construed as parodic, which I do not see in Crenne's writing. Crenne certainly reacts to male authority and discourse by absorbing it. Her broken quill and her borrowed eloquence – emblems of the fictionality of her texts, her claims to gentler forms of persuasion through the confessional mode, her plot thefts and idiom emulation – are the conditions for creating female agency (as a writer) that emerge out of Crenne's dialogic and agonistic notion of literary production.

IV. "La chose contentieuse": The *Translatio* of Heroes and Books

In this concluding section, I want to address Crenne's use of geography and chivalric romance in her production of fiction and authority in parts two and three of the *Angoysses*. This discussion will present the *Angoysses* as a case study of early modern "textual promiscuity," or generic hybridity (*Pré-histoires* 12). The narrative and generic complexity of the *Angoysses*, and the specific plot developments of the text's conclusion, expose fissures in traditional concepts of the source and nature of authority. So from correction and imitation as forms of idiomatic translation and textual transfer, I turn now to translation as displacement in space.

Early criticism of Hélienne de Crenne doubted the value of parts two and three of the *Angoysses*. I must reiterate again that the privileging of part one has been mainly due to its perceived 'modernity' and its place in the history of the novel; the turn to chivalric romance comes across as a regrettable generic regression in that history. More recent criticism, by Jean-Philippe Beaulieu notably, shows keen interest in the implications of the mixture of sentimental and chivalric prerogatives, when descriptions of adventure (masculine activities of combat, tournaments, navigations) bristle against expressions of intense feeling.¹⁵⁰ The *Angoysses* purports to have a didactic project of persuasion in mind – to teach ladies to avoid love – but it often does so erratically and without much conviction. If the avoidance of love is the text's intended message, then parts two and three are indeed superfluous and even detrimental to that message. What better way to teach the dangers of extramarital love than by ending the book with the bleak image of the lady locked in a tower, her "scelere et mauvais" lover nowhere to be found (188)? However, I see parts two and three as necessary continuations to complete Crenne's mission of textual authority. The chivalric belongs to the agonistic quality of the text's very fabric. In these sections of the text, Crenne advances her feminist ideology by mapping both the tradition of *translatio imperii et studii* and the debate of arms versus letters along a gender and generic divide that privileges the literary output of the female writer over the triumphs of male heroism.

¹⁵⁰ Beaulieu, "Données chevaleresques" 74. For how the chivalric nature of parts two and three gives a new shape to the pact between Crenne and her readers, see Beaulieu, "Les données chevaleresques du contrat de lecture dans les *Angoysses*." For how these sections of the *Angoysses* do not conform to the conventions of the chivalric novel, see Beaulieu, "Où est le héros? La vacuité de la quête chevaleresque dans les *Angoysses*;" and Baker, "France's First Sentimental Novel and Novels of Chivalry." Baker provides examples of Arthurian romances and chivalric novels that Crenne may have known (36). For errancy as the primary marker of romance, see Parker, *Inescapable Romance*, chapter 1.

I will now trace the itineraries of Hélisenne, Guenelic and Quezinstra, and the text that becomes the *Angoysses*. It will become clear that the path of *translatio* is laden with its own authority that Crenne exploits for her own purposes. The commonplace of *translatio imperii et studii* holds that there is a seamlessness to the continuity of empires (the political power and legitimacy of *imperium*) and their arts and learning (knowledge and authority represented by *studium*). Greece paves the way for Rome, and Rome leads to the great (northern) nations of early modern Europe. This sense of *translatio* as transfer is a narrative of displacement and progress, providing a natural order and ordering of the (European) world.¹⁵¹ In the Book of Daniel, Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four giants as the sign of the succession and destruction of four empires, after which the kingdom of God will reign on earth forever (2.31-2.45). Chrétien de Troyes's *Cligès* (ca. 1170) recounts how *translatio imperii et studii* made its way to France, where "science" finds its ultimate, perfect resting place.¹⁵² To compensate for Hélisenne's own spatial limitations, Crenne sends her hero out to reenact the path of *translatio*, bringing that authority back home to France with him. Guenelic's travels take him east, west, and then north, an itinerary intended to redeem him of his discourteous behavior from part one. But as Crenne sends him on this route, she questions its very value and ends up supplanting it with other itineraries, that of death and her book. This process, then, involves not only the horizontal axis of the hero's travels on earth, but also a vertical axis between the underworld, earth, and divine paradise.

