DE GRUYTER

Glyn P. Norton

MONTAIGNE AND THE INTROSPECTIVE MIND

STUDIES IN FRENCH LITERATURE

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XXII

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by

GLYN P. NORTON

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To Léon Wencelius, *Didaskalos*

PREFACE

Literary introspection demands, at best, the writer's constant attention to the task of relating the Self to the world of people. Rather than become immobilized in prolonged self-description and scrutiny, a mind like Montaigne's reaches out to encompass the complexity of life's experiences and thereby succeeds in describing itself and its own complexity. Style and tone are, therefore, never fixed, but share in the dynamic tableau of ideas that unfolds before the reader. Literary introspection becomes an extension of life rather than a diversionary substitute; it posits actions and weighs experience.

At worst, it is a hazardous path, marked with numerous pitfalls for the inattentive mind. Through excessive self-indulgence, it can cloud the writer's ability to see and comprehend the world of people that lies beyond the microcosm of the Self. As the mind, in turn, becomes its own object of prolonged scrutiny and attention, it falls progessively into a state of paralysis, unable to serve any creative literary function. The end result is that monotony of tone and style characterizing the introspective ramblings of such writers as Maine de Biran and Amiel. In its ultimate form of deterioration, such introspection seems to displace the ordered values of life, failing to reproduce and enlarge upon the writer's own experience.

Montaigne's introspection does, however, enhance reality. He cannot perceive himself without first perceiving the greater world of men and ideas encompassing the Self. What he refers to as the "profondeurs opaques" and the "replis internes" are part of another dimension of reality, beyond the reach of rational under-

standing, but nevertheless comprehended only through his attempt to comprehend the world. His introspection seeks, therefore, to embrace the consciousness of both mind and body, of the whole man, for whom existence must be probed and weighed in its myriad and changing impressions. The goal of self-knowledge is primarily a function of the individual's perception of himself as a reality within the greater world reality.

One of the few critics to suggest that such a process could even be termed "introspection" is Erich Auerbach in his perceptive essay on "L'Humaine condition" where he refers to Montaigne's "realistic introspection" based upon the unity of mind and body. It is, however, true that no systematic attempt has yet been made to come to grips with the nature and scope of the *Essais* as an act of concerted, world-embracing introspection.

To approach this work through the focus of an "idée fixe" is, of course, risky business. Indeed, the real test of the critic's mettle often comes in seeking to sift Montaigne's inconsistencies, both artless and self-conscious, from his underlying unity. For this reason, I have, in so far as possible, tried to abstract the notion of introspection from any specific clinical frame, except as precision and clarification occasionally require. Rather than yield to the temptations of a particular psychoanalytic bias, I have followed a more eclectic path, based especially on the insights of Albert Thibaudet, Henri Bergson, Jean Prévost, and Carl Jung. From Thibaudet's rich notes on the *Essais,* I have borrowed the idea of movement, not only as a philosophical construct, but as a deeply embedded quality of mind uniting the introspective writer with his aesthetic medium. In turn, Bergsonian thought seems to give coherence to the idea of introspection as an integral event in the writer's consciousness – an act of creative duration in which Man and Book share a common organic evolution. From the cogent essay on introspection by Prévost, I have taken the concept of corporal awareness and its ineluctable involvement with the artistic imagination. Finally, I have found in Jungian depth psychology perhaps the most persuasive development of Auerbach's view of introspective unity, of introspection (that is to say, individuation) as a centripetal act grounded in both ethi-

cal and aesthetic values.

Since completing this book, I have had the opportunity to read three recent critical studies, each bearing directly on my own approach. While it is gratifying to discover that my fundamental premises and conclusions remain substantially unshaken, I think it only fair to here acknowledge the perceptive, albeit limited, work of Frederick Rider, *The Dialectic of Selfhood in Montaigne* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1973). Through the focus of ego psychology and existential psychoanalysis, Rider selects six essays as significant stages in Montaigne's psychological development. By viewing these essays as the literary responses to certain biographical circumstances, he thus runs the risk of perhaps devaluing the aesthetic message behind the introspective project. As for the present work, criticism could be made conversely that I have neglected the biographic Montaigne in deference to the introspective figure. If, by "biographic", one means the extra-literary data of the writer's life, then such is no doubt the case. If, however, in a broader sense, biography may also describe the writer's genesis within his own literary creation, then Montaigne's introspection is, indeed, an indissoluble segment of his biographical continuum. For it has been my purpose to examine introspection not as the immobilizing act of a torpid, contemplative mind, but as a creative mechanism indispensable to Montaigne – *homo faber*. In short, it is deeply enmeshed in the structural, syntactical, and figurative patterns of his work.

In the second of the recent critical studies, R. A. Sayce (*The Essays of Montaigne: A Critical Exploration* [Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1972]) makes a convincing case for the preeminence of Montaigne's *inner* self-portraiture (see especially Chapter 4). Disclaiming the notion that the Essayist's self-revelations are simply sporadic intuitions, he sees the Self of the *Essais* as an integral factor inseparably bound to the network of thought and judgment. This inner portrait thus depicts a figure "subtly different from the Montaigne who can to some extent be reconstructed from external evidence" (p. 70). Sayce later goes on to express, in general terms, what might well serve as the guiding idea of the present study: "Form and content (the

self-revelation is practically indistinguishable from the style), introspection and general reflection go together" (p. 72). Introspection, then, is not necessarily the disintegrating, formless act so often associated with a flight from action and reality. It may, in more felicitous moments like those of the *Essais*, describe a state of extreme objectivity and lucidity, devoid of all listless indecision. This, in essence, is the message of the Socratic ideal and Delphic admonition inscribed in Montaigne's living, consubstantial register.

Montaigne's psychic objectivity is, I believe, the crucial trait of his introspection. In turn, he channels this objectivity through the form-giving medium of language, granting the metaphor a functional, creative role in his introspective project. *Individuation*, the transcendent process by which the individual achieves self-integration, involves, then, not only an unfolding knowledge of Self, but also a linguistic assemblage of figurative forms. Accordingly, metaphor and epistemology, as they describe Montaigne's autobiographical insights, are causally related. To Jungian scholars, these notions, developed at length in the third part of the present study, will of course bear a cachet of familiarity. And indeed, it would be difficult for me to hide the critical persuasion I brought to my initial reading of the *Essais* and have continued to find reaffirmed in several later readings. Significantly, however, this bond between Montaigne's metaphorical quest and Jungian theories of selfhood has been subsequently corroborated in James Olney's important study of autobiography: *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972).

It has been impossible to write a study on Montaigne's self-scrutiny without inevitably gaining an enhanced self-understanding, and for this intangible benefit, perhaps my most heartfelt thanks should go to the Man in the *Essais*. Nevertheless, this work would never have been possible were it not for more direct support, both material and spiritual, of others.

Portions of Chapters 7 and 8 have already appeared in print and for permission to incorporate them in the book I wish to thank the editors of *The French Review* and *Publications of the*

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PART ONE

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THE EMPIRICAL INTROSPECTIVE

The emergence of modern psychological man in the *Essais* and the introspective act of which the work is an expression, have been largely neglected in any but the most cursory, sometimes fortuitous, scholarly references. Through the pages of his book and through the multiform pathways to the man which these pages disclose, Montaigne has been examined, classified, and categorized according to what some consider his chronological mental evolution, others his "forme maîtresse". With Villey, the tripartite figure of Montaigne as Stoic, Pyrrhonist, and Epicurean sometimes negates the dynamic presence of the Essayist and the mobility of his thoughts. For others, he is the moralist, the pedagogue, the Humanist, the Catholic, the conservative, the phenomenalist, and finally, the introspective, each of these categories holding a valid claim upon a portion of the work. No single one of these, however, is sufficient to penetrate to the core of the man. They are simply fragments of a randomly formed portrait which defies being absorbed at a single glance or in a passing moment. Montaigne of the *Essais* is a cumulative figure whose totality can never quite be encompassed at any given point in time. His self-potraiture is rather like those drawings of Leonardo da Vinci in which the subject is portrayed from every angle in a group of successive sketches, thus approximating a simultaneous glance at its totality: "Je me presente debout et couché, le devant et le derriere, à droite et à gauche, et en tous mes naturels plis" (III, viii, 922).[1] To seek out Montaigne's total self-

[1] Montaigne, *Oeuvres complètes*, textes établis par Albert Thibaudet et Maurice Rat (Paris: Gallimard, 1962). All further citations, unless otherwise

portrait in a single essay is, therefore, to search for an elusive image: no sooner have we glimpsed a promising fragment of the man than it slips irretrievably from our grasp as we pass through the constantly changing landscape of the *Essais*. Any epithet or label which we may affix to Montaigne is, if not artificial, then a mere approximation of the man's totality, serving to crystallize our thoughts around a solid, seemingly immutable aspect of his image. What, then, is the fate of such qualifiers as "introspective" and "psychological" as applied specifically to the approach taken in this study?

Austin Warren, in his chapter on "Literature and Psychology" in *Theory of Literature,* observes that by "psychology of literature", we mean the study of the author as a psychological type, the analysis of the creative act, or the presence of certain psychological types within the work itself. This explanation is qualified, however, by the reminder that "in itself, psychology is only preparatory to the act of creation; and in the work itself, psychological truth is an artistic value only if it enhances coherence and complexity – if, in short, it is art".[2] In perhaps no more appropriate way is the unity of psychology and art demonstrated than in that irrevocable consubstantial bond linking Montaigne with his book: " . . . qui touche l'un, touche l'autre" (III, ii, 783). While Warren's threefold application of psychology to literature covers most literary forms, in the *Essais* the idea of consubstantiality precludes the use of any single one of these criteria. Indeed, Montaigne, as an introspective, realizes and affirms no identity independent from his own creative life. The universe he possesses through the written word exists both in himself and on the printed page: "Icy, nous allons conformément et tout d'un trein, mon livre et moy. Ailleurs, on peut recommander et accuser l'ouvrage à part de l'ouvrier . . ." (III, ii, 783).

indicated, will be from this edition.

[2] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature,* 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956), 81.

In its primary form, the psychology of the *Essais* is simply introspection – an introspection which transcends the bounds of Montaigne's personal life and draws upon philosophical traditions. Montaigne, in the *Essais,* is neither purely introspective nor purely philosophical; indeed, the realms of philosophy and introspection are complementary worlds. He, therefore, never strays far from the Socratic admonition to self-knowledge, always defending the role of classical sources while affirming the underlying originality of his project:

> car les plus fermes imaginations que j'aye, et generalles, sont celles qui, par maniere de dire, nasquirent avec moy. Elles sont naturelles et toutes miennes ... depuis je les ay establies et fortifiées par l'authorité d'autruy, et par les sains discours des anciens, ausquels je me suis rencontré conforme en jugement: ceux-là m'en ont assuré la prinse, et m'en ont donné la jouyssance et possession plus entiere. (II, xvii, 641–42)

Montaigne is, then, conscious of the supremely unique nature of his undertaking and of the role of introspection, not only as it works in tandem with philosophy, but as an ethical alternative to be contemplated by all mankind: "Les autheurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque particuliere et estrangere; moy, le premier, par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne.... Si le monde se plaint de quoy je parle trop de moy, je me plains de quoy il ne pense seulement pas à soy" (III, ii, 782-83). In its ethical dimensions, however, the road of introspection is not for the self-indulgent and egocentric soul: it is a pathway of empirical discovery leading to the boundaries of self-knowledge. How, then, is such empirical discovery related to Montaigne's humanism?

The *Essais* are the history of a soul – a soul in the last twenty years of its life, cast by Fortune into the final thirty tumultuous years of a waning century. This ebb of life and years, of man and century, becomes increasingly significant for Montaigne, prompting him to declare in Book III, "Ce m'est faveur que la desolation de cet estat se rencontre à la desolation de mon aage..." (III, ix, 924). During this period which signals the gradual passing of Renaissance institutions and ideals in France,

some of the guiding principles of the transition from medieval to modern man are being sustained by Montaigne. With the spirit of the times, he turns from the anthropocentrism of traditional philosophy and the geocentrism of medieval science in order to exercise the right of free inquiry upon his own being. Throughout the *Essais* his is a constant, sometimes implicit, reaction to "... cette fantasie, que la raison humaine est contrerolleuse generalle de tout ce qui est au dehors et au dedans de la voute celeste, qui embrasse tout, qui peut tout, par le moyen de laquelle tout se sçait et connoit" (II, xii, 523). By confronting the barriers between himself and a rational understanding of the external world, Montaigne, the introspective, turns to himself in order to attempt a probing of his inner universe. In the center of this universe is the Self which bears a metaphoric relation to the geocentric view of the earth as center of the solar system. More than a simple metaphor, however, the Self is a conscious force, pressing in at every moment upon each action and thought; indeed, upon the Humanist's very act of living.

Joseph Mazzeo, in his penetrating study, *Renaissance and Revolution*, explains the genesis of Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* as a manifestation of ideals analogous to those expressed in the *Essais*, especially as such ideals are related to the Greek concept of *kalokagathia,* the view that a man is "both an ethical agent and an artistically structured self".[3] As an ethical agent, Montaigne, the Humanist, turns to antiquity as also to himself to seek out criteria of conduct, and accordingly, is faced with the need to organize and develop a style of life – not the style of any one man, but rather a personal style, the mark of what Philip Hallie terms a "personal philosophy".[4] The *Essais* are full of the author's defense of this personal ethic:

> Je n'ay point cette erreur commune de juger d'un autre selon que je suis. J'en croy aysément des choses diverses à moy. (c) Pour me sentir engagé à une forme, je n'y oblige pas le monde, comme chascun fait; et croy et conçois mille contraires façons de vie. ... (I, xxxvii, 225)

[3] Joseph A. Mazzeo, *Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of European Thought* (New York: Pantheon, 1965), 133.

[4] See Philip P. Hallie, *The Scar of Montaigne* (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1966).

Or elsewhere: "Il ne faut pas se clouër si fort à ses humeurs et complexions. . . . C'est estre, mais ce n'est pas vivre, que se tenir attaché et obligé par necessité à un seul train. Les plus belles ames sont celles qui ont plus de varieté et de soupplesse" (III, iii, 796).

What appears to be in the early essays a more conscious application to both a style of life and art, becomes, in his later writings, an unconscious surrender to the motion and exigency of corporal processes. This is not to say that Montaigne abandons a personal style of life. On the contrary, this style has been absorbed into the natural progression of life and Time until all that remains is a vague sensation of corporal consciousness and bodily decay. Resistance to change and motion thus becomes resistance to the style of life characterized above by Montaigne as "varieté" and "soupplesse". The Humanist's life-style is, as Mazzeo suggests, the affirmation of all that "is finally intensely personal, the possession of a unique personality, capable of infinite variations within its overarching patterns of order".[5] Abstaining from presumptuous judgments regarding its relation to the external world, Montaigne's gaze turns inward to the empirical Self, guiding his Humanism to that inner universe and to the creation of a style of life: "And so, insofar as the style is the man, insofar as life-style involves the most intimate, basic patterns of a man's thought, feeling, and action, Humanists like Erasmus and Montaigne were interested in what we have called the 'style of living'."[6] As a Humanist, however, Montaigne is also keenly sensitive to the function of language as a concrete agent in the expression of life-style.

Language is capable of measuring and transmitting to the public audience those inner qualities which form the individual's distinctive presentation of himself: "J'ay naturellement un stile comique et privé, mais c'est d'une forme mienne, inepte aux negociations publiques, comme en toutes façons est mon langage: trop serré, desordonné, couppé, particulier . . ." (I, xl, 246). Furthermore, in the spirit of Humanism, language may have a cumu-

[5] Mazzeo, *Renaissance,* 150.
[6] Mazzeo, 14-15.

lative effect upon the individual personality: contact with language, whether in its written form through works of antiquity, or in its spoken form through daily associations, may produce an accumulation of experiences, each adding to the individual's personal vision of the world. For example, in a familiar passage of "Sur des vers de Virgile", Montaigne declares:

> Or j'ay une condition singeresse et imitatrice ... de mes premiers essays, aucuns puent un peu à l'estranger. (c) A Paris, je parle un langage aucunement autre qu'à Montaigne. (b) Qui que je regarde avec attention m'imprime facilement quelque chose du sien.
>
> (III, v, 853)

But beyond this propensity toward imitation, the Essayist seeks to absorb into his personality what he has borrowed from others: "Je tors bien plus volontiers une bonne sentence pour la coudre sur moy, que je ne tors mon fil pour l'aller querir. (a) Au rebours, c'est aux paroles à servir et à suyvre, et que le Gascon y arrive, si le François n'y peut aller!" (I, xxvi, 171). Because the second half of the sixteenth century, however, marks a repudiation of grammarians such as Meigret and the philological studies of the Humanists, and a progression towards stylistic creation, in the strict philological sense, Montaigne must not be considered purely a Humanist.[7] Rather he assimilates what the traditions of Humanism have taught him about the styles of art and life, applying it haphazardly but aesthetically to the discovery of the Self. As Hallie observes, Montaigne's language reflects an entire process of thought and action: "His [Montaigne's] style of writing was to be formed by *his* way of dealing with anything that came to hand: the words of the ancients, the incidents and demands of the religious wars around him, and so on."[8]

Through the cumulative effect of language upon the individual, the Self thus becomes a palpable, explorable phenomenon, subject to empirical discovery and seeking expression in a personal artistic form. The search, however, is not without sacrifice: Montaigne stands confronted with two worlds, each equally as

[7] Floyd Gray, *Le Style de Montaigne* (Paris: Nizet, 1958), 33.
[8] Hallie, *The Scar*, 13.

vast and complex as the other.[9] While never denying the reality of the outer realm, he rejects any attempt to give it a rational form. Rather through the periodic introspective glance, he turns inward to create his personal artistic record. This, then, is the dilemma of modern man – on the one hand, a social being, prey to the demands of society, and on the other, an existential being whose responsibility is to the Self. It is, above all, the dilemma of Montaigne faced with his divisive nature: "Le Maire et Montaigne ont tousjours esté deux, d'une separation bien claire" (III, x, 989).

The inner man and the inner world to which Montaigne turns assume the dimensions of spatial, albeit metaphorical, forms:

> . . . the substrate of his [Montaigne's] educational ideal is, in a sense, his whole discovery of the self and its expression in that great work of art which is the *Essays:* the self as a world much like the great world which is our measure and guide, which contains analogous complexities and contradictions, which is, like culture, a historical deposit, undulating and diverse, a paradoxical unity of the grossest infantilisms and the most sublime subtleties.[10]

Montaigne's microcosm is primarily an artistic world in which the concept of the Self stands solely in metaphoric relation to the external universe. In its metaphoric form, his inner world, replete with its system of humors, complexions, and fantasies, becomes susceptible to the controls imposed by language and style. It can be touched and manipulated by a countless array of images and figures; it expands or contracts in harmony with the movement, sound, or arrangement of the word upon the page. According to the direction of the thought, it permits an occasional glimpse of a brief, never-to-be-repeated segment of the Self.

[9] Among modern psychological movements, it is the Jungian vision that comes perhaps closest to recalling the ethical and therapeutic value of self-discovery as it is formulated across the pages of the *Essais.* For Jung, the dilemma of man, faced with the pressing reality of two worlds, becomes clear: "In my picture of the world there is a vast outer realm and an equally vast inner realm; between these two stands man, facing now one and now the other, and, according to his mood or disposition, taking the one for the absolute truth by denying or sacrificing the other" (Carl G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* [New York: Harcourt Brace, n.d.], 137).

[10] Mazzeo, *Renaissance,* 155.

Montaigne's introspection is, then, both a psychological and aesthetic truth bringing about that vital union of psychology and art of which Austin Warren speaks. Only through this union do image and idea take on increased significance, imparting to the *Essais* their fundamental mobility and variety. Indeed, for Albert Thibaudet, "la vie psychologique est un détail d'images".[11] As a metaphoric microcosm, Montaigne's Self is, therefore, approachable only by the empirical movement of mind and style. At that precise moment when the Essayist is willing to confront his internal disorder, the empirical function of his introspection begins its random course across his inner world.

[11] Albert Thibaudet, *Montaigne,* textes établis, présentés et annotés par Floyd Gray (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 365.

2

THE SHADOW

The introspective system of the *Essais,* composed as it is of the random movement of intellectual meanders, is based on a fundamental premise: there is an obscure, nocturnal side to man which, from time to time, rises from his inner world in order to intrude upon and disorient the conscious mind. Haunted by the sensation of his internal "otherness", the individual feels possessed by some curiously alien yet familiar essence which, for lack of a more precise term, is called the Self – an essence whose existence is eternally affirmed by the Socratic admonition to self-knowledge. Montaigne's extended account of this experience in "De l'oisiveté" is a basic psychological fact essential to the reader's further understanding of the work's genesis as well as of the essay as an introspective medium:

> Dernierement que je me retiray chez moy, deliberé autant que je pourroy, ne me mesler d'autre chose que de passer en repos et à part ce peu qui me reste de vie, il me sembloit ne pouvoir faire plus grande faveur à mon esprit, que de le laisser en pleine oysiveté, s'entretenir soy mesmes, et s'arrester et rasseoir en soy: ce que j'esperois qu'il peut meshuy faire plus aisément, devenu avec le temps plus poisant, et plus meur. Mais je trouve . . . que au rebours, faisant le cheval eschappé, il se donne cent fois plus d'affaire à soy mesmes, qu'il n'en prenoit pour autruy; et m'enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques les uns sur les autres, sans ordre et sans propos, que pour en contempler à mon aise l'ineptie et l'estrangeté, j'ay commancé de les mettre en rolle, esperant avec le temps luy en faire honte à luy mesmes. (I, viii, 34)

Although this passage is primarily a retrospective glimpse at the fact of Montaigne's retirement from public life, its real signi-

ficance relates to the Essayist's initiation to the contemplative life. Before more purposeful goals can be found for this spiritual retreat, the Writer's intentions are circumscribed by a more primitive and uncreative introspective form: solitude ("à part"), rest ("en repos"), and inactivity ("en pleine oysiveté"). Cast momentarily into this interlude between the public, active life and its private, contemplative counterpart, Montaigne is in the act of adapting unconsciously to a new way of life in which inertia and inactivity are the preparatory stage to the act of introspection, a concept explained by Jean Prévost in his penetrating *Essai sur l'introspection:*

> L'homme inactif qui continue de veiller voit défiler, devant son regard intérieur, des suites de pensées détachées de l'action présente; s'il ne s'abandonne pas à la dérive, il les contrôle en s'amusant à les suivre. Ces suites de pensées sont l'une des matières de l'introspection. . . .[1]

Indeed, the theme of inactivity is a frequent motif throughout the *Essais.* Montaigne tells us that in his youth, he was " . . . si poisant, mol et endormi, qu'on ne me pouvoit arracher de l'oisiveté, non pas pour me faire jouer" (I, xxvi, 174). Elsewhere, he speaks of "ce naturel poisant, paresseux et fay neant" (II, xvii, 626), and of "la liberté et l'oisiveté, qui sont mes maistresses qualitez" (III, ix, 971).[2] Implicit within these references is the suggestion that the duration of Montaigne's creative life is a form of compensation for his propensity towards inaction: "tel . . . faict des *Essais* qui ne sauroit faire des effects . . ." (III, ix, 971). Until the moment of retirement, Montaigne had lived a life of action, having known first-hand that abiding uncertainty and instability of daily existence which had contributed to his ideas of temporal mutation and mobilism. With his withdrawal from public life, his sensation of Time changes from the concept of chronological extension in which death is the end goal of a sum of individual mo-

[1] Jean Prévost, *Essai sur l'introspection* (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1927), 26.

[2] In referring to this passage from "De la vanité", Thibaudet emphasizes that Montaigne's "oisiveté" has the meaning of inactivity or "otium" rather than indolence: "Liberté et oisiveté, soit *otium,* ce sont les maîtresses de son style comme de sa vie" ("Du style de Montaigne", *Boletim do Instituto francês de Portugal,* IV [Coimbra, n.d.], 94).

ments, to the concept of depth extension in which the artistic creation is a preservative against the ravages of chronological Time.

Activity, then, for Montaigne, is always studied relative to its depth and value. A state of inertia, however, may sometimes be preferable to one of action, especially when such inertia anticipates an action more significant by its depth and utility. The Essayist thus concludes that "l'utilité du vivre n'est pas en l'espace, elle est en l'usage: tel a vescu long temps, qui a peu vescu . . ." (I, xx, 93).[3] Montaigne's inertia, as explained in "De l'oisiveté", prepares not only for the act of creation, but for a new quality of existence; it is that part of his total "complexion" which assumes, at this transitional stage in his life, a conscious application. The trait of "oisiveté" now becomes a studied "complexion": he succumbs to pure introspection, allowing his mind to wander fortuitously through the complex network of experience ("s'entretenir soy mesmes, et s'arrester et rasseoir en soy"). The formless nature of pure introspection precludes, therefore, the making of records, the keeping of diaries, and the writing of essays; the mind is incapable of projecting itself upon exterior objects and goals. Through no other path, however, can Montaigne confront the psychic reality which is the Self.

In turning from an active to an introspective life, the Essayist turns from the rational constructs of the deductive mind to the irrational and disordered constructs of this nether world forming the groundwork of his creative imagination. Only through the act of pure, unrecorded introspection does Montaigne become conscious of this shaded side of his being[4] – an awareness based on phenomena no less real than those observed in the ex-

[3] Here one recognizes the partial formulation of Montaigne's concept of Time as an attempt to withdraw from what Bergson, in both the *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* and *L'Évolution créatrice,* calls "Time as heterogeneity".

[4] Although Montaigne does, indeed, speak of a tenebrous side to man (II, xii, 416), I am indebted to Léon Brunschvicg, *De la connaissance de soi* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1931), 12, and to Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*, trans. S. M. Dell (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1939), 20, for the specific vocabulary with which to describe the nocturnal, shaded nature of the psyche.

terior world by the rational mind. It is, in fact, an admission of the fundamental reality and existence of the psyche which presents itself here in imminent terms, Montaigne's "chimeres" and "monstres fantasques" assuming a distinct psychic reality, and describing his inner world. In contrast to the order of the rational mind, they possess that same irrational, fortuitous arrangement ("sans ordre et sans propos") which, for Montaigne, characterizes the motion of the external world, governed as it is by Fortune's caprice. Elsewhere, he compares such activity to that of the dreamer whose temperament he likens to his own "complexion": " . . . je feuillette à cette heure un livre, à cette heure un autre, sans ordre et sans dessein, à pieces descousues; tantost je resve, tantost j'enregistre et dicte, en me promenant, mes songes que voicy" (III, iii, 806). Man is by nature a "shadowy" being with a voice "si terrestre, ignorant et tenebreux" (II, xii, 416). As a composite of those "chimeres" and "monstres fantasques" which create in Montaigne his acute sensation of "otherness" and internal division, the shadow becomes, therefore, a force for unity within the *Essais* and stands in constant tension with the outer man. Possessing its own distinct psychic reality, it shows itself susceptible to perpetuation through figurative language and artistic creation. Montaigne can, then, proceed to the second stage of his retirement: " . . . j'ay commancé de les mettre en rolle". What began as a state of inertia, inactivity, and pure introspection finds extension in the register of the *Essais*. The inspiration for this "registre" is, however, not entirely fortuitous.

Not only does Montaigne convey throughout his work an emphatic admiration for the "meilleur pere qui fut onques" (II, xii, 416), but is, above all, sensitive to the great legacy of manorial property bequeathed him by his father.[5] Particularly in the later essays, such sensitivity is often accompanied by his confessions of inability to administer the inheritance, and of having failed to live up to his father's image and expectations. Filled with this sense of personal failure, Montaigne describes the two "registres" maintained in his father's household: not only did

[5] His concern for the development of this legacy is, in fact, to be noted in the Latin inscription of his library.

the steward keep a record of each economic transaction ("le registre des negoces du mesnage" [I, xxxv, 221]), but under the father's orders, a record of the day-to-day history of the house was also kept by a servant:

> . . . il ordonnoit à celuy de ses gens qui lui servoit à escrire, un papier journal à inserer toutes les survenances de quelque remarque, et jour par jour les memoires de l'histoire de sa maison. . . . Usage ancien, que je trouve bon à refreschir, chacun en sa chacuniere. Et me trouve un sot d'y avoir failly. (I, xxxv, 221)

The idea is here implicit that not only is a patrimony a physical substance to be maintained against decay and ruin, but also a living being whose chronological history must be preserved in writing if it is to endure in memory. The question remains, then, for Montaigne: can his failure to keep the register begun by his father be redeemed through the maintenance of a different kind of record, but one which relates organically to its predecessor?

The object of Montaigne's register, more than a preservative against the assault of Time upon the patrimony, is primarily aesthetic and personal: this new "registre" is a preservative against the ravages of Time upon Montaigne, the man. Having transcended the stage of pure introspection and inertia, he has come to recognize the existence of a shaded part of his being which demands expression and release in a substantial form. Unable to maintain an historical record of the patrimony, he is willing to keep a living register of the Self in order to give form to the disorder experienced in pure introspection. An empirical awareness of the Self and its manifestations is, therefore, vital to Montaigne's task. In "De l'affection des peres aux enfans", he not only confesses this awareness, but describes the sense of solitude which led him to the recognition of an empirical Self: "Et puis, me trovant entierement despourveu et vuide de toute autre matiere, je me suis presenté moy-mesmes à moy, pour argument et pour subject. C'est (c) le seul livre au monde de son espece . . ." (II, viii, 364). The feeling of "estrangeté" with which Montaigne first confronts his shadowed side is gradually erased as each word and image of his record draws him closer to recognition and self-knowledge. It is an effort to allow all

portions of his being to speak freely, revealing that underlying goal of psychic wholeness which moves throughout the *Essais*. The Essayist's "mettre en rolle" becomes the very extension of his life.[6]

Time, then, is at the very essence of Montaigne's register. In its pre-literary state, his thought is a formless prey to Time.[7] However, the initial act of pure introspection and thought without duration leads him to the recognition of his fundamental duality – a being whose inner Self is no less a living chronicle than the social orientation and concerns of the outer Self.[8] If, therefore, Montaigne evolves from his initial state of inertia towards the concrete expression of his duality in a permanent record, he also grows, in Time, progessively more conscious of this record as a dimension of creative duration.[9] Whereas in Book I, he can declare, "... jamais homme ne se défia tant de sa vie, jamais homme ne feit moins d'estat de sa durée... A chaque minute il me semble que je m'eschape" (I, xx, 86), in Book II he recognizes, "Les fortunes de plus de la moitié du monde à faute de registre, ne bougent de leur place et s'evanouissent sans durée" (II, xvi, 611).

It is in "Du desmentir" that he finally uses the term "regis-

[6] The temporal nature of Montaigne's register is echoed by Bergson: "Partout où quelque chose vit, il y a, ouvert quelque part, un registre où le temps s'inscrit" (*L'Évolution créatrice*, 7e ed. [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911], 178).

[7] In his discussion of Montaigne and Time, Poulet writes: "... while it was thought without substance, it was also thought without duration" (*Studies in Human Time*, trans. Elliott Coleman [New York: Harper, 1956], 39).

[8] It is precisely the recognition of such a fundamental human duality and of its concrete artistic expression which provides a useful focus from which to examine the introspective Montaigne: "Il y aurait donc enfin deux moi différents, dont l'un serait comme la projection extérieure de l'autre, sa représentation spatiale et pour ainsi dire sociale. Nous atteignons le premier par une réflexion approfondie, qui nous fait saisir nos états internes comme des êtres vivants, sans cesse en voie de formation. ... qui se pénètrent les uns les autres, et dont la succession dans la durée n'a rien de commun avec une juxtaposition dans l'espace homogène" (Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 6e ed. [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908], 178).

[9] The idea of a creative duration is likewise proposed by Bergson: "Plus nous approfondirons la nature du temps, plus nous comprendrons que durée signifie invention, création de formes, élaboration continue de l'absolument nouveau" (*L'Évolution créatrice*, 11-12).

tre de durée" to designate what began as the "mettre en rolle":

> Ay-je perdu mon temps de m'estre rendu compte de moy si continuellement, si curieusement? Car ceux qui se repassent par fantasie seulement et par langue quelque heure, ne s'examinent pas si primement, ny ne se penetrent, comme celuy qui en faict son estude, son ouvrage et son mestier, qui s'engage à un registre de durée, de toute sa foy, de toute sa force. (II, xviii, 648)

Montaigne has now moved to a new level of self-awareness: that of a temporal dimension. The strictly spatial concept of his work, developed in "De l'oisiveté", has assumed the perspective of duration in Time. No longer is he escaping himself at each moment, but is approaching, through an increasingly personal style, the amorphous mass of the Self. Each word, sentence, and essay links itself to a succession of glimpses, constructed by the creative imagination and bound up in Montaigne's style of life. Duration and creation thus unite, in the *Essais,* to form the vehicle of the author's introspection. In the final pages of Book III, the original register of the "monstres fantasques" and the confrontation with the shadow, have become the "registre des essais de ma vie" (III, xiii, 1056), an ambitious conclusion to such a humble project! Montaigne's life in the *Essais* has, therefore, taken shape in proportion as the essays themselves have taken shape, around the swell and motion of what Floyd Gray terms the "mot créateur . . . qui nous propose de 'devenir' plutôt que de nous arrêter. . . ."[10]

In this act of giving creative form to the shadowed, inner man, the Essayist's attention to his divisive inner nature recalls clearly the introspective nature of the Christian soul and its participation in the rites of the confessional.[11] Although Montaigne is always ready to declare the originality of his project ("C'est le seul livre au monde de son espece" [II, viii, 364]), it is perhaps as a series of public confessions that the *Essais* come close to confirming this declaration. In "Sur des vers de Virgile", he contrasts the originality of his own purpose with the intentions of

[10] *Le Style de Montaigne,* 105.

[11] Thibaudet asserts: "Sa psychologie n'est pas seulement tirée de lui-même, éclairée par les moralistes antiques, mais du courant chrétien né dans les entours des confessionaux" (*Montaigne,* 339).

his forerunners in autobiography: "S. Augustin, Origene et Hippocrates ont publié les erreurs de leurs opinions; moy, encore, de mes meurs" (III, v, 824). While Villey remarks that Montaigne seems here to have been unfamiliar with Saint Augustine's *Confessions*,[12] their existence prior to the *Essais* in no way diminishes the originality of Montaigne's undertaking. Although both works are autobiographical, the role of confession in Saint Augustine is more charged with the significance of Christian salvation: it always remains a public confession of the Christian sinner moving upward towards God and conversion. Montaigne's self-indictment, however, is made in recognition of the inherent weakness in human nature – an indictment with which all humanity can identify, and whose significance is not perceived exclusively by the Christian sinner.

In its primary form, Montaigne's confession is a private communication to himself: "Quand je me confesse à moy religieusement, je trouve que la meilleure bonté que j'aye a de la teinture vicieuse" (II, xx, 656). In order to maintain that healthy internal complexion, to which Hallie refers,[13] the Essayist's candid encounter with the Self is vital; only in this way can he effect a happy coexistence of the outer Self with the inner microcosm. In the therapeutic tradition of the confessional, Montaigne is, in fact, denouncing the act of psychological repression which brings man to deny the "shadowy" side of his being: "Il faut voir son vice et l'estudier pour le redire. Ceux qui le celent à autruy, le celent ordinairement à eux mesmes. Et ne le tiennent pas pour assés couvert, s'ils le voyent" (III, v, 822-23). Of necessity, introspection and self-awareness assume simultaneously an ethical and practical perspective: not only do they give a healthy contentment to mind and body, but confront the individual with the actuality of his own vice. If Montaigne, as a Catholic, however, has transformed the act of private confessional into one of creativity, he has, at the same time, made it a supremely public exercise.

[12] "En 1580, il [Montaigne] ignore si saint Augustin a eu des enfants [II, 8, tIII, p. 109], ce qui semble indiquer qu'il ne connaît pas bien les *Confessions*" (Pierre Villey, *Les sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne*, I [Paris: Hachette, 1908], 72).

[13] See *The Scar of Montaigne.*

Referring specifically to the religious dimension of the act of confession, he declares: "En faveur des Huguenots, qui accusent nostre confession privée et auriculaire, je me confesse en publiq, religieusement et purement" (III, v, 824). In this reference to the public nature of his confession, he anticipates a further declaration: "Je suis affamé de me faire connoistre . . . je crains mortellement d'estre pris en eschange par ceux à qui il arrive de connoistre mon nom" (III, v, 824). The practical considerations of a public confession are, therefore, evident: "La confession genereuse et libre enerve le reproche et desarme l'injure" (III, ix, 958). Montaigne's aspiration to self-knowledge is always manifest in direct proportion to his endeavor to communicate himself to the reader – an act of communication perpetuating itself eternally through his book. It is, however, in the relatively brief span of Montaigne's corporal life that this act of communication assumes a distinct cathartic role. Across the ever-changing landscape of his literary creation, he seeks to enact a transformation in his own mind (" . . . esperant avec le temps luy en faire honte à luy mesmes"), as well as in the nature of his shadowed, inner Self.

The experience, by Montaigne, of a psychological state which seems alien to his very being is also a realization that the human mind may often take its own course, unsubdued by the promptings of the conscious will. It is precisely this realization which inspires such essays as "De la force de l'imagination", and "Que nostre esprit s'empesche soymesmes". Through the medium of the essay, then, Montaigne is purging himself slowly of the initial strangeness of the "monstres fantasques". His creative act becomes a progressive acquaintance with his "shadowy" side, aiming towards a reinstatement of a healthy mental tranquility and making the mind ashamed of its rebellion. In fact, as an act of personal confession, the *Essais,* according to Montaigne's objective in "De l'oisiveté", assume an unmistakably cathartic role.[14] They are specifically an instrument "pour l'interne san-

[14] As used in this study, the term "catharsis" carries the specific medical connotation once used in the school of Hippocrates: ". . . it strictly denotes the removal of a painful or disturbing element from the organism, and hence

té" (III xiii, 1056).

Hallie, in his introduction to *Scepticism, Man, and God,* examines the importance for Sextus Empiricus of the medical metaphor, illustrative of the therapeutic role of Pyrrhonism.[15] In *The Scar of Montaigne,* he extends this analysis to the *Essais* and to Montaigne's contact with Sextus. However, the motif of corporal and mental health is, for Montaigne, rooted in something more than a nostalgia for the philosophical state of *ataraxia* or a bookish reflection of his readings in Sextus Empiricus: such readings appear to be the confirmation of a real and present spiritual state to which Montaigne bears witness in "De l'oisiveté". Confession and catharsis are, therefore, the complementary foci of Montaigne's confrontation with the shadow, interacting in a manner conducive to an ultimate state of mental unperturbedness. The road to discovery of the inner shadow is the way from self-division into self-integration, from pure, unrecorded introspection into a living introspective register.

The passage from "De l'oisiveté", examined here at length, is the first basic statement in the *Essais* dealing with the genesis of the work of art, not as the sole product of social and external forces acting upon the author's life, but as the point of contact between the individual and the psychological event which forms his retreat and inactivity. At this point of contact lies not only a psychological but an aesthetic truth. As Montaigne comes face to face with the nature of the empirical Self as an unfamiliar force, he is obliged, in order to approach familiarity and mental equilibrium, to give it living permanence through the written word. Each essay becomes a single act in that long continuum of creative duration – a continuum which probes the depths of psychic space rather than extending into the successive moments of Time.[16] This is a world which is created by the assaying

the purifying of what remains, by the elimination of alien matter" (S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* [London: Macmillan, 1923], 253).

[15] Hallie, *Scepticism, Man, and God – Selections from the Major Writings of Sextus Empiricus* (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1964), 86n.

[16] See Chapter 5 of the present study.

mind of Montaigne as he tries to perform with the implements of language what he was unable to perform with action in public life. This effort to come to grips with his inner universe and the resultant aesthetic record will be, for two centuries, the last breath of the man called Callias.[17] The ideal of introspective writing, in the manner of Montaigne, will be eradicated by Pascal's dictum "le *moi* est haïssable", only to be fully restored when Proust formulates his stand against Sainte-Beuve.[18] As an inner voyage of discovery, Montaigne's introspection is always only an approximation and anticipation of a final state of self-knowledge and internal equilibrium. It is as if he were confronted by a mountain so immense that he is unable to step far enough back to see its total form. He is, therefore, destined to assay and measure each "lopin" of its gigantic mass in anticipation of a far wider, more inclusive perspective.

The transformation of Montaigne over the course of the *Essais* is enigmatic. At those moments, when he is closest to describing his personal change, his vocabulary suddenly becomes vague, incapable of evoking any distinct image: "Somme, me voicy après à achever cet homme, non à en refaire un autre. Par long usage cette forme m'est passée en substance, et fortune en nature" (III, x, 988). Within the enigma of this later passage, Montaigne attempts to formulate the nature and circumstances of his transformation. It is clearly not a question here of a tripartite change from Stoicism to Pyrrhonism, and from Pyrrhonism to Epicureanism. The sense of his transformation lies in the abstruse message of the words "forme", "substance", "fortune", and "nature", but as they are examined more closely, these words reveal the real dimension of Montaigne's undertaking. The read-

[17] "L'homme qui s'appelle Callias", an expression borrowed from Aristotle, is indicative, for Thibaudet, of the irrational spirit of the individual to be later counteracted by the Cartesian method. Thibaudet, "Le Quadricentenaire d'un philosophe", *Revue de Paris,* no. 4 (1933), 760.

[18] ". . . un livre est le produit d'un autre *moi* que celui que nous manifestons dans nos habitudes, dans la société, dans nos vices. Ce moi-là, si nous voulons essayer de le comprendre, c'est au fond de nous-même, en essayant de le recréer en nous, que nous pouvons y parvenir" (*Contre Sainte-Beuve* [Paris: Gallimard, 1954], 137).

er comes to realize that the *Essais* are composed of much more than the triadic groundwork of a philosophical system. Indeed, the introspective moments are more memorable than the philosophical periods. The constant change and motion in which Montaigne finds himself prevent him from ever assuming any permanent mantle. From the initial confrontation with his shadow, an introspective dimension unfolds – the dimension of the man – in which philosophy and books constitute the vehicle of his individuality.

PART TWO

THE MAN IN HIS BOOK

3

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ESSAYIST

While the tripartite philosophical evolution of Stoicism, Pyrrhonism, and Epicureanism, proposed by Villey, is most significant if it is used as an index of what Montaigne is reading at a given time, Thibaudet gives perhaps a more plausible perspective to the work when he writes of the "trois étapes sur une même direction dont l'ensemble constituerait sa nature vivante":[1]

> (1) Une philosophie qu'il dépasse, qu'il formule comme une oeuvre d'école beaucoup plus qu'il ne la réalise. C'est le pyrrhonisme de *l'Apologie*. (2) Une philosophie qu'il réalise et qu'il vit, un phénoménisme, un mobilisme. . . . (3) Une philosophie qu'il aperçoit comme quelque chose d'idéal et de pur. . . . — le stoïcisme. . . . Dans l'ordre du temps ces trois philosophies semblent avoir été conçues et formulées dans l'ordre: 3-2-1.[2]

As an examination of the introspective system of the *Essais*, the present study is not concerned so much with what Montaigne sees as an unapproachable ideal or a philosophical mask, but with that personal style of life which he takes for himself, a philosophy that he can live, and which forms the core of his introspective act. The "living nature" of Montaigne, to which Thibaudet refers, is a composite formed from the encounters in his books as well as from a fundamental sense of the world's instability. The intellectual experience organized around his "bookish" encounters and the phenomenological reality of daily life impart both temporal and spatial importance to Montaigne: his

[1] Albert Thibaudet, *Montaigne*, textes établis, présentés et annotés par Floyd Gray (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 252.
[2] Ibid., 252-53.

human dimensions in the *Essais* are, therefore, a function of what he is in Space and how he changes in Time.

THE TEMPORAL DIMENSION

The introspective fabric of the *Essais* is comprised of Montaigne's passage through a series of mutating self-realizations which, in the later essays and additions, enter fully into his consciousness. It is in one of these momentary, conscious insights that the Essayist makes the obscure, but significant declaration: "... cette forme m'est passée en substance, et fortune en nature" (III, x, 988). Only when Time has run its course and change has become irrevocable does Montaigne realize the full extent of this transformation: "Il n'est plus temps de devenir autre" (III, x, 987). Within the Essayist's temporal dimension, this passing from "forme" to "substance" cannot be marked effectively by stages or levels corresponding to each of the three books. The movement of the *Essais* is, indeed, more rhapsodic: the themes of mutation, movement, and "lopinisme", introduced at random throughout the early (pre-1580) writings, gradually become more dominant as the tone of the work becomes more personal. Montaigne's transformation is, however, not cataclysmic; it proposes no great change in character, but simply binds and confirms him in the pace he has already set for his life. Whereas in their early stages, the *Essais* reveal the creator's attempt to exert some mastery over Time, Montaigne finally realizes at the end of his work that he has really been absorbed by Time. The mutation and movement which once seemed exterior to his being now pass into the very flow of corporal and spiritual life. His change is less a massive transformation in personality and character than a gradual resignation to the facts of his psychological constitution. Too late to become someone else, he is left to become himself, a realization prefigured earlier in the *Apologie:* "L'homme ne peut estre que ce qu'il est, ny imaginer que selon sa portée" (II, xii, 501). What, then, is the nature of Montaigne's change from a "formal" to a "substantial" reality?

