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**Édition électronique**

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/116>

DOI : 10.4000/shakespeare.116

ISSN : 2271-6424

Éditeur

Société Française Shakespeare

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 1 novembre 2004

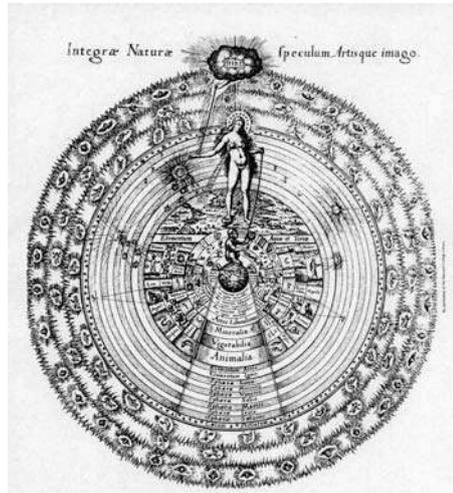
Pagination : 13-28

ISBN : 2-9521475-0-7

Référence électronique

Warren Boutcher, « Marginal Commentaries: The Cultural Transmission of Montaigne's *Essais* in Shakespeare's England », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* [En ligne], 21 | 2004, mis en ligne le 27 janvier 2007, consulté le 06 mai 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/116> ; DOI : 10.4000/shakespeare.116

Shakespeare et Montaigne vers un nouvel humanisme



actes du Congrès

organisé par la

SOCIÉTÉ FRANÇAISE SHAKESPEARE

en collaboration avec la

**SOCIÉTÉ INTERNATIONALE
DES AMIS DE MONTAIGNE**

les 13, 14 et 15 mars 2003

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Robert Fludd
Utriusque Cosmi Historia (1617-19)
planche 17

conception graphique et logo
Pierre Kapitaniak

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Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle
<http://univ-montp3.fr/SFS/>
5 rue de l'École de Médecine
75006 Paris

Diffusion :
AVL DIFFUSION
Parc Euromédecine
34198 MONTPELLIER CEDEX 5

ISBN 2-9521475-0-7

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MARGINAL COMMENTARIES: THE CULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAIS* IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Warren BOUTCHER

This paper will attempt some generalisations about the cultural transmission of Montaigne's *Essais* in England in the late Tudor and early Stuart period and will ask how they might change our perspective, in particular, on the figure of Gonzalo and Shakespeare's debt to Montaigne in *The Tempest*. Much of the evidence considered will relate to the cultural circumstances of the production and consumption of the published English translation (1603), and to the broader context of John Florio's and his helpers' careers. Florio's Montaigne originated in a translation of the essay on the institution of the nobility made for an English nobleman, Sir Edward Wotton, in the process of educating his heir. The point in analyzing the relations between *The Tempest* and humanism has traditionally been to recover a hidden intellectual relationship between the author Shakespeare and the source Virgil or the source Montaigne. The goal has been to reveal the bard's "reading" of these authors as an aspect of the humanistic development of his mind and of the literary genesis and meaning of a particular work. But this approach needs to be complicated by a sense of the play's staging of "learning" as the cultural aspect of aristocratic family strategy. Furthermore, the dramatic (not the authorial) context of mediation of the text from Florio's Montaigne relates closely to the aristocratic household process of "institution" of the nobility that mediated the reception of Montaigne's imported book in late Elizabethan English culture.

La dissémination culturelle des *Essais* de Montaigne dans l'Angleterre de Shakespeare *Ce travail propose quelques conclusions sur la transmission culturelle des Essais en Angleterre à l'époque des derniers Tudor et des premiers Stuart, en vue d'une révision de notre compréhension du personnage de Gonzalo en particulier, et plus généralement, de la dette shakespearienne à Montaigne dans La Tempête. La plupart des témoignages allégués ici tiennent aux circonstances culturelles de l'édition et de la dissémination de la traduction anglaise (1603), aussi bien qu'au contexte plus large de la carrière de John Florio et des ses assistants. L'œuvre de Florio procède d'une traduction de l'essai de l'institution de la noblesse entreprise pour Sir Edward Wotton aux fins de donner une éducation à son héritier. L'analyse des rapports entre La Tempête et l'humanisme vise d'ordinaire l'éclaircissement du lien entre Shakespeare l'auteur, et sa source chez Virgile ou chez Montaigne. Sous cet angle on cherche à éclaircir la « lecture » que fit le chancre d'Avon de ces auteurs dans la mesure où elle permet d'accéder à son éducation humaniste et à la genèse d'une œuvre spécifique. Cette approche se complique lorsque l'on prend en compte la mise en scène que propose La Tempête de la culture comme stratégie figurant dans une ascension familiale. Qui plus est, le contexte proprement dramaturgique (et non celui d'auteur) de la médiation culturelle du texte des Essais traduit par Florio correspond de près à la pratique dans les maisons aristocratiques de l'« institution » d'une noblesse qui a conditionné, dans la culture élisabéthaine tardive, la réception du livre importé de Montaigne.*