Hélisenne does not circulate in a significant way, at least not in the terms of the greater European geographic space that we associate with *translatio*. Her movements are limited to a small area of France and, at the end of part one, she is taken out of circulation when her husband locks her in a tower. Her movements show, by their very limitation, how Hélisenne is forced to retreat into her mind and her fantasy, and eventually writing, in order to find a place for self-expression. The world is not open to her as it will be opened up for Guenelic. The spaces in part one – the lodgings, the temple, and the law court – are deliberately left vague and are described minimally. Just as her husband has no name, Dame Hélisenne leaves these spaces unspecific, using infinite articles and circumlocution to refer to them: "une ville," "un logis," "un temple," "le lieu ou on plaidoyt les causes." This is in stark contrast to the very literary route of famous places and names that Guenelic and Quezinstra will trace: an abundance of names replaces lack of specificity. Once Hélisenne's husband becomes aware of her extramarital desire, he tries to control that desire through restrictions in space: he forbids her from leaving their lodgings and even changes lodgings so Guenelic will not know where they are; when Hélisenne does circulate in public, she must be accompanied by her husband; when her eyes betray her desire, her

¹⁵¹ "Roman reverence for Greek culture was simply a corollary of the desire to displace that culture, and eliminate its hegemonic hold, through contestation and thus difference" (Copeland 30). See also Goez, chapters 1 and 2 for biblical and Classical sources for *translatio* in the Middle Ages.

¹⁵² Si que ja mais de France n'isse

L'ennors qui s'i est arrestee.

Dex l'avoit as altres prestee,

Que des Grezois ne des Romains

Ne dit en mais ne plus ne mains,

D'eus est la parole remise

Et esteinte la vive braise. (lines 37-44)

(et que jamais ne sorte de France / la gloire qui s'y est arrêtée. / Dieu l'avait prêtée aux autres, / car quant aux Grecs et aux Romains, / le chapitre est clos désormais. / On a cessé de parler d'eux, / elle est éteinte, leur vive braise).

husband beats her. Movement, both of her body and of her body in space, becomes a sign of her marital disobedience.

These limitations cause Hélienne to seek and retreat to “lieux secrets” where, most often, she unburdens her heart to herself and delights in fantasy: “je me retiray en lieu secret et taciturne, pour plus solitairement continuer mes fantasieuses pensées...” (187). These ‘secret places’ are often found adjacent to public space such as the temple and law court, where it is likely that her reveries can be interrupted by their very object, Guenelic himself. Her bedroom is also a refuge, but one that is often violently disturbed by her husband. Her bed is not a comfort to her because that is a space she must share and in which she is expected to share her body unless she can justify abstinence: her husband “s’approcha de moy, pour parvenir au plaisir de Venus, mais en grand promptitude me retiray loing de luy...” (119-120). The only space that is certain to provide comfort is her mind – her “fantasieuses pensées” – a space that is unregulated by her husband and that, as Dame Hélienne, she eagerly shares with her reading public. Restriction of movement, then, forces Hélienne to begin carving out a new kind of space for herself and her ‘fantasy,’ a space that eventually becomes *écriture*, where “fantasies,” “angoisses” and “écrits” become interchangeable.

Hélienne therefore has freedom of thought, but even that proves sometimes to be insufficient as a replacement for freedom of movement. Her turbulent mind is not a stable refuge, so she turns to the vertical axis for a different kind of displacement. She is constantly describing herself as in a perpetual state between life and death. In her suffering, Hélienne imagines the relief brought by death in terms of passive transport, a translation of sorts into the underworld. When her husband announces her impending imprisonment in a castle tower, she begs Charon to carry her over the River Styx and for Mercury to bring her to the Elysian Fields, using passive constructions.¹⁵³ Even movements towards death require male supernatural intervention. Her imprisonment in “la grosse tour” not only takes her out of circulation, but its ascension and height also mock her desire for vertical movement: transported, but not translated into a new state connoting some kind of progress beyond literary productivity (213). This relationship with death sums up Hélienne’s relationship to movement: obstructions, both physical and moral, prevent freedom of movement. It is in this state of relative immobility, emotional instability, and solitude that she begins to draft her *Angoisses* in the hopes that it will reach Guenelic: it is the only recourse to disobedience she has left.