The presence is the *Essais* of a dialog between the inner and outer man is a constant source of tension within the work's introspective system.[3] As a being which extends into the outer world as well as its inner counterpart, Montaigne is necessarily concerned with the presentation of himself both to society and to his inner world. However, he comes to realize the necessity of allowing his outward Form, replete with its external traits and appearances, to assume a more substantial existence by passing into the essential nature of the individual. Only in this way can the chaotic inner world of man's shadow be partially subjugated. It is precisely this act of absorption and assimilation which characterizes the life styles of such great men as Cato and Socrates:

> On voit aux ames de ces deux personnages et de leurs imitateurs . . . une si parfaicte habitude à la vertu qu'elle leur est passée en complexion. Ce n'est plus vertu penible, ny des ordonnances de la raison . . . c'est l'essence mesme de leur ame, — c'est son train naturel et ordinaire. (II, xi, 404)

In much the same manner as Cato and Socrates are said here to have absorbed what was initially virtue, as effort, into their natural constitution, so Montaigne absorbs the teachings of Socrates, making them conform to an already "preconceived philosophy of natural living".[4] Form, then, is that quality which gives man the distinctive presentation of himself to the outside world and which, through assimilation into his total being, becomes the mark of his particular life style.[5]

[3] "Un dehors qui est la place que nous tenons, la profession que nous exerçons, le parti que nous avons embrassé . . . – et un dedans, un intérieur qui est nous-même." Thibaudet, *Montaigne*, 127.

[4] Gray, "Montaigne and the *Memorabilia*", *Studies in Philology*, 58 (1961), 135.

[5] That Montaigne is familiar with the Aristotelian concept of *ule* and *eidos* is seen in the *Apologie* where he speaks of "l'opinion d'Aristote, sur ce subject des principes des choses naturelles: lesquels principes il bastit de trois pieces, matiere, forme et privation" (II, xii, 521). Although Montaigne's frequent use of "forme" does not denote a conscious application of Aristotelian terminology, its essential reference to the external qualities and shapes of objects is always present. For example, "toute autre forme de police" (I, xxiii, 114), "formes receues" (I, xxiii, 117), "les formes et les loix"

Whereas the style to which one person adheres may often be proposed as a universal standard of action, Montaigne insists on a clearly personal Form: "Pour me sentir engagé à une forme, je n'y oblige pas le monde, comme chascun fait; et croy et conçois mille contraires façons de vie . . ." (I, xxxvii, 225). Not only is this a formulation of his doctrine of individualism, but it conveys the image of a distinctly eclectic Montaigne who speaks, above all, in the *Institution.* The Form of a man is, therefore, assimilated from many systems in order to produce his distinctive image, an idea which recalls the familiar metaphor of the bees: "Les abeilles pillotent deça delà les fleurs, mais elles en font après le miel qui est tout leur . . . ainsi les pieces empruntées d'autruy, il [the pupil] les transformera et confondera, pour en faire un ouvrage tout sien, à sçavoir son jugement. Son institution, son travail et estude ne vise qu'à le former" (I, xxvi, 150-51).

The character and life of an individual are, therefore, malleable. Form is not a quality with which man is born; it is rather a force by which he lives. Form, like Time, is subject to absorption; it is an eclectic acquisition which creates the novelty of each successive moment. It may, through its suppleness, be added, subtracted, augmented, decreased, molded, and changed; it is the very justification for living by which Montaigne can say: "J'ay mis tous mes efforts à former ma vie. Voylà mon mestier et mon ouvrage" (II, xxxvii, 764). Form is, moreover, that quality by which the public Montaigne can conform and integrate himself into society. The development of a life style which, although personal and natural, is also in conformity with social norms characterizes this act of assimilating Form into one's own being. To form one's life is, thus, to maintain, in bookish en-

(I, xxiii, 120), "forme de gouvernement" (I, xxv, 143), "forme du parler" (I, xxvi, 171), "forme d'institution" (I, xxvi, 172), "forme . . . du visage" (II, ix, 386), "forme de ce corps" (II, xii, 582), "vicissitude de formes" (III, vi, 886). "Forme", however, has a more personal application for Montaigne when he speaks of "ma maistresse forme" (I, l, 290), "ma forme naïfve" ("Au Lecteur", 9), "la forme de nostre estre" (II, xii, 559), "ma forme naturelle" (II, xvii, 621), "ma forme ordinaire" (II, xxxvii, 740), "ma forme premiere" (III, xii, 1033), "ma forme universelle" (III, v, 844), "la forme plus mienne" (III, i, 769).

counters, a perpetual confrontation with the Forms of other lives: " . . . je ne sçache point meilleure escolle, comme j'ay dict souvent, à former la vie que de luy proposer incessamment la diversité de tant d'autres vies, (c) fantasies et usances, (b) et luy faire gouster une si perpetuelle varieté de formes de nostre nature" (III, ix, 951). Montaigne's confrontation with these Forms, beginning as marginal annotations, gradually assumes the more precise contours of the essay and the book. The *Essais,* therefore, comprise a vast effort towards the assimilation of many external and borrowed Forms into a unique, natural pace of life. Just as the virtue of Cato and Socrates passes into their "complexion", so the multiplicity of external Forms passes into that single, natural Form which reveals the empirical Self. This passing once realized, there is no room for regret: "Quand j'eusse peu prendre quelque autre façon que la mienne ordinaire et quelque autre forme plus honorable et meilleure, je ne l'eusse pas faict; car je ne veux tirer de ces escrits sinon qu'ils me representent à vostre memoire au naturel" (II, xxxvii, 763).

Montaigne's confrontation with the shadow of his mind is, on the other hand, a confrontation with a formless world, prior to its concrete existence on the printed page: "Je peins principalement mes cogitations, subject informe, qui ne peut tomber en production ouvragere. A toute peine le puis je coucher en ce corps aëré de la voix" (II, vi, 359). Whereas Form, as a style of life, is an external, social quality and may be referred to as "Cato's Form", "Socrates' Form", or "Montaigne's Form", the world of the mind is an internal quality always just beyond the grasp of reality of style or action ("qui ne peut tomber en production ouvragere"). Like the realm of the "monstres fantasques", it is essentially disordered until arranged on paper. The printed page becomes, therefore, the initial point of contact between the "formal" Montaigne, reading, borrowing, and constructing his external presentation, with the shadow of Montaigne, that inner microcosm by which the process of assimilation takes place. As a catalyst for this confrontation, then, the page is the formative matrix in which the world of action coexists with the chimeric world of the "monstres fantasques":

Nature nous a estrenez d'une large faculté à nous entretenir à part, et nous y appelle souvent pour nous apprendre que nous nous devons en partie à la societé, mais en la meilleure partie à nous. Aux fins de renger ma fantasie à resver mesme par quelque ordre et projet, et la garder de se perdre et extravaguer au vent, il n'est que de donner corps et mettre en registre tant de menues pensées qui se presentent à elle. J'escoute à mes resveries par ce que j'ay à les enroller.

(II, xviii, 648)

While there is no evidence to connect the "forme"/"substance" dichotomy with the *ule* and *eidos* of Aristotelian metaphysics (other than a passing reference in the *Apologie*), it should be noted that Montaigne's "cette forme m'est passée en substance" represents a significant alternative to Aristotle's teleological approach to the problem. In the doctrine of mutation and evolution as proposed in the *Metaphysics,* all things increase in actuality as they increase in Form and move away from pure matter which has a potentiality of Form.[6] In the Aristotelian universe, the passing is, then, from Substance to Form. For Montaigne, however, it is a reverse teleology: he conceives of Form, not only as something to be taken in, and made part of his essential personality, but which also passes from the body as life runs its course and brings him to the realization that no time remains to "devenir autre". All further transmutation must cease: "Il ne faut point d'art à la cheute: (c) la fin se trouve de soy au bout de chaque besongne. Mon monde est failly, *ma forme est vuidée*; je suis tout du passé . . ." (III, x, 988). After Form has vacated the body, only the essence remains: when external Forms and styles have been assimilated fully by the Self so as to leave no trace of their presence, the individual – Montaigne is left with an acute sensation of his fundamental corporality. He truly becomes what he is, and in so doing, emerges as the existential prototype of Roquentin who, in *La Nausée*, finds a quintessential meaning in the corporal flow of Time.[7] This temporal dimension of Montaigne's transformation across the *Essais* is, however,

[6] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* in *On Man and the Universe,* ed. Louise Ropes Loomis (New York: W. J. Black, 1943), 31.

[7] I shall reserve, however, until later in the study a complete account of this Substance of existence which finally, spongelike, absorbs Montaigne's life in the *Essais.*

further elucidated by another lexical duality.

In the second half of the "Forme"/"Substance" passage of "De mesnager sa volonté", there is a second set of terms ("et fortune en nature") which, by their position and meaning, not only stand in apposition to "forme" and "substance", but which clarify the preceding observation. The role of Fortune is of primary importance in the *Essais* as one of those recurring motifs, ready to appear at each turn in the movement of Montaigne's mind. Although already a literary commonplace in the latter sixteenth century, the concept of Fortune portrayed here is in no way a remote element of the external universe, but a formative force which penetrates to the core of the *Essais*' aesthetic message. Just as Form is an external quality which can be borrowed and applied to the individual's life through confrontation with other life styles, Fortune is also an external condition which, from birth, grants him the particular Form of his character: "Ma vertu, c'est une vertu, ou innocence, pour mieux dire, accidentale et fortuite. Si je fusse nay d'une complexion plus déreglée, je crains qu'il fut allé piteusement de mon faict" (II, xi, 406). And elsewhere: "Ce que j'ay de bien, je l'ay au rebours par le sort de ma naissance" (II, xi, 408).

As in the passing from the "formal" to the "substantial" Montaigne, a similar act of progressive assimilation anticipates the mutation of Fortune into Nature. What Fortune has given him fortuitously, Montaigne must make his own. Rather than struggle against Fortune, he accepts it with resignation, attempting to construct a redemptive inner order: "Ne pouvant reigler les evenements, je me reigle moy-mesme, et m'applique à eux s'ils ne s'appliquent à moy. Je n'ay guiere d'art pour sçavoir gauchir la fortune et luy eschapper ou la forcer, et pour dresser et conduire par prudence les choses à mon poinct" (II, xvii, 627). Montaigne's attitude is, therefore, one of healthy resignation to his condition: "... je jette le plus souvent la plume au vent, comme on dict, et m'abandonne à la mercy de la fortune ..." (II, xvii, 638). To walk boldly into the external world with our self-styled weapons of Reason is to do battle with Fortune. We must, therefore, turn inward, transforming the elements of our condi-

tion into an act of self-possession: "Plus nous amplifions nostre besoing et possession, d'autant plus nous engageons nous aux coups de la fortune et des adversitez. La carriere de nos desirs doit estre circonscripte et restraincte à un court limite des commoditez les plus proches et contiguës . . ." (III, x, 988).

The passing from Fortune to Nature is the act of acceptance by which the fortuitous events of birth and character, implanted by chance in our being, become fully absorbed as elements of our fundamental condition. Nature, then, is a substantial component of the individual personality: it is that repetitive, habitual side of man which is unalterably present in each thought and action: " . . . appelons encore nature l'usage et condition de chacun de nous" (III, x, 987). Just as his being is reduced to its fundamental corporal elements in the temporal movement from "formal" to "substantial" reality, so the gifts of character, bestowed by Fortune, pass into a state of permanence within the individual. Nature, habit, and custom are, therefore, end results in the passing of Montaigne across the essays of his book: "L'accoustumance est une seconde nature, et non moins puissante. (c) Ce qui manque à ma coustume, je tiens qu'il me manque" (III, x, 987).

The habit to which Montaigne abandons himself by the later essays is that of an acute consciousness of his own substantive, corporal processes. Such is the course of individuation in which the internal motion of the "monstres fantasques" and the "bookish" encounters of life-forms and life-styles are absorbed by the overriding empirical fact of the Self manifest in each facet of the inner voyage of discovery. Rather than the mark of a cataclysmic psychological change, the passing of the "formal" to the "substantial" Montaigne is, therefore, the temporal movement of assimilation inscribing each essay as an added confirmation of his fundamental condition. To become, on paper, what he already is, remains an implicit dictum which, like Ariadne's thread, guides him as a moralist through the patchwork of judgment and criticism comprising his work.

THE SPATIAL DIMENSION

The self-portraiture of the *Essais* is, at best, an approximation. The inveterate presence of Time and mutation makes impossible a single, consistent act of self-description. Montaigne of the later stages of his book is no longer the Montaigne of the early writings: "J'ay des portraits de ma forme de vingt et cinq et de trente cinq ans; je les compare avec celuy d'asteure: combien de fois ce n'est plus moy! combien est mon image presente plus esloingnée de celles là que de celle de mon trespas!" (III, xiii, 1082). Just as Time takes its toll on the body, it also penetrates to the inner life of the individual, creating in him that vague sensation of internal movement and change: "Il y a des mouvemens en nous, inconstans et incogneus . . ." (III, xiii, 1082). While such movement, however, is partly a function of the individual's temporal dimension, the Essayist also affirms his spatial duality: "Le Maire et Montaigne ont tousjours esté deux, d'une separation bien claire" (III, x, 989).

This consciousness of a fundamental duality, although expressed throughout the work, asserts itself more frequently in the earlier essays and well in advance of Montaigne's election to the mayoralty of Bordeaux. It does, in fact, exist at the very moment when Montaigne is formulating his epistemological and pedagogical doctrines of the First Book. His duality in these early essays is the expression of a sense of tension between the two sides of his being, between the exigency of the active life and that of the contemplative life. On the one hand, he seeks to flee from the subjection to which a socially active life compels him: " . . . je retranche en ma maison toute ceremonie. . . . A quoy faire fuyt-on la servitude des cours, si on l'en traine jusques en sa taniere" (I, xiii, 48). On the other hand, he proposes a doctrine of conformity and subjection to society: "Nous devons la subjection et l'obeissance egalement à tous Rois, car elle regarde leur office . . ." (I, iii, 19). His retirement from society is, therefore, never absolute; it is a gradual progression towards the release of a creative drive and the concrete expression of this drive in an

introspective, personal style.[8] When Montaigne is later able to formulate explicitly this duality ("Mais nous sommes, je ne sçay comment, doubles en nous mesmes . . ." [II, xvi, 603]), he enunciates what, in the earlier essays, is simply a state of tension between the demands of activity and contemplation.

The life of action in society constrains Montaigne to reflect on those actions, attitudes, and situations which make conformity and subjection possible. If the Mayor and Montaigne have always been two persons, the public profession of an individual must, therefore, be distinguished clearly from his private philosophy. The "Mayor" is a title – a Form or style borrowed from society; it suggests a set of mechanical actions by which an officeholder fulfills his public duties independently of private thought and feeling. Montaigne as Mayor is Montaigne masked, conforming to an ethical code altogether different from the private system of values by which the individual acts for himself. The application of the private code to its public counterpart is an attempt to weld two irreconcilable forces, a fact which falls in the realm of Montaigne's personal experience:

> J'ay autrefois essayé d'employer au service des maniemens publiques les opinions et reigles de vivre ainsi rudes, neufves, impolies ou impollues, comme je les ay nées chez moy ou raportées de mon institution, et desquelles je me sers (c) sinon (b) commodéement (c) au moins seurement (b) en particulier, une vertu scholastique et novice. Je les ay trouvées ineptes et dangereuses. (III, ix, 970)

The Form which the individual must take in society is, therefore, at odds with the doctrine of individualism; it is a mask of external adaptation to the social milieu and, as such, permits Montaigne to play his role in the human "comedy":

> Celuy qui va en la presse, il faut qu'il gauchisse, qu'il serre ses couddes, qu'il recule ou qu'il avance, voire qu'il quitte le droict chemin, selon ce qu'il rencontre; qu'il vive non tant selon soy que selon autruy, non selon ce qu'il se propose, mais selon ce qu'on luy propose, selon le temps, selon les hommes, selon les affaires.
>
> (III, ix, 970)

[8] "La vie intérieure a supplanté peu à peu chez Montaigne la vie extérieure. Ce sont les formes de l'une qu'il préfère qui dans l'autre lui sont les plus importunes" (Thibaudet, *Montaigne,* 102).

Whereas on the one hand, Montaigne is an introspective, concerned with developing his personal style of life, he is also capable of what Mansell Jones has termed *extroversion,* "having acquired, assimilated and stored much first-hand knowledge of the men, affairs and troublesome events of his time".[9] For Thibaudet, however, the one attitude must certainly reinforce the other:

> Le problème qui se pose inconsciemment pour Montaigne est celui-ci: armer le maximum de liberté intérieure par le maximum de mécanisme extérieur, le second constituant le mur, la défense, l'armature protectrice, l'habillement de l'autre. La liberté de Montaigne est une liberté habillée.[10]

In the early essays, then, Montaigne is clearly undergoing an adaptive process. As an extrovert, he is concerned with the conscious application of his judgment to external conditions and institutions: to the Court, to military ethics and strategy, to customs, to conformity, to personal relations with family and friends, to various philosophical codes. He looks to the assimilation of an external style of life and dreams of imitating, in death, the ideals of stoicism. He is conscious of the necessity to cultivate those tools by which a man can act properly in society: language, memory, judgment, and the ability to assimilate examples of morality and right action. The concept of virility, implicit in his admiration of stoic ideals, extends to the idea of action as that which can be borrowed, studied, premeditated, and controlled. When circumstances lead to the adoption of an extrovert personality, the inner chaos of the "monstres fantasques" is concealed by the front which the individual constructs for himself in order to face society. On the contrary, Montaigne's introversion leads ultimately to his acceptance of an inner reality expressed in the creative drive: "Mais quelque personnage que l'homme entrepraigne, il joue tousjours le sien parmy" (I, xx, 80).

The concept of a social mask is the fundamental motif of the

[9] P. Mansell Jones, *French Introspectives from Montaigne to Gide* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1937), 20.
[10] *Montaigne,* 103.

individual's duality. The *persona* is the line of demarcation between the Mayor and Montaigne; it is that quality with which we are all forced to live in order to remain at peace with society.[11] In his public capacity as counsellor and Mayor, and in his relationship with the Court, Montaigne appears to have a well-developed mask. Alluding implicitly to his capacity for adapting to various social roles, he declares, "Mettray-je en compte cette faculté de mon enfance: une asseurance de visage, et soupplesse de voix et de geste, à m'appliquer aux rolles que j'entreprenois?" (I, xxvi, 176). The outward assimilation of other Forms and styles of life is an ethical imperative for the child of the *Institution*: "Il sondera la portée d'un chacun: un bouvier, un masson, un passant; il faut tout mettre en besongne, et emprunter chacun selon sa marchandise, car tout sert en mesnage" (I, xxvi, 155). By utilizing the examples of action, both good and bad, which history and society have transmitted to mankind, the individual becomes bound to his *persona*; it is the preparatory step to real introspection and the personal assimilation of these actions. Only at the moment of death can man transcend totally the *persona*'s reality; only when he has played "le dernier acte de sa comedie" (I, xix, 78):

> En tout le reste il y peut avoir du masque: ou ces beaux discours de la Philosophie ne sont en nous que par contenance; ou les accidens, ne nous essayant pas jusques au vif, nous donnent loysir de maintenir tousjours nostre visage rassis. Mais à ce dernier rolle de la mort et de nous, il n'y a plus que faindre, il faut parler François. . . . (I, xix, 78)

Life, then, is a comedy in which man's activity is an integral part of the human masquerade: ". . . bien que, à la verité, la

[11] In his acknowledgment of the social mask, Montaigne anticipates a similar concept in modern psychoanalytical theory: "Fundamentally the persona is nothing real: it is a compromise between the individual and society as to what a man should appear to be. He takes a name, earns a title, exercises a function, he is this or that. In a certain sense all this is real, yet in relation to the essential individuality of the person concerned it is only a secondary reality, a compromise formation. . . . The persona is a semblance, a two-dimensional reality, to give it a nickname" (Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, trans. R. F. C. Hull [New York: Pantheon, 1966], 158.)

pluspart de nos actions ne soient que masque et fard . . . si est-ce qu'au jugement de ces accidens il faut considerer comme nos ames se trouvent souvent agitées de diverses passions" (I, xxxviii, 229-30).

While the individual is destined to play till death the dual role of his existence, nothing prevents him from circumscribing his field of action and from turning upon his inner chaos. Montaigne's goal of self-knowledge is only possible if, in turn, his perception can penetrate the opacity of the *persona*: "Il faut oster le masque aussi bien des choses que des personnes . . ." (I, xx, 94). At the end of the *Essais*, however, Montaigne is no closer to an absolute transcendence of the mask than he was in Chapter XX of the First Book:

> Il faut jouer deuement nostre rolle, mais comme rolle d'un personnage emprunté. Du masque et de l'apparence il n'en faut pas faire une essence réelle, ny de l'estranger le propre. Nous ne sçavons pas distinguer la peau de la chemise. (III, x, 989)

If, therefore, Montaigne has passed, in Time, from a "formal" to a "substantial" existence through the multiplicity of successive states, at any single moment he is always a dual being composed of Self and mask. His spatial dimension, reinforced by the polarity of the inner and outer man, is ultimately counterbalanced by the reality of his temporal dimension in which the Essayist takes to himself the data of daily experience as well as the data of his books.

A PSYCHOLOGY OF MOVEMENT

The extension of Montaigne in Time and Space is, above all, a function of his existence between the pages of his book. As a manifestation of the creative act, the *Essais* form the corpus of a living, moving being whose individual parts comprise a unified whole. In the early essays, the doctrine of movement, incorporated by Montaigne into the aesthetic structure of his work, remains at a primary, pre-introspective level:

Et tout ainsi qu'en nos corps ils disent qu'il y a une assemblée de diverses humeurs, desquelles celle là est maistresse qui commande le plus ordinairement en nous, selon nos complexions: aussi, en nos ames, bien qu'il y ait divers mouvemens qui l'agitent, si faut-il qu'il y en ait un à qui le champ demeure. Mais ce n'est pas avec si entier avantage que, pour la volubilité et soupplesse de nostre ame, les plus foibles par occasion ne regaignent encor la place et ne facent une courte charge à leur tour. (I, xxxviii, 230)

The mind conceived here in terms of "volubilité" and "soupplesse", is portrayed as a dynamic force, exposed irrevocably to change. The individual's psychological constitution, because of this dynamic state, is not a device by which his personality may be projected into the future: Montaigne cannot choose to become what he already is; he can only surrender to the change and motion of his psychological condition.

Montaigne of the early essays tries simply to project himself into the future by confronting a stoic ideal, this "philosophie qu'il aperçoit comme quelque chose d'idéal et de pur. . . ."[12] His attitude is a philosophical pose, a structured core around which he wishes to mold his entire personality. This concept of life and character as entities to be styled and composed is, if allowed to persist, a surrender to the *persona*'s autonomy.[13] The individual must, therefore, abstain from a temptation to organize himself around a single, coherent Form. As Ramon Fernandez explains, he must not allow himself to become a mechanism: "L'homme qui se compose une conduite cohérente en vertu de certaines idées, de certaines traditions extérieures à lui n'est que le modèle mécanique d'une personne. . . . Une vie humaine n'est riche, complète, féconde, créatrice de valeurs que si elle jaillit des profondeurs de l'être comme une source, comme un cri."[14] Just as Montaigne cannot fashion himself around a consciously

[12] Thibaudet, *Montaigne,* 252.

[13] "La personnalité m'apparaissait sous un jour plus net: je deviendrais une personne, je 'me posséderais' si je me trouvais un jour prêt, à tout moment et en toute circonstance, à défendre, à affirmer, à proposer les sentiments, la somme d'être que j'aurais reconnu m'appartenir. Disposition de soi, idéal du stoïcisme, de toute vie liée" (Ramon Fernandez, *De la personnalité* [Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1928], 41).

[14] Fernandez, *De la personnalité,* 43.

premeditated personality, so his book defies any preconceived Form. It is for this reason that many of the great introspective passages of the *Essais* occur *after the fact*: they are retrospective glances, comparing the man and his book as they once were, to the man and his book as they are at the present moment.

In Book I, the *Institution* is, therefore, a confirmation of Montaigne's presence in the earlier essays. This overt statement of pedagogical doctrine is a solid *corpus* in which the Essayist expresses his abiding interest in forming and styling the individual personality. Across the pages of the *Institution,* Montaigne appears to be looking back at his own formation, rooted as it is in a direct confrontation with the books on his library shelves, and thereby exercising and assaying those natural faculties of judgment, memory, and language upon which he can postulate a series of right actions. The concept of life as a substance to be composed, ordered, and styled around a specific Form, is most apparent in his early encounter with the stoicism of Seneca. In order, however, for Montaigne to pass from a "formal" to a "substantial" level of life, he must surrender in part to the psychic reality portrayed in "De l'oisiveté". The path of individuation leads from a false conception of life as a product of conscious intention, to a recognition of the individual's basic condition of instability and mutation. The latter concept is expressed in the doctrine of movement which is, in fact, a prefigurative motif to be developed later in the more substantial, scholarly *corpus* of the *Apologie.*

Just as the *Institution* appears to be a formal statement of the fortuitous development of the preceding essays, Montaigne's encounter with Sextus Empiricus in the *Apologie* serves to confirm him, as Gray has pointed out, in the notion that "man is a creature of change and movement, 'un subject merveilleusement vain, divers, et ondoyant' " (I, i, 13).[15] Although scholarly in both structure and content, the *Apologie* is, in a real way, part of the introspective system of the *Essais.* It binds Montaigne to that feeling of internal motion and disorder expressed in preced-

[15] Gray, "The Unity of Montaigne in the *Essais", Modern Language Quarterly*, XXII (March, 1961), 83.

ing essays. Rather than the core of a doctrine of psychological movement, it is the ordered shell which Montaigne constructs around the doctrine; it is a formalized, complex statement hinging on the *tropoi* of Sextus, and serving as a philosophical touchstone.

At the core of the *Apologie* lies an essential resignation to the psychological facts of man's condition: unable to focus his life on a prospective ideal, Montaigne surrenders to his *internal* motion as it presses in upon the present moment. Therefore, in the final pages of the *Apologie*, the formula, "il n'y a aucune constante existence" (II, xii, 586), not only captures a fact of corporal life, but carries a deeper, psychological meaning to be later confirmed by the words, "Je peints le passage" (III, ii, 782).

In the final essay of Book III, "De l'expérience", Time has gradually run out. Once again, the retrospective role of introspection is formulated in the notion that Time has brought not only a corporal, but psychological change. This essay presents the reader with the final brush strokes of an uncompleted self-portrait which, in the essays of Book III, has assumed the dimension of Montaigne's corporal consciousness. When the Essayist declares, in the posthumous edition: "Il faut bien bander l'ame pour luy faire sentir comme elle s'escoule" (III, xiii, 1085), he verbalizes the need for man to reach a greater sensory awareness – a "conscience corporelle"[16] of life.

The introspection of the later essays and of the posthumous additions becomes, then, increasingly retrospective in proportion as Montaigne assumes a new body awareness. Life, as Form, can no longer be composed, styled, and constructed in view of a specific ideal: it must be experienced as the intrusion of Time on each momentary sensation and mutation of the body. There is a progressive identification between Montaigne's concept of psychological and corporal mutation. We must strain our soul in order to make it feel its ebb ("comme elle s'escoule"). In

[16] Jean Prévost, in his *Essai sur l'introspection*, discusses the role of "corporal consciousness" in the process of introspection. I am indebted to his perceptive study for use of the term and shall indicate in a later chapter its importance for Montaigne's introspection.

coming face to face with the Shadow of the unconscious and the phenomena of the conscious world, Montaigne neutralizes the primary conflict between these two realms and secures for himself a degree of individuation.[17]

To discover his unique nature, Montaigne must recognize that "L'homme ne peut estre que ce qu'il est . . ." (II, xii, 501). Any intention towards individuation can only be made with respect to the fleeting moment. The individual is able to discover what he is in the present, add it to the succession of past observations and look to the "mutations futures" which belong to Fortune's realm: "Je ne vise icy qu'à découvrir moy mesmes, qui seray par adventure autre demain, si nouveau apprentissage me change" (I, xxvi, 147). Montaigne's intention cannot exceed the bounds of the present – a fact he realizes only after having passed the stage of the earlier essays. He is unable to construct a teleological plan for his individuality because his own psychic change does not permit him the luxury of foreseeing tomorrow's man.

As an empiricist, Montaigne communicates only with experience – experience of the present measured against that of the past. As this experience changes from moment to moment, so the individual's psychological constitution appears to mutate.[18] While, in the post-1588 additions, Montaigne strives to defend the unity of his book ("Mon livre est tousjours un" [III, ix, 941]), he also infers the organic nature of the work by juxtaposing the concept of strict chronology with that of internal evolu-

[17] As used in this study, the term "individuation" is free from the specific clinical associations of Jungian psychology. It is, therefore, taken to mean that process by which a human being seeks and attains individuality. Although this concept is, for Jung, part of a more complex psychological system, his explanation of the term is fundamentally simple and cogent: "By it I mean the psychological process that makes of a human being an 'individual' . . ." (*The Integration of the Personality*, 3). Elsewhere, he states that ". . . it is a process by which a man becomes the definite, unique being he in fact is" (*Two Essays*, 174). The person truly embarked on the path to individuation cannot project himself into the future; he can only examine what he is at the present, fleeting moment, comparing this state with what he has been at other such moments.

[18] Bergson describes the temporal nature of this change in the following way: "Notre personnalité, qui se bâtit à chaque instant avec de l'expérience accumulée, change sans cesse" (Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice*, 6).

tion: ". . . il adviendra facilement qu'il s'y mesle quelque transposition de chronologie, mes contes prenans place selon leur opportunité, non tousjours selon leur aage" (III, ix, 941). His later additions are, therefore, further extensions of Montaigne's psychological change and, in no way, imply a repudiation of prior states of mind. Even Book III becomes "ce troisiesme alongeail du reste des pieces de ma peinture" (III, ix, 941) – a third stage in the construction of an empirical Self.

The experience of the Self confirms, however, the individual's interiority: "Chacun regarde devant soy; moy, je regarde dedans moy: je n'ay affaire qu'à moy, je me considere sans cesse, je me contrerolle, je me gouste" (II, xvii, 641). As an empirical phenomenon, the Self is susceptible to expression in many linguistic modes, especially in the language of the image. Montaigne, standing outside himself and looking inward, is caught up in this world of images just as he is absorbed by his world of thoughts.[19] In turn, the approach to individuality is realized in proportion as his imagery gives form to the contact between the inner and outer worlds. Montaigne's images are thus the implements by which he measures and probes his inner space.

The encounter with this inner being and the images used to depict its interiority endow the process of individuation with its fundamental quality: that of a quest. Montaigne frequently describes the human mind as a dynamic agent, constantly reaching out beyond itself:

> Il n'y a point de fin en nos inquisitions; nostre fin est en l'autre monde. (c) C'est signe de racourciment d'esprit quand il se contente, ou de lasseté. Nul esprit genereux ne s'arreste en soy: il pretend tousjours et va outre ses forces; il a des eslans au delà de ses effects . . . (b) ses poursuites sont sans terme, et sans forme. . . . C'est un mouvement irregulier, perpetuel, sans patron, et sans but.
>
> (III, xiii, 1045)

The mind's probing mobility, however, may be either an absurd

[19] As Gray explains, "L'image n'est pas dans le langage pour un effet de style; elle est réellement dans la pensée de Montaigne. . . . La plupart du temps l'image n'illustre pas la pensée de Montaigne, elle *est* la pensée; elle ne s'attache pas à l'idée, elle naît en même temps qu'elle" (*Le Style de Montaigne,* 155).

expression of man's self-styled reason, or a practical tool of self-study:

> Si nous nous amusions par fois à nous considerer, et le temps que nous mettons à contreroller autruy et à connoistre les choses qui sont hors de nous, que nous l'emploissions à nous sonder nous mesmes, nous sentirions aisément combien toute cette nostre contexture est bastie de pieces foibles et defaillantes. (I, liii, 296)

The attempt by Montaigne to gauge and make a sounding of his inner space is a vital phase of the quest by which he hopes to discover himself. He thereby utilizes the mind's mobility and disorder as a practical tool to assay each fantasy, thought, or momentary distraction.

Just as the process of individuation is only an approximation of elusive individuality, so Montaigne can never quite put a constant finger on himself. Only able to describe the parts which make up the mass of the amorphous Self, his sense of self-diminution is acute: "Ce que je seray doresnavant, ce ne sera plus qu'un demy estre, ce ne sera plus moy. Je m'eschape tous les jours et me desrobe à moy . . ." (II, xvii, 625). Montaigne's individuation is, therefore, partly frustrated by Time and by his own psychological mutation. While he recognizes the importance of the inscription on the Temple of Apollo ("L'advertissement à chacun de se cognoistre doibt estre d'un important effect . . ."[III, xiii, 1052]), he never succeeds in eluding the basic fact of inner change.

Beneath the more explicit message communicated in each essay, there is a single, implicit theme: man is not whole; he is composed only of "lopins", of a mutating array of parts which condemn him to live in the present. The quest of Montaigne and of individuation is to become whole.[20] The initial recognition of his mind as a domain in which he is only the nominal overseer underlies his entire psychological "lopinisme".[21] The whole

[20] "Man, he feels, must strive to be limited by neither youth nor age. The ideal is to be whole" (Donald M. Frame, *Montaigne's Discovery of Man* [New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1955], 160).

[21] The concept of Montaigne's psychological and stylistic "lopinisme" and "mobilisme" was recognized as early as the eighteenth century. For

man is one who faces the reality of an inner and outer existence. On the one hand, he has a conscious side which, if not constrained by blinders, reasons and judges absurdly; on the other hand, he has an unconscious side, revealing itself consciously as a feeling of inner chaos. Around the conscious side, the individual constructs his mask; on the unconscious side, he confronts a realm beyond the control of human reason – a realm which intrudes at will upon the authority of the *persona.* To become whole is to achieve, then, a reconciliation of the inner and outer man.

When Montaigne states, "Je ne vise icy qu'à découvrir moy mesmes, qui seray par adventure autre demain", he is formulating in the most essential way the concept of individuation and its goal of self-discovery and psychic wholeness. It is in this single respect that we can call Montaigne's doctrine "une doctrine d'aspiration",[22] a way of aspiring to the center of his being and making a "sounding" of inner space. If, however, the lines of Montaigne's self-portraiture appear at times ill-defined, it must be recalled that his plans of self-discovery are quite modest: "Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied, je ne m'essaierois pas, je me resoudrois; elle est tousjours en apprentissage et en espreuve" (III, ii, 782). He is, therefore, content to por-

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example, the *Encyclopédie* contains the following judgment: "Il [Montaigne] suit sans art l'enchaînement de ses idées; il lui importe peu d'où il parte, comment il aille, ni où il aboutisse. La chose qu'il dit, c'est celle qui l'affecte dans le moment. Il n'est plus lié, ni plus décousu en écrivant, qu'en pensant ou en rêvant" (Vol. XIII, 612). Later, Sainte-Beuve relates these concepts specifically to Montaigne's figurative language: "Montaigne a eu, plus qu'aucun peut-être, ce don d'exprimer et de peindre; son style est une figure perpétuelle, et à chaque pas renouvelée; on n'y reçoit les idées qu'en images; et on les a, à chaque moment, sous des images différentes, faciles et transparentes pourtant. A peine un court intervalle nu et abstrait, la simple largeur d'un fossé, le temps de sauter; et l'on recommence" *(Port-Royal,* ed. Maxime Leroy, I [Paris: Gallimard, 1953], 863). Albert Thibaudet, however, was the first critic to use these concepts to explore the total landscape of Montaigne's stylistic creation. See "Le Quadricentenaire d'un philosophe", *Revue de Paris,* no. 4 (1933), 755-76, as well as Gray's edition of Thibaudet's notes.

[22] Joachim Merlant, *De Montaigne à Vauvenargues: essais sur la vie intérieure et la culture du moi* (Paris: Société française d'imprimerie et de librairie, 1914), 47.

tray his being in a state of constant change. Such is man's common lot: we must all be resigned to the transformations, both corporal and psychic, which prevent us from knowing the totality of being: "Nous n'avons aucune communication à l'estre . . ." (II, xii, 586).

Individuation is, then, the only valid way for man to live his life, for it is the path by which he strives to become what he in fact is. Life, as a composition based on exemplary models, is as sterile as the ideals of stoicism. The Essayist, embarked on a project of individuation and aesthetic creation, cannot, in fact, regard his life as the exemplary stamp of another life; rather he sees it as a state of constant becoming in which each moment grows organically from the preceding one.[23] The *Essais*, by their very proximity and identification with Montaigne himself, are an organic substance imitating life in its quintessential form: that of change and mobility. Montaigne can no more construct a teleological plan for his book than he can for living. Intention is directed at the fleeting moment and never on tomorrow's project: "Il faut accomoder mon histoire à l'heure. Je pourray tantost changer, non de fortune seulement, mais aussi d'intention" (III, ii, 782).

[23] Bergson defines individuation in the following terms: ". . . on peut dire que, si la tendance à s'individuer est partout présente dans le monde organisé, elle est partout combattue par la tendance à se reproduire. Pour que l'individualité fût parfaite, il faudrait qu'aucune partie détachée de l'organisme ne pût vivre séparément" (*L'Evolution créatrice*, 14).

4

THE STYLES OF LIFE AND ART

Montaigne in retirement is Montaigne with time on his hands: time to read and reflect, without commitment to plan or project. Faced, however, with the need to give focal order to his existence, he embarks on a literary program of inner discovery. His psychological and epistemological aim is individuation; his aesthetic means are style and composition. Both life and book, then, are to be touched and transformed by the concept of *kalokagathia*, of the individual as an ethical agent and an artistically structured Self. The "registre" of his thoughts, first formed in the margins of his books, gradually takes shape in his encounter with the lives and works of other men.

"QUE PHILOSOPHER" AND THE STYLE OF LIFE

Although they express certain ideals of action, the early essays[1] prefigure the later pedagogical doctrines of the *Institution*, in which Montaigne sets down his eclecticism:

> . . . les principes d'Aristote ne luy soyent principes, non plus que ceux des Stoiciens ou Epicuriens. Qu'on luy propose cette diversité de jugemens: il choisira s'il peut, sinon il en demeurera en doubte. (c) Il n'y a que les fols certains et resolus. (I, xxvi, 150)

As Montaigne confronts the works of Seneca, he is performing an act of assimilation similar to the pedagogical counsels in the *Institution*. The early essays are, therefore, a striking illustration of the familiar bee metaphor: ". . . ainsi les pieces empruntées

[1] Those written during the period 1572-1574.

d'autruy, il les transformera et confondera, pour en faire un ouvrage tout sien, à sçavoir son jugement. Son institution, son travail et estude ne vise qu'à le former" (I, xxvi, 151). Even in his adaptation of this metaphor and in the concept of assimilation, Montaigne appears to borrow heavily from Seneca's eighty-fourth letter to Lucilius.[2] While Seneca, in the same letter, also uses the extended metaphor of digestion, Montaigne appropriates it in a similar way just prior to the bee metaphor: "C'est tesmoignage de crudité et indigestion que de regorger la viande comme on l'a avalée" (I, xxvi, 150). If, then, he first finds himself confronted by the works of principally stoic authors such as Seneca, the confrontation hardly progresses beyond the level of philosophical fascination and admiration.[3]

The dialog between imagination and order described in "De l'oisiveté" is nowhere more important than in "Que philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir", one of the prime expressions of Montaigne's so-called "stoic period". This essay contains, in seminal form, the introspective progression of the entire work. Without the perspective which it gives to the themes of life and death, the later development of the notions of movement and corporal awareness would be incomplete. Although it does show extensive evidence of the Essayist's contact with Seneca, it would be difficult to build from this essay a case for Montaigne as a stoic. As Thibaudet explains, "dans ce chapitre capital, dans cette consolation de Montaigne à lui-même... Montaigne est tout entier. Il n'est ni épicurien ni stoïcien. Aucune de ces catégories ne s'appliquerait à lui. Il est Montaigne – le philosophe appliqué sur cette idée de la mort."[4]

Here Montaigne is at his eclectic best. Starting with a statement from Cicero ("Philosopher ce n'est autre chose que s'aprester à la mort"), he passes through references to Seneca,

[2] This entire letter deals with the necessity of assimilating one's reading and refers not only to the bee metaphor ("apes, ut aiunt, debemus imitari ..."), but also to the metaphor of digestion, so familiar in the *Essais:* "concoquamus illa: alioqui in memoriam ibunt, non in ingenium."

[3] Thibaudet explains: "Le goût de Montaigne pour le stoïcisme n'implique pas qu'il soit stoïcien" (*Montaigne,* 260).

[4] Thibaudet, *Montaigne,* 63.

Lucretius, Claudian, Horace, Propertius, Catullus, Virgil, Ovid, Maximianus, and Manilius, such citations becoming the pollen which Montaigne gathers to create a product entirely his own. If this essay, then, is a philosophical manipulation of well-worn themes, it is, at the same time, an expression of a personal philosophy. The writer's bookish pilferings tend to enhance his personal insights. The speech of Nature, comprising the last part of the essay, is for example a paraphrase of Seneca and Lucretius; however, it only serves to confirm Montaigne in his private notions about life and death. These references are philosophical touchstones by which Montaigne stands firmly against the shadowed world of the imagination. They comprise that solid legacy of other life styles transmitted to the Humanists by ancient civilization. By incorporating them in the personal essay, Montaigne gives order to the vagaries of his inner, imaginative world: "Il est impossible que d'arrivée nous ne sentions des piqueures de telles imaginations. Mais en les maniant et repassant, au long aller, on les aprivoise sans doubte" (I, xx, 86). This preoccupation of Montaigne regarding the essential themes of life and death is, however, only a philosophical prefiguration of the introspective dimensions of "De l'exercitation" and "De l'expérience".

Between October, 1567, and August, 1570,[5] Montaigne suffered a near-fatal fall from his horse while riding not far from his château. The proximity to death experienced in this accident was to be later recorded in "De l'exercitation"; however, it was first in philosophical terms that Montaigne had to consolidate his impressions on death. Fortunately, the reference to his thirty-ninth birthday, which he celebrated "only two weeks before", enables us to date "Que philosopher" quite accurately: March 15, 1572.[6] With less accuracy, Villey dates "De l'exercitation" between 1573 and 1574.[7] It may be concluded from this effort

[5] This interval is established by Villey. See *Les sources,* I, 359.

[6] The date is established by Villey.

[7] Villey bases his conclusion on the following: (1) Montaigne's reference to "nos troisiesmes troubles ou deuxiesmes" (II, vi, 352), the time at which the accident occurred; and (2) the reference to "quatre ans apres", the time at which he is writing the essay. See *Les sources,* I, 359.

to date both essays and from the organic nature of the entire work that "Que philosopher" was, indeed, composed between Montaigne's accident and "De l'exercitation".

Although there is no specific reference to the accident in "Que philosopher", there is much to indicate that Montaigne's view of death at this time derives from very real impressions, and that perhaps the memory of the accident remains constantly in focus. If in "De l'exercitation" Montaigne writes, "et me sens encore de la secousse de cette froissure" (II, vi, 357), one might anticipate that in "Que philosopher" the memory of this encounter is no less vivid. We must, for example, always be ready for the appearance of death in the most unexpected circumstances: "Au broncher d'un cheval, à la cheute d'une tuille, à la moindre piqueure d'espleingue, remachons soudain: 'Et bien, quand ce seroit la mort mesme?'" (I, xx, 85). We are prey to death in all life's daily experiences: "Et si nous pensons combien il en reste, sans cet accident qui semble nous menasser le plus, de millions d'autres sur nos testes..." (I, xx, 86). The proximity of death to our domestic tranquillity demands that we encounter it, if necessary, only a league from home: "Quelqu'un... trouva un memoire de quelque chose que je vouloy estre faite après ma mort. Je luy dy, comme il estoit vray, que, n'estant qu'à une lieuë de ma maison, et sain et gaillard, je m'estoy hasté de l'escrire là, pour ne m'asseurer point d'arriver jusques chez moy" (I, xx, 86). Except in these general terms, then, "Que philospher" remains a non-retrospective essay.

In the early writings and, above all, in "Que philosopher", the opposition between order and imagination, between the outer and inner Montaigne, sets the stage for the later portrayal of the psychological man. Only in one brief passage does the Essayist here try on the introspective mantle:

> Je suis de moy-mesme non melancholique, mais songe-creux. Il n'est rien dequoy je me soye dès toujours plus entretenu que des imaginations de la mort: voire en la saison la plus licentieuse de mon aage.... Il est impossible que d'arrivée nous ne sentions des piqueures de telles imaginations. Mais en les maniant et repassant au long aller, on les aprivoise sans doubte. (I, xx, 85–86)

Once again, Montaigne is expressing the same psychological fact which brought him to the "mettre en rolle" of "De l'oisiveté", but here he is making a more inclusive statement about his psychological make-up. In the distinction between "melancholique" and "songe-creux", he is defending his attitude toward death as an expression of imaginative fancy and not as a morbid preoccupation with human mortality. These flights of imagination are ineluctable: they are expressions of inner disorder, contrasting clearly with the weighty, corrigible considerations of the individual's judgment. Elsewhere, Montaigne clarifies this important distinction between mind and judgment: "Il semble que ce soit plus le propre de l'esprit d'avoir son operation prompte et soudaine, et plus le propre du jugement de l'avoir lente et posée" (I, x, 41). Montaigne's thoughts on death were, therefore, preformed by his imagination. In the imaginative realm, they remain "promptes" and "soudaines", but in the realm of philosophy, where judgment reigns supreme, they become "lentes" and "posées". The imagination's fortuitous movement is counterbalanced by the premeditated considerations of philosophy.