Opening his celebrated 1975 article on "Self-consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare" Prof. Robert Ellrodt described our subject as "the encounter of two master-minds".¹ How might we classify the traditional approaches to this encounter? Some scholars have asked comparative questions about Montaigne and Shakespeare, some literary-historical questions, and others a blend of

¹ Robert Ellrodt, "Self-Consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare", *Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975), 37-50 (37).

the two. But the line-up of topics in the present volume may suggest that the historical questions have largely dried up. It is not hard to see why this might be so. There are plenty of literary and philosophical topics that can bring our English and French master-minds together in excited conversation. There is no need to argue for a “real” encounter, for a historical scene in which Shakespeare sits down with Montaigne’s text, reads him through, and is changed as man, thinker or dramatist. The single piece of incontrovertible evidence that Shakespeare did encounter Montaigne, that, at any rate, he read and borrowed an extract from Florio’s English Montaigne, was discovered as early as 1780. Nothing as significant has emerged since. Some literary historians have taken the one substantial locus in *The Tempest* to be a historical fact of deepest consequence. They make it the tip of a hidden iceberg of supporting evidence. Others have taken it to be of little consequence. They find the supporting evidence to be “a hundred ciphers” that “still add up to zero” (Pierre Villey).²

One might distinguish between two broad phases in approaches to the historical question, approaches which this paper aims, if it can, to refresh. With one or two notable exceptions, such as Villey himself, most scholars have approached the topic from the perspective of problems and questions in Shakespeare studies. The context for the initial discovery was the loaded eighteenth century debate about how cultivated Shakespeare had been in Graeco-Latin and European learning. It was Richard Farmer in 1767 who first convinced influential editors of the late eighteenth century that as one of the “Natives of the banks of *Avon*” Shakespeare had been “scientifically choked with the culture of exoticks” by Alexander Pope and other critics anxious to make him a classical and learned poet. In a brilliant piece of scholarly polemic Farmer argued that aside from a familiar word or two of French or Italian Shakespeare’s “*Studies* were most demonstratively confined to *Nature* and *his own Language*”.³

The key to this demonstration was the clear evidence of Shakespeare’s use of contemporary translations such as Arthur Golding’s Ovid, and Thomas North’s Plutarch. The influential editor George Steevens was thoroughly persuaded and a list of “Ancient

² Ellrodt, 37 (citing Villey from *The Book of Homage* of 1916).

³ Richard Farmer, *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1767), 49.

Translations from the Classic Authors” was accordingly drawn up as part of the critical apparatus for his edition of Shakespeare.⁴ Meanwhile other critics began to hunt down Shakespeare’s seemingly classical learning in “natural”, vernacular sources. Edward Capell was the first to note that the source for Gonzalo’s Utopian speech in *The Tempest* was Montaigne’s *Essais*, later identified more precisely as the English *Essayes* translated by John Florio.⁵

By the mid- to late nineteenth century, the problems and questions in Shakespeare studies had changed. The influence of philosophical idealism diverted many scholars to the search for traces of Shakespeare’s *mind* and its development. The fact that the same diversion took place in Montaigne studies at around the same time explains the heyday of Montaigne and Shakespeare studies from 1880 to 1940. In the 1880s, the first editor of Florio’s Montaigne in two hundred and fifty years, Henry Morley, described his studies as a search in the work of all the great English writers of the past for what he called “the one Mind in them all”. Foreign literatures had to be invoked as the sources of literary-historical change and progress, but in a manner that did not threaten the homespun integrity of this “Mind”. The image of a great river naturally presented itself, a river into which foreign tributaries flowed and became lost in a single English current.⁶ Florio’s translation was needed by Morley as the channel through which the tributary genius of Montaigne swelled Shakespeare’s – the national poet’s – mind to mature, modern self-consciousness.

Over the long term of our second phase, between Philarète Chasles in 1851 and Prof. Ellrodt in 1975, the historical question was set up along the following lines. Were the apparent affinities between the text of Florio’s Montaigne and the “discursive, digressive portions” of speeches in post-1600 Shakespearean plays to be described as:

⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Plays and Poems*, ed. Edmund Malone, 10 vols, (London: H. Baldwin, 1790), vol. 1, 58, 65-81.

