I AM MYSELF THE MATTER OF MY BOOK: GENDER, FRIENDSHIP, AND WRITING IN HELISENNE DE CRENNÉ AND MARIE DE GOURNAY

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ABSTRACT

Emily Rose Cranford: I am myself the matter of my book: Gender, Friendship, and Writing in Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay
(Under the direction of Hassan Melehy)

The framework of early modern gender wars situates androgyny, intersexuality, and transgender phenomena as powerful yet risky, eminent yet subversive, symbols in early modern discourse. Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay manipulate and transform iconic genders in early modern French culture, rewriting masculinist friendship traditions and reproductive imperative. These authors evoke the intersexuality with which their culture is obsessed in order to present the reality of fluctuating notions of sexe and gender. In her Angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d’amours (1538) and Epîtres familières et invectives (1539) Hélisenne de Crenne detaches gender from the sexed body and represents multiple masculinities, from effeminate men to hypervirile men to virile women. In her Proumenoir de M. de Montaigne qui traite de l’amour dans l’œuvre de Plutarque (1594), Les Advis ou Les présens de la demoiselle de Gournay (1639), and her multiple prefaces to Montaigne’s Essais (1595-1641) Marie de Gournay argues the cause of women and challenges misogynistic conceptions of female intellectual incapacity by forming notions of family that, like Michel de Montaigne’s literary progeny, work outside the bounds of sexed bodies and the institution of marriage. Marie de Gournay and Hélisenne de Crenne use transgendered literary personae to work within and through the boundaries of friendship, gender, and love in early modern France. Through textual
dialogues about (female) sexuality, friendship, gender, and writing that are queer in their subversions of gender-based conceptions of textual generation, these authors participate subversively in the *Querelle des femmes*. These two women produce proto-feminist arguments by detaching masculinity from the male body, by entering male literary realms through masculine personae, and by feminizing the masculinist literary traditions popular in early modern France.
To my mother, Anita, who has been *père et mère* for many years.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

L’autre histoire, c’est d’un homme encore vivant, nommé Germain, de basse condition, sans nul métier ni office, qui a été fille jusqu’en l’âge de vingt-deux ans, vue et connue par tous les habitants de la ville, et remarquée d’autant qu’elle avait un peu plus de poil autour du menton que les autres filles; et l’appelait-on Marie la barbue. Un jour, faisant un effort à un saut, ses outils virils se produisirent; et le cardinal de Lenoncourt, évêque pour lors de Chalons, lui donna nom Germain. Il ne s’est pas marié pourtant; il a une grande barbe forte épaisse.¹

Michel de Montaigne relates Marie la barbue’s incredible story of sexual transformation, one of “trois histoires mémorables” he supposedly heard recounted while passing through the village of Vitry-le-François, in both his Journal de Voyage (1774) and his essay “De la force de l’imagination” (I.21) (1580). Most probably the essayist was so intrigued by Ambroise Paré’s ample and detailed narration of this dual-sexed individual’s tale (one of the “Histoires Memorables de Certaines Femmes Qui Son Degenerees en Hommes” in Paré’s Des monstres et prodiges [1573]) that Montaigne integrated it into his own texts. The intersexed body is a pervasive image in much of early modern French literature, crossing such disciplines as to be included in political

¹ Montaigne, Journal de voyage p. 78.

² Kathleen Long’s Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe is a comprehensive study of these disparate
pamphlets, medical and surgical treatises, philosophical, literary, and even alchemical texts. ²

Representations of intersexuality in the literature of early modern France employ multitudinous meanings that either reinforce or problematize binaries and hierarchies on sexual, gendered, political and philosophical levels. Most often represented or evoked in the figure of the hermaphrodite or androgyne, sex and gender ambiguity provoked both intense interest and extreme anxiety in early modern France. Montaigne and Paré are by no means the only early modern French writers who recount stories of intersexuality or attempt to explain such a monstrously problematic phenomenon; rather, the omnipresence of the hermaphrodite’s image in early modern French literature reveals this culture’s attraction to and anxiety about sexual ambiguity. Intersexuality is indeed “an almost obsessively recurrent theme in Renaissance culture, one of the most visible figures of the time” (Long, Hermaphrodites 4).³ Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay, who both argued on the side of women in early modern France’s Querelle des femmes, manipulate the anxiety surrounding shifting gender. By presenting themselves as embodying a kind of female masculinity in their published works, they prove by demonstration that woman are capable of “exerceant oeuvres viriles” (Crenne, Espitres 95).

² Kathleen Long’s Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe is a comprehensive study of these disparate genres.

³ Long continues, “The intersexual is celebrated and reviled, alternately a monster and a god, thus reflecting ambivalence towards the rigid gender roles imposed by the law as well as towards what has been declared by law and by Church to be sexual deviance. The omnipresence of the hermaphrodite in most aspects of Renaissance culture suggests attraction towards sexual ambiguity as well as fear of transgression of sexual roles” (5).
Unlike Paré’s representation of Germain as always having been male – having simply been taken for a girl because he showed no signs of virility and wore women’s clothing – Montaigne textually engenders the personage of Marie Germain with both of his subject’s sexes. Indeed, Montaigne’s Marie Germain passage engenders many problematics of sexual and gender ambiguity that this study proposes within the works of Héloïsenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay. This study examines the ways in which Crenne and Gournay use the performativity of textuality to present, perform, and examine ambiguous sexes and genders. Crenne, Gournay, and Gournay’s literary father Montaigne, whose texts destabilize binary notions of sex and gender, all treat questions of (female) sexuality, gender, and textuality in ambiguous ways. These authors subversively present themselves textually as ambiguously gendered subjects. Both Crenne and Gournay manipulate the gendered elements of the French language in order to feminize male literary realms like the chivalric novel, friendship, editing, and translation. Montaigne’s commentary about Marie Germain is important to this study.

4 “. . . lequel jusqu’au quinziesme an de son aage avoit esté tenu pour fille attendu qu’en luy ne se monstroit aucune marque de virilité et mème qu’il se tenoit avec les filles en habit de femme…” (Paré 29).

5 Judith Butler’s *Undoing Gender* examines many current problematics of the construction of genders and sexed bodies, especially the intersexed body: “The critique of male-to-female (MTF) transsexuality has centered on the ‘appropriation’ of femininity, as if it belongs properly to a given sex, as if sex were discretely given, as if gender identity could and should be derived unequivocally from presumed anatomy. To understand gender as a historical category, however, is to accept that gender, understood as one way of culturally configuring a body, is open to a continual remaking, and that ‘anatomy’ and ‘sex’ are not without cultural framing (as the intersexed body has clearly shown). . . . Terms such as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are notoriously changeable, there are social histories for each term; their meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining whom, and for what purpose. . . . Terms of gender designation are thus never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade” (9-10).

6 By “sexuality” this study understands experiences of erotic life rather than some attribute of universal human experience produced by nineteenth-century sex psychologists. See Halperin, *How to do the History of Homosexuality*.  

3
because it highlights the problematics of women who take on masculinity – both the anxiety of shifting gender as well as the social repercussions of appropriating maleness.

The Marie Germain passage embodies the thematics of this study in Montaigne’s insistence on gendered textuality (that is, the gendered elements of French grammar, Latin etymologies, and notions of textual generation), a common manifestation of the essayist’s use of the text to produce gendered subjects. He represents Marie Germain’s sex transformation through textual manifestations of gender; for when named “un homme” Germain is attributed with masculine adjectives “vivant” and “nommé,” yet his gender transforms mid-sentence as he is named “fille” – thereafter “vue,” “connue,” and “remarquée” (Journal 78). Montaigne blurs his subject’s gender by omitting gendered subject pronouns and using gender neutral pronouns in the phrase describing the sex transformation: “Un jour, faisant un effort à un saut, ses outils virils se produisirent; et le cardinal de Lenoncourt, évêque pour lors de Chalons, lui donna nom Germain” (78 emphasis mine ERC). Only once the subject is named (textually and socially) as male (“nom Germain”) does the masculine subject pronoun “il” reappear (78). This passage’s representation of gender transformation demonstrates Montaigne’s willingness to play with textuality’s power to be gendered, sexual, and material – and this sexual/textual play manifests itself in Gournay’s and Crenne’s textual self-representations as ambiguously gendered subjects.

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7 Edith Benkov signals, “the economy of the French allows the reader’s imagination to make an effortless leap from female to male, whereas translation creates more gender trouble for the insufficient reader” (206).

8 See Robert Cottrell’s Sexuality / textuality for a thorough examination of Montaigne’s use of gendered textuality.
Secondly, Montaigne’s Marie Germain passage manifests the power of the intersexed or ambiguously gendered body to destabilize, for Marie Germain is “remarquée” because her female body has signs of maleness (a little more hair on her chin than those of other girls) (78). Further, unlike Paré’s insistence that Marie Germain never demonstrated any mark of virility before her transformation, Montaigne’s representation allows for bodily signs of sexual ambiguity to exist on all female bodies—for while the other girls may also have hair on their chins, Marie’s hairy chin is remarkable solely by degree. In her analysis of this passage Edith Benkov argues that “Montaigne understood the distinction between sex and gender and the instability of these categories” and further that “the examples Montaigne chooses of transgendered and/or passing individuals who perform drag and create it, prefigure a modern sensibility of sexuality and gender” (213).

Significantly, Montaigne represents the coexistence of male and female signs on a single body as a phenomenon to be remarked and thusly named by others (“l’appelait-on Marie la barbue”), and not simply as a literary representation of the “twin anxieties of visibility and difference” that Garber avers mobilize “all of [a] culture’s assumptions about normative sex and gender roles” (Journal 78, 130). The remarkable, destabilizing nature of the ambiguously gendered or dually sexed body is paramount in these authors’ ambiguously gendered self-representations; for Marie de Gournay and Hélisenne de Crenne both pointedly destabilize early modern binary notions of sex and gender through their textual constructions of ambiguous identities. In their fight for women’s participation in literary society and culture, Crenne and Gournay argue for a kind of gender parity that destabilizes normative bifurcated sex distinctions. Normative sex and
gender roles are constructed in such a manner as to be taken for granted as natural; and while normalcy’s power lies in its invisibility, it is a subversive necessity that destabilizations and problematizations of normalcy be remarked upon. To be remarked is to be considered, and readers’ confrontation with non-normative genders and sexual practices is imperative in the case of our authors. Herein lies the poignancy of these ladies’ gender transformations – they make manifest female intellectual capacity through demonstration.

Montaigne’s tale of incredible gender transformation highlights the tension between (ambiguous) gender and the love relationship in that Germain “ne s’est pas marié” after being made a man (Journal 78). His not marrying avoids (though in fact highlights by omission) the problematic question of an ambiguously or doubly gendered subject’s sexual role(s) and object choice(s). By omission, this passage implicates gendered ambiguity within the context of love for one’s “semblable” – that is to say, the problematics of same-sex love, which Montaigne explores elsewhere in his textual eroticization of his perfect friendship with Etienne de La Boétie. Marie de Gournay reconstructs Montaigne’s queer friendship with La Boétie in the prefaces to the Essais; she makes herself Montaigne’s masculine double and spreads the seed of the Essais for over 40 years. Crenne too problematizes platonic male friendship within the chivalric genre, questioning the nature of emotional male companionship and her male characters’ sexual desire for women.

Montaigne’s inclusion of the love relationship and erotic practices in the construction of Marie Germain’s gender identity is exemplary of our authors, for Gournay and Crenne explore gender’s relationship to love and sexuality. Indeed, our
authors explore normative and non-normative masculinities and femininities most profoundly through the love relationship. Hélise de Crenne, for example, examines the ambiguities surrounding the sexuality of effeminate masculinity, personified in her narrator’s lover, Guénélic. Her text seems to explain Guénélic’s non-normative masculinity as the result of the emasculating power of Love’s dominion over him, for like women, he has succumbed to weakness by allowing Love and desire to overcome his forces of reason. Yet the author undermines her text’s investment in heterosexuality by eroticizing Guénélic’s exemplary friendship with the hyper-virile Quézinstra.

Further, Ambroise Paré’s account of Marie Germain’s gender transformation, the source from which Montaigne constructs his text, invests itself in yet another early modern problematic that this study will employ – “the specter of transvestism” (Garber 32). Paré’s portrayal of “Germain Marie”’s sex as male (despite his body’s being unmarked by virile signifiers) makes the surgeon’s mention of Germain’s women’s clothing quite problematic (Paré 29). The text represents the female vestments of his youth as a gendered presentation in defiance of his sex: “il se tenoit avec les filles en habit de femme” (29). Even more anxiety-producing is that his transvestism helped to construct and to maintain his female identity.

Paré’s account does not fail to represent the strong cultural aversion to ambiguous signs of sex distinction in early modern France, for this medical authority instates Marie Germain’s obligation to dress in male garb: “luy fut baillé habit d’homme” (30). The coexistence of male and female signifiers in a single body of the transvestite constitutes the representation of inversion to its limits, and Garber emphasizes “the tension, the repulsion, the antagonism which is created between them” (150). Transvestism can thus
be interpreted socially and critically in early modernity as hermaphrodisism constructed artificially (and, in the context of these authors, constructed textually), for transvestism and hermaphrodisism both embody the signs and tension of two genders/sexes in one body. This study will engage in the culturally specific exploration of Marie de Gournay’s and Hélisenne de Crenne’s textually androgynous personae through textual transvestism. It proposes an exploration of the means by which these two proto-feminists represent themselves androgynously by textually fashioning their genders. These resulting portraits allow Crenne and Gournay to enter male traditions and feminize them by demonstration.

Lastly, Montaigne’s Marie Germain passage textually manifests the explosive discourse in early modern France concerning sex distinctions and gender roles, as well as destabilizations of such norms. The essayist completes his account with a particular instance of gyno-social and gyno-centered discourse about Marie’s transgressive tale: “Il y a encore en cette ville une chanson ordinaire en la bouche des filles, où elles s’entr’advissent de ne faire plus de grandes enjambées, de peur de devenir mâles, comme Marie Germain” (Journal 78). This study treats not only the specific textual productions of discourse about ambiguous sexuality by two women authors, but also and more significantly the question of women’s participation in intellectual discourse and its link with troublesome female sexuality. Marie de Gournay’s textual transvestment as Montaigne’s double (often representing herself as embodying more masculine attributes

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9 Garber notes that Magnus Hirschfeld “saw a relationship between androgyynes and transvestites; where androgyynes were concerned with the physical marks of gender (beard, breasts, genitals), transvestites concerned themselves instead with psychological gender signs, like dress and names” (131-32). The conflation of transvestism, hermaphrodites and sodomy will be examined further in the pages that follow.
than her literary father) has as its most primary goals dialoguing with Montaigne and enabling the participation of women in intellectual conversations.\textsuperscript{10} In Montaigne, the young girls’ warning to each other not to engage in such activities as “grandes enjambées” – that presumably would open or spread the legs wide enough and with such force as to allow hidden organs to pop out of her sex – may even be exemplary as discourse promoting the ideals of what Joan Kelly deems the “Renaissance of chastity.”\textsuperscript{11} Further, Montaigne, in a characteristic pursuit of multiplicities and infinity, textually multiplies and diversifies his examples of this discourse about sexual ambiguity by ending his transgressive tale with, “ils disent qu’Ambroise Paré a mis ce conte dans son livre de chirurgie” (Journal 78 my emphasis ERC). This phrase not only demonstrates the multiplicity of different discourses about ambiguous gender (from “contes” in Montaigne’s texts to explanations in pseudo-scientific literature) but also that this discourse forms cultural norms through orality as well as written word.

This study aims to engage in a “calculated encounter with the past” that, through close examination of Hélisenne de Crenne’s Angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d’amours (1538) and Espîtres familières et invectives (1539) and Marie de Gournay’s Proumenoir de M. de Montaigne qui traite de l’amour dans l’oeuvre de Plutarque (1594), Advis ou Les présens de la demoiselle de Gournay (1639), and prefaces to

\textsuperscript{10} Dorothea Heitsch signals that Gournay “makes very good use of the possibilities of print culture, enabling her to participate in a literary dialogue and to re-edit her texts with additions and changes. It becomes evident in ‘Grief des dames’ . . . that this is of utmost importance to her, one of her goals being the unequivocal integration of women in social events from which they have been barred, such as conversations” (“Dialogue” 113).

\textsuperscript{11} Todd Reeser makes the excellent argument that in “De la force de l’imagination” Montaigne personally argues the opposite case: “To alleviate or to cure the girls’ anxieties, Montaigne suggests a kind of cure for sex change; here, it is simply a question of not avoiding what the girls fear, by ‘incorporating’ the virile part within the girls” (231).
Montaigne’s *Essais* (1595-1641), explores the means by which these two female authors present and question a multiplicity of genders and sexualities in early modern France. It is an investigation into the ways in which our authors present proto-feminist and queer subversions, and its methodology is informed by several queer theorists and historians of sexuality. Homosexuality, though important in the study, is not privileged. Indeed, the Renaissance is an “historic period that does not operate under the aegis of the homo/hetero divide,” and the failure to raise questions of sexuality in early modern texts “has often meant nothing less than the tacit assumption that the only sexuality that ever obtains is a transhistorical heterosexuality” (Goldberg 2, 4).

Rather than “queering” these writers or imposing queerness upon them, this is a project that explores the means by which our authors destabilize sex and gender norms, the ways in which these texts occupy spaces within and without Renaissance binaries. Carla Freccero elaborates the way queer designates a sort of Derridean différance, “occupying an interstitial space between binary opposites”; it is a haunting, occupying a space within and without (*Queer/Early/Modern* 18). This study examines the role of ambiguity in creating multiplicities of simultaneous genders, how the uncertainty that ambiguity manifests allows its subjects to occupy spaces between cultural binaries. I configure ambiguity as enabling the queerness of these texts to move “in the space between hetero- and homo-, normative and non-, in order to reinscribe, by occupying a place within but not containable by heteronormative phallogocentric logic” (18).
Always Already Queer French Renaissance

The early modern period . . . is a privileged domain for the study of both sexuality and subjectivity; in both areas it is a period in which ‘older’ and ‘emergent’ models coexist (qualifications which clearly may be applied and make sense only in retrospect from a particular modern viewpoint). . . . [I]t is a period in which, therefore, (sexual) identities, the practices on which they are founded, and the representations through which they come to us tend to be multiple and labile.12

This study examines female masculinity that Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay present in their characters and also in the self-portraits they produce in their authorship. While Judith Halberstam’s Female Masculinity treats the lesbian experience, this study explores female masculinity in two women who are outside the definitions of hetero/homo, yet who are nonetheless both inside and outside normative sexuality in early modern France. As Gary Ferguson13 argues for queerness in the Renaissance, the following chapters focus on a transhistorical female masculinity that neither privileges yet ignores (in the case of Paré in chapter two) lesbian female masculinity. The problem surrounding the possible anachronism of gender and queer theory being applied to periods and cultures before terms like gender, sexuality, even heterosexuality were to emerge discursively is a difficult one to address:

As queer historians have repeatedly pointed out, one common limitation of many gay and lesbian as well as feminist models of sexual and gender function is the tendency to be ahistorical . . . . The challenge for new queer history has been, and remains, to produce methodologies sensitive to historical change but influenced by current theoretical preoccupations. (Halberstam 46)

12 Gary Ferguson, Queer (Re)readings in the French Renaissance (16).

13 Ferguson’s introduction to Queer (Re)readings in the French Renaissance is an important justification for queer approaches to Renaissance studies.
Queer Renaissance studies, though more frequently in English literature than French literature, have blossomed in the past few decades, and they have contributed important reconsiderations of and understandings of early modern culture and literature. Gary Ferguson notes that “the deployment of sexuality in the analysis of pre-modern configurations of the sexual and subjectivity or identity certainly requires prudence in the face of the concomitant dangers, notably that of projecting anachronistically back into the past and of obscuring fundamental differences” (10). Joan Kelly’s “Did Women Have a Renaissance” opened the door to queer studies in the Renaissance by questioning the notion that Humanism was universally efficacious. Likewise, Foucault’s *Histoire de la sexualité* is a foundational text, though limited in that it is not marked by gender difference – it is phallocentric in that Foucault takes male erotic experiences as the universal experience, or at least the only significant experience. Indeed, as Halperin argues, Foucault informs queer theory by making possible a conception of erotic life in history that is culturally specific but by no means entirely alterior to modern experiences – and that rather works to establish them. Foucault opens the door to the history of male homosexuality; in fact, he lays important groundwork for historians like Halperin to elaborate and to practice methodologies that treat sexuality outside of the framework of gay/straight binaries. As Freccero theorizes in “Prolepses,” queer theory – though

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14 I argue, in fact, that Foucault makes a grave error in misinterpreting Diderot’s *Bijoux indiscrets*, the text his project aims to transcribe into history: “Ce dont il s’agit dans cette série d’études? Transcrire en histoire la fable des *Bijoux indiscrets*” (Volonté 101). Diderot’s bijoux are in fact vaginas that speak about their experiences, and not the magic ring that forces them to speak as Foucault interprets. His misinterpretation is formative in the gender-neutral yet phallocentric nature of Foucault’s project. By ignoring gender, Foucault in fact participates in the system of sexual hierarchies he aims to critique.
seemingly anachronistically applied to the Renaissance – effectively illuminates many unrecognized realities of the early modern period.\(^\text{15}\)

Gender and queer theories are culturally relevant to early modern France due to a prolific gender crisis and its explosive male anxiety, to the \textit{querelle des femme’s} destabilizing binary notions of gender, and to the pervasive ambiguity of the intersexed body in Renaissance culture and discourse. In early modern French literature, developing notions of masculinity and femininity are often manifested or constructed in rather queer ways – take, for example, Hélisenne de Crenne’s masculine persona as Guenelic, whose effeminate masculinity is anything but normative. Further, Long notes that gender plays a significant role in the formation of the early modern subject: “even if the modern individual was largely formed in the classical era, the crucible of this formation was the Renaissance, a period in which clear-cut dimensions of gender were already being questioned and the relationship between an individual and his public role was already fraught with tension” \textit{(Anxiety ix-x)}. She adds that “early modern skepticism presages our postmodern notions of the factitious nature of gender roles” \textit{(xi)}.

Such parallels between 21\textsuperscript{st} century notions of gender and sexuality and the nascent notions of gender and sexuality in early modern France thus allow the unique possibility of translating (to the extent possible) and contextualizing queer concepts within the frameworks of sixteenth-century France. As Fradenburg and Freccero argue, “the sexualitites we practice now are part of a history of ‘discipline and punishment,’ of ‘social control,’ of the ways communities construct people’s bodies and touch them in rage or in welcome” \textit{(viii)}. Sedgwick considers homo- and heterosexual definition as a

\(^{15}\) See Freccero’s \textit{Queer/Early/Modern}.
“performative space of contradiction,” and further that modern understanding of homosexual definition “is organized around a radical and irreducible incoherence” due to our inheritance and sociocultural preservation of a multitude of (often contradictory) sex and gender models from our pre-modern past (85).

This study’s methodology applies Garber’s theoretical “transvestite effect” – the manifestation of the “centrality of the transvestite as an index of category destabilization altogether” – to the context of textuality and textual production in several early modern French texts (17). The transvestite effect is not an historical effect but rather a “psychosocial” one in which the anxiety the transvestite produces by the blurring of categories of gender allows other category stabilizations to be easily read. I propose that Marie de Gournay and Hélisenne de Crenne construct themselves as ambiguously gendered subjects of their own texts. These female authors textually engender themselves as androgynous or double-sexed beings by manipulating the materiality and sexuality of their texts. In fact, their textually constructed self-representations are hermaphroditic and androgynous to the effect of demonstrating the capacity of women to act like men, to perform literary masculinity.

This study will explore how the texts of Gournay and Crenne exemplify the “always already queer” of the French Renaissance. Various theoretical approaches to the early modern period, from post-structuralism and deconstruction to feminist and psychoanalytic theory, have produced important works that highlight a multitude of topoi. While other theoretical approaches to the Renaissance and approaches to Renaissance literature that reject theoretical applications have made significant contributions to Renaissance scholarship, these approaches are limited because they don’t
fully explore the queerness of the texts they treat or conceptions of gender outside binaries. This study intends to build upon research from various theoretical backgrounds and to further these excellent critical departures by illustrating the queerness of these ladies’ proto-feminist texts. Indeed, the critical texts that inspired this study, Cathleen Bauschatz’s “Travestissement textual dans la ‘seconde partie’ des Angoisses douloureuses” and Lawrence Kritzman’s “Of ashes born: Montaigne’s surrogate daughter,” establish that both authors undergo textual drag.

Bauschatz delineates that Hélisenne de Crenne textually cross-dresses as a means of accessing the male realms of chivalry, the voyage, and male intimate friendship, and this study explores further Hélisenne’s goal of “passing” as man. She argues that “la narratrice s’exprimera . . . par la voix de Guenelic,” though my analysis bases its drag theory on her “parlant en la personne de son ami Guenelic” – speaking in the persona or mask of Guénélic rather than using his voice (“Travestissement” 55, Angoisses 147). Crenne’s textual drag gives her access that parallels the kind of progress narratives that Garber delineates are used to explain why women cross-dress (as in the case of Billy Tipton, jazz musician who lived as a married man). I articulate how the ambiguity of Hélisenne’s drag persona allows our author to queer these male realms and to portray a multiplicity of masculinities. There are similar pleasures in Hélisenne de Crenne’s gender ambiguity and the pleasure of other drags that accentuate the coexistence of male and female bodily signifiers. This study also builds upon Jerry Nash’s assertion that Hélisenne portrays female masculinity in her Lettres familières et invectives as a pro-woman participant in the Querelle des femmes; I examine how her portrayal of male
femininities in *Angoisses douloureuses* renders her an even more subversive participant in the *Querelle* than criticism of her work has thus far demonstrated.

Kritzman’s argument that “by becoming Montaigne’s double [Marie de Gournay] permits herself to engage in a rhetorical transvestism that manifests itself as a hermeneutic fetishism in terms of its relationship with the master’s text” inspired this study’s examination of textual transvestment, but I am more critical of the limitations of his theory than of Bauschatz’s (“Ashes” 426). First, I argue that hers is not simply a rhetorical but a textual transvestism because of Gournay’s use of intertextuality within her own and Montaigne’s texts, as well as the dialogism she employs with Montaigne. Gournay’s queer use of text and textual reproduction enables her to become her literary father’s perfect friend and interlocutor through the palimpsest of her texts. Secondly, this analysis rejects the hetero-centric use of fetishism with Montaigne’s text – its concomitant and popular critical trend that emphasizes her desire for and relationship to Montaigne. Rather than present Gournay in the shadow of her literary father, it seems imperative to present the essayist as a means of exploring Gournay’s manipulation of his text and her appropriation of his queer writing process. This study explores how Gournay’s transvestism is not centered around the “daughter’s desire,”¹⁶ but rather based upon an inner desire to textually manifest her intellectual female masculinity – as well as to enter into intellectual conversation, as Heitsch’s work elaborates.¹⁷ The queerness of her textual transvestism effectively delineates “la femme sçavante” as a female

¹⁶ See Patricia Cholakian’s “Reading the Daughter’s Desire.”

¹⁷ Heitsch’s chapter in *Printed Voices* is foundational to this study. There has been quite a significant amount of excellent research of Gournay’s editorial and writing process that is important to this study. See especially Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, Philippe Desan, and Hope Glidden.
masculinity that is intellectual, and this transvestism engenders Montaigne’s text by engaging him in intellectual dialogue about women’s intellectual capacities and female sexuality. I argue that her textual generation is a queer dialogue with Montaigne; this queer dialogue and her queer textual generation implicate both of these authors in a subversive, gender-bending and queer participation in the *Querelle des femmes*.

This study aims to use Michel de Montaigne’s text and writing process as a way to examine Gournay’s manipulation of the friendship tradition. Montaigne inserts and interweaves pleasure and erotics into male friendship, and my analysis builds upon Marc Schachter’s avowal that “Montaigne loves La Boétie” and refutes Ulrich Langer’s claim that their friendship rests within the realms of the Platonic – I argue rather that it occupies the queer haunting space of ambiguous sexuality. Montaigne’s text, through self-examination, self-contradiction, and self-doubling, further engages readers as interlocutors to this queer dialogue on friendship – the most passionate, willing and subversive of which is Marie de Gounay, whose textual transvestment as Montaigne’s double problematizes the gendered limitations of the topos of male friendship.

As this use of the dialogue genre demonstrates, the following chapters engage a theory of texuality “in a matter designed to accentuate its historical character” (Mowitt 2). By underlining the sexuality of textuality in Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay, this study demonstrates how rhetoric, language, and literary strategies serve as gender-encoded textual clothing or “parts” of each author’s transvestism. It explores how literary language can represent and construct desire and subjectivity, how it can

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18 Schachter’s *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship* is foundational to this study. This work is by far the most elaborate refutation of Langer’s approach to the Montaigne – La Boétie friendship in *Perfect Friendship*. 

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destabilize and construct heteronormativity. While Cottrell and Cave explore sexual
textuality in early modern France, this study is inspired more by Freccero’s exploration of
“the ways early modern textuality is a product of a kind of queer theorizing”
(Queer/Early/Modern 107). I engage in what she calls a “queer philology,”
exploring how our authors’ use of Latin etymologies, wordplay and (inter)textuality produce textual
destabilizations of normalized and binarized genders and sexualities (107).

Queer Renaissance theory must explore what Sedgwick calls “nonce
taxonomies,” must elucidate the multiplicity of genders, sexualities, and queer spaces
that early modern texts (re)present. This study articulates the ways in which Hélisenne de
Crenne and Marie de Gournay present genders and sexualities that parallel and presage
contemporary understandings of these notions as well as current gender and sexuality
theorization, specifically queer theory. As Freccero argues for French theory, this study
contests that early modern France is “Always Already Queer.”

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19 In opposition to what Freccero terms the work of masculinist, heteronormative “phallogists” (107).

20 “The making and unmaking and remaking and redissolution of hundreds of old and new categorical
imaginings concerning all the kinds it may take to make up a world” (23).

21 See Freccero’s chapter, “Always Already Queer (French) Theory” in Queer/Early/Modern. Her
“Prolepses: Queer/Early/Modern” is an moving justification of queer theory’s application to early modern
French literature.
The Matter of My Book

This project’s next chapter, “Born This Way: Intersexuality and Early Modern Gender Wars,” examines the roles of “culture” and “nature” in Renaissance conceptions of sex and gender roles. It explores the ways in which masculinist culture insisted that the two sexes were “born this way” for moral and biological reasons; indeed, Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way” puts forth the notion that a modern person’s “nature” includes her sexual identity, much like early modern authorities insisted that bodies are “born that way” and must stay that way. This project adopts song titles that are more or less problematic in terms of gender and sexuality; in so doing, I aim to express specific trends in the works of Crenne and Gournay as well as early modern experiences in the parlance of pop to feminist ends. Like this project’s title, “I am the matter of my book,”22 and like Gournay and Crenne’s usurpation of masculinist culture, the chapter titles borrow from others in order to express a reinterpretation of the cannon (in this project’s case, the canon of pop).

This second chapter treats the gender war that exploded with male anxiety about sex and power in early modern France. Sex was an important part of the individual’s status in the Renaissance, and both the one-sex model and dual-sexed model of sex figured women as submissive to men. According to Nature, men and women were “born this way,” sexually distinct with social roles whose origins are found in the composition of the sexed body. Female sexuality in particular was frightening to men, and this chapter demonstrates this anxiety through literary and medical examples. Further, because this study treats textual transvestment, in particular the mask in Crenne’s Angoysses, chapter

22 The famous admission of Michel de Montaigne, “Je suis moy-mesmes la matière de mon livre” (1.0.3).
two treats the specter of transvestism, hermaphroditism, and the radical force of gender ambiguity. Lastly, this chapter explores how monstrous and ambiguous bodies are treated by juridical, medical, and social forces that attempt not to determine why differently-formed bodies are “born this way,” but rather how to make these bodies conform to early modern norms.

Chapter three, “Sissy That Walk: Transgendered Masking and Manly Works in Hélisenne de Crenne,” examines Crenne’s presentation of masculinity as something that is performed and detached from the male body. She uses her male persona to infiltrate male literary realms in order to speak directly to men. Crenne infiltrates through imitation; and by entering male literary territories she subverts masculinist tradition, infusing it with her proto-feminist intentions. By bending the gender of Guenelic she questions the link between male bodies and virility. Though dame Hélisenne masks herself in the persona of her lover Guenelic in parts two and three of the Angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d’amours, her textual drag is that of the effeminate lover. Unlike many contemporary drag kings, who most often choose a dominant masculinity as their persona, Crenne chooses an ambiguous masculinity that retains a bit of her femininity. She “sissies her walk” for proto-feminist purposes, bringing feminine elements into the male literary tradition.

RuPaul’s “Sissy That Walk” thematically links the ideas of gender and persona that Crenne evokes in her writing; RuPaul’s drag queen anthem implores queens to make their performance as feminine as possible, and Crenne attempts to make her drag king performance as ambiguous as possible. The mask of her persona highlights the duplicitous nature of gender as it was constructed in early modern France, and Crenne’s
writing works as performance. Indeed, it is almost as if Crenne insists upon her female sexed body performing manly works, just as RuPaul claims to possess a vagina and disavows a transsexual identity. This chapter also treats Crenne’s conception of masculinity in women, the “sissy” in female masculinity. Crenne’s princesse d’Elivéba, virago in the chivalric realm of the Seconde partie, can be read as the literary manifestation of her praise of Marguerite de Navarre and of Vergil’s Dido. Dido’s virtue and virility through “exerceant oeuvres viriles” is paramount in Crenne’s conception and presentation of virility in her works (Angoysses 95). Lastly, this chapter explores Hélisenne de Crenne’s proof of female masculinity and authorship in her representation of lady Hélisenne in the Tierce partie, a laudable and efficacious woman writer. This virago of letters in Angoysses works to exemplify the prowess of women writers and the performativity of gender and writing.

Chapter four, “Dude Looks Like a Lady: Ambiguous Amitié and Effeminate Masculinity,” explores how Hélisenne de Crenne and Michel de Montaigne problematize and eroticize perfect male friendship. It explores the problematic figure of the effeminate man in early modern France and the links between sodomy and dudes who look like ladies. The specter of sodomy permeated sixteenth century discourse about power, authority, and gender norms. There existed acute anxiety concerning gender and political power. Aerosmith’s “Dude (Looks Like A Lady)” engenders a twentieth-century

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23 See, for example, “Better beware / Ain’t no T, ain’t no shade, / But at the same time, / Bitches better get outta my way. / I’m a fem queen, / Mother of the House of No Shame, / My pussy is on fire, / Now kiss the flame.”
interpretation of effeminate masculinity and links it to homosexuality;\textsuperscript{24} likewise, this chapter argues that in the sexually bifurcated society of early modern France, effeminate men were often associated with what one might call passive homosexuals. In fact, anxiety about Henri III’s sexual transgressions is evidence of the extent to which heterosexual virility and the capacity to reproduce were bound up in the masculinity of kingship. This chapter traces the links between the hermaphrodite’s ambiguous connotations and the perceived need to govern and police “unnatural” bodies in early modern France, particularly “dude[s who] loo[k] like lad[ies].”

This chapter also examines Hélisenne de Crenne’s problemization of normative masculinity through the character Quezinstra and the male friendship that he and Guenelic share. Within the context of these bedfellows’ personal and intimate bond of friendship, both of their masculinities are questioned or made ambiguous. Within this intimacy Crenne explores the effeminacy of the male bond; their seclusion allows these young men to look like ladies and talk like ladies. She writes a womanly performance of ideal masculinity while problematizing the ideal man’s relationship with “that dude [who] looks like a lady.” Further, this fourth chapter considers the queer aspects of Michel de Montaigne’s friendship with Etienne de La Boétie and his conception of textual reproduction. Both of these ideas Marie de Gournay manipulates in her battle for women’s participation in intellectual life. I explore how Montaigne interweaves homosexual erotics into the friendship tradition and disrupts the reproductive imperative by producing progeny that is outside human corporeality. Montaigne mingles ideas of

\textsuperscript{24} The 70’s rock band is surprisingly open to a sexual encounter with such an effeminate dude and offers a rather open philosophy of sexual object choice: “Baby maybe you’re wrong but you know it’s all right . . . . Never judge a book by its cover / Or who you gonna love by your lover.”
monstrosity prevalent in early modern France with Platonic and Aristotelian notions of friendship and textual production in such a way that he creates a maternal identity for himself. He attempts to “[look] like a lady” in order to produce an androgynous method of textual reproduction. Because it defies the reproductive imperative of Renaissance France and implicates two men arguably in love, I argue that Montaigne’s writing process is queer; the queerness of his kinship of the book allows Gournay to insert herself into his circle of literary friends and to feminize his textual reproduction.

Chapter four, “Man in the Mirror: Paternal Resemblance and Learned Kinship in Marie de Gournay,” traces the gendered elements of Gournay’s early writings, particularly those that evoke her intellectual father. It argues that Gournay repeatedly presented herself and certain female figures as embodying elements of early modern masculinity. Using herself as example (in contrast to Crenne’s counter-exemplarity), Gournay demonstrated that masculinity could inhabit the female body, questioning the very notion of sexual difference. Gournay actively cultivated a self-portrait as Montaigne’s double; speaking in the first person, her self-portrait is one that mirrors Montaigne in word, deed, emotion, and form. By presenting herself as the essayist’s double, she figures him as the “man in the mirror.” Indeed, Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror” arguably presents Gournay’s literary intentions throughout her career. That is, she figures herself as Montaigne, the “man in the mirror,” and in her life-long pursuit of gender parity in the literary scene she starts by correcting her father in her Proumenoir. Jackson’s lines, “I’m starting with the man in the mirror, / I’m asking him to change his ways,” prescribes precisely Gournay’s intent in entering the masculine literary tradition and giving it a proto-feminist edge.
This chapter also examines Gournay’s exploitation the literary family that Montaigne’s text established between him, Étienne de La Boétie, and herself. She mirrors Montaigne’s mourning for La Boétie and insists upon her intellectual resemblance to Montaigne. Her published work, especially her *Proumenoir*, enters into a philosophical dialogue with Montaigne in which she argues the cause of women. In addition, she presents herself as Montaigne’s ideal friend and interlocuteur, his “man in the mirror,” all the while manipulating the gendered elements of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy.

This chapter argues that Gournay recreates the philosophical, theological, and moral textual corpus created by male writing, all the while pretending to follow faithfully ancient authority. She not only expands the concept of femininity by demonstrating her masculinity – in effect she feminizes the male dominated realm of intellectual authority.

Chapter six, “Blurred Lines: Camilla and Gournay the Literary Amazon,” appropriates Robin Thicke’s masculinist pop hit as a metaphor for Marie de Gournay’s feminization of male realms. She opens up masculinity to women, making masculinist sex distinctions untenable and feminizing the male literary tradition. Gournay acted as a literary Amazon, violently defending women and advocating the diversity of the French language. Gournay’s gender made her admiration for the past ridiculous to her counterparts, and she was consistently mocked as a spinster obsessed with language. In this chapter I argue that because she was so ridiculed, Gournay developed a literary persona whose authority was grounded in antiquity, the Amazon Camilla. She used this authority to advocate for women’s rights to participate in public debates about language. It is Montaigne’s conversion of parentage to maternal
generation that inspires and allows Gournay to further blur distinctions between gender, parenthood, and authorship.

Chapter six also examines the ways in which she blurs the lines between biological and textual parentage and between male and female roles in textual production; in fact, she appropriates the maternal and the feminine. Gournay paints herself as Tuteur and Protecteur in her work as editor of the Essais. She acted as the adoptive parent to Montaigne’s text, which she called an orphan in her letter to Cardinal Richelieu asking him to protect the Essais after her death. In this way, she takes on normative masculine and feminine roles, blurring the lines between men’s work and women’s labors. This chapter also explores how her work in translation and her treatises on poetics worked to feminize both of these realms. By adopting the persona of Camilla, Gournay further blurred the lines between ancient and early modern, between male warriors and female warriors, between self-portrait and reality.
CHAPTER 2
BORN THIS WAY: INTERSEXUALITY AND EARLY MODERN GENDER WARS

The early modern crisis in gender and the *Querelle des femmes* served as frameworks for Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay to explore personhood outside the bounds of binary notions of gender and heterosexual, procreative norms. Early modern gender wars manifested tensions concerning the nature of personhood and power – and underlined the importance of certain social, economic and political changes in the transition to early modernity that manifested gender as a prominent framework for articulations of male anxiety about powerful women. Masculinist culture created a reproductive imperative in Renaissance France that determined not only social and sexual roles for women and men but also struggled to maintain dominance amidst recurring images of and discourse about intersexed bodies; these bodies challenge Aristotelian theories of gendered hierarchy. Masculinist forces sought not only to repress intersexed bodies and people “born this way” but also to negate that such bodies were in fact “born this way”; ambiguity required some semblance of distinction through binary norms. Further, masculinist culture insisted that the two sexes were “born this way” for moral and biological reasons; male dominance over women was upheld by Aristotelian,

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25 I borrow David LaGuardia’s term masculinist, meaning forces “consciously used and propagated in order to ensure the domination of certain kinds of men over women” (2).
Platonic, and Galenic laws that supported cultural and political norms by the mere “fact” that men and women were “born this way.” Salic law, which prohibited women or progeny from female lines to inherit the French throne, is an exemplary case of masculinist constructions of culture during the early modern period; that is, it used Aristotelian reproductive science (in which female seed contributed only matter while male seed was formative) to ensure male domination over women in familial and political spheres.\(^{26}\)

In the transition from feudal systems to the early modern state, aristocratic women lost political, social and sexual liberties.\(^{27}\) The Renaissance woman had far fewer freedoms and much less of a role in creating culture than her early modern male counterparts and women in medieval Europe. Aristocratic women were stripped of the right to possess and rule over land; and as European monarchs consolidated and centralized their states, they suppressed feudal power. As laws began to limit and regulate the aristocracy, men became overwhelmingly concerned with the legitimacy of their offspring. Indeed, the patriarchal structure of medieval feudalism had allowed aristocratic women some sexual liberty as well as political rights. Feudalism was a privatized structure that allowed women to inherit and administer property; thus, powerful feudal

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\(^{26}\) Carla Freccero argues, “based in arguments from Aristotelian reproductive science that male seed was formative while the female contributed only matter, political theorists developed a biogenetic seminal theory of authority, whereby husbands produce heirs and kings produce successors through seminal creation. Even though . . . there were competing scientific theories of reproduction, notably from Galen, this is the one that seems to have predominated as a political maxim in part no doubt to prevent succession to the crown from unions involving French queens and foreign husbands.” (\textit{Queer/Early/Modern} 56-57)

\(^{27}\) See Joan Kelly’s “Did Women Have a Renaissance?”
families benefitted from women’s inheritance. Likewise, women often presided over their husbands’ courts while they were crusading; yet early modern notions of appropriate female behavior barred women from practicing or carrying arms. Further, feudalism allowed the aristocratic lady some degree of sexual activity outside the realms of her marriage; for her husband was mainly concerned with maintaining the land she or he possessed and needed her help running the fief. Aristocratic families could tolerate, even benefit, from illegitimate children because this progeny could support the family in marital alliances and as warriors. State regulation of inheritance emerged in the transition to early modern political structures, however, making paternity and legitimacy crucial concerns for men.

Perhaps most significantly, medieval women benefitted from the sexual freedom and gender equality that courtly love afforded them. As masculinist culture began to establish chastity and submission as the female norm, Renaissance notions of love reinforced female subordination, thereby reversing the gendered hierarchy of courtly love in which ladies reigned. Kelly argues, “Renaissance ideas on love and manners, more classical than medieval, and almost exclusively a male product, expressed the new subordination of women to the interests of husbands and male-dominated kin groups and served to justify the removal of women from an ‘unladylike’ position of power and erotic independence” (“Renaissance” 47). The culture of courtly love, in which knights swear fidelity and service to their ladies, gave aristocratic women peers and lovers rather than husbands; further, courtly love gave women a justification for adultery and allowed

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28 Joan Kelly argues that the “retention of matronymics in medieval society, that is, a common use of the maternal name… reflects the position of women as landowners and managers of great estates, particularly during the crusading period (“Renaissance” 27).
women to shape courtly culture in a way that supported their sexual freedom. Marie de France shaped the genre of courtly romance, and the courts of powerful female rulers like Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughter Marie de Champagne were centers of cultural production. These women served as patrons to artists who shaped medieval culture – Marie de Champagne, for example, supported Chrétien de Troyes and is believed to have influenced the sexual liberties he gives his female characters. The disappearance of women from positions of power in French courts paralleled the disappearance of courtly romance as a genre. Indeed, women’s public role as active participants in discussions at court diminished in the early modern period, as social roles for women required their silence and passivity.

In the sexually bifurcated society of early modern France, sexe (that is, sex and gender) was of utmost import. One’s sex was a role or position in French Renaissance society, one that allowed for or denied a person essential rights and privileges such as property holding, inheritance, and marriage rights. Questions of sexuality and alterity were crucial in the formation of the individual in early modern France, and the role of reproduction was of critical concern. During this period “self-determination is limited by a very specific role in society, that of reproduction. Individual identity is thus established purely in relation to others – a spouse, a child, the state – rather than by means of any sense of self that comes from within” (Long, Hermaphrodites 46). The Renaissance was dominated by Aristotelian concepts of sex and reproduction that privileged the male; and the hierarchy of early modern French society depended decisively on the model of

29 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park argue that in “early modern France, jurists could tolerate no middle ground between male and female: sex, like rank and age, was a legal ‘condition’ that fitted or unfitted a person from marrying, inheriting property, bearing witness, and so forth, and was a determinant of legal identity” (123).
domination of man over woman. The basis of this masculine domination was derived from the Aristotelian view that women were incomplete (even monstrous) men – though unlike the monster, which is gratuitous and useless for future generations, the female is a necessary departure from the norm, a useful deformity. While the one-sex, Aristotelian doctrine figured women as imperfect, “deformed” men who contributed only matter (matière, menses) to reproduction; a more egalitarian, dual-sex system began to emerge as intellectuals embraced Hippocratic and Galenic doctrine. As Hippocratic views on women and their reproductive roles became more frequent and significant in intellectual writing in sixteenth century France, the distinctions between male and female were problematized and destabilized. Because the breakdown of the one-sex model would bring about the collapse of the logic of sexual hierarchy that implied male superiority and domination over women, it is not surprising that many discourses and juridical forces aimed to protect social norms of gender. Men held power and social dominance by the mere fact of their birth and biological nature; they ruled because they were “born this way.”