While Montaigne's preoccupation with the idea of death seems to be preformed in the imagination, it is also confirmed in his encounter with the books on his shelves: ". . . et n'est rien dequoy je m'informe si volontiers, que de la mort des hommes: quelle parole, quel visage, quelle contenance ils y ont eu; ny endroit des histoires, que je remarque si attantifvement" (I, xx, 88). He then goes on to remark: "Si j'estoy faiseur de livres, je feroy un registre commenté des morts diverses" (I, xx, 88). The idea of death becomes here an object of intellectual scrutiny: in the lives of others, death assumes the appearance of a composition whose parts can be analyzed and dissected. The death of Socrates, for example, may be evoked in a parting word, in the philosopher's countenance, or in his general bearing; it is not merely a cessation of life, but that unique moment which enables the individual to play "le dernier acte de sa comedie" (I, xix, 78). As an actor in the play's final moments, he may compose one last gesture, word, and expression, one

last movement of his body. It is the moment when all eyes are on him, when all the histrionic styles of preceding acts suddenly gather for the inevitable finale: "Voylà pourquoy se doivent à ce dernier traict toucher et esprouver toutes les autres actions de nostre vie. C'est le maistre jour, c'est le jour juge de tous les autres . . ." (I, xix, 78-79). Montaigne looks to his books for the models of death, the "sainctes formes", which communicate the act of death as a composition of interlocking parts. The composition's style is purely our own; if all else in life has been false, this final moment lies beyond imitation: ". . . il n'y a plus que faindre, il faut parler François . . ." (I, xix, 78). In this unique moment, our actions can only be measured against our fundamental condition. Montaigne can thus never repeat the death of Cato or Socrates. He admires other deaths, but will later be content to compose a death in conformity with the "homme moyen": "Au Jugement de la vie d'autruy, je regarde tousjours comment s'en est porté le bout; et des principaux estudes de la mienne, c'est qu'il se porte bien, c'est à dire quietement et sourdement" (I, xix, 79).

While the idea of a style of death is really the subject of the preceding essay ("Qu'il ne fault juger de nostre heur qu'après la mort"), in "Que philosopher", this idea takes on a philosophical dimension, albeit a disordered one. In the opening reference to Cicero, Montaigne sets the predominant tone: "Philosopher ce n'est autre chose que s'aprester à la mort" (I, xx, 79). And in this essay, the writer is, indeed, philosophizing. Not content to speak solely of his personal attitude toward death, he seeks from the beginning to involve all humanity in his philosophical disquisition. Using the first person plural pronoun, he constructs a series of such universal principles as that of pleasure: "le plaisir est nostre but" (I, xx, 80); or that of death as Man's common lot: "Le but de nostre carriere, c'est la mort . . ." (I, xx, 82). In a later addition, Montaigne distinguishes at length his personal concept of virtue from the more virile, stoic idea of *virtus* he admires in Cato. From the universal principle of pleasure, attained only through philosophical contemplation, Montaigne then moves to a discussion of the two principal attitudes toward

death. On the one hand, forced to recognize our common lot, we may face death head-on ("Il luy faut faire brider l'asne par la queuë . . ." [I, xx, 82]); on the other, we may try to blindly ignore our ineluctable mortality: "Le remede du vulgaire, c'est de n'y penser pas" (I, xx, 82). In the 1588 edition, the Essayist interlaces these initial reflections with allusions to Horace and Claudian, thereby adding other philosophical confirmations to the earlier Ciceronian references. As an eclectic, Montaigne rarely sets philosophers against each other: should he choose a quotation from Cicero as a philosophical springboard for a discussion on death, his subsequent readings simply add to the patchwork of ideas. Each quotation and reference belongs to a solid legacy of learning embraced and assimilated by the writer. His philosophical musings are thus grounded in the operation of common sense.

It is precisely this common sense philosophy which Montaigne evokes in "Que philosopher": a philosophy which teaches us how to live well by dint of teaching us how to die. Indeed, Montaigne's concept of a life lived well through philosophy is confirmed in a real way by what he reads in Seneca: "Quis dubitare, mi Lucili, potest quin deorum immortalium munus sit quod uiuimus, philosophiae quod bene uiuimus?"[8] For Montaigne, life may be based on either foolish inadvertence or practical common sense. The common sense way is the philosophical way. To philosophize, therefore, is not only to reflect and study; it is to take the age-old, tested concepts of wisdom, assimilating them into a personal code of action. Consequently, the subject of death in "Que philosopher" becomes increasingly caught up in Montaigne's notions of life and Time. Knowledge of death is reflected in our very lives and enables us to live more freely: "La premeditation de la mort est premeditation de la liberté. Qui a apris à mourir, il a desapris à servir. Le sçavoir mourir nous afranchit de toute subjection et contrainte" (I, xx, 85). When the individual has come to a philosophical communication with the idea of death, as the Essayist in the very creation of this essay, life and

[8] *Select Letters,* ed. Walter C. Summers (London: Macmillan, 1910), Letter XC, 116.

Time may be savored as qualitative rather than quantitative states: "L'utilité du vivre n'est pas en l'espace, elle est en l'usage: tel a vescu long temps, qui a peu vescu . . ." (I, xx, 93).

The concept of a style of life takes on here its richest expression. Montaigne does, of course, dream of imitating Cato and Socrates, and if we may believe his own self-appraisal ("Je suis . . . songe-creux"), we realize that this can never be more than idle fancy. He is able to act only in conformity with his condition: "Car il me suffit de passer à mon aise; et le meilleur jeu que je me puisse donner, je le prens, si peu glorieux au reste et exemplaire que vous voudrez . . ." (I, xx, 84). If Montaigne's condition is "songe-creux" and "singeresse", his admiration for other styles of life conforms completely to this condition. His imagination becomes a passport to a boundless world of individual life styles. He can bring nothing back from this world, however, except the concept that each person, as a unique being, must style his life around his essential condition.[9]

To philosophize on death is, then, to formulate a verbal, intellectual, and psychological dominion over this personal life-style. On paper, the idea of death assumes the same fortuitous form ascribed to it in the imagination. The verb "philosopher" has, therefore, a distinctly personal meaning for Montaigne. To philosophize is to seize an idea, such as the initial declaration of Cicero, molding and expanding it through the mechanism of the imagination. To philosophize is to assimilate a philosophical truth and to transform it into a personal statement; to philosophize is to grow in self-awareness, to arrive at a personal interpretation of life. It is to introduce nature into the realm of artifice, an idea crucial to the entire essay: "A la verité, en toutes choses, si nature ne preste un peu, il est malaisé que l'art et l'industrie aillent guiere avant" (I, xx, 85).

[9] Later, in "Du jeune Caton", he formulates more clearly this idea: "Pour n'estre continent, je ne laisse d'advoüer sincerement la continence des Feuillans et des Capuchins, et de bien trouver l'air de leur train; je m'insinue, par imagination, fort bien en leur place. Et si, les ayme et les honore d'autant plus qu'ils sont autres que moy. Je desire singulierement qu'on nous juge chacun à part soy, et qu'on ne me tire en consequence des communs exemples" (I, xxxvii, 225).

At this point in the essay, Montaigne turns briefly to himself in order to describe his own personal view of death. Little by little, the death theme is transmuted into a statement on life and Time – a prefiguration of the introspective material of later essays. Verbally inscribed in the fabric of the essay, the imagination no longer acts in concert with the frightful images of human mortality: "Autrement de ma part je fusse en continuelle frayeur et frenesie; car jamais homme ne se défia tant de sa vie, jamais homme ne feit moins d'estat de sa durée" (I, xx 86). By giving permanent expression to his imagination through philosophical inquiry, Montaigne begins to lose sight of death as an ultimate state to which all time must progress. Death becomes a present actuality to be faced and experienced in the context of life itself. Not only does it surround him, but dwells in him as the sensation of inner change: "A chaque minute il me semble que je m'eschape" (I, xx, 86). In more specific terms, Montaigne's notion of death is, therefore, that feeling of corporal and psychological transmutation bound up in the process of individuation and elaborated in "De l'exercitation". For the moment, he is content to manipulate philosophically that corpus of ideas upon which he is later to construct his introspective world.

The most important of these ideas involves the concept of life as a continuum of useful activity:

> Il ne faut rien desseigner de si longue haleine, ou au moins avec telle intention de se passionner pour n'en voir la fin. Nous sommes nés pour agir . . . Je veux qu'on agisse, (c) et qu'on allonge les offices de la vie tant qu'on peut, (a) et que la mort me treuve plantant mes chous, mais nonchalant d'elle, et encore plus de mon jardin imparfait.
>
> (I, xx, 87)

This emphasis on activity which penetrates the psychology of the *Essais* diverts the individual from a teleological view of life and art as one vast transcendental movement. What man is, he is in the present moment and in the present gesture. His myopia rules out a foreknowledge of the outcome of actions too broad in scope ("de si longue haleine"). On the contrary, the individual must circumscribe his field of activity and act within the limita-

tions of present capacity. Rather than brood over what tomorrow may bring, Montaigne is preoccupied by the more immediate need to act wisely, and in conformity with his condition.[10] The use of the "garden metaphor" ("et que la mort me treuve plantant mes chous") evokes, then, the creative function of activity. Life is a sum of successive actions, each of which is a reduced, circumscribed field of creativity. As such, it can be styled and composed only in the short-run. A style of life – the concept of life as a composition – is based on the individual's adaptation of present resources to wise action. If Montaigne's garden is "imparfait" at the moment of death, it is of little consequence; he has styled his life in harmony with the facts of his psychological condition rather than with a vague ideal. Only at the end of life, in a post-1588 addition, is this notion of a living composition specifically turned upon the idea of death: "Le continuel ouvrage de vostre vie, c'est bastir la mort" (I, xx, 91).

The role of action in Montaigne's personal philosophy leads to a second principle to be later incorporated into his introspective act: namely, the idea of Time, and its attributes of movement and change. In the latter part of his essay, Montaigne speaks through the figure of Nature whose words, in turn, are inspired by Lucretius and Seneca. In changing here to the second person ("vous") address, he views Time through Nature's eyes, and casts off his mortal vision. For Man, Time is teleology, a succession of moments through which he approaches a predetermined end; for Nature, it is cyclical, a recurring pattern of seasons devoid of teleological significance:

> Et, au pis aller, la distribution et varieté de tous les actes de ma comedie se parfournit en un an. Si vous avez pris garde au branle de mes quatre saisons, elles embrassent l'enfance, l'adolescence, la virilité et la vieillesse du monde. Il a joué son jeu. Il n'y sçait autre finesse que de recomencer. Ce sera tousjours cela mesme. (I, xx, 92)

[10] Mansell Jones considers this emphasis on action to be at the very center of Montaigne's introspective technique: "This activist attitude to psychology reveals a French moralist of the great line. The mind . . . in deliberation for action; the perplexities presented by alternatives of action; the meditation which analyses or the dispute which exposes the motives and consequences

Man's position within this cyclical movement is that of a "lopin" of matter whose life cycle is unrenewed, one moment in the repetitive cycle of the universe: "Le mesme passage que vous fites de la mort à la vie, sans passion et sans frayeur, refaites le de la vie à la mort. Vostre mort est une des pieces de l'ordre de l'univers; c'est une piece de la vie du monde" (I, xx, 91).

Man's seasons do not recur: infancy, adolescence, maturity, and old age are stages of his mortal progression. He grows old with the world of living creatures: "Tout ne branle-il pas vostre branle? Y a-il chose qui ne vieillisse quant et vous? Mille hommes, mille animaux et mille autres creatures meurent en ce mesme instant que vous mourez" (I, xx, 93). Movement – the penetration of Time in the body and spirit – becomes an irrevocable fact.

Such, then, are the seminal bases of Montaigne's introspection. In the passages of this essay written during the early period (1572), however, he is not yet fully conscious of the significance of Nature's declarations. He thus closes the essay logically with the description of a deathbed and of the vain ceremony with which we surround death: "Je croy à la verité que ce sont ces mines et appareils effroyables, dequoy nous l'entournons, qui nous font plus peur qu'elle . . ." (I, xx, 94).

An examination of the later additions to this essay reveals a greater elaboration of the themes of life, Time, movement and change. In a word, Montaigne ages in the essay, becoming more conscious of the steady infiltration of corporal decay. Although most of the additions to the essay made between 1580 and 1588 comprise specific quotations from Horace and Lucretius, Montaigne does, in one passage, suggest the almost imperceptible quality of the individual's transformation: "Voyons à ces mutations et declinaisons ordinaires que nous souffrons, comme nature nous desrobbe le goust de nostre perte et empirement.

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of action – such is the stuff of the tragedies of Corneille and Racine .... This explains why he is not introspective in the passive, post-classical manner. It is with the appraisement of the self in adventurous or apprehensive movement that he is concerned, not with the scrutiny of the self immobilized in dejection" (*French Introspectives,* 37).

Que reste-il à un vieillard de la vigueur de sa jeunesse, et de sa vie passée?" (I, xx, 89). As a homogeneous concept, Time is indivisible; its moments of change cannot be distinguished individually from each other.[11] It is, therefore, difficult to discern any real stages in our life; moment passes imperceptibly into moment, and youth into old age:

> Qui y tomberoit tout à un coup, je ne crois pas que nous fussions capables de porter un tel changement. Mais, conduicts par sa main, d'une douce pente et comme insensible, peu à peu, de degré en degré, elle [Nature] nous roule dans ce miserable estat et nous y apprivoise; si que nous ne sentons aucune secousse, quand la jeunesse meurt en nous qui est en essence et en verité une mort plus dure que n'est la mort entiere d'une vie languissante, et que n'est la mort de la vieillesse. (I, xx, 89)

The earlier reference to personal change ("A chaque minute il me semble que je m'eschape") takes on a new perspective in this passage. Montaigne has become more keenly aware of the hitherto impalpable change experienced by his entire being. He now looks retrospectively at the facts of this change, comparing his present state to that of the earlier writings. While in the 1580 edition, he simply declared, "c'est une partie de vous que la mort", in the above addition of the 1588 text, the notion of death in life is explained as the death of youth – a mortal stigma far less easy to bear than death itself.

In the additions contained in the 1595 text, Montaigne is speaking all the more ironically from his grave. It is here that the reader learns the real value of the Essayist's philosophical musings: "Comme celuy qui continuellement me couve de mes pensées et les couche en moy, je suis à tout'heure preparé environ ce que je puis estre. Et ne m'advertira de rien de nouveau la survenance de la mort" (I, xx, 86). In the posthumous edition, Montaigne appears more resigned to the loss of youth; indeed, the lengthy passage on virtue even suggests a distinct hedonism: "Quoy qu'ils dient, en la vertu mesme, le dernier but de nostre visée, c'est la volupté" (I, xx, 80). Death as a personal com-

[11] See Bergson, *L'Evolution créatrice,* for a discussion of homogeneous Time.

position seems now to have lost its savor: while in the 1580 text, life's goal and meaning were centered around death, gloomy finality seems here to have given way to pleasance. The act of philosophizing thus aims at a pedagogy for right living, concerned with teaching the individual how to style his life. A death enacted in conformity with one's nature is more often the outgrowth of a life composed in conformity to that same nature. Upon such an insight, Montaigne may conclude: "Le continuel ouvrage de vostre vie, c'est bastir la mort" (I, xx, 91).

Cicero's declaration has, like Montaigne himself, suffered the mutations of Time in the course of the three editions; however, it appears to be no worse for wear. Rather than a philosophical commentary on the citation, the essay becomes the living actualization of Cicero's words and represents more effectively than any early essay the "pollinations" of Montaigne's creative imagination. He takes the citation, twists it, assays it, and makes it his own: "Je tors bien plus volontiers une bonne sentence pour la coudre sur moy, que je ne tors mon fil pour l'aller querir" (I, xxvi, 171). If, in this assimilative process, the quotation becomes interlaced with Senecan and Lucretian thought, it must be recalled that Montaigne is in the act of consolidating his impressions on death – impressions antedating his readings of Seneca and Lucretius. As he manipulates these impressions by juxtaposing them with bookish corroboration, he is performing a personal act of philosophy.

Montaigne's idea of death is, moreover, transformed by this act. In its initial form, death is viewed as an action which, according to its particular style, reflects favorably or unfavorably on one's entire life. It is that moment in which a man's worth must ring true. While such a notion of death is communicated to Montaigne through his books, there is another less ordered concept communicated through the imagination. Death, as a vagary of the imagination, is no longer seen as a final, composed action, but as an unfamiliar state conceived in apprehension and fear. In order to rid himself of this fear, Montaigne must come to philosophical terms with the subject of death: he builds his essay around the Ciceronian maxim, allowing the world of books

and the world of the shadow to become contingent domains.

At this point of contingency, the introspection of the *Essais* really begins. While he is trying on various readings to see how they fit, Montaigne is simultaneously recording his inner world. It is against these readings that the occasional introspective glimpses of "Que philosopher" stand out in sharp relief. The theme of death, therefore, tends to follow the path of Montaigne's inner world rather than the order of a philosophical system. It is transformed into the more pertinent and crucial theme of how to live and act wisely. Death, as a composition, grows dependent on the concept of life, as a composition. And life can only be composed in the short-run as the individual confronts his constant spiritual and corporal change. His vision of Time is funneled into the present moment where he savors what he is and what he has become, rather than what he will be tomorrow. Death is faced as an omnipresent reality barring the individual from commitment to long-term plans, but nevertheless, permitting him to "jouyr loiallement de son estre" (III, xiii, 1096). When he later declares, "Mon mestier et mon art, c'est vivre" (II, vi, 359), Montaigne refers specifically to the idea of life as a composition branded with his individual stamp. Only by first seeing life as a creative force can he later view his book as an expression of this same creativity; and only by dealing with the concept of a style of art can he arrive at the introspective insight of "De l'exercitation", an essay whose form is an inward extension of "Que philosopher", and which depicts the compression of Time into an event of the creative mind.

THE STYLE OF ART

Montaigne's introspective act is firmly grounded in aesthetic sensitivity. That same stylistic awareness which enables Proust to move from pastiche to personal creation also underlies the Essayist's own literary "pollinations". The assimilative process, affirmed in such early essays as "Que philosopher", is thus not only a philosophical but a stylistic appropriation, the one

apparently dependent on the other.[12] Through pastiche, paraphrase, and citation, he shows, in the early essays, an implicit admiration for the Senecan amble of the *Letters*, a work which appears to be foremost in Montaigne's mind as a prototypal model for the *Essais*. Only in the period from 1574 to 1580, however, does Montaigne begin to exercise a series of conscious, stylistic choices, underscoring in no uncertain terms a preference for Seneca and Plutarch, and a distaste for Cicero. Prior to this period, his stylistic judgments relate solely to the nature of Ciceronian eloquence and its concern with the "bien dire" rather than the "bien faire". The question, then, remains: how do the enticements and pilferings of Senecan style prepare for the creation of a more personal, introspective expression?

Montaigne's anti-Ciceronianism is based on far more than the philosophical and stylistic conventions of the day; his stand is a personal one, taking into account the vagaries of mind and intellect. Memory, for example, is simply a vain and useless ornament, not unlike the linguistic fixtures of Ciceronian eloquence: "Or il ne faut pas attacher le sçavoir à l'ame, il l'y faut incorporer" (I, xxv, 139). The alternative proposed by Montaigne is, therefore, the assimilation of what is in the memory. What he detests most is the mental rigidity caused by unassimilated recollection and language. Whether this rigidity is centered on books which "puent l'huyle et la lampe" (I, x, 41) or on eloquence "qui nous destourne à soy" (I, xxvi, 171), the Essayist is decrying that lethargy and inertia of mind which work against wise thought and action.

On the contrary, the mind is a dynamic force not to be fettered by the trappings of language: "c'est aux paroles à servir et à suyvre . . ." (I, xxvi, 171). In "Du parler prompt et tardif", this spiritual dynamism is further explained in the context of Montaigne's anti-Ciceronianism:

[12] Floyd Gray writes: "Il faut admettre que Montaigne passe par une sorte de période de don-quichottisme philosophique et stylistique où il se considère comme un stoïcien, et où il croit son langage 'simple et naïf, succulent et nerveux, court et serré, vehement et brusque' [T, I, xxvi, 207; 222, 1580]" (*Le Style de Montaigne*, 28).

Je cognois, par experience, cette condition de nature, qui ne peut soustenir une vehemente premeditation et laborieuse. Si elle ne va gayement et librement, elle ne va rien qui vaille. . . . En cette condition de nature, de quoy je parle, il y a quant et quant aussi cela, qu'elle demande à estre non pas esbranlée et piquée par ces passions fortes . . . elle veut estre eschaufée et reveillée par les occasions estrangeres, presentes et fortuites. Si elle va toute seule, elle ne fait que trainer et languir. L'agitation est sa vie et sa grace. (I, x, 41)

Rarely does the Essayist formulate more clearly his psychological mobilism. With the notion of Time compressed into the present moment and the present action, Montaigne's mind is no longer a vehicle for premeditated action, but a force operating randomly in his moral life. A dynamic mind is thus an implement of intuition: except in the instant, fortuitous spark of moral insight and understanding, it is barred from a foreknowledge of right action. Montaigne's thoughts, as well as actions, are rarely premeditated or predictable. The mind, in perpetual agitation, creates these thoughts spontaneously as it moves through the succession of present moments. In contrast to the thought of the Ciceronian period, molded around a central member, and linked by a series of logically placed connectives, Montaigne's thought keeps adding to itself as it encounters what he calls "les occasions estrangeres et fortuites". The dynamic mind is, therefore, the seat of Montaigne's creativity. It is not as a preconceived form that the Self becomes an aesthetic creation, but as a momentary, desultory charge of the intuition: ". . . je ne me trouve pas où je me cherche; et me trouve plus par rencontre que par l'inquisition de mon jugement" (I, x, 41-42).

In light of this psychological dynamism, the aesthetic barbs directed against Cicero in "Consideration sur Ciceron"[13] show evidence of Montaigne's early preoccupation with literary style. Morris Croll observes that Montaigne is, in fact, "the only Anti-Ciceronian who dares to express his independence with perfect frankness".[14] The effort to construct a personal

[13] Although offering no specific proof, Villey dates this essay in the early period: 1572-1574.

[14] "Attic Prose: Lipsius, Montaigne, Bacon", *Schelling Anniversary Papers* (New York: The Century Co., 1923), 127.

style of life inspires a parallel desire to develop a personal style of art. To this end, he speaks out against the false eloquence of the Ciceronian period and against those "lettres vuides et descharnées, qui ne se soutiennent que par un delicat chois de mots, entassez et rangez à une juste cadence. . . . Fy de l'eloquence qui nous laisse envie de soy, non des choses . . ." (I, xl, 246). Only later, during the period 1578-1580, is he able to translate a simple distaste for eloquence into an attack on the underlying forms of Ciceronian style:

> Sa façon d'escrire me semble ennuyeuse, et toute autre pareille façon. Car ses prefaces, definitions, partitions, etymologies, consument la plus part de son ouvrage; ce qu'il y a de vif et de mouelle, est estouffé par ses longueries d'apprets . . . la plus part du temps je n'y treuve que du vent . . . Pour moy, qui ne demande qu'à devenir plus sage, non plus sçavant (c) ou eloquent, (a) ces ordonnances logiciennes et Aristoteliques ne sont pas à propos: je veux qu'on commence par le dernier point. . . . (II, x, 393)

It is, therefore, not only the cadence or eloquence of Cicero's style which offends Montaigne, but the very substance and composition of the period. What substance there is in such a period is lost within a vain accumulation of members ("ses longueries d'apprets") superfluous to the central thought. While the Rhetorician's attention is more drawn to the trappings preceding the central thought and to the way in which their cadence builds to a focal, climactic member, Montaigne seeks to initiate his sentence by the thought itself ("je veux qu'on commence par le dernier point"). In his discussion of "style coupé", Morris Croll explains this process in the following way: "The first member therefore exhausts the mere fact of the idea; logically there is nothing more to say. But it does not exhaust its imaginative truth or the energy of its conception."[15] The thought is caught up in the mind's mobility.

Before Montaigne becomes fully aware of the uniqueness of his stylistic creation, however, he passes through a period of

[15] "The Baroque Style in Prose", *Studies in English Philology – A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1929), 433.

imitation and admiration prefiguring the later introspective style. Gray characterizes this early tendency in two ways.[16] On the one hand, the Essayist seeks to imitate the classical oratorical period, a stylistic vogue shared by many of his contemporaries. But rather than consciously attempt to adhere to the Ciceronian phrase, he adopts its element of movement, constructing around it a "phrase à compartiments, à parenthèses"[17] which prefigures his later style. Such a period, examples of which are found in "De la force de l'imagination", is based on an accumulation of present participles resembling closely the relative clause construction of seventeenth-century prose. On the other hand, as Montaigne's bookish encounters with Seneca become more frequent, his admiration for the "style coupé" becomes central to his literary tastes: "Le parler que j'ayme, c'est un parler simple et naïf, tel sur le papier qu'à la bouche; un parler succulent et nerveux, court et serré . . . plustost difficile qu'ennuieux, esloigné d'affectation, desreglé, descousu et hardy; chaque lopin y face son corps; non pedantesque, non fratesque non pleideresque, mais plustost soldatesque . . ." (I, xxvi, 171).

Morris Croll reveals four significant and interdependent features of the "style coupé":[18] first, the brevity of the members of the period; second, a mode of progression beginning with Montaigne's "dernier point"; third, an assymetrical arrangement of long and short members, or of literal and figurative language; fourth, the omission of connective words. If Montaigne, however, admires this style in Seneca, he is nevertheless performing the same act of assimilation he is also accomplishing on a philosophical level. Just as Seneca's philosophy represents, for him, all that is most natural to man's condition, the Senecan style likewise seems to measure a man's natural faculties. In the first chapter of Book I, the Essayist strikes directly at the heart of the human character: "Certes, c'est un subject merveilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant, que l'homme" (I, i, 13). Later, in precisely the same terms, he focuses this universal judgment

[16] *Le Style de Montaigne,* 23-32.
[17] *Le Style de Montaigne,* 25.
[18] "The Baroque Style in Prose", 435.

on Seneca himself, calling him "plus ondoyant et divers" (II, x, 392). These are qualities he sees in himself and with which he is able to identify. If, therefore, he borrows, translates, and pastiches Seneca's style, he is only assimilating what his own nature and experience have taught him. Both Seneca and Plutarch become, then, the literary patterns for his own enterprise: "Ils ont tous deux cette notable commodité pour mon humeur, que la science que j'y cherche y est traictée à pieces décousues, qui ne demandent pas l'obligation d'un long travail, dequoy je suis incapable . . . Il ne faut pas grande entreprinse pour m'y mettre; et les quitte où il me plait" (II, x, 392).

What Montaigne appears to admire most in Seneca's style is its adaptability to speech ("tel sur le papier qu'à la bouche") – not declamation, but a natural, unpretentious speech conforming closely to the act of thinking. A natural pattern of thought leads to a natural pattern of speech. In Senecan style, the natural pattern of thought is that same unpremeditated, intuitive movement of the mind described early in "Du parler prompt et tardif". Senecan style evokes, then, a prelogical form of thought and speech, recalling Montaigne's reference to Severus Cassius: "qu'il disoit mieux sans y avoir pensé; qu'il devoit plus à la fortune qu'à sa diligence . . ." (I, x, 41). In its prelogical state, thought is unpremeditated and desultory, but never superfluous. Its importance lies in the generative power to bring about a repercussion of successive thoughts, each trying to exhaust the subject's possibilities.

Such an intuitive type of thinking becomes, in Seneca's prose, an act of syntactical generation. The substance of each period lies in the primacy of the thought, devoid of all stylistic ornament. When Montaigne prescribes "le dernier point", he refers specifically to the thought as the core of the sentence, stripped of all unnecessary connective and subordinate clauses. This thought becomes a "lopin" of wisdom, one of those "pieces décousues" so admired in Seneca's style and which seem to dominate his literary tastes throughout his book. Even in the final additions, then, there are numerous examples of Senecan imitation: "Tout ce que vous vivez, vous le desrobez à la vie; c'est

à ses despens. Le continuel ouvrage de vostre vie, c'est bastir la mort. Vous estes en la mort pendant que vous estes en la vie. Car vous estes après la mort quand vous n'estes plus en vie" (I, xx, 91). Such examples present a sequence of compacted truths which fall on the page according to their mental order. Their lack of syntactical connectives seems to enhance their aphoristic function. Each thought is a particle of wisdom organically related to its predecessor and capable of generating its own context and sequence of ideas. However, if Montaigne still admires, in the later additions, the "style coupé" of Seneca, the fusion of the "style coupé" with the oratorical period produces in Book III a personal style to be incorporated into the more introspective essays.[19]

The stylistic assimilation of the early essays and the later critical judgments of "Des livres" seem to parallel, in a very real way, the philosophical assimilation already alluded to in "Que philosopher". In both cases, the encounter with his own psychological make-up guides Montaigne to certain, well-defined philosophical and stylistic insights. Just as his philosophical manipulation of the death theme is generated in the imagination, so his attempt to assimilate the movement of the oratorical period and the Senecan "style coupé" reflects a closer identification with those organic mental traits outlined in "Du parler prompt et tardif".

Because of its adaptability to the concepts of life and Time discussed philosophically in "Que philosopher", the Senecan style is well-suited to the portrayal of these organic traits. The view of life as a depth concept, to be composed and styled in the short-run, finds, for example, its most valid expression in a style which moves in a similarly circumscribed way. The initial placement of the "dernier point" draws the reader's attention to the supremacy of the idea. The idea, in turn, is potentially re-

[19] This amalgamation of the "phrase coupée" and the "phrase oratoire" is proposed by Gray as a part of the evolution towards Montaigne's personal style. See *Le Style de Montaigne,* 29-32. On the other hand, Morris Croll, in both his articles ("The Baroque Style" and "Attic Prose") appears to neglect the influence of the sixteenth-century oratorical period in the early style of Montaigne.

percussive and suggestive to the writer's imagination. Successive ideas thereby become expansions of thought. While their syntactical structures are similar, the ideas themselves are modified by slight changes in form, such as in the previously cited example of Senecan style: "Vous estes en la mort pendant que vous estes en la vie. Car vous estes après la mort quand vous n'estes plus en vie." The syntactical pattern of pronoun, verb, prepositional phrase, and conjunctive clause, remains unchanged. A new idea, however, is generated from the same form by the simple transformation of preposition ("en" to "après") and conjunction ("pendant" to "quand"), and by verbal negation. The new idea leans so tightly upon its preceding form that it is more correctly an extension of the initial idea rather than an entirely new thought. While the philosophical truth is essentially unaltered in the words "Vous estes", "la mort", and "la vie", the seemingly incidental connectives (prepositions and conjunctions) forming the period's skeletal structure become the significant factors of this generative act.

The temporal message conveyed by the "style coupé" is a second concept already elaborated on a philosophical level in "Que philosopher". For Montaigne, present actions conform to present capacities: "Mes actions sont reglées et conformes à ce que je suis et à ma condition. Je ne puis faire mieux" (III, ii, 791). The passing moment becomes the significant unit of Time for the creative act. The writer's subject is richly suggestive, but ultimately resistant to the exhaustive probe of mind and pen: "Je ne puis asseurer mon object. Il va trouble et chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle. Je le prens en ce point, comme il est, en l'instant que je m'amuse à luy. Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage . . ." (III, ii, 782).

This literary compression of Time, explained in the later terms of "Du repentir", is, in fact, a natural component of the "style coupé". As in the following example, words are repercussive, taking on associative meanings: "Il est incertain où la mort nous attende, attendons la partout. La premeditation de la mort est premeditation de la liberté. Qui a apris à mourir, il a desapris à servir. Le sçavoir mourir nous afranchit de toute subjection et

contrainte" (I, xx, 85). The reader is here once again jolted by the spontaneity of brief, antithetical phrases, and of the organic ties between certain words. In the first period, the idea of death is twisted antithetically between two concepts: the uncertainty of a death which awaits us versus the certainty of a death which we await. The verb "attendre", occupying the focal point of the antithesis, reinforces the idea of premeditation. In turn, the word "premeditation" becomes the pivotal point of the following phrase, binding the antithetical notions of death and freedom. The antithesis then undergoes a syntactical transposition, the substantives of the preceding phrase changing to inflected and infinitive verb forms. Moreover, there is an implicit association between the theme of premeditation and the verb "apprendre",[20] followed in the last phrase by "le sçavoir mourir". These phrases are thereby bound together not only through their corresponding antithetical elements, but also in the association between the concepts of awaiting death ("attendre"), of premeditating death ("préméditer"), of learning to die ("apprendre"), and of knowing how to die ("savoir"). Such a semantic association, linking concise, aphoristic phrases, describes, in a real way, the act of reflection and conception which is at the basis of Montaigne's temporal vision.

Time in the "style coupé" is, thus, a heterogeneous notion. Each phrase serves as a temporal unit, a moment in an ongoing process of conceptual and syntactical generation. This is precisely what Morris Croll refers to when he describes the progress of the Senecan period "as a series of imaginative moments occurring in a logical pause or suspension."[21] As the first critic to deal at length with Montaigne's "associationisme", Thibaudet is close to formulating the same idea: "Ainsi Montaigne ne procède pas par composition et disposition active, mais par association et dissociation passive. Tout est dans tout... L'écriture reproduit pour Montaigne cette continuité mouvante de la

[20] It should be noted that this phrase ("qui a apris à mourir...") is translated from Seneca's twenty-sixth letter and, as such, illustrates Montaigne's early admiration for Senecan style.

[21] "The Baroque Style", 433.

pensée, et non pas cet ordre méthodique, discontinu, extérieur, qui lui est suspect."[22] This heterogeneous image of Time, susceptible to stylistic portrayal through syntactical concision, a sparing use of connectives, and an association of ideas is, then, entirely compatible with Montaigne's admiration for Seneca whom he finds so "ondoyant et divers". On the other hand, "Que philosopher" also reveals the more homogeneous view of movement and change, temporal qualities inconsistent with the choppy aphorisms of the Senecan amble.

Time, as homogeneity, cannot easily be partitioned into "lopins", units, and stages. The statement "A chaque minute il me semble que je m'eschape" (I, xx, 86) affirms the philosophical and psychological reality of change which is to assume a stylistic dimension in the post-1580 essays. But before introspection and style merge, the concision of Senecan expression is counterbalanced by the rambling gait of oratorical prose.[23]

Time, conceived as one vast, pulsating movement, seems to endow all phenomena with a field of kinetic energy – an energy which becomes, above all, a stylistic force for Montaigne. In describing the dynamism and originality of the Essayist's early narrative style, Gray explains "C'est une phrase qui refuse de prendre fin, qui avance en accumulant les détails; une phrase qui veut tout dire, qui n'est jamais satisfaite d'elle-même, qui, se tournant lentement dans toutes les directions, nous décrit ce qu'elle voit."[24] While this period is simply a propaedeutic stage for what Morris Croll terms the "loose" or "libertine" style, it expresses nevertheless, an essential energy capable of transcribing the mind's intuitive, unpremeditated movement. One striking example of this period occurs in "De la force de l'imagination":

[22] *Montaigne,* 83-84.

[23] Gray distinguishes this oratorical period from its prototype in Ciceronian style: "Mais nous ne nous trouvons pas devant une période cicéronienne dont la construction est circulaire, plutôt devant une phrase à compartiments, à parenthèses, qui avance en s'appuyant sur des participes présents" (See *Le Style de Montaigne,* 25).

[24] *Le Style de Montaigne,* 26.

Car je sçay par experience, que tel, de qui je puis respondre comme de moy mesme, en qui il ne pouvoit choir soupçon aucune de foiblesse, et aussi peu d'enchantement, ayant ouy faire le conte à un sien compagnon, d'une defaillance extraordinaire, en quoy il estoit tombé sur le point qu'il en avoit le moins de besoin, se trouvant en pareille occasion, l'horreur de ce conte lui vint à coup si rudement frapper l'imagination, qu'il en encourut une fortune pareille. (I, xxi, 97)

This example is a particularly effective representation of energic movement in Montaigne's early style. All sense of syntactical unity is destroyed. The first few words ("Car je sçay par experience, que tel . . .") prepare logically for what the reader assumes will be a conjunctive clause introduced by "que". From this point on, however, the Essayist is beset by indecision. He confronts the subject "tel" (referring to the man from whom he borrows this tale) and is suddenly barraged simultaneously by all the circumstances and qualities of the experience. For this reason, the reader at first anticipates the verb of which "tel" is the subject, but then encounters a mass of detail distracting him from the unfinished clause. Falling on the heels of two relative clause constructions ("de qui" and "en qui"), the present participle "ayant" suspends the action of "tel", and prolongs this action by amassing another series of phrases and clauses. At this point, the reader has all but forgotten his original anticipation of the verb; rather he finds himself enmeshed in a syntactical labyrinth from which his only escape lies in a long-awaited resolution. Unfortunately, however, this resolution, beginning with "l'horreur de ce conte", offers only false hopes, projecting the entire period upon a new syntactical level beyond the resolution of the initial clause "que tel". To be a logical syntactical unit, the period, therefore, would have to read: "Car je sçay par experience que . . . l'horreur de ce conte lui vint. . . ."

Just as there is often an association of words and ideas in Montaigne's style, there is also an association of sentence particles. As in the above example, the period appears to generate itself, clause growing from clause without any resolution of the initial syntactical development. The very essence of the experience – the tale of sexual impotence – hovers suspended

within the present participle clauses. For this reason, the final statement ("l'horreur de ce conte") is generated from and resolves the two present participle clauses rather than the initial clause "que tel". The reader's attention is thus concentrated on the movement and generation of clauses rather than on the period's syntactical arrangement. Each particle appears as a temporal unit, one moment falling fortuitously upon the next. Any formal trajectory of subject, verb, complement is ill-adapted to such dynamism. In this way, the style of art becomes, then, the meaningful extension of Montaigne's style of life. Only through the exposition of these complementary styles can the Essayist move along the literary continuum which encompasses his project of individuation.

PART THREE

INTROSPECTIVE EXPRESSION

5

INNER SPACE

The notion of psychological interiority can be traced back to the philosophical inquiries of Plato and Socrates, in which the human mind is no less a living organism than man's biological constitution. It remains for Montaigne, however, to transpose this philosophical *locus* onto a first-personal plane. The allegorical ascent from the Cave lies beyond his psychological grasp: a set of mental "orbières"[1] restrains his moral outreach, binding him to a terrestrial resolution of ethical goals: "Car de faire la poignée plus grande que le poing, la brassée plus grande que le bras... cela est impossible et monstrueux. Ny que l'homme se monte au dessus de soy et de l'humanité: car il ne peut voir que de ses yeux, ny saisir que de ses prises" (II, xii, 588). The first-personal or "I" relationship is, therefore, a circumscription of mind and body – a restriction to certain corporal and spiritual limitations. The "orbières" or blinders placed upon the physical and mental vision turn the individual's attention inward to the metaphorical reality of inner space. Montaigne thus seeks to verbalize a psychological depth dimension, a spiritual topography to be conceptualized and inscribed as a literary form:

Le monde regarde tousjours vis à vis; moy, je replie ma veue au dedans, je la plante, je l'amuse là. Chacun regarde devant soy; moy, je regarde dedans moy: je n'ay affaire qu'à moy, je me considere sans

[1] The term is borrowed from a significant passage of the *Apologie* in which may be seen echoes of the *Practical Criterion* of classical Scepticism: "C'est un outrageux glaive que l'esprit... Et n'y a point de beste à qui plus justement il faille donner des orbieres pour tenir sa veuë subjecte et contrainte devant ses pas, et la garder d'extravaguer ny çà, ny là, hors les ornieres que l'usage et les loix luy tracent" (II, xii, 541-42).

cesse, je me contrerolle, je me gouste. Les autres vont tousjours ailleurs, s'ils y pensent bien; ils vont tousjours avant . . . moy je me roulle en moy mesme. (II, xvii, 641)

The universe of inner space, revealed through Montaigne's conceptualization, is a void of infinite distances and metamorphoses, no less boundless than the reaches of outer space. Referring to the act of self-knowledge, he declares: "Moy qui ne faicts autre profession, y [in introspection] trouve une profondeur et variété si infinie, que mon apprentissage n'a autre fruict que de me faire sentir combien il me reste à apprendre" (III, xiii, 1052). There is, then, a sensation of inner magnitude which the individual confronts in circumscribing his field of experience to the Self.[2] In one of the most incisive introspective passages of the *Essais*, Montaigne describes the gloomy opacity of this inner universe, underscoring the images of interiority and inner energy formed in the individuating mind:

C'est une espineuse entreprinse, et plus qu'il ne semble, de suyvre une alleure si vagabonde que celle de nostre esprit; de penetrer les profondeurs opaques de ses replis internes; de choisir et arrester tant de menus airs de ses agitations. . . . Il n'est description pareille en difficulté à la description de soy-mesmes, ny certes en utilité. (II, vi, 358)

Elsewhere the literary conceptualization is less obscure, as in the following comparison of the introspective act to the ocean's violent surge:

Cette opinion et usance commune de regarder ailleurs qu'à nous a bien pourveu à nostre affaire. C'est un objet plein de mescontentement; nous n'y voyons que misere et vanité. Pour ne nous desconforter, nature a rejetté bien à propos l'action de nostre veuë au dehors. Nous allons en avant à vau l'eau, mais de rebrousser vers nous nostre course c'est un mouvement penible: la mer se brouille et s'empesche ainsi quand elle est repoussée à soy. (II, ix, 979)

[2] Ira Progoff, in *Depth Psychology and Modern Man* (New York: Julian Press, 1959), explains that the word "depth", as used in depth psychology, "refers to the magnitude of human personality". But while "depth" in conventional usage may refer quite literally to a spatial level in the sense that a river runs deep, the depth dimension of the inner man describes the potential for wholeness and becoming inherent in the human personality.

In no uncertain terms, he thus takes this act as an ethical imperative whose message has been emblazoned on his mind by the Delphic admonition:

> Regardez dans vous, reconnoissez vous, tenez vous à vous; vostre esprit et vostre volonté, qui se consomme ailleurs, ramenez la en soy; vous vous escoulez, vous vous respandez; appilez vous, soutenez vous; on vous trahit, on vous dissipe, on vous desrobe à vous. Voy tu pas que ce monde tient toutes ses veues contraintes au dedans et ses yeux ouverts à se contempler soy-mesme? C'est tousjours vanité pour toy, dedans et dehors, mais elle est moins vanité quand elle est moins estendue. Sauf toy, ô homme, disoit ce Dieu, chaque chose s'estudie la premiere.... (III, ix, 979–80)

The concentration of the individual's creative energies upon the notion of interiority is no easy task, as these passages clearly indicate. What Montaigne is proposing is man's containment within his own psychological constitution – a constitution buffeted by change and agitation. The essay's function in the introspective act thus involves the selection and stabilization ("choisir et arrester" [II, vi, 358]) of this inner mobility. In the second passage, the image of the sea, for example, depicts introspection as a suspension of the normal, linear flow of life and Time. More than a simple stylistic device, the image, in fact, serves to conceptualize Montaigne's imaginative flights. The sea, as a phenomenon of the natural world, is absorbed into the introspective message, conveying the pictorial reality of inner space.

If the individual is to successfully concentrate his creative powers upon the inner world, however, he must also come to terms with the crucial question of temporality – an idea expressed in the philosophical and stylistic discussions of the previous chapter. When the maturing personality turns to the reaches of inner space, its view of Time likewise takes on a depth dimension, burning behind it the bridges to past and future. In the final passages of the *Apologie,* Montaigne describes the concepts of past and future as "declinaisons, passages ou vicissitudes de ce qui ne peut durer, ny demeurer en estre" (II, xii, 588). Past and future are thus the time frames of human reason, that faculty which tends to filter out present actuality: "la raison le [Time]

descouvrant le destruit tout sur le champ: car elle le fend incontinent et le part en futur et en passé . . ." (II, xii, 588). Later, when Time seems to have run its course, the Essayist grasps at the fleeting moment; the depth dimension intrudes more forcefully on the corporal consciousness of the introspective mind:

> Principallement à cette heure que j'aperçoy la mienne [Life] si briefve en temps, je la veux estendre en pois; je veus arrester la promptitude de sa fuite par la promptitude de ma sesie; et par la vigueur de l'usage compenser la hastivité de son escoulement; à mesure que la possession du vivre est plus courte, il me la faut rendre plus profonde et plus pleine. (III, xiii, 1092)

As Montaigne circumscribes his mode of existence within the boundaries of inner space, he is thus also circumscribing the flow of Time within a similar state of interiority.