⁵ Edward Capell, *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare and The School of Shakespeare*, ed. John Collins, 3 vols (London, Printed for the author, 1779-80), vol. II, part iv, 63. Capell identifies a French source for *The Tempest* passage in the 1659 Brussels edition of the *Essais* but strangely says that “[t]he person who shall compare this passage with the translations of it that were extant in Shakespeare’s time, will see reason to think he read it in French.”

⁶ Henry Morley, *An attempt towards a History of English Literature*, 11 vols (London, 1887-95), vol. I, 4, 2; Montaigne, *The Essayes*, tr. John Florio, ed. Henry Morley (London, 1886 [1885]). Morley’s eleven-volume history ends with Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

(a) a coincidence explained by a shared stock of rhetorical commonplaces; (b) a matter of “phrasal” or rhetorical but not philosophical influence; (c) the effect of a cause – Shakespeare’s reading of Florio’s Montaigne around 1600-1603 – that explained the philosophical maturity into which Shakespeare enters with *Hamlet*?⁷ Prof. Ellrodt’s thesis is an authoritative and moderate qualification of the most influential study to take up the last of these three positions: the second, 1909 edition of J.M. Robertson’s *Montaigne and Shakespeare*. Robertson used late Victorian sociology and anthropology as the setting for his argument. His subject was what he called Shakespeare’s “culture-evolution”.⁸ He wanted to tackle “the deeper problem of the dramatist’s mental history” (120). He wanted to “track down the youth from Stratford” (142), to show how “the early man developed into the man of the great tragedies and comedies” (148). The mental history he recovered told how Shakespeare’s “unequalled receptive capacity” (156), acted upon first by North’s Plutarch, was extended by Montaigne to its full “philosophic reach” (162). The self-educated Shakespeare, the Shakespeare who read Montaigne so deeply, is thus a practical paradigm of late Victorian “culture-evolution” in a broader sense. The personal philosophical formation of a nation’s educated readers is the basis, in Robertson’s worldview, of its civilisation. One great writer’s literary encounter with another exemplifies the “contacts of cultures” that are “the very life of civilisation” (37).

There were many scholars, again, who took up the opposite position from Robertson, but my task now is not to rehearse their arguments. It is to suggest how we can renew the historical basis for a comparison between Montaigne and Shakespeare by taking a fresh look at the evidence of the cultural transmission of the *Essais* in Shakespeare’s England. Most of this evidence, relative to our question, will be circumstantial. The sketchy argument that follows will aim neither to prove nor to disprove the thesis that Shakespeare’s mind or language reacted in this or that way to Montaigne’s. But neither will it move straight over to the rich comparative questions that others pose

⁷ Philarète Chasles, *Études sur W. Shakespeare Marie Stuart et L’Arétin. Le drame, les mœurs et la religion au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Amyot, 1851), 176ff.; G. C. Taylor, *Shakespeare’s Debt to Montaigne* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), 32-3.

⁸ J. M. Robertson, *Montaigne and Shakespeare, and other essays on cognate questions* (London, Adam & Charles Black, 1909), ch. 6.

in this volume. It will try, instead, to keep the moribund historical question alive by using the resources of cultural history and the history of the book. I shall attempt to situate Shakespearean drama's use of Montaigne not in the dramatist's personal "culture-evolution" but in the broader social conditions of the *Essais*' reception in England.

These social conditions are conveniently summarised as the role of the private institution of humane learning in the social and dynastic reproduction of the *élite*. By the mid-sixteenth century, the *élite* young across Europe, even when they went away to school or university, were being educated as part of the gentle or aristocratic household, by "governors" or tutors who were allies and *famuli*, and who tailor-made the education on offer according to the needs and the imagined future of that household. This, of course, was even more literally true of gentlewomen and noblewomen, who were educated within – and as ornaments for – the *élite* household. For young *élite* men, the imagined future would include continued employment of scholars and readers. As they undertook travels accompanied by scholarly servants and noble friends, their early "institution" blended into a continued relationship to learning and the services and materials provided by advisers and counsellors in adulthood.⁹ At the top of this informal institutional hierarchy was the relationship between a King and his closest learned friend and noble adviser, between Alexander and Aristotle, between Alonso and Sir Prudence, Gonzalo. But the informally structured relationship to what we might just call "culture" could continue as a largely self-directed programme of study or collecting activity, especially in "retreat" later in life.

