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Domestic Georgic from Rabelais to Milton

by

Katherine Kadue

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Timothy Hampton, Co-chair
Professor Joanna Picciotto, Co-chair
Professor Victoria Kahn
Professor Anne-Lise François
Professor Jeffrey Knapp

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Abstract

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Professor Timothy Hampton, Co-chair, and Professor Joanna Picciotto, Co-chair

This dissertation uncovers the unexpected affinity of major early modern literary figures for the minor, incremental operations of preservation, maintenance, and what could be broadly construed as housekeeping. Reading male-authored literary works alongside domestic manuals and recipe manuscripts, many of which were written by or for women, I show how canonical early modern texts shared the primary concern of home and garden maintenance: the necessity of constant, almost invisible labor in order to keep the things of the world—perishable material, fragile bodies, precarious real and virtual communities—intact. When scholars ignore authors' persistent comparisons of their own work to small-scale acts of domestic preservation, they pass over a still-viable possibility that I bring into focus: the conception of literary labor not as a desperate striving for originality, fame, and a starring role in a narrative of progress, but as a form of maintenance work that aims at preserving individual and collective life.

This maintenance work falls under the category of, though it is rarely recognized as, georgic: the (agri)cultural topos whose early modern resurgence is usually associated with the heroically laborious advancement of learning, the forwarding of foundational national mythologies, and groundbreaking formal innovation. Authors working both within and aslant of the georgic tradition, I show, denaturalize the conflation of cultivation and progress by situating their work in domestic spaces and practices where preservation, not progress, is the provisional goal. For Erasmus and François Rabelais, humanist education is less about the forward march of knowledge than the maintenance of texts, bodies, and communities; for Joachim Du Bellay, tending to the French garden of letters yields only invisible or uncertain results. For authors writing in the midst or wake of civil war—Michel de Montaigne, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton—domestic georgic intellectual labor becomes a mode of precarious individual and collective survival, rather than of certain improvement.

The first half of this dissertation recasts the heroes of humanism as housewives at heart. Reading Erasmus's commentary on his own scholarly labors alongside one of the most influential accounts of labor in the twentieth century, that of Hannah Arendt, I suggest that the humanist condition—the drive to preserve the classical tradition through active means—is, in practice, housewifery. My chapters on Rabelais and Du Bellay locate deep concerns about the fragility of culture and community at the heart of the French authors most associated with celebratory textual excess and robust linguistic fertility programs. In the second half, I shift from the shaky beginnings of national cohesion to the context of civil war, where collective precarity was even more apparent, and where the maintenance work that animates Virgil's *Georgics*—a poem also written with civil war in the

background—became even more urgent. I argue that Montaigne, Marvell, and Milton respond to political degeneration by redefining progress and reproduction as minor, cyclical, metabolic repair, whether of the self, the family, or the Christian community.

I trace the domestic georgic mode through sixteenth-century France and seventeenth-century England through close stylistic analysis. Through an attention to small-scale textual patterns like parenthetical interruption, self-correction, and repetition, as well as to thematic concerns with small-scale acts of domestic preservation, I recover overlooked attitudes about "unproductive" labor and non-linear progress in the works of the early modern authors often credited with industriously ushering in modernity. By revealing male authors' deep identifications with menial labors that were and are often relegated to "women's work," my project exposes a genealogy from the glorified texts of Renaissance humanism to the insufficiently valued intellectual labor of today. In academia and online, performed by manuscript digitizers and "content providers," this labor, if visible at all, is often disparaged as mechanical, expendable, or a "labor of love" that should be its own reward. Yet this unseen, unappreciated work makes possible the communities and institutions we claim to value.

In memory of my grandmother,
Marjorie Moore Kadue,
and in appreciation of her economy.

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paradise with Ramsey McGlazer. Eden would not be Eden without his sisterly correction. I could not have metabolized my thoughts and remained myself over the past few years without daily conversation with Marianne Kaletzky, who has helped me come out of my burrow and whose friendship has been a political and sentimental education. Thanks to Paco Brito I have been able to imagine more of what it could mean to conserve the world we have and still work for the world we want. Laura Wagner has taught me more than I thought there was to know about teaching. Julia Nelsen taught me the etymology of *sprezzatura*; I can't put a price on what her friendship has meant to me. Jordan Greenwald has helped me find levity even and especially in disappointment. I have been inspired by Kathryn Crim's devotion to heaps, surfaces, and the small form of joy likeness equals. With her and over many happily eristic evenings with Keith Budner and Jane Raisch I found something like a Renaissance humanist community of my own. At a late and dark stage of this project, Emily O'Rourke's unrelenting critiques and equally unrelenting commitment to discourse intervened to help me articulate and experience what I love about our work. Jennifer Row, whose work on queer temporality has opened up my thinking in unpredictable directions, has at the same time been a steadfast supporter of my intellectual and emotional life over many years. Sharing an intellectual world with Ross Lerner has been transformative for me in ways both incremental and profound. I have striven to live up to the generous readings he has given my work, and I am so grateful I get to think with him.

Finally and foremost, I thank my parents and grandparents for supporting me through my long education. Shortly before I began graduate school, my mother, Martha Kadue, completed a dissertation on Gilded Age legal cases that had this question at its heart: how did judges determine the monetary worth of a wife's duties when that work was supposed to be a priceless "labor of love"? When I came to Berkeley in 2009, I found myself asking similar questions about the labor of love I hoped to pursue, though only later did I start thinking about the ways in which that labor has been gendered. I have continued to talk with (and get pushback from) my mother about our research and teaching over the past eight years, and I feel extremely fortunate to have her as both an unsparing intellectual interlocutor and an unconditional emotional supporter. My father, David Kadue, has offered scrupulous advice about my dissertation's title and has at times subjected my work to microscopically close reading. He taught me the values of humor, stylistic precision, and having a place for everything and everything in its place. I blame my proclivity for puns on him. My grandmother, Marjorie Kadue, was a beloved home economics teacher who hated to cook. Born on a farm in Mississippi and having worked very hard to get out of there, she was skeptical when I told her I was voluntarily going to pull weeds on an organic farm for a summer in rural France. Tirelessly committed to improving her own situation and especially that of her family, she would be even more skeptical of some of the claims I make here that question (or seek to put in suspension) the ideology of improvement. I hope she would be proud of me nonetheless.

Introduction
The Humanist's Closet Opened

I teach both fruits and flowers to preserue,
And candie them, so Nutmegs, cloues, and mace:
To make both marchpaine paste, and sugred plate,
And cast the same in formes of sweetest grace.
Each bird and foule so moulded from the life,
And after cast in sweet compounds of arte,
As if the flesh and forme which nature gaue,
Did still remaine in euerie lim and part.

-Hugh Plat, *Delightes for Ladies*

I could, if I'd not seen you back away from such concerns, regale you with a store of ancient learning.

-Virgil, *Georgics*

Humanists are not often associated with housewives.[1] The project of modernity, as understood by Renaissance humanists and later proponents of Baconian new science,[2] involved creating a virtual, cosmopolitan community of minds where lasting monuments to the arts and sciences might dwell. Housewives, by contrast, were parochial, materialistic, and incapable of thinking beyond immediate bodily needs. In the terms of classical rhetoric, women were concerned not with *koinoi topoi*—topics of common interest, appropriate for public discussion—but with the irrelevant *idioi topoi* of "private places."[3] Narrow-minded and confined to narrow rooms, piling up provisions, mindlessly spinning on their wheels, early modern housewives were as scorned by humanist and experimentalist rhetoric as were the cloistered, unimaginative monks of a bygone era. According to that rhetoric, medieval men of letters did no more than hoard material in enclosed, quasi-domestic spaces, constraining knowledge with their botched attempts at scholarship. Such constraints not only impeded the productive growth of knowledge but also created breeding grounds for its contamination. Francis Bacon blames the putrefied, "vermiculate" learning of the schoolmen on "their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors" just "as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges," describing their "infinite agitation" in terms that evoke the labor of spinsters as well as spiders: "it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of

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[1] Except, perhaps, by contradistinction: in the section of the introduction to her book *The Usurer's Daughter*

[2] I follow Brian Vickers in maintaining that Bacon and his heirs, long accused of harboring anti-humanist hostilities, were far more continuous with humanism than has been assumed (Vickers, "The myth of Francis Bacon's 'anti-humanism,'" in *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Jill Kraye and M.W.F. Stone [London: Routledge, 2000]). The received idea of Bacon's contempt for the ostensible humanist emphasis on *verba* over *res,* empty *copia* over weighty knowledge, seems to Vickers to be based entirely on a single passage from *Advancement of Learning* hinging on the charge that, with the critique of scholasticism and the rise of philology, "men began to hunt more after words than matter." But far from dismissing the humanist project out of hand, Vickers argues, Bacon was merely intervening in a longstanding debate *within* humanism. Bacon was as much a believer in the necessity of moving past superficial stylistic imitation, and restoring a correspondence between *res* and *verba,* as such bona fide humanists as Gabriel Harvey and Roger Ascham (Vickers, 143-4, 149).

[3] Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 104.

learning, admirable for the fineness of the thread and work, but of no substance or profit."[4] When, in *Pantagruel*, Rabelais's hero derides a once-pristine classical compendium as "une belle robbe d'or triomphante et precieuse à merveilles, qui feust brodée de merde,"[5] casting overzealous medieval commentary as a particularly unfortunate incident of embroidery, he laments the denigration of a grand and glorious tradition by a bodily secretion, the contamination of spiritual yearning with a materiality both grossly natural and effeminately artificial.

Yet despite the fact that humanists and experimentalists defined themselves in contradistinction to housewives and their monkish counterparts, this dissertation will argue that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French and English authors were intently focused on the interior work and housewifely task of merely and laboriously preserving biological and cultural material, often wading through waste—or at least tedium and a nagging feeling of irrelevance—in the process.[6] Laborious and incessant, their work in some ways fits the category of georgic—the poetic mode, originating in Virgil, that takes labor as its praiseworthy subject—but falls short of, or expresses indifference to, georgic's usual heroic optimism. In effect domesticating the georgic ethos, these authors perform and describe a form of labor that—because it only preserves and fails to produce anything really new, or because it achieves results that are only temporary—calls to mind the mundane maintenance work of housewives rather than the trailblazing feats of modern and modernizing heroes. Pickling, preserving, storing, and organizing are not usually considered the province of the literary and intellectual powerhouses this dissertation will consider: Desiderius Erasmus, François Rabelais, Michel de Montaigne, Joachim Du Bellay, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton. But an attention to the role these activities played in the mentalities of those authors reveals an attitude with far-reaching consequences for our conception of intellectual labor: that all intellectual life depends on the preservation of its conditions for possibility, and that such preservation is itself an intellectual activity.

I. Garden Variety Humanism

In the new, modern world, writers like Erasmus and Bacon proclaimed, mere and provisional preservation—the physical and intellectual hoarding of inherited material without regard for either its improvement or its permanence—would prove unviable. Erasmus would teach students not to "pile up a meaningless heap of words and expressions without any discrimination"—the effect of which was "both silly and offensive"[7]—and instead to master *copia,* which he defines as "the abundant style" and praises as a "godlike power of speech."[8] The word *copia,* Terence Cave

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[4] Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning,* in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 140.

[5] François Rabelais, *Pantagruel,* ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995), 90.

[6] See Michel Jeanneret on how, in sixteenth-century France, the proliferation of print, multiplicity of religious viewpoints, "discovery" and exploration of new lands, and growing circulation of ancient texts, while certainly causes of excitement, also led to a fear of excess: "la menace de la démesure" ("Débordements rabelaisiens," *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* [Spring 1991]: 105-23, 110). For a general account of the anxiety and dread caused by early modern "information overload," see Ann Blair, *Too Much To Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Information Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[7] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus, Literary and Educational Writings,* ed. Craig R. Thompson, vol. 24: *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style: De duplici copia verborum ac rerum Commentarii duo,* trans. and ed. Betty I. Knott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 295.

[8] Ibid. In the *Ciceronianus,* Erasmus imagines successful rhetoric as a complex metabolic operation that appears like spontaneous parthenogenic reproduction: "I approve an imitation that is not limited to one

explains in his influential account of the concept, had by the sixteenth century lost its classical connotations of material and rhetorical wealth, its meaning degraded, by medieval textual practices, from "copiousness" to "copies": "Hundreds of years of manuscript copying have, indeed, preserved the written materials of the Latin world while converting one of its most fertile concepts from a context of dynamically deployed energies […] to one of endless repetition."[9] Defenses of vernacular literatures, like Joachim Du Bellay's *illustration* of—in the sense of "adding of luster to"—the French language, expressed similar frustrations with the impoverishment of contemporary language. Du Bellay's manifesto makes explicit and extended use of an agricultural idiom consistent with the humanist commonplace of the "garden of letters": an enriched cultural soil would yield a cornucopia of linguistic riches, a triumph of human labor over inert nature.

Such sentiments can easily be understood as participating in a georgic ethos. Marking the middle stage in Virgil's career, the *Georgics*—part farming manual, part panegyric of the civilizing power of labor—were not, as Anthony Low acknowledges in his influential history of medieval and early modern georgic revolutions, formally imitated or theorized nearly as much as the low, pastoral *Eclogues* and the high, epic *Aeneid.* Nonetheless, Low makes a convincing case for the pervasiveness of the georgic *spirit* in seventeenth-century English literature, a spirit that can also be seen at work in sixteenth-century French.[10] Low fleshes out this middling mood with the figures of the farmer (as opposed to the shepherd or soldier), the field (as opposed to the pasture or castle), the fruit tree (as opposed to the beech or laurel), and, most importantly, work (as opposed to leisure or fighting). Like many other commentators, Low takes *Labor omnia vicit*, from Book 1 of Virgil's poem, as the georgic rallying cry.[11]

Though plenty of what might be called pseudo-georgic poetry of the period blatantly confuses the plowman's labor with the gentleman's stroll, fox-hunt, or fishing trip on his estate, Low identifies an increasingly earnest interest in the poetic potential of agricultural labor in seventeenth-century England, when the civil war context of the *Georgics* gave the ancient poem new relevance,[12] as it had in France the century before. Beset by fear that the Eden of England had been overcome by rapacious weeds, religious and political reformers took to agriculture both literally and figuratively, citing Scripture's references to vineyards, barren fig trees, and the promised land while

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model from whose features one does not dare to depart, an imitation which excerpts from all authors, or at any rate from the most eminent, what is excellent in each and most suits one's intellect, and which does not at once fasten to a discourse whatever beauty it lights upon, but which transfers what it finds into the mind itself, as into the stomach, so that transfused into the veins it appears to be a birth of one's intellect, not something begged and borrowed from elsewhere, and breathes forth the vigor and disposition of one's mind and nature, so that the reader does not recognize an insertion taken from Cicero, but a child born from one's brain, just as they say Pallas born from Jupiter's, bearing a lively image of its parent, and also so that one's discourse does not appear to be some sort of cento or mosaic, but an image breathing forth one's mind or a river flowing from the fountain of one's heart" (qtd. in G. W. Pigman, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 33.1 [Spring 1980]: 1-32, 8-9).

[9] Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 4.

[10] For analysis of more direct engagement with the *Georgics* in sixteenth-century French literature, see Michael Randall, "On the Magical Statues in Lemaire de Belges's *Le Temple d'honneur et de vertus,*" Stéphanie Lecompte, "Temples of Virtue: Worshipping Virgil in Sixteenth-Century France," and Isabelle Fernbach, "From Copy to *Copia*: Imitation and Authorship in Joachim Du Bellay's *Divers Jeux Rustiques* (1558)" in *Virgilian Identities in the French Renaissance,* ed. Phillip John Usher and Isabelle Fernbach (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2012).