Psychological interiority, for Montaigne, is by no means a philosophical abstraction; it is a real, spatial universe possessing its own geographic landscape and depicted in the numerous allusions to a psychological focus within the individual. In fact, in his repeated attempts to portray the human soul, he is far closer to expressing a psychological phenomenon than in resurrecting traditional philosophical stands. Only in the *Apologie* does his curiosity lead him to a formulation of classical approaches to the soul's placement: "Il n'y a pas moins de dissention ny de debat à la [Soul] loger. Hipocrates et Hierophilus la mettent au ventricule du cerveau; Democritus et Aristote, par tout le corps . . . Epicurus, en l'estomac . . . Les Stoïciens, autour et dedans le coeur; Erasistratus, joignant la membrane de l'epicrane . . ." (II, xii, 525). Although refusing to join in this "dissention", Montaigne does lean toward a more plausible mind-soul concept, taking into account the soul's phenomena as well as location:

> Et la plus vraysemblable de leurs opinions est que c'est tousjours une ame qui, par sa faculté, ratiocine, se souvient, comprend, juge, desire et exerce toutes ses autres operations par divers instrumens du corps . . . et qu'elle loge au cerveau: ce qui apert de ce que les blessures et accidens qui touchent cette partie, offencent incontinent les facultez de l'ame; de là, il n'est pas inconvenient qu'elle s'escoule par le reste du corps. . . . (II, xii, 528–29)

By reasoning, remembering, understanding, judging, and desiring, the soul exercises certain well-defined psychological functions within what Montaigne calls the "prison corporelle" (II, xii, 530).

As a centering activity, the act of individuation is characterized by the attempt to come to terms with a focal, psychological foundation within the individual, or with what the Essayist calls the soul and variations on a soul concept: for example, "esprit", "patron", "assiette", and "siège". He is, therefore, not interested in the philosophical, but in the psychological dimensions of the soul as a central ethical authority:

> Nous autres principalement, qui vivons une vie privée qui n'est en montre qu'à nous, devons avoir estably un patron au dedans, auquel toucher nos actions, et, selon iceluy, nous caresser tantost, tantost nous chastier. J'ay mes loix et ma court pour juger de moy, et m'y adresse plus qu'ailleurs. (III, ii, 785)

This example is especially effective because it once again gives to a psychological notion a point of reference with the external world: corresponding to an external political authority, there is also an inner realm of moral jurisdiction ("ma court") with its own set of laws. In order for our actions to adhere to this central authority, they must begin and end with ourselves:

> La carriere de nos desirs doit estre circonscripte et restraincte à un court limite des commoditez les plus proches et contigües; et doit en outre leur course se manier, non en ligne droite qui face bout ailleurs, mais en rond, duquel les deux pointes se tiennent et terminent en nous par un brief contour. (III, x, 988)

A concept of inner space is based, then, upon the sensation that the inner universe is no less susceptible to man's speculative and investigative curiosity than its outer counterpart: "il faut sonder jusqu'au dedans, et voir par quels ressors se donne le bransle; mais, d'autant que c'est une hazardeuse et haute entreprinse, je voudrois que moins de gens s'en meslassent" (II, i, 321). At a central point within this inner universe, there is a psychological foundation upon which the individual can construct the entire range of his ethical conduct. Introspection, then, is not simply a gratuitous attempt at self-portraiture, but serves an

eminently practical end. For Montaigne, the soul exceeds the bounds of metaphysical reality; it is a basic nucleus of psychological resources which lead man to the world of action.

The traditional questions involving immortality and the soul's composition play only a minor role in the *Essais,* except as they serve the Pyrrhonism of the *Apologie.* On the contrary, as was already suggested, the metaphor redeems the notion of interiority from vain and formless abstraction. It is not by metaphysical speculation, but by figurative language that Montaigne gives form and substance to his concept of soul:

> Mais en bon escient, comme le bras estant haussé pour frapper, il nous deult, si le coup ne rencontre et qu'il aille au vent; aussi que pour rendre une veuë plaisante, il ne faut pas qu'elle soit perduë et escartée dans le vague de l'air, ains qu'elle aye bute pour la soustenir à raisonnable distance . . . de mesme il semble que l'ame esbranlée et esmeuë se perde en soy-mesme, si on ne luy donne prinse; il faut tousjours luy fournir d'objet où elle s'abutte et agisse. (I, iv, 25)

No metaphysics here! As a real psychological phenomenon evoking a real internal landscape, the soul is portrayed in spatial dimensions – a substance requiring a specific object upon which to act. Montaigne chooses, therefore, two similes which refer to external, corporal activity: the movement of the arm in space, and the aimless direction of the vision. The placement of the similes before the focal idea draws the reader into the metaphorical world before his mind is allowed to dwell on the idea itself. Arriving, then, at the central thought, the reader becomes aware of the spatial connection between the actions of arm, vision, and soul; indeed, this is part of the passage's conceptual nucleus: the soul must not lose itself ("se perde") to abstraction. It must occupy space, fill the inner void, and act upon a firm, palpable object: "L'ame qui n'a point de but estably, elle se perd: car, comme on dict, c'est n'estre en aucun lieu, que d'estre par tout" (I, viii, 34).

The traditional dichotomy of body and soul thus becomes meaningless and is supplanted by the concept of individual wholeness. It is toward this totality that individuation aims; to individuate is ultimately to bridge the gap between the inner and

outer man: "Je veux que la bienseance exterieure, et l'entregent, (c) et la disposition de la personne, (a) se façonne quant et quant l'ame. Ce n'est pas une ame, ce n'est pas un corps qu'on dresse, c'est un homme; il n'en faut pas faire à deux" (I, xxvi, 164). Elsewhere, in more dynamic terms, Montaigne writes:

> Ceux qui veulent desprendre nos deux pieces principales et les sequestrer l'une de l'autre, ils ont tort. Au rebours, il les faut r'accoupler et rejoindre. Il faut ordonner à l'ame non de se tirer à quartier, de s'entretenir à part, de mespriser et abandonner le corps . . . mais de se r'allier à luy, de l'embrasser, le cherir, luy assister, le contreroller, le conseiller, le redresser et ramener quand il fourvoye, l'espouser en somme et luy servir de mary; à ce que leurs effects ne paroissent pas divers et contraires, ains accordans et uniformes.
>
> (II, xvii, 622–23)

In this example, figurative expression once again gives the soul a spatial extension on an equal basis with that of the body. The nature of the metaphor, however, presents a distinct contrast to the example cited earlier in which the thought was introduced by two similes.

Whereas the first of the above examples, taken from an early passage, illustrates what Gray terms "l'image statique", the second, from "De la praesumption", evokes "l'image dynamique . . . qui provoque la pensée, appelle la phrase, lui donne son mouvement".[3] Free of all analogical connectives, the thought gradually builds in movement toward the climactic "en somme" in which the metaphor finds its resolution. Until this climactic point, there is a concentration of metaphorical suggestiveness in the verb forms themselves. The infinitives "r'accoupler" and "rejoindre" prefigure the specific reference to conjugal union. The soul affects a feminine disdain and coquettishess toward the body which, in turn, corresponds to the male partner: such traits as pride, scorn, and infidelity are suggested in the verbs "se tirer à quartier", "s'entretenir à part", "mespriser", and "abandonner". On the other hand, "r'allier", "embrasser", "cherir", "assister",

[3] *Le Style de Montaigne*, 153. "L'image statique est celle qui suit la pensée, la clarifie; c'est l'illustration visuelle que l'écrivain donne à sa pensée abstraite".

"contreroller", "conseiller", "redresser", all suggest positive aspects of the feminine character. The metaphorical richness of these verbs and the traits they evoke build, then, to the unequivocal metaphor, "l'espouser en somme et luy servir de mary". Following this resolution of the metaphor, the thought evolves logically to the theme of corporal and spiritual union. Once again, all feeling of abstraction is erased not only by Montaigne's attempt to deal metaphorically with inner space, but also through a reconciliation of the inner and outer man.

In keeping with this male-female dichotomy, the body, marked by uniformity, and the soul, marked by diversity, also take on certain masculine-feminine features:

> Le corps n'a, sauf le plus et le moins, qu'un train et qu'un pli. Elle [Soul] est variable en toute sorte de formes, et renge à soy et à son estat, quel qu'il soit, les sentiments du corps et tous autres accidens. Pourtant la faut-il estudier et enquerir, et esveiller en elle ses ressors tout-puissans. Il n'y a raison, ny prescription, ny force, qui puisse contre son inclination et son chois. (I, xiv, 57)

The masculine rigidity and uniformity with which the individual faces the outer world enables him to plan his activity around certain social goals. The confidence and self-discipline surrounding the creation of his *persona* and the linear development of life stand in contrast to the depth concept of personality. Whereas a more masculine, stoic ideal can help the individual to forge his life in the outer world, the inner world is characterized by feminine whim and psychological complexity. The individuation process, therefore, demands a reconciliation of the individual's outer uniformity with those "ressors tout-puissans" which forms his inner complexity. The rigidity of man's husk must be welded to the suppleness of his core. If Montaigne seeks to extricate the soul from metaphysical abstraction, he is, in fact, transforming it into an empirical substance subject to portrayal in concrete, metaphorical terms. His psychological diversity remains in touch with the pen strokes of the writer:

> Je donne à mon ame tantost un visage, tantost un autre, selon le costé où je la couche. Si je parle diversement de moy, c'est que je me

regarde diversement. Toutes les contrarietez s'y trouvent selon quelque tour et en quelque façon . . . quiconque s'estudie bien attentifvement trouve en soy, voire et en son jugement mesme, cette volubilité et discordance. Je n'ay rien à dire de moy, entierement, simplement et solidement, sans confusion eet sans meslange, ny en un mot.
(II, i, 319)

Thus, the concept of inner space, for Montaigne, always remains a metaphorical landscape, what Gray terms "une topographie de son imagination".[4]

The second mechanism by which Montaigne conceptualizes his sense of inner space involves the direction and progression of thought. While the previous chapter of this study examined Montaigne's early recognition of intuitive personality and its confirmation in two specific literary styles, the *Essais* are more than the mere outgrowth of intuitive personality. They are, in a very real way, expressions of intuitive thought.[5] For this reason, Montaigne's intuitive mind is often seeking and creating those images which best express an inner dimension. Their verbal expression thus has more the appearance of fortuitous encounter than consciously applied introspection:

. . . je ne me trouve pas où je me cherche; et me trouve plus par rencontre que par l'inquisition de mon jugement. J'aurai eslancé quelque subtilité en escrivant . . . Je l'ay si bien perdue que je ne sçay ce que j'ay voulu dire . . . Si je portoy le rasoir par tout où cela m'advient, je me desferoy tout. Le rencontre m'en offrira le jour quelque autre fois plus apparent que celuy du midy; et me fera estonner de mon hesitation. (I, x, 41–42)

Montaigne's intuition cannot act in a concordant way with the preconceived goals of judgment: his introspection proceeds ran-

[4] *Le Style de Montaigne,* 165.

[5] In his helpful discussion of psychological types, Jung draws certain conclusions about intuition and interiority which are curiously similar to the stand taken by Montaigne: "Intuition . . . is directed upon the inner object, a term we might justly apply to the elements of the unconscious. For the relation of inner objects to consciousness is entirely analogous to that of outer objects, although theirs is a psychological and not a physical reality. Inner objects appear to the intuitive perception as subjective images of things" (*Psychological Types* [New York and London: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1923], 505).

domly and gropingly, rather than as a premeditated attempt at self-portraiture. There are, however, two kinds of judgment: if, on the one hand, there is rational judgment which arrives at firm conclusions and final statements about the universe, there is also an intuitive (but not necessarily irrational) judgment which perceives the momentary richness of phenomenological data without reaching the limits of sure knowledge. Referred to early in the *Institution* as the "jugement naturel" (I, xxvi, 144), the intuitive judgment is constantly in a state of trial, receiving and always scrutinizing the changing panorama of the Essayist's meditations. Acting upon the literary subject, it draws the greater essay together through an agglomeration of lesser, more tentative "essais". The essay then, becomes the ultimate testing ground for the joust of judgment and ideas:

> Quant aux facultez naturelles qui sont en moy, dequoy c'est icy l'essay, je les sens flechir sous la charge. Mes conceptions et mon jugement ne marche qu'à tastons, chancelant, bronchant et chopant; et quand je suis allé le plus avant que je puis, si ne me suis-je aucunement satisfaict; je voy encore du païs au delà, mais d'une veuë trouble et en nuage, que je ne puis desmeler. (I, xxvi, 145)

The intuitive judgment thus operates within the circumscription of present time. It seeks, but does not always discover. No sooner has it arrived at an apparent touchstone of moral wisdom than it opens onto another "païs au delà". It can discern clearly only what confronts it in the confines of the present; all else is murky and nebulous.

In light of these intuitive perceptions, the direction Montaigne gives to his thought as it seeks out the contours of the essay's subject is likewise characterized by a sense of inner space. In "De Democritus et Heraclitus", it is once again the metaphor which rescues this psychological truth from vain abstraction:

> Le jugement est un util à tous subjects, et se mesle par tout. A cette cause, aux essais que j'en fay ici, j'y employe toute sorte d'occasion. Si c'est un subject que je n'entende point, à cela mesme je l'essaye, sondant le gué de bien loing; et puis, le trouvant trop profond pour ma taille, je me tiens à la rive; et cette reconnoissance de ne pouvoir passer outre, c'est un traict de son effect, voire de ceux dequoy il se vante le plus. (I, l, 289)

The subjects Montaigne confronts throughout the *Essais* are all potentially open to such soundings. Each one is rich in imaginative complexity and contains a boundless network of suggestive truths. The Essayist's mind does not seek to come to *a priori* terms with these subjects; an ordered development through deductive thought would negate the tentative meaning of the term "essai". Intuitive thinking strikes at the subject's depth rather than its breadth, thereby precluding the construction of deductive bridges: "J'y donne une poincte, non pas le plus largement, mais le plus profondement que je sçay" (I, 1, 289).

Montaigne's probing of subject defies, then, all attempts at philosophical scope and comprehensiveness, but rather strikes at an unpredictable, largely unexplored point: "Et aime plus souvent à les [chaque chose] saisir par quelque lustre inusité" (I, 1, 289). His vision, myopic in breadth but lucid in depth, assumes only fragmented literary forms:

> Car je ne voy le tout de rien . . . Je me hazarderoy de traitter à fons quelque matiere, si je me connoissoy moins. Semant icy un mot, icy un autre, eschantillons despris de leur piece, escartez, sans dessein et sans promesse, je ne suis pas tenu d'en faire bon, ny de m'y tenir moy mesme, sans varier quand il me plaist; et me rendre au doubte et incertitude, et à ma maistresse forme, qui est l'ignorance. (I, 1, 289-90)

Just as the notion of interiority reveals the inner magnitude of personality, the depth concept observed in Montaigne's attitude to his subject also discloses the inner magnitude and suggestiveness of the world of ideas. Interiority is a psychological function not only expressed through the metaphors of inner space, but through the intuitive direction of the writer's thought. All subjects, no matter how impersonal, are inevitably turned back upon the "I" relationship. The inner complexity of those "ressors tout-puissans" manages continually to personalize man's vision of the outer world:

> Joint qu'elle [Soul] se couche entiere sur chasque matiere, et s'y exerce entiere, et n'en traitte jamais plus d'une à la fois. Et la traitte non selon elle, mais selon soy. Les choses, à part elles, ont peut estre leurs poids et mesures et conditions; mais au dedans, en nous, elle les leur taille comme elle l'entend. (I, 1, 290)

The subjects to which Montaigne turns are held against the background of personal experience and take shape through contact with an inner dimension, a technique illustrated nowhere more forcefully than in "Des coches".

At first glance, one might expect the coach, as the essay's subject, to occupy a focal place in the discussion; such, however, is not the case. To Montaigne's intuitive mind, objects often become the affective supports of thoughts and emotions. Indeed, there is nothing inherent in the coach itself to justify an extended elaboration, but when the Writer allows his mind to explore the object's inner magnitude and suggestiveness, the coach becomes the entire support for his reflections. It must be probed by the intelligence and examined in its affective power upon the Writer. Since the psychological data surrounding the creation of each essay are continually changing, so Montaigne's intuition must strike as deeply as possible into the subject, for second glances may call forth an entirely new set of experiences. The comparison of the essay's subject to a river, in "De Democritus et Heraclitus" is, therefore, not inappropriate because the act of assaying involves a momentary plunge of intuitive judgment into the subject's mutating landscape. The coach is never simply a coach: it is an object constantly affecting the trials and tests of the Writer's mind.

The opening passages of the essay deal with fear, especially as it relates to Montaigne's personal experience. He first takes a remark of Plutarch on the origin of seasickness and its ties with fear, relates this judgment to himself, concluding that fear has really little to do with his own propensity to seasickness: "Nature, m'ayant descouvert d'un costé, m'a couvert de l'autre; m'ayant desarmé de force, m'a armé d'insensibilité et d'une apprehension reiglée ou mousse" (III, vi, 878). Following this circuitous path, Montaigne finally broaches the subject of his essay: "Or je ne puis souffrir long temps . . . ny coche, ny littiere, ny bateau; et hay toute autre voiture que de cheval, et en la ville et aux champs . . . c'est un remuement interrompu qui m'offence, et plus quand il est languissant" (III, vi, 878). What began as a response to Plutarch has now passed through a discussion of

fear and the personal experience of seasickness to the more general reference to motion sickness arising from all man-made conveyance. The initial pages of the essay thus serve to create a sense of affectivity surrounding Montaigne's reflections on coaches and portray the intuitive judgment progressing "à tastons" towards an encounter with the essay's subject.

Through its affective complexity, however, the subject "coaches" is not exhausted in this brief introduction; there is, indeed, "encore du païs au delà". Consequently, a second probe is in order: "L'estrangeté de ces inventions me met en teste cett' autre fantasie: que c'est une espece de pusillanimité aux monarques, et un tesmoignage de ne sentir point assez ce qu'ils sont, de travailler à se faire valloir et paroistre par despences excessives" (III, vi, 879). Montaigne's thought is detoured along quite another path. The immoderation suggested by the idea of the coach leads to a lengthy political discussion on the vices and virtues of monarchical extravagance. On the positive side, such extravagance sometimes leads to inventiveness, a recurrent motif in mankind's intellectual progress. Civilizations rise and decline, but the human mind goes on seeking and creating. The reader is finally led to a third part of the essay: the discovery of the New World.[6]

Montaigne is primarily concerned with the ethical ramifications of this discovery. Decay and corruption enter into any political system. The youth and vigor of the New World seem destined to ultimate decay through the infecting presence of European man. The historical accounts of this other world confronted by the Essayist in the chronicles of López de Gomara tell of great splendors and wealth found by the conquerors. Once again, the reader happens upon the theme of extravagance and is promptly recalled, by Montaigne, to the subject at hand ("Quant à la pompe et magnificence, par où je suis entré en ce propos, ny Graece, ny Romme, ny Aegypte ne peut... comparer aucun

[6] Dain A. Trafton, in a novel and cogent study, sees in this focal third part a key to the essay's message, namely the relative superiority of the ancients over the Indians ("Ancients and Indians in Montaigne's 'Des coches' ", *Symposium*, 27 [1973], 76-90).

de ces ouvrages au chemin qui se voit au Peru . . ." [III, vi, 893]). The magnificence of the Quito to Cusco road brings to mind the methods used in its construction: "ils n'avoient autre moyen de charrier qu'à force de bras, en traînant leur charge . . ." (III, vi, 893). In almost random fashion, Montaigne then falls back upon the subject of transportation associated with the road: "Retombons à nos coches. En leur place, et de toute autre voiture, ils se faisoient porter par les hommes et sur leurs espaules" (III, vi, 894). Only in a retrospective glance at the entire essay, then, does the reader become aware of the essay's thematic meandering.

The direction given by Montaigne to his imaginative vagaries aims at the interiority of his subject; that is to say, at a nucleus of affective experience in which the subject is enclosed. Such affectivity discloses the suggestive and organic nature of object and idea. Central to the above essay is Montaigne's susceptibility to motion sickness and a resulting dislike for any man-made mode of transportation. Like a central cell, this personal experience undergoes a thematic multiplication and diffusion until the essay has changed organically into another form and has passed into the "païs au delà". Ideas and objects do, indeed, possess an inner space, as is suggested by Montaigne's careful use of the metaphors of the river, the sounding, and the landscape. In this metaphorical inner world, the Essayist's mind also takes on a figurative concreteness. Corresponding to his voyages in the outer world, the creative imagination crosses an inner landscape of ideas and objects – a landscape where "mes conceptions et mon jugement ne marche qu'à tastons". The inner space of an object or idea is disclosed when the individual confronts its affectivity and when the intuitive mind begins its inward trajectory.[7]

Even on the level of the period itself, ideas do not simply spring into being; they are frequently the effect of a spiral move-

[7] Significantly, Bergson contrasts the intuition with the intelligence. As with Montaigne, intuition alone can make man conscious of the inner dimension of Self and life: "Mais c'est à l'intérieur même de la vie que nous conduirait l'intuition. . . ." See *L'Evolution créatrice,* 191-92.

ment of mind around a particular facet of the subject. It becomes, therefore, as important to examine the transitions and nuances in Montaigne's ideas as to scrutinize the ideas themselves. In overlooking these transitions and nuances, the reader is unable to detect the organic nature of intuitive thinking. On the other hand, the deductive process of Cartesian thought follows a more linear direction which Descartes, in the *Discours de la Méthode* and in *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, describes metaphorically as a "chain" of reasoning.[8] While in Descartes, one is struck by the logical cohesion of ideas, held together by a mass of conjunctive forms ("donc", "pourtant", "ainsi", "mais", "néanmoins", "car", "toutefois"), the thematic progressions in the *Essais* defy a strictly linear development. Montaigne's mind settles upon an idea, studying its expressive depth and affectivity; the new idea, evolving organically from this meditation, thus has no deductive connection with the initial idea. To establish a link between the ideas, it is often necessary to center one's attention on the business of how Montaigne's mind gets off the track. Upon re-examination, for example, the bridge between the themes of monarchic extravagance and human inventiveness in "Des coches" appears to be ill-defined. The organic bridge is, in fact, made by the extended, picturesque description of the Roman arenas and amphitheaters – a description borrowing many of its elements from *De amphitheatro* of Justus Lipsius, but which also is remarkable for its concentration of details into a seemingly interminable period. Within this syntactical mass, Montaigne relinquishes his grasp on the theme of extravagance and is caught up in an emotion of awe and wonder. One aspect of this

[8] In *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit* (trans. Georges Le Roy), Descartes describes deductive thought in the following manner: "C'est ainsi que nous savons que le dernier anneau d'une longue chaîne est relié au premier, même si nous n'embrassons pas d'un seul et même coup d'oeil tous les intermédiaires dont dépend ce lien, pourvu que nous ayons parcouru ceux-ci successivement, et que nous nous souvenions que du premier au dernier chacun tient à ceux qui lui sont proches" (*Oeuvres et Lettres* [Paris: Gallimard, 1953], 45). In the *Discours de la Méthode*, he adds: "Ces longues chaînes de raisons, toutes simples et faciles . . . m'avaient donné occasion de m'imaginer que toutes les choses qui peuvent tomber sous la connaissance des hommes s'entresuivent en même façon . . ." (*Oeuvres et Lettres*, 138).

description is particularly worth citing at length:

> C'estoit aussi belle chose à voir ces grands amphitheatres encroustez de marbre au dehors, labouré d'ouvrages et statues, le dedans reluisant de plusieurs rares enrichissemens . . . tous les coustez de ce grand vuide remplis et environnez, depuis le fons jusques au comble, de soixante ou quattre vingts rangs d'eschelons, aussi de marbre, couvers de carreaus . . . où se peut renger cent mille hommes assis à leur aise; et la place du fons, où les jeux se jouoyent, la faire premierement, par art, entr'ouvrir et fendre en crevasses representant des antres qui vomissoient les bestes destinées au spectacle; et puis secondement l'innonder d'une mer profonde, qui charrioit force monstres marins, chargée de vaisseaux armez, à representer une bataille navalle; et, tiercement, l'aplanir et assecher de nouveau pour le combat des gladiateurs; et, pour la quatriesme façon, la sabler de vermillon et de storax, au lieu d'arene, pour y dresser un festin solemne à tout ce nombre infiny de peuple, le dernier acte d'un seul jour.
>
> (III, vi, 883–84)

The reader senses, in this passage, a Balzacian thirst for detail coupled with the Writer's sense of spectacle. The scene's imaginative impact upon Montaigne is re-created by the deliberate movement of his vision across the entire panorama and by the array of data absorbed by this vision. From the marble exterior, inlaid with statues and ornamentation, the eyes of his imagination descend into the interior, first settling on the amphitheater's internal dimensions and capacity. They finally focus upon the "place du fons", methodically described in terms of its functions during a typical day's festivities. Not only, then, is there a spatial movement of vision from exterior to interior, but also a temporal movement which attempts to assimilate and reconstruct the time span of an entire day. With minimal use of inflected verb forms, the details build around an abundant use of participle and infinitive constructions ("encroustez", "labouré", "reluisant", "remplis", "environnez", "couvers", "faire", "entr'ouvrir", "fendre", "representant", "destinées", "innonder", "chargée", "armez", "representer", "aplanir", "assecher", "sabler", "dresser"). From this lack of inflection, one senses an interminable accumulation of detail bounded only by the temporal limits of "le dernier acte d'un seul jour". Ultimately, Montaigne leads his reader across a

series of such passages to the frontiers of a new idea: "S'il y a quelque chose qui soit excusable en tels excez, c'est où l'invention et la nouveauté fournit d'admiration, non pas la despence" (III, vi, 885). The notion of human inventiveness is, therefore, generated directly from the imaginative richness and creative achievements represented in the above tableau.

To the careful reader of the *Essais*, there are many such lacunae between successive ideas. Left, at times, without the slightest philosophical transition, the reader is obliged to construct his own intuitive bridges. In the above example, however, one can follow clearly the imaginative digressions of Montaigne's thought process as it becomes involved in extended descriptive detail, losing itself completely to a new idea which, in turn, becomes a transitional stage for the subject of the New World.

The nucleus of affective experience around which "Des coches" is formed is perhaps not visibly introspective, at least not at first glance. Nevertheless, as a living, changing organism, Montaigne realizes that he is portraying himself just as meticulously by arranging, on paper, this ostensibly random generation of ideas, as if he were to construct an entire essay around one aspect of his self-study. In one sense, André Gide is correct in recognizing the relatively few instances of introspection in the *Essais*, if introspection can only refer specifically to self-study. However, in another sense, many of those ideas seemingly oriented away from introspection are, in fact, centered upon an introspective core. Inasmuch as this core continues to nourish those concepts formed either in himself or in his readings, the role of self-study, for Montaigne, assumes much broader significance.

Psychological interiority not only describes a depth dimension within the individual, but also applies this dimension to the individual's vision of his immediate environment. In a more specific application to the writer-artist, psychological interiority refers, on the one hand, to Montaigne's sensation of his inner landscape and, on the other hand, to the imaginative direction his thought may take before any subject. The idea or object, therefore, possesses an inner magnitude and suggestiveness in complete

conformity to the inner magnitude of personality. The individuation process and the Delphic admonition to which it adheres are expressed, not only in the life, but in the work of the artist – by those attempts to come to metaphorical terms with himself and with his thought mechanisms. Before Montaigne can pass from "formal" into "substantial" reality, before he can fully assimilate what he has read and what he perceives, his deep sense of inner space must become literature.

6

INNER ENERGY

Psychic depth does not explain the full dimension of Montaigne's literary introspection; indeed, the imaginative constructs of inner space would seem strangely lifeless were it not for their energic vitality. As they take on the verbal, aesthetic forms of the essay, they become the intelligible transcriptions of the Writer's mind – the living progeny through which the book becomes consubstantial with its author. The reality they represent is, then, not only an inner topography, but the data of a living, organic mind. The notion of the mind as a reservoir of *psychic energy* is the ineluctable premise of Montaigne's individuation.[1]

In a previous chapter, I discussed at length the doctrine of psychological movement in its early form, especially as developed in "Que philosopher". In later writings, however, the theme is personalized through the Essayist's introspective vision. Whether or not this doctrine is Heraclitian or Pyrrhonistic seems inconsequential when measured against the psychological insights it permits Montaigne to make. Indeed, the question of sources for his "mobilisme" is, at best, inconclusive.[2] Of greater interest to the reader is the Writer's progressive recognition of spiritual

[1] Although I have borrowed the term "psychic energy" from Jungian psychology, it is used descriptively and by no means carries the specific clinical meaning given by Jung in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (New York: Pantheon, 1960), 3-66. Briefly, this concept represents Jung's attempt to deal with psychological phenomena as a *quantum* and as the concrete data of experience.

[2] For a comprehensive discussion of movement in the *Essais,* see Thibaudet, *Montaigne,* 163-88; and P. Michel-Côte, "Le 'Mobilisme' de Montaigne", *Mercure de France,* vol. 252 (June 1, 1934), 225-41.

change and agitation. The metaphor of mind ("faisant le cheval eschappé"), first formulated in "De l'oisiveté", expresses a sense of this inner energy. In fact, much of the aesthetic message of the *Essais* depends on what Thibaudet calls this "effort perpétuel pour exprimer son mouvement intérieur, pour transporter les mots, la réalité discontinue en termes de mouvement continu".[3] Montaigne's attempt to deal with the notion of movement arises, then, from inner experience. Rather than strictly quantitative evaluation, the psychological man's tool of measurement is the subjective category of *feeling*, that energic sensation which makes the individual aware of his fundamental instability.

Montaigne's sensation of instability is rooted in his "disponibilité"[4] before all phases of experience. Objects and ideas – the data of the inner and outer worlds – are endowed with affectivity as they pass through the category of subjective experience: "Que les choses ne logent pas chez nous en leur forme et en leur essence, et n'y facent leur entrée de leur force propre et authorité, nous le voyons assez . . ." (II, xii, 545). Montaigne, thus, senses the futility of holding himself taut against the assimilation of such phenomena. His receptivity enables him to perform that very act of *exercise* ("exercitation") by which he can coexist in peace with his essential irrationality. The kinds of affective rapports established between himself and external phenomena are temporarily blocked by the retreat to his château, only to be diverted into a more creative channel (the *Essais*) whose source lies in the innermost reaches of the personality.

One of the earliest expressions of Montaigne's psychological mobility is found in "De l'inconstance de nos actions".[5] Typical of many later introspective passages, the essay abounds in metaphorical insight, especially in the relation between certain natural phenomena and their introspective meaning. It is thus the "wind" of circumstance with leads the individual to a particular inclination: "Nostre façon ordinaire, c'est d'aller après les inclinations de nostre apetit, à gauche, à dextre, contre-mont, contre-bas,

[3] *Montaigne*, 180.

[4] I use the word "disponibilité" for lack of an effective English equivalent. Villey establishes the date of this essay as 1572.

selon que le vent des occasions nous emporte" (II, i, 316). Elsewhere, it is a body of water which dictates the internal motion: "Nous n'allons pas; on nous emporte, comme les choses qui flottent, ores doucement, ores avecques violence, selon que l'eau est ireuse ou bonasse . . ." (II, i, 316).[6] Finally, in an unequivocal reference to the concept of psychic energy, Montaigne relates the weather's unpredictability to the motion of the body's humours: "Chaque jour nouvelle fantasie, et se meuvent nos humeurs avecques les mouvemens du temps" (II, i, 317). In this last image, the ideas of change and motion are identical, as they often are throughout the *Essais*. Man lives, then, in a continuum of mutation: "Nous flottons entre divers advis; nous ne voulons rien librement, rien absoluëment, rien constamment" (II, i, 317). Unable to pit himself against this inner motion, the individual must seek to measure its effects through self-knowledge: "il faut sonder jusqu'au dedans, et voir par quels ressors se donne le bransle . . ." (II, i, 321).

The notion of the soul as a spatial reality, developed in the preceding chapter, is also joined by the energy motif. Nowhere is this relationship clearer than in the often neglected passages of introspection in the *Apologie*. Once again, the metaphors of wind and water are links between the world of natural, physical laws and an inner, agitating landscape:

> Les secousses et esbranlemens que nostre ame reçoit par les passions corporelles, peuvent beaucoup en elle, mais encore plus les siennes propres, ausquelles elle est si fort en prinse qu'il est à l'advanture soustenable qu'elle n'a aucune autre alleure et mouvement que du souffle de ses vents, et que, sans leur agitation, elle resteroit sans action, comme un navire en pleine mer que les vents abandonnent de leur secours. (II, xii, 550)

The soul, as a focal psychic authority, is touched not only by the agitation of corporal passions, but by the winds of its own emotions. The nature of this inner energy, however, is not brusque, turbulent or cataclysmic. Movement, for Montaigne, is the "passage", that almost imperceptible change from one moment to the next. Slowly drifting between successive states

[6] This image is borrowed from Seneca's twenty-third Letter to Lucilius.

of mind, the Essayist experiences a gentle inner agitation: "Je n'ay point grande experience de ces agitations vehementes (estant d'une complexion molle et poisante) desquelles la pluspart surprennent subitement nostre ame, sans luy donner loisir de se connoistre" (II, xii, 552). Once more, in recalling the phrase "Je suis . . . songe-creux" (I, xx, 85) used in Montaigne's self-description, we comprehend the languor of the passion, making its way "avec loisir et d'un progres mesuré" (II, xii, 552). The psychological distress, evoked in "De l'exercitation", does not rush in upon Montaigne, propelling him into the sudden darkness of a nether world. On the contrary, the boundary between diurnal and nocturnal states, between sleep and wakefulness, between contact with external reality and contact with the Self, is often indistinct and hazy. Rather like Proust's encounter with the gradual metamorphosis of the "madeleine" or the Vinteuil theme, the agitation of Montaigne's inner world guides him dreamily through contingent phases of the experience.

The dynamic and organic unity of such a psychological event is occasionally depicted in rich and suggestive detail, as in the following passage from the *Apologie*. Describing the infiltration of a slowly moving emotion, Montaigne writes:

> J'ay autrefois entrepris de me tenir bandé pour la [cette passion] soustenir et rabatre . . . je la sentois naistre, croistre, et s'augmenter en despit de ma resistance, et en fin, tout voyant et vivant, me saisir et posseder de façon que, comme d'une yvresse, l'image des choses me commençoit à paroistre autre que de coustume; je voyois evidemment grossir et croistre les avantages du subjet que j'allois désirant, et agrandir et enfler par le vent de mon imagination; les difficultez de mon entreprinse s'aiser et se planir, mon discours et ma conscience se tirer arriere; mais, ce feu estant evaporé, tout à un instant, comme de la clarté d'un esclair, mon ame reprendre une autre sorte de veuë, autre estat et autre jugement; les difficultez de la retraite me sembler grandes et invincibles, et les mesmes choses de bien autre goust et visage que la chaleur du desir ne me les avoit presentées.
>
> (II, xii, 552)

Nowhere in the *Essais* is there a period which prefigures more clearly the psychological and stylistic dimensions of the Proustian phrase. Elsewhere, Montaigne writes: "Je veux representer

le progrez de mes humeurs, et qu'on voye chaque piece en sa naissance" (II, xxxvii, 737). It is precisely in the above passage that the period encompasses a pulsating, rhythmic progression of ideas. By transcending the bounds of syntactical order, the Essayist draws the reader's attention to a gradually unfolding panorama in which a psychological state is caught up in its own metamorphosis. There is here no more stability than in the poetic world of Vinteuil's "petite phrase": Time and motion are working against Montaigne just as they are against Proust.

Although Montaigne does not specify the nature of "cette passion", its level of affectivity is no less acute than Vinteuil's theme. It could, then, refer to any emotional state arising from the poignant contact between the Self and the world of objects. This external world (the "subject que j'allois désirant") whose advantages seem to expand in contact with the imagination's breath ("le vent de mon imagination") participates in a synchronic metamorphosis with the energic inner world. Things, as they really are, are unapproachable through Montaigne's modest epistemology; things, as they appear, however, to the psyche ("l'image des choses") enjoy a superior, even poetic level of existence. Reality's psychic image is, therefore, a fragile, ephemeral one, constantly changing with the mind's imaginative flights. For Swann, the theme of Vinteuil is just such a psychic image: like a Wagnerian leitmotiv, it keeps recurring under various disguises and transmutations. For Montaigne, external phenomena pass slowly through the subjective categories of experience, to be ultimately transcribed on paper according to their phenomenological sequence.

In the opening phrase of the above passage, for example, the Writer outlines concisely the circumstances of the experience: at an imprecise point in time ("autrefois"), he confronts an invading emotion like a true Stoic, prepared to resist it ("soustenir") and beat it down ("rabatre"). But this passion is too imperious to be repelled: it first enters into the sensory faculties ("je la sentois"), gradually expanding and encroaching upon Montaigne's emotional life. Unable to resist this genesis, he delivers himself over to its power, and is seized and possessed by

it. As a living being endowed with the faculty of sight ("tout voyant et vivant"), his faculties of sight and sensation are all open to the phenomena of the invasion. Progressively, his vision of the objective world begins to change. No longer is it the emotion itself which is growing and increasing, but the objective world outside the emotion. The verbs "grossir", "croistre", "agrandir", and "enfler", describe, then, the transformations of this world just as "naistre", "croistre", and "s'augmenter" describe the expansion of subjective data. Reason and conscience withdraw, faced with the body's total surrender to this psychological incubus; Montaigne remains possessed by the demonic form of the passion. In its ephemeral form, this passion is unstable; it is like a lightning flash ("la clarté d'un esclair") which suddenly escapes from the body, leaving the Essayist at the limits of a new imaginative awareness. Just as Swann "n'avait donc pas tort de croire que la phrase de la sonate existât réellement",[7] so Montaigne is totally absorbed by the visual and sensual impact of this passion. If, on the one hand, it is fleeting and ephemeral, it is also the concrete expression of a dynamic, empirical psyche.

That Montaigne should compress this mass of psychic data into one period, while maintaining an ordered sequence of ideas, shows further evidence of his stylistic mastery. As in Proust's work, the experience takes on a certain timeless quality, as though the metamorphosis were in a state of spatial and temporal suspension. The categories of Time, normally provided by specific verbal inflection, are imprecise. The period's entire mass hinges upon only three inflected forms: (1) "Je la *sentois*"; (2) "l'image des choses me *commençoit* à paroistre"; and (3) "je *voyois*". Within these forms is concentrated not only the sole temporal framework, but also the two psychological categories of the experience: sensation and sight. In the relatively brief introductory phrase ("J'ay autrefois entrepris de me tenir bandé pour la soustenir et rabatre"), Montaigne, faced with a strange emotion, summarizes concisely his *conscious* intention; but upon the more subjective level of the experience ("je la sentois"), the time frame is deformed through a series of infinitives and

[7] Proust, *Du côte de chez Swann* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 350-51.

present participles ("naistre", "croistre", "s'augmenter", "voyant", "vivant", "saisir", "posseder"), thus leaving the emotion in a state of lingering irresolution. Between the categories of sensation and sight, he interposes a series of connecting words and phrases, thereby forming an anti-resolution of the idea: the infinitive sequence is followed by a prepositional phrase ("en despit de ma resistance"), a conjunction and adverb ("et en fin"), two present participles ("voyant et vivant"), two infinitives ("saisir et posseder") which refer back to the first inflected form ("je la sentois"), and two conjunctive expressions ("de façon que" and "comme"). The clause ("l'image des choses me commençoit . . .") modifying the first of these two conjunctive expressions forms a transition to the category of sight.

The extension of the temporal and emotional meaning, achieved through this circuitous path, is made even more intricate by the introduction of the category of sight ("je voyois evidemment"). Upon this one focal verb, the thoughts hang like fragments. The series of complements modifying "je voyois" ("les avantages du subjet", "les difficultez de mon entreprinse", "mon discours et ma conscience", and so on) is thus suspended by yet another sequence of uninflected verbs: "grossir et croistre", "agrandir et enfler", "s'aiser et se planir", "se tirer arriere", "reprendre", "me sembler". By eliminating the repetition of "voir" before each complement and infinitive, the Essayist succeeds in drawing his reader back to the preannounced category of sight. "Je voyois" belongs to the imaginative nucleus of the experience, whereas the verbal and substantive complements are the psychological data surrounding this nucleus. All that remains salient in the perception of these data is the substantive object upon which the sight is fixed (for example, "les avantages du subjet") and the verbal quality which expresses the action of this object (for example, "grossir et croistre"). As verbal vehicles, the infinitive forms tend, in fact, to stress more effectively the qualitative, as opposed to quantitative nature of the perception. Rather than a determinate temporal framework, they provide an indeterminate and timeless quality, not unlike Proust's creative effort to capture and prolong the fleeting reality

of his "petite phrase".[8]

By the time Montaigne is aware of his new level of perception, the reader seems to have passed through the entire organic cycle of an emotion, from birth to death. More than an impersonal witness to the Writer's new insight, he has shared in its emergence from an embryonic emotion to its stylistic transcription on the printed page. The syntactical energy of this passage, however, is also reinforced by the pulsating movement of the period. There is a perceptible rhythmic quality in the frequent use of such word doublets as "soustenir et rabatre", "saisir et posseder", "grossir et croistre", "agrandir et enfler", "s'aiser et se planir", and so on. The reader participates directly in this ebb and flow of Montaigne's inner world. It is, after all, the *progression* of his humours which the Writer seeks to convey, and not simply the pictorial reality of a particular mental state. The notion of psychic energy assumes, then, the dimension of a psychological genesis. Montaigne cannot simply examine his mental postures as individual, detached emotions, bearing no organic relation to each other. His vision, above all the aesthetic vision with which he views his book, is preformed by a distinctly psychic and dynamic image of reality.

While the above passage is primarily an account of the psychological currents at work during the assimilation of an invading emotion, it does not tell us all about Montaigne's ability to recreate the introspective moment. Nowhere, more than in "De l'exercitation", do artistic order and imaginative vagary unite throughout the entire *corpus* of an essay. In an earlier chapter, the idea of practice or exercise was discussed on a philosophical level,[9] but in "De l'exercitation", Montaigne is drawn wholeheartedly into the energic data of experience. If, in "Que philosopher", the death theme was handled with greater detachment,

[8] "Elle [la phrase) reparut, mais cette fois pour se suspendre dans l'air et se jouer un instant seulement, comme immobile, et pour expirer après. Aussi Swann ne perdait-il rien du temps si court où elle se prorogeait. Elle était encore là comme une bulle irisée qui se soutient. Tel un arc-en-ciel, dont l'éclat faiblit, s'abaisse, puis se relève et, avant de s'éteindre, s'exalte un moment comme il n'avait pas encore fait" (*Du côté de chez Swann*, 352).

[9] See Chapter 3, "The Styles of Life and Art".

in "De l'exercitation", it is touched and transformed by the Essayist's self-knowledge. While the earlier philosophical act did bring him to a depth awareness of life and activity, it is only when he can take himself as the subject of experience that his work becomes truly introspective, an insight set down in the essay's opening lines:

> Il est malaisé que le discours et l'instruction, encore que nostre creance s'y applique volontiers, soient assez puissantes pour nous acheminer jusques à l'action, si outre cela nous n'exerçons et formons nostre ame par experience au train auquel nous la voulons renger: autrement, quand elle sera au propre des effets, elle s'y trouvera sans doute empeschée. (II, vi, 350)

Reasoning and education alone do not lead the individual to wise action; human instruction must lay hold of empirical tools. By extricating the soul from philosophical abstraction, he brings it, through metaphor, into the light of objective reality: it may be exercised ("exerçons"), formed ("formons") and maneuvered ("renger") into a desired course of activity. And what, indeed, is the Socratic principle if not the conceptualization of an empirical psyche: "Dequoy traitte Socrates plus largement que de soy? A quoy achemine il plus souvent les propos de ses disciples, qu'à parler d'eux, non pas de la leçon de leur livre, mais de l'estre et branle de leur âme?" (II, vi, 359).

At first, this essay seems to circumvent the death theme. In the opening passages, Montaigne simply describes various means by which men have been known to "exercise" their souls. Death however, is the one exception to this activity: "Mais à mourir, qui est la plus grande besoigne que nous ayons à faire, l'exercitation ne nous y peut ayder" (II, vi, 350). With an ironic twist so typical of Montaigne, the reader is told that there were men in ancient times who attempted to taste and savor death, even while in its very throes: "mais ils ne sont pas revenus nous en dire les nouvelles . . ." (II, vi, 350). Following a eulogy on the Stoic death of Canius Julius, executed by Caligula, Montaigne appears suddenly stricken by an entirely new insight:

> Il me semble toutefois qu'il y a quelque façon de nous apprivoiser à elle [Death] et de l'essayer aucunement. Nous en pouvons avoir ex-

perience. . . . Si nous ne la pouvons joindre, nous la pouvons approcher, nous la pouvons reconnoistre; et, si nous ne donnons jusques à son fort, au moins verrons nous et en prattiquerons les advenuës.
(II, vi, 351)

Once more, the Essayist broaches the notion of experience ("Nous en pouvons avoir experience"); however the experience of death is never more than an approximation, extending not to the essence of the state itself, but rather to its approaches ("advenuës"): "Ce sont les approches que nous avons à craindre; et celles-là peuvent tomber en experience" (II, vi, 352).

Although the concept of a life/death contingency was originally a natural reflection of Montaigne's readings in Seneca, "De l'exercitation" shows almost no evidence of such borrowings.[10] The Essayist now speaks from a deep-seated awareness of a psychological truth and is preparing to make an extended statement about the presence of death in life. He realizes that philosophy, reason, and education cannot lay claim to an absolute knowledge of the outer world, for man is, at best, a creature endowed with his own unique, psychic vision of phenomena. He can never know more than what his experience conveys to him, and his experience is filtered through a subjective sieve: "Plusieurs choses nous semblent plus grandes par imagination que par effect" (II, vi, 352). Such is the nature of Montaigne's accident, a crucial moment not only in the life of the mind, but also in the life of the book.