While Hippocratic and Galenic views on gender entered into Renaissance thought, Aristotelian doctrine continued to dominate; indeed, masculinist forces reinforced Aristotelian notions of anatomy while suppressing alternative notions of bodies in an early modern systematic medical subjection of women. Alchemists, whose alternative views on gender and the body challenged dominant notions of medicine, anatomy and biology, formed relatively underground networks of early modern chemists.

30 Aristotelian doctrine makes “a decisive association between monsters and the female as two departures from the norm, as two exceptions to another tenet of Aristotelian doctrine, namely that ‘like produces like’” (Huet 5).
and philosophers, many of whom were women. Alchemy not only produced communities of women who actively participated in early chemistry and experimental science; it offered strikingly different ideas about gendered bodies than officially sanctioned discourse. Namely, early modern alchemical texts embody the rebis (or double body) as the symbol of perfection, the union and balance of male and female: “one of the fundamental principles of alchemy is that both masculine and feminine elements are necessary for the perfection of any aspect of nature or man; another, that perfection arises out of imperfection and irreconcilable difference, not out of elimination of that imperfection or that difference” (Long, “Odd Bodies” 84).

While alternative views on gender in scientific discourse existed and thrived in early modern France, dominant culture maintained, manifested, and mandated male dominance in its insistence on Aristotelian theories of gender difference. Many physicians actively discredited midwives (and even surgeons) in an effort to take over the realm of women’s reproductive health. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the growing publishing industry introduced learned surgeons and midwives in Paris to medical theory, previously available only to medical students and physicians. While traditionally surgeons and midwives trained through apprenticeships, physicians training

31 Kathleen Long argues, “in the shadow of a university, church and state-based culture run by, for, and primarily about men lived alternative cultures that perceived gender in a range of ways and that created communities of intellectual women sharing ideas with each other as well as with men. What this picture suggests is that other ways of understanding social order and the relations between men and women always already existed, only covered over by the discourse of institutions intent on protecting themselves and the social hierarchies they thrived upon from alternative world views” (Gender 12). See also her “Odd Bodies: Reviewing Corporeal Difference in Early Modern Alchemy,” Meredith K. Ray’s “Experiments with Alchemy: Caterina Sforza in Early Modern Scientific Culture” and Penny Bayer’s “Madame de la Martinville, Quercitan’s Daughter and the Philosopher’s Stone: Manuscript Representations of Women Alchemists.”

at universities gained knowledge of anatomy through books rather than experience; in this way, surgeons and especially midwives knew (female) bodies, intimately – unlike physicians, who grasped stalwartly to hierarchical notions of gender upheld by Aristotelian doctrine. In this way, competing forces vied for domination over the issue of women’s bodies – and while the burgeoning field of women’s health became professionalized as learned physicians actively worked to replace midwives, the professionalization of women’s health produced surgical treatises such as those of Ambroise Paré. With the birth of the publishing industry and the emergence of battling theories of reproduction and bodies, written debates about the nature of gender and power spanned the realms of science, philosophy, literature and law. The transition from feudalism to the early modern state brought about the quarrel of women, *la Querelle des femmes*, in which women’s power, individual rights, and sexual freedom were at stake. Women who participated in this nascent feminism defended women’s power and intellect, questioning misogyny’s sexual differentiation on the basis of power and intellectual incapacity. From literary debates on gender and power to juridical and medical battles delineating gender divisions to the problematic prominence of intersexuality, gender as a determiner of personhood in early modern France could not have been more duplicitous.

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33 Joan Kelly points out that “the women of the *querelle* initiated and carried on a four-century-long tradition of intellectual opposition to misogyny. They showed how learning was used to belittle women and they created a countervailing image of historical female power. The power of woman’s mind they defended with just as much vigor. Letters, as well as arms, formed their twofold ‘defence’ against the misogynist use of culture” ("Querelle" 95).
“Filer ou écrire?”: France’s early modern gender crisis and the *Querelle des femmes*

While Elisabeth Badinter attributes the first crisis in masculinity to the Précieuses in the seventeenth century, recent scholarship has demonstrated that the first gender crisis came about in the fifteenth-century’s birth of the *Querelle des femmes*, which brought about an explosive crisis of masculinity during the sixteenth century. Anxiety over a loss of masculine authority in early modern France produced uncertainty about gender and blurred notions of sexuality, while debates over natural law spawned notions of gender roles by questioning the effects of custom (normalcy) and culture on what was taken to be natural. Indeed, there exists only a blurred distinction between nature and culture in much early modern thought. Montaigne openly criticizes his society’s conflation of culture (or custom) and nature: “Nous appelons contre nature ce qui advient contre la coutume ; rien n’est que selon elle, quel qu’il soit. Que cette raison universelle et naturelle chasse de nous l’erreur et l’estonnement que la nouvelleté nous apporte” (II.30.374). Renaissance thought personified Nature in the goddess of *Natura*, protectress of heterosexual procreative sex. This goddess’s intention is to ensure sexual congress between man and woman so that the human race continues; she is in fact so imbued with reproductive sexuality that sexual “reproductive” organs are referred to as a person’s

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34 "Ce sont les Précieuses françaises qui furent à l’origine de la première remise en question du rôle des hommes et de l’identité masculine …. Elle est la première expression du féminisme en France" (Badinter 24-25).

35 See Long, *High Anxiety: Masculinity in Crisis in Early Modern France*.

36 See Boswell, *Christianity, social tolerance and homosexuality* and Daston and Park, “The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature.”
“nature.” In early modern thought Nature’s laws follow custom (what most often or usually happens) as well as intention (what should happen). In this way, according to Renaissance laws of nature, heterosexual relations most often happen, and nature intends for them to happen because the human species must propagate. Non-procreative sex—that is, everything from masturbation to oral and anal sex—is contrary to the laws of nature and in violation of the reproductive imperative that existed in early modern France. Nature’s laws were not inviolable in early modern thought, as is evident by the omnipresence of intersexed bodies in writing of the time. Indeed, gender ambiguity in the form of the hermaphrodite or androgyne is a powerful symbol in philosophical, medical, juridical, and alchemic works. Male anxieties about blurred gender distinctions threatening early modern France’s gender-based hierarchies led ironically and yet naturally to a call for the reestablishment of natural law—the clearest manifestation of this early modern gender crisis. Kathleen Long notes the paradox that the crisis of gender reveals, for “the call for a return to clearly defined gender roles stands also as an admission that those roles can be created and recreated” (Hermaphrodites 24).

France’s early modern gender crisis and the Querelle des femmes are intimately linked, both causally and discursively. While centuries of misogynistic discourse demonstrate that masculinity is perpetually in crisis—constantly discursively establishing

37 For example, in Paré’s Des monstres et prodiges, a double-sexed woman is labeled: “figure d’un Monstre ayant ... deux natures de femme” (18). The Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis gives the first definition on “natura” in medieval Latin as “pars corporis, qua quis aut vir est, aut femina” (575). The Lexique Roman: ou Dictionnaire de la Langue des Troubadours gives “partie sexuelle” and the Dictionnaire Historique de l’Ancien Langue François as “parties naturelles, acte charnel” (303). In Latin natura directly translates the Green noun phusis, from the verb phuo (to beget, bring forth, grow, plant). Phuo itself is closely related to the verb phuteo, which in Latin becomes futuo and in French foutre. In this way normalcy and the carnal act itself are linguistically and culturally associated with reproductive (and thus at the time normative heterosexual) sex.

38 See Long’s Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe.
and defending phallocentric order – the *Querelle*’s early feminism in response to such misogyny ignited acute male anxiety about the nature of gender and power. The question of Renaissance woman – that is, her nature and social role - was a commonplace in certain discourses (philosophical, medical, theological, poetic) for centuries. Women “had long been the focus, both negative and positive, of masculine writing. Praised as noble and pure or reviled as evil and corrupt, their respective virtues or vices form the topoi of countless medieval works” (Gray 6). A large part of medieval antifeminism that early modern France inherited treats women’s inconstancy and uncontrollable sexuality within the marital relationship; in fact, the *Querelle des amys*, in which marriage is debated, was for the most part a theological (or rather monastic) effort to reinforce the ideal of chastity (especially in men) by defaming marriage. David LaGuardia delineates the civil and ecclesiastic legal codes defining marriage in medieval and early modern France, which limited sexual activity to celibacy in the case of the clergy and, within the institution of marriage, intercourse only with one’s spouse.\(^{39}\) Within the masculinist literature that treats the question of marriage interweave discourses of misogyny and misogamy; and this antimatrimonial literature represents husbands as the perpetual victims of their wives’ adultery. Indeed, LaGuardia understands the cuckold figure so prominent in this literature as “an embodiment of a particular type of historically-contingent masculinity that is an essential element of late medieval and Renaissance

\(^{39}\) LaGuardia cites specifically *Lamentatione Matheoluli, Disciplina clericalis* and Justinian’s *Digest*. He argues that “throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, sexual activity was proscribed and prescribed in at least two ways: the major social institutions of marriage and the religious orders called either for celibacy, or for the limitation of intercourse to one socially-sanctioned partner, whose status and being were predicated on this exclusivity. This regulation of sex produced gender difference as a series of social practices and institutions that had both positive and negative effects” (2). See his chapter, “Masculinity as an Intertextual Context in Legal, Pastoral and Clerical Documents of the Late Middle Ages” p.15-56.
culture” and suggests that “Renaissance masculinity itself is a series of texts and discourses about women, both serious and comic, that were indelibly inscribed in men’s minds, or whose repeated inscription constituted masculine consciousness as such” (2, 151).

One such masculinist work is indubitably the *Roman de la Rose*. Begun by Guillaume de Lorris in the 1230s and completed by Jean de Meun in the 1270s, the *Roman de la Rose* was an enormously popular allegorical work that portrayed woman as deceitful, faithless and disobedient, derived from Eve. When Christine de Pisan’s series of letters refuting the misogynistic elements of Meun’s addition were made public, men responded either by defaming women or defending Pisan – and the *Querelle de la Rose* developed into the *Querelle des femmes*. With Pisan’s explosively feminist outcry (Christine’s series of letters begin in 1399, followed by *La Cité des dames* in 1404) the *Querelle des femmes* became a debate between both women and men; it manifested a veritable crisis of gender whose misogynistic roots date back centuries. As Kelly points out, “Christine’s opposition to misogyny gave rise to the four-century-long debate on women concerning their evil and their excellence; their equality, superiority, and inferiority to men; and, simply, their defense” (“Querelle” 71).

In early modern France the education of women aimed to cultivate deference, silence and sexual morality; it most commonly centered upon domestic skills, notably

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40 LaGuardia argues that “masculinity as a dominant ideology has a material existence as the intertextual practice of telling stories, expressing opinions and transcribing examples concerning adultery, cuckoldry, and ‘women’s wiles,’ which men are called upon to share with one another” (8-9).

41 Long argues that “since the dawn of the querelle des femmes femininity has been embattled in France …. In sixteenth century France and elsewhere, woman is defined most frequently in relation to man; thus, any crisis in the definition of the feminine would suggest a concomitant questioning of the masculine …. The evolution of an early modern crisis in masculinity can be traced from a profound questioning of gender roles that is delineated in the work of numerous women authors of the early sixteenth century” (*Anxiety* xi).
spinning.\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, the image of the \textit{quenouille} is frequently employed by women in the \textit{Querelle} as the unsavory foil to women’s literary cultivation and production, embodied in the \textit{lyre}.\textsuperscript{43} Those fortunate few women whose education involved reading were most often taught only the vernacular; indeed, those literate women with a humanistic education (such as Marie de Gournay and Hélisenne de Crenne) who pursue the study of Latin gained a literary knowledge and competency equal to that of men.\textsuperscript{44} The disparity between education for women and men is manifest in Crenne’s female audience sometimes being unable to understand her Latinate style.\textsuperscript{45} Further, women in early modern France are defined by their mental incapacities\textsuperscript{46}; and countless male writers either defame women’s incapacities or defend their higher education during the \textit{Querelle}.

Most often male writing in defense of women’s literacy is ambiguous and qualified; and we see this phenomenon exemplified in Montaigne’s rather typical Humanist insistence that women lack \textit{suffisance} but may benefit from some formal education if they insist upon it. Within his passage qualifying the education of women, however, is an unusual and even protofeminist argument against the control of women’s

\textsuperscript{42} Margaret King’s chapter “Virgo and Virago: Women and High Culture” is an excellent overview of women’s education and literate women of the Renaissance.

\textsuperscript{43} Gisèle Matieu-Castellani argues, “A la Renaissance, la problématique de l’écriture féminine s’articule autour d’un dilemme, filler ou écrire, qui résume l’alternative \textit{la quenouille ou la lyre} ; ces emblèmes du ménage et de l’activité littéraire, purs produits d’une figure de synecdoque, fixent un réseau d’oppositions paradigmaticques entre le féminin et le masculin, que chaque sexe ne saurait bouleverser sans perdre son identité” (198).

\textsuperscript{44} See Evelyne Beriot-Salvadore, “La femme sc savante.”

\textsuperscript{45} See Diane Wood’s introduction to \textit{Hélisenne de Crenne: At the Crossroads of Renaissance Humanism and Feminism}.

\textsuperscript{46} See Beriot-Salvadore, “La femme incapable.”
education by masculinist forces that wish merely to dominate women by controlling their access to knowledge:

Il ne faut qu’esveiller un peu et rechauffer les facultez qui sont en elles. Quand je les voy attachées à la rhetorique, à la judiciaire, à la logique, et semblables drogueries si vaines et inutiles à leur besoing, j’entre en crainte que les hommes qui le leur conseillent, le facent pour avoir loy de les regenter sous ce tiltre . . . Si toutesfois il leur fache de nous ceder en quoy que ce soit, et veulent par curiosité avoir part aux livres, la poësie est un amusement propre à leur besoin: c’est un art follastre et subtil, déguiser, parler, tout en plaisir, tout en montre, comme elles. (III.3.822-3 my emphasis ERC)

As it is characteristic of Montaigne’s ambiguous views of his society and culture, this passage illustrates the complexity and contradiction within the question of women’s intellect and instruction; for while he states that women’s education should be limited, he more tellingly critiques his learned contemporaries who manipulate and control women through miseducation. In fact, Montaigne emerges through the Essais as being quite aware of the injustices his society imposes upon women: “les femmes n’ont pas tort du tout quand elles refusent les regles de vie qui sont introduites au monde, d’autant que ce sont les hommes qui les ont faictes sans elles” (III.5.854). Further, Montaigne qualifies his rather pedantic statement that poetry is an appropriate subject for women by assuring his readers of his own inexplicable draw to its seductive power – for poetry “ne pratique point nostre jugement ; elle le ravit et ravage. La fureur qui espoinçonne celuy qui la scait penetrer . . . Dès ma premiere enfance, la poësie a eu cela, de me transpercer et transporter” (I.37.283-4).

Marie de Gournay’s attempt to dialogue with Montaigne concerning the education of women exemplifies the Querelle as women’s response to and repudiation of such misogynistic writing. Her defense of women is replete with her corrections of
Montaigne’s misogyny, arguing that women’s seeming incapacities are the effect of cultural restraints on women. In her *Egalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622) Gournay alludes to Montaigne’s defense of animals’ intellectual capacity (“il se trouve plus de difference de tel homme à tel homme que de tel animal à tel homme”), applying his argument to the question of women’s intellectual capacity:

*Se trouve t’il plus de difference des hommes à elles que d’elles à elles-mesmes,* selon l’institution qu’elles ont prins, selon qu’elles sont eslevées en ville ou village, ou selon les nations? Et pourquoi leur institution ou nourriture aux affaires et lettres, à l’égal des hommes, ne rempliroit elle ce vuide qui paroist ordinairement entre les testes des mesmes hommes et les leurs . . .? (44 my emphasis ERC)

This first question, a chiastic version of Montaigne’s defense of animal intellect, pointedly questions the role of education and culture on an individual’s development, intellect and general nature. Gournay’s use of chiasmus, as chapters five and six explore, is a powerful tool of appropriation that turned masculinist logic on its head. The defiant tone of Gournay’s second question coupled with her use of the conditional implicates men who do not dare suppose to question the seeming intellectual disparity between the sexes – thereby denying this disparity and all the gendered hierarchy on which it is based. She argues that it is not women’s nature but rather their education that leads to their intellectual insufficiencies, problematizing early modern notions of natural sex distinction. Gournay argues the difference between nature and culture/custom that was vehemently denied in masculinist writing, a distinction that Montaigne underlines himself. Further, even Humanist pedagogy limited women, for the corpus of literature to

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47 “Mais cet animal raporte en tant d’autres effects à l’humaine suffisance que, si je vouloy suivre par le menu ce que l’experience en a apris, je gaignerois asseéemment ce que je maintiens ordinairement, qu’il se trouve plus de difference de tel homme à tel homme que de tel animal à tel homme” (II.12.466 my emphasis ERC).
which they were exposed was written by and established by men; and most of it defamed
women. We see this problematic in the proto-feminist writings by women in the
Querelle; for not only do they base their arguments for gender parity as counter
arguments to misogynistic discourse, their exemplary women are developed by male
writers.\footnote{While Constant Venesoen attempts to discredit Gournay’s feminism by arguing that she neglects to
employ female writers and chooses rather to cite and make reference to male writers, I disavow such a
claim in chapters five and six. See his introduction to Gournay’s Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne.}

Early modern discourse disparaging women’s intellectual capacities often also
linked female unbridled sexuality to their literacy and education. For many men (for
example, critics of Hélisenne’s frank representation of sexuality) fear that reading may
incite women’s dangerous libidos. The education of women is indubitably engrained in
male attempts to control early modern “daughters of Eve,” who inherit sexual stigma and
submission to men, especially their husbands. LaGuardia signals, “the multifaceted
display of masculine ‘sexuality’ was inscribed upon the bodies of women divided into
legal categories (virgin, wife, concubine, widow), hence masculinity displayed itself
either as this marking and penetration of women’s bodies, or as their confinement
through surveillance and the study of ‘women’s tricks’” (228). The Renaissance woman
was irrevocably bound to the sexual sins of Eve; thus her social role is to serve her
husband, her master, as punishment for her concupiscent duplicity that brought about the
fall of man.\footnote{King notes that “the sin of Eve was bound up in [the Renaissance woman’s] very nature. By nature
sexual (where man was rational), upon her especially lay the sin of sexual intercourse, rendered sinful by
the fall. . . . She alone, it was decreed, would forever both serve and love another: her husband and her
master. Every woman was to be a daughter of Eve (20).} The portrayal of women as Eve in the Roman de la Rose is one that proto-
feminist participants in the Querelle constantly combat, for the specter of unbridled
female sexuality forms much of the logic of gendered hierarchy and sexual constraints on women in early modern France. Indeed, Margaret King attests that Renaissance women’s lives “unfolded according to the rhythm of sexual life – premarital, marital, postmarital. . . Women, with very few exceptions, were categorized in terms of their relations to the female ideal of virginity and nightmare of sexuality” (23).

“Forcenées courir l’aiguillette”: Female sexuality, mother of monstrous chaos

The question of female sexuality was a commonplace in early modern French discourses for important social reasons – for female sexuality defined women’s essential nature and established her social role. Early modern theories of female sexuality, inherited from medieval monastic misogynist literature, paint unbridled female sexuality as nightmarish and monstrous, and the uterus as a ravishingly greedy animal whose hunger for sex could never be satisfied. In Le Tiers Livre (1546) Rabelais’s Doctor Rondibilis reproduces this common personification of female sexual nature:

Quand je diz femme, je diz un sexe tant fragil, tant variable, tant muable, tant inconstant et imperfaict, que Nature me semble . . . s’estre esguarée de ce bon sens par lequel elle avait créé et formé toutes choses, quand elle a basty la femme . . . . Certes Platon ne sçay en quel rang il les doibve coloquer : ou des animaux raisonables, ou des bestes brutes. Car Nature leurs a dedans le corps posé en lieu secret et intestin un animal, un membre, lequel n’est es hommes, où quelques foys sont engendrées certaines humeurs sales, nitreuses, bauracineuses, acres, mordicantes, lancinantes, chatouillantes amerement ; par la poincture et fretillement douloureux des quelles (car ce membre est tout nerveux et de vif

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Rabelais’s text offers a contextualized condensation of medical discourse on women in sixteenth century France, for he intends for Rondibilis to reproduce medical thought about the dangers of female sexuality. Just as much masculinist discourse centers questions of sexuality within the framework of marriage, the *Tiers Livre* is in many ways a search for masculinity within the institution of marriage – for Panurge spends the entirety of the work asking friends and authoritative figures alike whether he should marry.

Like many early modern men, especially learned writers, Rondibilis reproduces images of women as frail, inconstant, and imperfect compared to men; likewise, he rewrites and parodies ancient and contemporary authorities such as Plato, Galen, Hippocrates, Tiraqueau, and Erasmus.  

While this parody is not definitive proof of Rabelais’s misogyny, his rewriting specifically anti-feminine literature intensifies their misogynistic bias. Rabelais also reinforces a gross misrepresentation of female sexuality on the part of early modern medical discourse – this image of the uterus as an avid animal that moves around women’s bodies and ultimately overpowers their frail bodies with its force. In Plato and Galen the uterus is described as an animal, in the sense of being a living organ, not being a free-moving being within women’s bodies over

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50 See LaGuardia’s discussion of the Rondibilis episode pp. 153-60.

51 LaGuardia signals, “it is no accident that the third of Rabelais’s books is squarely focused on misogynist themes that can serve as the basis of rhetorical exercises: on the contrary, woman as a ‘topic’ of discourse within which men performed their gender assumed one of its most forceful and canonical expressions in this work” (159).
which they had no control. Like Aristotelian views on sexual hierarchy, this invention on
the part of misogynistic forces is in fact a conscious perpetuation, a means of justifying
gendered hierarchy in sixteenth century France. The uterus was a powerful tool for
masculinist forces, for it justified the sexual domination of women through their biology;
women are “born this way” and at the same time engender other beings with this avid
animal organ.

This misrepresentation of the uterus as a greedy sexual animal that overpowers
women is indicative of early modern constructions of gendered behavior and gender
roles, not to mention the ever-present conflation between nature and culture. Rondibilis
argues that because of their insatiable lust, woman would be running around copulating
with everyone if Nature had not imbued her with shame: “si Nature ne leur eust arrousé le
front d’un peu de honte, vous les voiriez comme forcenées courir l’aiguillette” (Rabelais
401). It is rather masculinist constraints on female sexuality and an imposition of chastity
upon women that causes her supposed shame and keeps her from sexual freedom.

Indeed, the power of female sexuality, allegedly stronger than women’s frail
bodies and reason, acutely threatened phallic order in early modern France. Female
sexuality is nothing if not disruptive and disturbing; most significantly, female pleasure is
seen as tainted and deforming. For example, common belief in early modern France held
that the hermaphrodite is formed because of copulation at a wrong or inappropriate time
(during the mother’s period, for example), copulation with the woman on top, or

52 Tim Reiss argues that “ancient debate about male and female difference was tilted by medieval to
modern western practitioners for ideological aim and to justify medical subjection of women. The
ostensibly typical wandering womb was not in Aetios, any more than it had been in Rufus, Galen or
Soranus, to name a few figures vital to the tradition. The uterus was a live part of a live body, in or out of
balance with the whole, like all organs, members and humors” (190).
copulation that produced too much female pleasure. In this way, hermaphrodites are “born this way” as punishment for unbridled female sexuality and supposed sexual promiscuity. The traces of female shame and sin mark the monster; there is a reason these aberrant creatures are “born this way.” As Marie-Hélène Huet articulates, monstrous progeny such as hermaphrodites and girls born covered with fur are interpreted as the chaotic consequence of female pleasure and the frightening force of women’s imagination. There exists consequently a rigid attempt to control female sexuality by emphasizing its monstrous dangers. The threat that women will birth monstrous progeny is linked to the disruptive power of the imagination, which is so strong as to overpower the fragility of female bodies. Indeed, there existed intense male fears concerning the question of paternity in early modern France, for it could never be fully proven, only assumed based on resemblance – unlike maternity, which could not be more easily proved. Indeed, Huet suggests the disruptive force of monstrous progeny is its erasure of paternal resemblance.

Thus, in early modern France, the construction of women’s gender, which tied women’s social roles and proprieties of self-comportment to their essentially sexual nature, is established as a social reality through masculine fears about disorderly female sexuality. In an attempt to dominate and to control the specter of female sexuality, early

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53 Montaigne treats the hairy virgin as an example of the transformative power of imagination in “De la force de l’imagination (I.21).

54 Huet signals that “what made monstrosity monstrous was that it served as a public reminder that, short of relying on visible resemblance, paternity could never be proven: that if nothing were more undeniable than maternity, paternity could never be verifiable or physically ascertained. . . . But if resemblance creates a visible connection between father and child, it also conceals the questionable nature of all paternities . . . thus a fundamental, primordial disorder. And what resemblance conceals, the monster unmasks” (34).
modern phallic order established female chastity as the female ideal.\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, women suffered new constraints that made chastity normative and imperative in order to solidify male domination over woman as family and political life were restructured in the transition from medieval feudal society to the early modern state.\textsuperscript{56} Taking women’s essential nature to be bodily and sexually chaotic, normative gender roles required women’s passive social behavior. The Renaissance of chastity, to use Kelly’s parlance, underlines the role of female sexuality in the establishment of her social role, all the while ensuring male domination through control of female bodies. Sylvie Steinberg makes a telling argument for the whole of social order in the \textit{Ancien Régime} being inscribed in the body – and for female bodies, sexual modesty is a forced inscription:

\begin{quote}
Toutes les notations sur la manière dont les femmes se dissimulent concourent à souligner la place essentielle tenue par la pudeur sous l’Ancien Régime. . . . Mais la pudeur des femmes n’est pas seulement la vergogne, la honte, qui les empêche de regarder et de toucher, elle est aussi une manière de rester à leur place, de ne pas regarder vers le haut. Dans la société profondément hiérarchisée de l’Ancien Régime, elle ne correspond pas seulement à une logique sexuée. \textit{C’est tout l’ordre social qui s’inscrit dans le corps}, jusque dans son intimité la plus secrète, avec un entêtement discret. (155-56 my emphasis ERC)
\end{quote}

The construction of female gender normalcy is based upon this disturbing and powerful, yet strange and unknowable, female sexuality; and while woman’s sexuality informs and defines her gender, it is the control of female sexuality that is the goal of male constructions of gender normalcy. Dominant masculinity is likewise established by male attempts to dominate women – that is, it constructs itself through female nature or

\textsuperscript{55} Further, David LaGuardia argues, “because marriage was identified by the \textit{Digest} of Justinian with a \textit{domus} and a domicile, and by the necessity that a married woman remain faithful within it, masculinity was defined as the necessary surveillance of that space and of women’s bodies” (228).

\textsuperscript{56} Joan Kelly suggests, “the sources that represent the interests of the nobility and the bourgeoisie point to [these constraints] by a telling double index. Almost all such works … establish chastity as the female norm and restructure the relation of the sexes to one of female dependency and male domination” (“\textit{Renaissance}” 21).
“Par ce qu’elles en peuvent abuser” : Intersexuality and sex determination

Early modern pseudo-scientific texts about intersexuality and hermaphroditism offered theories of sex determination and sex roles that imply a reproductive imperative and expressed cultural anxiety about bodies that do not fit easily within sexual binaries. Because sex, reproduction, and gender roles are so intricately bound in early modern thought, physicians and notably the royal surgeon Ambroise Paré give their readers causal links between anatomy and sexuality, not to mention reassurances that male domination cannot be shaken by monstrous anomalies. Paré used his knowledge of
biological aberrations to soothe male readers that while some female bodies transform to male during adolescence, the perfection of male bodies remains intact by their biological superiority. Men are “born this way,” and this way (male) they will remain. His Des monstres et prodiges (1573) manifests the tension between Aristotelian and Hippocratic doctrine in early modern France, for the surgeon oscillates between one-sex and dual-sex models. Paré argues in “Histoires memorables de certaines femmes qui sont degenerées en hommes” that the reason some women can become men is that while women have the same organs as men inside them, their bodies are too cold and wet for their sex organs to be pushed out, thus elaborating the Aristotelian one-sex model. However, he explains further that in some cases (as in the case of Marie Germain), adolescence warms and dries girls’ previously incomplete bodies (by nature cold and wet), allowing their virile members to emerge:

La raison pourquoy les femmes se peuvent degenerer en hommes, c’est que les femmes ont autant de caché dedans le corps que les hommes descouvrent dehors, reste seulement qu’elles n’ont pas tant de chaleur ny suffisance pour pousser dehors ce que par la froidure de leur temperature est tenu comme lié au-dedans. Parquoy, si, avec le temps l’humidité de l’enfance qui empeschoit la chaleur de faire son plein devoir estant pour la plus part exhalee, la chaleur est rendue plus robuste, acre et active, ce n’est chose incredible qu’icelle, principalement aidee de quelque mouvement violent, ne puisse pousser dehors ce qui estoit caché dedans. (Paré 30)

Paré exemplifies early modern male anxiety about sex fluctuation and identity instabilities by assuring his male readers that men cannot become women because (once again following Aristotelian doctrine) nature does not allow what is perfect to become imperfect: "nous ne trouvons jamais en histoire veritable que d’homme aucun soit devenu femme, pour-ce que Nature tend tousjours à ce qui est le plus parfaiict, et non au contraire faire que ce qui est parfaiict devienne imparfaiict" (30). He significantly denies the
Aristotelian belief that women contribute only matter to reproduction while men provide the essential form (the life force in the vessel of sperm) by citing the cause of hermaphroditism as woman’s equal contribution of “seed” to reproduction. This is not to say that Paré’s attitude towards women’s equal contribution to reproduction is positive or empowering, for the hermaphrodite’s status (though within the realms of the natural) remains monstrous and socially problematic. The hermaphrodite’s identity is unfixed; it can easily present itself as either gender, “abusing” its gender-bending capacities. In fact, Paré’s text addresses the cultural imperative to impose a single “sexe” upon the frighteningly ambiguous specter of “hermafrodites masles et femelles” since antiquity:

[Translated text]

These perfect hermaphrodites, “ceux qui ont les deux sexes bien formez et s’en peuvent aider et servir à la génération,” are the most intriguing and disturbing in early modern France because both sets of their sex organs are functional. Indeed, it is telling that the capacity to reproduce as both sexes is imperative to a hermaphrodite’s being labeled both male and female, for the logic of the reproductive imperative in early modern France requires reproductive capacity as a determinant of sex. Again, the biological imperative of early modern France is at work in trials and tests that determine a hermaphrodite’s

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57 “[Q]uant à la cause, c’est que la femme fournit autant de semence que l’homme proportionnement, et pour-ce la vertu formatrice, qui tousjours tasche à faire son semblable, à scavoir de la matiere masculine un masle, et de la feminime une femelle, fait qu’en un mesme cors est trouvé quelquefois deux sexes, nommez Hermafrodites (Paré 24)."
status within the social order. Hermaphrodites who can impregnate women are male; those who can give birth after sexual intercourse with men are female; birth and reproduction thus solidify the ambiguity of bodies “born this way” – simultaneously male and female. However, this distinction is problematized by the double body of the perfect hermaphrodite. Unlike the other three types Paré names, the true hermaphrodite has the ability to be and to seem fully both male and female (24). Indeed, the figure of the “perfect” hermaphrodite ignited intense fear in early modern French society. Most frightening is the unfixed nature of the perfect hermaphrodite’s identity – for s/he moves between female and male identities and thus has the potential for deception, not to mention an instable, unfixed identity.

No third sex could possibly be admissible in this sexually bifurcated system that attributed sexual difference to reproductive capacities and depended upon male superiority and control over women. The logic of this reproductive imperative requires two distinct sexes whose contribution to reproduction is what distinguishes them. For this reason, many writers doubted that such dual-sexed bodies truly existed. Thus, ambiguously sexed and intersexed people were forced into either one sexual category or the other. Paré’s text is one example of this classification system, for he distinguishes between four different types of hermaphrodites. There are male hermaphrodites who have perfectly formed male sexual organs with which they can procreate in addition to a shallow vaginal hole from which neither menses nor urine flow. In order to be classified as male, these intersexed beings must “engendrer” and must not have female reproductive

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58 “[H]ermafrodite masle, qui est celuy qui a le sexe de l’homme parfait et qui peut engendrer et a au perinaeum qui est le lieu entre le scrotum et le siege) un trou en forme de vulve, toutes fois non penetrant au dedans du corps, et d’iceluy ne sort urine ne semence” (Paré 24).
capacity embodied by menstruation (24). Female hermaphrodites have a fully formed vulva from which flow her seed and menses as well as an unformed penis, and no trace of a scrotum or testicles.\(^59\) The most explicit designation of reproductive capacity as sex determiner is in Paré’s categorization of hermaphrodites that are neither male nor female because they are exempt from all reproduction.\(^60\) Paré notes that doctors must closely examine the male member, and must discern from the hermaphrodite’s confession that he can ejaculate.\(^61\) Further, the last category of perfect hermaphrodites most directly poses the issue of sex distinction, and Paré immediately underlines genitalia as determining factors, especially female genitalia that are well-formed enough to be penetrated by a penis.\(^62\) In this case, however, we are presented with certain bodily signs of maleness and femaleness other than genitalia, such as voice, breast formation, body hair\(^63\) and even bodily comportment: “si la parole est virile ou gresle; si les tetins sont semblables à ceux des hommes ou des femmes ; semblablement si toute l’habitude du corps est robuste ou effeminee, s’ils sont hardis ou craintifs” (25-26). Notably, even these bodily determiners of sexual difference are ambiguous and ambiguously presented in Paré’s work. It is

\(^59\) “La femme hermafrodite, outre sa vulve qui est bien composee, par laquelle jette la semence et ses mois, a un membre viril, situe au dessus de ladite vulve pres le penil, sans prepuce, mais une peau delice, laquelle ne se peut renverser ne retourner, et sans aucune erection, et d’iciluy ne sort urine ny semence, et ne s’y trouve vestige de scrotum ne testicules” (Paré 24).

\(^60\) “Les hermafrodites qui ne sont ne l’un ne l’autre sont ceux qui sont du tout forclos et exempts de generation, et leurs sexes du tout imparfaits … et n’en peuvent servir que pour jeter l’urine” (24).

\(^61\) “Semblablement faut bien examiner si la verge virile est bien proportionnee en grosseur et longueur et si elle se dresse et d’icelle sort semence, qui se fera par la confession de l’hermafrodite, lors qu’il aura eu la compagnie de femme” (26).

\(^62\) “[T]elle chose se cognoistra aux parties genitales, à sçavoir si le sexe feminine est propre en ses dimensions pour recevoir la verge virile et si par iceluy fluent les menstrues” (24).

\(^63\) “[P]areillement par le visage, et si les cheveux son deliez ou gros …. Et, quant aux parties genitales qui appartiennent à l’homme, faut examiner et voir si s’il y a grande quantité de poil au penil et autour du siege, car communement et quasi tousjours les femmes n’en ont point au siege” (25-26).
indeed the ambiguity of intersexed bodies that manifests the plurality of bodies that exist in this world; as we see, ambiguous bodies in early modern France elicit violent reactions and monstrous categorizations.

Kathleen Long characterizes medical treatises as “theories of hermaphrodism . . . thus reflect[ing] early modern thought concerning gender . . . Social status and behavior and biological sex distinctions are not seen as divergent by most early modern authors” (Hermaphrodites 3). Because of the cultural imperative to binarize sex and reproductive / sex roles, such works also treat the threat of non-procreative sexual acts that ambiguously sexed people may have. In the case of masculine women, their ambiguously sexed bodies incline them towards sex role reversal and a reversal in sexual object choice. These virile women, like effeminate men discussed in chapters three and four, are categorized as threatening personages to the masculinist hierarchy of early modern France. For example, in his medical text on female anatomy and childbirth, Caspar Bauhin’s treatment of female hermaphrodites suggests a direct if not causal relation between the body and an individual’s sexual practices or identities, for he equates the active, enlarged clitoris of the female hermaphrodite with women who enjoy penetrating other women. In a strange concurrence with modern political and social discourse adopted by many (though significantly not all) LGBTQI people, Bauhin argues that sexual acts are the result of biology; sex and biology are linked because these aberrant bodies are “born this way.” Bauhin conflates biological gender with its social expression of sexual behavior; according to him, both male and female sex organs in a single body determine and signify that this person is bisexual, that the person “wickedly” takes both active and passive

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64 Plantarum circiter sex millium ab ipsis exhibitarum nomina cum earundem synonymiis & differentijs methodice secundum genera & species proponens (1671).
roles. He associates the hermaphrodite with sexual acts between women, describing female hermaphrodites as *tribades*.\(^{65}\)

Further, the association of ambiguous female genitalia with female-female sexual acts and the categorization of early modern tribades appears in the 1573 and 1575 editions of Ambroise Paré’s *Des monstres et prodiges*. Paré ends his discussion of hermaphrodites, “Des hermafrodites ou androgynes, c’est à dire, qui en un mesme corps ont deux sexes” and segues into his “Histoires memorables de certaines femmes qui sont degenerées en hommes” with an explicit description of female sexual anatomy and a discussion of women whose ambiguous genitalia inclines them to have sex with other women. No detailed description of male genitalia appears in Paré’s work, save his portrait of female hermaphrodites’ differently formed virile members. This description, a series of negations and lacks, presents male anatomy in terms of female masculinity. Paré gives an even more detailed description of female anatomy in the context of female masculinity as well, though it is far more monstrous because of its sexual implications. He begins by describing the clitoris, clitoral hood and labia minora as one single organ.\(^{66}\)

Strikingly more explicit than his description of male reproductive anatomy above, here Paré seems to view the clitoris in most women as simply a urinary vessel. He continues

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\(^{65}\) This term, from the ancient Greek, most often signifies “a phallic woman, a hypermasculine or butch woman, and /or a woman who sought sexual pleasure by rubbing her genitals against those of other women” (Halperin, “The First Homosexuality?” 51). Halberstam underlines that “tribade” means a woman who rubs, and “it refers to the pleasurable friction of rubbing a clitoris on another person’s thigh, pubic bone, hip, buttocks, or any other fleshy surface,” and was sometimes suspected of having a large, hermaphroditic, clitoris (59). See Halberstam’s chapter, “Perverse Presentism: The Androgyne, the Tribade, the Female Husband, and Other Pre-Twentieth-Century Genders” as well as Valerie Traub, “The Psychomorphology of the Clitoris.”

\(^{66}\) “D’abondant au commencement du col de la matrice est l’entrée et fente de la nature de la femme, que les Latins appellent Pecten : Et les bords qui sont revetus de poil, en Grec se nomment Pterigomata, comme si nous disions ailes, ou lebres du couronnement de la femme, et entre icelles sont deux excroissances de chair musculeuse une de chascun costé, qui couvrent l’issue de conduit de l’urine, et se serrent après que la femme a pissé” (Paré 26).
by recounting that this organ in some women is elongated and enlarged, giving a vivid
description of protruding genitalia that can miraculously become erect like a virile
member when these women are aroused. Indeed, while these women are initially aroused
by their husbands, their erect sex leads them also to pleasure themselves with other
women. 67 This enlarged, erect clitoris that the Greeks call *nimphes* according to Paré and
his sources belong to certain women who are not classified as hermaphrodites (because
this mysterious organ is not seen as an inchoate virile member but rather a monstrous
female organ that can sometimes resemble a penis); these women are rather classified as
*fricatrices* due to their sexual inclinations. Like hermaphrodites, however, women who
have ambiguous genitalia (and because of virile sexual impulses have sexual contact with
women) are nonetheless a frightening specter for early modern men; thus we see violent
male reaction to these women’s monstrous anatomy in the form of female genital
mutilation. Paré, though he calls it “chose fort monstrueuse qui se faict aux nimphes
d’aucunes femmes,” 68 justifies this violence as a preclusion of female-female sexual acts.
Their ambiguous bodies are shameful and deformed, and the threat of women “abusing”
their virile sexual organs for pleasure with other women elicits one of the most violent
acts that can be done to women. Paré’s commentary manifests the belief that female
bodies “born this way” are not allowed and absolutely not to be tolerated; female
circumcision was a violent means of maintaining early modern biological reproductive

67 “Les Grecs les appellent *nimphes*, qui pendent et sortent à aucunes femmes hors le col de leur matrice, et
s’allongent et acourcissent, comme faict la creste d’un coq d’Inde, principalement lors qu’elles desirment le
coit, et que leurs maris les veulent aprocher, se dressent comme la verge virile, tellement qu’elles s’en
joïent avec les autres femmes” (Paré 26).

68 “Aussy les rendent fort honteusses et difformes estans veües nues, et à telles femmes on leur doibt lier, et
couper ce qui est superflu, par ce qu’elles en peuvent abuser, se donnant le Chirurgien garde de n’inciser
trop profondément, de peur d’un grand flux de sang, ou de coupper le col de la vessie, car puis après ne
pourroient tenir leur urine, mais decouleroit goutte à goutte” (26).
imperative by destroying body parts that made non-procreative sexuality possible. In the second edition of Paré’s work, after warning surgeons not to make too deep an incision and noting in the margin that this circumcision is a monstrous act, he elaborates that *frottage* itself is a monstrous act and difficult to believe: “Or qu’il y ait des femmes qui par le moyen de ces caruncules ou nymphaes, abusent les unes des autres, c’est chose aussi vraye comme monstrueuse et difficile à croire” (27). He proves the veracity of these female acts with an anecdote about lesbian witches in Fez.69 These women, pretending to be overtaken with demons or spirits after covering themselves with essential oils, speak in the voice of demons and are revered as “divineresses”; however, they are also called “Sahacat” or “Fricatrices” (27).

Even more threatening to phallic hegemony is that these women demand sexual payment from beautiful women who come to consult them; and some of these beautiful women, finding immense pleasure in such acts, feign sickness in order to continue consulting these women-loving women. Paré notes that some husbands discover this

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69 “[C]onfirmée toutefois par un narré memorable tiré de l’Histoire d’Afrique, composee par Leon L’Africain. Entre les devineurs qui sont à Fez ville principale de Mauritanie en Afrique, il y a certaines femmes (dit-il livre 3.) qui faisans entendre au people qu’elles ont familiarité aux Demons, se parfument avec quelques odeurs, feignants l’esprit leur entrer au corps, et par le changement de leur voix donnent à entendre que ce soit lesprit qui parle par leur gorge: lors on leur laisse en grande reverence un don pour le demon. Les doctes Africains appellent telles femmes *Sahacat*, qui vaut en Latin *Fricatrices*, par ce qu’elles se frottent l’une l’autre par plaisir, et veritablement elles sont atteintes de ce meschant vice d’user charnellement les unes avec les autres. Parquo si quelque femme belle les va interroguer, pour payement au nom de lesprit, luy demandent les copulations charnelles. Or il s’en trouve quelques unes, qui ayans pris goust à ce jeu, allechees par le doux plaisir qu’elles en reçoivent, feignent estre malades, et envoyent querir ces divineresses et le plus souvent font faire ce message par leur mary mesme: mais pour mieux couvrir leur meschanceté font accroire au mary qu’un esprit est entré dedans le corps de leur femme: la santé de laquelle ayant en recommandation, il faut qu’il luy donne congé de se pouvoir mettre au rang des divineresses: parquo le bon Jean y consentant, prepare un somptueux festin à toute ceste venerable bande, à la fin duquel on se met au bal, puis la femme a congé de s’en aller où bon luy semble. Mais il s’en trouve quelques uns, lesquels finement s’appercevant de ceste ruse, font sortir l’esprit du corps de leurs femmes à beaux coups de bastonnades. D’autres aussi donnant a entendre aux divineresses qu’ils sont detenus par les esprits, les deçoivent par mesme moyen qu’elles on fait leurs femmes: Voyla ce qu’en escrit Leon l’Africain. Asseurant en un autre lieu, qu’il y a gens en Afrique qui vont par la ville à la mode de nos Chastreux, et font mestier de couper telles caruncules, comme nous avons monstré cy devant aux operations de Chirurgie” (Paré 27).
female complicity and respond by beating their wives with big sticks; and he concludes this anecdote by averring that this is why in Africa castrators travel from town to town mutilating female genitalia, just as Chastreux do in France. Paré’s account of Moroccan lesbian witches manifests an acute anxiety about the specter of unbridled female sexuality and the terrifying possibility of losing all male control over wives – and even further, of women usurping men’s sexual and social role as husbands. In this way, early modern cultural anxiety about gender instability is manifest in even medical texts – and those such as Paré’s attempt to explain sexual and gendered anomalies to their male readers in a way that reassured them of their fixed identities as dominant members of society.

“Remettre en estat de fille”: Hermaphrodites and the specter of transvestism

It is telling that the hermaphrodite, the bodily manifestation of intersexuality and sexual ambiguity, should have a binary code of sexual difference imposed, sometimes violently, on it. The hermaphrodite brings the concept of sex into direct confrontation with the body; and this confrontation reveals the constructed nature of Renaissance conceptualizations of sex and gender. Court trials such as that of Marin le Marcis that

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70 "In an era obsessed with the (re-)establishment of 'natural law,' the distinction between the natural / biological and the cultural was not evident.... The very existence of the hermaphrodite challenges the neatly delineated dual-sex system, according to which one has to be either male of female. Still, jurists and
aimed to determine and to impose a single gender identity upon hermaphrodites
demonstrate precisely the “powerful cultural desire to binarize” in early modern France
that is still alive and anxious in the twenty-first century (Garber 265). Violently juridical
responses to the specter of the hermaphrodite reveal the extremity of the early modern
crisis of gender in France, thereby demonstrating how “the deformed or differently sexed
body can be read … as symbolically central to culture, even as it is legally, medically,
and socially expunged from culture” (60).