While Hélienne is only able to occupy the spaces that are allotted to her by her husband, Guenelic has no such limitations on his movement. He and Quezistra participate in iconic moments in Renaissance culture that allow the two heroes to take on the roles of knights, protectors, diplomats, councilors, and law-makers. The path of *translatio* thus becomes the path of romance and humanism. There are three main stops on Guenelic’s road to redemption along the horizontal axis of east-west-north. First is the island of Cyprus, where Guenelic and Quezistra become knights in the service of a great Duke. Second, they fight in a Trojan War in miniature in the name of the lady of Eliveba,¹⁵⁴ of unknown location but somewhere between their tour of the Trojan coast and Rhodes. Third, in the west, they defend the monarchical state

¹⁵³ “O Alecto, Thesiphone et Megera filles d’Acheron l’horrible fleuve, à tous vos cheveux colubrins presentez vous à moy, apres que le vilain Charon m’aura passée outre le fleuve appelé Stix: et me transmiguez pour perpetuelle habitation en la profondeur des abismes appellées chaos, qui est l’eternelle confusion: car je me repute indigne à l’occasion de mes tant multiples faultes, et exorbitans pechez: que Mercure recepueur et conducteur des ames, messenger des dieux, me conduyse aux champs Helisiens, ou est le sejour des bienheureux...” (209, emphases mine).

¹⁵⁴ “Eliveba” is an anagram of Abbeville, the village in Picardy where Marguerite (de) Briet was born. In many respects, this lady is a double of Hélienne herself.

and the just prince's right to rule in Bouvaque, a made-up city in Italy. Their patrons – the Duke, the lady, and the just prince – each offer them a permanent place at their courts, an ending to their travels. This kind of social recognition would, in a different text perhaps, mark the end of the hero's journey and transformation, when the knight errant ceases to wander and finds a place after continuous displacement.¹⁵⁵ But love gets in the way and insists that they wander further.

Unlike other narratives that take advantage of the redemptive *tour du monde* trope, there is no logic to the movements of these two heroes apart from a casual touristic interest in taking in the sites seen by mythical heroes. Crenne frames part two of the *Angoysse*s as an effort to redeem Guenelic who opens the section with a lament: “Helas moy paovre miserable, qui trop tard congnoys mon imprudence et inconstance...” (232). The male-authored texts from which Crenne draws typically feature a male lead traveling great distances, pivoting around his immobile lady to whom he eventually returns. In two of Crenne's source texts for this part of the novel, *Jehan de Saintré* (1456) and *Il Peregrino* (1508), the lovers are sent out by their ladies for the specific purpose of self-improvement. *Angoysse*s part two begins as a promise of redemption in matters of love, but there is no sign that a transformation takes place. The event that should have been the *point culminant* of their transformations – their knighthood – takes place at their first stop, not their last (Beaulieu, “Données” 78-79). Guenelic says that his quest for Hélienne will outdo the voyages of those heroes: this translates, however, to an unfortunate thoroughness in the recreation of those travels, as if our hero suffers from being too well-read (246). They are not delayed in their quest by pirates, enslavement, or storms like Peregrino and other heroes of chivalric romance; their travels are marked by more agency, but no direction. There is still an aimlessness to their wanderings: Guenelic never even asks where Hélienne is. In fact, if their quest comes up in conversation, Guenelic is too ashamed to admit that love is the reason for their travels. He is chastised by the prince of Bouvaque for allowing love to conquer his reason (383-394). Such encounters reproduce the agonistic quality of part one, staging a debate between two people, and they maintain the *Angoysse*s's project of persuasion. The prince suggests that Guenelic's love is perverse, since it takes him away from success as a knight and a permanent place, dragging him away from masculine pursuits back into the world of the sentimental. Love should not take precedence over chivalric prowess. Guenelic's redemption pulls at the fabric of the text, revealing a certain incompatibility of the two genres that Crenne capitalizes on to secure her hero in a certain limbo of generic space.