His presentation of the event is a masterful use of narrative development. Rather than dwell on superfluous detail, he constructs two circuitous periods, cramming them with only those facts essential to the frame of the experience. The first of these periods presents a concise background to the focal event which is to follow:

Pendant nos troisiesmes troubles ou deuxiesmes (il ne me souvient pas bien de cela), m'estant allé un jour promener à une lieue de chez moy, qui suis assis dans le moiau de tout le trouble des guerres civiles de France, estimant estre en toute seureté et si voisin de ma retraicte que

[10] The anecdote concerning Canius Julius is the sole exception: it is a paraphrase of Seneca, *Letters* XXX and XIV, "De tranquillitate animi".

je n'avoy point besoin de meilleur equipage, j'avoy pris un cheval bien aisé, mais non guiere ferme. (II, vi, 352)

From the temporal category ("Pendant nos troisiesmes troubles ou deuxiesmes"), Montaigne proceeds first to the circumstantial data ("m'estant allé un jour promener à une lieue de chez moy"), followed directly by subjective insight ("estimant estre en toute seureté"). The idea seems here implicit that, given the insecurity of the times and the specific location of Montaigne's properties within this troubled corner of France, it was clearly unsafe and imprudent for anyone to venture far from the patrimonial domain. On another level, however, Montaigne is once again echoing the tone of "Que philosopher" where he described the ubiquitous presence of death: "Au broncher d'un cheval, à la cheute d'une tuille, à la moindre piqueure d'espleingue . . ." (I, xx, 85). Death remains inescapable, even within the bounds of domestic security. It thus matters little whether or not the rider has strayed beyond safe limits; the danger is much closer at hand: "j'avoy pris un cheval bien aisé, mais non guiere ferme."

Structurally similar to the first period, the second is perhaps more striking in its syntactical progression towards the central experience, followed by a complete fragmentation of data and expression:

A mon retour, une occasion soudaine s'estant presentée de m'aider de ce cheval à un service qui n'estoit pas bien de son usage, un de mes gens, grand et fort, monté sur un puissant roussin qui avoit une bouche desesperée, frais au demeurant et vigoureux, pour faire le hardy et devancer ses compaignons vint à le pousser à toute bride droict dans ma route, et fondre comme un colosse sur le petit homme et petit cheval, et le foudroier de sa roideur et de sa pesanteur, nous envoyant l'un et l'autre les pieds contre-mont: si que voilà le cheval abbatu et couché tout estourdy, moy dix ou douze pas au delà, mort, estendu à la renverse, le visage tout meurtry et tout escorché, mon espée que j'avoy à la main, à plus de dix pas au-delà, ma ceinture en pieces, n'ayant ny mouvement ny sentiment, non plus qu'une souche. (II, vi, 352–53)

Once again, the temporal and factual frames are provided by the prepositional and participial clauses ("A mon retour, une

occasion soudaine s'estant presentée . . .''); suspense, however, is heightened by the detachment of subject and verb. The action performed by this subject ("un de mes gens") is suspended over a series of phrases describing the man ("grand et fort"), his horse ("un puissant roussin qui avoit une bouche desesperée, frais au demeurant et vigoureux"), and his motivation ("pour faire le hardy et devancer ses compaignons"). Not only does this descriptive density serve to postpone the verbal element, but provides an antithetical balance to the concision of the "petit homme et petit cheval". The ironic relief of this self-deprecation is matched by the more lush characterization of the burly henchman and his powerful horse. In one final, conscious moment, the sudden clash of riders and horses takes on an abrupt, metaphorical twist: "fondre comme un colosse . . . et le foudroier de sa roideur et de sa pesanteur".

The second half of this period is anti-climactic. From the dynamic portrayal of henchman and horse, Montaigne's vision turns back on himself. As if transcribing the physical impact of the accident, the syntactical elements fall into complete disarray and the description into choppy and disjointed fragments. Upon the word "voilà" hang the verbal remnants of the experience. The mass of past participles, relegating all action to the past, enables Montaigne to pronounce his own post-mortem: "le cheval abbatu et couché tout estourdy, moy dix ou douze pas au delà, mort, estendu à la renverse, le visage tout meurtry et tout escorché. . . ." As if to draw attention to the scene's immobility, he then turns to the inert objects surrounding his own lifeless form: "mon espée que j'avoy à la main . . . ma ceinture en pieces." Finally, in clearly metaphorical terms, he makes the analogic link between himself and the world of objects, devoid of movement and sensation: "n'ayant ny mouvement ny sentiment, non plus qu'une souche". Cast into this unconscious nether world, Montaigne, like a tree stump, joins the realm of objects.

The return to consciousness, however, stands in marked contrast to the jarring movement of the preceding scene. Rather like a film suddenly projected into slow motion, narrative sequence becomes somnolent and drawn out. Time all but ceases

to function, no longer able to give order and form to reality. Only twice, before his return home, does Montaigne give any temporal or spatial framework to his experience: "Sur le chemin, et après avoir esté plus de deux grosses heures tenu pour trespassé . . ." (II, vi, 353); and "Comme j'approchai de chez moy . . ." (II, vi, 356). All that falls between these references, however, is murky and indistinct. Within the delicate light of this *demi-jour*, the Essayist seeks to reassert the harmony between Self and the outer world: as if reborn into consciousness, he must become aware of the inner, shadowed world of the mind.

Montaigne's renewal of consciousness is first directed at the primary corporal processes of motion and respiration: "Je commençay à me mouvoir et respirer . . ." (II, vi, 353). In turn, these processes cause the emission of large quantities of blood which has gathered in his stomach: "car il estoit tombé si grande abondance de sang dans mon estomac, que, pour l'en descharger, nature eust besoin de resusciter ses forces" (II, vi, 353). Slowly, languorously, the corporal flow of existence winds a precarious course between death and life: "Par là je commençay à reprendre un peu de vie, mais ce fut par les menus et par un si long traict de temps que mes premiers sentimens estoient beaucoup plus approchans de la mort que de la vie" (II, vi, 353). But death, unlike the philosophical constructs of "Que philosopher", is now more imminent and personal; it is, in fact, both image and idea: "Cette recordation . . . me representant son visage et son idée si près du naturel, me concilie aucunement à elle" (II, vi, 353). Finally, the faculty of sight, unable to penetrate external forms, conveys only a blurred, opaque panorama of light: "Quand je commençay à y voir, ce fut d'une veuë si trouble, si foible et si morte, que je ne discernois encores rien que la lumiere" (II, vi, 353).

Simultaneously, Montaigne senses an inner progression corresponding to his organic life-processes: "Quand aux functions de l'ame, elles naissoient avec mesme progrez que celles du corps" (II, vi, 353). Upon the most primary level of thought, the mind makes no rational attempt to explain phenomena. It seeks rather to bridge an intuitive gap between certain external

data and their interpretation by the individual. Montaigne, therefore, recognizes his blood-stained doublet, and so infers that he has been shot in the head. It is precisely this illusion of a mortal head-wound which is to blot completely from his mind the real facts of the event. Later, in the shelter of his home, he even refuses all care, believing himself on the verge of death: "On me presenta force remedes, dequoy je n'en receuz aucun, tenant pour certain que j'estoy blessé à mort par la teste" (II, vi, 356-57). The memory of the accident is, in fact, the last of his recollections: "Je ne veux pas oublier cecy, que la derniere chose en quoy je me peus remettre, ce fut la souvenance de cet accident . . ." (II, vi, 357).

In turn, the idea of an imminent death, brought on by this seemingly mortal wound, is fostered by an almost impalpable sensation of life. While the life-process normally depends on the participation of every corporal and spiritual fiber, Montaigne is only able to place it, with anatomical precision, upon the tip of his tongue where it hangs precariously, ready to be inhaled into the body's core, or to be exhaled and extinguished: "Il me sembloit que ma vie ne me tenoit plus qu'au bout des lèvres; je fermois les yeux pour ayder, ce me sembloit, à la pousser hors, et prenois plaisir à m'alanguir et à me laisser aller" (II, vi, 354). So fragile does this link with life seem to be that it no longer appears as reality, but as fantasy, drifting randomly across the surface of the soul. Montaigne has not yet been pricked by pain; his sensory data and faculties remain only on the most primary level: movement, respiration, blurred vision, and a vague idea of life. Upon these primary levels, pain is prefigured by its opposite: pleasure. The Essayist appears to savor each moment of this gradual release from the world of the living while slipping peacefully into sleep: "C'estoit une imagination qui ne faisoit que nager superficiellement en mon ame, aussi tendre et aussi foible que tout le reste, mais à la verité non seulement exempte de desplaisir, ains meslée à cette douceur que sentent ceux qui se laissent glisser au sommeil" (II, vi, 354).

As if directed along a similar path into oblivion, the narrative of the experience then becomes derailed. All temporal and spa-

tial clarification is eliminated. Montaigne turns back to the themes of sleep and death already announced. In a more discursive manner, he redirects them away from the focus of his experience, creating instead a series of psychological generalizations. Contrary to accepted opinion, the sighs, groans and movements of the body made by the dying are not necessarily signs of pain: "j'ay tousjours pensé, dis-je, qu'ils avoient et l'ame et le corps enseveli et endormy" (II, vi, 354). Pity thus becomes meaningless: "ils n'avoient aucun discours qui les tourmentast et qui leur peut faire juger et sentir la misere de leur condition, et que, par consequent, ils n'estoient pas fort à plaindre" (II, vi, 354). In a post-1580 addition, Montaigne imagines a far more pitiable state; "Je n'imagine aucun estat pour moy si insupportable et horrible que d'avoir l'ame vifve et affligée, sans moyen de se declarer . . ." (II, vi, 354-55). Like the pleasant, sensory mesmerism of sleep, death, in its final stages, is a release from corporal sensation:

> Il nous advient ainsi sur le beguayement du sommeil, avant qu'il nous ait du tout saisis, de sentir comme en songe ce qui se faict autour de nous, et suyvre les voix d'une ouye trouble et incertaine qui semble ne donner qu'aux bords de l'ame; et faisons de responses, à la suitte des dernieres paroles qu'on nous a dites, qui ont plus de fortune que de sens. (II, vi, 355)

Following this narrative digression, Montaigne strays back to the theme of his encounter with death: "Or, à present que je l'ay essayé par effect, je ne fay nul doubte que je n'en aye bien jugé jusques à cette heure" (II, vi, 355). Now aware of the delicate line between consciousness and unconsciousness, he carefully discriminates between those passions arising from the orderly perceptions of sensation and those nourished in the penumbra of semiconsciousness, such as the delirium of a dying man: "Or ces passions qui ne nous touchent que par l'escorse, ne se peuvent dire nostres. Pour les faire nostres, il faut que l'homme y soit engagé tout entier . . ." (II, vi, 356). The function of "De l'exercitation" in the introspective setting of the *Essais* lies, then, in its portrayal of the individual's reinstatement in the conscious world. As a continuum of spiritual mutations, this movement

from unconsciousness through semiconsciousness and into the diurnal light of consciousness bears the image of psychic dynamism, representing Montaigne's energic view of the Self. Unlike the deductive constructs of the Cartesian *cogito*, his understanding of being is based on the empirical, indeed sensory, realities of mind and experience.[11]

Self-knowledge, then, appears to rest on the notion of man as a sensory unit in which the soul, no less than the body, opens itself to phenomenological reality: "Et ne pouvois croire que, à un si grand estonnement de membres et si grande défaillance des sens, l'ame peut maintenir aucune force au dedans pour se reconnoistre . . ." (II, vi, 354). That sensation of inner motion and change through which the Essayist views the universal order of things leads him to the insight that each experience, in its uniqueness, is a reflection of the changing Self. The accident and the resulting disarray of the sensory machinery give him a rare opportunity to dissect and reconstruct the processes by which the mind generates the energy of perception.

In the final passages of the narrative, time has passed almost imperceptibly. Upon arriving home, Montaigne regains a form of consciousness. His immediate contact with external things has now been transferred from the bloodstained doublet to the presence of persons and sounds entirely detached from his own being. From those primary sensations of bodily movement, respiration and blurred vision, he now arrives at a more coherent, albeit erroneous, perception of external forms. His order for a horse to be brought for his wife, whom he imagines to be stumbling down the rugged road, appears, then, as a subconscious association with the accident and, in turn, prefigures the recovery of memory. Despite their gradual reintegration, then, his senses continue to play their imaginative tricks: "Il semble que cette consideration deut partir d'une ame esveillée, si est-ce que je n'y

[11] This role of the sensory faculties is recalled much later by Gide in *Les Nouvelles nourritures;* in the lyrical prose of this work, he transforms the *cogito* into a more personal statement: "Je sens que je suis . . . '– Ici je suis juge et partie' " (*Les Nourritures terrestres; Les Nouvelles nourritures* [Paris: Gallimard, 1947], 233).

estois aucunement; c'estoyent des pensemens vains, en nuë, qui estoyent esmeuz par les sens des yeux et des oreilles; ils ne venoyent pas de chez moy" (II, vi, 356). In a curious prefiguration of the words of Buffon's First Man,[12] Montaigne expresses his disorientation upon encountering the world beyond; not knowing which way to turn, he seeks aimlessly for a mental touchstone: "Je ne sçavoy pourtant ny d'où je venoy, ny où j'aloy; ny ne pouvois poiser et considerer ce que on me demandoit . . ." (II, vi, 356). Not even the sensation of pain is present to expand his corporal awareness: "Cependant mon assiete estoit à la verité très douce et paisible; je n'avoy affliction ny pour autruy ny pour moy; c'estoit une langueur et une extreme foiblesse, sans aucune douleur" (II, vi 356). There is here no need for the kind of Christian solace provided by the last rites. Montaigne knows neither spiritual nor physical torment, but enjoys, in death, that same soporific languor he attributes to sleep:[13]

> C'eust esté sans mentir une mort bien heureuse; car la foiblesse de mon discours me gardoit d'en rien juger, et celle du corps d'en rien sentir. Je me laissoy couler si doucement et d'une façon si douce et si aisée que je ne sens guiere autre action moins poisante que celle-là estoit. (II, vi, 357)

Full corporal awareness is the last state into which Montaigne is cast, but its accompanying pain and torment reveal yet another more sinister form of death. For the first time, all the senses participate in the corporal and spiritual reintegration: "je me senty tout d'un train rengager aux douleurs, ayant les membres tous moulus et froissez de ma cheute; et en fus si mal deux ou trois nuits après, que j'en cuiday remourir encore un coup, mais d'une mort plus vifve . . ." (II, vi, 357). This sensory collision with the life-process restores the Essayist's temporal perspective.

[12] "Je me souviens de cet instant de joie et de trouble, où je sentis pour la première fois ma singulière existence; je ne savais ce que j'étais, où j'étais, d'où je venais. J'ouvris les yeux, quel surcroît de sensations!" (*Oeuvres complètes,* vol. 3 [Paris: Bureau de la Société des publications illustrées, 1839-41], 264).

[13] In "De l'expérience", Montaigne writes, "Le dormir a occupé une grande partie de ma vie, et le continuë encores en cet aage huict ou neuf heures d'une haleine" (III, xiii, 1075).

External objects begin to assume their real forms; the senses seek to reach out and grasp this outer world, measuring both quantities and qualities.

Once more in touch with the present, Montaigne now turns to one final temporal bridge: his recollection of the accident. Only through the suggestive probings of family and friends are the vague forms of the past reshaped as lucid and coherent memories. The particles of the experience coalesce, binding the horror of the event to a vibrant, emotive present. Memory's involuntary intrusions thereby restore his imaginative faculties:

> Mais long temps après, et le lendemain, quand ma memoire vint à s'entr'ouvrir et me representer l'estat où je m'estoy trouvé en l'instant que j'avoy aperçeu ce cheval fondant sur moy (car je l'avoy veu à mes talons et me tins pour mort, mais ce pensement avoit esté si soudain que la peur n'eut pas loisir de s'y engendrer), il me sembla que c'estoit un esclair qui me frapoit l'ame de secousse et que je revenoy de l'autre monde. (II, vi, 357)

Recapitulating the entire experience, the above passage not only recalls Montaigne's initial introduction of the accident, but also recalls the passage from the *Apologie,* discussed earlier in this chapter, in which one emotion is seized and absorbed by another, "comme de la clarté d'un esclair". In both these earlier passages, the metaphor seems to heighten the impression of shock and abruptness. If, in the passage from the *Apologie,* one mental state collides with another like "a flash of lightning", in the introduction to the accident the henchman falls like a thunderbolt ("le foudroier") upon rider and horse. In the above passage, the return to consciousness is likewise marked metaphorically by that same abruptness. The memory of the accident strikes like a flash of lightning upon Montaigne's imagination, reforming the mental trajectory which began with the fall from the horse. As with the previous metaphors, this flash occurs at a crucial point in the progression of the period. The metaphorical and syntactic resolution of the period thus hangs suspended in a mass of connecting clauses. The temporal data ("long temps après, et le lendemain") is joined to a conjunctive phrase ("quand"); an infinitive within this clause ("represen-

ter") is followed by a complement ("estat") which, in turn, is the antecedent for the adverbial clause ("où"). Following the relative clause ("que j'avoy aperçeu"), the suspense is augmented by a parenthetical phrase describing the rider's reflections upon seeing the horse bearing down on him. This instant of terror is then gathered into a single metaphor whose syntactic position serves to underscore the shock value of Montaigne's experience. Each time his mind reaches into the past to re-create the circumstances of the event, he is forced, in a real way, to relive this rite of instatement in the conscious world ("il me sembla . . . que je revenoy de l'autre monde").

In the 1580 and 1588 editions, "De l'exercitation" is only three-fourths complete. The Essayist has concluded his psychic narrative in simple, personal terms. Choosing to draw no general inference about his introspective act, he relates its empirical value to himself alone: "Or, comme dict Pline, chacun est à soy-mesmes une très-bonne discipline, pourveu qu'il ait la suffisance de s'espier de près. Ce n'est pas ci ma doctrine, c'est mon estude; et n'est pas la leçon d'autruy, c'est la mienne" (II, vi, 357). Only in the post-1588 additions does he reflect more deeply on the meaning of this event, so fused to his mental life. His stance in these final additions is, in fact, defensive, as though in anticipation of the later Pascalian polemics: "et ne me doibt on sçavoir mauvais gré pourtant, si je la [la leçon] communique. Ce qui me sert, peut aussi par accident servir à un autre. Au demeurant, je ne gaste rien, je n'use que du mien. Et si je fay le fol, c'est à mes despens et sans l'interest de personne" (II, vi, 357). If he thus portrays his thoughts rather than actions, it is because his imaginative world has its own psychic objectivity: "Je peins principalement mes cogitations, subject informe, qui ne peut tomber en production ouvragere. A toute peine le puis je coucher en ce corps aërée de la voix" (II, vi, 359).

His description of the accident is just such a "cogitation". Montaigne is not standing back in detachment from himself; he is not the object, but the subject of the experience. In this subjective reconstruction of reality, the reader is no disinterested third party, but is forced to relive, with Montaigne, an entire

genesis of mental progressions. The importance of this genesis, however, is captured not only in the psychic ramblings of the accident, but in the essay's entire panorama of energic thought. Within the greater evolution of ideas leading to the final defensive statement on introspection, the narrative of the accident stands as an authoritative event by which the Essayist proclaims his right to take himself as literary subject. His is no ideal portrait, no absolute of formal perfection. On the contrary, he places himself beneath the harsh scalpel of truth and performs the anatomical inquisition of a sixteenth-century surgeon: "Je m'estalle entier: c'est un *skeletos* où, d'une veuë, les veines, les muscles, les tendons paroissent, chaque piece en son siege . . . Ce ne sont mes gestes que j'escris, c'est moy, c'est mon essence" (II, vi, 359).

Face to face with the ineluctable "branle" of man's condition, especially his own, Montaigne approaches the human mind as an energic phenomenon corresponding to the corporal mutation he finds in himself and in external matter. Just as the individual's skeletal structure suffers the ravages of Time, so his psychic make-up is subject to the same mutability. Corporal functions progress in concert with spiritual ones ("Quant aux functions de l'ame, elles naissoient avec mesme progrez que celles du corps" [II, vi, 353]). Montaigne knows that the fluidity of external matter can, of course, be captured on canvas as a static form just as the mutability of psychological phenomena can also be transmitted through a similar visual medium – the printed word. By actually painting his "cogitations", he seeks to preserve the spontaneity and motion with which they strike his conscious mind.

"De l'exercitation", as a focal expression of Montaigne's introspection, is without equal in the *Essais*. From the concept of life described philosophically in "Que philosopher", the Socratic ethic has moved slowly into the forefront now occupying the introspective core of the work. If Socrates did, indeed, bring his disciples to recognize their inner mobility ("l'estre et branle de leur âme" [II, vi, 359]), so Montaigne, in his proximity to death, comes to a firsthand knowledge of his psychic constitution. Life

becomes a process in which he is directly and personally involved rather than a concept based on *a priori* reflection. While it was once philosophy which reconciled him to the idea of death, it is now experience which permits him to grasp the life/death contingency. Mutation, in both its corporal and psychological forms, makes death ineluctable. Those inner movements by which one emotive state progresses to another correspond to those external movements by which the body decays and the senses seek to comprehend the conscious world. All that is possessed most surely by the individual is but an expression of his finite nature; existence is reduced, by Montaigne, to "la nihilité de l'humaine condition" (II, vi, 360).

At any given moment, the individual represents the sum of these corporal and psychological states; this is not to say, however, that the sum remains constant. Individuation is not a terminal plateau, but a centripetal progression of judgments about the Self. The energic principle by which Montaigne explains the function of the human mind in "De l'exercitation" underlies his literary inquiry into self-knowledge; this principle represents the inner "branle" which the disciples of Socrates were admonished to study and which is described in the final pages of the *Apologie:*

> La fleur d'aage se meurt et passe quand la vieillesse survient . . . et n'y a rien qui demeure ne qui soit tousjours un. Car, qu'il soit ainsi, si nous demeurons tousjours mesmes et uns, comment est-ce que nous nous esjouyssons maintenant d'une chose et maintenant d'une autre? . . . Car il n'est pas vraysemblable que sans mutation nous prenions autres passions; et ce qui souffre mutation ne demeure pas un mesme, et, s'il n'est pas un mesme, il n'est donc pas aussi. Ains, quant et l'estre tout un, change aussi l'estre simplement, devenant tousjours autre d'un autre. (II, xii, 587)

Montaigne's notion of a dynamic, inner Self is a necessary complement to his parallel sensation of inner space. If the realm of external space is filled with the constant activity of matter, the inner realm is likewise in a state of flux. By seeking to portray this flux on paper, Montaigne is, in fact, channeling his inner energy into a *kinetic* form, into a positive, creative

result. From the attempt to portray his dynamic "cogitations" to the act of metaphorical creativity is but a simple jump. For Thibaudet, the image becomes a vital expression of Montaigne's inner energy: "Sa pensée ce n'est pas ces images, c'est la succession de ces images, et chacune de ces images retient autant qu'elle peut quelque chose de cette succession, de cette procession, de ce mouvement."[14] The individuation process is thereby dependent upon figurative language as a creative vehicle for the concepts of inner space and inner energy.

[14] *Montaigne*, 164.

7

THE IMAGE

The links between Montaigne's introspection and figurative language are inextricable. Indeed, the concepts of psychological space and energy are nothing more than vast, metaphorical constructs, describing a realm hermetically sealed from penetration by sensory perception. More than a mere stylistic device, the image enters a world where the so-called rational modes of thought cease to operate. It transcends a purely decorative function in order to participate in the organic life of the essay.[1]

IMAGE AND IMAGINATION

In its modern sense, the word "image" more generally refers to those figures of speech which, as early as Aristotle's *Poetics,* have been subdivided into metaphors and similes.[2] With Rimbaud and certain of his Surrealist disciples, however, the preference for metaphor brings about a corresponding devaluation of the simile – not a surprising turn of events given the Surrealistic notion of two poetic worlds made contingent by the "alchimie du verbe". At the point of contact between these two worlds, the metaphor becomes a real thought, capable of

[1] Gray, *Le Style de Montaigne,* 137.

[2] As it is used in this study, the word "image" may be taken to mean either figurative language and ornamentation, or a mental representation conceived by fancy and imagination. Since, for Montaigne, there is little distinction to be drawn between the mechanisms of conception and the stylistic products of these mechanisms, there appears to be no reason for this study to draw fine lines, except as the requirements of clarity demand.

transcription on paper and unencumbered by syntactical adhesives.[3] Metaphorical expression thus contains stylistic possibilities closed to the simile; it is, as Pierre Reverdy explains, the reconstruction and juxtaposition of two distinct, imaginative orders: "L'image est une création pure de l'esprit. Elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison, mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées."[4] On the other hand, the simile is more cumbersome, an unfaithful reproduction of thought: it is, at best, a comparison of two orders of reality forever separated by a syntactical boundary. Aristotle has, in fact, stated the case most concisely: "it [simile] does not say outright that 'this' is 'that' and therefore the hearer is less interested in the idea."[5] While the simile remains only a stylistic figure, the metaphor reflects the preverbal origins of the image.[6]

At no point in the *Essais* does Montaigne resurrect the traditional Aristotelian dichotomy of metaphor and simile in his stylistic discussions. When he does refer to the use of figurative expression, it is always with the idea in mind that language must be made more vigorous and expressive. Through age and overwear images become tarnished and commonplace: "Comme en nostre commun, il s'y rencontre des frases excellentes et des metaphores desquelles la beauté flestrit de vieillesse, et la couleur s'est ternie par maniement trop ordinaire" (III, v, 852). Just as Aristotle declares that "it is from the metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh",[7] so Montaigne admires

[3] André Rolland de Renéville explains this contact as follows: "La métaphore est une condensation de la réalité que la conscience connaît, et de celle qu'elle doit percevoir. Elle porte un élément d'inconnu dont le signe est l'éclair qui surgit de la confrontation des termes qui la constituent" (*L'Expérience poétique* [Paris: Gallimard, 1938], 151).

[4] *Poètes d'aujourd'hui,* XXV (Paris: P. Seghers, 1960), 133. It should be noted that Reverdy's remarks are a clear restatement of Aristotelian theory, formulated in *De Poetica,* 1459a: "a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (*The Works of Aristotle,* ed. W. D. Ross [1924; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon, 1953-63], XI, n. pag).

[5] *Rhetorica,* Book III, 1410b, in *The Works of Aristotle,* ed. W. D. Ross, XI, n. pag.

[6] "Preverbal" refers to the initial act of conception which takes place prior to the creation of such verbal connectives as "like" or "as".

[7] *Rhetorica,* Book III, 1410b, in *The Works of Aristotle,* ed. W. D. Ross,

in Horace the ability to penetrate an object with his poetic vision in order that the mind might express itself from its storehouse of words and images; in so doing, the Poet transcends the commonplace:

> Horace ne se contente point d'une superficielle expression, elle le trahiroit. Il voit plus cler et plus outre dans la chose; son esprit crochette et furette tout le magasin des mots et des figures pour se representer; et les luy faut outre l'ordinaire, comme sa conception est outre l'ordinaire. (III, v, 851)

In complete candor, he confesses his propensity for figurative expression, and rather than offer an excuse for this trait, he takes it as a vital part of his nature for which no apology is necessary: "Quand on m'a dit ou que moy-mesme me suis dict: 'Tu es trop espais en figures . . .' Oui, fais-je; mais je corrige les fautes d'inadvertence, non celles de coustume. Est-ce pas ainsi que je parle par tout? ne represente-je pas vivement?" (III, v, 853). The relative merits of metaphor and simile in his affinity for figurative language are of little conscious concern to Montaigne. On the contrary, they both share in the organic evolution of style in the *Essais*.

The simile is more prevalent in the early writings where Montaigne is attempting to assimilate and imitate those stylistic techniques he admires in Seneca and in the oratorical style of the neo-Ciceronian period.[8] Only in the later writings, when he is more conscious of the identification between Self and book, does the orderly expression of the simile become ill-adapted to the description of the elusive, changing Self. The simile is then limited as a means of expression; it can tell the reader what something is like to the eye or the mind, but it cannot penetrate beneath the surface and measure the object's trans-

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XI, n. pag.

[8] Gray contrasts Montaigne's early use of simile with its opposite assimilation in Flaubert: "Montaigne, lui, a commencé comme Flaubert finira, toutes proportions gardées, en arrangeant, en composant sa phrase comme n'importe quel bon élève de rhétorique, et c'est à ce moment-là qu'apparaissent la plupart de ses comparaisons. On peut donc dire, que chez Montaigne au moins, la comparaison représente presque toujours un effort conscient de la part de l'écrivain" (*Le Style de Montaigne*, 139-40).

formations.[9] As the Essayist becomes progressively more committed to the notion of his changing Self, the inadequacies of simile seem increasingly evident. The Self cannot be fixed in any substantive form; because it is in constant flux, it must by evoked by a stylistic medium conveying change and motion. By surrendering the syntactical bonds of "like" and "as" and by portraying the movement of the mind across the printed page, the metaphor becomes a seminal force in Montaigne's individuation.

Figurative expression, however, does not spring from a spontaneous eruption of vatic inspiration. It is primarily an act of imaginative creation. In his study of Montaigne's Pyrrhonism, Philip Hallie refers to two kinds of imagination present in the *Essais*: the *Poetic* and the *Assertive*.[10] While the *Poetic* imagination assumes an exclusively metaphorical form, the *Assertive* imagination, intent on persuasion and the assertion of truth, uses a more literal language. As the basic machinery of image-making, the *Poetic* imagination deviates from the paths of man-made reason and judgment; its power lies in its ability to obliterate the rational processes: "Elle [la beauté] se presente au devant, seduict et preoccupe nostre jugement avec grande authorité et merveilleuse impression" (III, xii, 1035). In "Sur des vers de Virgile", Montaigne refers to the beauty found in the eloquence of such men as Virgil and Lucretius: "Ce n'est pas une eloquence molle et seulement sans offence: elle est nerveuse et solide, qui ne plaict pas tant comme elle remplit et ravit" (III, v, 850). Beauty and the language by which it is served must overwhelm the rational faculties. The figurative language Montaigne so admires in Virgil's verses ("Quand je rumine ce 'rejicit, pascit, inhians, molli . . .' " [III, v, 850]) follows a more natural pace:

> A ces bonnes gens, il ne falloit pas d'aiguë et subtile rencontre; leur langage est tout plein et gros d'une vigueur naturelle et constante; ils sont tout epigramme, non la queuë seulement, mais la teste, l'estomac

[9] In his chapter on the simile, Gray demonstrates a vital syntactical contrast between the simile and metaphor, the former relying heavily on the passive expression of a substantive, and the latter relying on the active expression provided by the verb and its complements (*Le Style de Montaigne*, 140).

[10] *The Scar of Montaigne*, 76.

et les pieds. Il n'y a rien d'efforcé, rien de treinant, tout y marche d'une pareille teneur. (III, v, 850)

Language may, thus, be charged with a kind of expressivity not inherent in its own structure. Verbal power proceeds from the constructs of the imagination: "Quand je voy ces braves formes de s'expliquer, si vifves, si profondes, je ne dicts pas que c'est bien dire, je dicts que c'est bien penser. C'est la gaillardise de l'imagination qui esleve et enfle les parolles. . . . Nos gens appellent jugement, langage et beaux mots, les plaines conceptions" (III, v, 850-51).[11] Against this theoretical background Montaigne presents the theme of the mind as an empirical phenomenon – an object whose activity can be reproduced on paper by the writer-artist. This visual portrayal of the mind's activity depends, therefore, on the clarity of the conception: "Cette peinture est conduitte non tant par dexterité de la main comme pour avoir l'object plus vifvement empreint en l'ame. Gallus parle simplement, parce qu'il conçoit simplement" (III, v, 851). A creative mind, like Horace, penetrates the object, unlocking a world of figurative language for self-representation ("son esprit crochette et furette tout le magasin des mots et des figures pour se representer" [III, v, 851]). The value of any language reflects ultimately upon the mind of the user; if a clear conception does not exist prior to the verbal formulation, then the Poetic imagination fails to transmit a clear image. In fact, what Montaigne proposes is a general expansion of the expressive functions of language, not by neologism and innovation, but by enriching the meaning and use of the vocabulary which already exists:

Le maniement et emploite des beaux espris donne pris à la langue, non pas l'innovant tant comme la remplissant de plus vigoreux et divers services, l'estirant et ployant. Ils n'y aportent point des mots, mais ils enrichissent les leurs, appesantissent et enfoncent leur signification et leur usage, luy aprenent des mouvements inaccoustumés, mais prudemment et ingenieusement. (III, v, 851)

[11] This passage is an interesting prefiguration of the later aesthetic dictum of Boileau in *L'Art poétique,* Chant Premier, vv. 153-54: "Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement,/Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément."

The Poetic imagination and its metaphorical progeny are not at the mercy of language, but rather at the mercy of the mind. The mind, as we have already seen, is an energic force, groping around the subject, exploring its contours and, for Montaigne, illuminating it through the metaphor. The elite company of "beaux espris" is thus composed of those for whom concept and manner of expression must be identical. Although too modest to place himself among this elite, he is nevertheless espousing the same stylistic doctrine. The metaphor, as a product of his imaginative mechanisms, plays a crucial role in the reproduction of the ebb and flow of thought processes.[12]

THE METAPHOR

The nature of metaphorical expression, in the *Essais,* is twofold: not only is it an integral part of Montaigne's chain of thinking, but it is often a philosophical catalyst for the work's major introspective themes. Montaigne's images, especially the metaphors of the later passages, thus remind the reader periodically of the Writer's centripetal, self-oriented progressions. It seems no coincidence, then, that the principal groupings of images, in the *Essais,* should correspond to the introspective themes.[13] Those images within the category of internal and external realities tend to evoke the themes of man's essential duality and divisive inner nature. The images of movement and change, forming the majority of examples, express not only external flux, but also the Socratic inner "branle". Finally, the images of organic sen-

[12] "Chez Montaigne elles [les métaphores] traduisent la présence d'une imagination spontanée, d'une pensée formée dans l'acte même de la composition. On n'a jamais été plus près du moment de la création littéraire à son état pur" (Gray, *Le Style de Montaigne,* 150).

[13] I am indebted to Thibaudet's catalog of images for the present discussion. In this catalog, as it appears in Gray's edition of Thibaudet's notes, the images are divided into four categories: (1) "Dedans et dehors"; (2) "Sensations organiques"; (3) "mouvement et changement"; (4) "Images visuelles", a miscellaneous grouping that does not possess the thematic unity of the other categories and that I do not intend to use in this discussion.

sation describe the Writer's degree of corporal awareness; the organic processes of life infiltrate his figurative expression.

In order to face and come to know himself, Montaigne must turn to his corporal and spiritual marrow where alone can be found the natural man – the "forme naïfve" that he undertakes to portray in the introductory address "Au Lecteur". It is, then, no surprise if the metaphors, referring to inner and outer realities, especially to the inner and outer man, take on concrete forms, such as the acts of robing and disrobing.

Of course, the examples of such metaphorical categories occur so frequently that any catalog would remain incomplete. If, in fact, we study Montaigne's metaphors in their catalog form, we miss not only the context from which they are drawn, but also their essential, organic nature. Rather they occur as *metaphorical clusters*, illustrated by the following example from "De la phisionomie" of the act of robing and disrobing:

> Or nos facultez ne sont pas ainsi dressées. Nous ne les *essayons* . . . nous nous *investissons* de celles d'autruy, et laissons chomer les nostres. Comme quelqu'un pourroit dire de moy que j'ay seulement faict icy un amas de fleurs estrangeres, n'y ayant fourny du mien que le filet à les lier. Certes j'ay donné à l'opinion publique que ces *parements* empruntez m'accompaignent. Mais je n'entends pas qu'ils me *couvrent* et qu'ils me *cachent:* c'est le rebours de mon dessein, qui ne veux faire montre que du mien, et de ce qui est mien par nature. . . . (III, xii, 1033)

Montaigne has introduced this passage with a discussion of the death of Socrates and the theme of art versus nature, concluding that it is much easier to speak like Aristotle and to live like Caesar than to speak and live like Socrates: "Là loge l'extreme degré de perfection et de difficulté: l'art n'y peut joindre" (III, xii, 1032-33). Art, for Montaigne, signifies the artificial, all that can be applied to or invested on the individual from outside. Nature, on the other hand, is what is most personally ours; it lies beneath our artificial outer covering. The metaphorical discussion into which Montaigne breaks lies implicit within the previous statements.

Rather than assaying and getting to know our faculties, we

invest ourselves with the faculties of others; we drape ourselves in the artificial while hiding the natural. The metaphor of investiture is then transformed into that of the "amas de fleurs estrangeres". Combining the metaphors of flowers and investiture, Montaigne takes the unifying theme of decoration ("paremens empruntez") and makes it serve as a bridge between two seemingly disparate figures. In the following sentence, the metaphor is sustained by the verb rather than by the substantive ("couvrent" and "cachent"). Finally, the idea of nature and its personal application to the book conclude this metaphorical statement. Almost imperceptibly, Montaigne's continuum of thought has become momentarily introspective; through the creation of this figurative cluster, his mind has turned from the more lofty ethical preoccupations on the life and death of Socrates to more humble and personal reflections on his book.

The metaphor thereby gives body to his thought. By drawing attention to the visual image communicated by the subject, language, as a verbal composite, ceases to be important. Conceptual and artistic techniques must complement each other; words must be the natural result of the clearly conceived idea:

> J'en oy qui s'excusent de ne se pouvoir exprimer, et font contenance d'avoir la teste pleine de plusieurs belles choses . . . C'est une baye . . . Ce sont des ombrages qui leur viennent de quelques conceptions informes, qu'ils ne peuvent desmeler et esclarcir au dedans, ny par consequant produire au dehors: ils ne s'entendent pas encore eux mesmes . . . De ma part, je tiens, (c) et Socrates l'ordonne, (a) que, qui a en l'esprit une vive imagination et claire, il la produira, soit en Bergamasque, soit par mines s'il est muet. (I, xxvi, 168–69)

Confronted by an idea, Montaigne's mind begins to explore and render this idea in its visual dimensions. Beyond a purely verbal explanation of the idea in the way it appears to the rational mind, Montaigne creates a substance having form and extension on the printed page. The metaphorical clusters previously described thus convey to the reader a portrait of the Writer in the act of giving form to his conceptions. Ideas are more than mere concoctions of words; they strike the creative mind as vivid images. For this reason, the metaphor is not simply a stylistic

artifice; it communicates the preverbal quality of thought processes. It distracts the reader momentarily from the idea in its verbal form while depicting, at the same time, the mechanisms of conception. Perhaps this is what Montaigne means when he writes in the *Institution:* "Au rebours, c'est aux paroles à servir et à suyvre . . . Je veux que les choses surmontent et qu'elles remplissent de façon l'imagination de celuy qui escoute, qu'il n'aye aucune souvenance des mots" (I, xxvi, 171).

In the stylistic proposals enclosing the preceding passage, the reader finds a similar use of metaphorical cluster. This example, rather than illustrating a single metaphorical class, unites two of Thibaudet's categories in one coherent image. The Essayist first uses the robing image to describe the act of patching his style with the fine thoughts of others: "Je tors bien plus volontiers une bonne sentence, pour la coudre sur moy, que je ne tors mon fil pour l'aller querir" (I, xxvi, 171). He then takes up the organic theme, attributing to speech both an alimentary ("succulent") and physiological ("nerveux") quality. The concise syntactical units that comprise this "style coupé" are also depicted as individual bodies ("chaque lopin y face son corps" [I, xxvi, 171]). As if reflecting more closely on this passage in a post-1580 addition, Montaigne later relates his own vestiary habits to the nature/art opposition and to his manner of speech:

> J'ay volontiers imité cette desbauche qui se voit en nostre jeunesse, au port de leurs vestemens: un manteau en escharpe, la cape sur une espaule, un bas mal tendu, qui represente une fierté desdaigneuse de ces paremens estrangiers et nonchallante de l'art. Mais je la trouve encore mieus employée en la forme du parler. (I, xxvi, 171)

Nature is thus represented by those disordered raiments that defy artistic arrangement: such is the stylistic effect Montaigne desires to create. With the subject of style hovering implicitly in the background, he then bridges the two themes of robing and physiology: "je n'ayme point de tissure où les liaisons et les coutures paroissent, tout ainsi qu'en un beau corps il ne faut qu'on y puisse compter les os et les veines" (I, xxvi, 171). Abstracted from the body of the essay, this statement is clearly a simile in which a piece of seamless fabric is compared to corpo-

ral beauty. But Montaigne is not only formulating a personal preference; he is making an aesthetic judgment referring ultimately to the natural disorder of the "style coupé". The statement is, thus, a simile enclosed by a larger metaphor. In the resolution of this double image, the Writer asserts that while diction may be imitated with facility, the imitation of judgment and invention only compounds the imitator's difficulties: "La plus part des lecteurs, pour avoir trouvé une pareille robbe, pensent très-faucement tenir un pareil corps. La force et les nerfs ne s'empruntent point; les atours et le manteau s'emprunte" (I, xxvi, 172).

Montaigne is supremely aware of the conflict between nature and art, between the inner and outer man. In the metaphorical progression just discussed, there is a common philosophical thread transcending the nuances in context and expression. Not only is art represented in the superficial "fleurs estrangeres", but is also a language that lays bare its stitches, seams, bones, and veins. Nature, on the contrary, is more visceral, that amorphous disorder encased by the "fleurs estrangeres". It is the inner man; it is what he assimilates and makes his own. The Writer's introspective message is thereby nourished by these thematic meanderings. In the last example cited, this thread of ideas forms a transition to the second metaphorical category: organic sensations.

Montaigne's introspective self-awareness filters through the entire spectrum of the *Essais,* whether in "De l'oisiveté", "De l'exercitation", or "De l'expérience". Between the early and later writings, however, this self-awareness is subject to a qualitative transformation. With the inevitable approach of old-age, sickness, and death, self-consciousness passes gradually to body-consciousness. Life's organic flow, described in the narrative of the accident, becomes, in Book III, the consciousness of organic decay and decline. The earlier metaphors of movement take on the bulkiness of pure matter: "La vie est un mouvement materiel et corporel, action imparfaicte de sa propre essence, et desreglée . . ." (III, ix, 967). As for Montaigne himself, his corporality is only too clear: "moy qui suis tout materiel, qui ne me paye que de la realité, encores bien massive . . ." (III, ix, 978).

What was once a vague sensation of psychological interiority gradually assumes a visceral, purely physiological dimension. The deepest, most central processes of the inner man are, thus, organic. Repentance, for example, must transcend the superficial, penetrating to the individual's *corporal* core: "Il faut qu'elle [la repentance] me touche de toutes pars avant que je la nomme ainsin, et qu'elle pinse mes entrailles et les afflige autant profondement que Dieu me voit, et autant universellement" (III, ii, 791). Elsewhere, the mind participates in the corporal mutation: "Elle [la vieillesse] nous attache plus de rides en l'esprit qu'au visage; et ne se void point d'ames, ou fort rares, qui en vieillissant ne sentent à l'aigre et au moisi" (III, ii, 795). When Montaigne refers later to "cette agitation intestine" (III, x, 981), the following passage is a veritable bloom of metaphorical profusion:

> Si quelquefois on m'a poussé au maniement d'affaires estrangieres, j'ay promis de les prendre en main, non pas au poulmon et au foye; de m'en charger, non de les incorporer. . . . J'ay assez affaire à disposer et renger la presse domestique que j'ay dans mes entrailles et dans mes veines, sans y loger, et me fouler d'une presse estrangere. . . . (III, x, 981)

Once again, the introspective impact of this cluster overrides stylistic embellishment. Juxtaposed with the words "poulmon" and "foye", the locution "prendre en main" assumes a more literal, tactile quality not normally present in its conventional, idiomatic sense. On a philosophical level, Montaigne is saying that the outer man can *lend* himself to society, but the inner man must *give* himself only to himself ("il se faut prester à autruy et ne se donner qu'à soy-mesme"). The inner organs represent the faculties of incorporation in which an organic, assimilative process is taking place: digestive ("foye" and "entrailles"), circulatory ("veines"), and respiratory ("poulmon"). Such organs cannot be lent; they perform vital, life-giving functions for the individual alone. While the hand, as an external member, may be engaged in activity beyond the individual's immediate, self-oriented needs, the inner organs are crucial to life itself. The extent of Montaigne's "incorporation" has, therefore, been limited to the domestic anxieties ("la presse domestique") absorb-

ing his very being ("entrailles" and "veines"). The metaphor of a psychological core is thus identified, in this passage, with the physiological and organic realities of life. Montaigne is well aware that the sensation of inner flux not only reveals a state of mind, but also a state of body.