The hermaphrodite was a troubling and monstrous figure because its very
existence nullified Aristotelian concepts of sexual difference; indeed, “it is the
coexistence of two sexes in one person that is threatening to society because it disrupts
the clear distinction and hierarchical relations between male and female” (Long,
Hermaphrodites 46). Even more anxiety producing is the question of cross-dressing for
hermaphrodites, for dress is an outward signifier of sexual and gender identity. In court
trials, gendered garb is read as a signifier of gender and sexual identity. Often
punishments for hermaphrodites who assume the identity of the “opposite” gender
include reverting to dress that conforms to female sexual identity—as in the case of
Marin le Marcis, who had to return to female dress and “remettre en estat de fille” for two
years in order to determine whether or not he was male or female. In early modern
French society, then, clothes make the man and the woman. Outward signifiers must
conform to a person’s gender: you are “born this way,” you must dress this way and walk
this way. Garber argues that the image and bodily reality of the transvestite caused the

medical authorities alike try to impose sex, male or female, even on the hermaphrodite” (Long,
Hermaphrodites 1).

71 See Long, “Jacques Duval on Hermaphrodites” and Daston and Park.
same anxieties and problematizations of binary codes of gender as the hermaphrodite in the Renaissance because of “the coexistence, in a single body, of masculine and feminine signifiers: the tension, the repulsion, the antagonism which is created between them” (150). Because the hermaphrodite’s and the transvestite’s bodies are marked by simultaneous male and female signs, the visibility of their transgressions is marked and remarked upon; the transvestite can thus be construed theoretically and textually as the hermaphrodite constructed artificially. Indeed, as Garber signals, “the figure of the hermaphrodite opens up the whole question of the relationship of the aesthetic to the essential” (71). She introduces the “transvestite effect” in an early modern context, arguing that transvestites living under the sumptuary laws enacted in Western Europe transgressed and blurred both gender and class boundaries:

The specter of transvestism, the uncanny intervention of the transvestite, came to mark and indeed to overdetermine this space of anxiety about fixed and changing identities, commutable or absent “selves.” Transvestism was located at the juncture of “class” and “gender,” and increasingly through its agency class and gender were revealed to be commutable, if not equivalent. To transgress against one set of boundaries was to call into question the inviolability of both, and of the set of social codes – already demonstrably under attack – by which such categories were policed and maintained. The transvestite in this scenario is both terrifying and seductive precisely because s/he incarnates and emblematizes the disruptive element that intervenes, signaling not just another category crisis, but – much more alarming – a crisis of “category” itself. (Garber 32)

In fact, it is the coexistence of class and gender anxieties that is “exemplary” rather than culturally specific here – for Garber argues that it exemplifies transvestism’s effect as an “index” of the destabilization of categories. Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay both perform a textual transvestism, an oscillation between masculine and feminine genders, within their texts. In so doing, these authors destabilize notions of friendship, intellect, and love, asking their readers to participate in their crossing of genders.
Coupling textual cross-dressing with explorations of love opens the reader to the possibility of non-procreative, same-sex love; their textual transvestments link unstable genders with deviant sexuality, just as cross-dressing in early modern Europe often associated an individual with alternative sexual practices.

Indeed, for women in Renaissance France, cross-dressing often took place when escaping families with their lovers or when prostituting themselves, thereby associating some female transvestism with alternative or loose sexual practices. Some early modern sources presume that the coupling of transvestism and prostitution indicated that these women offered anal intercourse or fellatio to their clients, thereby creating a most interesting link between non-procreative sexual acts, transvestism and homosexuality: “le travestissement féminin pouvait inviter à des types de relations sexuelles communes parmi ceux qui pratiquaient l’homosexualité ou d’autres conduites ‘contre nature,’ en particulier le coït anal ou la stimulation ou le coït buccaux” (Steinberg 34). Often interpreted as an invitation to the exchange of active/passive roles, in the Renaissance “le travestissement masquait des pratiques sexuelles infiniment . . . variées” (35). Though most women arrested in early modern France for cross-dressing had male clients or sexual relations with men, about a dozen instances of arrested cross-dressed women were accused of sexual relations with women. In these cases, “les sources sont très discrètes sur les comportements, au point que la relation entre femmes est parfois appelée ‘peccatum mutum,’ ‘pêché muet’” (40). The women are condemned to death, hanged, burned or drowned – unless they “reprennent l’habit de femme” or “se remett[ent] en état de fille” (40). In this way masculinist culture produces a violent and murderous insistence
that women present themselves as women, that they act and look like they are “born this way.”

Tales of intersexed and transsexual experiences are not uncommon in early modern French literature as well as pseudoscientific works. In his *Journal de Voyage* (1774) Montaigne relates the story of a group of women living in Chaumont en Bessigny who decide to dress as men. One of these women, having moved to the near-by town of Vitry-le-François and married a young woman there, was discovered and hanged just a few days before Montaigne’s arrival, having refused to live as a woman again:

[D]epuis peu de jours il avait été pendu à un lieu nommé Montier-en-Der, voisin de là [Vitry-le-François] pour telle occasion: sept ou huit filles d’autour de Chaumont en Bassigny complotèrent, il y a quelques années, de se vestir en mâles et continuer ainsi leur vie par le monde. Entre les autres, l’une vint en ce lieu de Vitry sous le nom de Mary, gagnant sa vie à être tisserand, jeune homme bien conditionné et qui se rendait, à un chacun, ami. Il fiança audit Vitry une femme qui est encore vivante; mais pour quelque désaccord qui survint entre eux, leur marché ne passa plus outre. Depuis étant allé audit Montier-en-Der, gagnant toujours sa vie audit métier, il devint amoureux d’une femme, laquelle il avait épousée, et vécut quatre ou cinq mois avec elle avec son contentement, à ce qu’on dit; mais ayant été reconnu par quelqu’un dudit Chaumont, et la chose mise en avant à la justice, elle avait été condamnée à être pendue ; ce qu’elle disait aimer mieux souffrir que de se mettre en état de fille. Et fut pendue pour des inventions illicites à supplir au défaut de son sexe. (*Journal* 77)

The last phrase here indicates that unlike the *tribades* and *fricatrices* discussed in Paré whose ambiguous anatomy allowed them to penetrate other women, Marie was hanged because of her use of a dildo, an “invention illicite” that supplied her that which her sex has not provided. Male sexual and biological privilege insisted that men are dominant because they were in possession of a penis – a dildo in the hands of a woman is a material manifestation of the fact that this woman is not a man, she is indubitably not “born this way,” the way of sexual dominance. In early modern France, possession of a dildo in
particular was a crime worthy of the death penalty because the dildo is an invention, an instrument of artifice that imitates the organ that masculinist forces believe render man superior to women. By using this unnatural device on other women, lesbians usurp male power, dominance, and that which pounds women into submission. In many ways, possessing a dildo allows women to cross genders through artifice, actively manifesting their crime against nature. Similarly, the female hermaphrodite was a frightening figure because her gender ambiguity and sex-role reversal prove that early modern France’s binary sex system was a cultural construct; likewise, she disrupted the reproductive imperative by taking the man’s place as penetrator and engaging herself and other women in non-procreative sexual acts. The relationship between transvestism and homosexuality here, like the conflation of transvestism, hermaphrodism, and sodomy in the case of Henri III, pointedly marks the power of the transvestite to make category blurring easily visible and thus to spark violent reactions in early modern France.

Indeed, the bisexuality that early modern texts attribute to hermaphrodites is reproduced in the figure of Henri III as symbolic of the social and sexual chaos during his reign. Henri’s bisexuality was often critiqued and mocked by his enemies, making sexual ambiguity in early modern France an even more spectacular figure of transgression, as this satirical portrait of him embodies: “Je ne suis masle ny femelle / Et sy je suis bien en cervelle / Lequel des deux je doibs choysir / Mais qu’importe à qui on ressamble / Il vault mieux les avoir ensemble / On en reçoit double plaisir.”

72 From the first edition of Thomas Artus’s Description de l’Isle des Hermaphrodites, nouvellement descouverte (1605) cited in Long, Hermaphrodites p.207. See chapter four of this study for a discussion of Henri III’s portrayal as a hermaphrodite and sodomite.
Conclusion: Le coqu, specter of masculinity raté

Whereas female masculinity is monstrous because it works against nature and threatens male sexual and social superiority, male effeminacy is a monstrous, sexually deviant and even laughable failure of men to embody virility. Effeminate masculinity is a question of diverse sexual orientations and roles in early modern France, and each embodies a failure to live up to man’s sexual and social roles. The image of the cuckold in much of medieval and early modern French literature elaborates male gynophobic perspectives – for this figure is castrated by and submissive to his adulterous wife. In this way, different sorts of effeminate men emerged for French men as sex and gender wars escalated in early modernity. The cuckold appears in much medieval and early modern French literature as a comedic figure, a buffoon who was likewise a hero in carnival processions of the period because they celebrate the topsy-turvy world turned upside down. Indeed, Rabelais’s comedic figure Panurge becomes an emasculated buffoon when simply faced with the question of marriage, feeling himself doomed to the position of cuckold. Unlike the dominant masculinity Panurge exhibits in Pantagruel – menacing a young man with his codpiece and asking a noble Parisian lady if she would like him to ejaculate on her – Panurge’s effeminate masculinity in Tiers Livre finds its figure in a symbolic castration, taking off his codpiece: “en tel estat [Panurge] se praesenta davant Pantagruel, lequel trouva le desguisement estrange, mesmement ne voyant plus sa belle et magnifique braguette, en laquelle il souloit, comme en l’ancre sacré constituer son dernier refuge contre tous naufrages d’adversité” (Rabelais 141 my emphasis ERC).

Dominant masculinity constructed the husband as the violent defender of his domestic

73 See Natalie Zemon Davis and David LaGuardia for the cuckold as celebrated figure in the “woman on top” element of such festivals.
space from sexual entry by other men and from his wife’s sexual activity outside his
domain. David LaGuardia treats the large and diverse body of literature that establishes
dominant masculinity as the confinement of women’s sexual activity to the husband’s
body and within his home. This body of legal, didactic, and pastoral works concern
themselves with what was appropriate and inappropriate behavior for men. I argue that
the cuckold can be interpreted as dominant masculinity raté – thus male anxiety about
being sexually overcome by not just any woman but their wives thus takes a comedic

LaGuardia argues that in almost all of the countless cuckold stories “the supposed
humor of the tale derives from the fact that ‘the man of the house’ has been ‘unmanned’
by his wife and her accomplices, who usually have as their goal the wife’s sexual
infidelity” (2). He also argues, however, that the unifying element of cuckoldry is that
every man has the potential to be a cuckold – thus, tales of cuckoldry, through which
male anxiety is channeled into laughter, in fact unite men and justify their domination of
women. Hélisenne de Crenne’s text, from the pen of a woman, transforms the masculinist
image of the cuckold as violent buffoon into a ferocious, proud, and domineering villain.
Her quenouille transforms the cleverly wicked and concupiscent wife into a broken-
hearted lover who never consummated any adulterous feelings – and thus rises to heaven
virtuously to meet her other half.

LaGuardia’s Intertextual Masculinity in French Renaissance Literature presents in detail the discursive
prescriptions that define male comportment within the marriage institution and treats dominant masculinity
turned upside down through the image of the cuckold in the Cent nouvelles nouvelles, Rabelais’s Tiers
Livre and Brantôme’s Les Dames galantes.
CHAPTER 3
SISSY THAT WALK: TRANSGENDERED MASKING AND MANLY WORKS IN HELISENNE DE CRENNE

Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours (1538) was a veritable bestseller of its time, and most critics consider the work to be the origin of the sentimental novel and the psychological novel written in French. Hélisenne de Crenne’s oeuvre is vast and encompasses a multitude of genres, from her *Epistres familières et invectives* (1539) to the *Songe* (1540) to the first translation of the *Aeneid* into French, her *Quatre premiers livres des Eneydes du treselegant poete Virgile, Traduictz de Latin en prose François* (1541). Crenne’s innovative writing can be read as proto-feminist in her advocacy of women and gender parity in sixteenth-century France. Unlike most writers who centered their arguments on the question of women, Crenne’s oeuvre treats the question of masculinity and presents a spectrum of genders in her characters. In this way, Crenne is a subversive participant in the *Querelle des femmes*. In her *Espistres* she argues the cause of women, giving countless exempla of virtuous, strong, intelligent, and virile women from mythological and biblical sources in her familiar and invective letters. Her letters present a kind of female masculinity to be imitated by her women readers. Critics thus place her feminist argument solely within her *Epistres*; for here she “posits, much ahead

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75 See Diane Wood’s introduction p.15.
76 See Nash’s “Anger,” “Biblical feminism,” and his introduction to the *Epistres*. 
of her time, nothing less than the feminist transference of ‘manly works’ to the feminine domain, their redefinition and their rewriting, *au féminin*, in the service of art and social-intellectual progress” (Nash, “Anger” 39).

*Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours* can be read as a proto-feminist and even queer text for three reasons. First, it represents multiple and blurred genders. Notably, her virile women perform “manly” deeds. Men in the novel range from effeminate to virile to even violently heteronormative. For example, Guenelic in the Premiere Partie comes across as emotionally distant, even callous – he spreads rumors about their love despite the consequences for Hélisenne; yet in the Seconde and Tierce Parties he pines for his absent Hélisenne, totally emasculated by the domination love has over him. Further on the masculinity spectrum, Hélisenne’s husband responds to her emotional infidelity by beating her, burning the letters to and from her lover, and ultimately locking her away in a tower: “fort indigné, s’approcha de moy, et me donna si grand coup sur la face, que violentement me feist baiser la terre, dont ne me peuz lever soudainement, mais quand je commencay à reprendre mes forces, je plouray moult amerement, telement que les ruysseaulx de mes larmes tomboyent en grand superfluité et abondance aval ma face” (*Angoysses* 135). Hélisenne’s husband, whose proper name remains unknown to Crenne’s readers, is a woman writer’s version of the *cocu* or cuckold. Unlike the masculinist tradition, which makes the *cocu* and his brutal reactions to marital infidelity a matter of comedy, Hélisenne de Crenne insists upon the violence of the figure of the cuckold. In this way, her perspective emphasizes female experiences of cuckoldry in the brutality of his actions. His role is important in the didactic counter-

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77 See the conclusion of chapter two of this study p.58.
exemplarity of the novel by embodying the repercussions of female sexuality outside of
marriage.

Angoysses is also proto-feminist because Crenne presents masculinity as
something that is performed and detached from the male body; in this way she negates
early modern notions of “sexe” that are binary and linked to the sexed body’s
reproductive capacity. Lastly, Crenne actively performs literary masculinity by narrating
the second and third parts of her novel as the character Guenelic. Indeed, Angoysses’s
representation of ambiguous gender manifests in the author’s textual transvestment as the
persona of the effeminate character Guenelic. She uses her male persona to infiltrate male
literary realms in order to speak directly to men. Crenne infiltrates through imitation; and
by entering male literary territories she subverts masculinist tradition, infusing it with her
proto-feminist intentions.

Most criticism of Angoysses treats the first part of the novel; and criticism that
does treat the second and third parts has yet to explain fully the author’s bizarre change in
register and genre from the first to second parts. Debaisieux, for example, argues that
Crenne gives up her voice by having Guenelic narrate the remainder of her tale:

Dans la seconde partie de l’œuvre, un changement de voix narrative est en effect
effectué: Hélisenne cède la parole à Guenelic . . . La parole de la femme . . . se
trouvera ainsi récupérée dans (le corps d’) un discours (pseudo-) masculin. Dès
lors, se faisant l’écho de la tradition, le texte est voué à rentrer dans l’ordre et à
suivre les conventions. (“Fatalité” 38-39)

Rather than giving up her agency, Crenne uses a masculine persona in order to subvert
the very tradition that Debaisieux claims she echoes. Far from giving up her voice, she in

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78 Briet complicates (I would argue with feminist intent) the relationship between female author and
protagonist. I use Crenne to indicate the author and Hélisenne or lady Hélisenne to designate Angoysses’
protagonist, who is responsible for authoring the narrative.
fact usurps male literary tradition and disturbs masculine order and convention. Likewise, rather than her agency being recuperated into a masculine body and pseudo-masculine discourse, Crenne infiltrates and subverts traditional masculine discourse by presenting alternative genders in her narration of the second and third parts of the novel. Cathleen Bauschatz explores the proto-feminist elements of *Angoyssses*, signaling that the author appropriates a male voice and thus allows herself access to male-dominated realms. This chapter builds upon her work by articulating that Crenne’s textual transvestment plays on the Latin “persona” or “mask” rather than simply narrative voice. Far from giving up her voice to men, she uses male tradition to destabilize normative genders and sexualities. Indeed, Hélisenne de Crenne walks the pathway of men by imitating the chivalric tradition and alluding to Vergil’s *Aenied*; yet her walk retains the undertones of femininity. She “sissies her walk” for proto-feminist purposes, bringing feminine elements into the male literary tradition.

Lastly, I respond to the question of Crenne’s male readership; for while some criticism calls her work a “discours entre femmes,” this chapter will illustrate the importance of her intent to include men as potential readers (“Fatalité” 38). I respond to criticism that frames Crenne’s address to men in the *Epistres* as angered79 by illustrating the role of her benevolent address to men in *Angoyssses* – for she intends to impart more than simply anger towards men. To Crenne it is imperative that she be read by men; and she frames her writing so that it passes within the masculine tradition. Indeed, she intends to create a work that both mimics and problematizes male literary tradition, and she

79 See Jerry Nash’s “Feminist Anger and Feminist (Re)Writing in Hélisenne de Crenne.”
intends for her work to be read by men as well as women. By sissying her walk as an effeminate man in love, she infiltrates the male literary realm for the cause of women.

This chapter will first discuss Crenne’s address to men and articulate her learned persona within her work. It traces the way in which she employs and transforms male literary traditions in order to create her own gender-bending and proto-feminist work of hybridity that problematizes sex and gender normativity. The first section, “Persona docta: Hélisenne’s textual transvestment,” delineates the means by which Crenne, like Marie de Gournay, undergoes a kind of textual transvestism so that she is able to gain access to the male dominated space of literary production in sixteenth-century France. For while Crenne is the author of the text, the character of Hélisenne actually writes the story that her readers have in the form of the text; and it is “dame Hélisenne” who announces to her readers that she is storytelling in this persona. It explores Crenne’s Latinate style and her transformation and mimesis of male literary tradition and rhetoric, as well as the ways in which these feminist rewritings work to problematize binaries of sex and gender. I introduce Crenne’s use of persona as an example of her rhetorical feminist transformations that has yet to be studied critically.

This chapter’s second section, “‘Parlant en la personne de son amy Guenelic’: Hélisenne’s performance of effeminate masculinity,” explores Hélisenne’s textual drag in the personne or mask of Guenelic. Crenne announces that the second and third parts of her novel are composed by “dame Hélisenne parlant en la personne de son amy Guenelic”; and this textual transgendered masking allows Crenne access to male literary realms of chivalric combat, the voyage, and male friendship. I further explore her use of “personne” as “character” – specifically the problematic figure of the effeminate man.
Ultimately, Crenne’s intention in speaking in the mask of Guenelic is not to pass as a virile character but rather to represent simultaneous male and female signifiers within this character. Indeed, she “sissies that walk” to highlight the coexistence of these gendered signifiers.

This chapter’s last section, “‘Exerceant oeuvres viriles’: Female masculinity and the performance of virility,” explores the two exemplary figures of female masculinity, or viragoes, in the second and third parts of Angoysses – the princesse d’Elivéba and the character of Hélisenne as author of the novel itself. Both of these women can be viewed as reflective of Hélisenne de Crenne, and both exemplify women who accomplish the virile endeavors of ruling and writing. I trace Crenne’s conception of virility as the performance of “œuvres viriles”; because virility is performative, Crenne argues that some women (like Dido) are virile while some men (like Guenelic) are not virile (Espitres 95). Her delineation of virility is performative and thus stripped from the male body; and that while she outlines “œuvres viriles” and viragoes in her Epistres, she complements this epistolary delineation with fictitious representations of virile women in Angoysses. Ultimately, then, Hélisenne de Crenne’s text presents a multiplicity of genders in variation that argues women (and especially women writers such as herself) can and must outperform men “exerceant oeuvres viriles” (Angoysses 238).
**Persona docta: Hélisenne’s textual transvestment**

Much criticism of Hélisenne de Crenne’s oeuvre emphasizes her benevolent address to women while denying her interest in male readership. Martine Debaisieux, for example, calls her work a “discours entre femmes” (“Fatalité” 38). Others emphasize her angered address to men in her invective letters.\(^{80}\) While Hélisenne indubitably addresses women in *Angoysses* and speaks angrily toward men in her letters, denying any benevolent address to men in her oeuvre leads to potential misreading of her work and of her literary intentions. The 1538 edition of *Angoysses* begins by announcing that the novel is gender inclusive and intends to dissuade “toutes personnes” from following the madness of Love: “Les angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours: Contenantz troys parties. Composées par Dame Hélisenne: Laquelle exhorte toutes personnes à ne suyvre folle Amour” (95 my emphasis ERC). She begins each of the three sections of her novel with a dedicatory letter; the dedicatory letter of the Premiere partie is addressed to women, whom she implores to act virtuously and to avoid the painful, often disastrous effects of Love.

Though Crenne (as Hélisenne) addresses male readers in her introductory letter to the Seconde partie in the 1538 edition,\(^{81}\) most modern editions include her dedication to women that appears in subsequent editions\(^{82}\) – despite the fact that Hélisenne overtly

\(^{80}\) See Jerry Nash’s “Feminist Anger and Feminist (Re)Writing in Hélisenne de Crenne.”

\(^{81}\) “Après vous avoir exhibé (o lecteurs benevoles) les vehementes passions que Amour venerienne peult es tendres et deliciex cuer des amoureuses dames causer, il m’est prins vouloir de vous narrer et reciter les calamitez et extremes miseriz, que par indiscretement aymer les jeunes hommes peult souffrir” (*Angoysses* 228 my emphasis ERC).

states her reasons for writing this Second partie by addressing male literary tradition. While the first part of the novel discloses through counter-exemplarity the vehement passions that sex and love can cause in the tender hearts of women, Crenne wishes in the second (and third) parts to explore the ways in which young men can suffer from Love’s passion. Indeed, she announces that it is this intention that stimulates her to write the rest of her novel; ultimately she hopes that men will read her work and be inspired by “aulcunes œuvres belliqueuses et louables entreprinses” that Quezinstra and Guenelic accomplish. The fact that Crenne does in some editions address women in this letter is nonetheless important to note; for the author believes that virile works can be accomplished by both men and women.

Lastly, in every edition of Angoisses Hélisenne de Crenne addresses men directly in her introductory letter to the Tierce partie. She states that while her intention in the Second partie is to provide exemplary tales of heroic and virile chivalry performed by men, she intends in the Tierce partie to persuade men from succumbing to their sexual impulses – a battle she avers is not easily won. We see that her intention in addressing men (and women in those editions in which she dedicates the second part to women) is

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83 “Et je estant en ceste meditation occupée, est survenue en ma memoire encore aultre occasion, qui plus fort me stimule à appareiller ma tremblante et debile main, pour reprendre la plume derelinquée: car vous debvez croire que d’ung aspirant desir, suis excitée de divulguer et manifester aulcunes œuvres belliqueuses et louables entreprinses, que par la lecture de ce mien petit livre vous seront declarées avoir esté avecq vertu et magnanimité de cueur accomplyes” (228).

84 “Il n’est en ce monde (selon mon petit jugement) o nobles lecteurs, nul vice plus enorme et detestable, que le peché d’ingratitude ….” (398).

85 “Car si precedentement vous ay exhorté à la discipline de l’art militaire pour acquier triumphe de renommée, à cest heure plus fort suis provoquée à vous instiger à la resistence contre vostre sensualité: qui est une bataille difficile à superer” (399).
twofold: first, she wishes to dissuade them from being overcome by the passions of love, and secondly, she hopes to inspire them into virtuous and virile endeavors. Her textual drag enables Crenne to sissy that walk in the second and third parts of the novel, and she “sissies that walk” as an important part of the text’s counter-exemplarity – in the case of Guenelic, it is all about gender.

Crenne uses a learned and Latinate style throughout the Angoysses, and her dedicatory letters provide ample manifestations of her persona docta. Her dedication to women in the letter that introduces the “Premiere partie” reads, “A toutes nobles et vertueuses dames Helisenne humble salut D.” (228). The “D.” here is an abbreviation for “dicit,” or “(s)he says,” and is a commonplace in Latinate and erudite classical and early modern writing. Likewise, Crenne’s vocabulary is imbued with Latinizations. For example she uses “superer” from the Latin “superare,” to overcome or surmount (rather than “surmonter”) in her letter introducing the Tierce partie: “à cest heure plus fort suis provocquée à vous instiguer à la resistence contre vostre sensualité: qui est une bataille difficile à superer” (399). Angoysses is replete with allusions to ancient Roman and Greek mythology and philosophy – from Hélisenne’s use of the figure of Dido as an exemplary model of a virtuous woman to her evocation of the Platonic image of the androgyne.

In Platonic philosophy, the original beings were androgynes, double beings comprised of pairs either of man and woman, man and man, or woman and woman. As punishment for trying to overtake their gods, the androgynes were split in two – and men and women were created. These newly sexed beings are continually in search of their
“semblable,” and sexual acts are these beings’ attempts to rejoin their lost half. In the Neo-Platonic tradition, the double body myth is desexualized; and Crenne evokes this symbol as a way to moralize the love between Hélisenne and Guenelic. As she utters her last words, Hélisenne implores Guenelic to be strong and virtuous instead of crying and lamenting her death; she reassures him that she is content with her death because they never committed adultery. She knows her soul will join its “semblable,” her other half: “Car j’espère que mon âme sera colloquée au lieu où elle trouvera son semblable” (471).

Crenne usurps male literary traditions, notably the Aeneid and the medieval and Renaissance chivalric genre, in order to speak with her male readers in their own parlance. In the Seconde and Tierce parties, Guenelic and Quezinstra embark upon a long voyage, stopping in such renowned cities as “Carthaige” and “Citharée,” as well as the

86 “First you must learn what Human Nature was in the beginning and what has happened to it since, because long ago our nature was not what it is now, but very different. There were three kinds of human beings, that’s my first point – not two as there are now, male and female. In addition to these, there was a third, a combination of those two. . . . Now here is why there were three kinds: The male kind was originally an offspring of the sun, the female of the earth, and the one that combined both genders was an offspring of the moon . . . . In strength and power, therefore, they were terrible, and they had great ambitions. They made an attempt on the gods. . . . Zeus and the other gods met in council to discuss what to do, and they were sore perplexed. . . . At last, after great effort, Zeus had an idea . . . . ‘they will give up being wicked when they lose their strength. So I shall now cut each of them in two’ . . . . Now, since their natural form had been cut in two, each one longed for its own other half, and so they would throw their arms about each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to grow together . . . Before they, you see, they used to have their genitals outside, like their faces, and they cast seed and made children, not in one another, but in the ground, like cicadas. So Zeus brought about this relocation of the genitals . . . . This, then, is the source of our desire to love each other. Love is born in every human being; it calls back the halves of our original nature together; it tries to make one out of two and heal the wound of human nature. Each of us, then, is a ‘matching half’ of a human whole . . . and each of us is always seeking the half that matches him. That’s why a man who is split from the double sort (which used to be called ‘androgynous’) runs after women. Many lecherous men have come from this class, and so do the lecherous women who run after men. Women who are split from a woman, however, pay no attention at all to men; they are oriented more towards women, and lesbians come from this class. People who are split from a male are male-oriented . . . .” (Plato 474-75).

87 “Toutesfoys l’heure est venue que tu la [ta vertu] doibs monstrer et approuver, couvrant la douleur de ma mort, et si tu te veuxl efforcer, bien le pourras faire: car il n’est si grand travail que par prudence ne soit moderé: ne sy acerbe douleur, que patience ne desrompe. Parquoy, je te supplye d’imposer fin à ton grand deconfort: et te console, en pensant que la elemence divine a esté de nous piteuse, puis qu’elle n’a voulu permettre, que le peché d’adultaire eust esté par nous commis: qui eust esté cause de me faire finer par mort plus infelice, que celle que de brief je vois souffrir: laquelle sans timeur recepvray” (Angoisses 471).
fictional city Elivéba. These first two cities signal Dido and Venus, for they are the homes of these two extraordinary women important the Aeneas as well as Hélisenne de Crenne; they are locations infused with the theme of love. Further, Quezinstra’s “Ample narration” includes a voyage to the underworld, across the Styx, and into the realm of the gods, where Quezinstra interacts with such figures as Mercury, Jupiter and Pallas (Minerva). Crenne’s intention in alluding to Vergil and imitating his epic genre is to demonstrate her literary knowledge as well as to infuse this tradition with femininity. She reminds her male audience of Vergil’s exemplary female characters through these locations charged with love. She thus sissies her walk through her narration as Guenelic and feminizes the catwalk itself by imbuing her second and third parts with classical femininity.

Jean-Philippe Beaulieu delineates several conventions of the early modern chivalric novel in “Perceval and Amadis de Gaule: le roman chevaleresque de la Renaissance” – and many of these conventions Crenne undermines and imbues with the feminine in her Angoysses. He signals the “inclusion de plus en plus marquée d’éléments épiques dans les roman chevaleresques”; and Crenne weaves innumerable elements of Vergil’s Aeneid into the Seconde and Tierce parties of her novel (“Roman” 190). In each case, she highlights the powerful force that femininity can manifest in the figures of queens and goddesses. Beaulieu also suggests that in the work of Chrétien de Troyes “le lien épique/ romanesque . . . est cependant subtil car il est associé à un processus de resolution des conflits existant entre les obligations sociales et les sentiments des héros” (191). We see this doubled situation of individual and society in Quezinstra’s noble act of
fighting to free the city of Elivéba by way of rescuing his imprisoned friend Guenelic, queering this social obligation of the hero in the chivalric genre.

Further, Hélisenne de Crenne weaves a complex narrative of writing and authorship through her nom de plume and dame Hélisenne’s role as protagonist and author of *Angoysses douloureuses*. Through the narrative, lady Hélisenne becomes a pseudo-historical personage; and her adventurous love story is a fictitious history as counter-examplarity. Likewise, Beaulieu signals the interweaving of history and fiction in early modern chivalric works. Most notable is Crenne’s insistence on the question of love, which according to Beaulieu took a lesser place than the question of arms in early modern chivalric novels. Unlike in masculinist chivalric convention, love is indeed the impetus for the chivalric journey that occupies the second and third parts of the novel.

Thanks to Guenelic’s effeminate sensibility and his consistent conversation with Quezinstra, much of the novel’s narration concerns the pains of love.

It is also the chivalric genre that Hélisenne overtly infiltrates and subverts; and it is by bending Guenelic’s gender that she questions the link between male bodies and virility. Guenelic is not the first effeminate hero in chivalric literature; however, Hélisenne problematizes her own avowal that his effeminacy is due to Love’s domination over him. Prince Aucassin, of the thirteenth century chante-fable *Aucassin et Nicolete*, is also sensitive, reticent to engage in warfare or tournaments, and hopelessly in love with

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88 “Il ne faut... pas s’étonner de retrouver, dans les romans de la fin du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance, un grand nombre de procédés référentiels pseudo-historiques qui consistent, par exemple, en l’attribution d’aventures fictives à des personnages historiques” (“Roman” 191).

89 “Les aventures chevaleresques sont plus nombreuses et plus développées que les sequences de nature amoureuse, pourtant si importantes dans le déroulement narrative des narrations chevaleresques de la première moitié au seizième siècle, non seulement les passages consacrés à des considérations amoureuses sont-ils relativement peu nombreux, mais leur rôle n’est pas primordial dans la dynamique diégétique, la function du désir amoureux s’atténuant par rapport à la fonction purement guerrière” (“Roman” 192).
the slave girl Nicolete. He only fights to defend his father’s kingdom after the king promises to let him see Nicolete; while engaging the enemy Aucassin is distracted by thoughts of love and is captured by inimical forces, as is Guenelic in the Seconde partie. This comedic story song is filled with topsy-turvy elements, including Aucassin’s effeminacy due to love’s domination; and Crenne furthers *Aucassin and Nicolete’s* comedic critique of love by rendering Guenelic wholly unheroic. Unlike Guenelic, whose companion Quezinstra fights for him, Aucassin remembers his love for Nicolete and is thus inspired to defend himself – which he performs valiantly, even capturing his enemy. As Crenne’s princesse d’Elivéba argues, love is strong enough to inspire men into heroic deeds⁹⁰ – that Guenelic is unable to defend even himself while continually lamenting his lady’s loss is problematic. In this way, she treats heterosexual excess as effeminacy, which she ultimately problematizes further in Guenelic’s friendship with Quezinstra.

Through the figure of the effeminate Guenelic, Hélisenne de Crenne explores masculinities and their links with sexuality in early modern France. In this way she differs from many female participants in the *Querelle des femmes*, who treat solely the question of women and women’s competence. Even more subversively, she infiltrates male literary traditions while wearing the mask of masculinity.

The first page of folio AA, the second part of *Angoysses*, of the 1538 edition reads: “La seconde partie des angoisses douloureuses, qui procedent d’amours:

Composée par Dame Helissen, Parlant en la personne de son Amy Guenelic: En laquelle sont comprins les faictz d’armes de Quezinstra et dudict Guenelic errans par le pays, en

⁹⁰ “[A]vec souverain esperit, commenca à louer l’amoureuse enterprise, disant qu’amours est aulcunesfois cause de stimuler ses servans à entreprendre oeuvres dignes de louenges, ad ce qu’ilz soient tenuz en bonne estime et reputation de tous, et par especial de leurs dames” (340-41).
cerchant ladicte Dame” (227). While subsequent editions omit the second part of this title (“En laquelle . . . Dame), they all declare that Hélisenne is speaking in the “personne” of Guenelic. In this way, Crenne’s text abruptly announces its change in register: that is, both a change in narrator and protagonist as well as the text’s transformation to the chivalric genre. Only three pages later (f. AA iii), the 1538 edition announces once again that it is dame Hélisenne speaking as Guenelic: “La seconde partie des angoisses douloureuses: composée par dame Helisenne, parlant in la personne de son amy Guenelic: Ou sont relatées les angoisses dudit Guenelic” (231).\footnote{Subsequent editions of the text replace this declaratory title with “Chapitre I” or “Chapitre premier” (231).}

Crenne in fact underlines Guenelic’s lack of virility in these announcements – first by separating “dudit Guenelic” from his “faictz d’armes” with “Quezinstra,” whose character notably exhibits many more martial deeds than his companion (227). In the second announcement Hélisenne underlines the painful torments of love that Guenelic undergoes, rather than his supposedly manly endeavors; in fact, these “angoisses douloureuses” parallel those undergone by the novel’s female protagonist in the Premiere partie (231).

Maliciously Latinizing her sixteenth-century French prose, Hélisenne de Crenne employs the idea of the mask in her use of the gendered “personne” or persona – Latin for mask, especially worn by an actor. Yet she also employs a second meaning of persona as character\footnote{See the Grand Robert, “personne.”} – in her work, a specific and problematic masculinity. “Personne” derives from the Latin persona, a word of Etruscan origin meaning “theater masque,” and first appears in 1180. In the sixteenth-century “personne”’s principal meaning is “rôles,” such as father or husband. Huguet cites two exemplary usages in Calvin: “Ce n’est pas chose
nouvelle au Seigneur, de prendre la personne d’un mary envers nous” and also “Le Seigneur prend envers nous la personne d’un bon pere de famille” (740). The term “personné” was also used in the sixteenth century to mean wearing a mask, “portant un masque de théâtre.” \(^9^3\) Hélisenne de Crenne plays with dual connotations of “personne,” both in its sixteenth-century usage and its Latin origins, using the idea of masking in persona to portray a masculine “personne.” Her process of literary transgendered masking, her textual drag of sorts, allows her access to male behavioral norms as a literary character as well as access to male literary liberties and genres – not to mention a male audience, whom she addresses directly. To make her tale of counter-exemplarity effective, to explore the more feminine side of the male experience, Crenne chooses to “sissy that walk” in the persona of her effeminate lover.

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\(^9^3\) See “Personne” in Huguet’s *Dictionnaire de la Langue Francaise du seizième siècle* pp. 740-41. Also, the following entry for “personné” p. 741.
Cathleen Bauschatz argues that Hélisenne’s “travestissement textuel” allows her access to the male literary realms of chivalric combat, the voyage and male intimate friendship (“Travestissement textuel” 55). Crenne in fact problematizes normative genders and sexualities within these three masculine realms; and these subversions work to queer the literary spaces of chivalric combat, the voyage, and male friendship. The effeminate Guenelic of the second part is fearful and untalented at warfare,\(^{94}\) compares himself to tragic female figures such as Dido, locks himself away from the masculine world, even swoons. He is reticent to fight, and only does so when inspired by the passion of his companion Quezinstra: “[M]ais mon compagnon qui moult se fioit en sa force, par ung magnanime couraige me commença à exhorter, me disant, que virilement nous convenoit défendre . . . et à l’heure à l’exemple de luy me defendoye” (Angoysses 249-50). Like Hélisenne, whose husband locks her in a tower, Guenelic is imprisoned, all the while crying and even losing his senses – and his captors mock his effeminacy: “mais les scélères et mauvaises gens, qui me menoient par derision et mocquerie, se ryoient de mes propos, et disoient les ungs aux autres: je croy que cest homme est aliené de son sens” (354).

Even Hélisenne’s character implores him to be more masculine and strong, accusing him of letting passion overcome him and thus stripping him of virile virtue: “pource que tu continues tes lachrimes, pleurs et gemissements, tu me frustres du tout de l’esperance que j’avoie en ta science: laquelle j’estimoye estre suffisante pour refrener

\(^{94}\) See Beaulieu’s “Les données chevalresques” for discussions of Guénelic’s lack of courage.
ton courroux, et mitiger tes passions: qui sont tant excessives, que tu ne fais aulcune
demonstrance de ta vertu” (470-71). Masculinity, or “l’humaine virile condition,” seems
indeed to be the subject of the second part of Angoysses – Guenelic’s virility is insisted
upon and questioned incessantly precisely because of his ambiguous gender. Indeed,
Bauschatz posits the problem that Crenne’s masking and unmasking of gender poses, the
ambiguity of Guenelic’s gender itself: is he an effeminate man or a woman in textual
drag? 95 Herein lies the beauty of Crenne’s textual transvestment – she “siss[ies] that
walk” to such an extent that Guenelic’s gender is perpetually in question, to other
characters in the novel and to its readers.

Passing was transvestism’s most common objective in the early modern period, as
Marjorie Garber and Sylvie Steinberg illustrate 96; and especially common was the female
to male transvestism that allowed young women access to the military or a means of
escape from marriage-mongering families. Likewise, Crenne’s textual transvestism
allows her access to three masculine spaces: chivalric combat, the voyage, and male
amitié. While it seems Guenelic’s androgyny is too glaring for lady Hélisenne to pass, in
her drag’s seeming inefficacy lies an even deeper questioning of a dual gender system.
Crenne employs early modern anxiety about gender and performance to her proto-
feminist ends of gender parity by presenting genders that do not “naturally” align to
sexed bodies. Garber signals that in early modern Western Europe:

The specter of transvestism, the uncanny intervention of the transvestite, came to
mark and indeed to overdetermine this space of anxiety about fixed and changing
identities, commutable or absent “selves” . . . . The transvestite in this scenario is

95 See her “Travestissement textuel.”

96 See Steinberg’s La Confusion des Sexes and Garber’s chapter, “Dress Codes, or the Theatricality of
Difference” p.21-40.
both terrifying and seductive precisely because s/he incarnates and emblematizes
the disruptive element that intervenes, signaling not just another category crisis,
but – much more alarming – a crisis of “category” itself. (32)

Renaissance writing culture was one of dialogue, intertextuality, and rhetoric; and Crenne
engenders these essential textual elements in her works. Floyd Gray avers that thanks to
Humanist pedagogy, early modern French readers would be quite cognizant of and
sensitive to the performativity of rhetoric and writing:

In humanist works, present meaning is filtered through past works and words,
sometimes improvisationally, but more frequently in a process of deliberate, self-
conscious imitation and emulation, endowing it with remembered prestige. Writing then falls within the purview of reading, and the art of rhetoric,
knowledge of which is at the core of Renaissance pedagogy, is designed to
provide proper access to both. Children educated according to its methods
inevitably absorbed certain mental attitudes and habits which continued to
influence their literary expectations for the rest of their lives, making them
conscious and appreciative of writing as performance and persuasion. (10
emphasis mine ERC)

Hélisenne de Crenne envisions and embodies writing as performance and persuasion. She
uses the performativity and theatricality of the persona mask subversively, for the
“personne” she is depicting is the problematic effeminate masculinity. Contextualizing
her use of persona as malicious Latin wordplay demonstrates the subversive means by
which she problematizes binary gender norms and the reproductive imperative
personified in Nature’s coupling of male and female. The multiple meanings or
connotations of the Latin persona allow lady Crenne to give her masculine mask a
specific masculinity.

This woman writer understands well that persona is both a mask worn by an actor
and the character he or she portrays. Her drag persona is quite clearly the problematic
figure of the effeminate man, “son Amy Guenelic” (Crenne, Angoysses 227). Crenne’s
subtle understanding and use of the mask and of *personne*’s Latin meanings allow her to employ her textual mask of masculinity in all of its artificiality and performativity. This mask highlights the duplicitous nature of gender as it was constructed in early modern France, and Crenne’s writing works as performance. Indeed, within the artificiality of the mask lies the power of transvestism to disturb and to be a transgressive force, for “the figure of the transvestite in fact opens up the whole question of the relationship of the aesthetic to the essential” (Garber 71). What is the art of “sissy[ing] that walk? The detachable mask represents the totally artificial construction of a character, and Hélisenne de Crenne wears the ambiguity of her drag well.

While many cross-dressers’ intent is to pass easily as the opposite gender, many other drag queens’ and kings’ intent is not to pass easily as one gender or its opposite – rather, they intend to accentuate ambiguity in all its chaos. In this way, drag’s objective is to make visible the ambiguity in and artificiality of gender. As Garber argues, “the cultural effect of transvestism is to destabilize all such binaries: not only ‘male’ and ‘female,’ but also ‘gay’ and ‘straight,’ and ‘sex’ and ‘gender.’ This is the sense—the radical sense—in which transvestism is a ‘third’” (133). That lady Hélisenne does not pass effectively as a virile man is thus not a failure, and is in fact quite important to note. Every drag queen has her persona, and every drag king has his; these personas represent (in the most literal sense) the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities that exist. One should not ask, is she portraying “masculinity” well? But rather, *what masculinity* is she portraying? For she is not dragging as just any man, not even as the ideal, hyper-virile man; instead, her *persona*, her mask, is the effeminate man, her lover Guenelic. She

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97 See for example Bauschatz’s discussion of her drag’s efficacy in “Travestissement textuel.”
walks not as a lady in male realms but as a lady playing an effeminate man. The “sissy” of her walk is essential to Crenne’s argument for gender parity through the deconstruction of sexually defined gender. By adopting the effeminate male persona, Hélisenne de Crenne acknowledges the multiplicity of masculine nature, “l’humaine virile condition” (*Angoisses* 231). The Seconde and Tierce parties of her novel are in fact an exploration and questioning of her society’s multiple masculinities. *Angoisses* thus participates in and responds to early modern France’s crisis of gender. Her choice of the effeminate man, a quite troubling figure in early modern France, is significant; for Guenelic’s effeminacy is another count of Crenne’s counter-exemplarity.

The effeminate man has a long history of duality that is indeed linked to his sexual object choice; for effeminacy is a sign of excess in both homosexual and heterosexual desire. In the Renaissance and as far back as antiquity, normative masculinity “entailed austerity, resistance to appetite, and mastery of the impulse to pleasure”; it is most explicitly manifest in a man’s prowess and desire to engage in warfare (Halperin, *Homosexuality* 111). Men expressed masculinity in the homosocial world of war, battle and exercises of chivalry; to abandon warlike ambitions is to leave the realm of men for the society of women and all its voluptuous pleasures. Thus, men can be effeminate because they love and keep the company of women (heterosexual excess) or because of their desire to be women by taking the passive role in bed with men (homosexual excess). In this way, both of these desires are gender transgressions:

In various European cultural traditions men could be designated as “soft” or “unmasculine” … either because they were invert of pathics – because they were womanly, or transgendered, and liked being fucked by other men – or because, on the contrary, they were womanizers, because they deviated from masculine
Both notions of effeminacy are in this way misogynistic, for they imply that by becoming attached to excessive pleasure with the female or as a female, men lose their dominant status in early modern French society.

Many of Angoysses’s characters implore Guenelic to “be a man” by not succumbing to domination by Love and by concerning himself with virile, courageous works; Quezinstra, “qui estoit jeune d’aage, et antique de sens,98 me conseilloit tousjours de me desister de telle sollicitude et soing trop puerile, en m’exhortant d’exercer oeuvres viriles et de louenges dignes” and tries repeatedly to lead Guenelic from the enclosure of his bedroom to the battlefield (Crenne, Angoysses 238). A prince whom Guenelic and Quezinstra encounter during their voyage makes explicit the link between Love’s domination and the destruction of virility and masculinity, emphasizing that being a man requires certain actions choices: “considerez que ce n’est acte d’homme prudent ensuyvre la sensualité et laisser la raison” and “Revocquez doncq vostre penser à meilleurs usages: Laissez le cultivage de la concupiscence, et vous recordez d’estre homme” (388, 390 my emphasis ERC). Guenelic’s effeminacy due to love’s domination is in fact so glaring as to be well known; for he admits, “et si bien cognoissez, avecq quelle force amour me domine et seigneurie …. par le premier regard de ma tres désirée dame, Amour eut de moi entière possession” (392-93). His effeminacy is a counter example to Hélisenne de Crenne’s male readers, whom she implores to act virtuously through martial action like Quezinstra, the masculine ideal of virility. Like Aucassin, Guenelic is incapable of

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98 Chapter four of this study discusses the queer connotation of this description, “antique de sens.”
fulfilling his martial duties as a young man; his constant craving for Hélisenne makes complaints and tears Guenelic’s only real participation in the Seconde and Tierce parties.