The path of *translatio* therefore becomes an itinerary of stagnation, of tourism and reenactment for their own sakes. When the two heroes finally reach France in part three, *translatio* is not given any value. Visiting ancient places does not guarantee a triumph or recognition at home. In fact, Guenelic and Quezinstras are treated with derision and malice upon reentry, specifically because they have traveled far. Their welcome to the town near Hélienne's tower prison is telling. The townsfolk, “qui n'avoient charité ny amour,” delight in provoking people “à courroux” (420). They jeer at the heroes' (apparently visible) displacement in time and space: “messieurs s'il vous plaist, vous nous racompterez de voz nouvelles, venez vous de faire la guerre aux Macedoniaens? aux Arrabiens? ou à ceulx d'Athenes? ne vous soit ennuy, pour nous solacier de nous reciter de voz faicts d'armes” (420). The townsfolk also insinuate that the

¹⁵⁵ Antoine de la Sale's *Jehan de Saintré* influenced Crenne's writing and is indicative of this kind of conclusion to a chivalric romance: it is My Lady's financial generosity, not geographic displacement, that transforms Jehan, turning him into a proper lover and helping him advance socially. When he returns to find that My Lady has taken up with an Abbott, he tells the tale to the king and queen and his journey comes at an end: his story is coterminous with his love affair.

only type of “jouxte” these knights excel at is of the “nocturne” variety (421). At the very moment when the two heroes are about to find Hélienne, all that they did in part two is voided of meaning. Maybe the products of *translatio* are not as welcome in France as *Cligès* suggests.

Crenne thus indicates that this attempt to transform something symbolic (*translatio*) into something physical and real (a journey) does not carry the same cultural weight; she, too, may feel the rupture between Classical past and French present that other early modern writers experience acutely.¹⁵⁶ I propose a reading of this unsuccessful translation as a self-serving gesture on Crenne’s part. This is an interpretation that combines the rather dismissive idea that she continues the *Angoysses* just so that she can her hand at every genre with the primary antagonism that is dramatized in part two, figured dialogically by the agendas of Guenelic and Quezinstra. This is the debate between arms and letters, the question over what profession is proper for young noblemen to pursue. Since Hélienne is a woman, she cannot make this choice, but she can decide for her hero and, in so doing, Crenne create a symbolic professional space for her entire persona.

Dame Hélienne announces from the outset of part two that it concerns military pursuits. In the opening letter, alongside her defense of Guenelic, Dame Hélienne takes up her quill with “ma tremblante et debile main” to show men’s side of narrative (228). She claims that part of her project for this book is to inspire modern men to martial activity, just as Homer’s *Iliad* so moved Alexander the Great: “Et en raison de ce, j’ay indubitable foy que l’œuvre presente excitera, non seulement les gentilz hommes modernes, au marcial exercice” (229). This is a somewhat jarring shift in the book’s overall message from love to war, that a book about love can motivate a “posterité future d’estre vrayz imitateurs” of the art of war. Guenelic’s introduction to his side of the story includes his youthful vacillation between pursuing arms and pursuing letters, “l’art militaire” or “l’œuvre littéraire.”¹⁵⁷ Guenelic never becomes a man of letters. He is pushed into knighthood by circumstance and by Quezinstra, who argues, several times over, that the military art will give him courage, which is more pleasing to ladies than learning (295). Though the heroes are learned and can quote the proper sources in their interminable debates for and against love, the two heroes leave behind erudition as a valid life choice, exchanging letters for swords: “œuvres viriles et de louenges dignes” (238). In fact, the main antagonism between Guenelic and Quezinstra is displaced from arms versus letters to arms versus love because letters is not their prerogative; this reflects as well the confrontation between the *Angoysses*’ generic duality. Whereas arms and letters have a relationship of dependence (letters rely on the success of arms), love destabilizes what the profession of arms seeks to secure and place, as we see with Guenelic’s continual displacement for love’s sake. Essentially, then, Crenne sends her hero out on the path of *translatio* to take him out of letters and then empties *translatio* of its symbolic meaning when the two lovers meet again: his path of *translatio* is folded into her *Angoysses*. Crenne therefore uses genre to divide her prerogatives from Hélienne’s double and potential rival in narrative, Guenelic. In this manner, Dame Hélienne becomes the sole writer – a woman of letters – the only person with authority with claims to intellectual activity in the *Angoysses*.