Another class of organic metaphor used frequently by Montaigne is that of nourishment and digestion. Although such figures appear at times to belong to his pilferings of Seneca, their continued reappearance in various creative guises seems to suggest a highly functional role in the *Essais*. For example, in one especially striking passage from "De la phisionomie", the metaphor of food is cast into a rich metaphorical field where it takes on an anecdotal form through the accumulation of several metaphorical details. In the first part of this passage, learning is presented as an acquisition of spiritual appetite as well as a negotiable commodity: "Et Tacitus a raison de louer la mere d'Agricola d'avoir bridé en son fils un appetit trop bouillant de science. C'est un bien, à le regarder d'yeux fermes, qui a, comme les autres biens des hommes... un cher coust" (III, xii, 1015). Montaigne then unites the commercial and alimentary themes by depicting a symbolic landscape in the concrete terms of everyday reality:

> L'emploite [de la science] en est bien plus hasardeuse que de toute autre viande ou boisson. Car au reste, ce que nous avons achetté, nous l'emportons au logis en quelque vaisseau, et là avons loy d'en examiner la valeur, combien et à quelle heure nous en prendrons. Mais les sciences, nous ne les pouvons d'arrivée mettre en autre vaisseau qu'en nostre ame: nous les avallons en les achettans, et sortons du marché ou infects desjà, ou amendez. Il y en a qui ne font que nous empescher et charger au lieu de nourrir, et telles encore qui, sous tiltre de nous guerir, nous empoisonnent. (III, xii, 1015)

The passage's metaphorical complexity is such that the reader can distinguish several of Thibaudet's categories,[14] all woven

[14] In Montaigne's mind, the metaphor often tends to reach out in all directions of experience. From Agricola's appetite for learning, an entire landscape opens to the creative imagination, revealing all the contingent phases and qualities of the event. It is, therefore, perhaps inaccurate and unfair to examine Montaigne's metaphors in systematic, artificial categories. In the

into one unified tableau. Knowledge is, first, like food and drink; it may be consumed and digested, but in keeping with its organic nature, it may hamper or burden the individual because of its bulk, or poison under guise of healing. Like most forms of alimentation, knowledge has a negotiable value and must be bought at the market place; unlike food and drink, however, it cannot be brought home and examined. Upon purchase, it must be placed in the container ("vaisseau") of the mind beyond all hope of extraction. Finally, on a less obvious level, there is an overriding metaphor of movement created by the imaginative itinerary of the journey to market.

The metaphorical dominance of corporal processes and sensations is sometimes turned toward less subjective themes like war; but the wrenching effect of civil upheaval upon the Essayist is justification enough for his use of a metaphor transcribing the introspective preoccupations of organic decay and decline. Poison, infection, and ill health characterize this cancerous sore that deprives the country of its vital energies:

> Monstrueuse guerre: les autres agissent au dehors; cette-cy encore contre soy se ronge et se desfaict par son propre venin. Elle est de nature si maligne et ruineuse qu'elle se ruine quand et quand le reste, et se deschire et desmembre de rage. . . . Elle vient guarir la sedition et en est pleine . . . Où en sommes nous? Nostre medecine porte infection . . . En ces maladies populaires, on peut distinguer sur le commencement les sains des malades; mais quand elles viennent à durer, comme la nostre, tout le corps s'en sent, et la teste et les talons; aucune partye n'est exempte de corruption. (III, xii, 1018)

The monstrous deformity of civil war lies in its self-destructive capabilities. Just as the human body is caught up in life's material decline, so this internal strife reveals the corporal, organic putrefaction of France. More imaginatively than Montesquieu,

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example in question, Thibaudet's division of organic sensation is captured in at least four of its categories: weight; the soul's infirmity (learning as a poison); food; and the "vessel" of the mind. Within the division of metaphorical movement, the entire passage re-creates a tableau of a journey to market. The metaphor of commerce and negotiation suggested by the role of the market place and the purchase of food and drink is, however, not included in Thibaudet's categories.

Montaigne is declaring: "Le mal est dans la chose même." Disease and war are, moreover, not benign, but malignant forces. The verbs used to enrich the metaphor are themselves, active, violent, and generally reflexive: "agissent", "se ronge", "se desfaict", "se ruine", "se deschire et desmembre". Rather than the curative mission it is said to perform, the war is consumed by the disease it is supposed to cure. Montaigne's conclusion thus inveighs as much against medicine as against the war: "Nostre medecine porte infection". Like the final effects of an epidemic, the infection spreads universally throughout the nation; the entire body is tainted by corruption and decay.

The metaphorical themes of this passage are not based, however, on exclusively political issues. In the passage prior to this anti-war invective, Montaigne discusses the euphemisms adopted by common laborers to mollify the impact of certain diseases: "Les noms mesme de quoy ils appellent les maladies en adoucissent et amollissent l'aspreté; la phtisie, c'est la tous pour eux; la dysenterie, devoyement d'estomac; un pleuresis, c'est un morfondement; et selon qu'ils les nomment doucement, ils les supportent aussi" (III, xii, 1017). When life has run its course, such individuals go quietly to their beds to die: "Elles sont bien griefves quand elles rompent leur travail ordinaire; ils ne s'allitent que pour mourir" (III, xii, 1017). Montaigne thus turns once more to thoughts of death – a private, peaceful death enacted in conformity to nature. The realities of the civil war, on the other hand, suggest his concern with another, less private kind of death. The metaphor of this cancerous disease, eroding social order and institutions, leads Montaigne to the contemplation of "ce notable spectacle de nostre mort publique, ses symptomes et sa forme" (III, xii, 1023).

More than stylistic ornamentation, this metaphor provides a coherent thread for the entire essay, linking covertly Montaigne's political invective with his private sensitivities. It is introspective because it transcends mere comparison; it is a motif which always points deeper to the affective role of death and disease, especially in Montaigne's later years. "De la phisionomie" is, therefore, not only an attack on the horrors of civil war; it is a meditation

on the spectacle and meaning of a public and private death. From the account of the war, Montaigne moves to the poignant narrative of the plague from which he and his family are obliged to flee. No longer a metaphor, the theme of disease takes on a more concrete form while exemplifying peasant resolve before the inevitability of death. Following an extended digression on nature and the meaning of Socrates' death, Montaigne then returns to the facts of his own experience: the attempted seizure of his château and the attack by thieves in the forest. Borrowing on these personal accounts, he twists the theme of nature into a judgment on his entire disposition and bearing ("je devoy cette delivrance à mon visage, liberté et fermeté de mes parolles..." [III, xii, 1040]). The metaphor of disease does not exist, then, in its own private figurative vacuum, but participates fully in the chain of ideas and emotions that gradually take form in the essay. As with the other organic metaphors, it is introspective both thematically and functionally, participating in Montaigne's progression of thought.

Undoubtedly, the metaphors of movement comprise by far the largest division of Montaigne's images.[15] The concept of movement, as already discussed, penetrates deeply into the introspective fabric of the *Essais,* not only in strictly figurative expression, but more implicitly, in the ebb and flow of ideas by which the Writer's mind moves across the page. When the metaphors of movement do occur, it is rarely in any systematic form; they appear to fall capriciously upon the paper, sharing a common image of motion, but without a compelling unity of form and subject. They are brief illuminations grounded in the imagination and inserting themselves into the greater, all-encompassing movement of the essay. When the critic speaks of the essay's movement or of Montaigne's style, he is himself creating a metaphor by which to explain certain artistic phenomena; he is, in fact, borrowing this metaphor not only from Montaigne's explicit stylistic proposals, but from an entire storehouse of dynamic images. Like little clusters of motifs, these images communicate to the reader certain overarching introspective themes such as

[15] Thibaudet, *Montaigne,* 506.

individual mortality, the instability of man's inner nature, the flow of time, and the concrete, visceral quality of the human psyche.

One the most striking examples of movement in the *Essais* is Montaigne's preoccupation with the motion of travel. Speaking of the companionship that only books provide, he writes: "C'est la meilleure munition que j'aye trouvé à cet humain voyage . . ." (III, iii, 806). Elsewhere, in more explicit terms, he relates the idea of travel to specific psychological attributes: "Je sçay bien qu'à le prendre à la lettre, ce plaisir de voyager porte tesmoignage d'inquietude et d'irresolution. Aussi sont ce nos maistresses qualitez, et praedominantes" (III, ix, 966). There are, however, two primary passages in which the travel metaphor transforms a level of abstraction into a concrete topography unfolding before the passing traveler. The sense of movement conveyed by such passages lies in the changing panorama of objects paraded before the reader's eyes. For example, early in the *Institution,* Montaigne attacks certain of his contemporaries for their lengthy, tedious pilferings of ancient authors. Referring to just such a passage, he writes:

> J'avois trainé languissant après des parolles Françoises si exangues, si descharnées et si vuides de matiere et de sens que ce n'estoient voirement que parolles Françoises; au bout d'un long et ennuyeux chemin, je vins à rencontrer une piece haute, riche et eslevée jusques aux nuës. Si j'eusse trouvé la pente douce et la montée un peu alongée, cela eust esté excusable; c'estoit un precipice si droit et coupé que, des six premieres paroles, je conneuz que je m'envolois en l'autre monde. De là je descouvris la fondriere d'où je venois, si basse et si profonde, que je n'eus onques plus le coeur de m'y ravaler.
>
> (I, xxvi, 145–46)

The printed page assumes here its own terrain possessing concrete topographical features. The quality of stylistic movement, however, does not arise from the features themselves; it is created by that sense of ordered progression in which Montaigne's mind proceeds along the route traced by words. More than just a simple path, this route has the ascendant trajectory of the Platonic "gradus". After dragging languorously past landmarks

of dull, lifeless words, the Essayist's mind is confronted by a monolithic feature whose triad of qualities ("haute", "riche", "eslevée") corresponds to an opposing triad possessed by the "parolles Françoises" ("exangues", "descharnées", "vuides"). This sudden gradient propels Montaigne into another world from which he glances back at the murky depths he has just traveled.

In a later addition to the same chapter, there is a similar metaphorical passage which, by its overt reference to Virtue, is much closer to the Platonic "gradus". The landscape is here more lush and picturesque although differing very little from traditional descriptions of the "locus amoenus" found throughout medieval narrative prose.[16] There is no sudden gradient in this pleasance; Virtue is rather a divine Beatrice drawing the soul gradually upward:

> Elle [la sagesse] a pour son but la vertu, qui n'est pas, comme dit l'eschole, plantée à la teste d'un mont coupé, rabotteux et inaccessible. Ceux qui l'ont approchée, la tiennent, au rebours, logée dans une belle plaine fertile et fleurissante, d'où elle voit bien souz soy toutes choses; mais si peut on y arriver, qui en sçait l'addresse, par des routes ombrageuses, gazonnées et doux fleurantes, plaisamment et d'une pante facile et polie, comme est celle des voutes celestes.
>
> (I, xxvi, 160–61)

Montaigne conceives of a Virtue much different from the Virtue-effort notion of classical philosphy. Although this more facile Virtue must be reached by a journey, the allegorical figure of wisdom has only to pass along a gently ascending road, bordered by trees, lawns, and flowers. In picturesque terms, Montaigne is depicting an inner journey, a movement towards a spiritual and ethical acquisition. If the narrative inevitably recalls the conventional descriptions of a "locus amoenus", the idea of the journey is of more personal significance. At the end of the road, the traveler finds his goal; the journey must not have been in vain. Likewise, in Montaigne's doctrine of movement, there

[16] Gray concludes that this passage, with its theme of virtue, is derived from Montaigne's readings in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon. Virtue, conceived by Montaigne "in its highest form, would seem to imply something which excludes constraint" ("Montaigne and the *Memorabilia*", 133).

appears to be an implicit nostalgia for a *telos* – a state in which change and motion cease to function.

In "De l'expérience", the natural thirst for knowledge brought on by Man's intellectual aspirations is expressed as a movement only vaguely reminiscent of the travel metaphor. There is no sense of a "gradus", gentle or steep, no allegorical figure standing like a beacon at the end of the road. There is only a fruitless quest for an elusive goal. The metaphorical unity of the preceding passages becomes dislocated, conveying no clearly graphic landscape. Metaphors are cast side by side in a murky nether world where truth is indistinct and the road tortuous and broken:

> Les hommes mescognoissent la maladie naturelle de leur esprit: il ne faict que fureter et quester, et va sans cesse tournoiant, bastissant et s'empestrant en sa besongne, comme nos vers de soye, et s'y estouffe. 'Mus in pice.' Il pense remarquer de loing je ne sçay quelle apparence de clarté et verité imaginaire; mais, pendant qu'il y court, tant de difficultez luy traversent la voye, d'empeschemens et de nouvelles questes, qu'elles l'esgarent et l'enyvrent.
>
> (III, xiii, 1044–45)

While the preceding examples described a coherent metaphorical landscape, here the image is multiform and vague. The metaphor of sickness ("la maladie naturelle"), limited to the first phrase, is suddenly transformed into a shadowy representation of the mind's activity provided by the verbs, "fureter", "quester", "tournoiant", "bastissant", "s'empestrant", "s'y estouffe". Although the metaphorical expression of the first sentence is perpetuated by these verb forms, the activity they describe, whether human or animal, remains unclear. Upon arriving at the simile within the greater metaphor ("comme nos vers de soye"), the reader may deduce that the verbs refer to nonhuman activity, a fact further substantiated by the brief Erasmian locution ("Mus in pice"). The idea of the pitch barrel evokes the tenebrous dominions of the mind. Although still ill-defined, the metaphor is perhaps now referring to the activity of the mouse as it moves stumblingly towards a glimmer of light: beset by obstacles and the possibility of new quests, it is diverted from its path and cast into complete bewilderment. In keeping with

the more animalistic interpretation, Montaigne then compares the mind to the dogs of Aesop, vainly engaged in consuming the water from the sea in order to retrieve a floating object. Montaigne's metaphor thus appears to keep perpetuating itself by its very vagueness: the reader has no constant vision of the mind's formal qualities; it is, after all, like a mouse in a pitch barrel. Cast into obscurity, it can only be described by the nature of its vagabond activity, transmitted, in turn, by the verbal forms.

In a later resumption of the metaphor, however, even the above analogical precisions are lacking. Once more, it is the activity and movement of the mind rather than its formal structure which fulfill the functions of description; all points of reference with the animal world are now abandoned:

> C'est signe de racourciment d'esprit quand il se contente, ou de lasseté. Nul esprit genereux ne s'arreste en soy: il pretend tousjours et va outre ses forces; il a des eslans au delà de ses effects; s'il ne s'avance et ne se presse et ne s'accule et ne se choque, il n'est vif qu'à demy; (b) ses poursuites sont sans terme et sans forme; son aliment c'est (c) admiration, chasse, (b) ambiguité. . . . C'est un mouvement irregulier, perpetuel, sans patron, et sans but. Ses inventions s'eschauffent, se suyvent, et s'entreproduisent l'une l'autre. (III, xiii, 1045)

Montaigne appears here to be far more concerned with portraying the mind as an organic substance, an indistinct mass of energy whose aspirations and progeny are formless. Any neutralization of this energy is also a neutralization of creativity and discovery. By growing self-satisfied and restricting its field of action, the mind contracts and becomes weary. The truly noble ("genereux") mind reaches out, venturing beyond present capacities; if it does not advance and press forward, it is only half alive. It is always searching, but without end results; it feeds on admiration, the hunt, and ambiguity. In short, it is a vast eternal movement whose inventions perpetuate each other in one long chain of human creativity. Rather than expressing a concrete, graphic structure, the metaphor of movement here re-creates the mind as a dynamic, unstable reality. As in the preceding passage, the metaphorical content is condensed in the active, verbal expressions: "s'arreste", "pretend", "va", "s'avance",

"se presse", "s'accule", "se choque". In order to reinforce the impression of mental energy, the Writer links the syntactical elements together, as though the idea of a self-perpetuating chain of creativity had found a stylistic form. Subordination is thus noticeably lacking. The second and longest period of this passage, for example, is an accumulation of thoughts evolving from the initial phrase: "Nul esprit genereux ne s'arreste en soy. . . ." In some cases, the chain of words is suspended without any coordinating conjunction: "son aliment c'est (c) admiration, chasse, (b) ambiguité", in other cases, the coordinating effect is monotonous: "s'il ne s'avance *et* ne se presse *et* ne s'accule *et* ne se choque. . . ." Between the thoughts themselves, there are no conjunctive forms, thereby reinforcing the sense of succession and perpetuation of ideas. As a result, the metaphor of movement shares in the syntactical structure of the period.

Whether he is referring metaphorically to an inner and outer man, to organic sensation, or to the concept of movement, Montaigne is, in fact, saying that there is an essential part of himself reducible to visual, non-abstract representation. Most of his metaphors are thus introspective not only in their thematic content, but also in the context from which they are drawn and in the metamorphoses they undergo. The essential man, the subject of Montaigne's self-portraiture, takes form because of the interchange between ideas and images; when thought can proceed no farther, the imagination assumes momentary control. The impasse imposed by the idea's verbal limitations is transcended by its conception in a visual, preverbal form. Every word striking the page is a part of this essential man, especially the fleeting introspective glance provided by the metaphor.

When Montaigne, looking down at his literary musings, faces the stark mirror-image of himself, he becomes at that point a fully conscious introspective. What appears to have escaped Thibaudet, in his catalog of images, is the metaphorical equation uniting the Essayist with his book. When the Writer arrives at the formula "My book and I are one", he is also making an implicit comparison between the book and the essential man: not only is he ascribing to his essays certain organic

qualities, but he is imparting to himself the form of a literary enterprise. The metaphors of movement, organic sensation, inner and outer reality all combine to create the impact of this insight. The image, however, is not born in a sudden spark of inspiration. Upon examining the opening passages of "Du repentir", the reader confronts a series of rich, introspective communications, many of which are grounded in figurative language. In time, these communications build towards the crucial identification between Montaigne and book.

Like a painter who has just completed his self-portrait, stepping back to cast a critical eye upon his achievement, the Essayist now detaches himself from the printed page. His literary presence becomes objectified, less egocentric, eventually assuming the concrete, metaphorical terms of the painting. The notion of *kalokagathia*, discussed earlier, becomes, then, more explicit in the later writings: not only does Montaigne see himself as an object susceptible to artistic structuring, but takes on, to boot, the specific texture of a painted canvas. This essential objectivity is conveyed in the familiar opening lines of the essay: "Les autres forment l'homme; je le recite et en represente un particulier bien mal formé, et lequel, si j'avoy à façonner de nouveau, je ferois vrayement bien autre qu'il n'est. Mes-huy, c'est fait" (III, ii, 782). Art, for Montaigne, must serve more than didactic ends; it must show men what they *are* rather than what they *ought* to be ("Je n'enseigne poinct, je raconte" [III, ii, 784]). While others form man, setting for him certain ethical objectives, Montaigne describes him in his "façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire". As if suddenly propelled from the general into the particular, he then focuses upon himself as the object of descriptive study, a technique heightened by the impersonal form, "un particulier". The sudden jump from the general man to a particular man, from mankind to the individual, sets the stage for the basic tension of what is to follow, leading toward the equation of man and book.

Montaigne's self-portrait cannot be fixed on a single canvas. His creation is more cinematographic: "Or les traits de ma peinture ne forvoyent point, quoy qu'ils se changent et diversi-

fient" (III, ii, 782). Abruptly stricken by the universal impact of these words, he then re-enters the world of generalities: "Le monde n'est qu'une branloire perenne. Toutes choses y branlent sans cesse . . ." (III, ii, 782); and then back to the particular: "Je ne puis asseurer mon object. Il va trouble et chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle. Je le prens en ce point, comme il est, en l'instant que je m'amuse à luy" (III, ii, 782). Not only does the painting have a graphic, spatial extension, but it also undergoes temporal alteration: "Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage . . ." (III, ii, 782). The antithesis is thereby clear: fluid time unites with the static medium of the painter's canvas; the metaphors of painting and movement take on a complementary duality. As an artistically structured opus, the Self must therefore be constantly re-created across the canvas of introspective encounters that make up the essay: "Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied, je ne m'essaierois pas, je me resoudrois; elle est tousjours en apprentissage et en espreuve" (III, ii, 782).

If Montaigne views himself as artist and craftsman, he is also careful to distinguish between the creative values of artifice and nature:

> Est-il aussi raison que je produise au monde, où la façon et l'art ont tant de credit et de commandement, des effects de nature crus et simples, et d'une nature encore bien foiblette? Est-ce pas faire une muraille sans pierre, ou chose semblable, que de bastir des livres sans science et sans art? Les fantasies de la musique sont conduictes par art, les miennes par sort. (III, ii, 783)

He who creates the natural looks only to himself as the subject of his undertaking. A true work of art must necessarily be introspective; it must reflect the organic constitution of the inner man, as evoked in the metaphor of organic processes: "aucun (c) ne penetra en sa matiere plus avant, ny en esplucha plus particulierement les membres et suites" (III, ii, 783). The creator of the natural is thus bent on truth; he must, at all times, remain faithful to himself despite his inner mutability: "Pour la [sa besoingne] parfaire, je n'ay besoing d'y apporter que la fidelité" (III, ii, 783). There can be no betrayal between creator and creation: "Il ne peut advenir icy ce que je voy advenir souvent, que l'artizan et sa besoingne se contrarient" (III, ii, 783). The met-

aphorical relation of Montaigne and his book to a painting winds circuitously over the printed page, finally leading to an objective nucleus of truth. It is, in fact, his own life that is unfolding at each stroke of the pen – not only his mental life, but his very essence as a composite of spiritual and corporal elements: "Icy, nous allons conformément et tout d'un trein, mon livre et moy. Ailleurs, on peut recommander et accuser l'ouvrage à part de l'ouvrier; icy, non: qui touche l'un, touche l'autre" (III, ii, 783).

The above passage transposes the painting metaphor onto a new suggestive level in which the three major introspective themes of the *Essais* are fused in a single form. The theme of organic sensation and corporal awareness is evoked in the implicit comparison of the book with the organic flow of life processes ("nous allons conformément"); life is not only within man's corporal fibers, but is also assimilated into a creative opus. If human life can thus be transmitted figuratively into an external form, the objectivity of the external world may likewise be incorporated in the individual. Montaigne is formulating synchronically an implicit equation, "I am to the book, as the book is to me". Inner, psychic space thereby assumes the specific tactile qualities ("qui touche l'un, touche l'autre") of the book. Finally, this statement of identity between man and book re-creates the flux and motion ("et tout d'un trein") invading Montaigne's cinematographic self-portrait, as well as penetrating his psychological world. The elements of the metaphor reciprocate, amplifying the imaginative richness of the ideas.

By way of the metaphor, Montaigne is able to make effective introspective communications with his reader – communications that convey certain recurring themes. These themes, however, would seem too insistent and forced were it not for their organic function in the moral and philosophical meanderings of the essay. Encompassing this figurative display is a corpus of ideas constructed through paraphrase, imitation, and citation, and through the intellectual and personal concerns of Montaigne. As if roaming over a patchwork quilt, his mind proceeds gropingly through the mass of ideas that comprise this corpus. Whenever possible, the mind reaches out to touch these ideas, probing and

conceptualizing them with the imagination. The metaphor is thus created not only from a sense of dissatisfaction with the prosaic, verbal form of the idea but from the effort to synthesize the imaginative experience of thought itself. The act of conception, however, is no discontinuous psychic event.

The metaphor continues to perpetuate itself as a cluster of cognate metaphors, a transmutation of the original metaphor, or even the generation of a fresh idea. Montaigne's metaphor is caught up in the movement of the essay, and appears to produce its own series of mutations. The themes of movement, organic sensation, and inner and outer reality become woven into figurative forms because they constitute the fundamental categories of Montaigne's perception of the world and of himself. Through the medium of metaphorical language, the reader experiences the proximity of the Writer's introspective mind, but less consciously than in the more overtly introspective passages of the *Essais*. By the metaphor alone, the reader is forced to channel his perception through Montaigne's, while in an essay like "De l'exercitation", it is possible to remain detached from the event just as Montaigne's detachment enables him to objectify his psychic progressions.

The Self, as an imaginative construct, is a composite of all the elements at work in the Writer's psychic vision. Inasmuch as the metaphor transplants us into Montaigne's channel of perception, the leap from literal to figurative language serves to clarify our own understanding of that vision. In laying bare a momentary fragment of the Self, the metaphor comes closer to unmasking the essential Montaigne, the elusive figure hermetically enshrined at the end of the Essayist's self-quest. To restrict one's aspirations and activity to the limitations of this diffuse but essential man is, therefore, to confront individuation as a practical code of action. Only when Montaigne confesses the identification of himself with his book does he know the extent to which his creative life conforms to the sphere of his inner constitution. Around this insight forms the corpus of his personal ethics: "Mes actions sont reglées et conformes à ce que je suis et à ma condition" (III, ii, 791).

PART FOUR

TOWARDS SELF-DISCOVERY

8

THE AGING INTROSPECTIVE

In 1578, Montaigne suffers the initial assaults of a much dreaded disease. What was once a fearful apprehension of pain and suffering has now become consubstantial with the body. Fortunately, he tells us, the imaginative apprehension far surpasses the reality of the event. Life appears, then, to lose none of its luster; the Essayist's spiritual pleasures remain constant: reading, meditating, pacing back and forth across his library floor, dictating or inscribing his reflections. In short, his creative enterprise remains unchecked (indeed it is enriched) by this latest of acquisitions. Philosophy's pedagogical message no longer aims at death as a structured composition The Writer overcomes his earlier attraction to stoical humanism with its superhuman ideal of transcending corporal awareness. In its place, he envisions a philosophy of life more in keeping with his inner nature and corporal faculties. More *spiritually* sound, he enters his last fourteen years of life intent on acknowledging the ineluctable facts of his personal condition, of discussing them and giving them verbal extension in his book. His introspection becomes increasingly a function of aesthetic sensitivity to life's ebb and flow, and of his instinctive drive to criticize and judge all phases of experience.

CORPORAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The two primary categories by which one can affirm self-existence and self-knowledge are, for Montaigne, the psychic agents

of soul and body, an idea set forth clearly in the *Apologie:*

> Or il est vray-semblable que, si l'ame sçavoit quelque chose, elle se sçauroit premierement elle mesme; et, si elle sçavoit quelque chose hors d'elle, ce seroit son corps et son estuy, avant toute autre chose . . . Nous nous sommes plus voisins que ne nous est la blancheur de la nege ou la pesanteur de la pierre. Si l'homme ne se connoit, comment connoit il ses fonctions et ses forces? (II, xii, 543–44)

The body is thus an organic transmitter of human life. In a passage probably dating from the first attacks of his illness, Montaigne asserts: "Le corps a une grand'part à nostre estre, il y tient un grand rang; ainsin sa structure et composition sont de bien juste consideration" (II, xvii, 622). The individual's immediate knowledge and awareness of the body are filtered through the sensory machinery, enabling him to set up relationships between himself and the material world: "Les sens sont nos propres et premiers juges, qui n'apperçoivent les choses que par les accidents externes . . . . C'est tousjours à l'homme que nous avons affaire, duquel la condition est merveilleusement corporelle" (III, viii, 908-909). Life is synonymous not only with corporality, but also with the imperfect, putrescent state of matter in motion: "La vie est un mouvement materiel et corporel, action imparfaicte de sa propre essence, et desreglée . . ." (III, ix, 967). Elsewhere, Montaigne reduces this corporal awareness to a subjective level, referring to himself as "moy qui suis tout materiel, qui ne me paye que de la realité, encores bien massive . . ." (III, ix, 978). In "De l'expérience", when his illness is taking its final toll, life is no longer a vast, corporal flux, but rather some filthy excrement evacuated by the bodily processes of digestion and putrefaction: "C'est quelque grosse pierre qui foule et consomme la substance de mes roignons, et ma vie que je vuide peu à peu, non sans quelque naturelle douceur, comme un excrement hormais superflu et empeschant" (III, xiii, 1074).

The true introspective is thus not only one who attempts to come to terms with that inner, shadowed world, accessible through metaphorical expression. Self-knowledge, although at best an approximation, is a knowledge of man as a corporal and

spiritual unit. It measures the limitations of body as well as those of mind, and it seeks also to understand the interaction between the two. In the introspection of the later writings, the emphasis has shifted to what Jean Prévost terms "l'introspection corporelle".[1] Body processes and interests become central to Montaigne's self-portraiture. The goal of the Writer is, no less than before, to "paint" his thoughts, but the nature of these thoughts demonstrates a greater awareness of the body as an expression of individuality.

Montaigne's increased corporal awareness and the first attacks of his illness are understandably synchronic events. For the child of the *Institution,* an essay written during this period, philosophy not only acts on the inner man, but also transforms the corporal man: "L'ame qui loge la philosophie doit, par sa santé, rendre sain encores le corps. Elle doit faire luire jusques au dehors son repos et son ayse; doit former à son moule le port exterieur . . ." (I, xxvi, 160). Already, this theme prefigures the subject of a later essay, "De la phisionomie": "Il n'est rien plus vraysemblable que la conformité et relation du corps à l'esprit" (III, xii, 1035). At the time of the *Institution,* however, Montaigne is also composing another key introspective essay, "De la praesumption", regarded erroneously by many readers of the *Essais* as the Writer's single self-portrait.

One of the great thematic sources of "De la praesumption" lies in the body/soul unity. Montaigne's illness has probably made him more aware than ever of the destructive capabilities of Time. The themes of old age and physical decline seem to suggest new lines of thought open to the Essayist: "la santé forte et allegre, jusques bien avant en mon aage . . . J'estois tel, car je ne me considere pas à cette heure, que je suis engagé dans les avenuës de la vieillesse, ayant pieça franchy les quarante ans" (II, xvii, 625). For the aging man, the body, and its failing en-

[1] "L'impression de *connaissance de soi* la plus totale qu'on puisse avoir, je crois qu'elle participera de toutes les données de l'introspection corporelle, lorsqu'éloigné à la fois de la digestion et de la faim, de l'engourdissement et de l'irritation, sentant le sang circuler en détail, mais sans excès, notre esprit se compose, de toutes ces données, une harmonie tempérée et subtile" (*Essai sur l'introspection,* 112).

ergies appear, then, to represent man's inescapable lot. While in youth, the body was but the ancillary companion to a bold and presumptuous mind, in old age all corporal activity becomes the individual's operative center. To use Montaigne's existentialist turn of phrase, he can no longer become other than what he is. He must resign himself to his condition, thereby fighting the natural presumption of the human spirit. To become and be what one is, such is the theme of "De la praesumption": "C'est un'affection inconsiderée, dequoy nous nous cherissons, qui nous represente à nous mesmes autres que nous ne sommes. . . . Je ne veux pas que . . . un homme se mesconnoisse pourtant, ny qu'il pense estre moins que ce qu'il est" (II, xvii, 614-15). Indeed, Montaigne's esteem for Lucilius is based on these very grounds: "Celuy là commettoit à son papier ses actions et ses pensées, et s'y peignoit tel qu'il se sentoit estre" (II, xvii, 615). Does not Montaigne perhaps see himself as another Lucilius?

Through a frank and honest self-appraisal, the individual comes to recognize the connective bond between the spiritual and corporal man:

> Il me souvient donc que, dès ma plus tendre enfance, on remerquoit en moy je ne sçay quel port de corps et des gestes tesmoignants quelque vaine et sotte fierté. J'en veux dire premierement cecy, qu'il n'est pas inconvenient d'avoir des conditions et des propensions si propres et si incorporées en nous, que nous n'ayons pas moyen de les sentir et reconnoistre. Et de telles inclinations naturelles, le corps en retient volontiers quelque pli sans nostre sçeu et consentement.
>
> (II, xvii, 615–16)

These are qualities internalized and incorporated into the body's every motion. What Montaigne terms the "inclinations naturelles" are often the impalpable habits of his nature: "Tels mouvements peuvent arriver imperceptiblement en nous" (II, xvii, 616). If, therefore, there is some trace of vain and fatuous pride in Montaigne's demeanor, he undertakes to assess its nature, portraying himself as he feels himself to be, in the manner of Lucilius: "je veux icy confesser ce que j'en sens" (II, xvii, 616).

The vainglory of which Montaigne writes consists of either

excessive self-esteem or foolish misanthropy ("de s'estimer trop, et n'estimer pas assez autruy" [II, xvii, 606]). In keeping with his guileless self-appraisal, Montaigne takes his stand in no uncertain terms: "j'ay en general cecy que, toutes les opinions que l'ancienneté a eües de l'homme (c) en gros, (a) celles que j'embrasse plus volontiers . . . ce sont celles qui nous mesprisent, avilissent et aneantissent le plus" (II, xvii, 617). As for his trace of vainglory, he writes in an important post-1588 addition: "elle [la gloire] est infuse en moy superficiellement par la trahison de ma complexion, et n'a point de corps qui comparoisse à la veuë de mon jugement. J'en suis arrosé, mais non pas teint" (II, xvii, 618). In conformity with his "vie basse et sans lustre", he concludes: "Je me tiens de la commune sorte . . . et ne me prise seulement que de ce que je sçay mon prix" (II, xvii, 618). Returning to the theme of self-knowledge and self-assessment, he then embarks upon the frank analysis of natural capacities, seeking to establish his essential worth ("mon prix") through a series of personal judgments.

Initially, these judgments relate to the operation of his mind, for which he has little praise: "quant aux effects de l'esprit . . . il n'est jamais party de moy chose qui me remplist" (II, xvii, 618). However, it is not without clear forethought that Montaigne then proceeds from these judgments on his mental faculties to the corporal disposition through which the inner man is mirrored. For the first time, he confronts individuality as the sum total of body and mind: "Ceux qui veulent desprendre nos deux pieces principales [mind and body] et les sequestrer l'une de l'autre, ils ont tort. Au rebours, il les faut r'accoupler et rejoindre . . . à ce que leurs effects ne paroissent pas divers et contraires, ains accordans et uniformes" (II, xvii, 622-23). In bestowing on men their eternal rewards, God considers the individual in his entirety, as a spiritual and corporal unit: "Dieu regarde agir tout l'homme . . ." (II, xvii, 623).

Following these general proposals, the Writer moves to the second part of the essay, continuing his act of self-vilification by enumerating his physical attributes. Corporal beauty is measured according to the stature of the man; short men, for Aristot-

le, are not well-formed. Towering bodies, on the contrary, are equated with great souls: "et se connoist en la grandeur la grand'ame, comme la beauté en un grand corps et haut" (II, xvii, 623). Montaigne, however, is not unaware of his own corporal deficiencies: "Or je suis d'une taille un peu au dessoubs de la moyenne. Ce defaut n'a pas seulement de la laideur, mais encore de l'incommodité . . ." (II, xvii, 623). As for his other features, he fares no better, remaining a man of the "commune sorte": "la taille forte et ramassée; le visage, non pas gras, mais plein; la complexion, (b) entre le jovial et le melancholique, moiennement (a) sanguine et chaude" (II, xvii, 624). But even this former health has now begun to wane. Life becomes a progressive exhalation through which his entire being undergoes a total, irreversible reduction: "Ce que je seray doresnavant, ce ne sera plus qu'un demy estre, ce ne sera plus moy. Je m'eschape tous les jours et me desrobe à moy" (II, xvii, 625). Portraying the body in movement, his self-description is no more flattering. Conscious of the gap between his own physical capabilities and those of his active father, he writes: "D'adresse et de disposition, je n'en ay point eu; et si, suis fils d'un pere très dispost. . . . Il ne trouva guere homme de sa condition qui s'egalast à luy en tout exercice de corps" (II, xvii, 625). All those activities by which men may distinguish themselves in society – sports, music, writing, handicraft – lie beyond the scope of Montaigne's mediocrity. For this, however, he concedes no overt sense of shame, since the mediocrity of soul and that of body meet in a happy but undistinguished union: "Mes conditions corporelles sont en somme trèsbien accordantes à celles de l'ame. Il n'y a rien d'allegre: il y a seulement une vigueur pleine et ferme" (II, xvii, 625).

The Essayist finds nothing within himself to warrant a haughty self-esteem. He is simply telling the reader that given his entrance into old age these are the spiritual and corporal facts he holds at his disposal. There is, therefore, a sense of studied resignation in his remarks, as though all youthful aspirations for change had faded slowly with the passing years. Spiritual and corporal change are now unthinkable. Faced with the corporal

reduction inflicted by ill health and Time, he comes to accept himself for what he is: an ordinary man, gearing himself to the limits imposed by his condition. Since he cannot rise above this condition, he must confront himself in an attitude of healthy contentment: "je n'ay rien cerché et n'y aussi rien pris. . . . Je n'ay eu besoin que de la suffisance de me contenter" (II, xvii, 626). Nevertheless, such contentment is not absolute. Although Montaigne does, in most aspects of experience, achieve a state of relative unperturbedness, there are two things which block his participation in total *ataraxia*: "Car j'en suis là que, sauf la santé et la vie, il n'est chose (c) pourquoy je veuille ronger mes ongles, et (a) que je veuille acheter au pris du tourment d'esprit et de la contrainte" (II, xvii, 626). The enjoyment of total unity of mind and body lies one step beyond his grasp. Having attained an age where the mind is capable of self-contentment, he is beset by corporal rebellion. The preoccupations of health and life begin to assume, in Montaigne's body consciousness, increasingly physiological proportions.

While these new concerns are not without an empirical groundwork, one cannot help but compare them with the intuitive prescience of the earliest essays, written in times of relative vigor. In I:14, for example, he writes: "Ainsi n'ayons affaire qu'à la douleur. Je leur donne que ce soit le pire accident de nostre estre, et volontiers; car je suis l'homme du monde qui luy veux autant de mal, et qui la fuis autant, pour jusques à present n'avoir pas eu, Dieu mercy! grand commerce avec elle" (I, xiv, 56). Seven or eight years later, Montaigne's thoughts on the matter have not changed, despite the "new acquisition" mentioned in "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres":

> Je me suis envieilly de sept ou huict ans depuis que je commençay; ce n'a pas esté sans quelque nouvel acquest. J'y ay pratiqué la colique par la liberalité des ans . . . Je voudroy bien, de plusieurs autres presens qu'ils ont à faire à ceux qui les hantent long temps, qu'ils en eussent choisi quelqu'un qui m'eust esté plus acceptable: car ils ne m'en eussent sçeu faire que j'eusse en plus grande horreur, dès mon enfance. . . . (II, xxxvii, 737)

The corporal sensitivities set down in "Que le goust des biens"

and in "De la praesumption" are crystallized here around a real, empirical fact: the inexorable pain of the kidney stone. The philosophical constructs by which Montaigne verbalizes his notions on life in "Que philosopher", have given way to the data of immediate experience. Life moves from the level of abstraction to that of physiological reality, and is now described by the Writer as "ce vivre coliqueux": "J'entre des-jà en composition de ce vivre coliqueux, j'y trouve de quoy me consoler et dequoy esperer. Tant les hommes sont acoquinez à leur estre miserable, qu'il n'est si rude condition qu'ils n'acceptent pour s'y conserver" (II, xxxvii, 737).

Pain, then, is the sensory charge alerting the individual to the unrelenting presence of life. In "De l'exercitation", the sudden impact of pain following Montaigne's state of semi-consciousness seemed to lay bare the nerve endings of his body; existence became forthwith more real and vital. It is thus life itself, coursing through the nerves of the body, that keeps Montaigne from entering a state of absolute *ataraxia*. The tranquillity within his capabilities is one of soul rather than body; it is a tranquillity fostered in the Essayist by the gift of judgment and a natural condition of insensitivity:

> Les souffrances qui nous touchent simplement par l'ame m'affligent beaucoup moins qu'elles ne font la pluspart des autres hommes: partie par jugement . . . partie par une complexion stupide et insensible que j'ay aux accidents qui ne donnent à moy de droit fil, laquelle complexion j'estime l'une des meilleures pieces de ma naturelle condition. Mais les souffrances vrayement essentielles et corporelles, je les gouste bien vifvement. (II, xxxvii, 738)

By facing pain as the necessary adjunct of life and by coming to know it more thoroughly, Montaigne is able to go one step beyond philosophy. Philosophy reaches into the future, and posits ideal codes of ethical conduct around an ideal form of death; pain reaches into the present, measuring only the data of experience and creating a real, palpable form of death. The kidney stone, as the seat of such intense pain, is a particularly harsh reminder, to Montaigne, of his mortality: "Je suis aux prises avec la pire de toutes les maladies, la plus soudaine, la plus

douloureuse, la plus mortelle et la plus irremediable. J'en ay desjà essayé cinq ou six bien longs accez et penibles" (II, xxxvii, 738). But even such suffering has its compensatory side, bringing Montaigne (as did his accident) to a higher level of self-awareness:

> Mais l'effet mesme de la douleur n'a pas cette aigreur si aspre et si poignante, qu'un homme rassis en doive entrer en rage et en desespoir. J'ay aumoins ce profit de la cholique, que ce que je n'avoy encore peu sur moy, pour me concilier du tout et m'accointer à la mort, elle le parfera; car d'autant plus elle me pressera et importunera, d'autant moins me sera la mort à craindre. (II, xxxvii, 738–39)

This empirical function of pain, in turn, introduces Montaigne to a newly conceived role of philosophy for the aging man. Philosophical wisdom must do more than provide mankind with a series of stage directions for the enactment of Death's pageant: "Pourquoy la philosophie, qui ne regarde que le vif et les effects, se va elle amusant à ces apparences externes" (II, xxxvii, 739). Rather than teach man how to die for others, philosophy must teach him how to die for himself: "Elle [la philosophie] nous dresse pour nous, non pour autruy; pour estre, non pour sembler. (a) Qu'elle s'arreste à gouverner nostre entendement qu'elle a pris à instruire; qu'aux efforts de la cholique, elle maintienne l'ame capable de se reconnoistre" (II, xxxvii, 739). The individual's physical countenance is of little importance in a death he enacts only for himself. As long as the operations of the soul are not impaired, Montaigne now has little concern for outward bearing.

Montaigne, then, holds no regrets. His body is no less tied to his nature than to his soul. Pain becomes an exercise of the soul, recalling the earlier message of "De l'exercitation". This is no metaphysical communion with abstract being, but an empirical encounter with the fleshy substance of life – an encounter that can do little but enrich the Essayist's introspective insights:

> Je me taste au plus espais du mal et ay tousjours trouvé que j'estoy capable de dire, de penser, de respondre aussi sainement qu'en une autre heure; mais non si constamment, la douleur me troublant et

destournant. Quand on me tient le plus atterré et que les assistants m'espargnent, j'essaye souvent mes forces et entame moy-mesmes des propos les plus esloignez de mon estat. (II, xxxvii, 740)

While the body of this essay comprises a vitriolic attack on the practice and art of medicine, it is only in the final passages, where Montaigne addresses himself directly to Madame de Duras and to the defense of his book, that he becomes once again consciously introspective. Once more, self-portraiture takes on thematic dominance:

Aussi il s'en faut tant que j'attende à me faire quelque nouvel honneur par ces sotises, que je feray beaucoup si je n'y en pers point de ce peu que j'en avois acquis. Car, outre ce que cette peinture morte et muete desrobera à mon estre naturel, elle ne se raporte pas à mon meilleur estat, mais beaucoup descheu de ma premiere vigueur et allegresse, tirant sur le flestry et le rance. Je suis sur le fond du vaisseau, qui sent tantost le bas et la lye. (II, xxxvii, 764–65)

What Montaigne is formulating here is that same theme of corporal putrefaction developed in his final essay. Any hope of corporal or spiritual change appears now to be dead. While in earlier essays, the acquisition of psychic wholeness is based on the accretion of experience, there is here an increased sense of the corporal and spiritual reduction to which old age compels us all. Life is slowly beginning to make its exit from the body. A momentary shadow is cast over the role of self-portraiture: between the pages of his book, Montaigne suddenly confronts the gaunt, lifeless figure of himself. The vigor and joy of youth have been slowly extinguished, leaving only fragments of the original man. Time is running out; putrefaction ("le flestry et le rance") is setting in. All that remains of life's essence are the dregs of the cask. Montaigne cannot prevent himself from uttering one final word of nostalgia: "Certes, je n'ay point le coeur si enflé, ne si venteux, qu'un plaisir solide, charnu et moëleus comme la santé, je l'alasse eschanger pour un plaisir imaginaire, spirituel et aërée. . . . La santé, de par Dieu!" (II, xxxvii, 766).

THE FINAL MESSAGE OF THE EMPIRICIST

Like his remarks on ill health, Montaigne's fascination with the process of corporal withering appears to antedate a full, experiential knowledge of the state. In "De l'aage", for example, Montaigne considers the age at which men may be called on to perform illustrious actions, concluding that at twenty years, the soul reaches its developmental apex. For this reason, he asserts, the most noble of human activity is performed before the individual reaches the age of thirty, a limit long since passed by Montaigne himself. Indeed, the *Essais* do not express the propaedeutic optimism of callow youth; nor do they depict an individual engaged in bold, untried action. Rather they are reflective documents of a mature, more self-limiting mind. Whereas youth is able to set before itself great acts of courage and honor, lying beyond its immediate capacities, the mature thinker must affect a more studied pose based on the modest truths taught him by his own self-scrutiny. By first facing head-on the facts of spiritual and corporal putrefaction, Montaigne formulates these new insights and girds himself for the even greater reduction of being acknowledged in the later essays:

> Quant à moy, je tien pour certain que, depuis cet aage [trente ans], et mon esprit et mon corps ont plus diminué qu'augmenté, et plus reculé que avancé. Il est possible qu'à ceux qui emploient bien le temps, la science et l'experience croissent avec la vie; mais la vivacité, la promptitude, la fermeté, et autres parties bien plus nostres, plus importantes et essentielles, se fanissent et s'alanguissent. (I, lvii, 313)

What the Writer is, in fact, proposing in the *Institution* becomes here quickly evident: the child must be guided into adult activity without delay before age imposes its inevitable barriers: "je me plains des loix, non pas dequoy elles nous laissent trop tard à la besongne, mais dequoy elles nous y emploient trop tard" (I, lvii, 314). We cannot defer the child's confrontation with the instructive experience of his external environment. Like the pages of a book, the world opens before him, ready to be assimilated into his being: "Ce grand monde . . . je veux que ce soit le livre de mon escholier" (I, xxvi, 157).