[11] Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 4, 8.

[12] Ibid., 116.

ardently experimenting with universal compost to improve lands wrenched from Royalists for the future commonwealth.

In this vein, Baconian new science advertised itself as a vigorous metaphorically horticultural program that would clear new ground and improve the intellectual soil to produce prodigious harvests. Bacon begins the section of *The Advancement of Learning* entitled "De cultura animi" by collapsing agriculture and culture, declaring the life of the mind as good as dead ("without life and motion") if deprived of "husbandry."[13] Thomas Sprat opined "that wisdom, which they fetch'd from the ashes of the dead, is something of the same nature, with Ashes themselves: which, if they are kept up in heaps together, will be useless: But if they are scattred upon Living ground, they will make it more fertile, in the bringing forth of various sorts of Fruits."[14] Encouraged by the rise of proto-capitalist discourse and the discovery of new worlds ripe for cultivation, early modern French and English writers approached their intellectual labors with both personal profit motives and a desire to bolster common reserves of cultural and political capital. These writers called for the augmentation and enhancement of their national languages, literatures, and stores of knowledge through a collective commitment to what Bacon called a "Georgics of the mind"[15]: an intellectual-agricultural revolution that, through innovative technologies, would coax surplus harvests from native soil that had for too long lain fallow. At least according to the most vocal mouthpieces of the new cultural and intellectual paradigms, the medieval mausoleum of imperfectly embalmed texts was to be blasted open and replaced by the high-yield, well-tended Renaissance garden of letters.

Bacon's call to the plow is an explicit example of how humanists and their heirs associate themselves with georgic activity, of the mind and beyond, even if not always with references as explicit as Bacon's to the *Georgics* themselves. The familiar narrative of a heroic (or aspirationally so) humanism, put forward by scholars from Jacob Burckhardt to Thomas Greene and Richard Helgerson and still a tacit basis for periodization,[16] imagines (early) modern men digging up the glorious classical past to bring it, and us, into the light with an energy their anemic forebears lacked. Greene imagines the humanist on a quest to unearth lost treasures with an intrepid spirit of archeological adventure, breaking through the layers of sediment accumulated by time and medieval ignorance to reveal hidden truth.[17] Helgerson summarizes the job description of the poet laureate in England as the restoration of the name of "poet" to public relevance and legitimacy: "the name of poet had been usurped, and poetry had been made a toy, a vanity, a thing of ribaldry fit only for

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[13] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning,* 255.

[14] Qtd. in Anthony Low, "New Science and the Georgic Revolution in Seventeenth-Century Literature," in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance,* ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 320.

[15] "And surely, if the purpose be in good earnest, not to write at leisure that which men may read at leisure, but really to instruct and suborn action and active life, these Georgics of the mind, concerning the husbandry and tillage thereof, are no less worthy than the heroical descriptions of virtue, duty, and felicity" (Bacon, *Advancement of Learning,* 245).

[16] See Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Davis describes the narrative of secularization overtaking an ecclesiastical society as capitalism triumphed over feudalism as a remarkably unexamined assumption: "So commonplace are these ideas that—even though the Middle Ages is well understood to be a constructed category—they have taken on the self-evidentiary status of common sense" (2).

[17] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 92.

private chambers."[18] The Renaissance poet could attain glory by recasting a private embarrassment as a public service, an immaterial trifle as a monument deserving of display in the open air.

Scholars who see early modern intellectuals struggling to portray their work as a heroically georgic feat might also be seeing something of themselves. In their critique of symptomatic reading, embodied by Fredric Jameson's celebration of the "strong" critic who animates "the inert givens and materials of a particular text,"[19] Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus suggest that the "image of the critic as wresting meaning from a resisting text or inserting it into a lifeless one" has perhaps been so influential "because it presented professional literary criticism as a strenuous and heroic endeavor [...] and therefore fully deserving of remuneration"[20]; this response to a perceived decline in the value of humanistic labor in the late twentieth century in many ways echoes the early modern crisis of humanism in changing economic and political circumstances. When scholars have challenged humanists' heroic credentials, it has usually been to cast aspersions on the purity of their motives—revealing apparently selfless public servants as cynical self-fashioners—but not to question whether these authors might have been fashioning themselves as something other than public or profitable successes.

I am arguing that they were indeed, if not without mixed feelings, fashioning themselves otherwise. Some of early modernity's strongest apparent advocates of making literature and knowledge public and monumental returned repeatedly to their private chambers, towers, cabinets, and closets to engage in an activity more like cyclical labor than enduring work: georgic in character but domestic in scope, an intellectual husbandry tempered by intellectual housewifery. The practices and poetics of Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne, Du Bellay, Marvell, and Milton articulate a domestic georgic with their frequent rhetorical returns to the maintenance-oriented activities of private, feminized spaces, even when their explicit concerns are the innovation and discovery of the ideal public laboratory, or the world-changing action of the public sphere. Complicating a set of oppositions integral to an understanding of the early modern period—private and public, *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, idleness and production, medieval and modern, feminine and masculine, body and soul—these practices and poetics look much like the labor undertaken in early modern domestic sites, and are most immediately (though not exclusively) concerned with the organization, reproduction, hygiene, and preservation of material rather than with progress, production, profit, or improvement. Some of the authors best known for strategic self-fashioning, heroic self-styling, and triumphant self-crowning, who hailed the beginning of a modern age of action and the end of the era of mere monkish retention, conceived, in crucial ways, of their work as housework.

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[18] Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton, and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 23.

[19] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 75, qtd. in Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108.1 (Fall 2009): 1-21, 5. Anne-Lise François glosses—or suggests that one might be tempted to gloss—the move from the heroism of high theory to the more modest imperatives of surface reading as a downshift from georgic to pastoral ("Late Exercises in Minimal Affirmatives," in *Theory Aside*, ed. Jason Pott and Daniel Stout [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014], 45). When I consider what I am calling domestic georgic as a reading as well as a compositional practice, I mean to call attention to how apparently pastoral attitudes often require a lot of work to sustain.

[20] Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 5-6.

II. Humanist Housework

I use the term "housework" to describe not so much a set of activities as a way of performing them. Scholars like Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne S. Abate argue for the importance of attending to such practices themselves, pointing out that "early modern women's activities often constitute the very worlds which sustain men's activities": the material culture of the home informed how "early-modern individuals first learn about and identify themselves and their needs."[21] Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore has surveyed the crucial role played by sixteenth-century French housewives, including the wives of humanists, who, in providing "la nourriture et la défense des lettres,"[22] made possible and maintained the conditions for intellectual labor. As "circonscrit" as her role may have been, confined to an entirely interior sphere of influence, the *femme* of the *homme de lettres* was charged with the important role of running the household and managing her husband's confidences.[23] Similarly, Laura Lunger Knoppers has discussed how the responsibility and independence of English housewives could chafe against the accepted Christian doctrine of wifely subordination.[24] More broadly, work by Natasha Korda, Julia Reinhard Lupton, and Wendy Wall has shown the important connections between material practices performed by women in the home and their dramatizations on the early modern English stage.[25]

While I find an attention to these practices indispensible, my argument takes a different point of departure: not the material realities of women, but the perhaps unrealistic perspectives of male authors who, often failing to acknowledge in any explicit way the support their work received from women, imagined their literary activities as themselves sustaining of their own bodies and communities. (As the French humanist Estienne Pasquier fancifully described the division of household labor between him and his wife, "ses vins sont aux cuves sur le point d'etre pressurez, les miens cuvent dans ma tête."[26]) These authors understood poetic "housework" as a mode of working that was usually confined to physically enclosed and private spaces and that was often only temporary in its effectiveness, or that might never emerge from the fermenting vat in the first place. This work was not only painstaking, slow, and menial but also, rather than clearly and directly contributing to the progress of public projects, often did little more—for the foreseeable future, anyway—than maintain the basic fabric of local and domestic life and materials. In the terms of political economy later set forth by Adam Smith, theirs was an "unproductive labour," which—unlike the "sort of labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed," that "adds, generally, to the value of the materials […] worked upon"—instead "adds to the value of

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21 Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne S. Abate, "Introduction: 'Indistinguished Space,'" in *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England,* ed. Corinne S. Abate (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 6-7.

22 Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, *Les femmes dans la société française de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1990), 159.

23 Ibid., 160.

24 Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton's Eve* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 145.

25 Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Shakespeare Dwelling: *Pericles* and the Affordances of Action," in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now: Criticism and Theory in the 21st Century,* ed. Cary DiPietro and Hugh Grady (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and forthcoming work related to her current project on Shakespeare, design, housekeeping, and hospitality; Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

26 [Her wines are in the vats, ready to press; mine are fermenting in my head.] *Les lettres d'Estienne Pasquier* (Avignon, 1590), Livre X, fol. 424, "A. M. Regnier, President en l'Election de Soissons," qtd. in Berriot-Salvadore, *Les femmes dans la société française de la Renaissance*, 162.

nothing."[27] A domestic georgic framework, however, reveals that such unproductive labor, as well as failing to add to the value of anything, might be said to add to the value of *nothing* insofar as "nothing," or what looks like nothing, could itself have value. An attention to the processes and effects of activities that look like nothing—because they seem to do no more than reproduce existing conditions—invites us to expand our ideas of what, potentially, can come from the "nothing" of preservative labor and maintenance work.[28]

This "unproductive" mode encompasses both the work of housewives and, from the Protestant or moderate Catholic humanist perspective, that of monkish medieval scribes, compilers, and commentators, those practitioners of mere copying who, as Rabelais's Pantagruel complains, besmirched the ideal of *copia* with every meaningless repetition. The extent to which the authors in this dissertation engaged in retrograde, feminized, and degrading "medieval" textual practices, aiming at nothing more than the cleaning, sorting, and preservation of textual material—with the ultimate, though often unrealized, aim of preserving existing collections, relations, and communities—brings to light the extent to which early modern anxieties about the feminized domestic domain could blur with anxieties about the inheritances of the medieval world. Indeed, Katherine Maus, emphasizing how women's bodies and minds were imagined as quasi-monastic cloistered rooms, attributes male poets' double fascination with female psychology and physiology to women's dubious lack of transparency: "it's never obvious what a woman has inside of her."[29]

Whatever was inside of her was often presumed to have to do with her chastity, or lack thereof. If husbands worried that their wives had failed to preserve themselves adequately from other men, they voiced their fears with reference to imagined feats of feminine preservation of a different sort that were all too successful. Georgianna Ziegler documents how chastity obsessions spawned male confusion between women's illegible bodies and their cordoned-off domestic spaces, as when Othello jealously imagines Desdemona as a "closet, lock and key, of villainous secrets."[30] A character in the play known as *The Faithful Shepherd* quips, "Learn women all from me this housewifery, / Make you conserve of Lovers to keep by," a mock-instruction to women to use preservation technologies to keep a secret stash of illicit suitors.[31] In John Crowne's *The Married Beau,* "Conserve o' Man is more luscious" than conserve of roses, where such a nominally prudent practice as confecting a conserve, usually used for medicinal purposes, poses a threat to female chastity and marital stability.[32] When women were not figured as or associated with frustratingly

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[27] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 351-52. For an argument for the anachronistic use of Smith's categories in making visible the "fault lines" in early modern conceptions of labor and tragic drama, see Richard Halpern, "Eclipse of Action: *Hamlet* and the Political Economy of Playing," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.4 (Winter 2008): 450-82.

[28] Glossing W.H. Auden's claim that "poetry makes nothing happen," Anne-Lise François proposes that "nothing" should be understood precisely as an event (*Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008], xv). While François understands this event as ordained by grace, my interest lies in "nothings" that, however slight, are always tied up with, and weighed down by, questions of labor.

[29] Katherine Eisaman Maus, "A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 272.

[30] Georgianna Ziegler, "My lady's chamber: Female space, female chastity in Shakespeare," *Textual Practice* 4.1 (1990): 73-90, 84.

[31] Qtd. in Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 174.

[32] Ibid.

inscrutable containers, they were considered all too materially available, their uncontained corporeality a figure, as Patricia Parker shows in *Literary Fat Ladies*, of excessively effeminate *dilatio*.[33] Vernacular languages, in a common formulation, could be communicated to children as easily and uncontrollably as their nursemaids' breast-milk, symbolizing the dangers of contamination of noble sons' minds by lower-class women via a mysterious internal process.[34]

Rhetorical attacks on medieval hoarding, Jennifer Summit shows, homed in on similar dark fantasies of insidious illegibility. The monastic library that haunted the humanist's imagination was a repository devoid of any real content that was at the same time potentially full of unknown quantities hidden in those dark recesses. Early modern thinkers' attempt to differentiate themselves from a prior benighted age relied on an insistent conception of the monastic library as a dank prison that stifled innovation and collaboration, as opposed to the open spaces of scientific investigation and virtual scholarly communities. The reality that these libraries were not "merely static, passive, or retentive" stores of books but rather "dynamic institutions that actively processed, shaped, and imposed meaning on the very materials they contained" failed, Summit says, to weaken the tenacity of anti-medieval prejudice.[35]

My account, like Summit's, puts pressure on the picture of the soon-to-recede "Dark Ages" painted by authors from Petrarch on: of how the medieval period's misguided and ineffectual emphasis on mere preservation would (hopefully soon) be surpassed by a nascent early modern ideology of improvement, according to which ancient stores of knowledge would be broken out of their tombs, uprooted from their sterile plots, and, dramatically reversing their downward trajectory of decay, made to be fruitful and multiply. Unlike Summit, however, I focus not on the dynamism of medieval institutions, but rather on the "merely static, passive, or retentive" attitudes that persisted in early modernity, dimming the lights, as it were, on the glowing portrait of Renaissance vigor.

That picture is still mostly accepted by scholarship, even scholarship that is critical of Renaissance authors' self-reporting of their lofty goals. In Lisa Jardine's influential *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print*, for example, the grand ambitions of Erasmus, the humanist hero par excellence, are taken as a premise; Jardine's thorough examination of how Erasmus's heroism was mostly constructed by the man himself assumes that heroism was the only category of which Erasmus could conceive.[36] After all, any author hoping to gain public recognition, monetary or otherwise, for his literary production would do well to cast himself as a hero, to separate himself from the thankless occupation of supporting mere life, the endless labor confined to the domestic sphere and viewed ever since antiquity, in Hannah Arendt's influential account, as contemptible, ephemeral, and impoverished in comparison to the full expression of life in the political realm. In terms of Arendt's trichotomy of the *vita activa*, anyone seeking to make a lasting impact should be sure to avoid associating himself with "labor"—"the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body," where products' consumption "barely survives the act of their production"—and focus on the more permanence-affording spheres of "work," the production of durable things that contribute to a shared "human artifice," and especially "action," the only way we can distinguish ourselves as individuals and "insert ourselves into the human world."[37] Yet, as readers of Arendt have pointed out, the fragility of labor is shared by action, which

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[33] Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*, 10-11.
[34] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 70-76.
[35] Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 14-15.
[36] Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 44.
[37] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7, 96, 143, 176.

is characterized by "futility" and "uncertainty" as well as the more promising "boundlessness of outcome."[38] Lacking the "definite, predictable end" of work, action—like certain forms of labor—is defined primarily by its open-endedness.

Writers like Erasmus, who made their names as propagandists and practitioners of scholarly and literary production and progress in a public field, who sought to redefine heroic action as intellectual activity, also associated closely and repeatedly with the enclosed and private spaces usually reserved for purely preservative activity, rote repetition, scholastic stagnancy, and domestic labor. In the early modern world of letters, when intellectual production was supposed to enrich or at least materially improve the individual or the nation, Erasmus describes his vast scholarly enterprise as housebound drudgery, Rabelais devotes his prose project to managing the waste of the ancient and contemporary world, Du Bellay hedges his bets on the future with gardening metaphors, Montaigne complains about household cares, Marvell lingers on fruit-candying, and Milton's heroic Son of God marks his historic triumph over Satan by going home to his mother's house.[39] In enclosed spaces they paradoxically found opportunities for open-endedness not afforded by existing conceptions of the literary work.