For many early modern readers, especially English readers, Montaigne's own continuing "institution" was the very cause and ground of his self-portrait. It is not too difficult to see the *Essais* from this point of view. The work is the effect of the author's retired study of humanity and of himself, as first described in the 1580 text of

⁹ See Warren Boutcher, "Pilgrimage to Parnassus: Local Intellectual Traditions, Humanist Education and the Cultural Geography of Sixteenth-Century England" in *Pedagogy and Power: Rhetorics of Ancient Learning*, eds. Niall Livingstone and Yun Lee Too, "Ideas in Context" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 110-47; "Rational Knowledge and Knowledge ... drenched in flesh and blood": Fulke Greville, Francis Bacon and Institutions of Humane Learning in Tudor and Stuart England", *Sidney Journal* 19 (2001), 11-40; "Humanism and Literature in Late Tudor England: Translation, the continental book and the case of Montaigne's *Essais*" in *Reassessing Tudor Humanism*, ed. Jonathan Woolfson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), 243-68.

“Des livres” (II, 10). Along with his literary friendship with a moral mentor, La Boétie, the account of his own household formation is at the heart of book I (I, 26), and is embedded in advice concerning the household education of another, higher-ranking young nobleman. Book II centres on his apology for a book that his father has directed him to translate at Montaigne, having received it himself from a scholar welcomed into the household. Another crucial essay is II, 8 “De l’affection des peres aux enfans” which deals simultaneously with family and with intellectual reproduction, and which begins with a letter to an aristocratic noblewoman about her son. Book III could be described as centring on Montaigne’s adult institution: his “grand tour” to Switzerland and Italy in the early 1580s (III, 9). The paradox about Montaigne of course, is that his noble “lesson” lay not in the conventional institutional rules of civility and ceremony but in nature and liberty.¹⁰

So it seems that we cannot get away from the idea of a “culture-evolution”. It is just that we have to understand this “evolution” in early modern family terms. We have to understand it as the familial process whereby a “naturel” reacts to various self-directed, tutor-directed, father-directed “institutions” in the context of a culture centred on the dynastic household. And in the case of Montaigne *and* Shakespeare, I shall argue, we have to consider it not as a development in the historical individual’s – Shakespeare’s – mind but in the dramatic personae and their relations. We need to focus on dramatic context, on a staged process that is simultaneously a matter of “learning” and of social and cultural reproduction.

This was of course a process around which there was much doubt and anxiety, doubt and anxiety Montaigne taps into very clearly in his essay “De l’institution des enfans”, where he shows his father worrying about how he will turn out and changing his mind about the best directions to buy for his education. In early modern culture, doubters of all hues wonder whether an informal household institution of the kind purchased by Pierre Eyquem will equip the male and female gentle élite for virtue and action, for chastity and obedience, or leave them inclined to idleness and dilatory discourse, to sexual license and willfulness. Both *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* stage problems and deviations in the reproductive institution of humane learning in

¹⁰ Montaigne, *Les Essais*, eds. Pierre Villey and V.-L. Saulnier (Paris: P.U.F., 1965), 887-8c.

noblemen and noblewomen. Hamlet is a young nobleman whose educated mind digresses essayistically from the task set him by his father. Gonzalo, "Sir Prudence", is trying to get a king depressed by the apparent death of his son and heir back on the right mental track. But he is ineffective, and his Montaignean digression about planting the isle almost sparks a regicide.

But first things first. What kind of evidence do we need to bring into the picture? There is the usual evidence of critical reaction in the philosophical literature, together with the array of hidden textual citations in the drama, as gathered by Pierre Villey and others.¹¹ In fact, the earliest known public citation of Montaigne in England, missed by Villey, occurs in Florio's assistant Matthew Gwinne's 1598-9 orations at Gresham College, printed in 1605. Gwinne refers to the *Essais* in Latin as *inventiones, interpretationes, inquisitiones*.¹² But we also need all the material evidence there is about the circulation of copies of the *Essais* and of the *Essais*' reputation in Shakespeare's England. The earliest dateable English reference of any kind to Montaigne – 1592 – actually occurs in marginal annotations in a copy not of the *Essais* but of another work in English about France.¹³ There are copies of the French *Essais* signed by English owners – Drummond of Hawthornden's copy of Lyons 1595 – though none with very significant annotations that I know of.¹⁴ There are, however, copies of Florio's English translation with significant annotations, one in the Folger in Washington, one in the British Library.¹⁵ And Florio's translation itself can be viewed not just as a "reading" of the French text but as an artefact that has a lot to tell us about the context of the early English circulation of the *Essais*.