For the aging man, however, experience is not so readily met. Only with difficulty does the world communicate itself universally in the form of a book. Body and mind become less willing to assimilate all the data of experience. It is too late to effect changes or to incorporate new ethical forms. Faced with corporal and spiritual depletion, the individual is obliged to narrow his sights and center his empirical discoveries on an object of far less titanic dimensions than the world. There is, indeed, another book – Montaigne himself – encompassed by the greater encyclopedia of the world. The Self, for the aging man, thus becomes the center of empirical discovery, a little world comprised of infinite spiritual and corporal eddies. It is, therefore, appropriate that Montaigne's final essay should treat in detail the role of experience – not the world-experience of the child of the *Institution,* but the self-experience of the declining man:

> Quel que soit donq le fruit que nous pouvons avoir de l'experience, à peine servira beaucoup à nostre institution celle que nous tirons des exemples estrangers, si nous faisons si mal nostre proffict de celle que nous avons de nous mesme, qui nous est plus familiere, et certes suffisante à nous instruire de ce qu'il nous faut. (III, xiii, 1050)

Elsewhere, Montaigne adds: "De l'experience que j'ay de moy, je trouve assez dequoy me faire sage, si j'estoy bon escholier. . . . Escoutons y seulement; nous nous disons tout ce de quoy nous avons principalement besoing" (III, xiii, 1051). Self-knowledge, therefore, is the object of self-experience; but even self-knowledge is, at best, only approximate: "Moy qui ne faicts autre profession, y trouve une profondeur et variété si infinie, que mon apprentissage n'a autre fruict que de me faire sentir combien il me reste à apprendre" (II, xiii, 1052). By taking himself as the sensory sieve through which immediate experience passes, Montaigne inevitably must come face to face with his body as the primary affirmation of this experience. Such corporal awareness appears to be the most striking thematic element of "De l'expérience".

After "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres", this final essay is the second great statement on the Essayist's corporal

health; the roles of self-experience and corporal awareness are now, however, more clearly delineated. More consciously and earnestly, Montaigne seeks to communicate to the reader not only his spiritual being, but his essential corporality:

> En fin, toute cette fricassée que je barbouille icy n'est qu'un registre des essais de ma vie, qui est, pour l'interne santé, exemplaire assez, à prendre l'instruction à contrepoil. Mais quant à la santé corporelle, personne ne peut fournir d'experience plus utile que moy, qui la presente pure, nullement corrompue et alterée par art et par opination. L'experience est proprement sur son fumier au subject de la medecine, où la raison luy quite toute la place. (III, xiii, 1056)

Although professing experience as its guide, medicine, in fact, pays no heed to what is natural. It is an artificial construct of the human intellect, attempting to induce, through spurious means, a state of good health. But Montaigne has grown more resigned to his infirmity over the years. His corporality seems now inescapable. Health, then, is neither good nor bad: it is a general disposition of body and soul, an expression of man's unity: "Ma forme de vie est pareille en maladie comme en santé. . . . Ma santé, c'est maintenir sans destourbier mon estat accoustumé" (III, xiii, 1057).

Montaigne's "disponibilité" before experience, especially self-experience, is nowhere more graphically expressed than in this essay. If medicine misuses experience in its treatment of the human body, it is for the individual to conform to the course of life by measuring and weighing himself constantly, and by conducting an ongoing empirical investigation of his faculties. Habit thereby becomes an inner, dynamic force. Rather than bind him to a single ethical form, habit should prepare him for change, variation, and adaptability: "Elle [l'accoustumance] nous peut duire non seulement à telle forme qu'il luy plaist . . . mais au changement aussi et à la variation, qui est le plus noble et le plus utile de ses apprentissages. La meilleure de mes complexions corporelles, c'est d'estre flexible et peu opiniastre . . ." (III, xiii, 1061). Such are the decrees of habit, geared to a youthful suppleness of mind and body, and to the child of the *Institution.* Montaigne, however, appears now beyond the

sway of pedagogical guidelines ("Mon aage est hors d'institution . . ." [III, xiii, 1061]). From the book of the world, he narrows his moral vision to the inner book, discovering that old age imposes the less stringent, unreflective patterns of habit: "m'estant en vieillissant plus arresté sur certaines formes . . . la coustume a desjà, sans y penser, imprimé si bien en moy son caractere en certaines choses, que j'appelle excez de m'en despartir" (III, xiiii, 1061). Paradoxically, the aging man must conform to what he has become; he must surrender to the actuality of his corporal make-up.

The notion of life as change and vicissitude, discussed in "Que philosopher" and in the *Apologie,* now assumes a more concrete dimension. Mutation is actualized; life processes become body processes. As a philosophical construct, life bears an analogical link with the genesis and burgeoning of disease: "Les maux ont leur vie et leurs bornes. . . . La constitution des maladies est formée au patron de la constitution des animaux. Elles ont leur fortune limitée dès leur naissance, et leurs jours . . ." (III, xiii, 1066). Montaigne thus depicts life as a pathological process, a series of infirmities bound to the irreparable conditions of age. All of these infirmities are micro-lives within the greater life of the individual; they each are governed by laws of birth and death: "J'ay laissé envieillir et mourir en moy de mort naturelle des reumes, defluxions gouteuses, relaxation, battement de coeur, micraines et autres accidens, que j'ay perdu quand je m'estois à demy formé à les nourrir. . . . Il faut souffrir doucement les loix de nostre condition" (III, xiii, 1067).

What Montaigne is, in fact, portraying is that same death of youth, described in "Que philosopher": that imperceptible and gradual exit of life from the body. It is this death in life that brings the individual to a periodic confrontation with mortality; and it is just such a confrontation that is imposed by the kidney stone. Through this one affliction the Essayist faces the grim realities of age:

> Considere combien artificielement et doucement elle [la cholique] te desgouste de la vie et desprend du monde: non te forçant d'une subjection tyrannique . . . mais par advertissemens et instructions reprises

à intervalles, entremeslant des longues pauses de repos, comme pour te donner moyen de mediter et repeter sa leçon à ton ayse; pour te donner moyen de juger sainement et prendre party en homme de coeur, elle te presente l'estat de ta condition entiere, et en bien et en mal, et en mesme jour une vie très-alegre tantost, tantost insupportable. (III, xiii, 1070)

Each attack of the stone is an intermittent reminder to Montaigne that death is gnawing away at his living body. This realization is all the more acute because of the recurrent ebb and flow of the disease: between the throes of pain, he is obliged to reflect on the nature of his condition composed "comme l'armonie du monde, de choses contraires" (III, xiii, 1068).

By using his affliction to assay himself, Montaigne is participating fully in what he has already termed an experience of Self. The individuality and self-knowledge he has sought to acquire crystallize around this state of corporal decline. If, in one of the earliest passages written prior to his illness, Montaigne likewise revealed a sensation of corporal reduction ("A chaque minute il me semble que je m'eschape" [I, xx, 86]), the choleric affliction guides him to a poignant, living sense of death and putrefaction:

Dieu faict grace à ceux à qui il soustrait la vie par le menu; c'est le seul benefice de la vieillesse. La derniere mort en sera d'autant moins plaine et nuisible; elle ne tuera plus qu'un demy ou un quart d'homme. Voilà une dent qui me vient de choir . . . Et cette partie de mon estre et plusieurs autres sont desjà mortes, autres demy mortes. . . . C'est ainsi que je fons et eschape à moy. Quelle bestise sera-ce à mon entendement de sentir le saut de cette cheute, desjà si avancée, comme si elle estoit entiere? (III, xiii, 1081)

Mortality becomes bound up in the human condition: "La mort se mesle et confond par tout à nostre vie: le declin praeoccupe son heure et s'ingere au cours de nostre avancement mesme" (III, xiii, 1082). Self-knowledge thus does not proceed from the application of human reason to an abstract object; on the contrary, the individual intent on judging and knowing himself must establish a sensory communication with life, and with the empirical data released by mind and body: "Je ne me juge que par vray sentiment, non par discours" (III, xiii, 1074). After making such a personal accounting, Montaigne can once again return

to the problems of mind and body.

The natural decline suffered by his entire being must leave unclouded the unity of body and mind. While the mind, propelled into a fantasy world of its own creation, may reach out beyond the body, it can never relinquish its essential corporal ties. Central to the radius of the mind's activity is always the individual – a concrete core endowed with bodily form. In an especially lyrical passage, prefiguring Rousseau's own spiritual oneness in the *Rêveries*, Montaigne reveals: "Quand je dance, je dance; quand je dors, je dors; voyre et quand je me promeine solitairement en un beau vergier, si mes pensées se sont entretenues des occurences estrangieres quelque partie du temps, quelque autre partie je les rameine à la promenade, au vergier, à la douceur de cette solitude et à moy" (III, xiii, 1087-88).[2] What Montaigne is proposing is a full and complete participation in present experience. In whatever activity the individual is presently committed, be it dancing, sleeping, or walking, his whole being must become engaged. Although the mind may try to detach itself from this experience, it can never ignore for long its subjective bases; it must return to savor the rich data of present commitments. Only in states of ill health and pain may the soul break away momentarily from the body, but at all other times, it must share its interests conjugally with its corporal counterparts, permitting the individual to act in conformity with his nature and capacity: "Qui veut escarter son ame le face hardiment, s'il peut, lors que le corps se portera mal, pour la descharger de cette contagion; ailleurs au contraire, qu'elle l'assiste et favorise et ne refuse point de participer à ses naturels plaisirs et de s'y complaire conjugalement . . ." (III, xiii, 1091).

Montaigne never really forgets his early admonition in "Que philosopher": "Il ne faut rien desseigner de si longue haleine . . ." (I, xx, 87). Self-experience proceeds only from the

[2] Echoing Montaigne's pleasures of self-experience, Rousseau writes: "De quoi jouit-on dans une pareille situation? De rien d'extérieur à soi, de rien sinon de soi-même et de sa propre existence. . ." (*Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, in the *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Gagnebin et Raymond, Vol. I [Paris: Gallimard, 1959], 1047).

present moment and from the present gesture. More than idle pastime, it musters its retentive forces around full, time-consuming activity: "je passe le temps, quand il est mauvais et incommode; quand il est bon, je ne le veux pas passer, je le retaste, je m'y tiens . . ." (III, xiii, 1091). Even in this final state of corporal decline, Montaigne reaches out, perhaps wistfully, to grasp at life's fleeting essence:

> Mais je . . . la [la vie] trouve et prisable et commode, voyre en son dernier decours, où je la tiens; et nous l'a nature mise en mains, garnie de telles circonstances, et si favorables, que nous n'avons à nous plaindre qu'à nous si elle nous presse et si elle nous eschappe inutilement. (III, xiii, 1092)

Only by putting order in his life and by accepting the act of living as a creation and composition can the individual arrive ultimately at a full appraisal of experience: "Il y a du mesnage à la [la vie] jouyr; je la jouys au double des autres, car la mesure en la jouyssance depend du plus ou moins d'application que nous y prestons" (III, xiii, 1092). At the focus of this experience is the individual whose thoughts cannot stray long from the solitude of the orchard. The Essayist, in this final message, is unable to avoid the affirmation that he exists – in this time, in this place, and with this body. The mind cannot escape from the body nor man from himself: "Ils veulent se mettre hors d'eux et eschapper à l'homme" (III, xiii, 1096).

"De l'expérience" is crammed with physiological precision touching on such organic processes as eating, drinking, sleeping, breathing, defecation, illness, and sexual activity. Jean Prévost has shown that these are processes in which man's consciousness of himself is raised, as also is his self-knowledge: "Puisque la nature nous a pétri chaque corps d'une façon particuliere, c'est . . . dans les ressources et les sensations de ce corps qu'il faut chercher le principe de notre individualité".[3] The moment that Montaigne begins to take inventory of his corporal condition, describing phenomena most personally his, he senses more keenly his essential uniqueness: "These are my habits"; "this is the

[3] Prévost, 81.

nature of my affliction"; "this is my body to which I, Montaigne, am inseparably bound". The experience of the Self is thereby an empirical act that must not only take into account the shadowed side of man, but also measure the capacities of body. Through self-experience the individual can come to accept himself as he is, and achieve a unification of personality; individuation demands this empirical contact with life. Self-knowledge is thus the only sure knowledge; it is the basis of Montaigne's self-inclusion in the human condition.[4]

MONTAIGNE'S POPULOUS SOLITUDE

The aging Montaigne is by no means a passive figure, resigning languidly to the facts and conditions of old age. While portraying for the reader the physiological and psychological state of an individual in his declining years, he also maintains a healthy grasp on those creative forces that underlie his work of art. The bounds placed by age on his corporal activity never stand in the way of communication with the boundless world of the books on his library shelves. The exercise of judgment and the acquisition of knowledge are free from physical restrictions; while the aging man must learn to circumscribe his range of activity, his mind may grow ever more expansive: "Il est possible qu'à ceux qui emploient bien le temps, la science et l'experience croissent avec la vie; mais la vivacité, la promptitude, la fermeté, et autres parties bien plus nostres, plus importantes et essentielles, se fanissent et s'alanguissent" (I, lvii, 313). Less able to involve himself in public activities and affairs, Montaigne is, then, obliged to accept the call of a private, more sedentary life in which his books become increasingly the objects of new friendships and associations.

It is sometimes startling to the reader of the *Essais* that a man

[4] Léon Brunschvicg, speaking of Montaigne's self-scrutiny, writes: "Mais aussi cette vérité du moi qui s'oppose à la vérité en soi, c'est la racine en nous de l'humanité" (*Le Progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, 2nd. edition [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953], 126).

whose personality is so communicative and sociable should dwell so frequently on the subject of solitude. In contrast to such introspectives as Rousseau and Amiel, Montaigne is not a retiring personality. In a later passage, he declares most emphatically: "Il y a des naturels particuliers, retirez et internes. Ma forme essentielle est propre à la communication et à la production; je suis tout au dehors et en evidence, nay à la societé et à l'amitié" (III, iii, 801). Furthermore, for the child of the *Institution,* human communication is a crucial source of knowledge and wisdom: "Il se tire une merveilleuse clarté, pour le jugement humain, de la frequentation du monde. Nous sommes tous contraints et amoncellez en nous, et avons la veuë racourcie à la longueur de nostre nez" (I, xxvi, 156). How, then, can such statements be reconciled with the idea of solitude as an ethical desideratum?

Early in the creation of his book, Montaigne wrote in "De la solitude":

> Il se faut reserver une arriere boutique toute nostre, toute franche, en laquelle nous establissions nostre vraye liberté et principale retraicte et solitude. En cette-cy faut-il prendre nostre ordinaire entretien de nous à nous mesmes, et si privé que nulle acointance ou communication estrangiere y trouve place. . . . Nous avons une ame contournable en soy mesme; elle se peut faire compaignie; elle a dequoy assaillir et dequoy defendre, dequoy recevoir et dequoy donner; ne craignons pas en cette solitude nous croupir d'oisiveté ennuyeuse. (I, xxxix, 235)

The interest of this passage lies in the use of the term "arriere boutique". Montaigne appears to be not only referring here to a solitude of place, a spatial enclosure where the individual can enjoy physical isolation. There is a metaphorical suggestivity beyond the literal level: the "back shop" proposed by Montaigne, is thus also a "back shop" of the mind, a place of spiritual shelter. It matters little, then, if solitude is not a physical isolation. Real solitude is simply a wise circumscription of mind and may be enjoyed in the most public of places:[5] "Ainsin il la [l'âme] faut ramener et retirer en soy: c'est la vraie solitude, et

[5] Hallie also makes a distinction between the solitude of place and the solitude of spirit (*The Scar of Montaigne,* 139-40).

qui se peut joüir au milieu des villes et des cours des Roys; mais elle se jouyt plus commodément à part" (I, xxxix, 234).

Any retreat to the "arriere boutique", whether physical or spiritual, carries with it a partial sacrifice of the individual's sociability. Especially in the years of corporal decline, he must relinquish old forms of association. Human friendship and fellowship no longer contain the relevance or attraction they held in youth. In a post-1588 annotation of "De la solitude" Montaigne writes:

> Il est temps de nous desnoüer de la societé, puis que nous n'y pouvons rien apporter. Et qui ne peut prester, qu'il se defende d'emprunter. Noz forces nous faillent; retirons les et resserrons en nous. Qui peut renverser et confondre en soy les offices de l'amitié et de la compagnie, qu'il le face. En cette cheute, qui le rend inutile, poisant et importun aux autres, qu'il se garde d'estre importun à soy mesme, et poisant, et inutile. (I, xxxix, 236–37)

Montaigne's communicative nature, of course, cannot accept the fact that an individual should take from society more than he is able to contribute. When this happens, a solitude not only of spirit, but of place becomes necessary. Our more gregarious instincts of friendship and fellowship must be turned inward and used to form new kinds of association. Montaigne in retirement is, therefore, no less a communicative person. Indeed, the *Essais* are the natural offshoots of these new expressions of sociability.

The solitude of place is, for the Essayist, peopled with objects of friendship and association. In a useful and interesting study, Floyd Gray explains that Montaigne's "greatest friends were the vellum-bound volumes that lined his circular library. They were his consolation in old age and in solitude.... With them he was engaged in constant dialogue.... As a result of this companionship, a new friend slowly began to take shape – it too a book – the *Essais*."[6] Although Gray is only concerned with the relationship between a particular, real-life friend (La

[6] "Montaigne's Friends", *French Studies,* XV (1961), 203. Gray goes on to show that the friendship with La Boétie was formed not only through personal association, but through the operation of Montaigne's imagination and contact with his books.

Boétie) and Montaigne's books, there is much to indicate that the aging Essayist regarded his books as real, living associations with near human capacities for conversation and communication. In old age, the friendships created with these volumes replaced and were even superior to those created with real people. Indeed, the human associations prescribed for the child of the *Institution* are also of greater importance in the form of books: "En cette pratique des hommes, j'entends y comprendre, et principalement, ceux qui ne vivent qu'en la memoire des livres" (I, xxvi, 155). It is thus not surprising if, in the final body of essays written between 1585 and 1588, the theme of association and friendship is given an especially focal position in "De trois commerces".

At the core of this essay is an underlying plea for human "disponibilité" before all aspects of experience. It is an effort of the aging Essayist to re-think certain guiding principles by which all men can become wiser. While never disavowing the irrevocable physical decline to which age condemns us all, Montaigne affirms the individual's abiding need for healthy mental activity and exercise. Indeed, the subject of the essay is simply the exercise of the mind through pleasant human and literary communication.

From the essay "De l'oisiveté", the thought of Montaigne has now traveled its full circle. As in those earlier moments of his book, he proposes for himself a wise self-mastery:

> Si c'estoit à moy à me dresser à ma mode, il n'est aucune si bonne façon où je vouleusse estre fiché pour ne m'en sçavoir desprendre. La vie est un mouvement inegal, irregulier et multiforme. Ce n'est pas estre amy de soy et moins encore maistre, c'est en estre esclave, de se suivre incessamment et estre si pris à ses inclinations qu'on n'en puisse fourvoyer, qu'on ne les puisse tordre. (III, iii, 796)

Mental idleness and stagnation are, therefore, no more a part of the aging introspective of 1585 than of the younger Essayist of 1572. Recalling the "oisiveté"/"mettre en rolle" opposition of an earlier chapter,[7] Montaigne reminds us once again of the

[7] This opposition is the central idea of one of the earliest essays, "De l'oisiveté".

need to exert some control over our mental processes:

> Pour leger subject qu'on luy donne, elle [l'âme] le grossit volontiers et l'estire jusques au poinct où elle ait à s'y embesongner de toute sa force. Son oysifveté m'est à cette cause une penible occupation, et qui offence ma santé. La plus part des esprits ont besoing de matiere estrangere pour se desgourdir et exercer; le mien en a besoing pour se rassoir plustot et sejourner . . . (III, iii, 796–97)

As if to give these ideas a more formal extension, Montaigne moves in "De trois commerces" from the rambling thought progressions of the essay's introduction to a coherent, well-ordered structure in which he gets down to specific cases and discusses the kinds of exercise leading to self-mastery. It is here that we see Montaigne's judgment and creativity in their most active, dynamic form. Not only is the essay structured formally around the three kinds of association (that of noble men, beautiful women, and steadfast books), but at the core of this structure, the critical mind of the Writer weighs and evaluates the relative values of these associations. Montaigne is the critic of experience and not all experiences can lay claim to like values. Although there are no deficient experiences, insofar as this essay is concerned, there are *degrees* of validity and it is from the juxtaposition and order of these degrees that the essay's structure takes its dynamism and contributes to the play of irony.

Montaigne opens his discussion with the intermediate or second degree of validity. The association with men and friends is established chiefly in the course of conversation which, in turn, can be an effective way of exercising the mind. The attention required in conversation is not easily achieved, however, when the level of communication is reduced to "propos abatus et lachés, propos de contenance" or in other words, small talk: "Peu d'entretiens doncq m'arretent sans vigueur et sans effort" (III, iii, 797). Solid friendships are not easily formed in such circumstances: "Or, suyvant mon propos, cette complexion difficile me rend delicat à la pratique des hommes . . ." (III, iii, 797). Real friendship, the "perfect" friendship of "De l'amitié", is indeed a rarity for the gregarious Essayist: it has been found in his books, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's

De amicitia,[8] brought into contact with experience and imagination, and given literary extension through the Writer's creative vision.

"De trois commerces" is perhaps the most cohesive expression of Montaigne's ideas on friendship between 1580 and 1588. On the other hand, the form of "De l'amitié" had changed little in the 1588 edition: many of the major additions to the essay, especially the more personal accounts of the idealized friendship, only appear in the posthumous edition. Although it does contain two important addenda made after 1588, "De trois commerces"' begins to take form, however, between 1586 and 1588.[9] It is not surprising, then, that the Writer's ideas on friendship in this essay lack any but the most oblique reference to La Boétie and the idealized "amitié seule et parfaicte" (III, iii, 798). Montaigne is, in fact, very far from ideals in this essay, or at least far from the ideal of that friendship described as a perfect fusion of two souls and two wills.[10] He is simply searching for men to engage in free and impassioned conversation:

> Les hommes de la societé et familiarité desquels je suis en queste, sont ceux qu'on appelle honnestes et habiles hommes; l'image de ceux cy me degouste des autres. C'est, à le bien prendre, de nos formes la plus rare. . . . La fin de ce commerce, c'est simplement la privauté, frequentation et conference: l'exercice des ames, sans autre fruit. (III, iii, 802)

Montaigne's ideas on friendship here reach a more concrete level. His thoughts bear little imprint of Aristotle, Cicero, and Plutarch, and their lofty accounts of friendship and singleness of

[8] Montaigne also appears to have read Plutarch's *De amicorum multitudine* in the *Moralia.* Although the only specific reference to this work is found in "De trois commerces" (III, iii, 798), it is not impossible that Montaigne was reading it during the early part of "De l'amitié" (I, xxviii, 190) where he writes at length on the indivisibility of perfect friendship and of the danger of multiplied friendship.

[9] Villey dates this essay from early 1586.

[10] It should be mentioned that there is a reference to this spiritual fusion tucked away in "De la vanité", an essay begun during the same period as "De trois commerces": "il vivoit, il jouissoit, il voyoit pour moy, et moy pour luy, autant plainement que s'il eust été. L'une partie demeuroit oisifve quand nous estions ensemble: nous nous confondions" (III, ix, 955).

mind. His subject is communication between superior kinds of men, those "honnestes et habiles hommes" whose nobility of mind enriches the mutual pleasures and benefits of conversation.[11] Such men represent ideals of human character: their talk is charming without being trivial, sensible without being pompous, and frank without being disputatious. While they are, indeed, the rarest of types, they are not beyond the reach of reality and of Montaigne's goal of wise living.[12] These are the men whose society and friendship the Essayist seeks. With them there is no mystic fusion of interests as those described in Aristotle's *Ethics;*[13] rather their verbal association is vigorous, stimulating and argumentative. In "De l'art de conférer", Montaigne will later describe this association as "une societé et familiarité forte et virile, une amitié qui se flatte en l'aspreté et vigueur de son commerce, comme l'amour, ès morsures et esgratigneures sanglantes. (c) Elle n'est pas assez vigoureuse et genereuse, si elle n'est querelleuse, si elle est civilisée et artiste, si elle craint le hurt et a ses allures contreintes" (III, viii, 902).

When Montaigne writes of that single, perfect friendship in "De l'amitié", he refers to the Aristotelian ideal: that is, a friendship without interest, a "Friendship of Virtue" shared between those who "love each other for themselves and not accidentally" and who "resemble each other in virtue".[14] The friendship formed in verbal association with the "honnestes et habiles hommes" is another matter. It is a form of human communication and, as such, cannot be divorced from subjective interests. Montaigne thus seeks in conversation those very elements contrary to Aristotle's "Friendship of Virtue", namely *utility* and *pleasure.* For what else does the Writer see in such conversation but a communion of mutual pleasure and utility: "En nos propos

[11] For a more comprehensive discussion of the idea of "naissance" and its relation to the ideal of the "honneste homme", see Jean-Pierre Boon, "L'idéal de 'l'honneste homme' est-il compatible avec la théorie évolutive des *Essais* de Montaigne", *PMLA,* 83 (May, 1968), 298-304.

[12] Boon, 299.

[13] See Books VIII-IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics.*

[14] *The Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. H. Rackham (London and New York: William Heinemann and G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 461.

. . . la grace et la pertinence y sont tousjours; tout y est teinct d'un jugement meur et constant, et meslé de bonté, de franchise, de gayeté et d'amitié" (III, iii, 802).[15] There is, then, much more here than the mystic fusion of souls: each interlocutor shares in both a reciprocation of pleasure and a healthy form of mental exercise.[16] Montaigne's goal is simply to live more wisely and happily through association with these superior kinds of men – a goal not altogether incompatibl with the more lofty notions of friendship in Aristotle and Cicero, but at the same time, infinitely more measurable through the experiences of fellowship and conversation. In this confraternity of noble minds, judgment and verbal charm forego the props of vain pedantry: "Une ame bien née et exercée à la praticque des hommes se rend pleinement aggreable d'elle mesme" (III, iii, 802).

Montaigne's pleasurable associations are not, however, exclusively spiritual. On a slightly inferior level, there is also the relationship with "(c) belles et (b) honnestes femmes" (III, iii, 802), the second form of association discussed in the essay. Significantly, the Writer appears to look more wistfully at woman's physical attributes in the post-1588 addition of the word "belles", than he did in the earlier, more restricted reference to spiritual qualities ("honnestes"). This increasing preoccupation with corporal traits is confirmed by another late addition to the essay: "(c) . . . car de laides [femmes] universellement il n'en est, non plus que de belles" (III, iii, 803). Despite Montaigne's evident concern that his female partner converse intelligently, he is, then, primarily enticed by her comeliness:

> Au demeurant, je faisois grand conte de l'esprit, mais pourveu que le corps n'en fut pas à dire; car, à respondre en conscience, si l'une ou l'autre des deux beautez devoit necessairement y faillir, j'eusse choisi de quitter plustost la spirituelle; elle a son usage en meilleures choses; mais, au subject de l'amour, subject qui principallement se rapporte à la veue et à l'atouchement, on faict quelque chose sans les graces de l'esprit, rien sans les graces corporelles. (III, iii, 804–05)

[15] Neither the *Ethics*, *De amicitia*, nor *De amicorum multitudine* contain any significant discussions of verbal communication between friends.

[16] In his useful study of Montaigne's "honneste homme", Villey writes: "Outre le plaisir de connaître et de pratiquer son compagnon, chacun des

Once again, the Essayist's critical judgment is applied to this experience. Referring to the association with women, he writes: "Si l'ame n'y a pas tant à jouyr qu'au premier [le commerce des hommes], les sens corporels, qui participent aussi plus à cettuy-cy, le ramenent à une proportion voisine de l'autre, quoy que, selon moy, non pas esgalle" (III, iii, 802). In abrupt contrast to the preceding discussion of fellowship with noble minds, Montaigne's thought now moves ostensibly away from the theme of mental exercise in order to broach a more corporal, erotic interest. In juxtaposition with the rather more serious tone of the first part and in its digression from the theme of mental exercise, the cheerful good-humor in which this second, more inferior association is described creates a striking play of irony.[17] Although the Writer does not, of course, ignore the spiritual charms of "honnestes femmes", his thoughts are here filled with a healthy, nostalgic sexuality calling for the coexistence of love and passion ("je ne connois non plus Venus sans Cupidon" [III, iii, 804]). Even in old age, however, the powers of erotic imagination are no less ardent despite the individual's physical decline: "Celles mesmes à qui la vieillesse refuse la force corporelle, fremissent encores, hannissent et tressaillent d'amour. Nous les voyons avant le faict pleines d'esperance et d'ardeur; et, quand le corps a joué son jeu, se chatouiller encor de la douceur de cette souvenance . . ." (III, iii, 804). The confines of the imagination become, then, all the more crucial for the aging introspective while the body's participation becomes all the more listless.

On a less overt level, Montaigne is here describing yet another form of mental exercise. In fellowship with the "honneste homme", this exercise was primarily verbal, but confronted by a potentially erotic experience, the mind initiates the activity, creating and anticipating subsequent corporal pleasures. Made

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deux interlocuteurs sent sa vie multipliée, son Moi comme augmenté par la présence de son voisin" (*Les Sources et l'évolution*, Vol. II, 482).

[17] Unfortunately, in his discussion of Montaigne's attitude toward women in this essay, Villey appears to disregard this essential irony as well as the interesting use of the Essayist's creative judgment. He sees in this attitude a more sober expression of reverence for both the woman's spiritual and physical charms (*Les Sources et l'évolution*, 474-80).

possible through the imagination, this form of mental exercise is completely in keeping with the theme of "disponibilité". Montaigne values his freedom of movement, whether in frank, unbridled conversation with friends, or in an unrestricted, uncommitted association with the opposite sex. In keeping with the theme of wise living, he does not wish to nail himself down so firmly to his humors and dispositions. Even in this pleasurable association with "belles et honnestes femmes", inordinate passion and commitment must be held in check, thereby restoring to the individual a measure of personal independence: "C'est folie d'y [au commerce des femmes] attacher toutes ses pensées et s'y engager d'une affection furieuse et indiscrette" (III, iii, 803). The tension of tone and subject matter between the first two parts is, then, alleviated by this thematic continuity which is to dominate the third and essential part of the essay.

The structure of "De trois commerces" is by no means fortuitous. Montaigne appears to have carefully planned the arrangement and order of the three kinds of association, a fact largely ignored by Villey.[18] Not only are there levels of validity among these associations, but there is also an implicit comparison underlying the triadic structure. Quantitatively and qualitatively inferior to the third (the association with books), the first two associations refer clearly to human kinds of fellowship and communication. On the other hand, books, with their objective reality, are also targets of the Essayist's sociability. As the third and superior kind of association for the aging Montaigne, his books are, therefore, placed in metaphorical relation to human associations. Their position as the third and final term of the comparison is fixed intentionally by the Writer: only after enumerating the qualities of the associations with "honnestes hommes" and "belles et honnestes femmes" can Montaigne draw a more credible analogy with his books.

The Essayist's creative judgment is once again set to work.

[18] Villey does not discuss the essay as an aesthetic entity. For him, it is simply the manifestation of the three pleasures of the "honneste homme". He, therefore, ignores the evident thought progressions of the aging introspective and the operation of the Essayist's critical judgment.

Fellowship with books compares more than favorably with the two other associations:

> Ces deux commerces sont fortuites et despendans d'autruy. L'un est ennuyeux par sa rareté; l'autre se flestrit avec l'aage; ainsin ils n'eussent pas assez prouveu au besoing de ma vie. Celuy des livres, qui est le troisiesme, est bien plus seur et plus à nous. Il cede aux premiers les autres avantages, mais il a pour sa part la constance et facilité de son service. (III, iii, 805)

As with the "amitié seule et parfaicte", the verbal communion with superior kinds of men is also an ideal rarely achieved, accessible only as an approximation of an *absolute* communion. Although the rarity of such associations is referred to by Aristotle, Cicero, and Plutarch, the communion with books is far more accessible by the "facilité de son service". While the former depends totally on the whims of Fortune, the latter is entirely within the reach of one's hand: it is always there, ever open to the probing mind, ever ready to share its wisdom and charm. Unlike the capacity for sexual love and the progressive withering of human beauty, bookish associations are constant and unfailing. Whereas companionship with beautiful women must be tempered at the advent of old age (except in the imagination), the "beauty" of books is untouched by the ravages of Time as also is Montaigne's capacity for fellowship with them.

In short, books for the aging introspective fulfill all the functions of a good friend:

> Cettuy-cy [le commerce des livres] costoie tout mon cours et m'assiste par tout. Il me console en la vieillesse et en la solitude. Il me descharge du pois d'une oisiveté ennuyeuse; et me deffaict à toute heure des compaignies qui me faschent. Il emousse les pointures de la douleur. . . . Pour me distraire d'une imagination importune, il n'est que de recourir aux livres; ils me destournent facilement à eux et me la desrobent. Et si, ne se mutinent point pour voir que je ne les recherche qu'au deffaut de ces autres commoditez, plus reelles, vives et naturelles; ils me reçoivent tousjours de mesme visage.
>
> (III, iii, 805)

Books are a consolation in times of solitude and despair. They are pleasurable diversions from more tedious occupations. They

prevent the individual from being overpowered by troublesome ideas ("une imagination importune"), thereby keeping his mind receptive and alert. With complete equanimity, they act as cheerful substitutes for the "honneste homme" and the "belles et honnestes femmes". As with the communion of noble minds, books serve the ends of both utility and pleasure.[19] Like enjoyable conversation, they amuse as well as instruct. Never morose or incommunicative, they greet us with an even temperament and a unified expression ("de mesme visage"). Beyond their purely objective reality, books are, then, communicative living beings that populate the somber enclosure of Montaigne's tower. More than friends on a metaphorical level, they have for the aging introspective a life of their own which does not wither with age or confine itself to an ideal state; they are ever receptive to the eager hands taking them from their shelves and turning their worn, discolored pages.

The existence of Montaigne's bookish friends is completely gratuitous. They make no demands upon the Essayist, communicating themselves only when called upon to give pleasure and wisdom. They are at home on the secluded shelves of the circular library, or beside the Writer during his frequent journeys. Although left unopened and untouched for periods of time, their presence is itself a warm and pleasurable quality:

> Je ne voyage sans livres ny en paix, ny en guerre. Toutesfois il se passera plusieurs jours, et des mois, sans que je les employe . . . il ne se peut dire combien je me repose et sejourne en cette consideration, qu'ils sont à mon costé pour me donner du plaisir à mon heure, et à reconnoistre combien ils portent de secours à ma vie. C'est la meilleure munition que j'aye trouvé à cet humain voyage. . . . (III, iii, 806)

As constant companions in old age and solitude, books, by their very presence, reassure and comfort Montaigne. Whether

[19] Early in the *Essais,* Montaigne writes of this dual purpose of books: "Je n'ayme, pour moy, que des livres ou plaisans et faciles, qui me chatouillent, ou ceux qui me consolent et conseillent à regler ma vie et ma mort" (I, xxxix, 241). Later, in "Des livres", he resumes the same theme: "Je ne cherche aux livres qu'à m'y donner du plaisir par un honneste amusement; ou si j'estudie, je n'y cherche que la science qui traicte de la connoissance de moy mesmes, et qui m'instruise à bien mourir et à bien vivre" (II, x, 388).

in its spiritual or physical form, they fill and populate the Writer's seclusion.

Montaigne has, then, structured his essay in such a way as to weigh and judge the relative values of certain human associations, and to draw from their juxtaposition that meaningful synthesis found in the essay's final paragraphs. It is here that the Writer's critical mind, as it has progressed across the structure and order of his discussion, opens ultimately upon the real, concrete topography of his tower. Less able, because of corporal infirmities, to move out into the world and society and to form new human associations, the gregarious introspective of 1588 brings the world and society into the confines of his library.

Ironically, it is within the geometric limitations of this enclosure that Montaigne finds a maximum of personal liberty and "disponibilité". His natural sociability is, here, totally unrestricted: both mind and body have freedom to move, circulate, and form new kinds of associations. It is not unintentionally that the geometric and descriptive precision with which the Writer depicts his library retreat reinforces the notion of spiritual liberty. While the physical dimensions of the tower and library dominate the description, giving a sense of spatial circumscription, this enclosure also maximizes the Essayist's visual and mental independence. For example, the scope of the eye extends beyond the library walls: "Chez moy, je me destourne un peu plus souvent à ma librairie, d'où tout d'une main je commande à mon mesnage. Je suis sur l'entrée et vois soubs moy mon jardin, ma basse court, ma court, et dans la pluspart des membres de ma maison" (III, iii, 806). In the posthumous edition, the Writer adds: "Elle [la librairie] a trois veuës de riche et libre prospect, et seize pas de vuide en diametre" (III, iii, 807). This same freedom of vision dominates even the enclosure's interior and is made possible by the circular shape of the room: "La figure en est ronde et n'a de plat que ce qu'il faut à ma table et à mon siege, et vient m'offrant en se courbant, d'une veuë, tous mes livres, rengez à cinq degrez tout à l'environ" (III, iii, 806-07). As with the eye, the mind is also not constrained by the stone and mortar of the tower; it too is free to wander and associate with the

vellum-bound inhabitants of the library: "Là, je feuillette à cette heure un livre, à cette heure un autre, sans ordre et sans dessein, à pieces descousues; tantost je resve, tantost j'enregistre et dicte, en me promenant, mes songes que voicy" (III, iii, 806). Indeed, if the mind is to maintain itself in healthy exercise, the individual requires not only a spiritual, but physical freedom of movement: "Tout lieu retiré requiert un proumenoir. Mes pensées dorment si je les assis. Mon esprit ne va, si les jambes ne l'agitent. Ceux qui estudient sans livre, en sont tous là" (III, iii, 806).

Montaigne, in his library, enjoys the best of both worlds. On the one hand, the solitudes of place and mind combine to give him an absolute authority over the "arriere boutique" of which he wrote in "De la solitude"; it is here that he establishes his true liberty and sovereignty:

> C'est là mon siege. J'essaie à m'en rendre la domination pure, et à soustraire ce seul coin à la communauté et conjugale, et filiale, et civile. Par tout ailleurs je n'ay qu'une auctorité verbale: en essence confuse. Miserable à mon gré, qui n'a chez soy où estre à soy, où se faire particulierement la cour, où se cacher! (III, iii, 807)

On the other hand, this solitude is inhabited by real, palpable friends whose presence is never inaccessible and, whose beauty, unlike that of the "belles et honnestes femmes", is untouched by the ravages of Time. Only in such a place can his thoughts stroll leisurely with their new-found acquaintances, carrying on those spiritual dialogs which are to crystallize in the register of the *Essais*. Only in such a place and through metaphorical creation can the Writer's existence take on a new kind of objectivity: his thoughts here become moving, walking figures; his books become familiar faces, warm and receptive to his instinctive sociability; his library becomes a microkingdom, populated with his obedient subjects; and finally, Montaigne himself becomes a feudal suzerain whose authority, both real and verbal, extends beyond his throne ("siège") to this circular domain of books. Montaigne's communicative nature is, therefore, never compromised by the accession of old age.[20] Within its relatively confining dimen-

[20] While Montaigne qualifies his bookish pleasures as injurious to health ("Je ne sçache excez plus dommageable pour moy, ny plus à eviter en cette

sions, his library contains its own topography where body and mind may discover new pathways leading to new acquaintances, but where all roads ultimately turn back to the Self.

declinaison d'aage" [III, iii, 807]), he is also unable to stifle the force of his creative drive. His work of art keeps posing new questions and seeking new forms. As with Proust, his death is an abrupt intrusion upon this artistic quest.

9

THE TRIUMPH OF INTROSPECTIVE JUDGMENT

Montaigne's introspection is not a negative act.[1] It does not seek to sever the bonds between the individual and the world: it does not aim at alienating him from family, friends, or society. Neither does he introspect out of a pathological urge to self-vilification or self-gratification; he is always close to himself, anticipating the enjoyment of a life filled with wise, well-ordered activity. His introspection never precludes the possibility of acting wisely in society. On the contrary, it is an operation of judgment in which he establishes correspondence between himself and the world.

THROUGH THE WORLD'S MIRROR

If, on the one hand, he sees the world ("l'humaine condition") mirrored in himself, on the other hand, he sees himself mirrored in the world. All that is most personally and individually his is reflected in his external environment: "Ce grand monde . . . c'est le miroüer où il nous faut regarder pour nous connoistre de bon biais" (I, xxvi, 157).[2] Within the greater world, there is

[1] Hallie (*The Scar of Montaigne,* [136-39]) appears to be unable to accept Montaigne as an introspective because of the more pragmatic role of self-knowledge in the *Essais.* In so doing, he fails to realize that introspection often may serve a clearly practical goal beyond simple self-indulgence.

[2] The creation of a "Weltanschauung" is the practical goal to which individuation aspires. Jung, in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche,* describes this world-vision as resulting from an increase in consciousness and from knowledge and experience. Only through the world can the individual

a multiplicity of humors, sects, judgments, opinions, laws, and customs whose disarray leads the individual to reflect on the disorder of his own microcosm; to the movement and vicissitudes of the world, there is a corresponding agitation within the Self: "Tant de remuements d'estat et changements de fortune publique nous instruisent à ne faire pas grand miracle de la nostre" (I, xxvi, 157).

Montaigne is clearly against the kind of self-indulgent introspection to which Hallie refers in *The Scar of Montaigne*: "Nous sommes tous contraints et amoncellez en nous, et avons la veuë racourcie à la longueur de nostre nez" (I, xxvi, 156). Looking ultimately beyond himself, he proposes a Socratic introspection in which the individual's vision reaches out to embrace the world: "Luy [Socrates], qui avoit son imagination plus plaine et plus estanduë, embrassoit l'univers comme sa ville, jettoit ses connoissances, sa société et ses affections à tout le genre humain, non pas comme nous qui ne regardons que sous nous" (I, xxvi, 156). In expanding his contacts with the world, he also broadens his self-knowledge. Montaigne is thus communicating to the reader much more than the portrait of a particular man ("non comme grammairien, ou poëte, ou jurisconsulte" [III, ii, 782]); his self-portrait conveys a universal image ("mon estre universel" [III, ii, 782]). This self-portrait, however, is enclosed within the even greater portrait of nature – a painting within a painting:

> Mais qui se presente, comme dans un tableau, cette grande image de nostre mere nature en son entiere magesté; qui lit en son visage une si generale et constante varieté; qui se remarque là dedans, et non soy, mais tout un royaume, comme un traict d'une pointe trés-delicate: celuy-là seul estime les choses selon leur juste grandeur.
>
> (I, xxvi, 157)

According to the pedagogical ideals set down in the *Institution*,

see himself: "For you cannot see the world without seeing yourself, and as a man sees the world, so he sees himself.... To have a *Weltanschauung* means to create a picture of the world and of oneself, to know what the world is and who I am.... But *cum grano salis*, it means the best possible knowledge – a knowledge that esteems wisdom and abhors unfounded assumptions, arbitrary assertions and didactic opinions" (362).

the child's experience with the world should enable him to construct in his mind a series of just proportions and perspectives between himself and external objects. Like Socrates, he must learn how to act and react before the changing panorama of life, and how to judge what is expected of himself under varying circumstances and among different peoples and societies. In short, he must learn to evaluate his own worth through a conscious experience with the world. For this reason alone, Montaigne's introspection cannot be considered purposeless, for it aims ultimately at wisdom and self-knowledge. Allowances must be made, of course, for human error: self-knowledge is only the best possible knowledge, and wisdom, only the best possible wisdom. The individual can aspire to nothing greater than the goals imposed by his particular physical and mental constitution.

Montaigne finds his personal limitations in what Thibaudet calls his "phenomenology".[3] Life is a cinematographic continuum of phenomena, all of which must pass through the sensory machinery. The individual's picture of the world is constantly changing because the phenomena and their reception by the senses are constantly changing. Judgment, therefore, is not based on the rational, *a priori* constructs of thought; no definitive conclusions may ever be reached "par discours". On the contrary, the theory of phenomenology is focused on the intuition and the empirical, *a posteriori* data of existence. What else is Montaigne's sensation of energy ("et se meuvent nos humeurs avecques les mouvemens du temps" [II, i, 317]) if not the need to pass judgment on the circumstances and facts surrounding each successive event? For each action and perception, there must be an accompanying judgment: "A nous, au rebours, autant d'actions, autant faut il de jugemens particuliers. Le plus seur, à mon opinion, seroit de les rapporter aux circonstances voisines, sans entrer en plus longue recherche et sans en conclurre autre consequence" (II, i, 317). An event like the fall from his horse, described in "De l'exercitation", is a primary example of the way in which Montaigne's judgment is carried right to the center of the action itself: each passing moment introduces the

[3] See "Une philosophie des apparences", *Montaigne*, 361-73.

body to a new set of data as the Essayist seeks to cope with the gamut of sensations between unconsciousness and consciousness. By coming to terms with all these "circonstances voisines" surrounding the event, the individual once again is able to get a grip on himself. Judgment thereby becomes a practical tool for the one who is trying to assay himself within the heterogeneous movement of Time.