One motivation for these and other authors' identification with housewives and other domestic laborers might have been the professional positions some held as they wrote their works, which could and did cause some class anxiety. Gaining employment in a patron's household might guarantee ample free time to write, but the assignment of other household duties—as tutor, secretary, or amanuensis—could inhibit poetic inspiration. More broadly, working for a patron meant inhabiting a space nominally preserved from, if ultimately dependent on, the market. Embracing domesticity could be, in part, a response to an emerging market economy that challenged traditional ways of valuing intellectual labor while failing to offer clear alternatives. In the late medieval and early modern periods, as Natalie Zemon Davis has shown, spiritual and intellectual resources were beginning to circulate in sales economies, but they still retained a special status, often considered as inappropriate to exchange for money. The medieval conviction that "knowledge is a gift of God, and cannot be sold," had not quite lost its force, and the "sensitivity to the relation between gift and sale" and "concern about the border between them" was stronger in relation to the products of intellectual labor than to other goods and services; "it would have been unseemly, even insulting, to reward them by an ordinary payment."[40] Authors caught in the shifting tides of gift and sale attempted to negotiate this tension by explicitly associating themselves with these small-scale and subservient, degrading and retrograde occupations, while at the same time attempting to recast domestic and secretarial work as necessary to the maintenance of communities and institutions. Their strategic self-deprecation overlaps, in certain ways, with the courtly practice of *sprezzatura*, where the courtier rhetorically discounts his price (*prezzo*) as part of a strategy to establish his

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[38] Ibid., 195. See Halpern, "Eclipse of Action," for the implications for drama of this commonality between labor and action.

[39] Montaigne would seem to be the least interesting case for my study, being famous for his retreat to a private life of writing. But Montaigne's long career as a public official before (and even during) his "retirement," and his essays' ambivalence about whether disengagement from the world is really desirable or even possible, make him a crucial figure for understanding how public commitments (and publication in particular) might be negotiated with private languishing.

[40] Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 44, 33. See also Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), for the strict separation of the gentlemanly intellectual labor of aristocratic experimentalists from the slavish labors of their wage-earning assistants, even if the latter were indispensable to the former (376-97).

worth.[41] But the practice I am focusing on, a kind of domestication of *sprezzatura*, takes that program a step further: the domestic-minded writer seeks to separate himself, or at least temporarily preserve himself, from a price-based economy altogether.

The strategy was to suggest that intellectual work was domestic labor, in a strongly figurative and sometimes literal sense, while still maintaining the possibility of its relevance to the public. The difficulty in this rhetorical positioning is that the more successful the figure, the more it risks being taken too literally.[42] To put a laureate and a housewife in parallel marshals the force of the classical analogy of *polis* to household and recalls rhetoric manuals' guidelines for *dispositio* or the careful arrangement of arguments, as discussed by Thomas Greene, whose treatment of *imitatio* emphasizes the use of the trope of "domestication" in Renaissance reading and writing advice,[43] and Kathy Eden, who calls attention to how domestic economy, or *oikonomia*, conceptually structured ancient and early modern rhetorical discourse.[44] At the same time, the analogy comes close to collapsing supposedly sublime, transcendent, high-value intellectual production with the merely material and the temporally bound. Helgerson finds the negotiation of these two poles to be of particular salience for the would-be poet laureate of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England: "Bend too close to contemporary practice and he would topple from his laureate eminence to 'rolle with [the] rest'; but hold to that eminence with too little concession and he would, as Drayton discovered, lose his readers, and perhaps even the name of poet."[45]

One strategy for balancing the materially trivial and the spiritually sublime, as Jeffrey Knapp has argued of English writers of the sixteenth century, would be to apply a Christian formula of transvaluation.[46] In Knapp's account, writers like Wyatt, Spenser, and Shakespeare, relying heavily on

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[41] As Pigman notes, the courtier's concern with *sprezzatura* could be expanded to a more general desire to adhere to the adage of *ars est celare artem*. As Erasmus puts it in *Ciceronianus*: "Did not Cicero himself teach that the chief point of art is to disguise [*dissimulare*] art? … Therefore if we wish to imitate Cicero successfully, we must above all disguise our imitation of Cicero" (qtd. in Pigman, "Versions of Imitation," 10).

[42] My aim in examining the analogy of humanist to housewife is to treat it not simply as a trope, but as a sincere attempt by these authors to organize their lived experience. I take a cue from Todd Reeser, who explains his decision to take analogy seriously as a way of understanding Renaissance thought with reference to Foucault's well-known claim that "it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them" (qtd. in Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006], 39-40), as well as to Claude-Gilbert Dubois's assertion in *L'Imaginaire de la Renaissance* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1985) that "analogy was not simply an aesthetic device," but "a 'type de raisonnement valide et conforme à l'ordre de la réalité' ('a valid form of reasoning conforming to reality')" (Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity*, 39).

[43] Thomas Greene, *Light in Troy*, 82-4.

[44] Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 41. Pigman outlines the divergence of Macrobius's model from that of Seneca. For Macrobius, imitation was about arrangement, and emphatically not about transformation; his bees simply gathered and didn't synthesize (in what Pigman calls "redistributive reproduction," 6). Vida went even further, advocating outright theft (Pigman, "Versions of Imitation," 15). In Seneca's exemplum of synthetic bees, presented as a model of active reading and original style, it is important to note that this process is compared to a purely metabolic, unconscious, effortless one: "We see that nature does this in our bodies without any effort on our part" (Seneca, *Selected Letters*, trans. Elaine Fantham [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 156).

[45] Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*, 23.

[46] Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from* Utopia *to* The Tempest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

St. Paul's valorization of the weak and foolish over the strong and wise,[47] embraced their own apparent impotence, along with England's—its ill success in early colonial ventures, its female monarch, its geographical inconsequence—as evidence of spiritual power. Poetry, so often dismissed as a trifling toy, could thus claim strength *by virtue of* its apparent weakness. But those claims to transcendence via perfect humility could be compromised by the ignominy of receiving payment. As Helgerson puts it, "A laureate could not be a timeserver. Rather he was the servant of eternity."[48] And if meaner poetic labor was embarrassing because it was paid, it was perhaps more embarrassing that it was often so poorly paid, and so dependent on the continued favor of benefactors. In this, such reading and writing resembled not only labor in general, but in particular the labor performed and supervised mostly by women within the confines of the home. This was not the honest, hard, and potentially dangerous labor evoked by non-aristocratic writers like Ben Jonson, whose writing philosophy was to "bring all to the forge, and fire,"[49] with a typical georgic enthusiasm for transforming matter through showy, sweaty toil. But nor was it the kind of self-effacing labor that went into the construction of an aristocratic literary culture of pastoral, valued for its appearance of idleness.[50]

My dissertation diverges from other scholarly accounts of labor and literature in its focus on literary labor that was neither muscular enough to be straightforwardly valued *as* labor, nor rarefied enough to be effectively dissolved into leisure or passed off as a spiritual pursuit. In sharp contrast to the language of personal adventure and historical progress, the preoccupation with domestic labor is remarkable in its lack of ambition to go anywhere at all, at least not immediately. The modest mindset behind such unproductive labor is maintained by rhetoric more evocative of the kitchen than the marketplace, more firmly rooted in a household *jardin potager* than in the common field of engineered cultural production. The strangely domesticized heroic ambitions outlined in Bacon's *New Atlantis* provide one example of how this attitude tempers even his famously aggressive thinking. In Bacon's utopian vision, the public and progressive program he has planned for England reveals itself to be dependent on repetitive, small-scale, and domestic operations, less national georgic than home gardening guide. Though Bacon and his acolytes never tired of trumpeting about triumphant scientific advancements to come, the Baconian rhetoric of groundbreaking progress and innovative intellectual production clings to an enclosed and suspended image of Eden even while looking forward to its transformation and opening. In the operations it describes, *The New Atlantis* blends the pastoral and the progressive in a perfect recipe for domestic georgic: the experiments of Salomon's House repeat themselves in a narrative told entirely in the present tense (introduced with formulas like "We make by art..."), scientific progress freezing into "coagulations, indurations, refrigerations, and conservations of bodies," cabinets of curiously preserved fishes and delicately distilled vapors.[51]

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[47] "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29, *KJV*).

[48] Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*, 8.

[49] Qtd. in Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1.

[50] See, for example, Virginia Krause, *Idle Pursuits: Literature and* Oisiveté *in the French Renaissance* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003).

[51] Bacon, *New Atlantis,* in *Francis Bacon: The Major Works,* ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 482, 480.

Despite Bacon's cogitation against monastic libraries and celebration of the cosmopolitan circulation of knowledge, then, the ideal laboratory is structured like the closed domestic spheres of the body and the household, run by repetitive, metabolic, reconstitutive micro-operations. These operations recall the prefatory remarks of Hugh Plat to his popular handbook for housewives excerpted in my first epigraph. Announcing a shift in his professional interests from military to domestic technology, from "piercing bullets" to "sugar balls," Plat explains that one subject of this book will be the reconstitution of living organisms in sugar and almond paste: to reproduce "fruits and flowers" and "bird and foule" by "cast[ing] the same in formes of sweetest grace," that is, by molding them in "marchpaine" and sugar, "As if the flesh and forme which nature gaue, / Did still remaine in euerie lim and part."[52] Like this marzipan menagerie, the figures chosen by my dissertation's authors for their own textual production—Du Bellay's heirlooms to be archived in *Les Regrets*, Marvell's idle utensils in *Upon Appleton House,* Milton's vials of suspended fluid in *Areopagitica*—look as much like household curiosities as evidence of or incitements to a collective advancement of learning. Unlike, for example, Du Bellay's contemporary Pierre de Ronsard, who advertised his works as national treasures poised to earn interest over time, these authors were reluctant to guarantee that their work could accrue any value, positing mere physical preservation as an (albeit provisional) end in itself, and at the same time as a creative act: to "cast in sweet compounds of arte," to borrow Plat's phrase, could figure the work of a compiler of *florilegia*,[53] an amanuensis, an estate-manager, a housewife, or a domestic servant, as well as that of a scholar, essayist, or poet.[54] The extent to which preservation was treated as only a provisional end varies with each author. But my attention to the possibility that preservation might be valued in itself sets my account apart from those of scholars like Summit, who argue that what appeared to be "merely preservative" work, in the medieval world and elsewhere, was in fact actively productive. Rather than prove that this kind of intellectual labor is something richer and more meaningful than "preservation," we might work to enrich our sense of what "preservation" could mean, both in the early modern understanding and in our own.

The culinary practice of preservation, and the figurative uses to which it was put, provides one way of enriching the concept of the "merely preservative" while at the same time challenging Arendt's distinction between labor—which leaves nothing behind—and work, which does. (Arendt explains that this distinction is her new and improved version of Smith's distinction between

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[52] Plat, *Delightes for Ladies to adorne their persons, tables, closets, and distillatories, with beauties, banquets, perfumes and waters* (London, 1602, 1630), A2V-A3R.

[53] See Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[54] In *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* Robert Burton makes the connection between housewife and humanist, both tasked with organizing an overwhelming flow of material, explicit: "As already, we shall have a vast Chaos and confusion of books, we are oppressed with them, dour eyes ache with reading, our fingers with turning. For my part I am one of the number *nos numerus sumus* (we are mere ciphers): I do not deny it, I have only this of Macrobius to say for myself, *Omne meum, nihil meum*, 'tis all mine, and none mine. As a good housewife out of divers fleeces weaves one piece of cloth, a bee gathers wax and honey out of many flowers, and makes a new bundle of all, *Floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant*, I have laboriously collected this Cento out of divers writers, and that *sine injuria*, I have wronged no authors, but given every man his own…" (Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: What it is, with All the Kinds, Causes, Symptoms, Prognostics, and Several Cures of It* [London: Chatto and Windus, 1883], 7). It is important to note that this connection wasn't always metaphorical. Hierarchical domestic structures, like those documented by Steven Shapin in the context of experimentalism, often made humanist labor possible. As much as I'm arguing that these male humanists identified with certain feminized forms of intellectual labor and performed them themselves, parts of some of their work were literally done by women, notably in the cases of Milton's daughters and Montaigne's *fille d'alliance*.

unproductive and productive labor.[55]) A definition of labor's products as that which "cannot be 'heaped up' and stored away to become part of a man's property," products that "do not become more durable by their abundance" and are "only too likely to disappear in the process of appropriation or to 'perish uselessly' if they are not consumed 'before they spoil'"[56] does not take into account how much of domestic labor, especially in the early modern period, was devoted to a practice that Arendt would define as work. A work has been made, Arendt says, when "an entirely new thing with enough durability to remain in the world as an independent entity has been added to the human artifice,"[57] a feat achieved, early modern cookbooks avowed, by culinary preservation that could last a year or more. The preserved product, insofar as it is "preserved," is perhaps not "entirely new," but insofar as it is altered in order to be preserved—as fruit becomes *confiture*, or wine becomes vinegar—it is.

The durability of painstakingly preserved foods, like that of all works, is not absolute. And yet, suspended as they are in vinegar, salt, or sugar and thus temporarily removed from the process of natural decay, they make what Arendt calls an "obvious" distinction "between a bread, whose 'life expectancy' in the world is hardly more than a day, and a table, which may easily survive generations of men,"[58] much less obvious. Many recipes in early modern cookbooks and domestic manuals include instructions (or boasts) testifying to how the products of culinary preservation can enter the world of lasting artifice: "…then box it up and keepe it all the yeare"; "and so you may keep them all the yeare"; "so may you keepe them a whole yeare without shrinking"; "throw some Salt therein and keep it"; "pickle to keep six months or longer"; "cover it close, and so you may keep them all the year round"; "will keep many a year"; "then take them up & pot them, and you may keepe them all the yeare."[59] In a further complication of Arendt's schema, recipes—or "receipts"—were passed down and received through generations, both to endure and to be repeated.[60]

The poetic resonance of early modern French and English domestic labor has not been satisfactorily explored. Virginia Krause's account of private practices in the French Renaissance is pointed in its focus on leisure rather than labor, categorizing both embroidery and public service as

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[55] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 87.
[56] Ibid., 109.
[57] Ibid., 143.
[58] Ibid., 94.
[59] John Murrell, *A Delightfull Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen* (1621); Hugh Plat, *The Garden of Eden, or, An accurate Description of all Flowers and Fruits now growing in England, with particular Rules how to advance their Nature and Growth, as well in Seeds and Hearbs, as the secret ordering of Trees and Plants* (1608); *The Compleat Cook: or, The Whole Art of Cookery* (1694); Sir Kenelm Digby, *Choice and experimented receipts in physick and chirurgery, as also cordial and distilled waters and spirits, perfumes, and other curiosities* (1675); *A Closet for Ladies and Gentlewomen, or, The Art of Preserving, Conserving, and Candying* (1611).
[60] Joanna Picciotto notes how the slippage between Arendt's categories of temporary, bodily labor and enduring, meaningful work appears in the phrase "intellectual labor" itself. In our modern understanding of intellectual labor, the cyclicality and futility of labor have been completely flattened into a linear conception of work: the intellectual laborer is expected to make linear progress, advance towards truth (or at least greater knowledge), and produce "works." In her account of an earlier understanding of this concept in early modern experimentalism's collapse of the means and ends of paradisal labor, Picciotto makes a crucial distinction between the individual's uncertainty and the collective's progress. While I find this account both persuasive and provisionally productive, I also want to emphasize the extent to which, for the authors I consider, even collective progress was seen as radically contingent on the maintenance of its operating mechanisms, and how much of that maintenance work was understood not only as heroically painful, purgatorial labor but also as domestic drudgery (*Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010], 2).

that which "transcended" straightforwardly useful work.[61] If, as Krause convincingly contends, "the *value* of idleness depended paradoxically upon its lack of any manifest worth,"[62] it is also the case that female-dominated domestic management—the metabolism that keeps a household running—lacks any clear "manifest worth," and yet it has a harder time qualifying as transcendent.[63] Many of the scholars who have studied the translation of the domestic to the literary in the English context, including Hutson, Korda, and Wall, and Gail Kern Paster, have focused their attentions on drama, where what otherwise seem like trivial domestic concerns can literally take center stage.[64] Paster positions Bottom's antics in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* within the discourse of domestic purgative recipes[65]; Korda, reading *The Taming of the Shrew*, sees in Kate's fondness for "cates"—dainties bought from the market rather than produced at home—a crucial economic shift writ small[66]; Wall alerts us to the dramatic stakes of syrup in *The Duchess of Malfi*.[67] These studies also seek to elevate off-stage activities we usually think of as mundane, playing up their sensational and spectacular aspects. Disabusing readers of any anachronistic ideas of domestic affairs, Wall suggests that a day in an early modern housewife's life might involve, along with more expected tasks, disemboweling a rabbit, cleaning up spilled blood from a freshly decapitated capon with a urine-based astringent, and scavenging for human bones to grind with snails for a homemade hemorrhoid cream.[68] Throughout her work on both literary and practical texts, Wall persuasively argues that early modern housewifery was fast-paced, bloody, and always ripe for drama, providing a welcome alternative to preconceived notions of sanitary prudishness or soul-killing boredom. By focusing on non-dramatic writers who took decidedly non-dramatic stances on housework, I do not mean to dispute housework's potential for excitement. But I do mean to suggest that early modern domestic labor deserves our attention not only because it could sometimes be sexy, but also because it often could not.