To the translation we would add obvious imitations such as Sir William Cornwallis' *Essays* (1600), itself dedicated, like Florio's *Essays*, to a whole group of noble English ladies. There are treatises

¹¹ See "Appendice I" to the Villey-Saulnier edition.

¹² Matthew Gwinne, *Orationes duae Londini habitae in aedibus Greshamiis A.D. 1598. In laudem Dei, Civitatis, Fundatoris, Electorum* (London, 1605), sigs. C6v-C7r. The orations are dated to the Michaelmas term 1598 and Hilary term 1599 in John Ward, *The Lives of the Professors of Gresham College* (London, 1740), 261-2.

¹³ Caroline Brown Bourland, "Gabriel Harvey and the Modern Languages", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 4 (1940-41), 85-106 (96, 103-04).

¹⁴ Houghton Library, Harvard, pressmark TP 2750.5.30.

¹⁵ Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C., pressmark V.b.327; British Library, London, pressmark C.59.i.18.

that use Montaigne without acknowledgement, such as James Cleland's 1607 *Institution of a Young Nobleman*. There is a printed commentary on the *Essais* (*Essais et observations sur les Essais du Seigneur de Montaigne*) as taught by a Huguenot refugee in England to the English nobility – Jonathan de Saint Sernin (1626). Vernacular commentaries on other works draw on the *Essais*. There is Robert Tofte's 1615 translation (with commentary) from Benedetto Varchi (*The blazon of iealousie*), and George Sandys' printed commentary on his *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished* (1632). We should also attend to library inventories. The earliest reference of any kind to ownership of a specific French copy of the *Essais* in England is dateable to February 1596. It places the copy in one of the principal households in which Florio undertook his translation – the Harrington-Russell household.¹⁶ It is concrete evidence that the *Essais* were imported and translated in the 1590s as part of a noble household institution that retained the formally institutionalised “core” of humanist rhetorical and dialectical study but informally extended itself across an eclectic Latin-and-vernacular range of languages and studies. There is even, finally, a large painting, a triptych at Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal (United Kingdom), which depicts a copy of the English *Essayes* as part of the household institution of Lady Anne Clifford, a young noblewoman of the period.¹⁷

With the Kendal triptych in mind, let me put together a larger virtual picture of my thesis using a selection of this evidence. The picture I want you to imagine also has three panels, but each with two sides, one of which for convenience we might label “positive”, the other “negative”. In the central panel is Florio's 1603 *Essayes* as it originated in a commissioned translation of the chapter on the “institution” of the nobility. For there is indeed much textual and circumstantial evidence that this *was* the one chapter with which Florio started. It is, for example, the only chapter into which Florio inserts an extraneous passage from elsewhere – a passage glorifying the relationship between learning and the nobility.¹⁸ This is the “positive” side to our central

¹⁶ Warren Boutcher, “Michel de Montaigne et Anthony Bacon: la *familia* et la fonction des lettres”, *Montaigne Journal* 13 (2001), 241-76 (272).

¹⁷ Richard T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford: Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 181-99.

¹⁸ See Warren Boutcher, “Florio's Montaigne: Translation and Pragmatic Humanism in the Sixteenth Century”, unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Cambridge, 1991).

panel. The dedications to the 1603 edition leave no doubt that the context for the translation was Florio's and his higher-ranking assistants' activities as readers and tutors to young noblewomen and noblemen in various aristocratic households. Florio was stuck lower down the household hierarchy reading Italian and French books with young noblewomen. But his assistant Theodore Diodati – in fact his superior – was directly involved as a tutor in the education of the son and heir of the Harrington-Russell household, the young John Harrington. While his other assistant, Matthew Gwinne, described by Florio as his *La Boétie*, as an orator and a poet, a philosopher and a medic, was a senior scholarly adviser to the aristocracy.¹⁹

But this is a panel with two sides, remember. Both 1, 26 and the *Essays* as a whole could be seen to dramatize both confidence in and uncertainty about the contribution made by privatized humane learning to elite family strategies for dynastic and social reproduction. How strong an institutional foundation did the relationship between the lord of Montaigne and his heir appear to provide? On the one hand, one can read Montaigne in 1, 26 and in general as a very positive model of an autonomous and learned member of the noble elite of the kind the young John Harrington was meant to be. He traverses the routine pathways of humanist Latin pedagogy with informally added value and sophistication. He powerfully holds his moral and intellectual balance and retains an authoritative presence in the midst of shifting ideas and factions, whilst preserving the traditions of his father, the friendship of the members of his *familia*, and conformity to the religious and political establishment of France.