Dame Hélienne’s reassertion over her text is manifest in the opening pages of part three and, significantly, with a return to confession. She amends her encouragement of the military art

¹⁵⁶ See Greene, *The Light in Troy*.

¹⁵⁷ “Moy estant en ma florissant jeunesse, aagé de vingt et deux ans, j’estoye en variété de pensée, en vacillant par plusieurs foyz pour ne scavoir bien discerner: lequel me seroit plus utile de m’occuper à l’art militaire, ou de continuer l’œuvre litteraire, à laquelle j’avoys donné commencement pour parvenir de m’exalter jusques au siege de Minerve” (233-234).

in part two to restate her claim about avoiding sensuality, which is what drives her “assiduité d’escrivre” (399). The chivalric romance has not overwhelmed the sentimental novel. What is more, to further the text’s adamancy about the avoidance of love, Hélienne completes her confession from part one by finally repenting. As she lays dying, she philosophizes about mortality to Guenelic and her imminent “transmigration;” even in her last moments, she attempts to persuade, but Guenelic will not follow her example (467). Then she turns away from him to address God directly and repent: “... j’espere tant en ta divine clemence et infinye bonté, que mon oraison ne sera enervée, mais te sera acceptable... voyant comme je manifeste mon grand peché, je accuse ma vituperation et turpitude, et deteste mes vices” (468-470). The confessional act begun in part one is finally complete. This is the logical conclusion to Hélienne’s as a negative exemplar in a text that constructs itself as agonistic: Hélienne, now both exalting and vilifying love, dies so that her book may continue to do the same. The confessional mode of writing without repentance engages the readers’ compassion and belief. What follows Hélienne’s repentance defies plausibility and can only be read a symbolic apotheosis through publication that circumvents finding an authority in a source along traditional lines.

I turn now to “la chose contentieuse,” the text-within-the-text that becomes the *Angoysse* (503). I described earlier Hélienne’s attempts to control the circulation of her “amours trop publiées et vulgarisées” (142). Composed in private and in secret, in oral and in written forms, it still makes its way into the world despite Hélienne, culminating in “l’œuvre presente” (233). In the final pages of the *Angoysse*, Hélienne dies mid-escape, a mere four miles away from her tower, and Guenelic follows her shortly after (460). Quezinstra is about to kill himself when Mercury arrives to take the souls of the two lovers to the Elysian Fields (487). After being excluded from the text as a mere figure for an impossible human eloquence, Mercury himself is finally summoned to Hélienne and to the *Angoysse*. The god spots the book, which had fallen from Hélienne’s pocket, and he takes it with him to the underworld where he deposits the souls before flying to Mount Olympus to present the book as a gift to Minerva. Venus declares that the book should be given to her because it is about love, “choses amoureuses et veneriennes;” Minerva maintains that it is about “choses belliqueuses,” her domain (501). Their debate reiterates the arms versus love problem of part two with even more attention to genre. Mercury leaves before Jupiter makes his judgment on the genre, so we never know if the arms versus love debate is ever resolved. This is how the novel ends: Mercury returns to earth to command Quezinstra to get the book published in Paris. Hélienne’s suffering body – her “angoysse” – is replaced by the *Angoysse douloureuse*.