The interest of my authors in the slow and minor processes that make literal and figurative households run was both literary and moral, an interest both in the writing practice of tempering and in the ethical practice of temperance.[69] Erasmus, Rabelais, Du Bellay, Montaigne, Marvell, and Milton complicate apparent stances of disavowal and self-denial by converting static and negative (and often traditionally feminine) virtues into the active and positive (but only barely legibly so)

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[61] Krause, *Idle Pursuits*, 16.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Based on her reading of conduct manuals, Krause claims, "In an age witnessing the growing secularization of leisure, moralists projected the vanishing ideal of the contemplative life onto women's quotidian existence within the secular sphere," effectively rebranding certain domestic activities as forms of contemplation (ibid., 90).

[64] One reason why culinary labor has proved so productive for scholarship on drama may be that, in its status as both enduring and repeatable, a recipe is somewhat like a play-text. Though not specifically focused on *domestic* labor, Richard Halpern's work on tragedy and political economy has suggested that, despite Arendt's identification of action as the human activity most evoked by tragic drama, a play like *Hamlet*—with its constant interior revolving, and constant references to the inexorability of the biological life cycle—has much more to tell us about labor than action. See Halpern, "Eclipse of Action," as well as Margreta de Grazia, *"Hamlet" without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[65] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 113-62.

[66] Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 52-53.

[67] Wendy Wall, "Just a Spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England," *Modern Philology* 104.2 (Nov. 2006): 149-72, 149.

[68] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 19-21.

[69] See, for example, Joshua Scodel's *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) and Reeser's *Moderating Masculinity*.

operations by which a poetic and moral subject can be sustained, and literary and economic value can (if only indirectly) be suggested. Both the process and the product of this conversion could be described as temperance, understood to mean not simple abstinence or restraint but rather, borrowing from Milton's definition in *Areopagitica*—and borrowing, too, from a central activity of early modern housewives—the active collection and mixing, or tempering, of available materials over time.[70]

The tempering of housewives will emerge throughout this dissertation as a central practice of domestic georgic. That, as David Scott Wilson-Okamura points out, Renaissance commentators found the *Georgics* to be primarily defined by thematic and stylistic variety[71] underscores how the careful tempering of materials is as important to the poem as labor is. At the same time, the selection and management of various ingredients is a particular kind of labor: the tempering of diverse materials, often on a smaller scale than the kinds of georgic labors that begin in early modern literature to approach epic proportions, can be at once mind-numbingly tedious and so rarefied as to seem magical or nonexistent, at once boring and precarious. Cooking and preserving, like farming, are subject to both the predictable cycles and the unpredictable anomalies of nature. As much as progressive improvement was the explicit aim of much georgic labor, the georgic mode on which I wish to focus, and that I trace back to Virgil's poem, is shot through with a radical uncertainty about the future of any of its proposed projects. Even the formulaic flattery of a sovereign in the opening of the *Georgics* is expressed in terms of uncertainty:

> … and I address you too, O Caesar, although none knows the gathering of gods
> in which you soon will be accommodated, or whether you would choose
> to oversee the city or be in charge of the countryside, nor knows if the wide world
> will come to honour you as begetter of the harvest or as master of the seasons
> (around your brow already a garland of your mother's myrtle),
> or whether you will come as lord of endless sea …[72]

These concessions and conditionals—"although none knows," "or whether you would," "nor knows if"—cast no direct doubt on Octavian's place in *some* "gathering of the gods." But Virgil's performed inability to settle on a precise location reminds us repeatedly that his patron's place is not yet fixed in any pantheon. Labor, and Rome, may well eventually conquer all, but this conquest is neither inevitable nor permanent, requiring constant, qualifying, and provisional cultivation in both its fruition and its maintenance.

The contingency of georgic labor, as opposed to its inevitably conquering power, has been explored by Kevis Goodman in her work on what she calls the "georgic modernity" of the long eighteenth century. The variety of georgic, with its heterogeneous and sometimes incompletely incorporated elements, is key to its production and management of contingency. Goodman identifies georgic *versus*—which Virgil uses to mean both "verses" and "furrows"—as "communicative sites" for "that aspect of the flux of historical process that Raymond Williams called social experience 'in solution,' not yet or never quite precipitated out in the form of the

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[70] Milton argues that even "bad" books are "not temptations, nor vanities; but usefull drugs and materialls wherewith to temper and compose effective and strong med'cins, which mans life cannot want" (*Areopagitica,* in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998], 1008). I will expand on this pharmaceutical tempering in chapter 5.

[71] David Scott Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 78.

[72] Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. Peter Fallon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.24-29.

'known relationships, institutions, formations, positions' or other familiar terms."[73] Situating georgic "in solution"—in the suspensions afforded by culinary preservation, deferred action, and syntactical pauses—associates georgic labor with the cultivation of specific potentials rather than the assured production of results. Suggesting that georgic *versus* can "'work' as agents of disclosure in ways we have not been able to recognize, even as they attempt ideological closure in ways that we have," Goodman encourages us to look at what georgic labor brings to the surface, and to "explore the possibility that the problem is sometimes not the plough or the pen that buries what should be disclosed, but that the critic's predicament, like that of the farmer and the poet, is the difficulty of recognizing the historical meanings of what does get turned up, not under, by their lines."[74] While my account differs from Goodman's in my domestic and interior focus—my interest is less in what gets "turned up" than in what remains for the moment stuck inside or in between—I take her approach to offer an alternative to the heroic feat of groundbreaking discovery so often identified in early modern authors and imitated by contemporary scholars. To gesture back to this introduction's title, if the humanist's "closet," like those of the high-ranking ladies evoked by the title pages of domestic manuals, has been "opened," it has not necessarily been violently breached, nor is it necessarily spilling forth its secrets.

A domestic georgic ethos is what allows textual production to signify as both private and open, both natural process and cultural artifice, both mere conservation of value and source of surplus value, both self-consuming spiritual exercise and durable material product, both rote-produced copy and plenitudinous *copia*. With these authors' propensity for dwelling in the lowest stratum of the *vita activa*, in the private realm where no work of immediate productive or public moment can be done, the invisible work of domestic labor begins to blur, too, with the invisible work of contemplation. But the embrace of a confined life of labor does not so much refuse public active life as experimentally invite it in, through a negotiation that Michael McKeon calls a "formal domestication"—"a rhetoric that traditionally uses the easy familiarity of the private (and the profane) to accommodate the arcane obscurity of the public (and the sacred)."[75] But if for McKeon this process of "familiarization" or "bringing it home" is particularly productive "at the historical moment when the traditional distinction between the public and the private is in the process of issuing in their modern separation,"[76] with the seventeenth century's increasingly clear separation between domestic life and public life as the basis for the strength of the rhetorical comparison, my focus is on texts that question the validity of any such distinction in the first place.

In turning back to Erasmus in the following section, I aim to explore more fully how perhaps the most emblematic figure of the Renaissance reconciled, or failed to reconcile, some of the contradictions I list above. What does it mean when the most public face of humanism consigns himself to housework?

III. The Labors of Erasmus

In a 1523 letter, Erasmus asks his friend John Botzheim to indulge him in a thought experiment: what if he had died after finishing the first edition of his annotated collection of Greek

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73 Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.
74 Ibid.
75 Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), xxii.
76 Ibid., 326, 327.

and Latin adages*,* only to come back to life, bringing "a better and fuller version" of the book with him, presumably having had some blessedly undisturbed time to improve on it in the afterlife? Surely Botzheim would not resent the money he had spent on the first edition of the *Adages*, and would mostly be preoccupied with his gratitude at seeing his friend restored to life. Erasmus presents the whole hypothetical situation in his typical copious style, expanding and contracting its terms as it progresses, regulating his own questions, and obliquely discounting the proposition's own validity:

> Suppose I had produced the *Adages* and died at once, as soon as the work came out; would you regret having spent money on it? I don't think so. Now suppose further that I had come to life again a few years later, and that the book was born again with me, in a better and fuller version; would you groan about the expense, or would you receive joyfully both your friend and your friend's achievement? I know quite well what you will say: "I should certainly rejoice with the friend who was alive again—but all this is imagination." But which do you think the happier fate, to come back from the dead or not to die at all? If it is a matter of congratulation to be resurrected, it is a greater one to have survived.[77]

The conclusion to this friendly circumlocution, then, is that mere survival is a greater accomplishment than resurrection. This is an unexpected affirmation from a man who seems to have prided himself on resurrecting the entire body of ancient knowledge. In this letter, Erasmus does not dismiss singularly miraculous events as outside of his modest scope; Christ-like resurrection seems to be an option on the table. But what he finds most extraordinary about his augmentation of the *Adages* is that their growth is attributable to something as everyday and ordinary as survival.

Erasmus's stated ambition, in the encyclopedic *Adages* he first published in 1500 and continued to expand until his death in 1536, is no less than the "restoration of learning," and he is not slow, in his long entry on the classical trope of "The Labors of Hercules," to compare his own works to the deeds of the legendary hero himself. "But if any human toils deserve to be awarded the epithet 'Herculean,'" he interjects into his description of the twelve legendary labors, "it seems to belong in the highest degree to those at least who devote their efforts to restoring the monuments of ancient and true literature."[78] On one of these monuments, the complete letters of St. Jerome, Erasmus claims to have worked even harder than their author, it having "cost Jerome less to write his works than it has cost me to restore and explain them."[79] Simon Goldhill, after quoting this boast, goes on to marvel jocoseriously at Erasmus's indulgence in the anachronism that a Renaissance humanist skill set was a defining aspect of early Christian asceticism, translating Jerome's "smelly, painful, lonely sufferings" into laudatory linguistic faculties and a flawless memory. If the motivation of Jerome's trip to the desert was really "to 're-read his entire library' and systematically to collect references and citations for later use," it was, Goldhill quips, "[m]ore sabbatical than mortification." [80] But understanding scholarship as a form of everyday "mortification," or what one character in Rabelais calls "maceration"—a process that both damages

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[77] Erasmus, "Letter to John Botzheim," in Margaret Mann Phillips, *The 'Adages' of Erasmus: A Study with Translations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), xv.
[78] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus,* vol. 34 (Adages IIvii1 to IIIiii100), trans. and ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 170. Hereafter quoted parenthetically.
[79] Letter to Pope Leo X, 21 May 1515 (qtd. in Simon Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek?: Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 20).
[80] Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek?*, 20-21.

and reconstitutes the body in a preservative way—is central to complicating the early modern narrative of a heroic forward march into the future.

The edition of Jerome's letters becomes an important accessory for the scholar-hero so carefully constructed, as Jardine's account elucidates, by Erasmus himself: an iconic portrait he sent to his favorite patron portrays Erasmus sitting regally with his edition of the letters, emblazoned with the title *Herakleou Ponoi* ("The Labors of Hercules"). For Jardine, Erasmus exemplifies the successful self-fashioning to which so many Renaissance writers aspired. His self-presentation, "ostentatiously no model of cloistered selflessness," fits into the narrative of the emergence of an autonomous author who "strives for visibility rather than invisibility," who sees public heroism rather than private drudgery as the scholar's due.[81]

But as Erasmus goes on, in his Herculean adage, to explain his methodology, the scholar's heroic toils begin to sound more like the stuff of mock epic, more suited to a lady's cabinet than a foreign battlefield. The Hydra's many heads are replaced by a swarm of "monstrous scribal errors," and it is not superhuman strength but myopic squinting that is required to decode corrupt texts and unearth buried gems, for "adages, like jewels, are small things, and sometimes escape your eye as you hunt for them." (Those monstrous errors were compounded, according to Kathy Eden, by "the monstrous ingratitude of his reading public."[82]) As a result of having to "wear out your eyes on crumbling volumes covered with mould, torn, mutilated, gnawed all round by worms and beetles," any compiler can expect to develop "some sort of decay and old age" prematurely, and this at the expense of doing "other literary work," in those more expansive fields where "there is often scope for using one's wits, so that there is some pleasure to be gained from creative and original thought, and in any context and at any moment you may be able by nimbleness of mind to polish off some portion of your task" (173-4). But nimbleness will get Erasmus nowhere here. "[W]ho can make an adequate estimate of the infinite labor required to seek out such small things everywhere?" our Hercules asks, complaining that even his well-meaning predecessors have only made his job more hopelessly difficult: "An almost larger army of commentators […], some of whom by their idleness and inaccuracy and a certain number by pure ignorance (for they too must be worked through, in hopes of course of one day picking some gold off the dunghill), have added not a little to the burden of my labors" (172).

The humanist scholar's task, then, is both infinite and infinitesimal. On the one hand, such a paradox is a familiar one in Christian humanism, preoccupied as writers were not only with their own attempted accommodation of pagan culture to familiar Christian narratives but also with the more fundamental accommodation of Christ's own divinity to his apparently humble humanity. This twofold movement of domestication receives complex treatment in Erasmus's commentary on the "Sileni of Alcibiades," homely wooden figurines with statues of Greek gods hidden inside, symbolizing "some thing which, though on the surface […] looks worthless and absurd, is yet admirable on a nearer and less superficial view, or of some man whose face and bearing promise far less than what he hides in his heart."[83] But while the Scriptural comparison of the kingdom of heaven to a little mustard seed, or the widespread deprecation of humanist letters as mere toys and trifles,[84] are conventional formulations of a certain relationship between the infinitesimal and the

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[81] Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters*, 44, 43.

[82] Kathy Eden, *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property, and the* Adages *of Erasmus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 159.

[83] *The Adages of Erasmus,* ed. William Watson Barker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 242.