Likewise, Crenne’s text presents alternative effeminate masculinities in Guenelic’s defense of great men who weep: “Si doncques tant d’hommes fameulx et renomez ont larmoyé: et aulcuns, par anxieté, la vie laissée, je ne pourroie eviter que pareillement je ne succumbe” (483-84). Guenelic’s defense of effeminate masculinity, of famed and renowned men who allow themselves to weep because of the pains of love, is undermined by the counterexample of Paris – who before being struck by Helen was as strong and virtuous as his brother Hector: “Mais vous debvez entendre que cela n’a aultre signification, que la pusillanimité de Paris, lequel au paravant qu’il s’adonnast à ceste effrenée lasciveté, estoit esgual en force et en vertu à son frère Hector, le plus belliqueux chevalier du monde” (295). Quezinstra makes explicit the parallel between Guenelic’s counterexample and Paris’s effeminacy: “O combien se debvroit contem proprier et despriser ce pasteur Troyen, d’estre ainsi devenu si tres effeminé et remply d’ineptitude? cela doibt estre exemple à tous gentilz hommes modernes” (295).

Indeed, the text’s repeated explanation for Guenelic’s effeminacy is that the force of Love has overpowered him, “car cest amour sensuel aulcunesfois rend l’homme pusillanime” (294). Men in love are rendered passive and thus effeminate because of the power relation between Love and lover. Women are easily dominated by love because of the nature of their weakness; they are passive rather than active, not strong enough to resist Love’s passion. The fear that “amours obtienne sur [les hommes] domination et seigneurie” expresses an acute anxiety about the nature of power and gender in early modern France. Garber illustrates that effeminacy’s common Renaissance sense,
especially in England, “is generated by sexual voluptuousness directed toward women, not toward men. Historically, then, ‘effeminacy’ is misogynistic as well as homophobic … what is being protected here is a notion of manhood or manliness as a sexual norm” (Garber 139). The idea that men are rendered feminine because of Love’s domination over them seems to be the case for Guenelic. Effeminacy in men was also linked with same sex love in early modern France – and Hélisenne makes ambiguous just this link between effeminacy and non-normative sexuality in Guenelic’s friendship with Quezinstra, in which their virility is questioned. In the Seconde and Tierce parties Crenne also presents female characters who effectively perform manly deeds in contrast to her effeminate and passive Guenelic. She continues to feminize Vergil by evoking Queen Dido in her princesse d’Elivéba and impasses lady Hélisenne with the empowering force of writing, even while she is imprisoned in a tower. From effeminate man to masculine women, Crenne turns from sissying that walk to imploring her lover and her readership, “come to my window.”

99 Garber continues, “So “effeminate” can mean a condition caused by women (by excessive sexual interest in them) or the condition of being turned into a “woman” (with the implication that the “effeminate” man is not at all sexually interested in women)” (139).
“Exerceant oeuvres viriles”: Female masculinity and the performance of virility

In addition to male effeminacy, Hélisenne presents figures of female masculinity in Angoysses. Female masculinity is an important complement to these non-normative masculinities and an important element of Hélisenne’s argument for gender parity. It is within the homocentric realm of the Seconde Partie – where women are few and Hélisenne is noticeably absent (except when evoked in the lamentations of Guenelic such as “ma dame” or “ladicte dame”) – that a virile woman, the princess d’Eliveba, makes her appearance. The princess is honored and revered by her people (both men and women), which the reader is told demonstrates her power over her kingdom:

En sa compaignée avoit grande multitude de gentilz hommes et damoyselles, et en telle magnificence en ce lieu assistoit, que selon ma conception representoit la splendide et Claire dame Dyane associée de ses belles nymphes. Tous en general, tant hommes que femmes, luy exhiboyent honneur et supreme reverence, qui demonstroit qu’elle avoit la domination et seigneurie du pays. (337)

The princess’s virility is evoked in the power-imbued coupling “domination et seigneurie,” which Crenne also employs to describe the force with which Love affects lovers. For example, “amours obtienne sur [les hommes] domination et seigneurie” and “si bien congnoissez, avecq quelle force amour me domine et seigneurie …. par le premier regard de ma tres désirée dame amours eut de moi entiere possession, il n’est à croire que je m’en puisse aliener” (392, 393). She depicts this virago as magnanimously ruling over the splendor of her city, as Juno queen of the gods might reign (“la dame seant en ung siege magnificque, non en moindre majesté que Juno se sied au celeste consitoire”) and as any king or lord might address his army (“lors commenca à adresser sa douce voix vers ses chevaliers, qui luy donnoient bonne silence”) (345).
Further, the princess’s “domination et seigneurie” figures Vergil’s queen Dido as an iconic predecessor for this fictitious early modern queen. Both of these female rulers have throngs of loyal citizens following them, and their magnanimity is compared to Diana’s.\textsuperscript{100} The princess d’Elivéba’s “grande multitude de gentilz hommes et damoyselles” evokes Dido’s “throng of men behind” her; yet like Crenne’s dedicatory letters to both men and women, the princess d’Elivéba’s dominion implicates both genders. Crenne recreates Vergil’s memorable first encounter between Aeneas and Dido\textsuperscript{101}; for like Aeneas, Guenelic and Quezinstra first witness the “princesse monarque” in all her splendor while contemplating the beauty of the ruler’s art and architecture: “Plusieurs temples y étaient érigés par souverain artifice, et par especial en y avait un bien autant renommé que fut jadis l’oracle d’Apollon en Delphes; et dedans cettui entrâmes, à l’occasion de la spéciosité. Et sans guère de dilation, après survint une jeune dame de très excellente beauté et triomphamment ornée” (240). Crenne’s evocation is intentional, imitative, and inspired – she feminizes Vergil and applies his unhappy queen to an early modern context that demonstrates women’s potential to perform “œuvres viriles.”

\textsuperscript{100}“As on Eurotas bank or Cynthus ridge / Diana trains her dancers, and behind her / On every hand the mountain nympha appear, / A myriad converging: with her quiver / Slung on her shoulders, in her stride she seems / The tallest, taller by a head than any, And joy pervades Latona’s quiet heart: / So Dido seemed, in such delight she moved / Amid her people, cheering on the toil / Of a kingdom in the making. At the door / Of the goddess’ shrine, under the temple dome, / All hedged about with guards on her high throne, / She took her seat. Then she began to give them / Judgments and rulings, to apportion work / With fairness, or assign some tasks by lot . . . .” (Fitzgerald 21).

\textsuperscript{101}“He himself saw / In combat with the first of the Achaenians, / And saw the ranks of Dawn, black Memnon’s arms; / Then, leading the battalion of Amazons / With half-moon shields, he saw Penthesilēa / Fiery amid her host, buckling a golden Girdle beneath her bare and arrogant breast, / A girl who dared fight men, a warrior queen. / Now, while these wonders were being surveyed / By Aeneas of Dardania, while he stood / Enthralled, devouring all in one long gaze, / The queen paced toward the temple in her beauty, / Dido, with a throng of men behind” (21).
Again reminiscent of Vergil’s Carthage, the text insists upon the strength of the city Elivéba’s walls and its warlike fortitude even when threatened by inimical forces: “la cité estoit si forte et belliqueuse, qu’il ne seroit en la faculté de ses ennemys, de la scavoir expugner” (342-43). Unlike Vergil’s nascent Carthage, Crenne’s Elivéba is a well-established city. 

Guenelic and Quezinstra marvel at its resplendent fortitude: “Nous arrives en cette cité, nous prit vouloir de distinctement la contempler: elle estoit tres bien construicte et edifiée, et si estoit fortifiée de grosses tours belliqueuses et defensables” just as Aeneas “star[es] amazed / Carthaginian promise, at the handiwork / Of artificers and the toil they spent upon it” (Crenne, *Angoysses* 337, Fitzgerald 20). Crenne uses Elivéba and the princess’ domain to argue for women’s liberty; by presenting “l’état et liberalité d’une princesse monarque” in the Seconde partie Crenne opens the possibility for women to solve political disputes without forced marriage (240). Vergil’s Dido feels pressure to invite Aeneas to share her throne because of numerous neighborly suitors. 

The princesse d’Elivéba, as chapter four of this study explores, fights the inimical

102 “Aeneas found, where lately huts had been, / Marvelous buildings, gateways, cobbled ways, / And din of wagons. There the Tyrians / Were hard at work: laying courses for walls, / Rolling up stones to build the citadel, / While others picked out building sites and plowed / A boundary furrow. Laws were being enacted, / Magistrates and a sacred senate chosen. / Here men were dredging harbors, there they laid / The deep foundation of a theatre, / And quarryed massive pillars to enhance / The future stage – as bees in early summer / In sunlight in the flowering fields / Hum at their work, and bring along the young / Full-grown to beehood; as they cram their combs / With honey, brimming all the cells with nectar, / Or take newcomers’ plunder, or like troops / Alerted, drive away the lazy drones, / And labor thrives and sweet thyme scents the honey. / Aeneas said: ‘How fortunate these are / Whose city walls are rising here and how”’ (Fitzgerald 18-19).

103 Dido’s sister Anna persuades the queen to let herself fall in love with Aeneas as a protective measure against close political threats: “Granted no suitors up to now have moved you, / Neither in Libya nor before, in Tyre – / Iarbas you rejected, and the others, / Chieftans bred by the land of Africa / Their triumphs have enriched – will you contend / Even against a welcome love? Have you / Considered in whose lands you settled here? / On one frontier the Gaetulans, their cities, / People of invincible war – with wild / Numidian horsemen, and the offshore banks, / The Syrtés; on the other, desert sands, / Bone-dry, where fierce Barcaean nomads range. / Or need I speak of future wars brought on / From Tyre, and the menace of your brother? / Surely by dispensation of the gods / And backed by Juno’s will, the ships from Illium / Held their course this way on the wind” (96-97).
Admiral who wants her hand\textsuperscript{104} by means other than marriage – through the friendship and devotion between Guenelic and Quezinstra.

Crenne manipulates the masculine tradition here in order to highlight antiquity’s laudable women and insert them into early modernity. In this way, she feminizes Vergil (she sissies his walk) in her advocacy of gender parity. The princess d’Elivéba is exemplary of women rulers in early modernity – these women were figures whose worth many male writers questioned in the \textit{querelle des femmes}, and whose existence diminished as years passed.\textsuperscript{105} Crenne’s depiction of the princess d’Elivéba, virago in the chivalric realm of the Seconde partie, can be read as the literary manifestation of her praise of Marguerite de Navarre in “La iii Epistre Invective”:

\begin{quote}
Je n’estime point, qu’au preterit jamais fut, ne pour le futur peult estre personne de plus preclaire & altissime esperit, que tresillustre & magnanime princesse, ma dame la royne de Navarre. Est une chose toute notoire, qu’en sa reginale excellente & sublime personne, reside la divinité Platonicque, la prudence de Caton, l’eloquence de Cicero, & la Socratique raison: & à brief parler sa sincerité est tant accomplie, que la splendeur d’icelle à la condition feminine donne lustre. (\textit{Espistres} 152)
\end{quote}

Marguerite de Navarre embodies ancient authorities in this letter; the author again detaches masculinity from the male body and allows women to embody masculinity.

Navarre and Dido work together in Crenne’s conception of queendom and female masculinity in her letters and novel.

\textsuperscript{104} “. . . mais nouvelles lui survinrent, qui lui causèrent excessive anxiété: ce fut qu’un puissant amiral, avec infini nombre de navires, venait assiéger la cité” (\textit{Angoysses} 242). There is an immediate threat that “ce cruel homme parvient à son inique intention (qui est de renverser et totalement ruiner cette très fluent et populeuse cité), il est tant irrité et courroucé contre moi que je ne pourrais précogiter les contumelies, opprobes et injures qu’il me conviendra souffrir. Parquoi je puis conjecturer que, pour l’assidue et continuelle douleur, immaturément se terminera ma triste et dolente vie” (243).

\textsuperscript{105} See Kelly’s “Did Women Have a Renaissance?”
Thus Crenne, in addition to depicting men who lack virility, presents examples of female virility in both her *Epistres* and *Angoysses*. Both her works can be read as participating in the *querelle des femmes* by presenting images of viragos and praising their prowess. Joan Kelly argues that women who participated in this nascent feminism defended women’s political power and intellect, questioning misogyny’s sexual differentiation on these two levels:

The women of the *querelle* initiated and carried on a four-century-long tradition of intellectual opposition to misogyny. They showed how learning was used to belittle women and they created a countervailing image of historical female power. The power of woman’s mind they defended with just as much vigor. Letters, as well as arms, formed their twofold ‘defence’ against the misogynist use of culture. (“*Querelle*” 95)

Marguerite de Navarre exemplifies female figures of power and intellect in Crenne’s work; and we see in the princess d’Elivéba a powerful female ruler who can be read as a parallel or doubled Hélisenne, or one of the author’s shadowy and duplicitous appearances within her own work. Elivéba is in fact an anagram of Abbéville, the city in which Marguerite Briet was born; and her city’s port “s’appelloyt Hennerc,” an anagram of H. Crenne (Crenne, *Angoysses* 347). This princess, this virago, attributes to Hélisenne de Crenne a virility that the author also associates with Dido. This classical figure is, with Marguerite de Navarre, Crenne’s most exemplary of women.

In “La viii Epistre [familiere]” Crenne distinguishes between two types of women – “pusillanimes femmes” and those like Dido who perform “oeuvres viriles” (*Epitres* 95). “Pusillanime,” or lacking in courage or character, is the same term that she uses to describe men who are made effeminate or bent by Love: “car cest amour sensuel aulcunesfois rend l’homme pusillanime” and “la pusillanimité de Paris, lequel au
paravant qu’il s’adonnast à ceste effrenée lasciveté, estoit esgual en force et en vertu à son frère Hector, le plus belliqueux chevalier du monde” (294, 295). Further, it is precisely what lacks in Guenelic and “pusillanimes femmes” that Crenne marks as virtuous in Dido – virility and courage in performing excellent works. In this letter, the author urges a young woman Clarice not to give into passionate love’s clutches but rather to be “digne d’extoller” like Dido through her virtuous deeds:

Mais au contraire, t’esforceras d’estre semblable à celle à qui la magnanime constance, fut occasion de changer son nom primitif, qui estoit Helisa : Mais subseuentement appeleé fut Dido, qui en langaige Phenicien est interpreté, & vault autant à dire comme Virago, exerceant oeuvres viriles. Certainement c’estoit celle que l’adverse fortune ne povoit aulcunement superer. (Espitres 95 my emphasis ERC)

In this way, Hélisenne de Crenne implores women in her Epitres to act virtuously, and she first presents her exemplary argument in Angoysses – just as she implores men to act virtuously through the counter exemplarity of Guenelic. Further, Dido’s two names are both essential elements in Hélisenne’s conception of gender and her representation of virility within her works. Dido’s primitive name Helisa can arguably be one of several sources for Marguerite Briet’s nom de plume, thereby inscribing virility, heroism, and learned antiquity in the personage of the early modern author.

Secondly, Crenne articulates that Dido in Phoenician means “Virago” – a virile or masculine woman, from the Latin vir meaning man (male human) – or as she eloquently argues, a woman “exerceant oeuvres viriles” (95). Hélisenne de Crenne presents the virile woman as a striking possibility within the strict binary parameters of early modern France’s sex-gender system. She further presents the virago as a figure worthy of praise and imitation by both men and women. For Dido is not overcome or conquered by the
cruel fate that has stripped her of her husband; rather, Dido establishes the great city of Carthage (a city as strong and fortified as Elivéba): “Pareilement elle estant succumbé en la calamité de tenebreuse inforturne, fit apparoir la reluisence de sa magnanimité, de telle sorte que par elle fut construicte & edifiée la noble cité de Carthage: laquelle depuis fut tresfameuse &renomée” (95-96).

Dido’s virtue and virility through “exerceant oeuvres viriles” is paramount in Crenne’s conception and presentation of virility in her works (95). Virility can be had – or rather, performed – by members of either sex; indeed, some members of the male sex do not perform virile works, and some members of the female sex accomplish virile endeavors better then some men. Nash argues that Hélisenne de Crenne’s conception of sex parity and virile nature stem from her understanding of the creation story in the Vulgate: “Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam; ad imaginem Dei creavit illum, masculum et feminam creavit eos.”

He argues that For Crenne, the accomplishment of ‘manly’ or heroic works is not in relationship to gender but to individual ability and performance, in the sense of a single human nature and a single human activity. This virile nature, as some readers of the Bible such as Crenne knew, is thus one, both male and female, because it is of one and the same genesis or origin. (“Biblical” 16)

Dido thus is exemplary for women and for men; and Crenne illustrates this point by comparing Quezinastra to her in Angoysses: “Tout ainsi estoit Quezinsatra aux paroles de l’angelique princesse ententif, que fut la Royne de Carthage aux lamentables commemorations du piteux Troyen” (362). Through the figures of Dido and the princess d’Elivéba, Hélisenne de Crenne detaches virility from the male body; she presents virility as performed through heroic, virile, courageous works. Having virility thus is a question

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106 Cited in Nash, “Biblical feminism” p.16.
of performance; and virility can be had or performed by both women and men. Thus her representation of gender detaches itself from biological sex.

She demonstrates the artificiality of ascribing virility to the male body by conceiving of gender as performative. Quezinstra, for example, is exemplary of virile accomplishments performed by a man – his performance of virility or masculinity thus passes. Guenelic, likewise, is exemplary of men who do not accomplish “œuvres viriles” or pass as virile. Crenne’s intention in the effeminate character of Guenelic is to demonstrate that virility is performative and that some men do not act or perform in a virile manner. In this way, she makes an important sex – gender differentiation within her writing; this distinction illustrates women’s capacity to perform virile endeavors their need to perform them in early modern France.

Hélisenne de Crenne presents a second female masculinity in Angoysses – and this virago, like the princess d’Eliveba, emerges as one of Hélisenne’s many laudable female personae throughout her work. It is “la dame Hélisenne” herself, as the character who authors the book, who acts as a second exemplary woman “exerceant œuvres viriles” in Angoysses (Espitres 95). While Hélisenne is markedly absent in the Seconde partie, she emerges in the Tierce partie with a manuscript she has been writing while imprisoned in her husband’s tower. Indeed, the image of Hélisenne in her tower is an ambiguous one; for while her imprisonment is forced violently upon her by both her husband and his cruel sister, her enclosure allows her time and private space in which to write her story and recount her travails. Her time in the tower is one of literary production so exquisite that the gods delight in reading this book during Quezinstra’s “ample et accommodee narration” (Angoysses 486). Though she dies near the end of the novel, the
Hélisenne presented to the reader in the Tierce partie and Ample narration is a gifted woman writer whom the gods, from Mercury to Pallas Athena to Jupiter, praise. After Hélisenne’s death Mercury finds by her body “ung petit pacquet couvert de soye blanche” that is in fact the very “livre” that the readers are holding (489). Quezinstra recognizes that this small packet of white silk encloses the narration of his and Guenelic’s voyage that Hélisenne wrote after her lover recounted their adventures to her. The text here emphasizes once again that it is Hélisenne writing the Seconde and Tierce parties in the mask or voice of Guenelic; Crenne doubles the image of the woman writer by having the character Hélisenne (in addition to Crenne) “sissy that walk” as her lover, Guenelic. Crenne further inscribes the gods within the structure and original reproduction of Angoysses within the Ample narration. The remainder of the novel follows the journey of the reproduction of Hélisenne’s writings to her public in Paris by means of the gods. Mercury delights in the idea of presenting Hélisenne’s book to Pallas (Minerva, Athena), the goddess of intellect and patron goddess of women intellectuals in early modernity. Mercury proclaims his surety that this goddess, born from the brain of Jupiter, will delight in reading Hélisenne’s composition: “O déesse procréee du cerveau de l’Altitonant Juppiter, pource que certain suis que vous vous delectez souverainement aux lectures, je vous veulx faire present d’ung petit livre” (500-01). Most male humanists, if they evoke a goddess, more often evoke Venus than Pallas, following the masculinist

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107 Quézinstra recognizes “par intitulation, que en ce estoient redigeez toutes noz entreprinesses et voyages, Parquoy je peux facilement comprendre, que la pauvre defuncte l’avoit escript, apres le recit que Guenelic luy en pourroit avoir faict” (489).
tradition of associating women with sexuality. Hélisenne de Crenne, rather, associates herself with Pallas, an intellectual woman warrior whom she uses to give Vergil her proto-feminist edge.

The messenger god further emphasizes Hélisenne’s text as laudable and worthy of readership by noting that he saved it from the terrestrial realm so that it may be heard: “j’ay congneu que bien estoit digne d’estre distinctement entendu, je l’ay conservé esperant qu’en voz pudicques mains lieu d’acceptation recouvrera” (501 my emphasis ERC). It is Jupiter, king of the gods, who orders that Hélisenne’s book be printed and who gives the work its title. Hélisenne’s text further insists upon the importance of its readership in the persona of Quezinstra as he finishes his ample narration; the reader, in fact, ends her/his reading with a reminder of this text’s importance and efficacy:

Ay esteé desireux de manifester ceste oeuvre. Et l’autre cause qui ad ce faire m’a stimulé, si est, affin que tous lecteurs qui s’occuperont à lire ces angoisses douloureuse, par l’exemple d’icelles se puissent conserver et garder que la sensualité ne domine la raison, pour timeur de succomber en ceste lascivité, dont ne se peult ensuyvre, que peines et travaux intollerables. (506)

In this way, Mercury, Jupiter and even Quezinstra insist upon or delight in Hélisenne’s readership; they put forth efforts, in fact, to ensure its publication. The image of lady Hélisenne in the Tierce partie as an efficacious woman writer is thus a second female masculinity that emerges in her novel; this virago of letters in Angoysses works to exemplify the prowess of women writers and the performativity of gender and writing.

Indeed, Quezinstra’s Ample narration ends with a final reminder to its readers of the

108 See, for example, Montaigne’s “Sur des vers de Vergile” (III.5), in which the essayist eroticizes Vergil’s depiction of Venus, finding it more sensually fulfilling than the carnal act itself.

109 “Et à l’heure luy dist Juppiter, qu’il voulloit qu’il prind la coppie de ce livre: Et que diligemment le feist imprimer, affin de manifester au monde les peines, travaux, et angoysses douloureuse, qui procedent à l’occasion d’amours” (503).
power of *Angoysses*, an erudite and efficacious work whose author manifests qualities most admired in antiquity:

Pour desquelles vous préserver, j’obsècre l’éternelle divinité qu’elle vous concedes à tous la prudence de Caton, la subtilité de Lélius, la socratique raison, l’érudition aiguë d’Aristote, avec les institutions du grand Solon, afin que, par ce moyen, ayez vouloir de délaisser les choses transitoires, pour les choses perpétuelles acquérir. (363)

**Conclusion: “La diversité des meurs et conditions des hommes”**

Throughout *Angoysses*, Hélisenne plays with doublings, multiplicities, and variations – through her many personae and through the multiplicity of genders that she presents and performs. She furthers her exploration of gender through multiplicity by taking up the question of the diversity and variation of human nature: what is the cause of “la diversité des meurs et conditions des hommes” (*Angoysses* 479)? One significant cause she discusses is the body and its natural humours:

[L]a disposition diverse du corps, faict moult à la variation et mutation des affections des meurs et complexions . . . . Parquoy les colericques sont naturelement disposez et promptz à yre: les sanguins, sont benigns: les melencolicques, sont enuyeulx: et les flumaticques, paresseulx. (479-80)
Hélisenne thus acknowledges the variation in human nature; and by discussing different models through which learned people of early modernity explained these variations she demonstrates that there are more ways to categorize and to differentiate humans than a model based solely on sex.

The Premiere partie of Angoysses traces love’s effect on Hélisenne, which she experiences differently than her lover Guenelic. As Dorothea Heitsch argues, this first part traces the physical and psychological effects of melancholia on Hélisenne; and the Seconde and Tierce parties trace the way Love’s domination over Guenelic bends his gender rather than affecting his body. Though men and women experience the arduous pains of love differently, they both experience the “Angoysses douloureuses” of love’s domination. Further, Hélisenne represents the resemblances between the sexes in their domination by love – for love has “domination et seigneurie” over men and women alike (282). As Quezinstra states, “si en amour l’homme ard, vous debvez estimer que la dame brusle, et l’ardeur qui domine en l’ung ne default en l’autre” (427). Indubitably, this burning fire dominates both men and women; and Crenne has a vested interest in communicating with both men and women about love.

For Hélisenne de Crenne, the act of writing is an erudite imitation that subverts male tradition by infusing it with feminist intentions. She argues gender parity in early modern France by presenting and performing a multiplicity of genders, thereby detaching gender from sexed bodies. Her gender-bending arguments and textual drag establish her as a subversive participant in the Querelle des femmes. By making virility and masculinity performative within her work and by addressing her argument to a mixed

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110 See Heitsch’s “Female love-melancholy in Hélisenne de Crenne’s Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours (1538).”
audience of male and female readers, Crenne argues that women ought to be given the space, the opportunity, and the liberty to perform virile works.
An 18 March 1581 entry of Montaigne’s *Journal de Voyage* (1774)\(^\text{111}\) describes a marriage between two men that occurred outside Rome in 1578:

Saint Jean Porta Latina, en laquelle église certains Portugais, quelques années y a, estoient entrés en une estrange confrérie. Ils s’espousoient masle à masle à la Messe, avec mesmes cérémonies que nous faisions nos mariages, faisoient leurs pasques ensemble, lisoient ce mesme évangile des nopces, et puis couchoient et habitoient ensemble. Les esprits Romains disoient que, parce qu’en l’autre conjonction, de masle et femelle, cette seule circonstance la rend légitime, que ce soit en mariage, il avoit semblé à ces fines gens que cette autre action deviendroit parfaitement juste, qui l’auroit autorisée de cérémonies et mystères de l’Église. Il fut brûlé huict ou neuf Portugais de cette belle secte. (118)

Montaigne’s personal account of this strange establishment of homosexual brotherhood offers a legal and religious justification for marriage between men that is ambiguously fraught with tension and admiration. While these partnerships shared the same religious ceremonies and lay practices as heterosexual marriages did in early modern Europe, it is the sexuality of the lay practice of cohabitation that renders them inadmissible. Indeed, the sexuality of heterosexual partnerships is only deemed legitimate through the State and Church by the marriage ceremony; and yet it is the sexual conjunction of two men, despite having undergone the same marriage ceremony, that causes their deaths – a brutal spectacle of a ceremony itself.

\(^{111}\) A private travel journal written during his medicinal tour of hot springs to cure his kidney stones 1580-1581.
Alan Bray's The Friend traces the history of “affrèremens” and “confrèreries” in medieval and early modern Europe – a rich history of voluntary kinships – from godparents swearing kinship to their godchildren's parents at a baptism to wedded or sworn brotherhoods (two people of same sex, usually men, who swear vows of brotherhood or friendship in a church, often taking communion together as in a marriage ceremony). In Queer (Re)readings in the French Renaissance Gary Ferguson draws two conclusions from Montaigne's anecdote and Bray's historiography. First, he finds that “the idea of same-sex marriage was quite 'thinkable' in the sixteenth century because it could be assimilated within traditional beliefs and practices that remained deeply ingrained” and secondly, “men who wished to give to their (sexual) relationships the idea of a standing that, even in the absence of legal recognition, might come from a semi-public (religious) enactment, had at their disposal the means by which they might do so” (232). It seems, however, that while such same-sex unions were possible, they were not always without violent aftermath – especially when these unions are sexual. Indeed, it is the appearance of effeminacy that makes manifest the specter of the homosexual bedroom; the “dude [who] looks like a lady” is an individual who threatens to overturn the whole of early modern France’s gendered hierarchy.

This chapter’s first section, “‘En la place d’un roy, d’une putain fardee’: Sodomy, effeminate masculinity, and Henri III,” explores how the specter of sodomy permeated sixteenth century discourse concerning power, authority, and gender norms. It traces the links between the hermaphrodite’s ambiguous connotations and the perceived need to govern and police “unnatural” bodies in early modern France, particularly “dude[s who] loo[k] like lad[ies].” Ronsard’s defamation of Henri III’s minions as “culs devenus cons”
exemplifies early modern masculinist obsessions with the threat of men ceding power to women by taking their place as passive receptors in sexual acts. Because sodomy had multiple and convoluted meanings in early modernity, the problematic figure of the effeminate man produced acute male anxiety; and this anxiety often resulted in violent repercussions, as the Roman gay marriage account in Montaigne’s travel journal exemplifies.

Through the character of Guenelic in Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours Hélisenne de Crenne explores male effeminacy and its ties to the love of women and of men. While Crenne links Guenelic’s effeminacy to excessive heterosexual desire, she also explores the homosexual implications of male effeminacy through Guenelic’s friendship with the hyper-virile Quezinstra. “Ambiguous Amitié: Queering through Quezinstra,” this chapter’s second section, examines Hélisenne de Crenne’s problemization of normative masculinity through the character Quezinstra and the male friendship that he and Guenelic share. It articulates the ways in which Crenne uses her mask of counter-exemplarity in order to represent and acknowledge a multiplicity of masculinities, some normative and some alternative. In fact, she uses her access to the male realms of chivalric combat, the voyage, and friendship in order to problematize notions of male friendship that deny sexual relationships between men; she also problematizes heteronormativity and the exemplarity of the hyper virile man.

Women as subject in the Essais are much more diverse and problematic than men or even humanity as subject. From his first essay, Montaigne establishes an opposition between what is masculine and what is feminine; the masculine and the feminine are characterized by opposing attributes and actions, which the author problematizes more
often than not. In fact, Montaigne oscillates between depicting misogynistic representations of women and expressing stereotypically feminine characteristics, with a female voice and in a feminine style. Though many critics argue that Montaigne is either a misogynist or a feminist, it is in effect impossible that such distinct categories can fully situate woman in Montaigne’s work.\textsuperscript{112} His friendship with Marie de Gournay is extraordinary not only in that it problematizes his avowal that women lack the intelligence necessary for perfect friendship, but more importantly to this study, because it allows Gournay to manipulate Montaigne’s project in the \textit{Essais} for her personal proto-feminist intentions. This chapter’s third section, “‘Ce fagotage de tant de diverses pieces’: Maternal Monstrosity and Montaigne’s kinship of the book,” explores Montaigne’s manipulation of Aristotelian perfect friendship and Platonic ideals of the reproduction of the mind’s thoughts. Montaigne interweaves homosexual erotics into the friendship tradition and disrupts the reproductive imperative by producing progeny that is outside human corporeality. This section essays the connection between the \textit{Essais} as Montaigne's monstrous child and his text as a monument to his beloved La Boétie. By constructing his text in terms of memorial and monstrosity, Montaigne effects a spiritual union of souls within one textual corpus and a non-sexual procreation of the mind. It is Montaigne’s embrace of femininity as maternity that inspires and allows Marie de Gournay to blur the lines between masculinity and femininity.

\textsuperscript{112} “By posing the woman question in terms of the conventional dichotomy of ‘Montaigne: misogyné ou féministe?’ we set ourselves up for, at best, oversimplified answers, and at times, distortions of the text. If anything can be said with certainty about women and Montaigne, it is that they remain on all fronts—personal, textual, and paratextual—complex, potentially overpowering forces, defined by their paradoxically anarchic creative potential; they are supreme disturbers, albeit seeming maintainers, of the status quo” (Polachek 3).
“En la place d’un roy, d’une putain fardee”: Sodomy, effeminate masculinity, and Henri III

France’s early modern gender crisis exploded with discourse connecting sex and political power, often linking sexual or gender transgressions to political transgressions. There existed acute anxiety concerning gender and political power, for the ascension of female rulers like Elizabeth I and Catherine de Medici threatened Salic law in France. As Joan Kelly argues, aristocratic women’s loss of political, financial and sexual liberties and status during the transition from feudalism to the early modern bourgeois state made sexe a significant and powerful facet of political anxiety and its expression. Sexual and gender ambiguity are central figures in such discourse; in fact hermaphrodites have a long history of representing social chaos and disaster. The much discussed monster of Ravenna, born in 1511 just a few months after a bloody battle in Ravenna, was a hermaphroditic creature with a horn on his head, wings, a single leg terminating in a bird claw, an eye at the knee and a cross and upsilon on its chest. First documented in 1512 and appearing in countless chronicles of the early sixteenth century, the monster was

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113 See Agrippa D’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques* (1617): “Avoir raz le menton, garder la face pasle,/ Le geste effeminé, l’oeil d’un Sardanapale:/ Si bien qu’un jour des rois ce douteux animal,/ Sans cervelle, sans front parut tel en son bal./ De cordons emperlez, sa chevelure pleine,/ Sous un bonnet sans bord, faict à l’italienne,/ Faisoit deux arcs voutez, son menton pinceté,/ Son visage de blanc et de rouge empasté,/ Son chef tout empoudré, nous montrerent l’idee,/ En la place d’un roy, d’une putain fardee…” cited in LaGuardia p. 234.

114 The earliest documentation is in Latin, and most discussion is accompanied by an image of the monster. Boaistuau writes: “du temps que le Pape Jules second suscita tant de sanglantes tragedies en Italie, et qu’il eut la guerre avec le Roy Loys, à la journée de Ravenne, il fut engendré à Ravenne mesme … un monstre ayant une corne en la teste, deux aesles, et un pied semblable à celuy d’un oyeau ravissant et avec un oeil au genoil, il estoit double quant au sexe, participant de l’homme et de la femme, il avoit en l’estomac la figure d’un ypsilon et la figure d’une croix, et si n’avoit aucun bras.” Cited in Céard p. 154-55.
interpreted as the product of God’s wrath for the bloody war in Italy, most specifically the carnage at Ravenna.\(^{115}\)

The most repeated and powerful manifestation of male anxiety in the form of intersexuality in sixteenth century France concerns Henri III’s supposed hermaphroditism. Swarms of political pamphlets during his reign (1574-1589) falsely accusing him of being a hermaphrodite expressed anxiety and frustration concerning Henri’s inefficacy as ruler.\(^{116}\) Their essential message was, “that dude (looks like a lady)” and thus has lost control of his court and nation. Henri III’s proclivity for bisexuality and cross-dressing further politicized notions of supposedly natural gender presentations and sexualities. Accounts of Henri’s behavior and mockery of his sex life manifested the tensions surrounding power, kingship, and gender in early modern France that extend beyond the frames of political writing to literature. Ronsard links Henri’s supposed sodomy to the denigration of the royal bloodline:

Le Roy, comme lon dit, accole, baise et lesche
De ses poupins mignons le teint frais nuit et jour.
Eux, pour avoir argent lui prestent tour à tour
Leurs fessiers rebondis et endurent la bresche…
Et aurait mieux valu pour le bien de la France
Qu’Henri second du nom à qui je fus donné,
Bien qu’il desplaise aux Dieux, eut les culs bouquiné
Que de faire un Neron de sa noble semence.\(^{117}\)

\(^{115}\) See Céard’s commentary in *Des monstres et prodiges* and also Long, *Hermaphrodites*.

\(^{116}\) “For perhaps the first time in modern Western history the printed word was used as a means of waging a relentless cold war against an unsatisfactory ruler. It is less the supposed or real sexual practices of the king and those close to him that interests the historian than the image of illegitimacy conveyed by the social disorder in France, and an indication that public opinion misunderstood and disapproved of the king’s obvious affection for his favorites” (Sibalis 214-15). See also Joseph Cady on literary representations of Henri III’s homosexuality.

\(^{117}\) See Jeanneret p.275. Ronsard ends another poem by succinctly citing his disgust at the unnatural state of sodomy: “Vostre semence chet en terre qui n’est bonne” p.276.
Henri was rumored to have cross-dressed, and at least from the waist-up Henri’s dress was often effeminate: an elaborate headdress, strings of pearls, a décolletage covered by transparent material, often a powdered and rouged face: “Ce pendant le Roy faisait jouxtes, tournois, ballets et force masquarades, où il se trouvait ordinairement habillé en femme, ouvroit son pourpoint et descouvroit sa gorge, y portant un collier de perles et trois collets de toile, deux à fraize et un renversé, ainsi alors que les portoient les dames de sa cour.” Théodore Agrippa d’Aubigné attacks Henri III for his homosexual consorts and his effeminate dress, calling it monstrous. D’Aubigné underlines the uncertainty of Henri’s sex and the anxiety it produces, for he mockingly states that at first glance it is difficult to discern whether one is beholding a woman King or a man Queen: “Pour nouveau parement il porta tout ce jour / Cet habit monstrueux, pareil à son amour: / Si qu’au premier abord chacun estoit en peine / S’il voyait un Roy femme ou bien un homme Reyne.”

Whether lady King or man Queen, Henri “looks like a lady” at first glance. Long argues that in the case of Henri, the perceived ambiguity was taken as a threat to the fabric of society because of “a problematic sense of the gender roles informing the social structures such as monarchy and marriage …. The French would not have felt threatened by signs of effeminacy if masculinity had been an established and unquestioned fact rather than a social role” (Hermaphrodites 205). In his Quatorze histoires (1567) Tesserant borrows ancient accounts of Nero’s transsexual desires and his desire to be penetrated by other men, infusing these stories with fears of disorderly sexuality:


119 Cited in Hermaphrodites p.204.

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Car comme Spore luy avoit servy abominablement de femme, aussi voulut il en servir à un sien libertin . . . auquel il assigna dot, comme les femmes apportent à leurs maris . . . Bref il prenoit si grand plaisir à telles lascivetez, qu’il pardonnoit tous les autres crimes à ceux qui confessoient franchement devant luy leurs detestables luxures & paillardises.120

According to Long, Tesserant’s argument that Nero’s disorderly sexuality is the root of his other evils does not reflect his Latin sources, that “clearly sexuality and gender roles had become even more critical issues in sixteenth century French society than they had been in ancient Rome” (Hermaphrodites 195).

Anxiety about Henri’s sexual transgressions is evidence of the extent to which heterosexual virility and the capacity to reproduce were bound up in the masculinity of kingship in early modern France. Henri was discredited, denigrated, and disempowered because of this association with the specters of hermaphrodisim, transvestism, and homosexuality. A 1581 critique of the homosexual and hedonistic court of Henri III evokes a myriad of sodomies and transgressive sexual personages:

Les dieux, les nimphe, les driades,
Satyres, tritons et naiads
Y ont visité nostre Roy,
Qui avecques ses Ganimèdes
Les a recues en bel arroy,
Que ce son de beaux compignons
Que le Roy et tous ses mignons!
Ils ont le visage un peu palle,
Mais sont-ils femelle ou masle?
Car ils servent tous d’un mestier.
La valette est bien en quartier,
Et le plus aimé, ce dit-on;
Il est un peu bougre et poltron.121

120 Cited in Hermaphrodites p.195.
The series of effeminate men who are received in Henri’s court, because of their effeminate appearance and “buggery,” are not easily discernible as either men or women; in fact, many such writings aver that they are neither. Indeed, Ronsard refers to Henri’s minions as “culs devenus cons.”¹²² These “dude” parts have become lady parts – chaos reigned in sixteenth century France. While the hermaphrodite was studied in the Valois court as a figure of transcendent power in alchemical and Neo-Platonist treatises, critics of Henri III then twisted the hermaphroditic figure into a horrifying monstrosity of gender and sexual deviance. Kathleen Long states that “sexual ambiguity was not always seen as threatening, but evolved in that direction over the course of the sixteenth century, as the Valois court declined into very visible self-indulgence” (198). In this way, gender and sexual ambiguities were seen as politically threatening, and disorderly bodies and behavior were thought to lead to a disorderly, chaotic society. Because of the power of this anxiety-producing image, the hermaphrodite emerged in early modern France as a powerful political symbol that was often transcribed and reinterpreted in literary and philosophical texts of the time.

It is difficult to discern exactly what Henri’s sexual practices were, because all accounts of his sexuality and that of his mignons are the production of his Catholic and Huguenot enemies. Sodomy is indeed quite difficult to define, for it connoted all kinds of vices in the early modern period, from non-procreative heterosexual acts to homosexual acts to bloodshed.¹²³ Indeed, these existed a multiplicity of sodomies (and incoherencies

¹²² “Ces culs devenus cons engouffrent plus de biens/ Que le gouffre de Scylle hay des Anciens” (cited in Jeanneret p.275).

¹²³ Long Hermaphrodites p. 35.
of the concept in the period) at work in France, England and the New World. Boswell argues that sodomy’s

Etymology is probably a misprision of history, and it has connoted in various times and places everything from ordinary heterosexual intercourse in an atypical position to oral sexual contact with animals. At some points in history it has referred almost exclusively to male homosexuality and at others almost exclusively to heterosexual excess. (93)

Badinter signals that under the Ancien Régime sodomy was a “catégorie ‘attrape-tout’ qui inclut les contacts sexuels – pas nécessairement anaux – entre hommes, hommes et animaux, hommes et femmes, défiant la réproduction. On l’appelle le ‘péché muet’ ou le ‘vice abominable’ dont il vaut mieux taire l’existence au peuple” (148-49 my emphasis ERC).

Juridical definition and regulation thus determines sodomy to be a crime against the state, order, and nature – for non-procreative sex acts defy the reproductive imperative in early modern France. Reproduction defined maleness and femaleness and determined normative sex roles upon which early modern French society depended:

“Jusqu’à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, trois grands codes . . . régissaient les pratiques sexuelles . . . . Or ils étaient tous centrés sur les relations matrimoniales: le devoir conjugal, la capacité à le remplir . . . . La relation de mariage était le foyer le plus intense des contraintes; c’était d’elle qu’on parlait surtout” (Foucault, Volonté 51-52).

Montaigne’s conception of literary kinship is a queer textual reproduction, for it is a kind

124 See Queering the Renaissance, especially Traub and Warner for the New World; Bray, Mager, Hammill and Goldberg for England. Goldberg argues that a universalizing definition of sodomy “has its warrant in Renaissance notions of sodomy as a range of desires and acts that the period thought anyone could have or do, sodomy in its most capacious definition including just about anything but unprotected vaginal intercourse between a married couple” (13). Freccero’s chapter examines the possibility of Navarre’s text as lesbian space. See also Goldberg’s study of male love in early modern England in Sodomotries.

125 Sibalis confirms as well “in strict legal terms, sodomy was any sexual act not leading to procreation, including fellation, anal intercourse and even bestiality” (212). See also Goldberg’s Sodomotries: Renaissance texts, modern sexualities and Celia Daileader’s “Back Door Sex: Renaissance Gynosodomy, Aretino, and the Exotic.”
of non-procreative reproduction in the corporal sense; that is, it is a way to reproduce outside the limits of heterosexuality that define normative kinship in early modernity.

As Michel Foucault and David Halperin underline, sodomy was defined juridically before the nineteenth century; though “in common usage . . . sodomy meant sexual relations between two persons of the same sex (usually male)” (Sibalis 212). The “sodomites” were indeed personages (though developed socially rather than pathologized by psychiatry like the nineteenth century invert), also known in early modern France as “infâmes” or “gens/chevaliers de la manchette” (212). Sibalis notes that though jurists considered sodomy to be a heinous crime, French courts tried sodomites infrequently and rarely imposed the death sentence. Claude Courouve has determined that between 1311 and 1783 there were only 53 sodomy trials in France, and of 66 men charged with sodomy 39 were executed. Though less frequently mentioned than male homosexual relations, “les relations entre femmes sont en effet traitées dans les manuels de confession ou les pénitentiels sous des rubriques différentes” such as “luxure abominable,” “sodomie,” “vice infâme” and “crime contre nature” (Steinberg 41).

Indeed, the conflation of hermaphroditism and homosexuality in early modernity informed non-normative genders and sexualities that would be established in nineteenth-century psychiatry’s invention of pathologies. As Foucault demonstrates, “[l]’homosexualité est apparue comme une des figures de la sexualité lorsqu’elle a été rebattue de la pratique de la sodomie sur une sorte d’androgyrie intérieure, un hermaphrodisme de l’âme” (Volonté 59 emphasis mine ERC). The conflation of

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126 See Foucault, Histoire de la sexualité and Halperin, “Forgetting Foucault.”

127 Cited in Sibalis p. 212.
hermaphrodisms with homosexuality unveiled the specters of sodomy and non-procreative sex in early modern France. In the court trials of Marin le Marcis, the possibility of his/her homosexuality made sex designation imperative; and Duval’s (as well as other surgeons’) equation of reproductive ability with sex designation likewise exemplify the anxiety-producing connections between sexual/gender ambiguity and cultural constructions of difference. Cross-dressers were especially problematic because of their active choice to take on feminine appearance; they are “dude[s who] loo[k] like lad[ies]” of their own volition. Indeed, transvestites are born some way – these early modern trials insist on answering the question, born what way? And while sodomites are “born this way,” what ought the state to do with them?

There existed a distinct difference between men who penetrate other men and those who desire to be penetrated by other men in early modern France and throughout antiquity. “Sodomites” in this duality are the penetrators and thus remain virile and masculine, while “bougres” are those who take the female role of passivity in sexual acts, and were more vehemently condemned than those engaging in the active role. Sodomites may have deviant sexual practices yet retain a masculine status because of the underlying notion that “a conventionally masculine man who sexually penetrates a subordinate partner of either sex is acting out a conventional male role. That notion has a long history” (Halperin, Homosexuality 115). In this way, gendered expressions of sexuality are not necessarily linked with sexual object choice. What is transgressive and abominable about male sodomy lies in a man’s choice to take the woman’s role in sex acts – it is a transgression of gender and hierarchy. Indeed, the distinction between quasi-normal

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128 See Long, “Jacques Duval on Hermaphrodites.”
homosexualities and absolutely deviant sexual behavior “reflects an age-old practice of
classifying sexual relations in terms of penetration versus being penetrated, superordinate
versus subordinate status, masculinity versus femininity, and activity versus passivity – in
terms of hierarchy and gender, that is, rather than in terms of sex and sexuality”
(Homosexuality 115).