Thanks to this supernatural intervention, the book is able to bypass the horizontal, earthly geographic displacement of Greece-Italy-France that is required of the book’s hero. Instead, it is made to circulate along a more successful vertical axis of the underworld, earth, and Mount Olympus. The book undergoes a symbolic death and rebirth, and its own merit and interest links Greece directly to France in a reverse route. At this point, the two lovers have managed to finally achieve a place in the vertical axis that they desired all along, death, the only way out of the irresolvable debate between reason and passion. Quezinstra also leaves circulation for good, becoming a hermit who tends to the lovers’ temple. Only the book remains in circulation.

As a conclusion, I would like to turn to the adjective “contentieuse,” for everything seems in the end to pivot more around the book than the immobile heroine. This adjective comes from the verb *contendre*, to dispute, to quarrel; it takes on a litigious connotation. This definition makes sense in the context of the many debates of this agonistic text: between Venus and Minerva, between love and arms, between sentimental and chivalric novel, between didacticism

(message of avoiding love) and failure of that didactic message (fame achieved via writing about love), how we read Hélienne and Dame Hélienne separately, the scenes of failed persuasion that lend construction to the book as a whole. As I have argued, Crenne does not intend to solve any of these, but rather continuously point towards herself as the mastermind behind keeping these debates on equal footing and thus emerging as the voice of authority over all.

The adjective “contentieuse” also brings to mind “content,” contentment, from *contenter*, something that is satisfied in itself without desiring something else. Hélienne was always seeking a private place to indulge in her “fantasieuses pensées,” thoughts which both are her “angoisses” and become the sentimental novel *Angoisses*. Crenne’s process of self-authorization is achieved almost through sleight of hand, through the elimination and displacement of the other contenders for both authority and authorship. Her fellow narrators follow a more traditional, but ultimately unnecessary, path. She removes her heroes from the site of writing – which she articulates as an inner, private, domestic, immobile space – and from the occupation of writing and letters to show that *translatio* does not have to be an integral part of the creation of fiction and authority. Then she removes her self as Hélienne. The three characters are taken out of circulation at the very moment when the book is multiplied and put into successful circulation: the book is the only thing left; its end marks the end of illicit desire that is never “content;” the desiring character cedes to the writer. The heroes and the didactic message were pretexts for writing: the project was always about a kind of self-authorization that is and should be slightly disobedient, “plus volontaire que sage” even (155).

Coda

“Est-ce pas ainsi que je parle par tout?”
Michel de Montaigne’s Praise of Jacques Amyot

This dissertation opened with the Judgment of Paris, where three different eloquent means of persuasion were in competition with each other. Minerva’s “eloquence non vaine,” even bound as it is to humanist ideology and objectives, nevertheless failed to persuade Paris to choose her as the most beautiful. The paradoxical vanity of Classical eloquence in Renaissance imaginative writing is that, although it is traditionally seen as an indomitable civilizing force and irresistible transformative power, it often does not work when it should, and sometimes it works when it should not. The writers of my corpus thematize eloquence and then explore the issues surrounding what it might mean to make eloquence French, fully utilizing the possibilities and hybridity of imaginative writing to do so. I have argued that a characteristic of the emerging discourse of imaginative writing is that it stages the failure of more aggressive forms of persuasion by both drawing from and drawing away from the discourse of rhetoric. Dramatizing the ‘problem’ of eloquence therefore makes room for the text’s own persuasive maneuvers, summoning mercurial readers, who are in the know, to participate in the game of meaning. The result is very self-aware texts, conscious of the role persuasion plays in their own construction. Since imaginative writing is meant to borrow from rhetoric, then the problem of eloquence means literature itself is at stake: literature can be rhetorical, but it refuses to be eloquent. Eloquence is, then, a productive point of negotiation between the demands of Classical and humanist conceptions of language and literature and the resulting paradigm shifts as those conceptions are confronted by new ideas about writing, rhetoric, and the vernacular. Agonistic language and problems of persuasion emerge as conditions for a new literary discourse from earlier rhetorical traditions.