[84] Knapp's account of English writers' Scripture-based strategy to exalt themselves through humility, for example, emphasizes "toys" and "trifles" as the epithets of choice to signal the (apparent) irrelevance of

infinite, they suggest the decorous humility of restraint rather than the abject humiliation of interminably wading through a dunghill.

The restoration of learning seems to involve the scholar's success in proving his work to be not only apparently insignificant, but, more to the point, menial, ceaseless, and poorly compensated beyond the common reader's imagination; not wispily immaterial, but weighed down by banality. Erasmus's casting of his Herculean task as less a Christianized heroic struggle than a misuse of human resources—a great intellectual, who could have been putting his talents to more productive use, confined to dusty archives and degraded to secretarial status, for a public who will never appreciate him—contrasts not only with the neatly transvaluing Pauline inversion of worldly weakness into otherworldly strength but also with classical conceptions of the hierarchy of human activity. In Arendt's schema of the *vita activa*, the domestic laborer, as opposed to the worldly producer of works or the public-minded hero, could never achieve any significance outside the *oikos*, even if public life depended, indirectly and invisibly, on home economics. Limited to the mere preservation and never the ennobling of life, labor always falls short, according to Arendt, of both the durable contributions of productive work and the heroic, world-changing impact of action.

Arendt, after acknowledging that Hercules was both an archetypal hero and temporarily a laborer, clarifies that his labors can be called heroic only because they were singular events, taking place in the aorist tense rather than the present progressive. By contrast,

> the daily fight in which the human body is engaged to keep the world clean and prevent its decay bears little resemblance to heroic deeds; the endurance it needs to repair every day anew the waste of yesterday is not courage, and what makes the effort painful is not danger but its relentless repetition. The Herculean "labors" share with all great deeds that they are unique; but unfortunately it is only the mythological Augean stable that will remain clean once the effort is made and the task achieved.[85]

And yet scholarly, experimental, essayistic, and poetic labor, with the process of constant correction and revision undermining the finality of the published work, can leave behind products that both are publicly significant and stand in need of continuous maintenance and repair, or what Erasmus calls, in reference to his own work, "the unpopular and unvarying toil of collecting, of sweeping together, explaining, and translating" (174). If Erasmus's goal is to clean up completely the Augean mess that medieval commentators and the ravages of time have left behind, and to do this once and for all, one might think he would stress the singularity of his accomplishment, rather than its relentless seriality ("And another thing …"; "And here is another thought I would put before you …").

Thus Erasmus virtually situates himself, *avant la lettre*, among those men of letters that Adam Smith includes in his famous list of "unproductive laborers," which spans from the sovereign himself to government officials and the armed forces to "churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds" and finally down to "players, buffoons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers" and household servants.[86] Richard Halpern calls this roll call "a mock-epic catalogue" that replaces Homeric feats of battle or oratory with menial services, casting the king's official acts as just as worthless, in the terms of political economy, as those of a servant or a clown: as Smith puts it, "the work of all of them perishes in the very instant of its production."[87] If Erasmus maintained the hope

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literature, citing, for example, Sidney's professed embarrassment at the "triflingness" of his *Apology for Poetry*, which he identifies as an "ink-wasting toy" (qtd. in *Empire Nowhere*, 6).

[85] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 101.

[86] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 352.

[87] Halpern, "Eclipse of Action," 453; Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 352.

that his emendations might leave a mark far into the future—or at least lay the groundwork on which others could build—it does little to mollify his sense that his labors, no matter how noble in their aspirations for public service, are fundamentally service work, destined for an evaporation almost as instant as what Smith describes, absorbed by his readers without notice. Chained to his texts "like a slave bound to the mill," constrained to "repeat the same things three thousand times" in order to "content the leisured reader, give the hungry man what he needs" (174), Erasmus figures himself as just as condemned to relentless cycles of production and feeding as a menial servant, or a housewife.[88]

I characterize Erasmus's self-identification as with a "housewife" to draw attention to the difference between labor specific to the production and consumption cycles of a household, and usually performed or supervised by women, and the forms of unproductive, servile, or menial labor that were considered respectable in early modernity—though many of those activities were themselves at constant risk of sliding into the category of women's work. In his 1570 pedagogical treatise *The Scholemaster*, Roger Ascham takes pains to distinguish between the noble "scholehouse" and the base "larder house": "Euery man sees, (as I sayd before) new wax is best for printyng: new claie, fittest for working: new shorne woll, aptest for sone and surest dying: new fresh flesh, for good and durable salting. And this similitude is not rude, nor borowed of the larder house, but out of his scholehouse, of whom, the wisest of England, neede not be ashamed to learne."[89] Of course, this clarification that the subject at hand has nothing to do with food preservation is only required because Ascham's examples have slipped from the intellectually oriented, if ephemeral, task of "printyng" on wax to the domestic activity of meat-salting, revealing that the clear separation of respectable from unrespectable unproductive labor is not, after all, so clear.

My argument, again, hinges more on such rhetoric of housewifery than on its reality,[90] and as much as Erasmus elsewhere discounts the opinions of "silly women" and "men very much like women,"[91] the figure he cuts for himself in "The Labors of Hercules" resonates strikingly with a role rhetorically cast as feminine. He could, after all, have chosen to focus on some of the challenges that more obviously tested Hercules's muscular mettle, like the slaying of the Nemean lion or the capture of the Erymanthian boar. Instead, we get indefinitely dirty stables and unending scribal errors, tiresome trials that must be met with what Arendt calls "relentless repetition" rather than "courage," with the housewife's patience rather than the hero's audacity. Expanding, however infinitesimally, on Arendt's conception of domestic labor, Erasmus's cleanup project does aim to do something more than "keep the world clean and prevent its decay": namely, he hopes to organize messy textual material in order to make it available, hopefully, for others to use. In this, too, he fills a crucial role

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88 Ancient sources did not always portray Hercules as a paragon of masculine strength and virility. See, for example, Ovid's *Heroides* for a story of Hercules and Iole, where Iole dresses Hercules in women's clothes and makes him do women's work, or Lucian's account of the elderly, infirm, and comical "Gallic Hercules," to be discussed in chapter 2.

89 Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster,* ed. Edward Arber (London: A. Constable, 1897), 45-6.

90 Hutson shows how the structural alignment of gender roles set out in the household manuals of the time, with the husband's outdoor sphere of responsibility corresponding to the wife's indoors, belied the fact that it was the husband who really governed the household, with the "good wife" serving as "merely the example of his ability to govern"—or, more to the point, of the fictional construction of his ability to govern (*Usurer's Daughter*, 21).

91 Erasmus, *A Declaration on the Subject of Early Liberal Education for Children / De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis declamatio,* trans. Beert C. Verstraete, in *The Erasmus Reader,* ed. Erika Rummel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 66. It should be noted that the place and value of the feminine in Erasmus' writing, though often coded negative, is shifting and complex, not least in the female-voiced mock-encomium *In Praise of Folly*.

of the early modern housewife: to maintain, through unproductive or minimally productive labor, a store of resources.

To elucidate her description of the ideal Renaissance housewife, Lorna Hutson cites John Dod and Robert Cleaver's popular *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government* (1610)—based, like many other volumes in the popular marriage manual genre, on Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*—which declares, "The dutie of the Husband is to get goods: and of the Wife to gather them together, to save them."[92] Other wifely duties, similarly symmetrically opposed to the husband's, included "to keep the house," "not vainely to spend" the money and provisions acquired by her husband, "to talke with few," "to be solitary and withdrawn," "to be a saver," and "to oversee and give order for all things within the house."[93] Bridging the practical and the rhetorical, Hutson explains how Xenophon's portrait of the housewife gave early modern writers the prompt to think of "the figure of a woman as agent of rhetorical retrieval, or 'readiness for use,'" helping to define *oikonomia* as "that 'science' *(episteme)* which positions men metaphorically 'outdoors,' in a state of 'leisure' or readiness to 'sette their minds and diligence to do theyr frendes any good, or the commonwealth.'"[94]

Taking the poetics of household activity seriously, this dissertation means to temper the understanding of early modern intellectual labor as innovative and sweepingly transformative down to a smaller scale. This involves reading early modern writing as often merely extensive and corrective, and often only in minor ways, even as it claimed to make a definitive and dramatic break with the medieval past. Thomas Greene, in his argument for such a break, claims that "[t]he medieval writer works within a system of texts that are all equally available for extension, completion, higher realization," making medieval intertextuality "metonymic," as opposed to the more dramatically "metaphoric" intertextuality of the Renaissance.[95] Greene goes on to quote Gerald L. Burns' claim that "for the medieval writer, the inherited text is tacitly unfinished: 'it is never fully present but is always available to a later hand to bring it more completely into the open,'" a sense of continuous labor that was displaced by the Renaissance's "archaeological, necromantic metaphor of *disinterment,* a digging up that was also a resuscitation or a reincarnation or a rebirth."[96] This "resurrection of literary texts … by the humanist necromancer-scholar" was based on a conviction that the past's discrete forms must be discovered and then improved upon.[97] Erasmus's Augean toils trouble Greene's distinction: his is less a resurrection than a life support of ancient texts, a prosaic, continuous, laborious, and metonymic endeavor.

That Erasmus, no stranger to paradox, both illustrates the master narrative of the Renaissance as a heroic, once-and-for-all revival that paved the way for authors' personal and cultural self-aggrandizement on the one hand and muddies it on the other is perhaps no surprise, but the sediment of drudgery in his writing is often ignored in favor of the more vibrant (if, by scholars' admission, artificial) glow of heroism. Jardine includes in her portrait of Erasmus as self-fashioning hero a note on his commitment to constantly re-editing previous editions, to "vigorously keeping his printed text open and alive, trying to prevent the living text from sliding back into a dead textbook."[98] This incessant attempt to ensure survival, which for Jardine appears as a supporting detail of Erasmus's construction of a heroic image, is, by my account, a crucially deflating complication of it. Erasmus's fight for textual (and, by extension, personal) survival did not rise to

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[92] Hutson, *Usurer's Daughter*, 20.
[93] Ibid., 21.
[94] Ibid., 48.
[95] Greene, *Light in Troy*, 86.
[96] Ibid., 86, 92.
[97] Ibid., 95.
[98] Jardine, *Erasmus*, 23, 26.

the level of what Terence Cave identifies as a struggle to make plenitudinous *copia* victorious against the emptiness of mere "copy."[99] My point is a radically more mundane one: that Erasmus *insisted* on the collapse of *copia* and copy, being well aware that, like the early modern housewife's labor and unlike any heroic feat classically understood, the scholar's activity of correcting, copying, editing, translating, and transcribing can only seek to *maintain* original materials—and to only uncertain ends.

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[99] Cave, *Cornucopian Text*, xi.

Chapter 1
Fixing Rabelais

Rabelais has long been considered a celebrant of fluidity, fecundity, and flux, the creator of a world of permeable boundaries, mutating bodies, and interminable outpourings of wine and words. In this chapter, I will argue that an attention to the periodic *suspension* of that famous Rabelaisian flow is as important to understanding Rabelais and his humanism as a celebration of the flow itself. Echoing the rhythms of preservative domestic labor on both stylistic and thematic levels, Rabelais's prose evokes and embodies a domestic georgic ethos that aims not at the breaking of new ground or the boundless progress of human imagination, but at the constant management, or tempering, of material and intellectual life through periodic suspensions of its activity. What Michel Jeanneret, in his discussion of the famous "frozen words" episode with which this chapter will conclude, pejoratively calls the "tombeau pétrifié" of the printed book is better understood, in Rabelais's textual world, as a temporary and potentially salutary petrification. Like the reusable pie molds that were called "coffins" in English,[1] Rabelais's "tombeaux" are holding vessels for possibility in which minor, imperceptible, and sustaining alterations are always taking place.

I. Dead Stones: Cultivating Petrification

To begin at a dead end: in the opening pages of Rabelais's *Quart Livre*, just when the prologue's story is getting started, we are abruptly taken to Olympus, where we find Jupiter's faculty of judgment paralyzed. Having recently and conclusively resolved a series of geopolitical conflicts, the king of the gods finds himself at a loss when it comes to the quarrel between two scholars at the University of Paris, Pierre Rameau (Petrus Ramus) and Pierre Galland: "Mais que ferons nous de ce Rameau et de ce Galland, qui capparassonnez de leurs marmitons, suppous et astipulateurs brouillent toute ceste Academie de Paris? J'en suys en grande perplexité et n'ay encores resolu quelle part je doibve encliner"[2] ["But what are we going to do about those fellows Ramus and Galland who, flanked by their flunkeys, henchmen and partisans, are sowing discord through the whole of the Parisian Academe? I am greatly perplexed by it. I have yet to determine which way to lean"[3]]. The solution to this standstill proposed by the ever-helpful Priapus is for Jupiter to do what he did the last time he found himself faced with such an aporia, which is to turn both of them into stone, thus suspending the question indefinitely. This worked well that last time—when a fox, fated to be caught by no other animal, encountered a dog, fated to catch any other animal it came across—and seems especially fitting here, as Jupiter has just, as it happens, compared the pair of Pierres to a howling dog and a crafty fox. This sense of coincidence solidifies into poetic justice when Priapus reminds him that both parties to be made into *pierres* are already Pierres in name, and they could

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[1] "A mould of paste for a pie; the crust of a pie" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, *s.v.* "coffin").

[2] François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre,* ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 70. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

[3] Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. and ed. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2006), 654. This translation (which includes all four books as well as the *Pantagrueline Prognostication for 1533*) will hereafter be cited parenthetically by page number.

[2] François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre,* ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 70. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

[4] Drawing our attention to some of Rabelais's source material, Edwin Duval quotes Lucian's comparison of Zeus'

[3] Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. and ed. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2006), 654. This translation (which includes all four books as well as the *Pantagrueline Prognostication for 1533*) will hereafter be cited parenthetically by page number.

conveniently join a third troublemaking homonym, the so-called Pierre de Coingnet, already a fixture in the corner of the walls of Notre Dame de Paris, in a triangular coterie of "trois pierres mortes" (74).

Though Jupiter rejects this advice—such a literally monumental memorial is just what these narcissistic academics want—the outcome still, in a way, leaves the two Pierres petrified into perpetuity: distracted first by the general state of human affairs and the related problem of Olympus's shortage of thunderbolts, and then by the shouts from earth of the woodcutter at the center of the prologue's narrative, both Jupiter and the narrative voice abandon the question altogether, leaving Rameau and Galland stuck in their standoff indefinitely.[4]

If the proposed dead stones, the bloodless remains of bitter factionalism, have been thought to fit anywhere in the Rabelaisian edifice, it is as negative exempla. Edwin Duval has argued that these imagined monuments to intramural incivility, wedged into the walls of an "anti-community" built on "anticaritas," are the antithesis of the cheerfully reasonable Pantagruelist spirit we have come to know over the course of the previous books. By bringing civil war into the heart of humanism, once thought to be France's best hope *against* civil war, the factions of the University of Paris *petromachie* stand in opposition to the "living stones" (*lapides vivi*) with which Peter, that rock on which the Church was built, would have Christians construct a living house for God.[5] Duval finds these stony threats met throughout Rabelais's books by the author's call for literal life, pointing to Panurge's promise in the *Tiers Livre* to produce *pierres vives*, or children, in lieu of sterile stone buildings, and more generally to Rabelais's emphasis on sexual union as the jocoserious answer to all threats of division.[6] Lawrence Kritzman, writing from a psychoanalytic perspective, finds Priapus's petrification proposal "inauthentic" and "artificial," an improper "immobilization and reification" of movement that wants to be free.[7] Kritzman extends his diagnosis to the author, describing Rabelais's polysemic play on the word *pierre* and "petrification" as an expression of his "fear of choosing" that leaves him stuck "between ideological extremes, the unfortunate victim of repression."[8]

But petrification and its domestic cousins—pickling, preserving, and other forms of culinary and medicinal suspension—are neither, in Rabelais's case, symptoms of pathological indecision nor heresies to be quickly and simply stamped out. As this chapter will show, provisional or indefinite immobilizations are central to the ethics and aesthetics of a writer usually associated with irrepressible life. Life is, in fact, frequently and undramatically repressed—or, we might say, pickled—in Rabelais, on the level of the sentence as well as of the narrative. The resulting indeterminacy of meaning results not necessarily, as some have argued, from a delightful "polysémie,"[9] but rather from a deep sense of the contingency of the future, and of the maintenance work necessary to sustain both the basic conditions for linguistic and literary production and the potential for local and collective transformation.