In pre-modern European systems of sodomy and pederasty, the boy who is
penetrated does not take pleasure in the act of submission; rather, he benefits from his
sexual commerce by the learning and gifts his partner bestows. These boys’ passivity
does not extend to desire, and thus they are not categorized as passives, unlike those who
take pleasure in submission and penetration.129 Because of this desire to play the role of
woman, such men are argued to show outward signs of femininity. Likewise, the gender
distinction implicit in such sexual relations between men allows both effeminate and
virile men to take part in such acts – and writers such as Hélisenne de Crenne and Michel
de Montaigne challenge the precarious heterosexuality of virile men who share love and
friendship with other (especially effeminate) men.130

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129 “The category of male passive or invert applies specifically to subordinate males whose willingness to
submit themselves to sexual penetration by men proceeds not from some non-sexual motive (including love
for their partner) but from their own erotic desires and/or from their assumption of a female gender
identity” (Halperin, Homosexuality 122).

130 While Halperin and Langer both explicitly erase male eroticism from Montaigne’s friendship with La
Boétie, Marc Schachter’s work has effectively proven that this is far from the case.
“Bien aymé compagnon”: Queering through Quezinstra

Through the hyper-virile character of Quezinstra, Hélisenne de Crenne explores and problematizes another masculinity – the ideal chivalric warrior who is immune to the passions of love for women. Quezinstra represents the ideal man in physique, martial prowess, and homosociality. Crenne subverts the chivalric tradition of the rejection of sexual love with women for accomplishments as a warrior and the comfort of strictly male companionship. By his truly virile and homo-centric nature, Quezinstra rejects love but not friendship: “plus me plaist estre dict ygnorant de telle volupté (dont j’estime le plaisir petit et la delectation briefve) que, pour en participer, souffrir fatigues trop longues et ameres; et encore nulle bonne fin ne s’en peult esperer” (Crenne, Angoysses 270-71). Quezinstra is a real man’s man, lauded for his martial prowess; yet Crenne problematizes even the ideal masculinity that Quezinstra embodies.

His proclivity for physical combat is exemplified in a pseudo-eroticized hand-to-hand combat in which he and the king who are “merveilleusement expert[s]”:
“droictement … commencerent à s’entrelasser de mains, de bras et de jambes, en mettant toutes leurs forces” (311, 312). Crenne’s text eroticizes their fight by using sexually imbued images such as interlacing hands, arms and legs. She then evokes the violent nature of this wrestling by articulating that they are putting all of their force into these interlocking limbs. In addition to the gestures of this fight scene resembling those of coitus, they also evoke the Platonic androgynes’ interlaced bodies in the sexual act of reunion. Montaigne describes a similar intermingling of souls in his description of his perfect friendship with La Boétie: “En l’amitié dequoy je parle, elles [nos âmes] se

131 See chapter three of this study for a discussion of the androgyne myth in Plato.
meslent et confondent l’une en l’autre, d’un mélange si universel, qu’elles effacent et ne retrouvent plus la couture qui les a jointes” (I.28.188). While Montaigne’s Platonic entwining is subversive by sexualizing his text and genderless souls, Crenne’s belligerent intertwining of men is subversive due to its physicality and corporeality. Ultimately, the image conveyed to Crenne’s readers is unlike much chivalric narration of fight scenes even within the Angoysses, which painstakingly recount every movement of sword or combat on horseback. In this case, she evokes the physicality and sexuality of early modern homosociality within the male tradition of chivalric combat.

As is typical of the ideal warrior, Quezinstra embraces battle and eschews sexual acts. He gently mocks his friend Guenelic for desiring sexual union with and the company of his lady Hélisenne after the two witness a young couple’s marital nuptials; yet it is the force and arguably the imagery of Guenelic’s plea that persuades Quezinstra to take his leave of the duke and continue on their quest for Hélisenne. The lover swears that he would even endure being taken by Jupiter as Ganymede was in order to enjoy his absent lady: “Car croyez, si Jupiter, le souverain des dieux, me voulait béatifier et assompter au supernel habitacle, comme il fit jadis le gentil troyen Ganymède, point n’estimerais cette félicité équivalable à la douceur et sauvité que pourrais recevoir, en usant familièrement du regard et souefve collucution de ma très désirée dame” (Crenne, Angoysses 233). The young Trojan Ganymede, the most beautiful of mortals, is often depicted as lithe and feminine.\textsuperscript{132} He is the symbol of the beautiful young male who

\textsuperscript{132} Shakespeare’s Rosalind goes by Ganymede while in her masculine persona in As You Like It, exemplifying the questioning of gender and queerness of unstable genders that existed in early modernity. She is a woman dressed as a man and pretending (arguably ineffectually) to be a man in love; further, in the reality of the Elizabethan stage, a young man pretends to be a young woman pretending to be a young man.
attracts homosexual desire – for the assumption of Ganymede was in fact a rape. Zeus disguised himself as an eagle and snatched the youth from a field outside of Troy, sexually taking him en route to Mount Olympus. Zeus made Ganymede his immortal cupbearer, granting him eternal youth; and supposedly Hera despised him out of jealousy. Crenne’s “béatifier et assompter” are quite possibly euphemisms for being taken sexually by a dominant male figure; and the “fêlicité” of receiving this act and its post-coital pleasures, while nothing compared to loving Hélisenne, sparks a nerve in Quezinstra. What an admission this is for Guénélic, what a desire for his lady Hélisenne – and what a response on the side of Quezinstra, who smiles at this admission and acquiesces to Guénélic’s wishes: “À ces mots, le mien compagnon doucement commença à sourire, et me dit: « Certes, Guénélic, puisque vous estimez la fruition d’amour tant délictable, point ne m’émerveille de ce que ne voulez pardonner à aucun péril, pour participer à telle béatitude . . . »” (233).

Just as Guenelic defends his virility quite ineffectually, Quezinstra problematizes the veracity of his own normative heterosexual desires. He fulfills the necessary masculinist tradition of exalting female beauty, and yet his praise of one woman’s beauty seems in fact quite forced. He swears not to be the prisoner of love even in the same breath: “Guenelic, soyez certain que l’excellente beaulté de ceste dame m’a

who is in fact in love with another man. Even more destabilizing is that Rosalind as Ganymede attracts the unwanted attention of Pheobe, herself a young man playing a young woman.

133 The violently sexual energy of nuptial ceremony the two friends witness as the end of the wedding makes this allusion to rape quite plausible: “Aucuns des jeunes princes . . . aperçurent une fenêtre qui était demeurée ouverte, qui leur fut propice pour entrer dedans. Et incontinent que l’un d’eux y fut, ouvrit l’huis aux autres, si vinrent au lit des amoureux, et les pressèrent et stimulèrent d’eux lever. Si fut trouvé qui, par force et violence, la chemise avait été déchirée… laissèrent jouir le nouveau marié de s’amie, lequel combien que sa fureur fut grande, en rompant la porte et les murs, si est-il à présuposer que, depuis, il se rendit humain” (Crenne, Angoysses 231-32).
contraint à vérité proférer, sans ce que troublement de raison, par quelque désir aveuglé, ayt occupé ma veue, car croyez que je suis délibéré d’estre toujours loingtain des dars d’amours, lesquelz si indiscrettement et cruellement plusieurs offensent” (282). He continues by imploring Guenelic to consider the fates of literary heroes whose lives end tragically because of treacherous royal women: “le Troyen pour Helene, Achilles pour Polixene, Marc Antoine pour Cleopatra . . . Infiny est le nombre de ceulx qui pour ceste sensualité ont leurs vies terminées” (271). This exemplum of ruined warriors allows Crenne to display her erudition while providing a masculine parallel to lady Hélisenne’s long list of women destroyed by love in the novel’s Première partie. Guenelic is not fooled by his friend’s forced admiration for this woman, because his praise is not attached to any desire for her love "puis que les louenges que vous faictes de ceste dame ne procedent par estre attaict de quelque amoureux desir” (282). Quezinstrà, “qui estoit jeune d’aage, et antique de sens,” is further linked with classical Greek practices of pederasty because of Crenne’s description of his sensibilities. This description, “antique de sens,” connotes Quezinstrà’s nascent homosexuality because this antique sensibility links him to premodern conceptions of pederasty.

Ambiguity surrounding the sexuality of the effeminate man in early modern France allows Crenne to complicate the friendship between Guenelic and Quezinstrà, Guenelic’s hypervirile and “bien aymé compaignon” (288). Within the context of these bedfellows’ personal and intimate bond of friendship, both of their masculinities are questioned or made ambiguous. Because this gender bending centers on active and passive roles, and because it is dependent upon their intimate bond, the male rapport of friendship has quite sexual overtones if not a sexual framework in Angoysses. One must
wonder whether the text’s repetitious avowal that “Amour” is the cause of Guenelic’s effeminate masculinity may not in fact be a masking of Crenne’s exploration of homosexual love as the cause of male effeminacy. The term *amitié* or friendship in early modern writing had quite the ambiguous relationship with *amour*; for a lover is an “ami” (“son Amy Guenelic”), and lovers share “amitié” as well as love. Quezinstra calls Guenelic “mon bien aymé compaignon” while Guenelic expresses to Hélisenne’s character “l’incomprehensible amitié que je te porte” (288, 333). By entering the homo-central space of male friendship, Crenne in fact takes part in a long tradition of masculine discourse lauding the male-male bond; and the links between perfect male friendship and male same-sex object choice are at once ambiguous and pointed.

While countless renowned male writers have treated the subject of male friendship in a strictly platonic manner, denying any sexual rapport between these twin souls, there exists in much writing on the subject an ambiguity or an anxiety about the possibility of sexual relations between men who love each other so completely. The discourse of masculine friendship “has helped to produce the uneasy relations between masculine homosociality and homosexuality” in that authors of such erotically devoid narratives of male friendships often purposefully efface pleasure from their relationships (Fradenberg, Freccero xvii). Hélisenne de Crenne, veering from traditional male literary tradition, presents the intimate relations between Guenelic and Quezinstra as consolation, intense conversation, and communion. The close friends often retire to a secret and private place where they might converse or comfort one another. Quezinstra at one point notices that Guenelic is afflicted with pain, and leads him to the most private of spaces to comfort his friend sweetly: “j’estoye de cruel travail tant affligé, qu’il seroit bien difficile
de le scovoir exprimer, ce que voyant Quezinstra, me retira au lieu qui luy sembloit plus secret et taciturne: Et lors fidelement avecq discreses et benignes raisons doucement me reconforztoit” (Crenne, Angoysses 343).

The comfort and seclusion passages in Angoysses emphasize the friends’ intimacy and empathy. They share their feelings, fears, and disappointments. Within this intimacy Crenne explores the effeminacy of the male bond; their seclusion allows these young men to look like ladies and talk like ladies. Guenelic and Quezinstra share declarations of intimate friendship, as well as countless pillow talks:

Apres la collation faicte, chacun pour reposer en sa chambre fut conduict: et Quezinstra et moy comme les aultres nous retirazmes, non pour reposer: mais seulement pour continuer noz familieres devises. Je vouloye commencer à parler d’amours selon ma coustume: car l’amoureuse flamme avecq si grand force mon desir allumoit, que toute la puissance de Neptune la mynie part n’auroit peu estindre, mais gueres moins ne souffroit Quezinstra non par chose semblable: mais pour l’extreme tristesse interieure qui l’agitoit, pour n’estre en son povoir d’exercer chevalerie. (277-78)

Here Crenne emphasizes the two men’s deep emotional bond rather than potential eros like in the above passages. Is it ironical that the flames of love spark Guenelic’s nocturnal discussions with Quezinstra? Their talks contrast to typical discussion between men and especially warriors; for these “dudes” are more often depicted as braggarts blowing their own horns about women and war. In this case the two are unsuccessful at both, and they suffer the malaise of masculinity raté together. In these scenes Crenne subverts masculinist writing while presenting to her readers sensitive men and their intimate bonding. She underlines the friends’ intimacy while sequestered in “notre secret hébergement,” – secret meaning here discreet, private and intimate: “Nous retirez en nostre secret hebergement, en devisant de diversité de propos, l’insidieux sommeil si fort
nous stimula que noz lassez membres contraignit à cercher le benefice du désiré repos: parquoy pour restaurer la nocturne lasseté, dedans le lit nous collocquasmes” (290). Crenne makes clear the intimacy of the two friends’ bedchamber and interweaves eroticism into their journey to sweet repose. Indeed, their sleepiness is so strong as to stimulate their weary limbs; and her use of “lassez membres” evokes both “lascifs” and male members (290). Likewise, she evokes both desire and nocturnal lassitude during their pillow talks; and her use of “collocquasmes” imbues a certain shared intimacy in their conversation (290).

Bauschatz, considering the sexual overtones of their intimate discussions, astutely notes that the reader is unsure whether the conversation is taking place between two men or between a man and a woman in drag. It seems the most accurate response to her question is that Guenelic is both an effeminate man and a woman in drag. This “dude (looks like a lady),” but the presumed man is in fact quite starkly a woman personifying this problematic masculinity. This ambiguity makes the bedroom scenes even queerer than an exclusively male bedroom tête-à-tête; for Quezinstra’s supposed male love object is in fact a woman in drag – as an effeminate man. Crenne constructs this multiplicity of ambiguities, making the question of love and sexual object choice (male and female, virile and effeminate, heterosexual and homosexual) explode with possibilities – thereby calling into question any supposedly natural links between gender and sexuality.

Further, in a most telling episode of chivalry, Crenne plays with gender roles and masculine attributes by having Quezinstra fight Guenelic’s battle to free himself from imprisonment. During their chivalric quest the companions arrive at the city of Elivéba to find its princess almost immediately under siege by a certain Admiral. Having refused the
Admiral’s marital advances, the princess must defend her sexual and political sovereignty, violently under attack. As chapter three explores, the Princesse’s menacing suitor situation echoes Queen Dido’s ambiguous threat of belligerent suitors surrounding her lands; and the Princesse’s decision to fight for her sexual and political sovereignty (“exercer oeuvres viriles”) surpasses even Dido’s formidable female masculinity. Our heroes defend the city of Elivéba, and Guenelic is taken prisoner in battle. Quezinstra is so saddened by Guenelic’s capture and imprisonment that he locks himself away from the world, fearing his friend’s death. In fact, his comportment can only be compared to Guenelic’s anxiety and “angoysses” throughout the Seconde and Tierce parties, in which he laments his lost love Hélisenne:

[J]e me mys si avant entre les ennemys, que ne peuz evader, que ne fusse prins et emmené prisonnier: qui fut occasion que Quezinstra fut si irrité, que pour l’aspre et acerbe douleur interieure qui l’exagitoit, luy deffaillit la vigeur de son cueur, à cause qu’il estoit plus timide de ma morte que de ma prinse. Et pource sans dilation s’absenta, et retira dedans la cité, et les aultres le suyvirent: mais quand il fut en sa chambre, pour ne povoir plus supporter l’extreme travail dont il estoit persecuté, pour ultime refuge se colloqua au triste lict, ou il donna principe à former tres griefves complainctes et doloreulx regretz: lesquelz il continua assiduellement, sans ce que aulcun le peust corroborer ne conforter. (349)

What renders this man’s man effeminate? What makes “that dude look like a lady”? It is the imminent threat of sexual experiences with his bedside and dayside companion, Guenelic.

Filled with fear and sadness at his friend’s danger, Quezinstra retires to his room and as last recourse laments in the same bed he used to share with his dear friend: “[J]e m’esmerveille fort, à quelle occasion vous desirez la mort de ce vaillant et belligueux chevalier: lequel avec sa vertu, est tant accomplly en beauté naturele, que j’ay prins singulier plaisir à le contempler: Parquoy trop me contristeroye de sa mort” (355). This
episode of homocentric chivalry is thoroughly tinged with male love and admiration – for
the Admiral’s brother saves Guenelic from decapitation because he believes him to be
Quezinstra, whom the brother enjoys watching in battle because of Quezinstra’s virtue
and beauty. The Admiral’s brother then suggests that he fight with this chevalier, who
will live freely if he wins; and if the brother wins, the Admiral will take the princess’s
city. This insistence on the spectacle of the virile human form performing manly deeds
resembles the spectacle of the catwalk in which the male body engenders feminine
aspects. In Crenne’s (and Hélisenne’s) case, she writes a womanly performance of
ideal masculinity. She provides a convincing context for the limits of strictly platonic
friendship: even the ideal man becomes a dude who looks like a lady when threatened by
the loss of his male friend. With or without its explicit sexuality, male friendship provides
a demonstration of “culs devenus cons.”

Knowing that he will win such a fight, Quezinstra persuades Guenelic that their
best option is for him to fight for Guenelic, again insisting on acting valiantly for the
benefit of his special friend. The text and its characters insist upon Guenelic’s virility and
masculinity despite his passive decision to have his close friend fight for his life. Is
Crenne’s insistence ironical or is it a means of excusing his lack of virility? Quezinstra
states that he believes Guenelic has “assez vigueur de cueur et force de membres” to
conquer his enemy; however Quezinstra “estoit plus experimenté que moy, encore seroit
la chose plus seure” (363). In this way, Quezinstra assures Guenelic of the latter’s virile

134 “[A]nnoncez à la dame nostre conception, laquelle distinctement je vous veux exposer: c’est que sy
elle desire de terminer ceste odieuse et desplaisante guerre, faire le pourra, moyennant que vous ou aultr
de ses chevaliers vueille entreprendre la bataille comme j’ay predict” (358).

135 This spectacle is reminiscent of Crenne’s description of lady Hélisenne’s crowd of admirers, which
involves glorification of her physical beauty and bodily ornaments.
fortitude while undermining his friend’s martial aptitude by proclaiming the surety of his own triumph. Guénélic assures himself and his readers that he gives up this act of virile definition because of his uncompromising *amitié* – it is “pour luy complaire” that he lets Quezinstra fight (363). In response to his opponent’s immediate questioning of this decision not to fight, Guénélic defends his virility once again, insisting that he would fight for himself if it weren’t for the wishes of his companion: “[J]e luy feis response, tres affectueusement eusse désiré de le faire, mais pour satisfaire au vouloir d’ung mien compagnon, qui bien autant estoit desireux que moy, je m’en estoys desisté, affin de ne encourir son indignation” (363-64). His defense of male friendship is socially acceptable, yet indubitably less than virile. The question of Guénélic’s masculinity is thus treated incessantly and almost hyperbolically; and male friendship as a seemingly honorable and masculine defense is rather an ineffectual mask for Guénélic’s lack of virility.

Even more provocative is that Quezinstra’s battle for both Guénélic’s life and the liberation of the princess d’Elivéba’s country seems much more a defense of his friend than of the princess. Quezinstra thanks his opponent for sparing the life of Guénélic, “lequel je n’ayme pas moins que moymesmes” (368). Even the princess is not fooled by his galant act, admitting to Guénélic that she can well imagine that Quezinstra’s chivalrous offer to fight stemmed a desire to win back Guénélic’s freedom as much as to save the princess from her pitiful calamity: “autant l’a faict pour vous restituer vostre liberté, que pour la pitié et commiseration dont il a esté commeu pour me veoir en telle calamité” (370). The princess immediately reports to Guénélic that Quezinstra had been fraught with anxiety since his friend’s capture. Only Guénélic’s recovery could console him: “depuis que fustes prisonnier, vostre compaignon fut si anxieux, que nulem...
peult consoler, jusques ad ce qu’il fut certioré de vostre bonne convalescence” (370).
Though he was to her a “vray protecteur et defenseur,” she knows it is because of
Guenelic that he felt so called to action (370). Again, Quezinstra’s behavior during
Guenelic’s emprisonment calls to the reader’s mind Guenelic’s maudlin attitude and
incessant complaints during the first half of their quest. Guenelic’s melancholic
lamentation of his lost love is embodied in Quezinstra’s “angoyses.”

Not only does Crenne queer the male realm of amitié by creating sexual
ambiguity in their friendship, she also queers the male space of chivalric combat through
gender reversals – both in Guenelic’s passivity and in Quezinstra’s rescue of his friend
rather than the more normative rescue of a princess in distress. It is even more significant,
then, that Crenne bends even Quezinstra’s masculinity in this episode; she queers the last
of the three male realms she infiltrates – the voyage – by comparing Quezinstra’s joy for
the return of Guenelic to the joy of Greek women upon their husbands’ return from the
Trojan War:

Et disoient, voyez cy venir le chevalier que l’on presupposoit estre mort, dont la
fleur des chevaliers, lequel est son compaignon, est sy excessivement irrité.
L’ung de ceux qui prononcoient telz propoz, l’alla noncer à Quezinstra: lequel fut
si joyeux, que par plus grand desir ma venue attendoit, que ne faisoient les dames
de Grece la venue de leurs mariz. (360)

Quezinstra has been explicitly transformed into a wife in this moment; Crenne’s Homeric
image transforms Quezinstra the “dude” into a “lady.” It is telling that once again the two
companions lock themselves away from the outside world to celebrate their reunion:
“Finablement en sa chambre conduict, il me feist une reception qui moins ne fut
magnificque que benigne, et nous ne peusmes contenir de jecter quelques larmes
cordiales” (360). Once again Crenne imbues their queered friendship with gender reversal,
even more remarkably in that Guenelic is no soldier and Quezinstra, though compared to women, ultimately fights for him. In this way, she uses textual drag to enter male literary realms and also to problematize them, even queer them.

Hélisenne de Crenne presents two masculinities that are both problematic in sixteenth-century France, despite the fact that one of these masculinities is upheld as the ideal. Is this sentimental novel genre not masking her exploration of multiple masculinities under the influence of the love relationship, both heterosexual and homosexual? Her work is indicative of and a response to this early modern crisis of gender. Indeed, as Kathleen Long signals, “the evolution of an early modern crisis in masculinity can be traced from a profound questioning of gender roles that is delineated in the work of numerous women authors of the early sixteenth century” (*Anxiety* xi). Through her textual drag, Crenne enters the homosocial, homocentral and homosexual realm of male friendship – thereby posing problems concerning the multiplicity of genders and non-normative sexualities in early modern France. Crenne’s exploration of a sexualized male friendship imagines and publishes the experiences of these two men; and by weaving love and reproduction in Plato with Aristotelian ideal friendship, Michel de Montaigne uses his *Essais* to embrace rather than problematize the specter of dudes who look like ladies in sixteenth-century France.
“Ce fagotage de tant de diverses pieces”: Maternal Monstrosity and Montaigne’s kinship of the book

François Rigolot argues that Montaigne problematizes Renaissance exemplarity, “preserv[ing] that dialogical dimension in his *Essais* by bringing together contradictions, opinions, and making them wrestle each other. On the scene of writing, conflicting ideas become internalized” (“Invention” 14). This section explores his most revolutionary rewriting of exemplarity in his image of the *Essais* as a child of his mind, a maternal textual reproduction. Inspired by Jean-François Vallée’s examination of the classical literary and philosophical ties between male friendship and the dialogue genre, this section suggests that Montaigne problematizes classical thought on male friendship. Vallée signals that “the written representation of a friendly conversational encounter illustrates performatively, albeit through writing, the intellectual and/or ethical theses developed on friendship within the utterances of the characters”; I apply his study, which engages More’s and Erasmus’s exemplary *amicitia* to what Vallée acknowledges finds its French model in Montaigne and Étienne de La Boétie (43). Marc Schachter’s *Voluntary Solitude and the Erotics of Friendship*, which details the philosophical, classical, and textual origins of Montaigne’s love for La Boétie, has further been foundational to this study. The contradictions and ambiguities in “De l’amitié” (I.28) and the whole of the *Essais*, whose “ideal interlocutor” is La Boétie, work to problematize exemplary notions of male friendship that preclude eroticism.

Montaigne opens “De l'amitié” (I.28) by likening his writing of the *Essais* to imitating a painter’s labor: “Considérant la conduit de la besogne d’un peintre que j’ay, il m’a pris envie de l’ensuivre. Il choisit le plus bel endroit et milieu de chaque paroy, pour
y loger un tableau élaboré de toute sa suffisance; et, le vuide tout au tour, il le remplit de
crotesques, qui sont peintures fantasques, n’ayant grace qu’en la variété et estrangeté’’
(I.28.183). Though this is not the first time Montaigne describes his writing process in the
Essais, this passage is notable both for its visual imagery of the painter and for its
placement within his essay devoted to friendship. The 28th essay of his first of two tomes
in the 1580 edition, this portrait of perfect friendship more closely resembles a hymn to
love and occupies the central location – the most “bel endroit,” within the pages of this
first edition (I.28.183). Montaigne’s intent in the Essais is to paint himself as elaborately
as possible, and in the shape of monstrous “crotesques” both in form and in philosophy
(I.28.183). Montaigne’s text is monstrously structured, meandering from subject to
subject, infiltrated by anecdotes he has read and citations in Latin and Greek. The titles of
some essays in no way correspond to their subjects, and his text is filled with
contradictions. Montaigne’s intention in this formal monstrosity is to incite his readers to
contemplate varied opinions and stories, to spark their imagination so that each reader
ultimately brings his own meaning to the Essais. The essayist insists that the result of his
strange experimental endeavor in writing ends in formal, corporal monstrosity: “Que
sont-ce icy aussi, à la verité, que crotesques et corps monstrueux, rappiecez de divers
membres, sans certaine figure, n’ayants ordre, suite ny proportion que fortuité?”
(I.28.183). His monstrous and grotesque textual child, unlike children of his body, serve
as an immortal continuation of himself, a monument that lives on in the infinite potential
of his readers’ minds.

Montaigne’s monstrous work, his literary child, was born from his mourning of
Etienne de La Boétie; and he consecrates this 28th essay to the memory of his perfect
friend. He further inserts La Boétie's own 29 sonnets into the matter of his monstrous essays, allowing them to take up the center of his work. The essayist employs early modern notions of monstrosity, reproduction, and the imagination by weaving his friend La Boétie’s text, memory, and masculine “seed” into the *Essais*. Indeed, Montaigne conceives of the womb as having a reproductive potential, a certain masculinity in the making.136 By figuring himself as the mother of his essays and inserting La Boétie’s text into his creative womb, Montaigne engenders his text as a thought project shared with his most perfect friend. In this way, Montaigne allows his friendship with and love for La Boétie to live infinitely in the minds of his readers through their textual love child. His text inspires Gournay to further the metaphor of the book as child of the mind and to imbue the writing process with her personal feminist intentions. As chapters five and six of this study explore, she uses her literary father’s entirely novel genre to its extreme ends. Because Montaigne imbues his process with corporal femininity, Gournay is able to reclaim the feminine for the good of women. The fact that Montaigne paints himself to “loo[k] like a lady” emboldens Gournay to reclaim the power of the lady’s look.

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136 “Generation evolves from an eternally receptive female body; implied is Plato’s idea of that body as potential form and hence as having a male potency. Montaigne balances this figure with a second, also androgynous, that will prove generative in another way: the youth whose chin is still ‘boyish’ (that is, beardless). In forming both figures is the idea that the adult male is the apex of creation, the end point in a scale of physical and moral perfection. The female is either a male whose development has been arrested (Aristotle) or a male who has lapsed into a feminine modality (Plato). For Montaigne, both figures – potent womb and unevolved or regressed male – signify a paradoxical value: the vitality of the body at its most intense. The immature body harbors the material energy on which the mature body will draw as the adult becomes to be shaped by cultural processes establishing the differences in gendered behaviors. Nature alone promotes only sexual desire. The potent (and so masculine) womb of the female and the premasculine (and so feminine) body of the boy signify the pre-discursive and pre-social substrate in forming all communicable and public life. Without it, that life would not exist. The ‘mystery’ of generation thus defies and promotes civility: eluding law (‘regles positives’), it creates human beings. Homosexual love is also generative; by alluding to the adolescent tyrannicides Aristogiton and Harmodius, Montaigne suggests that the sexuality of young male lovers renews the body politic – a thesis he explicitly states in ‘De l’amitié’” (Jordan 66).
Montaigne creates a maternal identity, a novel maternal masculinity, in “Au lecteur” by announcing, “Je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre” (I.0.3). He materializes and feminizes textual generation by evoking the Latin roots of “matiere” – materia (matter) and mater (mother). Thus, he is both subject and mother of his book; while he insists on a maternal identity in relation to his text, this statement also engenders a kind of androgynous reproduction; it evokes masculine subject, ideas, form – and the corporeal matter that is feminine. Textual generation, following Platonic and Aristotelian thought, is a supremely male generation; for books are “children of the mind” and thus the generation of something akin to form, while female generation is bodily and material. Friedman signals that in classical antiquity and early modernity “the pregnant body is necessarily female; the pregnant mind is the mental province of genius, most frequently understood to be inherently masculine” (52).

Thus, by calling himself “matiere” from the Latin materia and mater, Montaigne calls himself both matter (female) and mother. Just as Montaigne avers that his writing is monstrous, the product of idleness and the imagination, he views La Boétie’s writing as stronger, firmer – “une autre semence” to his own materiality. His intention to publish La Boétie’s La servitude volontaire and later 29 sonnets is the textual insertion of his perfect friend’s seed and essence into the maternal body of the text. Montaigne’s matter and La Boétie’s seed work as corporal elements of reproduction in the Essais; and Gournay transforms this bodily reproduction with gendered roles such as tutor, protector, and wet nurse of this monstrous orphan after his death. Montaigne problematizes the link between women, poetry, history and philosophy by proclaiming similar intellectual proclivities
himself: “L’histoire, c’est plus mon gibier,\(^{137}\) ou la poésie, que j’ayme d’une particulièr
inclination” as well as “Dès ma première enfance, la poésie a eu cela, de me transpercer
et transporter” (I.26.146; I.37.284). The essayist takes a passive role in his encounter with
poetry, which pierces through him and transports him in a kind of poetic ecstasy. In this
way he creates an alliance with woman and femininity while furthering the sexuality of
the text and the normative passivity of the female body in heterosexual coitus. In a
strange congruence of textuality and sexual reproduction, this image suggests that poetry
has a sexually dominant position over Montaigne, who accepts the penetrating power of
the verse. Similarly to reading, the act of writing involves a female subject, the mother of
the text. It is if poetry impregnates Montaigne, who (years) later begets his strange and
monstrous text. Cottrell suggests in his analysis of “Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille
fin” (I.1) that Montaigne’s portrait of persuasion, rhetoric, sophistry, and seduction
embodies the act of writing with a feminine artistry:

> If woman is defined as representation, as transgression, as a producer of words . . .
and a generation of pleasure, then every writer can be defined as a ‘woman,’ and
the movement at the heart of every discourse can be defined as ‘womanly.’
Montaigne’s meditation on the seductive power of women is, at the same time, a
meditation on the seductive power of literature. (“Imprinting” 95-96)

To write is indeed to be feminine for Montaigne; yet he chooses a specific femininity –
the mother.

In the essay “On the affection of fathers for children” (II.8), which is dedicated to
a single mother and concerns raising a child as well as the ambiguous relationship
between fathers and their offspring, Montaigne explicitly presents himself as the mother

\(^{137}\) Marie de Gournay problematizes Montaigne’s association of women with poetry by averring that “Mon
gibier n’est pas la poésie; je poursuis quelque chose de plus solide” in a letter to Justus Lipsius 25 April
1593 (cited in Courcelles 221).
of his textual child. Though he dedicates the essay and addresses a mother, Madame d’Estissac, directly, he ultimately usurps her role as mother, transforming what ought to have been praise and advice of a 16th century single mother to a glorification of himself as mother and father of this book. He opens the essay by discussing his textual child: “Madame, si l’estrangeté ne me sauve, et la nouvelleté, qui ont accoustumé de donner pris aux choses, je ne sors jamais à mon honneur de cette sotte entreprise; mais elle est si fantastique et a un visage si esloigné de l’usage commun que cela luy pourra donner passage” (II.8.385 my emphasis ERC). In this way, Montaigne addresses to this mother the strangeness and novelty of his book project. He embodies his text with corporality, portraying it as having a face that is indeed far from commonly seen and reproduced in the literary world. While he starts to address a mother at the beginning of this chapter, he preempts the literary tradition of a dedicatory opening by presenting his own child to this mother and to his readership.

After a long digression concerning the melancholic humor of the essayist’s mind that spawned his writing project, Montaigne finally acknowledges Madame d’Estissac’s maternal merit, expressing his supposed intention to address her at the head of this essay, again embodying his text with human physiology:

Or, Madame, ayant à m’y pourtraire au vif, j’en eusse oublié un traict d’importance, si je n’y eusse représenté l’honneur que j’ay toujours rendu à vos merites. Et l’ay voulu dire signamment à la teste de ce chapitre, d’autant que, parmy vos autres bonnes qualitez, celle de l’amitié que vous avez montrée à vos enfans, tient l’un des premiers rengs. (II.8.385-86 my emphasis ERC)

It is Madame d’Estissac’s superb friendship offered to her children that Montaigne highlights here, which connects her maternal connection to the essayist’s writing project;
for it is in mourning the death of his perfect friend, Etienne de La Boétie, that Montaigne begins this most strange textual self-portrait:

C’est une humeur melancolique, et une humeur par consequent tres ennemie de ma complexion naturele, produite par le chagrin de la solitude en laquelle il y a quelques années que je m’estoy jetté, qui m’a mis premierement en teste cette resverie de me mesler d’escrire. Et puis, me trovant entierement despourveu et viude de toute autre matiere, je me suis presenté moy-mesmes à moy, pour argument et pour subject. C’est le seul livre au monde de son espece, d’un dessein farouche et extravagant. Il n’y a rien aussi en cette besoingne digne d’estre remarqué que cette bizarrerie: car à un subject si vain et si vile le meilleur ouvrier du monde n’eust sçeu donner façon qui merit qu’on en face conte. (II.8.385 my emphasis ERC)

Montaigne maliciously melds matter and seed, body and mind in his explanation of the subject of his book. He is devoid of any other matter than himself in all of his corporeal materiality; he transfers his materiality to the male realm of subject, of argument, of ideas. In this way he transforms Plato’s male philosopher midwife image into an androgynous individual. It is this strange mélange, this “dessein farouche et extravagant,” this “bizarrerie” of publishing the personal and of textualizing his self-portrait, that further makes his literary child monstrous yet worth of love and affection (II.12.385).

Montaigne’s essay on paternal affection is quite characteristically critical of the relationship between fathers and their biological children and the role of the wife and mother in the continuation of a father’s goods and estate. He admits having no

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138 “Voire, il semble que la jalousie que nous avons de les voir paroistre et jouyr du monde, quand nous sommes à mesme de le quitter, nous rende plus espargnons et rétrains envers eux: il nous fache qu’il nous marchent sur les talons, comme pour nous solliciter de sortir. Et, si nous avions à craindre cela, puis que l’ordre des choses porte qu’ils ne peuvent, à dire verité, estre ny vivre qu’aux despens de nostre estre et de nostre vie, nous ne devions pas nous mesler d’estre peres” (II.8.387).

139 “Il est tousjours proclive aux femmes de disconvenir à leurs maris: Elles saisissent à deux mains toute couvertures de leur contraster; la premiere excuse leur sert de planiere justification” (II.8.394).
patience even for witnessing a child nursing and further problematizes the practice of employing wet-nurses, critiquing the physical disconnect between mother and child and the propensity of affection to grow through association (even with goats as nourrisses) in this practice. Indeed, the essayist uses the example of goat wet nurses to argue that for both humans and animals “natural affection” is less than tenable. In the same way that Montaigne problematizes performative sexual masculinity in “De la force de l’imagination” in his long digression on impotence, we see in the practice of wetnurses in early modern France a kind of limited maternity; these mothers do not perform their sexual function of nourishing the children begotten in their wombs. These two examples work to problematize even further biological reproduction in the Essais. Clearly in the kinship of the book, it is the author who takes on the nourishment of their textual child; Montaigne’s method of reproduction outside the biological imperative assures a proximity of parent and child that fosters a kind of friendship meriting paternal affection: “Une vraye affection et bien reglée devroit naistre et s’augmenter avec la connoissance qu’ils nous donnent d’eux; et lors, s’ils le valent, la propension naturelle marchant quant

140 “Et ne les ay pas souffert volontiers nourris près de moy” (II.8.387).

141 “Au demeurant, il est aisé à voir par experience que cette affection naturelle, à qui nous donnons tant d’autorité, a les raciness bien foibles. Pour un fort legier profit, nous arrachons tous les jours leurs propres enfans d’entre les bras des meres, et leur faisons prendre les nostres en charge; nous leur faisons abandonner les leurs à quelque chetive nourrise à qui nous ne voulons pas commettre les nostres, ou à quelque chevre: leur défendant, non seulement de les alaiter, quelque dangier qu’ils en puissent encourir, mais encore d’en avoir aucun soin, pour s’employer du tout au service des nostres. Et voit on, en la plus part d’entre elles, s’engendrer bien tost par accoustumance un’affection bastarde, plus vehement que naturelle, et plus grande solicitude de la conservation des enfans empruntez que des leurs propres. Et ce que j’ay parlé des chevres, c’est d’autant qu’il est ordinaire autour de chez moy de voir les femmes de vilage, lors qu’elles ne peuvent nourrir les enfans de leurs mamelles, appeller des chevres à leurs secours; et j’ay à cette heur deux laquays qui ne tetterent jamais que huit jours laict de femmes. Ces chevres sont incontinant duites à venir alaitter ces petits enfans, reconnoissent leur voix quand ils crient, et y accourent: si on leur en presente un autre que leur nourrisson, elles le refusent; et l’enfant en fait de mesmes d’une autre chevre. J’en vis un, l’autre jour, à qui on osta la sienne, parce que son pere ne l’avoi qu’empruntée d’un sien voisin: il ne peut jamais s’adonner à l’autre qu’on luiy presenta, et mourut sans doute de faim. Les bestes alterent et abastardissent aussi aisément que nous l’affection naturelle” (II.8.399 my emphasis ERC).
et la raison, les cherir d’*une amitié vrayement paternelle*” (II.8.386 my emphasis ERC).

Again, it is true friendship that renders paternal affection real.

Montaigne closes this essay treating fatherhood and motherhood by offering an alternative to biological paternity, a kinship that is closer to the self and nobler in origin:

> Or, à considerer cette simple occasion d’aymer nos enfans pour les avoir engendrez, pour laquelle *nous les appelons autres nous mesmes*, il semble qu’il y ait bien une autre production venant de nous, qui ne soit pas de moindre recommendation: car *ce que nous engendrons par l’ame, les enfantsemens de notre esprit*, de nostre courage et suffisance, sont produicts par une plus noble partie que la corporelle, et sont plus nostres; *nous sommes pere et mère ensemble en cette generation*; ceux cy nous costuent bien plus cher, et nous apportent plus d’honneur, s’ils ont quelque chose de bon. (II.8.399-400 my emphasis ERC)

Indeed, what we call our other selves, our children of the mind, allow the bearer to be both father and mother, to produce offspring that are “plus nostres” than biological children (II.8.400). He continues, avowing that he would much rather reproduce textually than biologically: “Et je ne sçay si je n’aimerois pas mieux beaucoup en avoir produict ung, parfaictement bien formé, de l’acointance des muses, que de l’acointance de ma femme” (II.8.401). Just as Crenne’s Guenelic suffers the effeminacy of love for Hélisenne, earlier in the essay Montaigne suggests explicitly that heterosexual activity deprives men of their virility, citing Olympic athletes who deprive themselves of sexual relations with women to guard their strength. Most poignant is his example of Muley-Hasan, who “reprochoit la memoire de son pere, pour son hantise aveq ses femmes, et l’appeloit brède, effeminé, *faiseur d’enfans*” (II.8.390 my emphasis). This “maker of children” invective situates fatherhood itself as effeminate and further highlights the supremacy of textual reproduction in the mind of Montaigne.
Thus, Montaigne treats the fatherhood of the book through exempla, ending on his own work, “A cettuy-ci, tel qu’il est, ce que je donne, je le donne purement et irrevocablement, comme on donne aux enfans corporels: ce peu de bien que je luy ay faict . . . Il est plus riche que moy, si je suis plus sage que luy” (II.8.401-02). For once in the *Essais*, art triumphs over nature as this chapter closes. Evoking Aristotle’s claim that “le poëte nomméement est le plus amoureux de son ouvrage,” Montaigne manifests the supernatural affection that artists have for their masterpieces in the image of Pygmalion, “qui, ayant basty une statue de femme de beauté singuliere, il devint si éperduement espris de l’amour forcené de ce sien ouvrage, qu’il falut qu’en faveur de sa rage les dieux la luy vivifiassent, *Tentatum mollescit ebur, positóque rigore / Subsidit digitis*” (II.8.402). The essayist closes with his most vehement desire regarding his child and his status as androgynous begetter of this textual child: its coming to life and living infinitely in its artifice. He is nothing other than “pere et mere ensemble en ceste generation” of his infinite *Essais* (II.8.400).

In “De l’oisiveté” (I.8), Montaigne describes the role of idleness and imagination in his writing process, aligning it with fecundity in plants and women. He opens the essay with images of inchoate plant generation and maternal production. In this way Montaigne follows a patriarchal tradition while admitting to the positive function of female sexuality:

Comme nous voyons des terres oysives, si elles sont grasses et fertiles, foisonner en cent mille sortes d’herbes sauvages et inutiles, et que, pour les tenir en office, il les faut assujetir et employer à certaines semences, pour nostre service; et comme nous voyons que les femmes produisent bien toutes seules, des amas et pieces de chair informes, mais que pour faire une generation bonne et naturelle, il les faut embesoiner d’une autre semence: ainsin est-il des espris. Si on ne les occupe à un
certain sujet, qui les bride et contreigne, ils se jettent desreiglez, par-cy par là, dans le vague champ des imaginations. (I.8.32)

By evoking the anarchic creative potential of women, Montaigne thus links women to the body, to sexuality, to inconstancy and to the imagination – a force that according to the author inspires such uncontrollable passions that they are rendered powerless.

Montaigne likens the imperfection of these idle fields and inchoate female materia to the dangers of the unbridled mind – that is, to the mind susceptible to idleness and the dangers of imagination. Virgina Krause, in Idle Pursuits: Literature and Oisiveté in the French Renaissance, traces early modern French concepts of idleness and leisure. Arguing that “a general sense of moral depravity was indeed the most manifest of idleness’s…meanings” in early modern France, Krause explores the development of literary idleness cultivated by the noblesse de robe, in which the practice of writing occupies the mind of those who claim to desire avoiding idleness. Montaigne’s use of literary idleness is ambiguous – for as the opening passages of “De l’oisivité” illustrate, idleness leads to the dangers of imagination; yet the essayist avers that idleness is a productive and powerful element of his textual production. Indeed, he continues, “leisure ever creates varied thought” – “variam semper dant otia mentem.” In this way, Montaigne describes his agenda of literary idleness despite the moral dangers of oisiveté, the result of which is a writing process that births fantastical monsters and chimera. Montaigne presents idleness and leisure as means to a kind of fertile but inefficacious or inchoate generation; idle fields and menstruating women thus represent a material contribution to reproduction, in contrast to the seed or “semence” found in male contribution to reproduction.
Significantly, Montaigne closes “Of idleness” by describing the genesis of the *Essais*. He explicitly cites the role of idleness and imagination in the generation of his mind’s monstrous ideas – and these monsters and chimeras become the essays themselves. “De l’oisiveté” ends by contradicting the inutility of idleness presented in the opening with a description of the role of leisure and the power of the imagination in Montaigne’s writing process:

Dernièrement 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’arreseter et rasseoir en soy: ce que j’esperois qu’il peut meshuy faire plus aisément, devenu avec le temps plus poisant, et plus meur. (I.8.33)

Montaigne describes his literary retreat to his tower as time spent exploring his library in small pieces, reading a page from one book and jumping to read a passage from another – all the while delighting in the varied journey of contemplation this literary leisure allows him. The monstrosity of Montaigne’s *Essais* is due to his proclivity for textual or spiritual generation over corporeal kinship, his desire to inscribe his text with his strange and perfect love for Étienne de La Boétie, as well as his fascination with the diversity of humanity. His writing process can be seen as “variam semper dant otia mentem” in practice – “leisure ever creating varied thought.”