At the center of Montaigne's phenomenology is, therefore, the circumstance of the event: "Nous ne regardons gueres les subjects en gros et seuls; ce sont des circonstances ou des images menues et superficieles qui nous frapent, et des vaines escorces qui rejalissent des subjects" (III, iv, 814). The exercise of judgment upon confrontation with such circumstances must be carried out by the senses whose immediate administrator is the body: "Les sens sont nos propres et premiers juges, qui n'apperçoivent les choses que par les accidents externes. . . . C'est tousjours à l'homme que nous avons affaire, duquel la condition est merveilleusement corporelle" (III, viii, 908-909). The corporal consciousness expressed in the later essays, especially "De l'expérience", is a chronicle of judgments carried out by Montaigne upon his declining body. More than at any other time in the *Essais,* he sees himself here mirrored in the world. His decline is part of that irrevocable bond which binds him to humanity as well as to himself. The phenomena transmitted by the circumstances become more centered on the individual, bringing about a corresponding fascination with such activities as eating and sleeping. Experience must, in short, lead to self-knowledge. Self-knowledge, in turn, is a knowledge of what one is, and by extension, of what one can do in light of this self-estimation. But Montaigne does not arrive at this more introspective dimension of phenomenology without first passing through a period of intellectual preparation.

From 1575 to 1576, we know that he was reading the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* of Sextus Empiricus, a work based on the *tropoi* and formulae of classical Scepticism. Suspension of judgment, says Sextus, is rendered by any of ten formulaic modes. While several of these modes are tacitly present throughout the *Essais,*

none confirms Montaigne in his phenomenological vision more than that based on circumstances: "We understand by circumstances the states in which we are."[4] For Sextus, the senses are obliged to operate according to the circumstantial frame in which the individual happens to find himself. This mode, for example, encompasses, among others, the states of waking, sleeping, age, motion, rest, want, satiety, drunkenness, and soberness. The individual is thus locked inside his own psychic cell – within his private "Weltanschauung". Successive moments of time imply successive states; circumstances are continually changing. Montaigne, enjoying the lethargy of semiconsciousness after his accident, is thrown abruptly into a state of conscious suffering; even the kidney stone imposes discontinuous relief and distress on the unsuspecting victim. Through his circumstantial frame, the individual looks out upon a changing environment, directing his judgment and intuition upon each successive event.

It is in the *Apologie* that Montaigne's doctrine of phenomenology becomes part of a more formal, dialectical statement, reflecting his readings in Sextus and confirming preoccupations of earlier essays:

> Tout ce qui se connoist, il se connoist sans doubte par la faculté du cognoissant; car, puis que le jugement vient de l'operation de celuy qui juge, c'est raison que cette operation il la parface par ses moiens et volonté. . . . Or toute cognoissance s'achemine en nous par les sens: ce sont nos maistres. . . . La science commence par eux et se resout en eux. (II, xii, 571–72)

Such is Montaigne's vision of the world – a first personal, sensory vision that channels a continuing stream of data into his inner life. Although the Pyrrhonian modifier, "as it appears to us",[5] emphasizes this first personal dimension of perception, it is transmuted by the Essayist into "as it appears to *me*". His Scepticism, then, is what Hallie terms "Personalistic" and thereby incompatible with the "Experimental Scepticism" of Sextus,

[4] Sextus Empiricus, *Scepticism, Man, and God*, ed. Philip P. Hallie, 59.
[5] Sextus refers to the formula "ouden mallon" which makes possible such qualifying phrases as "it appears to us" (*Scepticism, Man, and God*, 80n).

Bayle, and Hume.[6] The world is constantly communicating itself to the individual. As he passes judgment upon each new set of phenomena arising from each new set of circumstances, knowledge and wisdom become the progressive accretions of experience. Montaigne, standing face to face with the mirror of the world, ultimately confronts his own image as it changes synchronically with the world image ("cette mesme image du monde qui coule pendant que nous y sommes" [III, vi, 886]). In this way, individuation leads ultimately away from the realm of the shadow, bringing the individual into greater harmony with his external environment and with his own condition. But if, on the one hand, the world is a book, an encyclopedia transmitting to the child of the *Institution* an infinity of knowledge and experience, the Self, reflected in the world, is likewise encyclopedic in its magnitude.

The *Essais* are, in a sense, a personal encyclopedia in which Montaigne's introspection, as discussed in this study, seeks to circumscribe the depth and breadth of his experience. Even at its inception, the work reveals that initial confrontation of the Writer with his internal disorder as it demands extension on the printed page. Turning from the uncertainties of life, Montaigne faces the imaginative vagaries of the human mind. From this "shadowed" inner world there arises a mass of formless ideas, those "chimeres" and "monstres fantasques" that intrude on the tranquillity of the individual's leisure. Upon the groundwork of this self-experience, Montaigne formulates a stand against the concept of man as a psychic unit. On the contrary, the individual turns a different face to himself from the one he turns to the world; the Mayor and Montaigne have always been two. It is in "De l'oisiveté" that Montaigne expresses this feeling of "otherness" which penetrates to the core of his introspection and individuation. While his prospects for the leisurely life have been shattered, he confronts the essay as a medium of aesthetic control and order through which to tame his spiritual aberrations.

Philosophical order plays a crucial role in the genesis of the early essays. From the Renaissance notion of a well-styled life, Montaigne looks wistfully at his potential for self-creation. In

[6] *Scepticism, Man, and God,* 80-81n.

the Humanist tradition, he is unashamedly eclectic; through his books, he looks back on the codes of action espoused by the older and greater souls of the past, attempting to incorporate what he can into his own constitution. Using the medium of the essay, constructed around imitation, quotation, and annotation, he seeks to give form to his life and ideas, and thereby, to oppose inner disorder with an order imposed from without. To the formless world of cogitations, he presents a world of ideas whose contours and patterns have been compacted into books. The wisdom and actions of great men, transcribed by these books, become communicable qualities for Montaigne. He can, however, never hope to assume the mantle of Cato or Socrates; the desire for individuality is too imperative for him to commit himself to the vigor of a single life style. What he desires to create is his own distinct form and to realize the potential for activity contained within himself. Having been made painfully aware how little dominion he actually has over the agitation of the mind ("faisant le cheval eschappé"), he looks to a state of complete self-mastery, or at least, to one of possible self-acceptance. Only in this way can his disruptive "otherness" be transformed into a sense of inner unity and harmony. Montaigne's goal is not to mold himself around a preconceived personality, but to conform to the one disclosed by his self-knowledge; not to create a new Montaigne, but to regenerate the old one.

The concept of style, for the Essayist, assumes an ethical as well as literary dimension. Life, like art, may be styled around a code of thought and action. Such thought and action may, in turn, be held up for the edification of humanity. It is thus accurate to speak of Montaigne's early interest in a style of life. Confronted by the models of action embodied by Cato and Socrates, he reaches out, through the imagination, toward these "sainctes formes". He is never far, however, from the concept of assimilation and "pollination" borrowed from his readings in Seneca and developed so eloquently in "Que philosopher". It is in this essay that the personal concerns of life and death prepare for the later introspective themes of the work. As a result of contact with his books, Montaigne begins to manipulate the motifs of

movement and change already confirmed in himself, and inscribed in "De l'oisiveté". The style of life to which he adheres is restricted to the temporal limitation of his actions; life can only be composed in the shortrun. As these philosophical preoccupations receive confirmation in the structure of the neo-Ciceronian and Senecan periods, the styles of art and life grow more contiguous. Montaigne and his book are aging together. This early handling of philosophy and art, and the confrontation with an inner disorder represent the initial stages of Montaigne's individuation.

From these preoccupations there evolves a depth concept of life and human personality. Rather than a linear process aiming towards a preconceived goal, life must be measured qualitatively in the present. Accompanying this temporal concentration of life and action, there is also a circumscription of the human mind and personality. Turning to himself, Montaigne recognizes the potential for wholeness and becoming rooted in his personality. He has no need to march boldly into the outer world erecting the vain shells of other ethical codes. All potential for development lies within himself, the force of the Delphic admonition remaining a constant beacon to the individuating mind. Not only does this concept of psychological interiority describe the inner "landscape" of the writer-artist, but also the direction his thought may take before any subject. In the example of "Des coches", ideas and objects become suggestive, creating their successive transformations. Corresponding to the magnitude of human personality, there is an imaginative magnitude – that conceptual universe of ideas by which the Essayist molds and structures his essay.

The human personality, however, is not only a spatial concept in Montaigne's introspection, but also an energic one. In "De l'exercitation", for example, mutation and mobility are the endemic facts taught us by our experience and self-consciousness. The *a priori* reflections on life that fill many of the early essays, principally "Que philosopher", are transformed by experience into *a posteriori* insights. More immediate to the self-knowledge of the individuating mind is this consciousness of inner flux, corresponding to the "branle" of the world. In coming to ac-

cept himself, the individual cannot disregard the data of self-experience: human existence is not durable, but a fragile chain of moments in which death is ever ready to reveal its ominous presence. Individuation, like Montaigne's actions, must be directed at the immediate, momentary potential for self-development. Judgment must be exercised upon each new facet of activity. Wisdom thereby becomes a cumulative acquisition.

Serving as a vehicle for the themes of inner space and energy, the metaphor crystallizes and objectifies the Writer's vision of the Self. From the need to reach a clearer conception of an idea, Montaigne uses metaphorical language, especially in the later *Essais,* to pursue and probe the idea. Just as his ideas tend to act as organic, self-generating agents, so his metaphors often interact with each other to form figurative and conceptual clusters. They belong to the Essayist's process of thought, re-creating in graphic terms the abstract nature of introspective themes. His metaphors are thus much more than an informational medium. Like textual signposts, they often indicate the direction in which the thought is moving, occasionally modifying and redirecting thematic priorities so as to pursue new ideas. For the introspective mind of the later *Essais*, the metaphor is, above all, a source of order in which the formless world of "chimeres" becomes organized around the conceptual concretion of the image.

In the final stages of the work, the metaphors of organic sensation are reinforced by an increased awareness of old age and corporal decline. Montaigne grows more conscious that time has run out and that his infirmity makes ever more rigorous demands on body and spirit. The message of "De l'expérience", however, is not one of passive surrender to corporal determinism, but a thoughtful appraisal of those faculties that assure a Socratic self-mastery. In these concluding pages, Montaigne's experience of himself shares in that healthy spiritual content which remained impracticable in the chimeric world of "De l'oisiveté". From initial self-discontent and inner division he passes into final self-acceptance and unity: "C'est une absolue perfection, et comme divine, de sçavoyr jouyr loiallement de son estre. Nous

cherchons d'autres conditions, pour n'entendre l'usage des nostres, et sortons hors de nous, pour ne sçavoir quel il y fait" (III, xiii, 1096). Through Nature's mirror, Montaigne catches the reflected glimmers of the Self.

THROUGH MEMORY AND CREATION

Montaigne's book is the concrete record of his introspective triumph. It is a compendium of judgments made about himself and the world. Having lived, read, and meditated, he imparts to these judgments, through his creative powers, certain dynamic, active traits. His thoughts, then, tend to postulate wise actions: they are empirical truths confronted in his readings, often confirmed by experience, re-enacted in the workshop of the mind, and set down in the living, consubstantial register of the *Essais.* Little by little, the form of this register begins to change, becoming more personal, until the confrontation with the shadow has been transmuted into a clearly delineated self-portrait. The triumph of Montaigne's introspective judgment is, therefore, also a triumph of the Writer's creative genius. The degree to which he succeeds both as moralist and artist cannot be appreciated fully, however, unless one comprehends the potential for failure which the introspective act offers to the unsuspecting writer. Perhaps the most striking case in point, serving as a comparative model, is that of Henri-Frédéric Amiel, the nineteenth-century Swiss journalist and critic.

Amiel's *Journal intime* is a vast introspective saga begun in 1847 and ending abruptly in 1881 with the Writer's death. It contains the momentary reflections of a man for whom creative activity, indeed life itself, is contemplated from a distance, eternally relegated to the realm of impracticability. Unable to tame the shadowed mental disorder generated by his inefficacy, Amiel retreats from the world as a snail into its shell:

Noli me tangere est un peu la devise de mon naturel. C'est pourquoi je n'ai jamais rien pris, conquis, forcé, osé, ni possédé, ni femme, ni fortune, ni gloire, ni domaine. Je suis un eunuque solitaire, par le

fait de mon désintéressement timoré, de mon irrésolution infinie, de ma discrètion stupide.[7]

Rather than a medium of creation, his solitude excludes any capacity to act. Amiel never gets far beyond the stage of pure introspection which Montaigne was able to overcome in "De l'oisiveté": "Je m'évapore en rêveries, en fumée et en élans de pure imagination; le journal intime, la conversation, une heure de méditation intérieure me dispensent d'écrire, d'exécuter ou d'agir" (86). Separated from the essence of life and activity, his being appears to dwindle into vegetation and desiccation. The Self is thereby unable to relate to the world beyond his window: it indulges itself in aimless reverie, imprisoned by ideals and possibilities, by the books he would like to write and the women he would like to marry. Inversely with the increasing individuality of Montaigne, Amiel experiences a personal reduction of being depicted in the frequent images of contraction and fossilization: "A présent, je végète, je médite et je me gélatinise. J'ai réduit mon cercle de vie à peu près au diamètre de l'huître, et la fossilization s'opère paisiblement en moi" (44).

Amiel's introspective failure is many-faceted and recalls, for each facet, a corresponding success in Montaigne's *Essais*. In a comprehensive study, Léon Bopp explains that Amiel's thought is reduced to "un petit présent sans étoffe, sans épaisseur".[8] By this, he means that memory plays no functional role in the *Journal*. The Writer's past is curiously lacking: all vestiges of life, feeling, and experience drift quietly into anonymity and oblivion. Only rarely does Amiel cast a thought towards what he wrote the day before; he is locked, asserts Bopp, into the confines of an impotent present, thereby cut off from creative progress:

Il n'y a pas de progrès constant dans la conscience d'Amiel . . . et il serait bien tendancieux de se refuser à tenir compte de tant de pages

[7] *Journal intime – l'année 1857*, éditée et présentée par Georges Poulet (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1965), 152. Unless otherwise indicated, all references will be to this edition.

[8] *Henri-Frédéric Amiel: Essai sur sa pensée et son caractère d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1926), 139.

du *Journal* où Amiel déplore le dessin de sa vie intérieure, ses recommencements, ses redites perpétuelles, en un mot, le rabâchage qui résulte de l'oubli de toute conclusion atteinte.[9]

As memory fades, so also does experience. Having surrounded himself by the works and thought of Hegel and Schelling, Amiel takes refuge from the real world, losing himself in the contemplation of ideals, absolutes, and perfection.[10] Dazzled by the infinite array of moral possibilities, his judgment is crippled and bound by the sceptical formula "Je m'abstiens":[11] "Ce qui dévore en moi la force de détermination personnelle, c'est le sentiment métaphysique de l'infinie multitude des possibles, le sentiment critique de l'insuffisance de chaque possibilité présente, et l'aversion morale pour la souffrance humiliante" (186). Amiel's idealism is, then, an escape from the necessity to act and live, what Bopp calls "une phobie implacable de l'action et du monde extérieur".[12] A moral petrification sets in, paralyzing the faculties of judgment and creativity. A negation of communication with the real world imposes a negation of empirical knowledge; and without experience, the introspective judgment as a bridge between individual and environment ceases to function.

The failure of memory and experience leads to the ultimate failure: that of self-knowledge. Unable to examine what he has been and has learned, what he will be and will do, Amiel, unlike Montaigne, loses himself in the details of momentary self-consciousness. He cannot relate to what he has read, seen or done, and, therefore, cannot postulate his activity in the more formal order of an essay. He would, for example, be impotent to write a commentary such as Montaigne's "De l'exercitation" in which the Essayist expands a particular experience into a broad con-

[9] *Henri-Frédéric Amiel,* 140.

[10] "Ici, c'est à l'isolement qu'il attribue sa faiblesse, là, au scepticisme, à l'incrédulité radicale qu'il découvre au fond de son caractère; ailleurs, c'est à son goût excessif de la perfection, de l'absolu, qui l'empêche de se satisfaire à bon marché et d'accepter le jeu médiocre et relatif des choses d'ici-bas. . . ." (*Henri-Frédéric Amiel,* 148-49).

[11] It is interesting to note that although "Je m'abstiens" is also the "devise" of Montaigne, it does not prevent the Essayist from exercising his critical judgment and from relating himself to his experience of the world.

[12] Bopp, *Henri-Frédéric Amiel,* 145.

clusion about his essential nature. Throughout his book, Amiel is conscious of this failure of the Delphic admonition:

> . . . il reconnaît, en divers passages de son *Journal* . . . qu'il se regarde de trop près, qu'il s'étudie trop en détail et pas assez dans son ensemble, qu'il faudrait s'embrasser d'un oeil plus général si l'on peut dire, apprécier des rapports . . . en un mot joindre la synthèse à l'analyse, évaluer les fréquences relatives de son ami, et extraire de ces données relatives un enseignement stable que des absolus de détail, sans cesse contradictoires, ne sauraient nous fournir.[13]

Nowhere, however, does the failure of introspective judgment and self-knowledge express itself more completely than in the literary creation.

In its chronological form, the *Journal* does not lend itself to creative expansion through addition and annotation, as do the *Essais*. There is no interior, creative evolution in the work: while Time moves, Amiel's thought and expression stand still. The essay form is, therefore, an aesthetic impossibility for Amiel. His work contains no room for experimentation, investigation, and assaying. Rather than the gradual stylistic expansion observed in the *Essais*, we witness a contraction of both the man and his literary style, a trait that he attributes to his "genevois" milieu: "C'est toujours le désir de cette *contraction morale* que j'ai éprouvé toute ma vie à Genève et qui est un trait de nos moeurs. Il faut se refouler, se priver, se comprimer dans sa coquille, pour ne pas donner prise à ce milieu hostile" (98). Consequently, his work bears no structure; it is what Bopp appropriately terms a "rabâchage", a wearisome repetition of words and ideas.

The resulting stylistic breakdown is seen in several ways. First, there is no figurative creation. Amiel's metaphors often form log jams in his thinking, preventing the smooth flow and transition of ideas: "C'est le rabat-joie, c'est le réveille-matin, c'est le cri du coq qui chasse les fantômes, c'est l'archange armé du glaive qui chasse l'homme du paradis terrestre."[14] Unlike Montaigne, whose metaphorical clusters are dynamic forms, generating and generated by his thoughts, Amiel's metaphorical

[13] Bopp, 153.
[14] Cited in Bopp, 231.

masses have no life of their own. In their divergent forms, they are unable to act upon the Writer's imagination and judgment; like Amiel himself, they are impotent and static.[15] They simply dazzle without illuminating![16] A second aspect of this breakdown, allied to the first, is the Writer's tendency to synonymize. His failing judgment is immobilized by any attempts to synthesize his ideas; he cannot choose or make up his mind. His memory, attacked on all sides by irresolution, condemns him to a tedious accumulation of words and phrases: "Tu as perpétuellement vacillé dans tes voeux, tes pensées, ton travail, et ton goût. Tu as été l'esclave de tes penchants, le jouet des circonstances, mobile, oublieux, ingrat, faible, hypocondriaque" (153). Finally, Amiel's thought suffers a syntactical breakdown and contraction. Definite and indefinite articles are often eliminated as also are essential verbs. His ideas become, on paper, the simple abbreviations of consciousness, the stylistic last resorts of a failing man, as seen in his striking summation of the year 1857:

> Mauvaise année à tous égards! – Chagrins de famille, deuils, accidents, et ce qui est pis, dessèchement du coeur, engourdissement de la conscience, épaississement de l'âme, diminution de la vie intérieure, éloignement de Dieu, oubli du devoir, ennui, langueur, sommeil, égoïsme, insensibilité! et de plus habitude de tout cela, pesante indifférence, avachissement du vouloir, existence d'huître supportée avec une vague satisfaction! triste situation. (282–83)

The act of writing and creating is, then, never a pathway to self-knowledge for Amiel; rather it is a dead-end road. Language and style simply confirm the extent of the Writer's immobility and solitude; they are the unavailing substitutes for communion with life and experience. Amiel's solitude is never populous like that of Montaigne. It is a physical and spiritual isolation from human society. Rather than self-knowledge and individuation, it generates a disaggregation and dissipation of the Self. Indeed, the Writer says it himself: an individual completely isolated cannot know himself, because self-knowledge is only reached in his differentiation from others.[17] The just perspective which Mon-

[15] For a comprehensive analysis of Amiel's style see Bopp, 155-224.
[16] Bopp, 231.
[17] Bopp, 357.

taigne maintains between himself and the world beyond his library windows is unattainable for Amiel. How much wiser, more lucid, then, does Montaigne's introspection appear in retrospect!

The introspective judgment teaches men how to live wisely and in living wisely, to accept their essential nature. As Donald Frame explains in his lucid analysis of Book III, this essential nature is simply *vanity,* a theme which fills most of the essays in "ce troisiesme alongeail du reste des pieces de ma peinture" (III, ix, 941).[18] Although men may be able to do little about their essence, its recognition by the individual is already, however, a decisive step towards wise and happy living. It is, then, appropriate that the most unequivocal statement of Montaigne's introspective triumph should be found in "De la vanité". It is here that one senses the unique polarity between the introspective act of Amiel and Montaigne. In this central chapter, the *Essais* are all that the *Journal intime* is not: a victory of memory, experience, self-knowledge, and art.

At first glance, Montaigne's memory would appear to fair no better than Amiel's. Having already declared his weakness most candidly in earlier essays,[19] the Writer once again restates this cause for self-deprecation:

> Ma memoire s'empire cruellement tous les jours . . . il faudra doresnavant (car, Dieu mercy, jusques à cette heure il n'en est pas advenu de faute), que, au lieu que les autres cerchent temps et occasion de penser à ce qu'ils ont à dire, je fuye à me préparer, de peur de m'attacher à quelque obligation de laquelle j'aye à despendre. L'estre tenu et obligé me fourvoie, et le despendre d'un si foible instrument qu'est ma memoire. (III, ix, 939–40)

For fear of being betrayed by his memory, Montaigne refuses to premeditate and plan his life and book, a disposition announced earlier in "Du parler prompt et tardif". Seeking to avoid a vain repetition of ideas ("Encores en ces ravasseries icy crains-je la trahison de ma memoire, que par inadvertance elle m'aye faict enregistrer une chose deux fois" [III, ix, 939]), he refrains from creating a formal order in his essays. This kind of premedi-

[18] *Montaigne's Discovery of Man,* 146-48.

[19] Namely, in "Des menteurs" and "De la praesumption".

tation is, in fact, what he comes to detest in the Stoic school: "et l'usage de son [de Sénèque] escole Stoïque me desplait, de redire sur chasque matiere tout au long et au large les principes et presuppositions qui servent en general, et realleguer tousjours de nouveau les argumens et raisons communes et universelles" (III, ix, 939). Should an inadvertent repetition occur because of a lapse in memory, this unpremeditated progression of thought thereby diminishes his sense of guilt. Indeed, such repetition enters into the aesthetic corpus of the work. Any adherence to a premeditated plan requires, therefore, a conscious application of voluntary memory, or of what Thibaudet calls the "mémoire réfléchie."[20] It is this kind of memory which depends on the application of will and effort, and which resurrects past names, associating them, in turn, with specific details and language. In short, voluntary memory may recall, in its precise form and at any point in time, what once was consciously committed to the mind for safekeeping. This is the memory of the Writer who premeditates the structure and premises of his work; it is not the memory of Montaigne.

There is another memory, however, far broader in scope, more crucial by its participation in the creative process, and more natural by its use in introspective judgment. This is the memory ascribed by Thibaudet to Montaigne:

> . . . mémoire spontanée, c'est-à-dire une mémoire qui enregistre une masse abondante, complexe et nuancée de durée . . . des milliers de vers latins se sont déposés spontanément, au cours de ses lectures, dans sa mémoire. On ne saurait expliquer autrement ses abondantes citations. Mais dès qu'il y a effort, volonté de mémoire, la mémoire défaille. . . .[21]

The spontaneous or involuntary memory is that of a man who lives in a full, vibrant present, but who, from time to time, is

[20] *Montaigne,* 200.

[21] *Ibid.* Elsewhere, Thibaudet explains, "Il se souvient de beaucoup de choses. Tous les passages d'écrivains latins sont cités par lui de mémoire. Mais ce qui lui manque c'est la *reconnaissance.* Généralement il ne sait pas de qui sont ces passages. . . . Manque de mémoire des noms. Donc mémoire conservatrice, mais pas de reconnaissance, ni de localisation. C'est-à-dire que les choses dont il se souvient *restent dans son être interieur,* elles n'en

carried back by his imaginative flights into significant moments of past experience. Sometimes captured in his readings, sometimes in life's daily agitation, these significant moments cling together in Montaigne's mind as an intricate mass of duration.[22] When the time is ripe, the Essayist's mind, caught up in the rich present, reaches back spontaneously to draw on and re-create this network of past duration. Although we have seen the most striking example of this technique in "De l'exercitation" and the description of the accident, the *Essais* are full of the Writer's imaginative re-creations, extracted from both his living and bookish encounters.

At times, there is a curious fusion of literary and non-literary realities; what Montaigne recalls in his readings is often bound inextricably with past experience and present reflection. His thoughts on Rome, some of the most memorable in "De la vanité", are precisely the result of this fusion. Rome, for Montaigne, is not simply a city, but an idea created by the encounter of his imagination with his books. While it is primarily a repository of the great and noble dead, it is also a *living* memorial whose image has been nurtured since youth in the Writer's mind:

> Or j'ay esté nourry dès mon enfance avec ceux icy [les morts]; j'ay eu connoissance des affaires de Romme, long temps avant que je l'aye eue de ceux de ma maison: je sçavois le Capitole et son plant avant que je sceusse le Louvre, et le Tibre avant la Seine. J'ay eu plus en teste les conditions et fortunes de Lucullus, Metellus et Scipion, que je n'ay d'aucuns hommes des nostres. (III, ix, 975)

In no more poignant way can Montaigne evoke the role of Roman

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sortent pas pour s'extérioriser, agir, fournir des points d'appui ou des leviers sur le monde extérieur" (203).

[22] In *Matière et Mémoire,* 6th ed. (Paris: F. Alcan, 1910), Bergson makes a useful comparison between a lesson learned by heart and a lesson remembered as a succession of phases and readings: "Je cherche maintenant comment la leçon a été apprise, et je me représente les phases par lesquelles j'ai passé tour à tour. Chacune des lectures successives me revient alors à l'esprit avec son individualité propre; je la revois avec les circonstances qui l'accompagnaient et qui l'encadrent encore; elle se distingue de celles qui précèdent et de celles qui suivent par la place même qu'elle a occupée dans le temps; bref, chacune de ces lectures repasse devant moi comme un événement déterminé de mon histoire" (75-76).

memories in his emotional and intellectual life than in a comparison of his father's death with that of Lucullus, Metellus, and Scipio. The noble dead of Rome are no more remote in the Essayist's memory than is "the best father who ever lived". Their spirit is ubiquitous, ready to be recalled and re-created through the spontaneous mechanism of involuntary memory: "Ils sont trespassez. Si est bien mon pere, aussi entierement qu'eux, et s'est esloigné de moy et de la vie autant en dixhuict ans que ceux-là ont faict en seize cens; duquel pourtant je ne laisse pas d'embrasser et practiquer la memoire, l'amitié et societé, d'une parfaicte union et très-vive" (III, ix, 975).

Friendship and association are, then, timeless. They are themes eternally renewable in the Writer's creative imagination; they belong to a past whose vitality, whether literary on non-literary, creeps gratuitously into present attitudes and reflections. Montaigne's friendship with Pompey and Brutus is no less real by dint of being literary:

> Or j'ay attaqué cent querelles pour la deffence de Pompeius et pour la cause de Brutus. Cette accointance dure encore entre nous; les choses presentes mesmes, nous ne les tenons que par la fantasie. Me trouvant inutile à ce siecle, je me rejecte à cet autre, et en suis si embabouyné que l'estat de cette vieille Romme, libre, juste et florissante . . . m'interesse et me passionne. (III, ix, 975)

Our imagination, therefore, works on present things ("choses presentes"): it holds on to them, re-creating and re-forming them according to passing fancy. The friendship with Pompey and Brutus is one of these "present things" susceptible to Montaigne's creative inspiration. Rather than bind itself to any given point in time or to any given state, this friendship has expanded according to the new discoveries and experiences of the Essayist, among the most significant of which are his travels to Rome (1580-81). When he is writing "De la vanité" five years or so after this journey, the memory of it still lingers on, ready to be re-formed according to the Essayist's present aesthetic requirements. Just as his friendship with Pompey and Brutus remains undated by the categories of Time, so also are the past and present, history and impressions, interwoven into Montaigne's

vision of Rome. This is the place where these undying friends still live, walk and converse in the Writer's imagination. More than a repository for the dead, Rome is the perpetual abode of living memories, a city still "libre, juste et florissante" and in which the Essayist is always able to re-create for himself these favorite friendships:

> Parquoy je ne sçauroy revoir si souvent l'assiette de leurs rues et de leurs maisons, et ces ruynes profondes jusques aux Antipodes, que je ne m'y amuse. (c) Est-ce par nature ou par erreur de fantasie que la veuë des places, que nous sçavons avoir esté hantées et habitées par personnes desquelles la memoire est en recommendation, nous esmeut aucunement plus qu'ouïr le recit de leurs faicts ou lire leurs escrits? . . . Il me plaist de considerer leur visage, leur port et leurs vestements: je remache ces grands noms entre les dents et les faicts retentir à mes oreilles. . . . Des choses qui sont en quelque partie grandes et admirables, j'en admire les parties mesmes communes. Je les visse volontiers diviser, promener, et soupper! (III, ix, 975–76)

The effect transmitted by this passage is one of temporal immediacy: the barriers to past and present are broken down by the Writer's aesthetic expression. Although the objects of his reflections are long since dead or passed, namely Brutus, Pompey, the Roman Empire, and even his trip to Rome, his imaginative recreation restores the past in all its vibrant life. The perfect tenses have no place in this act of restoration: his memories are being filtered through the present moment and concretized by his artistic vision. It is, therefore, important that Montaigne picture for himself the outward forms of his noble friends: their faces, their bearing, and their raiments. As in the Proustian world, their very names are composed of affective sounds which communicate meaningful impressions to the Writer and which are materialized and lapidified like Rabelais' "paroles gelées".

Montaigne's mind, at the very moment he is writing this passage, is reaching back spontaneously into the past to re-fashion his experiences. The lives of noble men, the Roman Empire, the Roman ruins, Montaigne's visit to this once flourishing city, all the Essayist's encounters, are synchronized in a single moment of Time. What he has read about Rome and its illustrious citizens is no more veiled or distant in Time than is his visit; literary and

non-literary realities reinforce each other's claims upon the Writer's imagination. Indeed, the *Travel Journal* indicates clearly that the ruins of Rome, in their present deterioration, may be restored to former grandeur through the viewer's imagination and contemplation: "Il [Montaigne] disoit 'qu'on voïoit rien de Rome que le ciel sous lequel elle avoit esté assise et le plan de son gîte; que ceste science qu'il en avoit estoit une science abstraite et contemplative, de laquelle il n'y avoit rien qui tumbast sous les sens. . . .' "[23] In the final pages of "De la vanité", however, Montaigne describes a Rome whose imperial glory is eternal and whose ruins become the affective supports for the act of imaginative re-creation. The triumph of memory, represented in these pages, is, then, also a triumph of experience.

We have already noted how Amiel's idealism appears to cripple the operation of experience and judgment. Such is the dilemma of the introspective who severs all ties with the past and is unable to utilize his memory. For Montaigne, the remembrance of things past makes possible a creation of things present. His Roman encounters form a foundation of experience which adapts itself to the Essayist's present reflections and literary requirements. Moreover, they prepare the reader for a broader statement about the Writer's own character. Despite the ruins of the city, Montaigne perceives in Rome the unique permanency and constancy of the Empire: "Il n'est lieu ça bas que le ciel ayt embrassé avec telle influence de faveur et telle constance. Sa ruyne mesme est glorieuse et enflée. . . . Encore retient elle au tombeau des marques et image d'empire" (III, ix, 976). Although this image of imperial continuity does not fail to impress the Writer, he is not so absorbed in veneration that he loses the introspective dimension. Montaigne is never far away from himself or his subject; his Roman memories lead circuitously back to a more personal example of the Empire's durability – the "authentic" bull of Roman citizenship presented to him on March 13, 1581.

There is little doubt that Montaigne sees this award as a clear example of personal vanity: "Parmy ses [de la Fortune] faveurs

[23] *Journal de voyage* in *Oeuvres complètes,* ed. Rat, 1212.

vaines, je n'en ay poinct qui plaise tant à cette niaise humeur qui s'en paist chez moy, qu'une bulle authentique de bourgeoisie Romaine, qui me fut octroyée dernierement que j'y estois, pompeuse en seaux et lettres dorées, et octroyée avec toute gratieuse liberalité" (III, ix, 978).[24] Not only does the ostentation of the document ("pompeuse en seaux et lettres dorées") appeal to the Writer's sense of vanity, but its grandiloquent, high-flown style also perpetuates the image of imperial grandeur. Indeed, perhaps Montaigne himself now feels linked to that chain of continuity in which the eternal ideals of the Empire outlast the Forum's ruins. Despite this honor, however, Montaigne's sense of judgment is never overcome. Across the "faveurs venteuses, honnoraires et titulaires" (III, ix, 978) bestowed by Fortune, he has come to recognize and accept himself for what he is – a creature full of inane disorder. It is, then, the object of the introspective act to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with the individual's essential vanity:

> Si les autres se regardoient attentivement, comme je fay, ils se trouveroient, comme je fay, pleins d'inanité et de fadaise. De m'en deffaire, je ne puis sans me deffaire moy-mesmes. Nous en sommes tous confits, tant les uns que les autres; mais ceux qui le sentent en ont un peu meilleur compte, encore ne sçay-je. (III, ix, 979)

Without the action of memory and experience, this personal realization, filled with its universal import for all men, could never have been formulated. Montaigne's mind is, therefore, continually reaching back into the past in order to dredge up those memories charged with present significance and serving as props for the operation of his judgment. His Roman memories are just such props, re-created on paper, submitted to the Essayist's critical mind, and linked organically to the theme of vanity.

Montaigne's critical judgment never fails to operate across each twist and turn of his mobile thoughts. His mind is continually

[24] In the *Travel Journal*, this feeling is even more explicit: "Je recherchai pourtant et amploiai tous mes cinq sans de nature pour obtenir le titre de citoyen romain, ne fut-ce que pour l'antien honur et religieuse mémoire de son authorité.... C'est un titre vein; tant-y-a que j'ai receu beaucoup de plesir de l'avoir obtenu" (*Journal de Voyage*, 1236-37).

measuring and assaying the data of experience – his unique personal experience. In his penetrating study, Hiram Haydn calls this operation the "science of the particular."[25] The reflections of each essay are filtered through the Essayist's own categories of perception. Empirical knowledge is, then, a wiser, more practical knowledge than rational understanding: the individual's comprehension of himself, what he has done, how he has thought and felt, what he is doing, how he thinks and feels creates a disposition to act and live wisely. His sense of judgment is, therefore, turned inward, becoming a tool of the introspective mind. If, as noted by one prominent philosopher, "concevoir c'est juger",[26] Montaigne is a supreme judge: his assaying is essentially an act of conception in which his mind, borrowing on experience, posits and formulates wise and happy activity. Rather than performing this activity, he acts it out in his mind and creates it spontaneously on paper. The act of conception is thereby expanded into creation; judgment becomes literature.

In striking contrast to the *Journal intime*, there is no failure of self-knowledge in the *Essais*. When the introspective act becomes an end in itself, producing only languid self-indulgence, the Writer's ability to communicate himself, as with Amiel, is diminished. On the contrary, Montaigne is constantly beset by the need to share himself and his thoughts with the world outside: "Nul plaisir n'a goust pour moy sans communication. Il ne me vient pas seulement une gaillarde pensée en l'ame qu'il ne me fâche de l'avoir produite seul, et n'ayant à qui l'offrir" (III, ix, 965). The vehicle of his communicative act is the essay – that boundless *terra firma* where the imagination is grounded in judgment and artistic creation.

It is thus fitting that "De la vanité", as the central chapter of Book III, contain some penetrating reflections on Montaigne's role as creator. Indeed, as one moves through this chapter's ap-

[25] *The Counter-Renaissance* (New York: Scribner, 1950), 234. "His *Essayes* constitute an inclusive testimonial to the superior certainty of one's own particular experience over that of universal theory" (232).

[26] Léon Brunschvicg, *La Modalité du jugement* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1934), 8. A useful treatise on the nature of judgment, this work also contains a thorough analysis of the semantic and syntactical bases of thought.

parent digressions, it becomes increasingly clear that the Essayist cannot write about human and personal vanity without talking about the nature of his book and methods of creation. What he sees in himself, namely disorder, mutation, and inanity, must also seek appropriate expression in his book. It is impossible to overstate, then, the degree to which Montaigne's stylistic remarks prefigure Buffon's familiar affirmation: "Le style c'est l'homme même". Over the course of the *Essais,* the Writer has experienced a spiritual fusion of himself with his book, of mind with style, and of the creator with his creation: "Mon stile et mon esprit vont vagabondant de mesmes" (III, ix, 973); "il faut que j'aille de la plume comme des pieds" (III, ix, 969); "Icy, nous allons conformément et tout d'un trein, mon livre et moy" (III, ii, 783). In keeping with the physio-moralist's vision of the world, Montaigne sets a natural pace for his style as well as for himself. The *natural* actions he posits on paper ("et faict des *Essais* qui ne sauroit faire des effects") cannot be weighed down by pompous prose. All constraint must be removed from language in order for the pen to keep pace with the feet. The happy result is what the Essayist calls "the poetic gait": "J'ayme l'alleure poetique, à sauts et à gambades" (III, ix, 973).

By "poetic gait", Montaigne is not simply referring to the rhythmic or dynamic qualities of poetic language, but to an entire code of thought and expression complementary to his own human dimensions. As also in the operation of memory, he sees in poetic expression a disposition towards spontaneity and adventure: "je hasarde souvent des boutades de mon esprit, desquelles je me deffie, (c) et certaines finesses verbales, dequoy je secoue les oreilles; (b) mais je les laisse courir à l'avanture" (III, viii, 922). Such spontaneity is, however, not restricted to the poetic genre: "Milles poëtes trainent et languissent à la prosaïque; mais la meilleure prose ancienne . . . reluit par tout de la vigueur et hardiesse poëtique, et represente l'air de sa fureur" (III, ix, 973). In "The Daemon of Socrates", for example, Plutarch loses sight of his theme, smothering his subject in foreign matter. The mind always moves forward, grasps at variation, and creates aesthetic disorder: "O Dieu, que ces gaillardes es-

capades, que cette variation a de beauté, et plus lors que plus elle retire au nonchalant et fortuite!" (III, ix, 973). The poetic frenzy is, therefore, completely in keeping with Montaigne's naturalism. Spontaneous and non-artificial, poetic prose feeds on "present things"; it is fitted to the dimensions of the Essayist's condition: "Le poëte, dict Platon, assis sur le trepied des Muses, verse de furie tout ce qui luy vient en la bouche, comme la gargouille d'une fontaine, sans le ruminer et poiser, et luy eschappe des choses de diverse couleur, de contraire substance et d'un cours rompu" (III, ix, 973-74).

While Amiel's style is, no less than Montaigne's, an extension of the man, it is also a measure of the Writer's introspective failure. Quite the contrary for Montaigne, the "poetic gait" he chooses for his self-expression is a gauge of introspective triumph. When he writes, "Je vais au change, indiscrettement et tumultuairement" (III, ix, 973), it is an accurate reflection of his life in the *Essais*: both he and his style are "present things" which meet each other in the book. They share each other's spirit of adventure, constantly seeking and discovering new ideas, sometimes re-creating and adding to the old ones. Through his judgment, Montaigne gives free rein to conceptions, allowing them to take new pathways to self-awareness. There is, therefore, no breakdown in style, such as that witnessed in the *Journal intime*. Despite its sometimes elliptic expression, Montaigne's style suffers no syntactical emasculation. As was previously described, the Writer's syntax is used in a positive way to create a sense of dynamism and progression inherent in the "poetic gait". Words, likewise, are never barriers to his self-awareness. While Amiel's thought progressions are often crippled by the accumulation of epithets and synonyms, Montaigne allows his mind to move fortuitously toward the idea's resolution. Even his images, unlike the divergence and repetition of Amiel's, enter as clusters into his train of thought, expanding his self-experience and generating new ideas. The image of the mollusk's contractive movement symbolizing Amiel's view of life becomes, in the *Essais,* an image of expansive movement completely in keeping with the ideal of the "poetic gait". Caught up in a sense of pres-

ent movement, Montaigne and his style stand constantly on the frontiers of adventure and spontaneity. In his book, the Essayist becomes another Alexander, "le souverain patron des actes hazardeux" (I, xxiv, 128).

The "poetic gait" chosen by the Essayist bears ultimately upon the entire structure of the *Essais,* and upon the concept of creative evolution. While the chronological structure of the *Journal intime* imposes strict limitations upon the Writer, the idea of experimentation contained in the essay holds infinite possibilities for creation and re-creation:

> Mon livre est tousjours un. Sauf qu'à mesure qu'on se met à le renouveller afin que l'acheteur ne s'en aille les mains du tout vuides, je me donne loy d'y attacher (comme ce n'est qu'une marqueterie mal jointe), quelque embleme supernuméraire. Ce ne sont que surpoids, qui ne condemnent point la premiere forme, mais donnent quelque pris particulier à chacune des suivantes par une petite subtilité ambitieuse. De là toutesfois il adviendra facilement qu'il s'y mesle quelque transposition de chronologie, mes contes prenans place selon leur opportunité, non tousjours selon leur aage. (III, ix, 941)

Chronological categories hold little place in Montaigne's work because he can never accept the idea of a day by day progression in thought. For this reason, no single essay represents a culminating point in the book's evolution, although the chapters of Book II do, in fact, show a greater elaboration of the Writer's self-awareness. The themes of earlier essays go on suggesting themselves to Montaigne as he re-reads and re-traces the progressions of earlier ideas. Memory, experience, and judgment give the Essayist new perspectives for self-expression. Former thoughts are never dead, desiccated, and in need of correction; they still have dynamic powers, capable of stimulating the Essayist's imagination. He conceives of adding to these thoughts, but seldom of correcting them ("J'adjouste, mais je ne corrige pas" [III, ix, 941]). What appear as occasional contradictions or repetitions in Montaigne's ideas are simply the result of these new insights and of attempts to re-create previous moments of reflection. Each essay, therefore, contains infinite possibilities for expansion and self-awareness through judgment and sty-

listic creation. In those lucid moments of understanding when the Essayist's thought has carried him forward to new levels of such self-awareness, his mind gathers its strength to reach out and speak to us all. The closing reflections of "De la vanité" are, then, a reminder to each of us that a universal message is contained within Montaigne's "science of the particular":

> Regardez dans vous, reconnoissez vous, tenez vous à vous; vostre esprit et vostre volonté, qui se consomme ailleurs, ramenez la en soy; vous vous escoulez, vous vous respandez; appilez vous, soutenez vous; on vous trahit, on vous dissipe, on vous desrobe à vous. Voy tu pas que ce monde tient toutes ses veues contraintes au dedans et ses yeux ouverts à se contempler soymesme? C'est tousjours vanité pour toy, dedans et dehors, mais elle est moins vanité quand elle est moins estendue. Sauf toy, ô homme, disoit ce Dieu [à Delphes], chaque chose s'estudie la premiere et a, selon son besoin, des limites à ses travaux et desirs. Il n'en est une seule si vuide et necessiteuse que toy, qui embrasses l'univers; tu es le scrutateur sans connoissance, le magistrat sans jurisdiction et, après tout, le badin de la farce.
>
> (III, ix, 979–80)

Through the observable facts of his own condition Montaigne is able to generate a universal principle of life – a fundamental truth upon which wise and happy living can be based. So perfect in its simplicity, yet so complex in its implementation, this statement describes a pathway beyond the reach of Amiel's failing conception. With complete freedom to move and create, the Essayist's mind, fortified by the "poetic gait", accepts the Delphic admonition: it looks inward, keeping to itself and striving for self-knowledge. As it performs its acts of judgment and creation, the mind comes face to face with the inevitable fact of personal vanity. Introspection is, therefore, a "pis-aller", a final recourse of Montaigne's individuality. Vanity lies within and without, but it is less vanity when it is less extensive. While all men are steeped in it, those who are aware of their emptiness are a little better off. Only when the mind has reached this first stage of wise living can it look across the depths of inner space and see that glimmer of light which leads it back to the world. Similarly, when Montaigne's thought has meandered spontaneously through the patchwork of "De la vanité" and built bridges

between present reverie and involuntary memory, only then can the essay expand into a universal affirmation addressed to all men in all times, namely the Delphic admonition.

Montaigne's solitude and introspection, as recorded in the *Essais*, are ultimately communicative media: they show us how one particular man, living amidst the turmoil of civil unrest, was able to turn his back on human folly and restore the voice of common sense. They show us an individual who, having traveled the road to the shadow, is able to take himself as the subject of his book and who, little by little, achieves consubstantiality with his creation. They show us the operation of the assaying mind as it judges, remembers, creates, and re-creates. They show us a man deeply involved with life, bent on becoming wiser and more able to act. They show us the practical and creative possibilities of self-contemplation when it overwhelms the hypnotic, sometimes deadly, attraction of the abstract Self. By both their timeliness and timelessness, they form, above all, a vast mirror in which are reflected our own humble proportions. Gradually, artfully, the lines of Montaigne's self-portrait become disturbingly familiar until we finally glimpse in their delineation the gaunt figure of ourselves. This man of the common sort who bears the entire form of the human estate has reached out through the introspective act to encompass us all.

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