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[4] Drawing our attention to some of Rabelais's source material, Edwin Duval quotes Lucian's comparison of Zeus' perplexity to "the bind of the Academics": the divine judge "like Pyrrho 'suspended judgment' indefinitely and continued to think it over" (*The Design of Rabelais's "Quart Livre de Pantagruel*" [Geneva: Droz, 1998], 56n).

[5] Ibid., 60.

[6] Ibid., 61.

[7] Lawrence D. Kritzman, *The Rhetoric of Sexuality and the Literature of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 182.

[8] Ibid., 183-4. Relatedly, Floyd Gray sees Rabelais's exhaustive lists as deadening sequences of reification. The anatomy of Quaresmeprenant, for example, is more like a series of autopsies, "Le texte s'arrête, donc se détruit, à chaque instant. … A chaque ligne donc, nous assistons à une mort du texte," successive nails in the coffin of the idea that Quaresmeprenant could be anything other than a negative force in the narrative (*Rabelais et le comique du discontinu* [Paris: Champion, 1994], 36).

[9] Michel Jeanneret, "Les paroles dégelées (Rabelais, *Quart Livre,* 48-65)," *Littérature* 17.1 (1975): 14-30, 20.

For Duval, the deadening specter of "anticaritas" cast by the *pierres mortes* crucially sets the *Quart Livre* apart from the hopeful humanist vision that came before, and others have located similar shifts from celebrations of vital energies to ominous spectacles of calcification in Rabelais's books. Michel Jeanneret finds Mikhail Bakhtin's famous account of Rabelais's empowering excess, which he agrees is a fair characterization of *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1534), to ring false for the *Tiers Livre* (1546) and the *Quart Livre* (1548/52), where Victor Hugo's almost equally famous view of Rabelaisian debauchery as didactically disgusting might make for a more valid interpretation.[10] In the *Tiers Livre,* published at a moment when lively debate over the future of Christianity was giving way to uncompromising entrenchments and the early signs of civil war, Rabelais's previously joyous excess, Jeanneret observes, begins to take on a different hue. The uncomplicated embrace of material and intellectual abundance of the first two books—"le mode euphorique du *très*"—gives way to "la tonalité maléfique du *trop,*" the nagging sense in the last two of the authentic books, often voiced or suggested by the grown-up Pantagruel, that there is indeed such a thing as "too much."[11]

Given that the *Quart Livre* ends with Panurge covered in his own excrement, ignoring Pantagruel's pleas to clean himself up, and inviting everyone to drink, Jeanneret takes as a foregone conclusion that Pantagruel's mature role as the voice of moderate reason ends up doing little to keep the messiness of the body in check. Other critics have emphasized the role of moderation in the third and fourth books, identifying Pantagruel as the middle term between the overindulgences and deficiencies of his companions frere Jan and Panurge[12] or as the mediator between excess and lack more generally.[13] But, Jeanneret contends, if the last two authentic books defend "mediocrité"—variously understood as *mediocritas, sophrosūne,* temperance, modesty, or the charitable inclusivity of "Pantagruelism"[14]—as a virtue, their author's excessive style (the never-ending descriptions, the

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[10] Others agree that the last authentic book especially is not quite as "Rabelaisian" as Rabelais's earlier output, in terms of *mots* as well as *mets*. Jean Claude Mühlethaler notes the shift in mealtime moods from "joyeuse convivialité" in *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, with conversation light and spirits high even in the face of gluttonous "démesure," to a darker view of the table in the *Tiers* and *Quart Livre*, "une image de plus en plus dégradée" ("Des Mets et Des Maux: Aspects et enjeux de la dévaluation de la table à la Renaissance," *Romanische Forschungen* 108 [1996]: 396-424, 404). Thomas M. Greene, commenting on how the *Quart Livre* ends with Panurge's "frivolous final fillip," the perhaps too-literal scatological conclusion to a book full of ingestion, admits that the volume lacks a certain *je ne sais quoi*: "in the *Quart Livre*, for all its local excellences, some vital Rabelaisian element runs thinner. One hardly knows what to call it: an exuberance of the imagination, an opening of the spirit, a momentum of courage, a generosity of laughter," the characters "thinner" in more ways than one (*Rabelais: A Study in Comic Courage* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970], 99). (Greene notes how in his dedicatory epistle, Rabelais confesses "that under the blows of circumstance his heart had nearly failed him and the spring of his animal spirits remained dry," 99.) For M. A. Screech, the *Quart Livre* is where Rabelais's jokes sublimate into seriousness, "explaining so many matters which the earliest books simply laughed at or passed over lightly" (*Rabelais* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979], 414).

[11] Or, as Duval and Todd Reeser discuss and as expanded upon below, too little. Michel Jeanneret, "Débordements rabelaisiens," *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* 43 (1991): 105-123, 105.

[12] Duval sees a key departure from conventional epic in Rabelais's choice to give Pantagruel a double *comes* or epic companion in frere Jan and Panurge, who "work together as a conjugated pair to represent opposing and perfectly balanced extremes of character between which the *mediocritas* of Pantagruel's own character may be defined and illustrated," "a fictional elaboration of the Nicomachean triad, excess/mean/deficiency" (*Design*, 81).

[13] Todd Reeser notes the surprising paucity of references in the Pantagrueline books to the hero's moderation, a quality one might expect to be emphasized in the life story of a product of humanist pedagogy, which would normally be "saturated" with lessons in moderation (*Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006], 184). Suggesting that this lack of representation might have to do with the unrepresentability of moderation, given its status as a negative virtue, he concludes that Rabelais's strategy could be explained by a decision "simultaneously to represent and not to represent moderation, to focus on moderation as what it is not—excess and lack—and to make moderation a byproduct" (186).

[14] Reeser comments on the range of meanings of this virtue: *le moyen, la moderation, la mediocrité, le meilieu, la moyenne mesure* all fell somewhere between excess and lack, and had nothing necessarily to do with the "mathematically determined

bloated lists) crucially undermines any nominal commitment to that virtue. Ultimately, Jeanneret concludes, excess always triumphs: the body's appetites will not be controlled, and if food, wine, and sex are no longer available for innocent and unlimited enjoyment, excess will instead come out verbally, producing text with inexhaustible significations and defying those who would condemn Rabelais's "polyphonique" text to a museum of determinate meanings.[15] In interpretations like these, Rabelais holds onto his literary reputation as irrepressible, boundary-breaking, infinitely productive and infinitely capacious; in Michelet's oft-cited words, with which Jeanneret begins, "L'homme de toute étude, de tout art, de toute langue […], qui fut tout et fut propre à tout, qui contient le génie du siècle et le déborde à chaque instant."[16]

However much his philosophical interests moved to moderation, Rabelais's artistic spirit would thus still seem far afield of the domestic georgic concern with temperance and the mundane maintenance work of "tempering" the materials of life, preserving them by temporarily suspending them.[17] Readings of Rabelais in the Bakhtinian spirit have indulged the fantasy of a natural economy that renews itself perfectly automatically, through passive or reflexive verbs, with no active maintenance, intervention, or culturing required. As Jeanneret puts it, channeling Bakhtin, "l'outrance est recyclée dans le processus régénérateur des énergies naturelles …. tout circule et se transforme, tout contribue à la croissance et s'équilibre dans l'égalité."[18]

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middle" implied by the classical Latin *medium.* Having aroused increased interest with the 1533 translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* into French (not to mention multiple editions in Latin), moderation became an important if often undefined aspect of ideal masculinity in the Renaissance (*Moderating Masculinity*, 12, 31). For Reeser, Pantagruel's moderation in the *Quart Livre* is an ideal, "fabricated by his extreme foils," rather than a practice that can be located (183). Represented by not being represented, the virtue's "creation through negativity" makes moderation a "byproduct" of immoderation (186), or, to put it another way, "a discursive fiction" (22). This in effect echoes Kritzman: "Although Rabelais proposes moderation—the golden mean—as an ideal, his text puts this notion into question through an ever-surfacing fear of excess and uncontrollable appetite. In other words, moderation is posited as an ideal while in fact the text reveals its antithetical correlates" (*Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 171).

[15] Jeanneret, "Débordements," 123.

[16] Qtd. in Jeanneret, "Débordements," 105.

[17] There are other reasons why Rabelais might seem like a strange fit for this dissertation. A cavalier attitude towards women's bodies, from Gargamelle's tripe-covered childbirth to the humiliation of the "lady of Paris," would not seem consonant with a thoughtfulness about gendered and reproductive labor. Perhaps the best that can be said of Rabelais's views on women is that he didn't have any. One might look especially to the *Tiers Livre* and what Floyd Gray calls the "gleeful indifference" with which Rabelais pits one side of the *Querelle des femmes* against the other by putting caricatures of feminist and antifeminist positions in his characters' mouths (*Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 29.) Furthermore, a cosmopolitan humanism would seem to drift far from domestic cares; a purely comical approach to menial labor in general, as when Epistémon enjoys the spectacle of Hector working as a kitchen apprentice in the underworld, would not suggest a respect for its value; and a generally carnivalesque celebration of the body's excesses might make us doubt how careful an approach this doctor is taking to his prescriptions. Of course, the Bahktinian folk-centric account is not entirely inconsistent with the domestic concerns of the low style (see Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007], on the relation between domesticity and genre). But Bakhtin is far from suggesting that Rabelais was drawn to drudgery; he too quotes Michelet's admiring assessment of Rabelais's expansiveness among the hagiographic declarations at the opening of *Rabelais and His World* (trans. Hélène Iswolsky [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984]). Gail Kern Paster provides a correction of Bakhtin's emphasis on the "grotesque body" to account for humoral theory, reframing many of his concerns (as they appear in English drama) in terms of health and housewifery rather than of pleasure and thus shifting focus from the exhilarating forces of natural energy to the practical necessities of household medicine (*The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993]).

[18] Jeanneret, "Débordements," 107. It is easy to understand the frustration of a reader like Duval, whose insistence that Rabelais's books have a "design" is up against not only the vulgar deconstructionist sense that the "text" does not obey bibliographic borders, but also the widespread idea, here articulated by Jeanneret, that in the sixteenth century, as opposed to the classification-obsessed ages that came directly before and after it, the goal of learning was not to organize, but simply to "acceuillir la variété la plus grande" and to produce works that were "polyphonique, volontiers

But acknowledging the great pleasure Renaissance humanists took in the novel abundance of textual material and the playful manipulation of language does not require denying that they also found importance, and even pleasure, in the (even if only provisional, even if precisely *through* play) ordering and fixing of that material.[19] Even though organic processes and bodily functions are natural, and even though Rabelais is inclined to celebrate them, he approaches these processes and functions as contingent on management and control. That control, however, is often invisible, or difficult to notice, the more so the more one is swept up in the celebration. Jeanneret's approving reading of the famous *torche-cul* episode in *Gargantua* as an unembarrassed embrace of the body's natural processes, for example, ignores that the young giant's experiments are engineered entirely towards managing the results of defecation after the fact, rather than taking pure immediate pleasure in the activity. Gargantua's pride, however exuberant, is not in his profligate production of waste, but in his superlative hygiene. Due to the number of innovative methods—rose-petals, a basket, pearls, a pigeon—he has found, by laborious and painful (and, yes, humorous) experimentation, to clean up after himself, he boasts to his father that, thanks to his organizational skills, he is the cleanest boy in all the land, "qu'il y avoit donne tel ordre qu'en tout le pays n'estoit guarson plus nect que luy"[20] ["he had so ordered things that there was no boy in the whole realm cleaner than he was," 246].

My argument departs from other accounts of Rabelaisian moderation by contending that Rabelais operates stylistically as well as ethically and philosophically under the sign of economical management, rather than that of wasteful excess, and that this domestic georgic labor of tempering operates as a cultural form that bridges material and textual practices of organizing, altering, preserving, and moderating. Further, maintaining Rabelais's textual economy often involves the temporary freezing and fixing of meaning and material in ways that recall the freezing and fixing techniques of contemporary domestic labor. Culinary and medical recipes of the time emphasize how much close human observation and intervention was required even of products primarily confected by the simple passage of time.[21] An excerpt from a typical recipe for "confiture de noiz," included in a late medieval household manual, adds a reminder to renew periodically the conditions for confection:

> Premierement vous prendrez .v. cens de nois nouvelles environ la saint Jehan—et gardez que l'escorche ne le noyau ne soient encores formez, et que l'escorche ne soit encores trop

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fragmentaires ou centrifuges" (116). In a similar spirit, V.-L. Saulnier, invoking Rabelais's abhorrence of all things petrified, concludes, "Toute sa vie […], Rabelais n'a cessé de répéter que le naturel compte d'abord, le naturel qu'il faut diriger et non pas contraindre. Edifier, au lieu d'entasser. Comme on encourage la croissance d'un être vivant, l'aidant seulement à s'ossifier, au lieu de momifier, fossiliser ou figer la vie" ("Hommes Pétrifiés et Pierres Vives [Autour d'une formule de Panurge]," *BHR* 22 [1960]: 393-402, 395).

[19] This important point is raised by Gérard Defaux, who argues that the univocity of meaning, far from shutting down the signifying play of language, is in fact the necessary precondition for the kind of "exploitation polysémique" that Jeanneret finds so fundamental to the Rabelaisian text ("A propos de paroles gelées et dégelées [*Quart Livre,* 55-56]: 'plus hault sens' ou 'lectures plurielles'?," in *Rabelais's Incomparable Book: Essays on His Art*, ed. Raymond C. La Charité [Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1986], 172).

[20] François Rabelais, *Gargantua*, ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 132.

[21] While older recipe collections like the anonymous 1394 *Menagier de Paris,* Taillevent's 1486 *Viandier,* and French translations of Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valutudine* were printed in numerous editions throughout the sixteenth century, Timothy Tomasik has documented the "thriving trade in home-grown, contemporary cookbooks" in Renaissance France, with vernacular bestsellers like Pierre Sargent's *Petit traicté auquel verrez la maniere de faire cuisine* (1536-8) and its new, improved, and expanded editions, the *Livre de cuisine tresutile & prouffitable* (1539), *Le livre fort excellent de Cuysine* (1542, 1555), and *La Fleur de toute cuysine* (1543-7) ("Fishes, Fowl, and *La Fleur de toute cuysine:* Gaster and Gastronomy in Rabelais's *Quart Livre*," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories,* ed. Joan Fitzpatrick [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010], 27).