One way in which Montaigne’s writing process combines form with matter is the philosophical role of the imagination, which he paints as a kind of midwife to his *Essais* akin to Socrates’ conception of the philosopher as midwife. That is, philosophical exploration, untamed and free as an unbridled horse, begets Montaigne’s monstrous ideas as a midwife births a child. One of Plato’s most fascinating images of the philosopher is
Socrates proclaiming himself a midwife to those with whom he engages in his dialogue *Theaetetus*. It is an argument for effective Socratic method; that is, a good dialectic engages a person so that he births his ideas well. The dialogue is replete with explicit and corporal images of carrying the idea child and helping it emerge fully; the philosopher midwife is also responsible with aborting false ideas before they are fully formed or birthed. In “Apologie de Raimond Sebond” (II.12) Montaigne ponders the writing process of his contemporaries and particularly classical authorities, highlighting the dialogism inherent in philosophical conversation that Socrates practiced: 

Le conducteur de ses dialogismes, Socrates, va tousjours demandant en esmouvant la dispute, jamais l’arrestant, jamais satisfaisant, et dict n’avoir autre science que la science de s’opposer . . . . Platon me semble avoir aymé cette forme de philosopher par dialogues, à escient, pour loger plus decemment en diverses bouches la diversité et variation de ses propres fantasies. (II.12.509)

Montaigne employs the image of the masculine philosopher midwife and even evokes Socrates’ role as a “sage homme,” creating an androgynous persona of the midhusband (II.12.509). It is of course the role of the midwife to birth, “engendrer,” or “enfanter” the child (II.12.509, I.8.33). Unlike the feminine *sage femme* of bodily reproduction, the kind of birthing body involved in ideas formulated by philosophical dialogue is at once masculine and feminine:

Socrates disoit que les sages femmes, en prenant ce mestier de faire engendrer les autres, quittent le mestier d’engendrer, elles; que luy, *par le tiltre de sage homme* que les Dieux lui on deferé, s’est aussi desfaict, en *son amour virile et mentale, de la faculté d’enfanter*; et se contente d’aider et favorer de son secours *les engendrans*, ouvrir leur nature, graisser leurs conduits, faciliter l’issue de leur enfantement, juger d’iceluy, le baptizer, le nourrir, le fortifier, le mailloter et circonscrire: exerçant et maniant son engine aux perils et fortunes d’autruy. (II.12.509 my emphasis ERC)
The actions performed by midhusband philosophers, like those performed by midwives, include not only the physical act of birthing, but also training and protecting it: “exerçant et maniant son engine aux perils et fortunes d’autruy” (II.12.509). These roles of protector and tutor are, quite significantly, the roles that Marie de Gournay takes on as editor of the *Essais*. Montaigne’s description of Socrates’ embodiment of male midwifery combines male form, “son amour virile et mentale,” with female material reproductive potential, “la faculté d’enfanter” (II.12.509). This potential for androgynously material reproduction of ideas is of prime importance to Montaigne’s writing process; and it is the force of the imagination that acts as his midwife in this generation.

The epigraph of “De la force de l’imagination” reads, “fortis imaginatio generat casum,” or “a strong imagination begets the event itself” (I.21.97). Montaigne’s imagination begets his book, which sparks the imagination of his readers. In his essay on the power of the imagination, Montaigne links the imagination with bodily movements, emotions, and expulsions – further allying the sexuality of his text’s reproduction to the corporality of biological reproduction. He argues that we blush with shame and embarrassment, become pale and tremble with fear, we scare ourselves to death – all due to the power of the imagination over our bodily experience of this world and its wonders: “Nous tressuons, nous tremblons, nous pallissons et rougissons aux secousses de nos imaginations et renversez dans la plume sentons nostre corps agité à leur bransle, quelque-fois jusques à en expirer. Et la jeuness bouillante s’eschauffe si avaint en son harnois tout’ endormie, qu’elle assouvit en songe ses amoureux désirs” (I.21.98). In this way the essayist associates the power of the imagination to sexuality early in “De la force de l’imagination,” attributing wet dreams to the power of nocturnal imagination and
recounting examples of gender transformation due to women’s powerful imaginative desires to become men.

His most famous example of the sexual nature of imagination’s power is a man in Vitry-le-François who had formerly lived as a young girl; straining herself one day as she leapt, Marie Germain’s virile organs emerged. In contrast to his version of Marie Germain’s sex transformation in his Journal de Voyage, here Montaigne attributes the sex change to imagination’s power when stimulated by a certain desire to change sexes within the young woman herself. He in fact borrows this anecdote from Ambroise Parè, who dedicates an entire chapter of his 1573 On Monsters and Prodigies to the phenomenon of women who turn into men. Later in the essay, Montaigne also borrows two famous monsters that Paré describes in his chapter on the force of maternal imagination, again linking its power to the pregnant female body:

Nous voyons par experience les femmes envoyer aux corps des enfans qu’elles portent au ventre des marques de leurs fantasies, teomoing celle que engendra le more. Et il fut presenté à Charles Roy de Boheme et Empereur une fille d’aupres de Pise, toute velue et herissée, que sa mere disoit avoir esté ainsi concève, à cause d’une image de Sainct Jean Baptiste pendue en son lit. (I.21.105)

Montaigne recounts this example and the same story as he supposedly encountered it in his Journal de Voyage, though his description in (I.21) appropriately provides the power of the imagination as the force behind Marie Germain’s transformation: “Passant à Victry le Françoys, je peux voir un homme que l’Evesque de Soissons avoit nommé Germain en confirmation, lequel tous les habitans de là ont cogneu et veu fille, jusques à l’aage de vingt deux ans, nommée Marie. Il estoit à cett’ heure-là fort barbu, et vieil, et point marié. Faisant, dict-il, quelque effort en sautant, ses membres virils se produisirent: et est encore en usage, entre les filles de là, une chanson, par laquelle elles s’entradvertissent de ne faire point de grandes enjambées, de peur de devenir garçons, comme Marie Germain. Ce n’est pas tant de merveille, que cette sorte d’accident se rencontre frequent: car si l’imagination peut en telles choses, elle est si continuellement et si vigoureusement attachée à ce subject, que, pour n’avoir si souvent à rechoir en mesme pensée et aspreté de desir, elle a meilleur compte d’incorporer, une fois pour toutes, cette virile partie aux filles” (I.21.99).

Benkov and Reeser articulate the fascinating philosophical implications of the sexed and gendered body through an analysis of these three versions of Marie Germain’s story. See their chapters in Montaigne After Theory, Theory After Montaigne.
It is important to note that while Montaigne borrows again from Ambroise Paré, he never labels these two fantastic children as monsters; rather, they are the result of the fabulous power of the imagination on the delightfully sensitive power of the maternal body. In this way, maternity, idleness, and the imagination come together to produce the monstrous text that is the *Essais*. It is only when Montaigne “looks like a lady,” that he exposes (or paints) his maternal side, that his kinship of the book is possible.\(^{144}\)

Further, Montaigne links unbridled sexuality and attributes the power of reproduction to imagination; it births monstrous ideas within the essayist’s mind, the result of which is the literary text itself. In the closing lines of “De l’oisiveté,” He imbues his writing process with a Platonic image of uninhibited sexuality, the horse running free from its bridle:

> 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.8.33 my emphasis ERC)

His imagination births the monstrous fantasies that will become his *Essais*; imagination “*m’enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques*” (I.8.33). In this way, Montaigne establishes the materiality and monstrosity of his book by linking his writing process to idleness and imagination. Carla Freccero argues that “premodern representations of textual production and reception [are] inseparable from premodern understandings of generation, reproduction, [and] inheritance”; and Montaigne’s usurpation of maternal

\(^{144}\) Richard Regosin signals the importance of “De l’oisiveté” as establishing Montaigne’s maternal writing process, arguing that maternity is a necessity for Montaigne: “In this essay about the engendering mind, conception is figured, not as male but as female, as nature and as earth, as if to imply that Montaigne’s own literary ‘paternity’ must be bracketed, that it can never be other than a form of maternal reproduction, displaced, repressed. Montagne has perhaps been a literary mother all along” (*Unruly* 4).
images allows him to subvert homocentric notions of textual generation and to materialize his book further by associating it with monstrosity (*Queer/Early/Modern* vii).

As the recent work of Marie-Hélène Huet and Kathleen Long have shown, early modern French culture was fascinated by monsters. From the Latin *monere* – to remind, warn or advise; and *monstrare* – to show, point out or indicate, monsters were interpreted as omens and by extension something that evokes fear and wonder. Montaigne gives much credence to the ambiguously powerful figure of the monster, for he calls his essays “tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques.” In “De la Ressemblance des Enfans aux Peres” (II.37) Montaigne presents his books as his child; a monstrous progeny of the mind. Indeed, he begins his essay on family resemblance by alluding to the strangeness and monstrosity of his writing process: “Ce fagotage de tant de diverses pieces se faict en cette condition, que je n'y met la main que lors qu'une trop lasche oisiveté me presse, et non ailleurs que chez moy” (II.37.758). The last book of the second tome and final essay of the 1580 edition concerns itself once again with the relationship between literary father and textual child. Insistent on capturing himself and his essays as a bundle of diversity, he makes idleness as dominant a force as the imagination, even further subjecting himself to being pressed by its creative power.

Above all women’s imaginations were thought to be strongly affected by images, especially pregnant women’s imaginations; and like pregnant women who birth monstrous progeny, Montaigne's being is pierced by imagination’s visual impression, its image. Marie Hélène Huet argues in *Monstrous Imagination*,

It was long believed that monsters, in as much as they did not resemble their parents, could well be the result of a mother’s fevered and passionate consideration of images. More specifically, monsters were the offspring of an
imagination that literally imprinted on progeny a deformed, misshapen resemblance to an object that had not participated in their creation. (5)

Imagination’s connections with image, spectacle, and philosophical contemplation are the elements most tantalizing to Montaigne. Imagination, like Plato’s Socrates (the philosopher as midwife) who begets ideas in the minds of his interlocutors, births the ideas that become Montaigne’s *Essais*.

In “De la force de l'imagination” (I.21) Montaigne links himself to the feminine and the maternal by admitting that he is especially sensitive to the power of imagination: “Je suis de ceux qui sentent tres-grand effort de l'imagination. Chacun en est hurté, mais aucuns en sont renversez. Son impression me perce” (I.21.97). The essayist cannot help but be pierced and driven by his imagination, especially as he composes his essays – just as pregnant women who engender monstrous progeny are especially susceptible to the force of their own imagination. Indeed, a remarkably persistent line of thought argued that monstrous progeny resulted from the disorder of the maternal imagination. Huet signals that the chaotic potential of the monster is that it erases paternity and replaces it with the mother’s desires:

Instead of reproducing the father’s image as nature commands, the monstrous child bore witness to the violent desires that moved the mother at the time of conception or during pregnancy. The resulting offspring carried the marks of her whims and fancy rather than the recognizable features of its legitimate genitor. The monster thus erased paternity and proclaimed the dangerous power of the female imagination. (27)

What dangerous power do the *Essais* manifest? They make a spectacle of Montaigne’s maternity, they engender ideas rather than bodies, they give agency to a “dude [who] looks like a lady.”
In *The Fabulous Imagination: On Montaigne's Essais*, Larry Kritzman explores the prominent role of the imagination in the essayist's life philosophies – as well as the importance of the visual, the spectral, in Montaigne's text. He terms “the mind's I”:

> A conflation of the visual and the self within the rhetoric of self-portraiture …. If the Greek notion of *thea*, signifying spectacle and contemplation, evokes the theory that is played out in the mind's eye, then the Latin imagination, from the same root of imitari, suggests the terms 'idea' and 'portrait' that are integral to the essaying process. For Montaigne the mind functions as the locus of visualization, with the essay becoming the space in which the self seeks to see itself. (3)

One could argue even that the whole of the *Essais* is composed of disparate images flashing before the eyes and minds of the readers in the form of striking anecdotes and ancient citations that evoke entire narratives in just a few lines. Indeed, Montaigne underlines the primacy of the image or painting in the genesis of his *Essais*; in “Au lecteur” he announces, “c'est moy que je peins … je m'y fusse tres-volontier peint tout entier, et tout nud” (I.0.3). Recalling the image of the painter in “De l’amitié,” Montaigne’s literary project of the self-portrait is novel in form as well as content; it is the extremely and starkly personal as a new genre of written expression for publication. “Tout entier, et tout nud” underlines further the bodily aspect of the *Essais*, and makes of the maternal body a spectacle to be explored by its readership. Ideas and bodies are both capable of reproduction; and Montaigne’s trial of self-portraiture is a continual confluence of the mind and the body. One could say even that it is an attempt to portray the author’s thoughts in as material a way as possible.
“Nous sommes pere et mere ensemble en ceste generation”: Conclusion

In “D'un enfant monstrueux” (II.30), Montaigne argues that monstrosity as his society sees it is perhaps not what God intends when he creates monsters; rather, the essayist argues that monstrosity represents the diversity of the world, the infinity of diverse pieces that comprise our universe. It is quite telling that Montaigne defends the diversity of the monster in this particular essay – for the monstrous child that he comes across one day (the subject of this essay), is in fact a double-bodied child. This double being is ambiguous (as always in early modern France) in this essay; for it is quite possibly an allusion to Henri III’s chaotic androgyne as well as a monstrous embodiment of Montaigne’s perfect friendship. Just like the double-bodied androgyne in Plato, the perfect friendship between Montaigne and La Boétie is a union of double-selves. It is, as Montaigne puts it, a complete fusion of our wills, “une âme en deux corps, comme dict la tres docte Aristote” (I.28). The novelty and strangeness of the Essais, the perfect friendship Montaigne shares with Etienne de La Boétie, and the essay as a genre spark thought, creation, and infinite essays in the minds of its readers. The monstrous text that represents perfect friendship lives on in the bodies and minds of the books’ readers.

Indeed, the novelty of the friendship Montaigne puts forth in “De l’amitié” is due to its equality, in contrast to the pederastic yet laudable friendship between Hermodius and Aristogiton, who waged war on tyranny. According to the essayist, his perfect friendship resembles the Stoic definition of love – that is, love being the desire to find

145 “Ce que nous appelons monstres, ne le sont pas à Dieu, qui voit en l’immensité de son ouvrage l’infini des formes qu’il y a comprises ; et est à croire que cette figure qui nous estonne, se rapporte et tient à quelque autre figure de même genre inconnu à l’homme” (II.30.713).
friendship in a person who attracts us with their beauty.\textsuperscript{146} Montaigne insists that his friendship is more equal and just than even the problematically heroic love he describes in Hermodius and Aristogiton: “Je revien à ma description, de façon plus equitable et plus equable” (I.28.188). The friendship shared by Montaigne and La Boétie cannot be categorized among other friendships because of the way the two men’s souls are entwined;\textsuperscript{147} it is so unique as to be in expressible in Couche A:

\begin{quote}
Au demeurant, ce que nous appelons ordinairement amis et amitiez, ce ne sont qu’accoincances et familiaritez nouées par quelque occasion ou commodité, par le moyen de laquelle nos ames s’entretiennent . . . . Si on me presse de dire pourquoi je l’aymois, je sens que cela ne se peut exprimer. (I.28.188)
\end{quote}

Couche C reflects the equality of this relationship with an addendum ultimately expressing its uniqueness: “. . . qu’en respondant: Par ce que c’estoit luy ; par ce que c’estoit moy” (I.28.188). This addition to the essay corresponds temporally to Montaigne’s notable amendment to the statement that early modern moral codes abhor “cet’ autre licence Grecque,” his euphemism for pederasty: “Laquelle pourtant, pour avoir, selon leur usage, une si necessaire disparité d’aages et difference d’offices entre les amants, ne respondoit non plus assez à la parfaicte union et convenance qu’icy nous demandons” (I.28.187).\textsuperscript{148}

Thus, the monumental friendship between Montaigne and La Boétie is wholly novel, wholly strange, wholly perfect. Their friendship is thus monstrous in its novelty, and also for its potential to make friendship more than chaste and more equal than

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{146} Montaigne cites Cicero: “Amorem conatum esse amicitia faciendae ex pluchritudinis specie” (I.28.188).

\textsuperscript{147} See section two of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{148} See Marc Schachter’s \textit{Servitude Volontaire} for an extensive analysis of the implications of the couche additions to the Montaigne-La Boétie relationship.
\end{footnotes}
pederasty. While custom may cause society to reject this strange love, humankind need
only rely on its reason to differentiate the particular and natural from the bad and
unnatural: “Nous apelons contre nature ce qui advient contre la coustume: rien n’est que
selon elle, quel qu’il soit. Que cette raison universelle et naturelle nous chasse l’erreur et
l’estonnement que la nouvelleté nous apporte” (II.30.713). Regosin has argued that
throughout the Essais Montaigne normalizes monstrosity, making it a manifestation of
the great diversity of the world God has created:

Montaigne’s commentaries have the dramatic effect of neutralizing the monstrous,
of removing the stigma of aberrance, of difference, and of eliminating its
referential value as meaningful sign which points outside itself (as prophesy,
prediction, omen). Recuperated into the infinity of God’s creation and into the
diversity of nature . . . the monstrueux has no special status, it belongs to the order
common to all other things, even if its appearance flaunts what is customary or
accepted” (“Monstrous” 76).

In this way, Montaigne renders monstrosity within the realm of the natural order yet
unique through its difference from custom. It is precisely this natural uniqueness that
provides the perfect image for the essayist’s love for La Boétie. Though his society’s
morals reject classical pederasty and the anxiety the male passives stir in normalized
minds, the strange perfection of the love through friendship of equals that Montaigne
paints in “De l’amitié” can be given form and corporality in the Essais.

While Montaigne claims to be both mother and father of his book, the structure of
the Essais implies rather that he and La Boétie are responsible for these tomes – that their
perfect friendship was so intense as to birth this monstrous literary child. In this way,
Montaigne's Essais are a perpetual monument to his love and remembrance of his friend
Etienne de La Boétie. Indeed, as a monument the text is also a tomb, a sepulcher, a
remembrance of and memorial to La Boétie. Like monsters, monument also has its root in
the spectrality of the Latin *monere*, to remind. This monument is a textual display of their queer love, monstrous, unusual, and novel in its time. The text is a visual reminder, a representation of the specter of queer love between men who, by Montaigne's own description, cannot be consummated in a fully lasting or physical way within the institution of marriage in the Renaissance.

The monument of this text lives on in the minds of its readers in all its monstrous spectrality. This spectrality, among other enticing elements of the *Essais*, inspires Marie de Gournay to further her literary father’s manipulations of gender norms. For while Montaigne speaks of the text as his child, he does not describe the maternal act of birthing the text; rather, it is imagination that acts as his midwife and births his *Essais*. Gournay reclaims maternal textual reproduction within the realm of the female by describing her writing process as a literal birth, further queering the kinship of the book and materializing textual reproduction. She imitates Montaigne’s writing process as editor of the monstrous posthumous editions of the *Essais*, imbuing the text with her personal identity and proto-feminism.
CHAPTER 5
MAN IN THE MIRROR: PATERNAL RESEMBLANCE AND LEARNED KINSHIP IN MARIE DE GOURNAY

While Marie de Gournay’s relationship with Montaigne and her editorial work launched her into the literary scene with the praise of paternal authority, we see throughout her lifetime that her most pressing goal was the liberation of women to intellectual, social, and political parity with men. Indeed, unlike other proto-feminist writers who participated in the *Querelle des femmes* and defended women as morally superior to men, Gournay's argument was always for the equality of the sexes. Most pointedly, in her *Proumenoir* Gournay argues that women’s seeming lack of intelligence is the result of culture rather than biology.\(^{149}\) In her vast œuvre Gournay repeatedly presents herself and certain female figures as embodying elements of early modern masculinity. Using herself as example (in contrast to Crenne’s counter-exemplarity discussed in chapters three and four), Gournay demonstrates that masculinity can inhabit the female body. Such an argument is radical because it questions the notion of sexual difference itself. Gournay’s participation in public intellectual life; the constant ridicule she faced as an outspoken defender of women, of poetic metaphor, neologism, and classical texts; her unfortunate defense in 1610 of the Jesuits who assassinated Henri IV – all of these made her especially sensitive to

\(^{149}\) See my discussion of her chiastic version of Montaigne’s defense of animal intellect in chapter two of this study.
public scorn and slander. In “The economics of friendship” Cholakian argues that Gournay was indeed an “iconoclast,” living on her own, never marrying, earning a living by writing and practicing alchemy.\textsuperscript{150} We see that while Gournay’s arguments from her earliest works were indubitably feminist in nature, they became more vehement and frequent with age.

“Rien n’est sot ny ridicule, apres la pauvreté,” writes Gournay in *Apologie pour celle qui escrit* “comme d’estre clair-voyant et scâvant: combien plus d’estre clair-voyante et scâvante, ou d’avoir simplement, ainsi que moy, désiré de se rendre telle ? Parmy nostre vulgaire, on fagotte à fantaisie l’image des femmes lettrées.” To be a woman writer in the Renaissance meant overcoming gender barriers; however, first the *femme écrivain* must have had the means for such a pastime. To write during the Renaissance was above all an activity open only to those who did not need to support themselves, as Montaigne’s “De l’oisivité” exemplifies; writing was not a question of profit but of luxury, and to make a living from writing was quite revolutionary. It is in this setting that Marie de Gournay wrote for her pleasure, for her cause, and for her living; and it is in her *Apologie* that she “shows that it is not women’s nature, but their situation that is responsible for their exclusion” from male-dominated intellectualism of the Renaissance (“Economics” 149). Indeed, the question of women writers during the Renaissance involved both gender and social issues. The metaphor of the *quenouille* versus the *lyre* is prominent in Gournay’s writing; we see throughout her oeuvre that

\textsuperscript{150}Cholakian highlights her “…earning money by writing, and neglecting what a woman should never neglect – her personal appearance . . . . She insisted on living independently in Paris, and refused to accept hospitality from family friends. Of course, it was unheard of for a single woman to live alone, let alone support herself by writing . . . she rejected the roles assigned to women of her class and tried to become self-sufficient in order to support herself as a writer” (“Economics” 150-54).
Gournay recognized the metaphor of woman’s rejection of the sewing needle as one that imbued her situation.\textsuperscript{151}

After first reading Montaigne’s \textit{Essais}, which struck Gournay so favorably that she recounts her family having to give her a sedative so she did not go into an ecstatic frenzy: “On estoit prest à me donner de l'hellebore lors que, comme il me furent fortuitement mis en main au sortir de l'enfance, ils me transissoient d'admiration”—Gournay wrote to Montaigne and met him in Paris in 1588 – she was 19, he was 55. Montaigne, struck by young Gournay's capacity for understanding his \textit{Essais}, supported the young intellectual’s hunger for knowledge and conversation; he even visited her at her family's estate in Gournay sur Aronde. There, according to Gournay, the two read and then walked while discussing the politics of love in Plutarch – and she told him of a story she had composed (which was in fact based on a story by Claude de Taillement) about a lady's tragic demise for the sake of love. Interwoven in the story is a strikingly proto-feminist passage in which Gournay argues for women's education, reading of classical texts, and active writing practice. While this passage is omitted in subsequent publications of the work, Gournay interwove her proto-feminist \textit{écriture féminine} throughout her later work, just as she reworked her 1595 “Préface” to the \textit{Essais} within her collected works. Gournay sent the manuscript of her novella \textit{Le proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne} (1594) to her adopted father along with some poetry and Latin translations, asking that he read her

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\textsuperscript{151} In \textit{L’Egalité des hommes et des femmes} Gournay uses this metaphor: “Que dis-je? Il ne suffit pas à quelques gens de leur [aux femmes] préférer le sexe masculine, s’ils ne les confinaient encore d’un arrêt irréfragable et nécessaire à la quenouille, oui même à la quenouille seule” (113). See Mathieu-Castellani’s “La quenouille ou la lyre: Marie de Gournay et la cause des femmes.”
\end{flushright}
work and correct her when necessary. While Montaigne never responded,152 she published her work, along with her dedicatory letter to Montaigne, in 1594.

Gournay first appears in the *Essais* as an anonymous young girl from Picardy who stabs her arm repeatedly in order to prove her constancy: “J’ay veu une fille, pour tesmoigner l’ardeur de ses promesses, et aussi sa constance, se donner du poinçon qu’elle portoit en son poil, quatre ou cinq bons coups dans le bras, qui lui faisoient craquer la peau et la saignoient bien en bon escient” (I.14.60). At face value, Montaigne’s use of young Marie serves as an example of one who chooses to “se blesser à escient, pour donner foy à leur parole” (I.14.60). The reference is quite the ambiguous one, however – for while Montaigne is recognizing Gournay’s gesture as a Roman one, he feminizes her act through her use of a *poinçon* or hair needle rather than the dagger used by Roman women to prove their constancy.153 While his reference to this feminine tool could be a belittlement of the young Gournay, it can also serve as a challenge to the Roman practice of using a dagger, a distinctly masculine tool.

Indeed, because Montaigne denies the possibility of true friendship between relations such as brothers and children, his appropriation of Marie de Gournay as his *fille d’alliance* is of great significance.154 Gournay exploited the literary family that Montaigne’s text established between himself, Étienne de La Boétie, and herself; she

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152 The manuscript was found among his papers after his death.

153 See, for example, Portia’s act in scene 1, act 2 of Shakespeare’s *Tragedy of Julius Caesar*.

154 Kritzman observes that “mothers and natural children appear to disappoint Montaigne to such an extent that what he discovers in the surrogate child relationship is described as potentially superior to the child he has biologically fathered; the ‘invention’ of the surrogate daughter functions as an anticipatory omen of the joys the future will bestow upon his literary legacy” (163).
actively cultivated her paternal intellectual resemblance in her prefaces to the *Essais* and even within the *Essais* itself. Gournay’s 1595 Préface to the *Essais* firmly presents the *demoiselle* as the authority on Montaigne based on their parallel capacities to judge and reason. Indeed, their intellectual kinship was so seemingly strong that her every scribble, every utterance retraces his steps: “la nature m'ayant faict tant d'honneur que, sauf le plus et le moings, j’estois toute semblable à mon Pere, je ne puis faire un pas, soit escrivant ou parlant, que je ne me trouve sur ses traces …” (Gournay, “1595 Préface” 45). Her early works (notably her prefaces to the *Essais*) actively portray Gournay as a double of Montaigne; speaking in the first person, her self-portrait is one that mirrors Montaigne in word, deed, emotion, and form. The “man in the mirror” in Gournay’s self-portrait is always Montaigne. She cultivated her intellectual friendship and resemblance to Montaigne as a means to enter the world of Renaissance letters, all the while defending her intellectual father’s textual child and arguing for the active participation of women in early modern intellectual life. She changed the masculinist system of textual reproduction and transmission by entering into the patrilineal tradition of books being children of the mind. Like Crenne, who entered the realms of friendship and chivalry, Gournay used masculinist tradition in a way that opened up masculinity to women by demonstration. Indeed, Gournay not only expands the concept of femininity by demonstrating her

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155 See section two of this chapter for a discussion of Gournay’s argument for paternal resemblance: “Et parce que mon ame n'a de sa part autre maniement que celuy de juger et raisonner de ceste sorte [like Montaigne], la nature m'ayant faict tant d'honneur que, sauf le plus et le moings, j'estois toute semblable à mon Pere, je ne puis faire un pas, soit escrivant ou parlant, que je ne me trouve sur ses traces; et croy qu'on cuide souvent que je l'usurpe. Et le seule contentement que j'euz oncques de moy-mesme, c'est d'avoir rencontré plusieurs choses parmy les dernieres additions que tu verras en ce volume, lesquelles j'avois imaginées toute pareilles, avant que les avoir veues” (“1595 Préface” 45).
masculinity – in effect she feminizes the male dominated realm of intellectual authority by means of dialogue with the Ancients.

This chapter will first discuss Gournay’s early dialogue with Montaigne in her 1594 *Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne*. In the first section, “‘[L]a coucher par écrit’: Gournay’s *Proumenoir* as early dialogue with Montaigne,” I trace the way in which she enters into conversation with her literary father about love and the importance of women’s education. By setting their conversation into a published text, Gournay plays with Montaigne’s notions of books as literary children and uses their friendship and shared conversation as a way to distinguish herself in the early modern literary scene. Through her evocation of classical texts and figures such as Ariadne and Dido, Gournay uses her novella to warn women readers of the dangers of fickle men. Further, she contradicts contemporary misogynists who claim that reading breeds licentiousness in women. Challenging her literary father’s cloistered notions of female intellectual capacity through countless apostrophes, Gournay inscribes her *Proumenoir* with proto-feminist inclinations, many of which reappear more vehemently in her later essays.¹⁵⁶

In this chapter’s second section, “‘[T]oute semblable à mon Pere’: networking, paternal resemblance, and Gournay as daughter-friend,” I explore Gournay’s active cultivation of a network of Humanists to support her – not only Montaigne and vicariously Étienne de La Boétie but also Justus Lipsius. She does so by mirroring Montaigne’s mourning for La Boétie and insisting on her intellectual resemblance to Montaigne. Both Montaigne and Lipsius had ambivalent positions on

¹⁵⁶ Notably *Grief des dames* (1626) and *Égalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622).
women; yet these two Humanists made a certain allowance for intelligent women and those adept at politics. While Lipsius’ *De constantia* is replete with misogynist discourse, his *Politica* expresses “explicit approval of women as rulers and counselors” (notably Elizabeth I of England). Lipsius is in fact “more woman friendly than many institutions of his time” (Waszink 112). Gournay made an adept choice in these two Humanists as her textual family circle, for their progressive ideas about exemplary women allowed her to be acknowledged for her intelligence and merit both privately and publicly.

After Montaigne's death, his widow sent the Bordeaux copy157 to Gournay, asking her to edit and publish a posthumous edition of the *Essais*. In 1595 Marie published the *Essais*, complete with an emotional defense of Montaigne and his writing, defending him from those who critiqued the ornate quality of his writing and defending herself as the person most qualified to edit Montaigne. It is a grief-stricken work, and in subsequent editions Marie edited out most of her intense mourning. She arms herself with the alliance with Montaigne; for as his *fille d'alliance*, his adoptive literary daughter, Gournay was better equipped to enter the intellectual scene of her day. In her 1595 Preface she paints herself as Montaigne's double, his “semblable.” In fact, she rewrites her friendship with Montaigne and her mourning in Montaigne's own terms for describing his friendship with La Boëtie.

Throughout Gournay’s lifetime, she took advantage of her literary “familial” ties to Montaigne, using their intellectual resemblance and classical models to establish herself as a literary authority despite her gender. She is the “man in the

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157 That is, the annotated manuscript of the last edition of the *Essais* published in Montaigne's lifetime.
mirror” thanks to her paternal resemblance – both her father and her intellectual resemblance, like Montaigne’s monstrous literary child, lay outside the bounds of early modern biology and reproduction. Gournay’s correspondence with Lipsius and her 1595 preface to the *Essais* established her as Montaigne’s daughter-friend, which gave her the authority to act in his place and in support of him. Mirroring Montaigne’s concept of the kinship of the book, Gournay gains paternal and literary authority.

“[L]a coucher par escrit”: Gournay’s *Proumenoir* as dialogue with Montaigne

*Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* (1594) is Gournay’s first attempt to enter into intellectual conversation, which she wrote and sent to Montaigne after the two intellectual friends walked together at her family’s estate Gournay sur Aronde discussing the theme of love in Plutarch. Their promenade is evidence of an early intellectual conversation between Montaigne and Gournay – and the *Proumenoir* text stands as evidence as well as a means to set the conversation into writing, to birth it textually (“la coucher … par escrit”) (*Proumenoir* 83). In her dedicatory letter Gournay explicitly links their shared activities of reading and conversation, all the while making clear that Montaigne is her primary interlocutor:
Vous entendez bien, mon père, que je nomme cecy votre Proumenoir, parce qu’en
nous promenant ensemble, il n’y a que trois jours, je vous contay l’histoire qui
suit, comme la lecture que nous venons de faire d’un subject de mesme air (c’est
des accidens de l’amour en Plutarque) m’en mit à propos. L’occasion qui
m’esmeut à *la coucher maintenant par escrit*…. (83 my emphasis ERC)

In these first lines is a mutual understanding as well as an implication that Gournay has a
notable story to share with her literary father, a story that merits not only a verbal
recounting but also its being set into writing and ultimately published. Further, her image
of birthing the story (and arguably their conversation) by laying it down in writing evokes
Montaigne’s predilection for referring to himself as the mother of his writing. In this way,
Gournay’s first few published pages actively incorporate the metaphor of book as a child
that Montaigne established; her dedicatory letter mirrors Montaigne’s “De l’oisivité”
(I.8), “De l’Affection des Pères aux Enfans” (II.8), and “De la Ressemblance des Enfans
aux Pères” (II.37). While Montaigne’s metaphor disrupts early modern notions of sex,
gender, and reproduction, his text does not reference the birth of the child itself.

In Gournay, the birth of the text is fully embodied with the imagery of *accoucher*.
Cotgrave’s 1611 French/English dictionary defines *coucher* as “to couch or ly (also to
lay) downe, or along; to goe (also, to get, bring, or have) to bed. Also, to mention, to set
downe in writing; also, to plant, or set a root, or flip flat along within the ground.”
*Coucher* derives from the Old French *couchier*: “to go to bed,” by extension to have sex
and the Latin *colloco, collocare*: “place, put, assemble, put together.” Gournay may very
well be playing with the sexual and reproductive associations of *coucher* as well as its
close associations with *accoucher*, defined by Cotgrave as “to lie downe in, to get himself
to bed; also to be brought to bed, as a woman of a child.” Like her literary father,

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158 See chapter four, section three of this study.
Gournay saw her writing as a literary child, just as she saw the *Essais* as an orphan she had inherited. In this way, Gournay establishes a writing process and a metaphor for writing that mirrors that of Montaigne. While Montaigne pushed the limits of early modern concepts of biological and textual production, Gournay exploded binary genders and reproductive capacity. In a way, she reclaimed the maternal body in her *Proumenoir*, all the while insisting on her masculinity, which mirrors Montaigne’s male identity.

Gournay used her *Proumenoir* to enter into dialogue with Montaigne about love and also in order to participate in a dialogue between Montaigne, La Boéte, and Justus Lipsius concerning the morals of reigning and the political power of princes. This discussion of political power was inspired by La Boéte’s *La Servitude volontaire*, which not insignificantly was the origin of his and Montaigne’s perfect friendship. Her first edition of the *Proumenoir* includes this invocation:

> Vous desirez en voz Essais, mon pere . . . que nostre Justus Lipsius voulut entreprendre un certain, utile et bel œuvre, je luy ay plusieurs fois souhaité l’entreprendre d’un autre, encore auquel il nous instruisit du devoir mutuel des princes et des peuples, et jusques où s’estendent les privileges des uns vers les autres. (100)

Gournay’s syntax evokes such a discussion with her *père d’alliance*, for she alludes to him and invokes him by apostrophe countless times, engaging him as interlocutor. Significantly, these invocations indicate the parameters of her overtly feminist interlude. Her dialogue here is meant not only to dialogue with her readers but to correct Montaigne’s misogynist ideas concerning women’s intellectual capacities. Indeed, even the genre of Gournay’s *Proumenoir* is provocative and malicious, for she knew well that her literary father was dismissive of novellas. Courcelles claims that “Marie, en dédiant à Montaigne sa première œuvre qui se rapproche d’un roman de chevalerie, mais consiste
plutôt en un roman discourant, veut s’imposer dans le jeu paternel la lucidité ironique des 
*Essais*” (222-3). In this way she imitates, rebukes, and questions her literary father. She 
mixes gender and genre, eliminating a distinction between male and female literary 
realms; further, she interweaves ancient authorities into her feminine (and protofeminist) 
genre – just as she imbues masculine genres with femininity. Like Montaigne, she 
challenges and undermines popular thought espoused even by those writers the two 
admired; we see a similar phenomenon when these two quote ancient texts while adding 
to them or changing their context to suit their own counter arguments.

In the context of her novella, this lengthy feminist passage follows a scene of 
*écriture féminine*, which further highlights Gournay’s avid interest in advancing female 
literacy, her cause of the lyre over the sewing needle. Alinda, after writing a letter to her 
lover Léontin, puts herself to bed and for the last time leaves herself to her “douloureuses 
pensées”;

159 these thoughts of hers constitute the feminist treaty that follows. In this way, 
Gournay’s heroine abandons herself to her wandering thoughts, which is reminiscent of 
Montaigne’s idleness as component of the writing process. She allows her female 
protagonist to undergo the same writing process as Montaigne, further blurring the 
distinctions between supposedly masculine and feminine writing. We see a play on 

159 “Cette lettre bien close, et les larmes qu’elle avoit esmuës un peu domtées, elle la donna à la dame de 
Perse, luy commandant que le lendemain matin avant que l’éveiller, elle l’allast porter à Leontin, pource 
que c’estoit un advis auquel il falloit qu’il pourveust à son lever, et non plustost. Cela fait, elle se rejetta 
miserablement sur son oreiller et sur ses douloureuses pensées, pour le dernier coup” (*Proumenoir* 139).

160 “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'esperoys qu'il peut meshuy faire plus aisément, devenu avec le temps plus poissant, et plus 
meur. Mais je trouve, *variam semper dant otia mentem*, 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'inepetie et l'estrangeté, j'ay commancé de les mettre en rolle, esperant avec le temps luy en faire honte à luy 
mesmes” (I.8.33).
Gournay’s own “la coucher…par escrit” – for Alinda lies in bed giving birth to her thoughts in idleness; and these bed-born thoughts constitute the most overtly feminist passage of the novella. As a certain wink to the promise of women’s literacy that she evokes in the passage that follows, Gournay cites some of Catullus’ lines that are sympathetic to the plight of women in love, of Ariadne abandoned by Theseus:

Nullane res potuit crudelis flectere mentis
Consilium? tibi nulla fuit clementia praesto,
Inmite ut nostri vellet miserae pectus?
At non haec quondam blanda promissa dedisti
Voce mihi, non haec misère sperere iubebas,
[Sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos;
Quae cuncta aerei discerpunt irrita venti.]\(^{161}\)
Nunc iam nulla viro iuranti femina credit,
Nulla viri speret sermones esse fideles;
Quis dum aliquid cupiens animus praegestit apisci,
Nil metuunt iurare, nihil promittere parcunt;
Sed simul ac cupidae mentis satiata libido est,
Dicta nihil metuere, nihil periuria curant.\(^{162}\)

Gournay uses the palimpsest of her text to double the image of the abandoned woman.

Like Alinda, Ariadne is abandoned by her lover, who had promised her a happy future of marriage. Similarly, Gournay’s readers confront the voice of a woman through the pen of a man – a sympathetic portrait of a woman painted by the masculinist canon. Most striking is Ariadne’s condemnation of the male sex and challenge to women: “Nunc iam nulla viro iuranti femina credit, / Nulla viri speret sermones esse fideles.” Gournay’s use of Ariadne’s complaint has the double function of warning her readers in a parallel story

\(^{161}\) Gournay omits these two lines.

\(^{162}\)“Could no fact bend your cruel mind's plan?/ Was there no mercy in you at all/ --vicious!--so your heart might pity me?/ But this isn't what you once promised me/ with your seductive voice. You didn't urge me to hope for this!/ [You said a happy marriage! You said our longed-for wedding! All of those mockeries the wind and air are shredding./] From now on let no woman believe a man's sworn promises./ From now on let no woman hope a man's talk is true./ So long as their desiring minds are eager to get something,/ they swear to anything. No promise do they spare./ But as soon as the lust in their desirous intent is gratified,/they remember nothing they said, they care nothing for their lies” (Catullus 64: 136-148).
of abandonment and demonstrating her own knowledge of classical texts. Throughout her oeuvre, as this and the next chapter illustrate, Marie de Gournay uses these texts, from which some misogynists found evidence of women’s wickedness, to demonstrate the wickedness of men. While some criticism argues that Gournay’s use of male sources rather than female sources undermines her argument for women’s equality in the literary sphere, it is evident that Gournay undermines misogynist claims by turning them on their heads.

While Gournay removed this overtly feminist passage from editions of the *Proumenoir* after 1594, we see many of the same themes appear in her later feminist essays – especially concerning women’s right to good education and participation in early modern intellectual life. Marie de Gournay’s attempt to dialogue with Montaigne concerning the education of women exemplifies the *Querelle* as women’s response to and repudiation of such misogynistic writing. Her defense of women is replete with her corrections of Montaigne’s misogyny, arguing that women’s seeming incapacities are the effect of cultural restraints upon women. In her *Proumenoir* Gournay begins her overtly feminist discourse with an invocation of her literary father and an argument for women’s literacy: “Ces vers de la chetive Ariadné devroient estre escrits par tout dans les heures des dames, et quiconque soit celuy qui premier leur defendit la science, comme allumette

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163 In his notice before “Égalité des hommes et des femmes” Constant Venoesoen argues that “Le féminisme qu’on lui reconnaît si volontiers reste miné par l’abondance même de ses témoignages masculins. Il fallait, en effet, faute de sources féminines, qu’elle fasse constamment étalage de preuves dites irréfutables tirées d’un corpus philosophique, théologique ou moral exclusivement constitué d’auteurs masculins. Marie de Gournay refuse même de prendre le moindre risque, préférant mentionner Politien ou Castiglione, tous deux pétrarquissant, à souhait et « sexistes » à leur façon, plutôt qu’une Marguerite de Navarre ou une Christine de Pisan. Etonnamment, tout auteur féminin du patrimoine français, qui aurait pu étayer la thèse de Marie de Gournay est absent du palmarès dans l’Égalité des hommes et des femmes. Il y a là un parti pris, semble-t-il, qui devrait être suspect aux yeux de tous ceux qui continuent de soutenir avec éclat la réputation féministe de Marie de Gournay” (35).
de lascivité, je croy qu’il craignoit qu’elles l’en missent au roüet le second jour de leur estude, mon pere” (Proumenoir 150 emphasis mine ERC). She in fact frames her argument by invoking Montaigne, all the while making it evident that she and her father differ in their views on the education of women and girls, for she ends her long passage by asking pardon for the length of this early feminist treaty: “Mais, mon pere, qui me pourroit pardonner la longueur de mon caquet en ceste digression, sinon vous qui me reprenez que je suis d’ordinaire trop taciturne en recompense” (161). Dorothea Heitsch signals that for Montaigne, “learning constitutes, at the very most, an asset, an ornament, and an enhancement of a woman’s natural graces in amicable talk, and should by no means be encouraged as an end in itself. Such an attitude may be questioned in the frame to Marie de Gournay’s novella Proumenoir where she presents herself as a worthy interlocutor” (“Dialogue”116). It is this lengthy treaty that embodies much of the didactic content of the Proumenoir – the efficacy of reading for women as a means to avoiding the pains and calumny that society creates for women as intelligent and sexual beings. She argues that “la pluspart des fautes que les femmes commettent aujourd’huy contre la pudeur, ce n’est pas par paillardise, c’est sottise” and that women must read (particularly classical authorities) in order to learn to guard against such evils (Proumenoir 150).

Gournay argues specifically against those who believe women should not read because it stirs up licentiousness within them, that reading incites indecent and immodest

164 “Il ne faut qu’esveiller un peu et rechauffer les facultez qui sont en elles. Quand je les voy attachées à la rhetorique, à la judiciaire, à la logique, et semblables drogueries si vaines et inutiles à leur besoing, j’entre en crainte que les hommes qui le leur conseillent, le facent pour avoir loy de les regenter soubs ce tiltre . . . Si toutesfois il leur fache de nous ceder en quoy que ce soit, et veulent par curiosité avoir part aux livres, la poësie est un amusement propre à leur besoin: c’est un art follastre et subtil, déguiser, parlier, tout en plaisir, tout en montre, comme elles” (III.3.822-3).
acts. In this way Gournay’s view turns misogynistic ideas on their heads. She was conscious of the link made between reading and writing (female knowledge and wisdom) and sexuality that existed in the minds of misogynists of her day. She makes an ardent argument that reading the ancient authorities can arm women in their battle to resist the faithlessness and infidelity of men:

Les dames au demeurant trouveront dans les livres que qui mieux cognoist les hommes, plus s’en deffie, et que le plus fiable des prometteurs de constance est celuy qui ne sçauroit tenir promesse, par l’instabilité de la nature humaine. Elles en rapporteront le mespris de mille et mille amans que les femmes ignorantes admireroient . . . . La vigeur et la gravité qu’elles auront chargées au commerce de ces admirables escris antiens, empeschera lors encore que ceste passion ne les tirannise si fort qu’elle tiranniseroit un autre . . . . Là verront-elles tant d’exemples de femmes trahies, et finalement elles y apprendront que celles qui ont meilleur marché d’aimer, y perdent encore leur liberté. (151)

Gournay sheds light not only on the capacity of women to understand admirable ancient writings but also on the lack of sex distinction in intellectual endeavors. That is, she implies that the ruin of women who are seduced by men is the result not of their sex’s lack of intelligence but rather of their lack of wisdom acquired through reading. Further, she problematizes early modern codes of morality that prohibit women’s access to knowledge and intellectualism, using male authority to contradict masculinist practices. Specifically Gournay refers to certain intellectual conversations forbidden to women due to rules of morality imposed by Renaissance society. Even when women are allowed to be present in conversations, their social role requires not only silent deference but feigned stupidity: “Car estre femme pudique, selon le monde, ce n’est pas garder la pudicité,

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165 Heitsch signals that Gournay “makes very good use of the possibilities of print culture, enabling her to participate in a literary dialogue and to re-edit her texts with additions and changes. It becomes evident in “Grief des dames” . . . that this is of utmost importance to her, one of her goals being the unequivocal integration of women in social events from which they have been barred, such as conversations” (“Dialogue” 113).
Further, Gournay questions the validity of disenfranchising women by theoretically changing the sex of Socrates and Saint Paul, arguing that if they had been women they would have indubitably suffered calumny rather than adoration. Her examples demonstrate clearly the limitations of sexual roles imposed upon men and women as well as the ephemeral nature of morals in history and society. This theoretical transformation is a radical challenge to the legacy of male authority – for it actively detaches authority from the male body. The sexual ambiguity she creates by rendering Socrates and St. Paul women underlines the artificial nature of gendered social behavior. It is a pointed erasure of sexual difference.

In Gournay’s passage, Socrates as martyr is allied with intelligent women – because the fear that led to his condemnation resembles male fear that women may be wiser than they:

C’est une scabreuse entreprise que d’aspirer à se rendre plus sage que ses compagnons; Socrates en mourut, mais les femmes en particulier y ont double malheur, car on ne pince que les actions sages aux hommes, à elles on pince le nom même de la sagesse, et quand il n’y aurait que ce titre seul d’une habille femme, on en dira du mal. (154)

The irony of misogynist Saint Paul’s context is not lost on Gournay, for his writings and words are implicated in conversations’ gendered roles and restrictions. Again critiquing society’s disenfranchisement of women through rules of propriety, Gournay argues that if St. Paul had been a woman, he would have suffered defamation of character in his goal of spreading the Christian Church. While his conversations and networking brought about the salvation of mankind, they would never be acceptable actions for honorable
women.¹⁶⁶ In St. Paul’s theoretical transformation, Gournay pointedly questions the insistence upon propriety for women. How could it be dishonorable for a woman to open the gates of paradise to humankind and laudable for a man? Inherent in St. Paul’s theoretical sex change is a threat to Christendom itself – for if Paul had in fact been a woman, the Christian Church could never have been founded. Further, this example opens the question of important ideas having been lost to the ages (or never having been spoken at all) because they were formed in the mind of a woman.