Related to the project of making eloquence French is the rising question of how to make the French language eloquent. Jean Lemaire de Belges and Hélienne de Crenne share an ornate and Latinate French that is later criticized and rejected. François Rabelais, Mireille Huchon demonstrates, creates a language located in between their intense artificiality and the common usage of the decades after the period under study here (“La Prose d’art” 299-302). In the first half of the sixteenth century, the concern was to strengthen the French language by imitating Latin and Classical rhetoric in an effort to create a strong vernacular. Pierre Fabri tellingly says in his 1521 *Le Grand et vrai art de pleine rhétorique* that: “Aulcuns ignorans... se veuillent efforcer en leur ignorance de soustenir que il n’est point de rhétorique aultre que la naturelle acoustumance, et que l’en doit parler en françoys ainsi comme il vient a la bouche, sans y garder ordre” (8). French without the trappings of rhetoric was practically inconceivable.¹⁵⁸

I would like to end my study with a brief discussion of Michel de Montaigne who, in his project of writing the self, runs counter to Fabri’s prescriptions. He does not seek out a rhetorical style or Classical eloquence, but, instead, a French “comme il vient a la bouche.” In “Sur des vers de Virgile,” Montaigne admonishes himself for absorbing too much and too well the styles and ornaments of his reading that then influence his writing. He would rather use phrases “qui s’usent emmy les rues françoises; ceux qui veulent combattre l’usage par la grammaire se moquent” (853). He does not correct his idiosyncratic verbal habits if they are not eloquent: Montaigne does not seek eloquence, only to write the way he speaks (“Est-ce pas ainsi que je

¹⁵⁸ For more on the history of this paradigm shift, see Trudeau.

parle par tout?”). This anti-prescriptivist intention turns to usage as the location of language’s value. Usage, he maintains, is created by “beaux esprits” and innovation, rather than the processes of “estirant et ployant” that take language away from “la route commune” (851). He conceives of no other way to represent himself “au naturel” than his own “façon... mienne ordinaire” (“De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres,” 2: 37, 763).

Montaigne has many qualms about rhetoric, far too numerous and complex to enumerate here. Much of his attitude toward language can be summed up by this remark, from “De l’institution des enfans” (1: 26): “De vray, toute belle peinture s’efface aisément par le lustre d’une verité simple et naïfve” (169). Language is, often, an undesirable mask and obstacle. Montaigne’s admiration for Jacques Amyot shows us the kind of language he values in his reading as well as for his writing. He sees Amyot as a model for French prose, and attributes to him the beginnings of a new eloquence, based not on the previous generation’s concern for ornament and Latin emulation, but rather one that feels more natural and even conversational, because actual speech and dialogue give more life to language, as he says in “De l’art de conferer” (3: 8, 900). Montaigne would prefer an eloquence that is “nerveuse et solide,” which ravishes by its substance, to any other eloquence: in other words, he seeks to regain the orality of an eloquent performance by redefining it by the parameters of naturalness and conversation (3: 5, 850). Montaigne opens “A demain les affaires” (2: 4) with this assessment of Amyot’s translation of Plutarch: “Je donne avec raison, ce me semble, la palme à Jacques Amiot sur tous nos escrivains François, non seulement pour la naïfveté et pureté du langage, en quoy il surpasse tous autres...” (344). Amyot’s ‘modern’ French expression triumphs when, “toutefois son stile est plus chez soy, quand il n’est pas pressé et qu’il roule à son aise.” In other words, Amyot’s style is pleasing to Montaigne when it seems native to Amyot (“chez soy”) and not stilted by unyielding adherence to the eloquence of someone else. Montaigne contrasts his delight in reading Amyot with the ‘bloodlessness’ of other texts written in French (1: 26, 146) and the lackluster French poetry written in imitation of Ronsard and Du Bellay (1: 26, 171).

On his own merit as well as his ideas for a written French that has some life to it, Montaigne signals a paradigm shift through the invention of a new literary form and the creation of a baroque vernacular that suits his subject. No longer truly invested in “making eloquence French” or “making French eloquent,” he reveres a style that is personal, a bit unpolished, and constructed in part by the rejection of Classical eloquence that began earlier in the century on a thematic and ideological level.

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