> dure ne trop tendre—et les pelez tout entour et puis les perciez en troiz lieux tout oultre, ou en croix, et puis les mectez tremper en eaue de Saine ou de fontaine et la changier chascun jour, et les fault tremper de .x. a .xii. jours (et lesquelles deviennent comme noires) et que au macher vous n'y puissiez assavourer aucun amertume, et puis les mectre boulir une onde en eaue doulce par l'espace de dire une miserelle, ou tant comme vous verrez qu'il appartendra a ce qu'elles ne soient trop dures ne trop moles.[22]

Instructions like these, outlining the first stage of a long process of preserving nuts in honey, requires a tempering or moderating judgment in several senses on the part of the reader, who must select the nuts at the right season, make sure the shell is neither too hard nor too soft, painstakingly peel all five hundred of them, change their soaking water every day for ten to twelve days until they blacken and can be determined to have lost their bitterness, and boil them either for the length of a prayer or until, again according to judgment, they are neither too hard nor too soft. This method may also be applied, the author goes on to suggest, to parboiled turnips, carrots, unripe peaches, and squashes, the latter with the instruction of "les gouvernez tout ainsi comme les choses dessusdictes, ne plus ne moins," a reminder both not to deviate from the moderate range of times and methods prescribed by the other recipes and to moderate—*gouverner*—within that range, fine-tuning according to individual judgment.[23] In this and in the many recipes like it, the primary agent of culinary preservation is time, but this temporal action must be moderated—tempered—by minor and intermittent human intervention.

When the abstract and capacious concept of moderation is refined into a still capacious but materially grounded practice of temperance, the relevant question becomes not how much is too much (the question taken up by Jeanneret), or whether the problem of immoderation goes beyond the category of excess (as critics from Terence Cave to Duval to Todd Reeser point out in their attention to lack or *pusillanimitas*, the opposite form of immoderation), but rather the more basic question of what to *do* about superfluous material, whether *très* or *trop*, abundant or excessive, textual or otherwise.[24] Whether having more than one needs at a given time is a blessing or a curse, those extra resources need to be managed, and this process often involves fixing, freezing, and other mortifying operations. Though the question of resource management emerges periodically

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[22] *Le Menagier de Paris,* ed. Georgine Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 267. "First take five hundred fresh nuts around St. John's Day (and make sure that neither the shell nor the kernel is formed, and that the shell is neither too hard nor too soft), peel them all the way around, and then pierce in three different places, or in the shape of a cross. Then set them to steep in Seine or fountain water, changing the water every day. You must steep them between ten and twelve days, until they become almost black and when you bite into one you can't taste any bitterness. Then bring them to a rolling boil in fresh water for the time it takes to say a *misere mei* (Psalm 51), or however long it takes until you judge them neither too hard nor too soft." The content of the full recipe repeats itself a few pages later in more digestible form, a tic common to many early modern recipe compilations: "Prenez avant la saint Jehan noiz nouvelles et les pelez et perciez et mectez en eaue fresche tremper par .ix. jours, et chascun jour renouvellez l'eaue, puis les laissier secher et emplez les pertuiz de cloz de giroffle et de gingembre et mectez boulir en miel et illec les laissiez en conserve" (270).

[23] *Menagier,* 268. Nicot gives "moderare" and "temperare" as possible definitions of "gouverner." Wendy Wall has emphasized the extent to which early modern English recipe books, rather than giving precise ingredient types, amounts, and cooking times, explicitly call upon the judgment of the (usually female) reader, instructing her to use however much of something she sees fit, for example ["Literacy and the Domestic Arts," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73.3 (Sept. 2010): 383-412].

[24] Greene, for his part, would dispute that moderation, or at least something like it, is (as Duval and Reeser would have it) impossible to locate, finding an important "moral virtue" precisely in the "continuing conversation" between Pantagruel and Panurge: "In Panurge's fretting refusal to be reassured we recognize a human trait which is in its own way attractive and which we would not choose to give up. The rarest moral value lies in the continuing conversation between these two unlikely, opposing comrades" (*Comic Courage*, 72).

throughout the four books, it is most urgent in the *Tiers* and *Quart Livres*, where the consumption of food and wine becomes increasingly tempered, in quality if not in quantity[25]: the processing of food and other organic material by maceration, fermentation, and careful storage becomes more important than its simple consumption, in a way that draws attention to Rabelais's careful management—rather than gleeful explosion—of language. This management occurs on the level of the sentence, on a more microscopic and more contingent level than the comprehensive "design" Duval finds at work in Rabelais's books. Using contemporary accounts and conceptions of domestic labor to temper intentionalist readings like Duval's against those of deconstructionists like Jeanneret and Cave, I find Rabelais's careful, local management of his text to result in the cultivation of specific potentials rather than either the answer to the oracle or the opening of Pandora's box.

II. Pickled Gaiety: Preserving Alteration

Though we never quite emerge from the *petromachie* of the *Quart Livre* prologue—the two Pierres may not have been sentenced to a stony immortality, but they have been indefinitely suspended between life and death, between *pierres vives* and *pierres mortes*—readers of Rabelais would have already received a long training in perplexity in the previous book. Despite the manic pace of the *Tiers Livre,* centered around Panurge's quest to answer the question of whether or not to marry and moving restlessly from "expert" consultation to "expert" consultation, the end result of the volume is suspension. Diane Desrosiers-Bonin suggests that Panurge's tendency to endless deferral is pathological; as reluctant to marry as he is to drink, preferring in both cases to talk rather than act, he fails to participate properly in the Pantagruelian economy of consumption and consummation.[26] By the end of the *Tiers Livre*, neither he nor the reader emerge from paralyzing indecision, and are sent instead on a potentially interminable voyage.

In that volume's prologue, as in the following one, we are thrust into a bustle of activity that ends up leading nowhere. The narrator announces that he is participating in a grand tradition of writing while drinking that goes back to Aeschylus, who "beuvoit composant, beuvant composoit," and has put himself on a strict regimen of drinking, deliberating, resolving, concluding, laughing, writing, composing, and more drinking.[27] Near the end of the prologue, with the metaphorical wine barrel he is rolling gaining momentum, he addresses "tout beuveur de bien, tout Goutteux de bien" who happens to be "alterez" (64). These good drinkers and gout sufferers, already altered, are invited to alter themselves further, by partaking of the copious barrel of wine that is Rabelais's text, in a seeming continuation of the Bakhtinian "mode euphorique du *très*."

Yet Rabelais's incitement to alteration is, at bottom, a call for maintenance: bodies—whether biological, textual, or communal—need to be altered not to reach new heights of intoxication, but in order to remain themselves. "Alteration," as Galen's *alloiosis* was usually translated into French, refers to the state of a body whose humors are out of balance; it could also simply mean thirst, a relatively minor maladjustment and one that can usually easily be corrected, unless one's thirst is, like some of Rabelais's characters, insatiable. In the prologue to the *Quart Livre,* we learn that the Olympian assembly, hopelessly and collectively perplexed by the aporia of the uncatchable fox and all-catching dog, was afflicted by an "alteration mirifique" (72), a thirst so wondrous as to be

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[25] Mühlethaler notes the importance, in classical and Renaissance sources, of the fragile balance of gustatory moderation—"le plaisir de la table comporte le risque de démesure et de désordre"—though without explaining how, exactly, it was supposed to be maintained ("Des Mets et Des Maux," 397).

[26] Diane Desrosiers-Bonin, *Rabelais et l'humanisme civil* (*Etudes rabelaisiennes,* XXVII) (Geneva: Droz, 1992), 71-2.

[27] François Rabelais, *Le Tiers Livre,* ed. Guy Demerson (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 58. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

unslaked by seventy-eight barrels of nectar and abated only with the solution of the petrifying alteration of the animals in question into stone. Even in less dramatic circumstances, the correction to alteration is itself understood as an "alteration," the disease linguistically indistinguishable from the remedy.[28]

The preservation of the body's health thus requires the corrective alteration, or minor transformation, of its state, with the same logic extending to the wider community. Discussing how Pantagruel, from the moment of his birth during a severe drought, is figured as both a dipsetic scourge and a "restorative hero," Thomas Greene concludes that the giant's salvific nativity along with a procession of salt-bearing mules "*alters* as it provokes us to alter our own insufficient world,"[29] reminding us that our thirst will not be miraculously satisfied once and for all. The etymology of Pantagruel's name, as Desrosiers-Bonin reminds us—*panta* meaning *tout* in Greek, *gruel* meaning *altéré* in Hagarene—refers to both a character and a world that are "tout altérés," and alteration proves crucial to Pantagruel's ethical proximity to Christ, who also came to save and restore humanity under the sign of life-altering, soul-reforming wine: "Comme le Christ, il remplit une mission salvatrice dans la mesure où il vient, sous le signe du vin, altérer, c'est-à-dire réformer, rendre à leur nature originelle ceux qu'il rencontrent."[30] (That *altérer* can mean either to alter or to make thirsty requires the constant application, when writing about the phenomenon in Rabelais, of such qualifying, tempering *c'est-à-dires*.)

Pantagruel's altering effects attest to the role of remedial transformation in even the earlier books,[31] but its importance is most clear in the *Tiers* and *Quart Livres,* the books most explicitly concerned with the virtue of moderation and that I argue most explicitly advance a domestic georgic ethos. In these later volumes especially, the alteration of foods and other organic material by maceration, fermentation, and careful storage is more important than their simple consumption. This culinary or medicinal model of tempered alteration is not, as we have seen, how moderation is usually understood in Rabelais. It is also not how the related concern of perplexity has been understood. "The riddle of the future is the philosophical question that underlies the quest of Panurge" is Greene's apt gloss of the *Tiers Livre*, Panurge's narcissistic obsession with the possibility of being cuckolded inspiring lofty questions "of foreknowledge, of divination, of freedom and determination, of history, of providence, of human action and human prudence": "Panurge's dilemma is the predicament of the conditional and the contingent, the unforeseen, the enigmatic ground of our condition."[32] But the attempt to manage futurity, to unpack carefully if not to solve its "riddle," is also the primary concern of the much more mundane practices of culinary preservation and domestic healing, practices that appear with increasing frequency in the later books.

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[28] See Timothy Hampton's account of the word's usage in "Strange Alteration: Physiology and Psychology from Galen to Rabelais," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions,* ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 281.

[29] Thomas M. Greene, "The Hair of the Dog that Bit You: Rabelais's Thirst," *Rabelais's Incomparable Book*, ed. Raymond C. La Charité (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1986), 193, emphasis in original. In this analysis of alteration in Rabelais, privation is, crucially, an original rather than a fallen state. In a cutting critique of Bakhtin, Greene argues that extraordinary carnival requires ordinary misery, so that drinking, the desperate attempt to stave off a natural state of indigence, could hardly be a celebration of a natural state of plenitude (184).

[30] Desrosiers-Bonin, 62, 60.

[31] The original alteration in Pantagruel's race was caused, we are told, by their consumption of medlars, fruits which have to be altered into a state beyond ripeness in order to be eaten and which caused, in the case of Pantagruel's ancestors, a body-altering swelling of all the limbs and organs (Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, ed. Guy Demerson [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995], 56, 60).

[32] Greene, *Comic Courage,* 68, 69-70.

Following the perplexities of the *Tiers Livre,* the *Quart Livre* prologue[33] opens in more temperate tones,[34] with our reckless barrel-roller suddenly concerned with the maintenance and care of himself and his readers. Congratulating his audience, no longer thirsty and poxed, on finding a remedy "contre toutes alterations," our author-physician attributes his own "sain et degourt" state to his moderate consumption of a certain pickled product:

> Vous avez remède trouvé infallible contre toutes alterations? C'est vertueusement operé. Vous, vos femmes, enfans, parens et familles estez en santé desirée. Cela va bien, cela est bon, cela me plaist. Dieu, le bon Dieu, en soit eternellement loué et (si telle est sa sacre volunté) y soiez longuement maintenuz. Quant est de moy, par sa saincte benignité, j'en suys là et me recommande. Je suys, moiennant un peu de Pantagruelisme (vous entendez que c'est certaine gayeté d'esprit conficte en mespris des choses fortuites), sain et degourt, prest à boire si voulez. (58)
>
> [You've found an infallible remedy against all thirsts and distempers? That's worthily done. You, your wives, children, family and kinsfolk are all in the health you desire? Things are going well. That's good. I'm pleased. God, our good God, be eternally praised for it and (if such be his holy will) may you long be maintained in it. As for me, by his holy loving-kindness I'm still here and pay you my respects. I am, by means of a little *pantagruelism* (that is, you know, a certain merriness of mind pickled in contempt for things fortuitous) well and sprightly and ready for drink if you are. (650)]

Partaking "un peu" from the pickle barrel—with the explanation of this pickling process held in a parenthetical suspension—sounds less conducive to linguistic and narrative production than a continuous flow of wine, and certainly less promising for the reader's pleasure. Early modern dietetics prescribed the use of pickles more to provide "correction"—to improve digestion and balance the humors—than for direct nutritional or gustatory value.[35] Pickling—like related methods of preserving food with vinegar, salt, or sugar—was a mode of gradually transforming food and bodies in order to stave off, at least for the moment, their deterioration.

Even accepting that Rabelais's exuberance had long begun to subside by the 1552 *Quart Livre*, maintenance and preservation might go against the guiding principles of even the most abstemious chronicler: the metonymic displacements of alteration are necessary to drive any narrative forward. If Panurge spends most of the *Tiers Livre* mired in indecision, his hand-wringing is at least energetic. A story about a healthy person who simply, calmly, and quietly remains healthy, on the other hand, would be no story at all.[36] Yet health for Rabelais, as for ancient and early modern medical writers, is defined not as completely static sufficiency, but as a slight imbalance, or openness

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[33] See Duval, *Design*, 49, on differences between the canonical 1552 and the hastily published 1548 version of the prologue, which was more in keeping with the tone and content of the previous prologues.

[34] Greene seems to suggest that the Rabelaisian prologue has aged like a fine wine, or vinegar, the "preposterous spiel of the *Pantagruel* Prologue" mellowing into "the subtler boast of these riper and wiser texts" (*Comic Courage*, 84).

[35] Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 245. Early modern French-Latin and French-English dictionaries attest to the range of what "conficte" could have meant. Nicot (1606): "Se confire en son sel, ou autre chose, Combibere"; "Confire les vice qu'on a de nature avec une malice acquise, Condire vitia naturae"; "Confit en joyeusetez, Sale conditus et facetiis." Cotgrave (1611): "Confire. To preserue, confect, soake, or steepe in; also, to season, relish, or giue sauor unto"; "Confis: m. Any thing that hath beene soaked, or steeped; any pickled, or preserued thing."

[36] As Greene points out, the drought into which Pantagruel is born, and the accompanying "alteration" of Utopia's thirsty inhabitants, is what sets off the chain of further alterations that constitute Rabelais's text ("Hair of the Dog," 182).

to imbalance, an alteration presented only as an afterthought but that nonetheless invites, "si voulez," an alteration in turn. It is this chain of alterations that paradoxically stabilizes and preserves both health and narrative coherence.[37] If our narrator has abstained from writing drunk, it is not because he is completely cured "contre toutes alterations"; he is, if his readers will allow it, "prest à boire," ready to be altered anew.

The prologue goes on to alter a straightforward parable of moderate desire fulfilled—a reasonable prayer for a lost hatchet results in the hatchet regained—into an extended Aesopic fable of immoderate returns. Couillatris, a simple woodcutter, loses his *coignée* ("hatchet," but also, in Frame's translation, "female fully and frequently copiocopulated"[38]), and his moderate wish for its return is answered by the gods with a choice of his own hatchet, a silver hatchet, or a gold hatchet. When he chooses his own, he is rewarded with the silver and gold as well, capital with which he buys enough "terre labourable" and livestock to become the richest man around (84). When the minor nobility of the neighborhood hear about Couillatris, they try to replicate his investment strategy, with disastrous results: they choose the gold hatchet, and are punished for their greed with decapitation. As Terence Cave's reading of the episode elucidates, this elaborate story—stocked with semantic and material wealth, interrupted with Olympic wordplay, and ending with disproportionate punishment—is an exercise in excess. The temperate and tempering pickled gaiety with which this prologue begins stimulates a mode of linguistic production perhaps less festive, but no less prolific, than the Bacchic barrel-rolling of the *Tiers Livre* prologue.