Gournay claims that while being a woman who chooses not to conform to masculinist social expectations of her time is less than easy, being a woman who actively participates in intellectual conversations invites slander and defamation precisely because her intelligence may question the intelligence of male participants. Rules of propriety in mixed gender conversation are established due to male fear, anxiety, and desire for domination. Gournay draws attention to the inefficacy of the ideas of the “vulgaire” – a term she freely applies to misogynists among others – and she takes on these arguments even more fiercely thirty years later in “Grief des dames,” in which the participation of women in intellectual conversations is once more her subject. She reverses the supposed defamation of misogynists by following the example of denigrated great men like Socrates, finding glory in calumny:

Or apres, tout le monde dira qu’une telle femme faict mal, puis qu’elle ne faict pas comme les autres, ny à choisir son exercice, ny à disposer ses actions; laissez-le parler, le pis que je voye en cecy, c’est que nous ayons à vivre en un siecle où il faut quicer le chemin fraié, qui veult suivre le droict chemin . . . . C’est gloire de faire reprouver sa manière de vivre en un temps de mauvais exemple. (152-3)

¹⁶⁶ “Si S. Paul eust esté de vostre sexe, il n’eust jamais peu se maintenir dame de reputation en establissant l’Eglise chrestienne, et en ouvrant au genre humain les portes de paradis. Car il luy fallut proceder en son dessein par peregrinations, conversations, et assistences, qui de vray sont bien dignes de sainct Paul, et d’un instrument du salut des hommes, mais non pas d’une femme de bien” (156).
Throughout her work Gournay maliciously follows a tradition glorifying classical poets and philosophers, a tradition that we also see figure prominently in Montaigne. Like her literary father, Gournay cites classical sources in a way that leaves them open to interpretation – even contrary to their original meaning and context. In this way Gournay recreates the philosophical, theological, and moral textual corpus created by male writing, all the while pretending to follow faithfully the ideas of classical pères. In her *Proumenoir* she applies the story of Ariadne to that of her protagonist Alinda. In this way she reinterprets the works of Vergil and Catullus through the eyes of a woman. Further, she openly contradicts lines of classical poetry concerning love and fidelity: “Ce vers n’est pas toujours vray: *Quel art pourroit siller l’œil jaloux d’un amant?*” (131). Indeed, the didactic element of the *Proumenoir* (that is, “[d]’advertir les dames de se tenir en garde” against seducers) embodies the feminist goal of her novella despite her attempt to dialogue with Montaigne. Even her choice of genre for this breakout text is in fact what Montaigne calls “tels fatras de livres à quoi l’enfance s’amuse” (I.26.175). Cholakian argues that the “daughter’s desire is not to be corrected by the ‘father,’ or even to please him. What she really wants is to revise his thinking on gender questions. Indeed, one might even argue that her true desire is to correct him” (“Reading” 152). This dialogue with her father is more malicious than it seems. It is anything but a story in the shadow of paternal identity. Like Crenne’s *Angoisses douloureuses*, Gournay’s *Proumenoir* addresses both women and men (specifically Michel de Montaigne) with a doubly didactic purpose.
“Toute semblable à mon Pere”: networking, paternal resemblance, and Gournay as daughter-friend

François Rigolot has recently argued that many of the women intellectuals of the Renaissance were adopted by prominent male Humanists, and that through their support women played roles in intellectual circles of the day. We see in the case of Marie de Gournay that she fought from a young age to be adopted by celebrated Humanists of her day, most prominently Justus Lipsius and Michel de Montaigne. She wrote to Lipsius in 1588; and though this first letter was lost, she left an impression on this man, who was moved by her intellect, youth, and gender: “Who are you, who thus writes me? A young woman? It's hardly believable. Is it thus not only reading (and) ability but prudence and judgment that fall into this sex, in this age? Young woman, you moved me; and I do not know whether I should be glad of this age, or whether I should lament the sex of our cause.” The two bonded over their mutual appreciation of Montaigne's writing; and as the letter from Bordeaux alerting Gournay of the death of her beloved literary father was lost in transit, it was Lipsius himself who informed Gournay of Montaigne's death. At the loss of her literary father, he comforted her and offered her his intellectual fraternity:

We are of this man, the best part of heaven included on earth. Happy are those who have been freed from the earth, and released. Your father has been now. Is it news to you, if you didn't know? Am I repeating, if you already know that he has perished, what I have said? He has disappeared from us, this great man: Montaigne, I say, through our high and heavenly mountains. Bordeaux wrote to me, and because I see this letter of yours is old, I think you already have a sense of this wound. But what evil has been done? He would laugh at us, if he knew we are grieving; he whom I think in death itself undertook it as a happy man, and

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167 See Rigolot’s “The Invention of Female Authorship in Early Modern France.”

even as its conqueror, even though by death itself he was conquered. He went, we will go; why not demand that these calamities be public and private? This spirit conquers all, unless it succumbs sometimes to disease, against whose persistent strength the strength of no wit or wisdom has held out. But this is not enough. I love thee, O virgin, thus as I love wisdom, chastely. Do the same to me, and since your father has died, think of me as your brother.\(^{169}\)

In the wake of Montaigne’s death, Lipsius’ letter manifests a fraternal affection and an empathetic consolation. Perhaps inspired by Lipsius’ offer of literary fraternity – a fraternity that Montaigne and La Boétie had shared – Gournay developed a metaphor of learned kinship between herself, Montaigne, and Lipsius. Significantly, Lipsius makes clear the chaste nature of his love for this astoundingly learned and intelligent young woman; Gournay herself always insists on chaste friendship. Likewise, he likens his love for her to his love for wisdom – an association at once gendered and laudatory. Indeed, Gournay’s correspondence with Lipsius and its integration into her writing demonstrates the hypocrisy of some Humanists while exploiting her relationships with those Humanists who are open to women’s intellectual capacity. While Montaigne opens the realm of the kinship of the book among Humanists, Gournay’s filial pact with Lipsius furthered and expounds the concept of intellectual kinship. Arguably her desire to create this network of filial Humanists was a desire to be seen as an equal. She too wants to be the “man in the mirror.”

\(^{169}\) My translation: “homulli sumus, id est pars optima et caelestis in terram inclusa; felices, qui liberis ab ea et soluti. tuus pater jam est. nuncio tibi, si nescis; renovo, sijam scis, perisse, quid dixi? abiisse a nobis magnum illum virum: Montanium, inquam, nostrum ad alta et aethereos illos montes. ita scriptum ad me Burdegalis, et quia letteras tuas veteres esse video, arbitror te quoque sensum jam habere huius plagae. sed quid mali factum? rideat ille nos, si sciat dolere: quem opinor in ipsa morte hilarem eam suscepisse, et victorem etiam ejus, cum ab ipsa vinceretur. ivit, ibimus: quidni desideremus, per publicas privatiasque istas calamitates?... omnia vinct hic animus, nisi quod morbo interdum succumbit, contra cujus pertinacem vim nullius ingenii aut sapientiae vis resistit. hoc non satis, amo te virgo, sed sic ut sapientiam amo, caste: fac idem mihi, et quoniam pater tuus ille obiit, cense me fratrem.” (Letter from Justus Lipsius to Marie de Gournay, May 24 1593)
This desire is most prominently manifest in her identity as a soul rather than a young woman. Gournay’s correspondence with Lipsius contains several references to herself as an âme: “combien il est grief d’être privée depuis tantôt cinq ans d’un tel ami, et encore pour une âme si tendre et si pathétique que la mienne!” (Fragments 187-88). By referring to herself as a soul rather than a woman, Gournay strips her identity of female attributes, which she continues to do in her early writing. As Bauschatz notes, in Gournay’s 1595 Préface she presents herself as genderless in order to be more easily accepted as a literary authority. Gournay participates in and extends the literary family Montaigne’s text establishes between himself, Étienne de La Boétie, and herself. Cholakian signals, “she represents her filial tie to Montaigne less as the object of her desire than as the validation of her literary qualification” (“Reading” 156). Indeed, she actively cultivates her paternal intellectual resemblance in her prefaces to the Essais:

Et parce que mon ame n'a de sa part autre maniement que celuy de juger et raisonner de ceste sorte [like Montaigne], la nature m'ayant faict tant d'honneur que, sauf le plus et le moings, j'estois toute semblable à mon Pere, je ne puis faire un pas, soit escrivant ou parlant, que je ne me trouve sur ses traces; et croy qu'on cuide souvent que je l'usurpe. (“1595 Préface” 45)

The grammatical structure of “toute semblable à mon Père” embodies the sort of ambiguous gender that Gournay presents herself as embodying – for while “toute” marks her corporeal femininity, “mon Père” establishes the masculinity of Montaigne’s role in her life. Indeed, she is so “semblable” that some people claim she usurps him; this structure allows Gournay to reflect her identity as “man in the mirror,” in the absence of her literary father.

170 In cutting all signs of the feminine, Gournay may hope to present a neutral or neutered text to the male reader, in which he will not notice the gender of its author” (Bauschatz, “L’œil” 100).
Further, throughout her prefaces Gournay insists on the mirrored experience of losing a perfect friend. Having lost their friends, neither Gournay nor Montaigne could find pleasure in life any longer; they found solace in celebrating their lost literary family, in rewriting their literary kinships: “Luy perdu, rien ne m'est resté ny de moy-mesme ny de la vie, sauf justement ce que la fortune a jugé qu'il en falloit reserver pour y attacher le sentiment de mon mal.”\(^\text{171}\) Again, Gournay’s text is a chiastic version of Montaigne’s extraordinary sadness at the loss of his friend.\(^\text{172}\) Gournay’s use of chiasmus is similar to her use of Vergil in that she borrows text from within the masculine literary tradition and modifies it to prove her argument, often in conflict with traditional masculinist thought.

While misogynists had used the texts of Gournay’s beloved pères to defame and oppress women, Gournay uses the power of the pères’ own words against this tradition. Her use of chiasmus is a display of the French language, an example of this woman’s own power of the pen. Gournay’s chiasmus allows her to enter the friendship tradition; specifically, she enters the circle surrounding the birth of the Essais – Montaigne’s mourning for La Boétie.

Her description of herself as a soul is also her way of linking her status as daughter with her status as friend; for we see in “De l’amitié” (I.28) that Montaigne references Aristotle’s notion of friendship as “un’ame en deux corps, selon la très-propre definition d’Aristote,” an idea that Gournay herself pursues in her prefaces to the Essais (I.28.190). In the same letter to Lipsius in April of 1593 she laments the brevity of her

\(^{171}\) Letter from Gournay to Lipsius, May 2 1596.

\(^{172}\) “Depuis le jour que je le perdy … je ne fay que trainer languissant ; et les plaisirs mesmes qui m’offrent à moy, au lieu de me consoler, me redoublent le regret de sa perte” (I.28).
friendship with her literary father, arguably mirroring his style of mourning for La Boétie in “De l’amitié”:

Certes le désespéré malheur de ce temps s’oppose trop à la progression de mon âme novice s’opiniâtrant à la priver de la très heureuse et salutaire presence de mon père, dont je ne fus jamais en possession que deux ou trois mois seulement. Misérable orphelinage! si faut-il que je le chasse à quelque prix que ce soit. Fut-il jamais un malheur pareil au mien? (Fragments 187)

Unlike the above citations emphasizing the coexistence of masculinity and femininity within Gournay’s literary persona, her use of the soul insists on a kind of gender neutrality that (despite Aristotle’s and Montaigne’s insistence that women cannot participate in perfect or virtuous friendship) underlines Aristotle’s conception of friendship as both shared experience and two souls sharing the same body.

Gournay describes their friendship as a kind of goodwill and alliance that, like Montaigne’s portrayal of friendship, surpasses the ties of biological parents and children: “cette bienveillance-là qui nous allie ensemble [et] qui surpasse neantmoins celle des vrays peres et enfans.” Her goal in representing their perfect friendship in such a light is to give herself a certain literary authority over the Montaignian text – an authority on which she insists frequently in her work: “C’est à moy d’en parler; car moy seule avois la parfaicte cognoissance de cette grande ame, et c’est à moy d’en estre crue de bonne foy, quand ce livre l’esclairciroit pas . . . Je dis doncq avec verité certaine” (“1595 Préface” 34). In the Gournay-Montaigne relationship, she takes on the role that the author of the Essais once held as he enclosed himself in the tower to write – that of the mourning friend. Indeed, the man in the mirror here is Gournay herself. Further, in her relationship with Montaigne’s widow, Gournay presents herself as “une autre luy-mesme.” She makes herself masculine through her resemblance to Montaigne (“luy-
mesme”) and feminizes Montaigne (“une autre”). Again, this structure blows apart the concept of sexual difference; and in a way, Gournay creates a portrait of herself as a kind of hermaphrodite or androgyne, embodying both masculine and feminine parts. She argues even that the two women considered Gournay’s editorial work and the time she spends with his widow to be a kind of resuscitation of the author himself:

[D]’avoir voulu r’embrasser et r’echauffer en moy les cendres de son mary, et non pas l’espouser mais se rendre une autre luy-mesme, ressussitant en elle à son trespas une affection où jamais elle n’avoit participé que par les Oreilles, voire luy restituer un nouvel image de vie par la continuation de l’amitié qu’il me portoit. (25-26)

Here Gournay replaces her literary father in body, memory, and action. By editing his *Essais* she allows him to live on within her and the textual corpus the two create. Once again reminiscent of Montaigne’s textual mourning for La Boétie, Gournay evokes death imagery and transforms her absent friend into a textual presence.

Because her goal is to argue paternal resemblance, she must incorporate her body into his; like her soul imagery, these cinders are genderless. By portraying herself as his cinders, Gournay literally subsumes him as Deslauriers signals. ¹⁷³ Such an image also invokes both her mourning and his absence; she is all that is left of him, she is his sepulcher: “J’estois sa fille, je suis son sepulcre, j’estois son second estre, je suis ses cendres. Luy perdu, rien ne m'est resté ny de moy-mesme ny de la vie….”¹⁷⁴ Her

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¹⁷³ “The ashes are ‘reheated’ and brought to life again in Gournay; we will see that this image of Gournay as containing, or being, the ashes of Montaigne recurs in other texts, and the suggestion is clearly that there is a life after death, when the soul is re-animated in another body. In this passage, Gournay contains the ashes of Montaigne in herself, but this allows her to make herself “another himself” – another Montaigne…. [T]he suggestion is that, after his death, while Gournay continues to be Montaigne (his ashes), she also contains Montaigne (acting as his sepulcher). So she subsumes him, and he has a kind of continuing life through her” (Deslauriers 7-8).

¹⁷⁴ Letter from Gournay to Lipsius, May 2 1596.
embodiment of Montaigne also links the two friends in body and in spirit. In this way they share a soul, and the text manifests the continuation of their friendship. Such a recurring image furthers Gournay’s argument against gendered embodiment. By acting as his soul’s other half, Gournay becomes Montaigne’s perfect friend who shares his soul – his double – just as he was La Boétie’s perfect friend.175 Again, Gournay mirrors Montaigne’s kinship of the book – if Étienne de La Boétie is Montaigne’s perfect friend and brother, by presenting herself as a soul Gournay can be his perfect friend and daughter. She pushes Montaigne’s use of children of the mind to extremes, mirrors him and his relationships, and appropriates Aristotle’s concept of two souls in one body. In the same way that the *Essais* are a kind of textual generation between Montaigne’s and La Boétie’s minds, Gournay makes her editorial work and *Proumenoir* a kind of textual generation between herself and Montaigne. The concept of children of the mind and genderless perfect friendship embodied in the soul allows Gournay not only to mirror Montaigne’s philosophy of writing but also to feminize the masculinist sphere of textual production.

It is of utmost import that Gournay, like Montaigne, speaks of herself as a soul, without a gender; in this way she can be wholly similar to her literary father. By accepting Montaigne’s library and the task of editing the posthumous editions of the *Essais*, Gournay usurps Montaigne’s role as director of his chaotic literary child. Again in

175 “Gournay suggests that a filial relationship might nonetheless be a relationship between friends. Some evidence that Montaigne shared this view is his willingness to refer to La Boétie, whom he certainly regarded not only as a friend but also as the ideal friend, as his ‘frère d’alliance.’” (Deslauriers 8).
a chiastic version of Montaigne’s “before having seen him.” Gournay boasts that she thinks so much like her literary father that she had already imagined many of his additions to the text before she even saw them: “Et le seule contentement que j’euz oncques de moy-mesme, c'est d'avoir rencontré plusieurs choses parmy les dernieres additions que tu verras en ce volume, lesquelles j'avois imaginées toute pareilles, _avant que les avoir veues_” (“1595 Préface” 46 my emphasis ERC). Once again Gournay uses Montaigne’s own language for describing his kinship with La Boétie in order to enter into a sort of kinship of the book. Having imagined these additions before seeing them in the _exemplaire de Bordeaux_ further implicates Gournay in the partnership of textual production. Through their kinship of the mind she can produce a text that mirrored that of Montaigne. By eliminating the human body in his literary reproduction and replacing it with textual body, Montaigne opens a space for Gournay to participate in textual reproduction as editor of the _Essais_. For the reproduction of the mind’s imagination does not require sex and does not reside within the realm of a sole, masculine gender. Further, this statement is arguably an allusion to Gournay’s own appearance in the _Essais_ as a possible woman friend; significantly, many critics believe Gournay to be the author of this description of an “accident de tres-digne consideration” (II.17.662).\(^{177}\)

\(^{176}\) Montaigne describes reading La Boétie’s _La servitude volontaire_ (1549) before their first encounter: “Car elle me fut montrée longue piece avant que je l’eusse veu” (I.28.184) and claims the two friends, having heard of one another, looked for such a friendship before seeing one another: “Nous nous cherchions avant que de nous estre veus” (I.28.188).

\(^{177}\) Both Frame and Villey doubt that Montaigne is the original author of this passage. Villey notes “Cet éloge de Marie de Gournay ne figure pas dans l'exemplaire de Bordeaux, où pourtant la place n'aurait pas manqué pour l'inscrire. C'est ce qui a fait souçonner parfois qu'il est de Marie de Gournay elle-même” (661n.). Bauschatz also doubts that Montaigne is the original author; see her “‘L’oeil et la main’: Gender and Revision in Marie de Gournay’s ‘Préface de 1595.’”
Conclusion: “Un accident de tres digne consideration”

The first posthumous edition of the *Essais* contains a passage in “De la praesomption” (II.17) that links Montaigne with Gournay through the bonds of friendship as well as paternity: “J’ay pris plaisir à publier en plusieurs lieux l’esperance que j’ay de Marie de Gournay le Jars, ma fille d’alliance: et certes aymée de moy beaucoup plus que paternellement, et enveloppée en ma retraite et solitude, comme l’une des meilleures parties de mon propre estre. Je ne regarde plus qu’elle au monde” (II.17.661). We see immediately that unlike filial bonds (incongruent with friendship for Montaigne as chapter four of this study explores), it is chosen literary bonds that link Gournay to her père d’alliance. Montaigne’s text goes further, undermining the essayist’s earlier claims that women lack intellectual sufficiency that the bonds of perfect friendship require. Further underscoring Gournay’s intellectual potential and in contrast to women’s supposedly imperfect corporality, the Montaignian text highlights her soul’s potential for friendship. Because this edition of the *Essais* appeared before Gournay fully developed as an intellectual force, the text itself holds Gournay’s intellectual potential. The reader re-experiences the potential for perfect friendship for a second time within this 1595 text:

> Si l’adolescence peut donner presage, cette ame sera quelque jour capable des plus belles choses, et entre autres de la perfection de cette tres-saincte amitié où nous ne lisons point que son sexe ait peu monter encore: la sincereté et la solidité de ses mœurs y sont deja bastantes, son affection vers moy plus que surabondante, et telle en somme qu’il n’y a rien à souhaiter, sinon que l’apprehension qu’elle a de ma fin, par les cinquante et cinq ans ausquels elle m’a rencontré, la travaillast moins cruellement. (II.17.661)

Similarly, the text again confronts the reader with the torment of losing a potential perfect friend; like Montaigne, whose mourning for La Boétie spurred the production of the
Essais, the text presents Gournay at the brink of mourning Montaigne – the textual result of which was the 1595 edition itself.

Considering the questionable paternity of several of the additions (most notably Montaigne’s excessive praise for the intellectual capacities of his fille d’alliance) as well as Gournay’s proclivity for wordplay, the whole of this very passage celebrating the strange occurrence that is Gournay’s female intellect can be understood on multiple levels: “Le jugement qu’elle fit des premiers Essais, et femme, et en ce siecle, et si jeun, et seule en son quartier, et la vehemence fameuse dont elle m’ayma et me desira long temps sur la seule estime qu’elle en print de moy, avant m’avoir veu, c’est un accident de tres-digne consideration” (II.17.662). This last sentence closely resembles Lipsius’ remark in his initial letter to Gournay.\(^{178}\) Considering her proclivity for highlighting her intelligence and singularity as the root of her friendship and kinship with prominent Humanists, it is entirely possible that Gournay felt confident enough in Montaigne’s appreciation of her to co-author this passage. If this were the case, Gournay also mirrors the hand of Humanist Lipsius within Montaigne’s text, interweaving all three in a textual network of friends. In this way, Gournay places herself as the central point, the focus of a kind of centrifugal Humanist force of friendship. Regosin puts forth the reasonable theory that Montaigne initially praised Gournay in the exemplaire de Bordeaux and that she likely embellished his text.\(^{179}\) Desan argues that while it is impossible to know exactly who authored the “Praesomption” passage, it is certain that Montaigne intended to make

\(^{178}\) See p.160 of this study, note 167.

\(^{179}\) “Taking into account Montaigne's habit of writing on separate pieces of paper and the notational system for his textual additions, M. Rat, the editor of the Pléiade edition, remarks that although the paragraph is not in the Bordeaux edition, ‘il y a des signes de renvoi sur la page, et le feuillet a dû se perdre’ (1595 n. 10)” (Regosin, “Dutiful” 107).
an addition at this exact spot; the *exemplaire* indicates that there were pages attached that included a passage to be added. He compares the “Praesomption” passage in the 1635 edition of the *Essais*, which Gournay cuts significantly compared to the accolade that first appears in the 1595 edition, arguing that she may very well have returned the passage to Montaigne’s original text that she found in the *exemplaire*181 and embellished:

> J’ay pris plaisir à publier en plusieurs lieux, l’espoirance que j’ay de Marie de Gournay le Jars ma fille d’alliance: et certes aymée de moy paternellement. Si l’adolescence peut donner presage, cette ame sera quelque jour capable des plus belles choses. Le jugement qu’elle fit des premiers Essays, et femme, et en ce siecle, et si jeune, et seule en son quartier, et la bienveillance qu’elle me voïa, sur la seule estime qu’elle en print de moy, long-temps avant qu’elle m’eust veu, sont des accidents de tres digne consideration. (cited in Desan, “Orphelin” 64)182

If Gournay indeed made such an addition to Montaigne’s original text, she becomes a co-author of the *Essais*, an idea explored in her editorial work in the next chapter. Further, she actively creates her own portrait within her literary father’s text

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180 “Il est impossible de déterminer si le passage en question dans l’édition de 1595 est bien de Montaigne. Les fameuses «feuilles volantes» collées par Montaigne sur l’exemplaire de Bordeaux furent en effet enlevées par Pierre de Brach en 1594 et envoyées à Marie de Gournay avec un autre manuscrit qui servit à établir l’édition de 1595 des *Essais*. Les traces de colle dans la marge du feuillet 284 du chapitre 17 nous prouvent qu’il y eut bien des «allongeails» sur cette page mais rien ne permet de vérifier le texte lui-même. Même la croix tracée de la main de Montaigne semble indiquer la place d’un ajout, mais ne nous autorise pas à nous prononcer sur le contenu exact de cette addition textuelle” (Desan, “Orphelin” 65).

181 “On pourra se demander si Marie de Gournay retourne à l’éloge original rédigé par Montaigne en supprimant d’elle-même ce qu’elle avait peut-être ajouté lors de l’édition de 1595, restituant ainsi dans sa dernière édition le texte initial de Montaigne” (Desan, “Orphelin” 64).

182 Compare to the 1595 and subsequent editions: “J’ay pris plaisir à publier en plusieurs lieux l’espoirance que j’ay de Marie de Gournay le Jars, ma fille d’ Alliance: et certes aymée de moy beaucoup plus que paternellement, et enveloppée en ma retraite et solitude, comme l’une des meilleures parties de mon propre estre. Je ne regarde plus qu’elle au monde. Si l’adolescence peut donner presage, cette ame sera quelque jour capable des plus belles choses, et entre autres de la perfection de cette tres-saincte amitié où nous ne lisons point que son sexe ait peu monter encore: la sincereté et la solidité de ses mœurs y sont desja bastantes, son affection vers moy plus que surabondante, et telle en somme qu’il n’y a rien à souhaiter, sinon que l’appréhension qu’elle a de ma fin, par les cinquante et cinq ans ausquels elle m’a rencontré, la travaillast moins cruellement. Le jugement qu’elle fit des premiers Essais, et femme, et en ce siecle, et si jeun, et seule en son quartier, et la vehemence fameuse dont elle m’ayma et me desira long temps sur la seule estime qu’elle en print de moy, avant m’avoir veu, c’est un accident de tres-digne consideration” (II.17.661-2).
acting as her father. We see in such a portrait the fusion of daughter and perfect friend, evidenced by her textual alterations. While some critics may assume that “bien plus que” indicates sexual ties to or desire for Montaigne, Gournay’s “more than paternally” aims to reproduce the language of perfect friendship borrowed from her father and evidenced in their textual friendship. She is not only Montaigne’s literary daughter, but also a kind of stepmother or godmother to the text itself.

Gournay is responsible in this first posthumous edition of the *Essais* for its preface, reorganization, and several notable additions to the earlier two editions of the *Essais*. She was especially proud of having anticipated several of Montaigne’s additions to the Bordeaux copy that her readers now saw before them. Her portrait of Montaigne is that of her father, while her self-portrait as evidenced in her prefaces and the *Essais* is that of daughter-friend.183 Marc Schachter notes that the literary daughter, spiritual friend, second-self identity Gournay creates allows her to break the bonds of commonplace biological reproduction, an identity that only evolves as her editorial process develops:

> Gournay is, at once, Montaigne’s friend, his daughter, and, in both capacities, “another self.” That her own writings should serve as her spiritual offspring further transforms convention, for in the tradition informing Montaigne’s understanding of his book as the child of the mind, women only offer the possibility of biological reproduction. Gournay thus intervenes in a series of masculinist and misogynist paradigms to insert sexual difference where before there was only one sex, and she does it without privileging heterosexuality or biology. (“Voluntary” 137)

Indeed, by mirroring Montaigne’s hand Gournay adds to and expands the concept of textual reproduction that emphasizes the mind and imagination over the sexed body.

While many critics find evidence that it was in fact Montaigne’s hand responsible for the

183 “Although she refers to Montaigne as ‘mon père,’ she persistently refers to herself as his friend” (Cholakian, “Reading”154).
“accident de tres digne consideration” passage, I prefer to emphasize Gournay’s sly additions to the essayist’s original passage in praise of her. In this way, her hand in the *Essais* mirrors La Boétie’s poetic hand that constitutes the first book’s 29th chapter, “Vingt et neuf sonnets d’Estienne de La Boétie.” As Schachter notes, Gournay effectively inserts sexual difference into masculinist paradigms. This study aims to go further in this analysis by exploring how Gournay multiplies the number of genders possible while denying sexual difference itself. She feminizes the male dominated realm of intellectual authorities and textual reproduction. The next chapter discusses how she feminizes the roles of educator and protector of children of the mind.
CHAPTER 6
BLURRED LINES: CAMILLA AND GOURNAY THE LITERARY AMAZON

Shortly after the assassination of Henri IV by Catholic fanatic François Ravillac in May 1610 Marie de Gournay published an unfortunate defense of the Jesuits involved in plotting the king’s murder, *Adieu de l’Ame du Roy de France et de Navarre, Henry le Grand à la Royne, avec la Defense des Peres Jesuites par la demoiselle de Gournay* (1610). Thus began an onslaught of attacks and mockery of the *demoiselle* that lasted hundreds of years. Her defense of the Jesuits brought about the anonymous 1610 parody pamphlet *Anti-Gournay or Remerciment des Beurrieres de Paris, Au Sieur de Courbouzon Montgommery*, in which “la Demoiselle de Gournay” is a public woman “qui a toujours bien servi le public.”[184] Though many mocked her as unattractive and unable to acquire a husband, her engagement with literature in public surely accounts for this sexual defamation. Indeed, her “refusal to occupy the place assigned to women in her day, ha[s] made her a popular target for prurient remarks” (Cholakian, “Reading” 145). Most of these remarks present her as a strange example of femininity – most notably the ridiculous old maid. Ilsley notes that the Jesuit controversy results in a “chain of fantastic stories picturing her in caricature and practical jokes played on her in the years to come” (Ilsley 118-19).

Throughout her career Gournay blurred the lines between public and private, ancient

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and modern, women’s work and men’s work; the calumny she endured is proof of her “blurred lines” effect on masculinist forces of her time. Gournay acted as a literary Amazon, violently defending women and advocating the diversity of the French language.

Marie de Gournay was not unaccustomed to receiving visitors in her “retrait,” often young men whose interest in language she shared – though as her monetary means decreased so did the number of her acquaintances (Magne 115). Poverty brought her to a third floor apartment on Rue de l’Arbre sec, where “on y monte péniblement à l’aide d’une grosse corde …. On s’embrasse dans les pattes de la chatte Piaillon et l’on découvre, à la fin, tripotant parmi les paperassés, la docte fille” who “versifiait” amidst the meowing of her cat (115, 117). Gournay valued friendship highly; and though she could be biting in her conversation, she was also lively and kind. She counted among her friends eminent thinkers such as Lipsius, La Mothe Le Vayer, Dupuy, L’Abbé de Marolles, Du Perron, Boisrobert, and L’Etoile.

Unfortunately for Gournay’s dignity, these relationships with prominent intellectuals could not stop the onslaught of misogynist criticism.185

While she was not alone in her defense of “antiquated” language and her beloved Anciens, Gournay’s gender made her admiration for the past ridiculous to her counterparts. Her love of the past made her seem “déformée”186 and outdated to her contemporaries – though she was arguably much more ahead of her time than behind

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185 “Ces excellentes relations n’ont cepandant pas suffi à protéger Gournay du dédain et des sarcasms de nombreux littérateur de l’époque et encore moins de ceux des siècles suivants” (Noiset 9).

186 “L’amour qu’elle entretient du passé lui montre du présent une image déformée” (Magne 115).
it. Indeed, the scorn and mockery of her in pamphlets and satires plagued her. These stories form a certain portrait of Gouray that is less than flattering and that wounded Gournay to the core. She was offended by this damage to her honor, and *calumnie* became an important theme in her writing. Because she was so ridiculed, Gournay developed a literary persona whose authority was grounded in antiquity, the Amazon Camilla. She used this authority to advocate for women’s rights to participate in public debates about language. In her opinion, and in a violently corporal image, those who devour the honor of another are “plus canibales que ceux qui dévorent le corps.”¹⁸⁷ While her court case against her slanderers did not come to fruition, Mlle de Gournay actively created her own self-portrait through her texts. In this way Gournay blurred the lines between portrait and persona; spurred on by threats to her reputation and unabashed mockery she faced, Gournay used her love of ancient authority to create her own persona of an intellectual warrior for the French language and women’s right to publish and participate in conversation.

Monsieur Petit’s *Dialogues satiriques et moraux* (1688) paints Gournay as “la plus vieille Pucelle du Royaume” and “la vieille Sybille” (207, 209). In an anecdote recounted in one of his dialogues “[c]ette Muse antique” comes across the word *raffinage* and examines it closely: “Pendant qu’elle le [*raffinage*] tournoit de tous costez, l’examinat rigoureusement, le prononcoit pour se determiner à le rejeter ou à le retenir” (208). Gournay’s fascination for words – their sound and pronunciation, their eloquence and force – is apparent despite Petit’s denigration of her spinsterhood. Further, her *Copie de la vie de la demoiselle de Gournay* (1641) was the result of a

¹⁸⁷ Cited in Ilsley p.119.
cruel joke played on Gournay by some of Malherbe’s followers who had convinced her that the king of England wanted an account of her life as part of a collection of contemporary writers. She displayed her wit and ingenuity by publishing the work despite its malicious origins in her collected works the *Advis.* Like an Amazon spurred into battle with men, Gournay made the written word her battlefield.

The anecdotes that comprise this chapter’s introduction merit an analysis that appropriately identifies Gournay’s ambiguous identity and her obsession with calumny; it is precisely her problematic status that inspires Gournay’s evocation of the Amazon Camilla in her self portrait. She chose this ambiguous warrior woman because Gournay was both mocked and begrudgingly accepted for her obsession with language, which she used as a weapon. She was an active participant in public debates about language at the dawn of the seventeenth century. In addition to her obsession with the past, Gournay’s spinster status marked her and thus marginalized her. These personal attacks led to Gournay’s concerns with slander and her adaptation of the persona of Camilla. She embraced her words as arms and virginal status and transformed personal defamation into a proto-feminist portrait of female masculinity.

Though she was not allowed to attend its formal meetings, Gournay played a large part in the debates about language and the establishment of the *Académie Française*. As such, her active and vehement participation in dialogues about the development of the French language is another source of pamphlets and plays that

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188 Marie croît qu’elle écrit ce texte [Copie de la vie de la demoiselle de Gournay] pour un chanoine anglais à qui le roi aurait demandé « d’historier tous les hommes et toutes les femmes de notre Siècle qui avaient servi les Muses », mais en réalité il s’agit d’une « malice » de trois courtisans appartenant à la « bande de Malherbe » et déterminés à la tourner en dérision. La farce tourne en fin de compte à l’avantage de la victime. Marie publie ce texte pour la première fois dans ses *Avis* de 1641 (Courcelles 223).
mock and deride her. Though she was absent from certain official conversations, she shared conversation with certain founders in salons and her own apartment. Her appearance in pamphlets and plays published as the *Académistes* fall out of fashion is testament to her public participation in language debates of the time. In a way, she slips into this institutionalized male realm through the back door; for “as this ‘tempest in a teapot’ which raged around the founding of this new institution was a man’s dispute in a man’s world, it seems significant that the name of this lone woman should appear in so many of the pamphlets hurled against it” (Ilsley 233). By participating in intellectual dialogue despite gendered constraints upon her mind and body, Gournay continually made her project of writing a demonstration of the gender parity for which she argued so vehemently.

Gournay was consistently mocked as a spinster obsessed with language; in these derisive portraits she is a ridiculous and badly dressed old maid obsessed with debating language. In *Comédie des Académistes* (1639) the “Vieille Gournai” argues for the continued usage of antiquated words like *jadis, recoin, ancuper* and loses “une grosse dent” mid-sentence. Yet she finds solace in the fact that Montaigne also lost a tooth at the age of sixty: “J’aime à lui ressembler meme à perdre les dents” (cited in Ilsley 239). Her righteous but seemingly ridiculous admiration for Montaigne was indeed an element of her persona that many satirists evoke. Emile Magne’s *Le plaisant Abbé de Boisrobert: Fondateur de l’Académie Française* (1909) recounts how Boisrobert enjoyed and supported her but could not “se défendre de railler ses ridicules et ses manies” (116). The story of how two of Malherbe’s followers impersonated Racan in Gournay’s apartment, causing the infuriated woman to
dismiss the real Racan in a manner less than hospitable, was one among Boisrobert’s “baggage de contes” (Magne 121). Magne depicts her as a woman of quick wit and intelligence despite her advanced years, however “étrangement pucelle de corps et d’esprit” and with “une bouche féminine” (115).

Marie de Gournay’s young friend La Mothe le Vayer inherited most of her library and all of her correspondence. He understood well her relationship to Montaigne and her fight for the appreciation of her beloved Anciens. His epitaph for the learned lady presents her as Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, just warfare, strength, and courage: “Arrête ici, passant, admire ce Tombeau, / Il ne renferme pas une cendre vulgaire, / C’est une autre Pallas qu’un Père extraordinaire / A produite ici-bas de son docte cerveau” (cited in Ilsley 264 my emphasis ERC). La Mothe Le Voyer’s portrayal of Gournay as another Pallas Athena – wise, strong, and supportive – is apt in its evocation of a classical model of female strength and spirit. Gournay would undoubtedly appreciate that she was painted as the product of Montaigne’s learned mind. But Gournay herself provided her public with a classical female figure who embodies her classical self: Vergil’s Camilla.

Gournay spent 40 years of her life continually editing Montaigne's essays; and at the request of a publisher, she identified and translated all the classical citations embedded within the work. This chapter’s first section, “‘[C]este orphelin qui m’estoit commis’: queer textual kinship and Gournay’s editorial process,” traces Gournay’s editorial work and the roles both masculine and feminine that she occupied. It explores Gournay’s use of the Essais as “cest orphelin qui m’estoit commis” in her 1635 letter to Richelieu. By using this image of the Essais as orphan
and herself as adoptive parent and protector, Gournay furthered her network of familial intellectualism, which not only bound her to her literary father but also legitimized her reputation as a learned woman author and editor. Like Montaigne’s system of queer textual reproduction, Gournay adds masculine “form” to Montaigne’s “matter” through her cultivation and guided development of the *Essais*. It is Montaigne’s conversion of parentage to maternal generation that inspires and allows Gournay to further blur distinctions between gender, parenthood, and authorship. She opens up masculinity to women, making masculinist sex distinctions untenable and feminizing the male literary tradition.

Her participation in public intellectual life, the constant ridicule she faced as an outspoken defender of women, of poetic metaphor, neologism, and classical texts, and especially her status as an unmarried woman – all of these made Gournay especially sensitive to public scorn and slander, which in her case were extremely biting and misogynistic. This chapter’s second section, “‘Ipse pater famulam vovit’: Camilla and the chaste literary amazon,” explores Gournay’s use of the essay as a feminist genre, in particular her evocation of Vergil’s Amazon Camilla as a symbol of herself, a chaste literary warrior. In the frontispiece to the 1641 edition of her complete works, the *Avis et Presens de la demoiselle de Gournay*, is a portrait of Gournay and a warning to any hateful readers. Her portrait’s frame includes a short Latin inscription: *ipse pater famulam vovit*, “the father himself dedicated [his daughter] as a servant” – to the goddess Diana. With these four words Gournay provides a sort of verbal self-portrait; for this allusion to the Amazon Camilla in Vergil’s *Aeneid* paints her as an erudite warrior woman and simultaneously links her
to her literary father. This section explores how Camilla represents Gournay’s own status as an unmarried woman writing in early modern France. Gournay’s evocation of Camilla serves as a defense of her chaste and erudite lifestyle, which was the source of much biting criticism as well as public scorn and mockery. Through her use of Camilla and her writings about translation and classical texts, Gournay demonstrated gender parity through action, words, and demonstration. She actively deconstructed gender through these “blurred lines.”

“[C]este orphelin qui m’estoit commis”: queer kinship and Gournay’s editorial process

While Gournay went to extreme efforts to present herself as a perfect friend to Montaigne as his fille d’alliance, her editorial work with the Essais made her much more than his daughter or friend. It is their friendship, their mutual understanding, and their roles in the birth and dissemination of the Essais that bind the two in a way that transcends biology. Regosin argues that Gournay is “linked to the father through a private covenant which transcends the limitations of the relation between parent and offspring” (“Dutiful” 109). He claims further that she is “like the metaphorical child of his mind,

189“As the only person the essayist claims still to think about in the world, she displaces Montaigne's family and becomes a ‘fille d'alliance’ who takes the place of wife and natural daughter, linked to the father through a private covenant which transcends the limitations of the relation between parent and offspring.
a product of his noble soul and of his writing, an offspring of whom he is both the father and mother” (109). Desan sees Gournay more as “mère adoptive” and even wet nurse to Montaigne’s book – from the moment she first read the *Essais* until her death: “L’« accouchement » de ce texte ne fut pas sans problème et la fille d'alliance se transforma peut-être alors en mère nourricière afin de protéger cet « enfant de mammelle »” (“Orphelin” 66). While Gournay was surely conscious of Montaigne’s conception of himself as mother of his book, her role as an editor painted her in a more masculine role than solely an adoptive mother or wet nurse to the *Essais*. Indeed, Gournay’s conception of kinship surrounding textual reproduction is even more gender bending and queer than Desan or Regosin delineate; for while she takes on the “feminine” role of nurturer to the book she also provides a kind of “form” to Montaigne’s “matter” in her role as *Tuteur* and *Protecteur*.

How did Gournay conceive of her own role in the development and protection of the book? Her letter to Cardinal Richelieu in the 1635 edition of the *Essais* gives us an idea of her conception of herself as editor of her father’s child of the mind. Gournay had spent most of her life editing this complex tome, the *orphelin* for whom she must be both *Tuteur* and *Protecteur*. Having completed the last edition of her lifetime and close to her deathbed, Gournay hoped to find the next protector of the *Essais* in Richelieu: “preste de tomber dans le sepulcre, je vous consigne cét orphelin qui m'estoit commis, afin qu'il vous plaise désormais de luy tenir lieu de Tuteur et de Protecteur” (“1635 Preface” 69). Following her father’s footsteps and fulfilling her covenant to protect and disseminate the

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Marie de Gournay is thus, in a sense, more than daughter, and that is perhaps why Montaigne loves her ‘plus que paternellement.’ As one of the best parts of his being, we might imagine that she is rather like the metaphorical child of his mind, a product of his noble soul and of his writing, an offspring of whom he is both the father and mother, and one who will represent him and bring him honor” (Regosin, “Dutiful” 109).
Essais after Montaigne’s death, Gournay incorporated his practice of queer textual reproduction into her role as editor of the book. She fulfilled the maternal role of nurturing the book using her understanding of Montaigne’s textual child – an understanding that is perhaps unparalleled to this day. She was without a doubt “la première à comprendre l’importance de la lecture philologique dans l’édition et l’interprétation des Essais” (Dotoli 117). Gournay used the gift of intellectual trust from her father not only to disseminate the Essais but also to feminize the role of literary editor.

Gournay’s comprehension of and authority concerning the Essais originated from her textual kinship to Montaigne and his book; but she did not act as a mere sister to her father’s orphelin. She saw her potential as a textual parent from an early age, and fought for the Essais with the fierceness of a mother and the sagesse of a father of the mind. Her affinity for Montaigne’s queer textual kinship and reproduction was also personal to Gournay. She had two fathers in her life – her biological father, Guillaume le Jars de Gournay, and her adopted literary father, Montaigne. One can imagine Gournay pondering the complexities of having both a father of the body and a father of the mind. In this triangle of relations Guillaume le Jars is associated with the body and matter (biological reproduction) while Montaigne is associated with the “form” or spirit (generation of the mind); in this way her biological father is feminine while Montaigne is masculine.

In her Preface to the 1635 Essais Gournay acknowledges her doubled paternal kinship and expresses her obvious and justified preference for Montaigne:

Et n'ay pas tort de ne vouloir appeller que du nom paternel, celuy duquel tout ce
In Gournay’s personal experience, kinship is outside the boundaries of reproductive biology. She herself was doubly orphaned after the deaths of her biological and literary fathers, and she may have felt a deep kinship with this orphaned literary child committed to her care. In the days following Montaigne’s death, Gournay wrote to Lipsius in grief over her newfound orphanhood, calling her miserable state that of an orphan. Like Montaigne’s mourning of La Boétie, her letters and posthumous editions of the *Essais* blurred the lines of author, editor, tutor and protector – of biology and literacy – all the while using the French language to make sex distinction and gendered hierarchies untenable.

Gournay’s letter to Richelieu in 1635 edition names the *Essais* as *orphelin*.

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190 “Misérable orphelinage! si faut-il que je te chasse à quelque prix que ce soit. Fut-il jamais un malheur pareil au mien?” (Gournay, Fragments 187).

191 “Ne vous pouvant donner les ESSAIS, parce qu'ils ne sont pas à moy, et cognoissant neantmoins, que tout ce qu'il y a d'illustre en nostre siecle, passe par vos mains, ou vous doit hommage; j'ay creu que le nom de vostre Eminence debvoit orner le frontispice de ce Livre. Il est vray, MONSEIGNEUR, qu'il vous rend icy, par mon entremise, un hommage fort irregulier; car ne pouvant le vous donner, je vous ose donner a luy: c'est à dire, que preste de tomber dans le sepulcre, je vous consigne cet orphelin qui m'estoit commis, afin qu'il vous plaise désormais de luy tenir lieu de Tuteur et de Protecteur. J'espere que le seul respect de vostre authorité luy rendra cet office: et que comme les mouches ne pouvoient entrer dans le Temple d'Hercule, dont vous estes emulateur: ainsi les mains impures, qui depuis long-temps avoient diffamé ce mesme Livre, par tant de malheureuses editions, n'oseront plus commettre le sacrilege d'en approcher, quand elles le verront en vostre protection par celle- cy, que vostr e liberalité m'a aydée à mettre au jour. Combien seray je fiere en l'autre Monde, d'avoir esté assez hardie en quittant cestuy cy, pour nommer un tel Executeur de mon testament que le Grand CARDINAL DE RICHELIEU! et de voir de là haut, qu'on se souvienne icy bas; que j'ay sceu discerner, à quelle excellence et hautesse d'ame, je devois assigner la protection du plus excellent et plus haut present que les Muses ayent faict aux hommes, depuis les siecles triomphans des Grecs et des Romains! Vous MONSEIGNEUR, Autheur de tant d'Ouvrages immortels de diverse sorte, qu'il semble que vous ayez entrepris d'enrichir et d'amplifier l'Empire de l'Immortalité: ne l'obligez-vous pas à vous offrir par nos vœux, pour une espece de recompense, les plus nobles des biens qu'elle tient d'ailleurs, comme ce Livre: oyu mesmes à les reputer d'autant plus seurement immortels, qu'en les vous offrant elle croid les appuyer aucunement dur le Destin de vostre Eminence. De laquelle je demeureray sans fin” (“1635 Preface” 69-70).
and also indicates two roles of tutor and protector taken on by the editor of the book. By asking Richelieu to “luy [orphelin] tenir lieu de Tuteur et Protecteur” Gournay ensured the future of this book by passing these roles to a worthy individual – much as Montaigne had done when he passed the *Essais* to her. This letter indicates some of the travails and responsibilities involved in adopting this orphan, most prominently keeping its text, language, and imagery intact against “mains impures” fighting to stifle it:

> J’espère que le seul respect de vostre authorité luy rendra cét office: et que comme les mouches ne pouvoient entrer dans le Temple d’Hercule, dont vous estes emulateur: ainsi les mains impures, qui depuis long-temps avoient diffamé ce mesme Livre, par tant de malheureuses editions, n’oseront plus commettre le sacrilege d’en approcher…. (“1635 Preface” 69)

In this way Gournay passes the role of *protecteur* to Richelieu in the future. During her lifetime she shared the role of *protecteur* with Lipsius by entrusting her examples of the *Essais* to him for their publication abroad: “Certes je rends à ce propos un sacrifice au bonheur, qu’une si fameuse et digne main que celle de Justus Lipsius, ait ouvert par Escrit public, les portes de la louange aux Essais” (73). The alliances Gournay formed played an integral part in her role as *protecteur* of this textual orphan. It is a masculine role and one that she accomplished with aplomb and enthusiasm.