But, on the other hand, the essay on noble education records a failure on the part of the lord of Montaigne. Montaigne's father buys the best Italian advice, then changes his mind and sends him for formal training, then ends up disappointed in his son, who does not go on to have a brilliant and learned career in the national establishment. One can read into the chapter specific tensions surrounding the indeterminacy of the character (or "humour") and action (or other outcome) that might be produced by ever-shifting educational and political ideas, as well as the general social anxiety as to whether the fruits would correspond to the intentions of parents and to socially and politically acceptable norms (the drama, also, of Shakespeare's

¹⁹ Montaigne, *Essays*, tr. J. Florio, 3 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1965), vol. 1, 4-5.

Hamlet). My overall argument is that it makes more historical sense to associate the presence of copies and translations of the *Essais* in England from the 1590s to the 1620s with both the potential power and the potential uncertainty surrounding the role in elite social and cultural reproduction of the household institution of humane learning, than with a more abstractly conceived rise of scepticism, individualism or self-consciousness.

Let us move over now to the left panel: the education of the young noblewoman. Florio in his dedications repeatedly reveals how he has been reading the *Essayes* with his patronesses in private household tutorials. The second dedication – to which I will return in a moment – gives us an idea of the “lecture” he might have given on his text. It is similar to the kind of lecture offered by Saint-Sernin in *Essais et observations* – tolerant of Montaigne’s “license” but also directive where necessary. We have no independent evidence of the readings in Montaigne of Florio’s female patronesses but we do have evidence relating to one of their young female relatives, Lady Anne Clifford. Her diaries, which only survive for 1616, 1617, 1619, record that in November 1616 “I sat at my work & heard Rivers & Marsh read Montaignes Essays which book they have read almost this fortnight”. Rivers and Marsh were household servants. It is likely they were reading Florio’s English but we do not know if they took the liberty of adding comment. Two months later Rivers was again reading “to me in Montaigne Essays” while one Mary Neville – probably one of the daughters of the dedicatee of book 3 of the English *Essayes* – is reading to her in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*.²⁰ The role of the *Essays* in Anne’s institution is memorialised in the famous Kendal triptych, or Great Picture. The central panel shows her parents and her two brothers, who both died very young, leaving her – in her own view – as the heiress. The right panel shows her as a sober older woman surrounded by pious and devotional books including the English translation of Charron’s *De la sagesse*. The left panel shows her institution as a fifteen-year old gentlewoman. There are portraits of her tutor Samuel Daniel and her governess, as well as representations of particular books, including Florio’s Montaigne.²¹

²⁰ *The Diary of Lady Anne Clifford: A Critical Edition*, ed. Katherine O. Acheson, “The Renaissance Imagination” (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 59, 69, 137, 147.

²¹ Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford*, 181-99.

Florio, of course, was a tutor in Italian and French, and possibly even Spanish. It is crucial to understand that Montaigne is translated into English and read by tutors and servants to noblemen and noblewomen in a plurilingual pedagogical context probably dominated by Italian. So when Robert Tofte, another household tutor and learned companion of this type, translates the Italian Benedetto Varchi's lecture on the poetry of jealousy, he adds his own commentary and, as we shall see, draws heavily on Montaigne. This is where we start to move around the other side of our panel on the education of the young noblewomen. For Florio's second dedication does betray anxiety about aspects of Montaigne's text. He is there concerned to direct his female pupils – in this case the daughter and ex-lover of the deceased Phillip Sidney – against the grain of Montaigne's praise of noblewomen who have committed suicide after the deaths of their male relatives. This discussion leads him to grant that his author may sometimes seem "capriccious, opiniative, ... paradoxical", that he is "sometimes extravagant, often od-chocheted, and ever selfe-conceited to write of himselfe out of himselfe" (second dedication). He admits that Montaigne can seem "in his humour" rather than balanced and rational.²²

Indeed, it might be thought that Lady Anne Clifford and the Great Picture make the *Essays* look like a rather respectable book. Could male tutors and servants have read and recommended licentious essays like "Sur des vers de Virgile" to their lady patronesses? The answer is yes. The notes Tofte adds to Varchi's commentary are often addressed directly to "Ladies and Gentlewomen" and tackle their concerns. In one case Varchi takes a particularly ardent Petrarchan sonnet as a pretext to warn women about the differences in the temperaments of men. Some men, says Varchi, take any occasion to get angry, some are "iocond and blithsome, and not troubled at all". Tofte in turn takes this opportunity to refer his gentlewomen clients in a note to "Sur des vers de Virgile" (though he gets the reference wrong). "I see no reason", says Tofte, "why the better sort [of men] should take this false playing of their Wives [i.e. adultery] so much at the heart as they doe; especially when it is their Destinie, and not Desert, to be so vsed". Montaigne, "that brave French Barron", says Tofte, is of the same mind, for he gives examples of worthies such as Lucullus, Caesar,

²² Montaigne, *Essays*, tr. Florio, vol. II, 2-4.