Indeed, the role of adoptive parent to the *Essais* required not only steadfast diligence due to the text’s complexity, but also an aptitude with language and a formidable understanding of the text’s meanings and Montaigne’s intentions.192 Armed

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192 “Mais le travail requis par la nouvelle edition des *Essais* ne consistituait pas en une simple faveur qu’un personage important pouvait aisément accorder à la mémoire d’un ami. C’était un labeur considerable et minutieux dont Montaigne lui-même avait fait l’expérience en 1588 lors de la seconde édition des *Essais*. Même une fois le texte établi, la correction des épreuves, surtout pour un texte comme celui de Montaigne, avec ses innombrables additions marginales, nécessitait un lecteur très averti …. Sous l’œil négligéant d’un correcteur peu scrupuleux ou simplement ignorant, les fautes de grammaire, mais aussi, et beaucoup plus fâcheusement, les contresens, risquaient d’abonder dans les textes imprimés…. Montaigne savait que
with a perfect friend’s understanding of Montaigne’s monstrous child, Gournay helped to form the *orphelin* in its first posthumous publication of 1595. For the duration of her life she carefully ensured that each edition remain faithful to the monstrous complexities of the *Essais*. In the kinship of the *Essais* that Gournay formed, individuals took on multiple roles in raising the orphan (*mère d’alliance, mère nourricière, tuteur, protecteur*); she herself took on both feminine and masculine roles of nurturer and protector.

Further, these roles are shared by multiple individuals and transferred from one individual to another – just as Gournay transferred the orphaned *Essais* to the care of Cardinal Richelieu, who was to take on her roles as *Tuteur* and *Protecteur*. In this way the *Essais* had multiple guardians who worked to form and protect them. They had the opportunity to continue to live through the centuries in the minds of their many readers, producing “infinis *Essais*” (I.40.185). Gournay acted as *protecteur* by establishing and maintaining these important alliances and also by scrupulously ensuring that the printed pages stayed faithful to the language, imagery, and meaning of her annotated examples of Montaigne’s text. Such a task in itself required diligence, authority, and a stalwart comprehension of the *Essais* practiced on a daily basis throughout her lifetime:

"Elle a pris très au sérieux sa tâche d’éditrice. On peut imaginer qu’elle n’a pas manqué, durant tout le travail d’impression des *Essais*, de faire une visite quasi journalière chez Abel L’Angelier où elle devait, après avoir scruté pour leur fidélité à l’originel, les quelques pages de texte préparés par l’imprimeur, répondre aux questions qui se posaient à celui-ci sur le sens du passage, trancher les hesitations, résoudre les équivoques, ayant à chaque instant en vue le but que Montaigne s’était proposé. (Noiset 44)

While she was a steadfast protector of the *Essais*, Gournay was not always faithful to Montaigne’s *exemplaire*; she made certain changes and additions to the orphan

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Gournay était prête à entreprendre la tâche ardue de veiller sur la publication la plus fidèle possible des *Essais* et qu’elle était capable de la mener à bien en son absence” (Noiset 43).
during her years as an editor. In this way Gournay formed the text in a manner she chose. Schachter shows how certain of Gournay’s changes in the form and titles of the *Essais* were an attempt to replace La Boétie’s place as friend in the corpus of the child of the mind. First, in all editions during Montaigne's lifetime, chapters 28 (“De l’amitié”) and 29 (“Vingt and Neuf Sonnets d’Estienne de La Boetie”) of Book 1 are both labeled as chapter 28 – as if the memory of La Boétie had been subsumed into Montaigne's own being. In Montaigne’s doubled chapters is the doubling of friendship, two souls sharing one textual body. However, Gournay’s 1595 edition corrects this “error,” and labels chapter 29 as such. Further, and more maliciously, this edition also displaces the essay entitled “On est Puny pour S’opiniaster à une Place Sans Raison” (1.15). In this way Gournay gave form to Montaigne’s *matière*; in the development of the book and in its corpus, Gournay occupied a male role and fulfilled Montaigne’s desire for a sort of masculine formation for the orphan like that needed for biological children: “et comme nous voyons que les femmes produisent bien toutes seules, des amas et pieces de chair informes, mais que pour faire une generation bonne et naturelle, il les faut embesoiner d'une autre semence” (I.8.32). Further, as chapter five explores, the “praesomption” passage in the *Essais* provides another complexity to the parentage of Montaigne’s text. If Gournay did in fact form her own portrait within the textual corpus of her father’s writing, she adds to the *Essais*’ monstrous body in a strange self-portrait from the persona

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193 See in particular his chapter, “Friendly Usurpations: Gournay and Montaigne” in *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship.*

194 See Schachter’s *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship.*
of her father.\textsuperscript{195} She pushes textual reproduction even further than Montaigne, blurring the lines of authorship and writing by weaving her own words into her father’s text.

As Tuteur and Protecteur of the textual orphan committed to her, Gournay guarded the text’s authenticity with maternal ferocity through the male realm of publication. Her Privilege\textsuperscript{196} established her as the textual authority and ensured that the Essais’ corpus remain as she had formed it. This Privilege expresses Marie de Gournay’s wish to retain the text’s authenticity as much as possible; indeed, she and the Essais’ publishers were in constant debate because they wanted to change the text in order to make it accessible to seventeenth-century readers. Gournay thus struggled to find a medium between the text’s authenticity and availability. One of the major debates regarded translating Montaigne’s citations for those readers who could not read Latin. As Gournay fully understood Montaigne’s goal to illuminate his readers’ minds in order to create “infinis Essais,” she also understood that the context of these citations was important: “bien avant la critique à venir, Mlle de Gournay comprend le rapport des Essais avec les autres livres, surtout ceux des Anciens” (Dotoli 120). It is solely for this reason that the young woman identified and translated all of Montaigne’s citations in a 97 page addendum to the 1617 edition.\textsuperscript{197}

\textsuperscript{195} See chapter five of this study.

\textsuperscript{196} “Et faisons tres-expresses defences à tous autres Imprimeurs et Libraires d’entreprendre d’imprimer ledit Œuvre, sans le gré & consentement de ladite exposante, & sans s’adresser à elle pour prendre advis & adveu de la coppie & methode qu’ils doivent choisir, pour faire sur icelle ladite impression, & s’obliger à elle d’y mettre bon ordre & bons correcteurs, pour eviter aux inconveniens & fautes qui peuvent ruiner de sa part rendre cét office gratuitement au public, & ausdits Imprimeurs quand ils l’en requerront, & sans obliger à aucune charge que de suivre les anciens & meilleurs exemplaires, lesquels elle leur fournira” (cited in Desan, Travail 99).

\textsuperscript{197} See Mary McKinley’s “‘Fleurs estrangeres’: Gournay’s Translation of Montaigne’s Quotations in the 1617 Essais” for a detailed analysis of Gournay’s translations as part of her battle for the French language.
This sacrifice to the authenticity of the language of the *Essais* was in fact a means of differentiation for Gournay. She placed her translations as an addendum to the chapters, thereby claiming authorship of her translation work that is nonetheless part of the *Essais*’ textual corpus. Desan notes that Gournay considered her translations “comme un appendice au livre des *Essais* et préfère placer ses traductions soit à la fin des chapitres (comme dans l’édition de 1635) soit tout simplement à la fin des trois livres (comme dans l’édition de 1625)” (“Travail” 95-6). Her translations hang from the ending of the chapters like extra limbs, contributing to the monstrosity of the *Essais*’ corpus. Like the changes and additions of the 1595 edition, these translations incorporated Gournay’s text into the orphan’s body. Entering the male realm of translation and all the erudition it required was in fact a way for Gournay to provide a masculine contribution and “form” to the monstrously feminine matter of the text.

Gournay’s translations also made manifest her role as *protecteur* of the textual *orphelin*. The monstrosity of Montaigne’s text and the diversity of his linguistic choices put it wholly outside trending literary practices of the seventeenth century. Malherbe’s insistence on standards of clarity and coherence in both language and form put the *Essais* up against violent contenders. Gournay had to protect the book, and in doing so she entered debates about language and literature. Mary McKinley signals that in her introduction to the translations Gournay never calls these passages *citations* but rather “les passages Latins des *Essais*.” She considers them part of the text because “for her, as for Montaigne, the *Essais* was in its very essence a bilingual text” (126).

Gournay adamantly defended the language of the *Essais* in her prefaces included – though varying drastically in form – in each edition published during her lifetime. In
the 1635 Preface accompanying her letter to Richelieu, she defends the diversity of Montaigne’s language as a means of expressing the complexity of his ideas: “On ne peut representer que les imaginations communes, par les mots communs: quiconque a des conceptions ou pensees extraordinaires, doit chercher des termes inusitez à s'exprimer” (“1635 Preface” 75). She battles for the language of the *Essais* in her Prefaces, acting as *protecteur* of Montaigne’s Latinisms, neologisms, and variants. In this way Gournay infused her own words, opinions, and text into the corpus of the *Essais*. Her role as *protecteur* allowed her to insert her own text as another monstrous limb of Montaigne’s *orphelin*.

Within Gournay’s prefaces we find another topic that pervades her later writings – the importance of discussing sexuality openly. In her defense of Montaigne’s frank discussion of sex in “Sur des Vers de Vergile” (3.5) Gournay argues that being well informed about sex can protect women from the dangers of ruinous situations. In this way the seeds of Gournay’s texts that would later comprise her treatises on poetry, translation, and equality of the sexes were planted within the *Essais*’ prefaces and constituted part of its monstrous body. In addition, Gournay’s battle to protect the language of the *Essais* launched her into the debates about language discussed in this chapter’s next section.

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198 “Premièrement on l'accuse de quelque usurpation du Latin, de la fabrique de nouveaux mots, et d'employer quelques phrases nonchalantes ou Gasconnes. Je respons, que je leur donne gagné, s'ils peuvent dire, pere ny mere, frere, sœur, boire, manger, dormir, veiller, aller, voir, sentir, ouyr et toucher, ny tout le reste en somme des plus communs vocables qui tombent en nostre usage, sans parler Latin. Ouy, mais le besoin d'exprimer nos conceptions, dit quelqu'un d'eux, nous a contraints à l'emprunt de ceux-cy” (“1635 Preface” 74).

199 “Ce ne sont pas donc les discours francs et speculatifs sur l'Amour qui sont dangereux; ce sont les mols et delicats, les recits artistes et chatoüilleux des passions amoureuses et de leurs effects, qui se voyent aux Romans, aux Poètes et en telles especes d'Ecrivains: dangereux dis-je tousjours, mais qui le seraient beaucoup moins, sans rencherissement et le haut prix où les loix de la ceremonie et leurs exceptions, ont eslevé Cupidon et Venus. Toutesfois certes j'ay grand peur, que le genre humain ne puisse sçavoir plus dangereusement quel animal est l'Amour, que quand personne ne le luy dit” (“1635 Preface” 78).
Gournay links language with the growth of the mind, and highlights the importance of diverse language for the development of culture that Montaigne demonstrates through his usage in the *Essais*. In the 1635 preface she even claims that she adorns herself solely with the ornament of her alliance with Montaigne: “Lecteur ayant à désirer de t'estre agréable, je me pare du beau titre de ceste alliance, puisque je n'ay point d'autre ornement” (73). However, Gournay chose a different ornament to adorn her complete works. In the self-portrait that she painted within her oeuvre, and because of her heated battle for language and poetry in the early part of the seventeenth century Gournay adorned herself with Vergil’s warrior woman Camilla.

“Ipse pater famulam vovit”: Camilla and the chaste literary amazon

The frontispiece of the 1641 edition of her complete works, the *Avis et Presens de la demoiselle de Gournay*, includes a portrait of the *demoiselle* framed by the inscription *ipse pater famulam vovit*, an allusion to the warrior woman Camilla in Vergil’s *Aeneid*. This section delineates how and why Gournay identifies with this ambiguous, martial, and chaste female figure. Gournay imbued her oeuvre with Camilla as part of a “position defensive adoptée par Gournay qui se sentait constamment sous le feu des critiques misogynes” (Noiset 67). As a proud outsider in
a society she found troubled, Gournay was surely attracted to Camilla as an
unmarried woman who chose weapons over marriage – who was arguably married to
her arms. Her chastity marks her as ambiguous and undefined by her lack of place
and established role in a society that, like Gournay’s own, considered women as
capable solely of biological reproduction. Baker notes that “by forsaking typical
feminine duties, [Camilla] becomes non illa colo calathisve Minervae/femineas
adsueta manus (her womanly hands not accustomed to the distaff and wool-basket of
Minerva, 7.805-7). By this crucial measure alone, she is outside the boundaries of
society” (1).

Gournay styles herself as a literary Amazon by evoking this exemplary
Amazon known for her incredible speed and ferocity as well as her insistence upon a
chaste life: “All her contentment being with Diana./ The girl remained untouched and
ever cherished/ Passion for arms and for virginity” (Fitzgerald 11, 352). Vergil’s
Diana describes how King Metabus, fleeing into exile and pursued by heavily armed
Volsci, carries his infant daughter Camilla but is blocked by the river Amasenus.
Desperate for the safety of his daughter, Metabus binds her to a spear and launches
this spear across the Amasenus, but only after dedicating Camilla to the service of
Diana: “Daughter of Latona,/ Diana, kindly virgin of the groves,/ I myself, her father,
swear this child shall be/ Thy servant – the first weapon she embraces/ Thine, as by
thy mercy through the air/ She escapes the enemy” (11, 351-52).200 Following
Montaigne’s proclivity for evoking Latin texts while subtly altering their meaning,

200 “alma, tibi hanc, nemorum cultrix, Latonia uirgo, / ipse pater famulam uoueo; tua prima per auras / tela
tenens supplex hostem fugit. accipe, testor, / diua tuam, quae nunc dubiis committitur auris” (Vergil 11,
557-60).
Gournay transforms King Metabus’ dedication of his infant daughter Camilla as a servant to Diana from the first person present to the third person perfect. Vergil’s “ipse pater famulam voveo” [I myself the father dedicate her as a servant] thus becomes Gournay’s “ipse pater famulam vovit” [the father himelf dedicated her as a servant]. Vergil’s text is in the first person and thus from the point of view of Metabus, Camilla’s father; yet Gournay’s incarnation shifts in time and perspective. By changing from the first person present to the third person perfect, Gournay marks the absence of her literary father while focusing upon the formation or origin of his daughter. In this way, Gournay reminds her readers of the exemplary father who has named her fille d’alliance – the father who has dedicated her to a life of virtuous intellectual warfare against defamers of the Essais, reformists of the French language, and vehement misogynists. Gournay the literary Amazon (a violent advocate for women and language) evokes this exemplary Amazon from classical literature known for her prowess as a warrior and her insistence upon a chaste life. In this way Gournay uses ancient authority to argue the cause of women, blurring the lines of past and present, masculinist and feminist – the result of which is a feminization of Vergil.

What attracts Gournay to Camilla? First, Camilla is the creation of Gournay’s beloved Vergil; she is an amalgamation of masculine women imbued with wholly feminine virginity. She is ambiguous, unsettling, heroic, and tragic. Camilla is a composite of the venatrix devoted to Diana (virgin huntress) and the bellatrix (warrior woman), most notably Amazons like Penthesilea, “a girl who dared fight men, a
warrior queen” (1, 672). Camilla’s origins are flowered with allusions to her future as an Amazon; her father must cross the river Amasenus, associated with the mythical eastern Amazons. Like the Amazons, this river is fierce and “foaming high, / R[unning] over banks and brim, filled by so wild a cloudburst” (11, 745-47). Metabus hurls his infant across the fierce river bound to a spear and dedicates her as a servant to the goddess of the hunt, “kindly virgin of the groves” (11, 759). The line that immediately follows “ipse pater” in the fallen king’s dedication signals Camilla’s warrior status and future victories with bow and arrow: “the first weapon she embraces / Thine, as by thy mercy through the air / She escapes the enemy” (11, 761-62). In a gesture that further links her to the Amazon’s quiver, her father lances the spear to which she is bound in a manner that evokes the path of an arrow released from a bow. It is for this reason Metabus dedicates Camilla to the goddess of the hunt, whose chosen weapon is bow and quiver. Like an arrow from an Amazon’s bow, Camilla soars across the perilous river to the woods on a “shaft of pine” (11, 908). Gournay’s use of Camilla makes her narrative personal, glorifying Montaigne and herself. She blurs the lines of warrior woman and erudite author. One can easily imagine Gournay’s affinity with a female character whose father launched her into a future as a warrior who fights fearlessly and ferociously.

Gournay fought for the cause of women, she battled to keep the *Essais* alive and appreciated, and she also fought ferociously for language. Vergil’s Amazon is a

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201 “bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo” (Vergil 1, 493). See Trudy Harrington Baker’s “Ambiguity and the Female Warrior” for a discussion of Camilla as a composite of *bellatrix* and *venatrix*.

202 Diana instructs Opis to kill any man who harms Camilla with her weapon of choice: “Here are my weapons. / Take one vengeful shaft out of the quiver” (Fitzgerald 11, 803-4). As Diana’s servant Camilla herself leaves to battle Trojan conquerors “equipped with bow and quiver, / Weapons of ours” (11, 327-28).
ferocious warrior whose prowess in battle leaves trails of bodies in her wake. Quiver, bow, and spear are her weapons just as Gournay uses bow and arrow imagery in her battle for language. Camilla appears to readers for the first time in the midst of a bloody and chaotic battle – her bow and quiver are at her back and she rides baring one breast.\footnote{Amidst the carnage, like an Amazon, Camilla rode exultant, one breast bared / For fighting cause, her quiver at her back} Using Diana’s weapon in typical Amazon fashion, she also looses arrows as she rides horseback.\footnote{The golden bow, Diana’s weapon, rang / Upon her shoulders…. With bow unslung in flight / She turned and aimed her arrows} In fact, Camilla’s arrows are integral to one of Gournay’s powerful images about poetry and writing. She depicts the Muse as forceful and military, like an Amazon releasing an arrow: “La muse procede en ceste maniere, afin de ramasser beaucoup de substance en peu d’espace: pource qu’elle croit qu’une des plus belles parties de son triomphe, consiste à frapper brusquement un lecteur, sans le frapper bresvement” (Gournay, \textit{OC} 1563). Gournay’s Muse is triumphant, exultant, reflective, startling. Bauschatz sees Gournay’s Muse as “active and incisive”; unlike Montaigne’s “passive and nurturing” Muse, she is an Amazon imbued with actions like \textit{proceder, ramasser, croire, frapper}.\footnote{The Muse here “takes on the characteristics of an Amazon, armed with bow and arrow. She is active and incisive, unlike portrayals…by Montaigne, who saw the Muse to be passive and nurturing. Active verbs like ‘proceder,’ ‘ramasser,’ ‘sçavoir,’ and ‘frapper’ show the Muse to be forceful and courageous rather than languid and decorative” (Bauschatz, “Images” 497).} In this way, Gournay infuses her theories of poetics with the precise and penetrating power of the arrow. Again, Gournay produces “blurred lines” – here, the blurred lines of metaphor and portraiture.
Camilla is perhaps powerful to Gournay because Vergil explicitly links her, leading her “chosen comrades, virgins all” to the “hardened Amazons” led by Hippolyta and Penthesilea – “women warriors bearing crescent shields / Exult[ing], riding in tumult with wild cries” (Fitzgerald 11, 890, 895-96). One can imagine how Gournay delighted in the image of triumphant wild women riding fiercely and belting war cries. Gournay herself was invested in dialogue and conversation, in women expressing themselves on the page and in salons. In her poetic theory Gournay links language, gender and classical texts; and as Vergil’s warrior woman on the written page Camilla embodies all of these elements. In the midst of language battles leading to the establishment of the *Académie Française*, Gournay must have found that evoking Camilla in the 1641 edition of her *Avis et Presens de la demoiselle de Gournay* would well suit her self-portrait as a woman of letters.

Camilla “fights like a man” and is imbued with masculine attributes and heroic sensibilities. Reed and Baker have shown how the language Vergil uses to describe her is reminiscent of male warriors like Aeneas and Turnus – language that

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206 “At her side / Rode chosen comrades, virgins all: Larina, / Tulla, Tarpeia shaking her bronze axe. / These were the girls of Italy that she, / Divine Camilla, picked to be her pride, / Her staunch handmaidens, both in peace and war. / So ride the hardened Amazons of Thrace / With drumming hooves on frozen Thermodon, / Warring in winter, in their painted gear, / Sometimes around Hippolyta, the chieftain, / Or when the daughter of Mars, Penthesilea, / Drives her chariot back victorious / And women warriors bearing crescent shields / Exult, riding in tumult with wild cries” (Fitzgerald 11,889-902).

207 Bauschatz notes the links between language, gender, and classical texts in Gournay, all of which I believe draw her to the *bellatrix* Camilla: “Marie de Gournay redefines poetic theory in her gendered images of poetry, as a feminist enterprise, but one clearly tied to the ‘Anciens’ rather than to the ‘Modernes’ (‘Images’ 252-5).

208 “Camilla fights like a man: she jabs and stabs and thrusts and blood pours forth, she is triumphant like them, she is *furens* (mad-crazy, 11.709) like both Aeneas and Turnus” (Baker 1).
also fills the martial epic the *Iliad*. In this way, Vergil uses discourse associated with men and masculinity in the portrayal of his warrior woman; this must have further attracted her to Gournay, who herself entered male territories like translation and editing. Camilla takes down countless foes almost effortlessly, and her battle style is brutal. Vergil depicts her as an epic hero – she acts like (and dies in the same way as) her male counterparts, yet her state as a woman sets her apart in an unsettling way. An epic hero, Camilla taunts her conquered and her enemies, and responds with rage when she herself is taunted. In a scene that must have resonated with Gournay, she attempts to fight an enemy who mocks her for being a woman. In a heroic act imbued with masculinity and a warrior’s rage, Camilla climbs down from her horse and challenges the man to fight her on equal ground: “Now bitter anger made her burn at this. / She gave a friend her mount and faced the man / Fearlessly, on foot with equal arms: / A naked blade, a shield without device” (Fitzgerald 11, 847-851). Gournay argues continually for the equal potential and capacities in women as men. It is society’s restrictions on the minds of young women that keep them from living up to their intellectual potential and from participating equally in intellectual life.

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209 Reed treats Camilla sporadically but highly effectively in *Virgil’s Gaze*. See especially chapters two, three, and five.

210 “Tricking him, she closed / A narrowing ring till she became pursuer; / Then to her full height risen drove her axe / Repeatedly through helmet and through bone / As the man begged and begged her to show mercy. / Warm brains from his head-wound wetted his face. / One who came upon her at that moment / Reined in, taken aback at the sudden sight” (Fitzgerald 11, 943-50).

211 “Se trouve t’il plus de difference des hommes à elles que d’elles à elles-mesmes, selon l’institution qu’elles ont prise, selon qu’elles sont eslevées en ville ou village, ou selon les nations? Et pourquoi leur institution ou nourriture aux affaires et lettres, à l’egal des hommes, ne rempliroit elle ce vuide qui paroist ordinairement entre les testes des mesmes hommes et les leurs . . .?” (*Proumenoir* 44).
Vergil depicts Camilla’s attack of this man unwilling to fight her in hand-to-hand combat with a simile of a falcon and its prey, common for epic heroes and fiercely violent: “so easily / A falcon, sacred bird, from his rock tower / Will strike a soaring dove high in a cloud / And grip her as he tears her viscera / With crooked talons; blood and plucked-out feathers / Fall from the sky” (11. 860-63). In this strikingly violent simile, Vergil reversed the genders of predator and prey; that is, the dying man is likened to a (female) dove, *columba*, while the conquering heroine is likened to a (male) falcon, *falco*. Likewise, Gournay’s imagery can be expressly violent, especially toward the female body. Alinda’s death in the *Proumenoir* is a bloodbath, her body gauged in multiple places and blood pooling to the ground:

[L]a pauvre princesse ne laissant jamais eschapper aucune clameur, fors un seul pitoyable gémissement lors que ces gens arrachèrent la dague qui, par la violence du coup, estoit entrée dans le matelas, lequel fut bien tost baigné du sang dégorgé de ces trois playes, qui se respaundit de là jusqu’à la terre. *(Proumenoir 142)*

Further, Montaigne first mentions Mlle Gournay in the *Essais* as a young girl from Picardy who once stabbed herself repeatedly in the arm to prove her word and constancy.212

One of the most vivid of her gendered images concerns language and its abuse by her contemporaries; Gournay follows Montaigne by upholding the ancients while simultaneously engendering social meaning in accusing those who would reform the French language of having given *la langue* “le coup de pied par le ventre pour la faire avorter.”213 Such an image evokes Montaigne’s often graphic images, all the while

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212 See chapter five of this study.

implicating the female body in a certain violence. As Bauschatz argues, “she feels the ‘coup de pied dans le ventre’ as a male theorist could not have done. She also emphasizes the precarious nature of the linguistic process in the analogy with gestation, and focuses on the generative role of the female in this process” (“Gendered images” 256).

Language is gendered and corporal to Gournay. Like a child it needs to be protected and nurtured; and most importantly it needs to develop to its full potential. The gestation of language is like the gestation of Montaigne’s book, his child of the mind. Gournay’s insistence on gestation, writing, development, and textual kinship in her editorial work extends to her writings on language and poetry; she employs Montaigne’s conception of parenté textuelle to her personal and patriotic ends. The physical, gendered nature of language renders it subject to violence; we see in her oeuvre the corporal potential in textual generation. Hers is an embodiment of language that furthers Montaigne’s textual generation, again blurring the lines between masculine and feminine, language and violence.

In “De la façon d’escrire de Messieurs du Perron & Bertault, qui sert d’Avertissement sur les Poësies de ce volume,” Gournay’s essay on translations of heroic poetry from Latin to French, she engages with language using a startling number of feminine metaphors. The act and study of translation gives Gournay the opportunity to appreciate and theorize both language and classical literature, her beloved Anciens. She expresses pride at having translated Book 2 of the Aeneid:

Que si telles considerations me touchoient pour ce Livre second en particulier, le peu de credit de mon sexe, la propre difficulté de l’ouvrage, comme encore la saison si peu studieuse, qu’elle reste fort unique juge de la Poësie Heroïque,
et plus de sa translation; ne m’effarouchoient pas moins en general, pour ceste 
mesme piece et compagnons. (Gournay, OC 1527)

The difficulty of translation is not a deterrent because of her gender; rather, it seems
to spark something inside of her. Like Crenne’s gendered masking in the Second and
Third parts of Angoysses douloureuse, “translation appears to be a way for Gournay
to enter the Latin, epic, largely male tradition” (Bauschatz, “Images” 496). One might
say she is a word warrior in her defense and study of language.

Theorizing translation, poetry, and language enabled Gournay to infuse poetic
theory with female elements. Classical texts concern la poésie, la métaphore, and
inspiration personified in les muses. All of these elements are feminine in
grammatical gender, and les muses are further female in biological sex. Gournay
manipulates grammatical gender in her treatises, playing with the implications of
female potential in language. Bauschatz argues that she “subvert[s] the idea that this
poetry is completely male territory” (“Images” 496). Gournay personifies metaphor
as an archer, which further imbues her theory with the puissant Amazons. She
appreciates a metaphor that has the grace and precision of a talented [presumably
female] archer: “Ny ne considerent aussi, que la parfaicte excellence d’une
metaphore, consiste à viser du plus loin qu’elle peut, pourvue qu’elle frappe au blanc”
(Gournay, OC 1559 my emphasis ERC). Like an archer, metaphor aims high to
connect the most distant of ideas; she is indubitably Amazon-like. Gournay
embroiders her writing with feminine pronouns, highlighting the opportunity for
gender play that she exploits within her own text.
While Hélisenne de Crenne chose Vergil’s Dido as her classical demonstration of forceful femininity, Gournay’s choice of Camilla is striking in her female masculinity. Like a goddess, a belletrix, or a virgin venatrix, Camilla is strange, unsettling, and other worldly. Baker notes that Vergil describes her using adjectives he also uses with immortal female figures Juno, Sibyl, and Allecto; she is “awesome” and “terrifying,” “harsh” and “fierce.” She is a “queen” and a “goddess,” and Gournay even uses *dia Camilla* as an example of Vergil’s usage just lines before her evocation of metaphor as Amazon-like.

In a scene that indubitably delighted Gournay, Camilla stands over her slain enemy in a way that evokes both warrior and goddess; for she looks down upon the man from above as a goddess would watch a mortal. Having vanquished her enemy, she joins taunting words to her conquering blows as she addresses her victim as a woman warrior: “from above, heart full of hate, she said: / …The day has come when boasts of all your kind / Are proven wrong, by women under arms” (Fitzgerald 11, 931-34). Gournay used words and essays as her arms in the battle for women’s participation in intellectual conversation, and Camilla’s statement epitomizes how Gournay wished to address the “vulgaire” group of men who limited women. By adding Camilla to her self-portrait, Gournay takes advantage of the spectacle of

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214 Vergil points out the discrepancy between Camilla and mortal women, and continues to cast her as ambiguous. He does this by paralleling Camilla to non-mortals, divine, and mythical. Vergil uses language to describe her which is more reminiscent of that used for these women. For instance, Camilla is *horrenda* (awesome, terrifying, 11.507) like the Sibyl (6.10) and like Juno (7.323). She is also, like Juno, *aspera* (1.279-Juno, 11.664-Camilla), harsh or fierce. In the *Aeneid* Vergil uses the word *aspera* mainly to describe inanimate forces such as nature or war, and some extraordinary characters. Camilla, when described as *aspera*, finds herself in non-mortal company; among females, only Allecto and Juno are so called” (Baker 1).

215 Just before the Amazon metaphor Gournay evokes Camilla in list of Vergil’s abbreviations: “Virgile en son « dirrexti » pour « dirrexisti » du mesme livre…sa « Dia Camilla »….” (Gournay, *OC* 1562).
scandal and embraces her love of language, classical authorities, and her spinster

status in her adoption of Camilla. Vergil’s remarkable Amazon is indeed a spectacle
to behold, ending the parade of warriors that closes book 7 of the *Aeneid*:

Besides all these
Camilla of the Volscian people came,
Riding ahead of cavalry, her squadrons
Gallant in bronze. A warrior girl whose hands
Were never deft at distaff or wool basket,
Skills of Minerva, she was hard and trained
To take the shock of war, or to outrace
The winds in running. If she ran full speed
Over the tips of grain unharvested
She would not ever have bruised an ear, or else
She might have sprinted on the deep sea swell
And never dipped her flying feet. To see her,
Men and women pouring from the fields,
From houses, thronged her passage way and stared
Wide-eyed with admiration at the style
Of royal purple, robing her smooth shoulders,
Then at the brooch that bound her hair in gold,
Then at the Lycian quiver that she bore
And shepherd’s myrtle staff, pointed with steel. (Fitzgerald 7, 800-17
my emphasis ERC)
Conclusion: “Parlons salement des ordures”

Marie de Gournay did not let the limits of social mores keep her from participating in intellectual conversation; rather, she interacted with and entertained some of the greats minds of her time in her modest apartment. Gournay was quick witted and sharp in conversation, and she did not shy from discussion of taboo topics or using vulgarity and violence. Emile Magne comments that “le mot ‘bordel’ par exemple sort de sa plume avec une agréable aisance” (115). She once expressed a certain desire for dirty discourse: “Parlons salement des ordures” (116). Gournay, who deeply desired recognition for her intellect and contribution to linguistic and literary studies, may very well have been attracted to Camilla’s taunts because they highlight Camilla’s fame as a warrior. In the fashion of the epic hero Camilla taunts her male victim in a statement of self-aggrandizement: “You’ll take no light fame to your fathers’ shades: / To have been killed by the lance-head of Camilla” (Fitzgerald 11, 935-36). This statement aligns Camilla with other warriors in the Aeneid and characterizes her battle style as heroic, for she desires fame for her accomplishments and prowess.

Camilla’s statement of androgynous heroism is more than a verbal assault that glorifies her as an Amazon. It is the culmination of valiant martial prowess and fierce,

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216 Emile Magne recounts that Mlle Gournay “accepte dans sa chambre un cercle d’écrivains gouailleurs: La Mothe le Vayer, Ogier et son frère, Habert, Serisay, Lestoile, Révol, Guillaume Collete, Malleville et l’abbé de Marolles. Ils écoutent complaisamment ses divagations savants et ses éternelles plaintes” (Le plaisant Abbé de Boisrobert: Fondateur de l’Académie Française 115). See also Ilsley’s A Daughter of the Renaissance: Marie le Jars de Gournay.

217 “Camilla resorts to insulting and mocking her victims, just as Aeneas and Turnus do. Aeneas’ comment to the dying Lausus (10.829-30) is recalled by Camilla (11.689), when she taunts her victim: te lo cecidisse Camillae (you have fallen by the spear of Camilla). Turnus speaks similarly (9.742). The emphasis by all three is on the enduring fame attached to their name, male or female” (Baker 1).
self-promoting language. Ferocious actions and fierce words for Camilla are similar to the battles of writing and conversation that Gournay entered in the latter half of her lifetime. This battle that was to spark the establishment of the *Académie Française* was both literal and metaphorical for Gournay, who actively fought as soldier for language on a battlefield that society deemed inappropriate and unsuited to a woman by nature. Indeed, “many of her male contemporaries considered her attempts in this field as foreign to feminine occupations as wielding the sword. To her it was a realm … where she could make a contribution, and she went to battle” (Ilsley 131).

Gournay’s battle for language – its preservation, its development, its usage – was also a battle for women’s rights and participation in intellectual life. As we saw in chapter five, Gournay envisioned sex distinction as two parts of a soul. To her, equality was of utmost import; and her prolific career as writer, editor, and theorist is a testament to her providing proof of gender equality through action and demonstration. For Gournay, the act of writing represented proof of gender parity by demonstration. Like du Bellay’s *La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoys* (1549), Gournay’s oeuvre was an illustration of women’s *suffisance*. Her illustration was doubly potent when she put pen to parchment to argue the cause of women – when her feminist ambitions were made manifest through text.

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218 “Il n’est guère pertinent de séparer celle qui plaide en faveur de l’égale dignité des sexes et celle qui mène combat pour la métaphore; il importe à Marie de faire la preuve de l’égalité en acte, en prenant parti comme chacun dans les débats littéraires de l’époque. Montrant par là qu’aucun domaine n’est étranger à la moitié de l’humanité, à la « moitié du monde »” (Mathieu-Castellani 207-8).
CHAPTER 7: Q.U.E.E.N.: CONCLUSION

Bien-heureux es-tu, Lecteur, si tu n'es point de ce sexe, qu'on interdict de tous les biens, le privant de la liberté…. Bien-heureux derechef, qui peux estre sage sans crime: ta qualité d'homme te concedant, autant qu'on defend aux femmes, toute action de haut dessein, tout jugement sublime, et toute parole de speculation exquise.219

Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay are far too often taken as writers whose texts suit female readership and treat gynocentric subjects. This study has demonstrated the important role that masculinity plays in the texts of these two women. As Gournay’s poignant address to men demonstrates, these two early modern authors wrote for the cause of early modern women yet addressed both sexes. Though they display their feminine sides with pride and ease, they treat traditionally male subjects in ways that underline the constructed nature of social norms of gender. Indeed, the framework of early modern gender wars situates androgyny, intersexuality and transgender phenomena as powerful yet risky, eminent yet subversive symbols in early modern discourse. Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay manipulated and transformed iconic genders in early modern culture, rewriting masculinist notions and reproductive imperative that the above pages have illustrated. Within their texts are self-portraits of women writers who embody androgy in order to develop their proto-feminist arguments through demonstration. Gournay and Crenne use transgendered literary personae to work within and through the boundaries of friendship, gender, and

219 Marie de Gournay, Oeuvres complètes p.1074.
love in early modern France. These authors evoke the intersexuality with which their
culture was obsessed in order to present the reality of fluctuating notions of sexe and
gender.

In “Ecrire au féminin à la Renaissance: Problèmes et perspectives” François
Rigolot signals that for women in early modern France, “si l’idée de mettre ses
sentiments par écrit n’est pas nécessairement suspecte . . . l’envie de les publier – de les
‘mettre en lumière’ – est le plus souvent considérée comme un dangereux signe de
débauche” (5). This study has traced the role of androgyny in the texts of two women
who defiantly published prolifically in early modern France. They treat the subject of
female sexuality in ways that subvert masculinist constraints on the female body and
encourage women to be well read as a way of protecting themselves from the angoisses
douloureuses that indeed happen to women in love.

By entering the homosocial space of textual generation as androgynous subjects,
Gournay and Crenne inhabit the third, queer, other space of within and without cultural
binaries. In the texts of Crenne and Gournay, the textual drag they employ is a bizarre
subversion of phallocentricity, a reappropriation of reproductive rights – in this case,
literary. For each woman drags as a man as a means to literary production that engages
male interlocutors. In the case of Hélisenne de Crenne it is her male readers she implores
to learn a lesson about love and masculinity. Tom Conley has argued that in Crenne’s
Angoisses douloureuses “the shift in narration from Books I to II looms as the most
significant skeleton key to the structure of a novel suggestive of a woman writing a
novel,” arguing further that:
[F]or this reason the thirteen *Lettres familières et invectives* of 1539 fit well into Hélisenne’s curious world of fact and romance, of masks uncovering masks, of fiction giving way to new layers of fiction. The epistolary form fits her purpose, for the rhetorical exercise of a letter of congratulation, of condolence or advice is a convention which shrouds the creation of a novel at once hiding and divulging the female condition. (‘Feminism’ 329)

This study has articulated that the “skeleton key” structure of Crenne’s change in register from the first to second and third parts of her novel is in fact a Latin wordplay on masking and character. It is this mask that enables Crenne to parade as a multitude of genders and to encourage both men and women to perform manly endeavors. Most striking are Hélisenne de Crenne’s constructions of female masculinity in the princesse d’Elivéba, who incarnates Vergil’s queen of Carthage, Marguerite de Navarre, and the character of lady Hélisenne, an accomplished and laudable author. Through her drag persona of the effeminate Guenelic, Crenne infiltrates male literary realms of friendship and the chivalric genre.

In “Les données chevaleresques du contrat de lecture dans les *Angoysses douloureuses* d’Hélisenne de Crenne” Jean-Philippe Beaulieu argues that the novel owes to both *Perseforest* and *Meliadus* “une partie significative de leur régime narrative. Il n’y a donc pas lieu de s’étonner de retrouver [dans le roman] des traits qui renvoient au roman chevaleresque, des XVe et XVIe siècles: démesure formelle et actantielle, démultiplication des topique, et amalgame des matières” (77). This study began to explore they way Crenne uses persona to infiltrate and feminize the masculine realm of chivalric literature, and I plan to conduct further research on this question that takes into account close analysis of the ways Crenne dialogues with other writers of the chivalric
novel. An exploration of *Perseforest, Meliadus,* and *Amadis de Gaule* in light of Crenne’s *Angoysses* merits further critical attention.

Marie de Gournay’s textual production, an act of mourning for Montaigne, is a queer production of dialogism with a deceased interlocutor. Marie de Gournay, in order to textually birth her story that served as a means to spawn dialogue with Montaigne one afternoon, drags as a man – an “ami parfait” and interlocutor to Montaigne. While her Préfaces to the *Essais* delineate her drag as a doubled Montaigne, in *Egalité des hommes et des femmes, Grief des dames,* and *Apologie pour celle qui écrit* Gournay uses slightly altered versions of Montaigne’s text as a means to engaging his text in debate with hers – as a means to correct his misogynistic tendencies. Zahi Zaloua argues in “‘De l’art de conférer’: Conférence as an Act of Friendship” that “Montaigne’s writing in the *Essais* seeks a reader capable of answering the call of friendship; he is writing to a reader, to a friend to come – to an other capable of responding to the author’s statement . . . ‘O mes amis, il n’y a nul ami’ . . . of filling the vacated empty space of communication once occupied by La Boétie” (4). Marie de Gournay aptly recognized her capacity to fulfill this role for Montaigne, and this study has examined the multiple ways she displayed and manipulated her intellectual kinship with Montaigne.

In “Montaigne’s Monstrous Confession” Richard Regosin signals, “the monstrous, like the miracle, the monstrous as the miracle, is interiorized and personalized” in the *Essais*: “Je n’ay veu monstre et miracle au monde plus expres que moy-mesme. On s’approvisoise, à toute estrangeté par l’usage et le temps; mais plus je me hante et me connois, plus ma difformité m’estonne, moins je m’entens en moy” (80, 3.11.1029). This study has seen the question of nature versus custom in early modern
France, particularly in the realms of monstrosity and the sexed body. Montaigne’s novel reconfiguration of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy allows perfect friendship to meld with the reproduction of ideas as children of the mind, and this study has treated Montaigne’s maternal identity in the kinship of the Essais as a way to reconsider Gournay’s authorial career and publications. The question of Michel de Montaigne’s use of monstrosity as a powerful image for same sex love in his textual reproduction merits a good deal more research that focuses on the essayist’s elaborate configuration outside the framework of his literary daughter-friend.

Marie de Gournay manipulates the gendered, sexed, and dialogic elements of her text; she performs textual transvestment and displays a conspicuous female masculinity, a masculinity defined by intellectual capacity. She drags as Montaigne’s double, inserts herself textually in the male perfect friendship that Montaigne queers with La Boétie, and thereby engages her often misogynistic literary father in textual dialogue about the nature of women. Gournay problematizes misogynistic discourse, and her resulting invocation of friendly dialogue with Montaigne is a rather queer textual generation. Dorothea Heitsch has demonstrated the difficulties of being a woman writer whose “interest in domains that are considered masculine” in “Cats on a Windowsill: An Alchemical Study of Marie de Gournay” (219). She signals that these “difficulties are reflected in [Gournay’s] repeatedly tying writing to her corporality, most particularly in the image of androgyny. . . . [S]he may transfer accepted topoi and explore her own voice and potion by dissolving traditional literary boundaries and by transmuting her literary persona” (219) This study has explored the ways in which Gournay used gendered language and philosophical discourse in such a way that she renders sex distinction untenable. Heitsch
also notes that in Gournay’s opinion the reason for sexual difference is procreation, and signals that Gournay explains this notion with the reason that “there is nothing more like a cat on a windowsill than a female cat.”

This study has examined the gendered aspects of Gournay’s treatises on metaphor and translation. I believe that an analysis of the figures of animals and nature in Gournay’s writings merit further research, especially in contrast to her evocation of urban life in her writings about conversation.

These two women writers most significantly exploit Vergil’s Aeneid and employ the poet’s laudable female leaders and warriors to proto-feminist ends. In the figures of queen Dido and the Amazon Camilla, Crenne and Gournay display their wealth of knowledge and their ability to understand and rewrite Vergil. It is notable that most humanists evoke Venus more often than Athena; for example, in Montaigne’s “Sur des vers de Virgile” the essayist contemplates sensuality of Vergil’s Venus in contrast to the authentic experience of sexual intercourse with women (notable in old age). Crenne and Gournay (via la Mothe le Vayer) are associated with Pallas. Because these two also translated the Aeneid, there are indubitably links between Crenne’s and Gournay’s translations of Vergil’s lines evoking these notable female figures and their appearance in the publications of these two early modern authors. The question of the woman author as translator, with Crenne’s and Gournay’s use of Dido and Camilla, merits further research. These female writers infiltrate male realms in order to express their philosophies of gender from female points of view; like Janelle Monáe’s “Q.U.E.E.N.” Crenne and Gournay defy dominant culture’s oppression and argue the cause of women of words and letters:

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220 Cited in Heitsch p.228.
Are we a lost generation of our people?
Add us to equations but they'll never make us equal.
She who writes the movie owns the script and the sequel.
So why ain't the stealing of my rights made illegal?
They keep us underground working hard for the greedy,
But when it's time to pay they turn around and call us needy.
My crown too heavy like the Queen Nefertiti
Gimme back my pyramid . . . .
Yeah, keep singing and I'mma keep writing songs
I'm tired of Marvin asking me, ‘What's Going On?’
March to the streets 'cause I'm willing and I'm able
Categorize me, I defy every label.\(^{221}\)

While Crenne detaches masculinity from the male body and argues that virility is
performative, Gournay makes the sexual binary no longer tenable in early modern literary
culture; they are outside of normative label and destabilize the very nature of sexual
categories. For Hélisenne de Crenne and Marie de Gournay, writing is an intellectual
battle for inclusion and agency; it is an erudite practice of gender parity through
imitation, demonstration, and feminization.


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