Anthony and Cato, who were all cuckolds but “made no stirre about it”.²³

This takes us very naturally to a precisely parallel context in a Jacobean comedy of c.1605. Act 3, scene 1 of John Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan* is a private scene between the two gentle daughters of Sir Hubert Subboys and their nurse Putifer.²⁴ As the scene opens the nurse asks Beatrice to read her once more the sonnet that Beatrice’s suitor Master Freevill has sent her concerning the kiss she gave him. Later in the scene, the nurse says to the sisters “I now will read a lecture to you both, how you shall behave yourselves to your husbands the first month of your nuptial” (3.1.60-62). But in fact the scene is dominated by an entirely different “lecture”, given by the bold, free-thinking second sister, Crispinella. Crispinella speaks directly with the first-person voice of Florio’s Montaigne, III, 5: “Let’s ne’er be ashamed to speak what we be not asham’d to think ... We pronounce boldly robbery, murder, treason, which deeds must needs be far more loathsome than an act which is so natural, just, and necessary as that of procreation ... as in the fashion of time, those books that are call’d in are most in sale and request, so in nature, those actions that are most prohibited are most desired”.²⁵

Notice here how the scenes of reading or “lecture” line up. Montaigne’s essay centres on readings of two pieces of verse, one about married love, one about adulterous love. In Tofte’s text, Varchi, in Tofte’s translation, reads sonnets and other poems in relation to problems of love and jealousy. In directing his ladies and gentlewomen in how to approach Varchi, Tofte in turn brings new readings, including a reading from Montaigne III, 5 about ancient worthies who turned a blind eye to adultery. In *The Dutch Courtesan* as printed for reading by a public we are told that the argument of the fable is “the difference betwixt the love of a courtesan and a wife” (in the preliminary matter). Finally, in a scene of private “conference” within the play two gentlewomen sisters and their nurse – in an Italianate

²³ Robert Tofte, *The blazon of ieaalousie* (London: T.S. for John Busbie, 1615), sig. E3r; Montaigne, *Essays*, tr. Florio, vol. III, 89: “*Lucullus, Cæsar, Pompey, Anthony, Cato*, and divers other gallant men were Cuckolds, and knew it, though they made no stirre about it. There was in all that time but one gullish coxcombe *Lepidus*, that died with the anguish of it.”

²⁴ John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. M. L. Wine, Regents Renaissance drama series (London: Edward Arnold, 1965).

²⁵ Compare Montaigne, *Essays*, tr. Florio, vol. III, 67, 70.

setting – comment upon a love sonnet and digress onto the topic of the realpolitik and the language of love, using Montaigne III, 5. A number of readers and commentators bring various texts to bear on problems of love and jealousy.

Montaigne, I am suggesting, was associated with such scenes of private “institutional” reading and “conference” in Jacobean England. He was used by scholars and advisers to furnish the real aristocracy and by playwrights to furnish the staged aristocracy with matter for topical philosophical discussion – as Gonzalo does Alonso. One can look not only at the scene in *The Tempest* but at *Hamlet* and *King Lear* from this perspective. But my general point is not just that lords and ladies politic would-be (alluding to Jonson's *Volpone*) and their servants and friends naturally draw upon Montaigne's text in such contexts. Montaigne's text is a kind of master-reader; it *shows* how one can comment and digress upon themes and topics thrown up by other texts. It is itself a highly informal, indeed potentially licentious, institution in the process of private group reading, commentary and conference. This process was at the core of secular household education of the gentry and nobility at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Let us move, finally, over to the right-hand panel of our imagined triptych: the institution of a young nobleman. We have already heard that the main cultural event in the principal household setting for Florio's translation was the education of the male Harrington heir. Florio refers to Montaigne's “discourse in the eightth of his second, written to the Lady of *Estissac* (as if it were to you concerning your sweete heire, most motherly-affected Lady *Harrington*)”.²⁶ James Cleland dedicated the fourth book of *The institution of a young noble man* (Oxford, 1607) to the same John Harrington as “one of/ Your most faithfull and loving Tutors”. Cleland says that he “cheifly intended the whole worke” for Harrington's instruction (sig. Q2v). Though he nowhere mentions Montaigne by name, Cleland's chief source is Florio's translation of the *Essayes*, especially the “institutional” essays. He borrows freely from Florio's translations of Montaigne's three essays on education (I, 24/25, “Of

²⁶ Montaigne, *Essayes*, tr. Florio, vol. I, 2.

Pedantisme”;²⁷ “Of the institution and education of children” I, 25/26;²⁸ and II, 8, “Of the affection of fathers to their Children”). Approximately half of Cleland’s chapter ten of the first book (“Of the Fathers allowance for his Sonnes maintenance”) is taken verbatim or paraphrased from Florio’s “Of the affection of fathers to their Children”.²⁹ The borrowed matter deals with unruly fathers, with the problem of fathers who spend liberally on their son’s early education but then hoard up resources and power later in life and fail to follow testamentary customs. Villey thought Francis Bacon drew on this essay of Montaigne’s when he added “Of Parents and Children” to the 1612 edition of his own *Essays*.³⁰

Again, we have here clear evidence of a shared reading relationship to the *Essais* in the early 1600s. For tutors and counsellors, Montaigne furnishes the topical matter though not the framework for the private institution of the élite. In this particular example, the key essay is II, 8 and the topic is unruly fathers. And of course, at exactly this moment, in 1608, a play was published on the topic of unruly fathers (*King Lear*). As Leo Salingar has convincingly argued, Montaigne’s essay II, 8 furnished the playwright with much material for the first two acts, as the two fathers, Lear and Gloucester spin out of control in their relations with their principal heirs.³¹ The play even contains a letter-essay on tyrannical fathers as a crucial element in its plot. And Salingar goes on to show how Shakespeare uses Montaigne to supply the king, Lear, with themes, terms and telling illustrations throughout the rest of the play (163). It is ultimately the king, if you like, who is borrowing counsel, themes and language from Montaigne (164). As Salingar puts it, “Montaigne has furnished Lear with the ‘matter’ for his exposure of contradictions at the basis of social life” (166). However, Salingar interestingly goes on to argue that

²⁷ Compare signatures (Cleland/Florio 1603 edition): D1v, ll. 16-18/ F6v; H1r, ll. 7-16/ G3r-v; H3v, ll. 22-26/ G3v; M3v, l. 29 - M4r, l. 1/ G2r.

²⁸ Compare signatures (Cleland/Florio 1603 edition): H1r, l. 27 and H1v, ll. 4-8/ H1r-v; H2r, l. 14 - H2v, l. 14/ H1v - H2r; H4r, l. 8 - H4v, l. 5/ H4v - H5r; I3r, l. 31 - I4v, l. 4/ H4v; I4v, ll. 4-6/ H1v; K1r, ll. 4-10/ H4r; L2v, ll. 5-12/ H1v; Aa1r, ll. 25-29/ H6r.

²⁹ Compare signatures (Cleland/Florio, 1603 edition): F1r, ll. 4-13/ X1r; F1v, ll. 15-27/ V4v; F1v, l. 29 - F2r, l. 3/ V5r; F2v, ll. 2-17/ X2r; F3r, l. 11 - F3v, l. 6/ X1v; F3v, l. 8 - F4r, l. 10/ X1v - X2r (a borrowing of Montaigne’s from Plato’s *De legibus*).

³⁰ See Pierre Villey, *Montaigne et François Bacon* (Paris, 1913), 30-7.

³¹ Leo Salingar, “*King Lear*, Montaigne and Harsnett” in *Anglo-American Studies* (Salamanca), vol. III, no. 2, November 1983, 145-74.

“Montaigne had too much influence on *King Lear*” in this respect. The passages of Montaignean thought “are like Essays in miniature, speculative and sententious ... [but] they are felt as marginal commentaries rather than essential to the action” (168). Here we arrive on the “negative” side of our panel on the institution of young and old noblemen alike. Montaigne in England is associated with that form of “marginal” commentary which is actually *informal*, digressive, personal – even “humorous” in the early modern senses of disorderly, fanciful, capricious, whimsical, odd, fantastic. In *Hamlet*, in *King Lear*, in *The Tempest* 2.1. we see this form of marginal commentary dramatised. Hamlet’s spoken essays are as marginal to the action as Lear’s. And in the figure of Gonzalo we can picture Montaigne as a “lord of weak remembrance” who prates amply and unnecessarily, a lord who against his own intentions stimulates others to rebellious thoughts.

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