Cave reminds us that, however copious this production is, it gets us nowhere fast—a simulation of superficial abundance that does little or nothing, in Cave's understanding, but mask an emptiness beneath.[39] I argue, however, for a reading of Rabelais's text not as a dizzying interplay of plenitude and lack, but as a healthy, modestly self-maintaining mechanism, a self-regulating body that finds sustainable but not infallible ways to alter its own alteration, transformative preservation or "pickling" foremost among them. The results of these constant, minor alterations are relatively stable, but never completely certain. As Rabelais boldly predicts in one edition of his parodic *Pantagrueline Prognostications,* a riff on the prophesying almanacs popular at the time, in the year to come blind men will experience difficulty seeing, the rich will enjoy a higher status than the poor, and the summer will be warm—but these seemingly obvious eventualities all depend on God, who "par sa divine parolle tout regist et modere […] et sans la maintenance et gouvernement duquel

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[37] Greene describes Pantagruelist *mediocrité* as "vital" and as a "healing power," the principle that ties together what would otherwise be "an inorganic jumble of vaguely related scenes" (*Comic Courage*, 87). I would add that this harmonization of elements that makes the story coherent as a story could be understood as seasoning, with moderation performing the function of salt in cooking.

[38] François Rabelais, *The Complete Works of François Rabelais,* trans. Donald M. Frame (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 431.

[39] Cave sees the Couillatris story as paradigmatic of a more general theme of plenitude undercut by the threat of lack throughout Rabelais's books, with the other exemplary episode being the overcompensating description of Gargantua's *braguette*: "A movement towards plenitude and presence is established, but is constantly threatened by the possibility of inversion or subversion, whether thematically or rhetorically; once again, the distinction between lists or repetitions carrying a thematically positive sign and those with a negative sign may seem, within a linguistic perspective, to be a mirage rather than the affirmation of a value-system" (*The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], 199). Similar conclusions have been reached by Kritzman ("The plenitude that Rabelais strives for is, by its very nature, empty; self-expression is *supplemented* by a fictional presence that disperses itself in a rhetorical labyrinth. The *mens/mentula/memoire* matrix is paradoxically the sign of both plenitude and emptiness; Rabelais' text fertilizes dead language and consequently valorizes the book as a commodified product which dislocates the original story from its referent," *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 187) and Gray, who says of the Rabelaisian text in general, "ayant rempli la page, entraîné par un certain souci de contradiction, il se préoccupe de l'aérer, de le vider" (*Rabelais et le comique*, 17).

toutes choses seroient en ung moment reduictes à neant."[40] In his mockery of bombastic fortune-tellers, Rabelais also suggests that everyday events that are easily taken for granted are, in a very real sense, granted by God, for better and for worse. This awareness of the necessity of constant and invisible intervention, whether divine, human, or accidental, informs an interest in moderation and maintenance that extends beyond the textual body to the bodies of its author, its readers, and the larger Christian community.

As a technology of moderation and preservation that involves excess and waste in its process, pickling wedges a solid if provisional middle ground into Cave's unstable binary of emptiness and plenitude, a possible location of that elusive Rabelaisian moderation. In the midst of Panurge's perplexity in the *Tiers Livre*, he is thrilled to learn that the answer to sexual excess is not total abstinence but the recasting of excess as a moderate regime. After citing Scripture's imperative "*Crescite. Nos qui vivimus, multiplicamini,*" frere Jan instructs Panurge to void his "vases spermaticques" as a prudent, pious expenditure, and the chapter closes by valorizing moderate rather than multiple returns: the genetic material of a death-sentenced man should not be wasted ("ne doibt estre follement perdue"), so that "mourra il sans regret, laissant home pour home" (278-80), leaving man for man, hatchet gained for hatchet lost, a simple reproductive projection into the future of conditions that exist in the present. Later, when the doctor Rondibilis, after deferring for a while with alternative solutions, finally informs a delighted Panurge that he can temper his immoderate sexual desire "par l'acte Venerien" (316), frere Jan adds his own gloss: this must be what they call the "maceration de la chair" (318), the mortification—or the pickling, the tempering, the preservation—of the flesh. The way to cure the unhealthy alteration caused by passions of the body and restore its balance is—moderately enough—by simply and straightforwardly satisfying them; the most efficient way to control bodily appetite is to pickle it, frere Jan instructs, twenty-five or thirty times daily.

Whether presented seriously or comically, the preservation of self and virtue promised by "maceration," or "gayeté … conficte," requires maintenance; the promise of an unalterably preserved product must be constantly renewed, like the soaking water of to-be-confited nuts. In Rabelais, the ostensible inalterability of preserved products gets rephrased in alternative forms, resulting in an increase in semantic value so imperceptible that it could easily be confused with, or potentially amounts to, loss, decay, or stagnancy. The *Tiers Livre* closes with the narrator offering advice on the preparation of the miraculous super-herb Pantagruelion in the manner of an entry in a contemporary household manual, herbal, or book of secrets: the recipe is attributed to an authority on the matter, encompasses proper actions from growing practices all the way through preparation and preservation, and includes a sprinkling of botany and casual anthropology.[41] Harvested during the "temps de alteration"—the dry season in which Pantagruel was born, one justification for the herb's name (452)—Pantagruelion must, according to its namesake's master recipe, be steeped ("macerer") in standing water (with variations according to season and water temperature) and sun-dried, followed by removal of the woody parts, which are useless except, the narrator offers

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[40] Rabelais, *Pantagrueline prognostication pour l'an 1533*, ed. M. A. Screech (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 7, qtd. in Greene, *Comic Courage*, 69; "rules and directs all things through his holy Word … and without whose preservation and control all things would in a moment be reduced to nothing" (Screech, 174-75).

[41] As Timothy Hampton notes in his description of the interplay of popular and learned medical knowledge in the account of Gargantua's birth, Rabelais's frequent deployments of "series of side steps," where each definition of a word requires a supplemental definition, present divergent discourses as "narratively interlocked," dramatizing "the process through which humanist learning appropriates for literary form the raw material" of the wider (often feminine) world, putting it to (according to humanists, anyway) better use. What Hampton calls the humanist's "discursive domestication of the female voice and body" could be extended to the male domestication of the female domestic discourses contained in recipe books ("The Fallen Fundament: Jargon, Gender, and Literary Authority in the Birth of Gargantua," in *Esprit Généreux, Esprit Pantagruelicque: Essays by His Students in Honor of François Rigolot*, ed. Reinier Leushuis and Zahi Zalloua [Geneva: Droz, 2008], 164, 171, 172).

anecdotally, for the amusement of children and oenophiles.[42] Only after being altered into a "conficte" form can the herb be put to its proper use. In one remarkable instance, it is not used up by use, remaining unalterable under fire. When applied around a corpse undergoing cremation, it cleanly separates human- from plant-based ash, and will be extracted from the flames "plus beau, plus blanc et plus net" than before, improved in value and yet remaining fundamentally "sans alteration, immutation ne eschauffement" (462, 464). What François Rigolot has called Rabelais's progressive "transmutation poétique"[43] of the hemp described in Pliny's *Natural History* into the mythical Pantagruelion is thus mirrored in the narrative account of the plant's minor metamorphosis: Pantagruelion increases in value by being used, becoming fairer, whiter, and cleaner by being exposed to fire, improving, paradoxically, by becoming more properly itself.

The main justification the narrator provides for the herb's name is that Pantagruel is its "inventeur": the discoverer not, the narrator quickly clarifies, of the plant itself, but of "un certain usaige," the strategic stopping up of the oral passageway usually traversed by exiting "bons motz" and entering "bons morseaulx" (452). At the close of the volume, the narrator celebrates not the natural growth of a plant, but the variety of cultural uses to which it can be put, including a wide array of cultural references: Penelope, apparently, wove her daily text with precisely this textile (444). Pantagruel's deliberate culturing of the herb is what makes Pantagruelion Pantagruelion. And it is Pantagruelion, with its many uses in housekeeping and manufacturing, that makes many other everyday things what they are:

> Sans elle, seroient les cuisines infame, les tables detestables, quoy que couvertes feussent de toutes viandes exquises, les lictz sans delices, quoy que y feust en abondance Or, Argent, Electre, Ivoyre et Porphyre. Sans elle, ne porteroient les Meusniers bled au moulin, n'en rapporteroient farine. (456)
>
> [Without *pantagruelion* our kitchens would be shocking and our tables repellent even when laden with every kind of delicacy; our beds would be without charm, even though bedecked with gold, silver, amber, ivory, and porphyry. Without it the miller could bring no corn to the mill and take home no flour. (607)]

And the eulogistic list goes on: tasks like drawing water from the well, carrying plaster to the workshop, and dressing clerics would no longer be possible; lawyers, secretaries, and printers—of, perhaps, the book containing these words—would no longer have professions ("Ne periroient le

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[42] "L'enseignement premier de Pantagruel feut le tige d'icelle devestir de feueilles et semence, le macerer en Eaue stagnante, non courante, par cinq jours, si le temps est sect, et l'eaue chaulde par neuf ou douze, si le temps est nubileux et l'eaue froyde; puys au Soleil le seicher, puis à l'umbre le excorticquer et separer les fibres (ès quelles, comme avons dict, consiste tout son pris et valeur) de la partie ligneuse, laquelle est inutile, forsqu'à faire flambe lumineuse, allumer le feu et, pour l'esbat des petitz enfans, enfler les vessies de porc. D'elle usent aulcunesfoys les frians à cachets, comme de Syphons, pour sugser et avecques l'haleine attirer le vin nouveau par le bondon" (442).

[43] François Rigolot, *Les Langages de Rabelais* (Geneva: Droz, 1996), 152. The plant becomes more and more extraordinary through narrative build: "Herbe banale au départ, objet d'étude du botaniste et du philologue, elle se charge peu à peu de toutes les qualités, de toutes les craintes, de tous les espoirs de l'humanité" (150). Greene expresses a similar sentiment, assuring us that in "what appears the most wayward and opaque of Rabelaisian digressions," where botanical facts "which are here so exactly and—it must be confessed—tiresomely catalogued" (*Comic Courage* 78), a redemptive transformation is in fact taking place. Pantagruelion is a step up from larix, the plant we are told Pantagruel used to protect the abbey of Thélème but that is not quite as unquenchable as this plant: "Are we to understand that the spirit of the venture now beginning to a distant, divine destination is tougher than the spirit of the land or the conventional voyage, that the new Pantagruelistic courage, tempered by struggle, is still more indestructible than the easier optimism of Thélème?" (80).

noble art d'Imprimerie?", 456). God forbid, in other words, that Pantagruelion should ever be scarce, and this, it seems, is precisely the point of this extended *éloge*. By making human life possible, Pantagruelion is a sign that God still "tout regist et modere" by his divine word, as the *Prognostications* not entirely unseriously hoped, not neglecting "la maintenance et gouvernement" that prevent the things of the world from becoming "reduictes à neant."

In Rigolot's account, the lengthy encyclopedia entry on the herb is Rabelais's way of forcing us, and himself, to eat our greens before we can have dessert: only after "deux chapitres lourds de science" can our author get to the good stuff, the fun of "déranger les classements, dérégler les mesures, fausser les cohérence."[44] And yet for Rabelais, disrupting categories and distorting sources is not the ultimate goal, either: Pantagruelion is praised not for breaking boundaries but for providing the glue of society, on levels local and literal—working as a binding agent—and vast and figurative, as the condition for the functioning of vital human industries. When Rabelais mixes myth and fantasy with natural science and distracts us with digressions, it suggests that disruption is central to the preservation of the world as it is, complete with its inequalities and its injustices: as our Pantagrueline Prognisticator reminds us, this year, like every year, with God's constantly intervening "maintenance et gouvernement," relations will stand: "les riches se porteront ung peu mieulx que les pouvres, et les sains mieulx que les malades."[45] By touting the civilization-preserving properties of a miracle of agricultural technology, Rabelais suggests that transformation is not necessarily progressive, nor is preservation necessarily staid.

The slippage, illustrated by Pantagruelion, between preservation and transformation, this suggestion that preservation—*mere* preservation—is at once threatening to, integral to, *and* potentially indistinguishable from transformation and human progress, is central to this dissertation's account of early modern poetic labor. If many humanists were at pains to distinguish retrograde and unproductive textual activities from original literary creation and scholarly innovation, they were plagued by a creeping suspicion that these modes were perhaps not different at all.

This tension was perhaps most visible in the practice of translation. That French translations were conventionally introduced as *réduit en français* implies, as "reduction" does in cooking, an intensifying concentration even while it suggests a diminishment,[46] a regression that is also a return to a proper origin. Jean Nicot's definition of "reduction" emphasizes the word's connotations of a return to an original state: "Reduction … Est proprement, ramenement (s'il se peut dire ainsi) d'une chose à son premier lieu et estat … Ainsi reduction, sera l'acte de celuy qui ramene une chose au lieu et estat dont elle est partie."[47] Nicot thus anticipates Jacques Derrida, who in "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?" explains how the alteration of a food by seasoning, like that of a word by translation, can make it more itself:

> *Relever* first conveys the sense of cooking […], like *assaisonner.* It is a question of giving taste, a different taste that is blended with the first taste, now dulled, remaining the same while

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[44] Rigolot, *Langages*, 149.
[45] Rabelais, *Pantagrueline prognostication pour l'an 1533*, 11.
[46] Noting the appearance of "boeuf royalles" in Gaster's list of feast foods in the *Quart Livre,* Timothy Tomasik comments on the culinary dimension of "reduction" in the sixteenth century. Bread was the standard thickener in medieval cooking, but a sauce recipe in *La Fleur de toute cuysine* for "saulce royalle" calls instead for a reduction: "Prenez vin vermeil et vinaigre autant de lun comme de lautre, canelle entiere, cloux de giroffle et sucre, et boutez tout bouillir en un beau pot jusques quil soit diminue quasi de la moytie…." Tomasik explains that such reduction into essences became common in seventeenth-century cooking, and its inclusion here suggests a modernizing break away from medieval sauce techniques ("Fishes," 35).
[47] Nicot, *Le Thresor de la langue francoyse* (1606).

> altering it, while changing it, while undoubtedly removing something of its native, original, idiomatic taste, but also while adding to it, and in the very process, *more* taste, while cultivating its natural taste, while giving it *still more of its own taste,* its own, natural flavor—this is what we call "relever" in French cooking.[48]

Just as Derrida repeatedly translates himself, constantly putting his ideas in alternative terms, adjusting the seasoning on his prose, keeping his idea the same while avowedly altering it, Rabelais takes to copious paraphrase, to altering his terms, even when describing the very quality—Pantagruelism—associated with inalterability. "Je vous ay ja dict et encores rediz," the narrator says of Pantagruel, because saying it once is not enough:

> Toutes choses prenoit en bonne partie, tout acte interpretoit à bien. Jamais ne se tourmentait, jamais ne se scandalizoit. Aussi eust il esté bien forissu du Deificque manoir de raison, si aultrement se feust contristé ou alteré, car tous les biens que le Ciel couvre et que la Terre contient en toutes ses dimensions, haulteur, profondité, longitude et latitude, ne sont dignes d'esmouvoir nos affections et troubler. (*TL*, 80)
>
> [He took everything in good part: every deed he interpreted favourably. He never tormented himself: he never took offence. He would moreover have quitted the God-made mansion of Reason if he had been otherwise saddened or depressed: for all the goods which the heavens cover and this earth contains in all its dimensions—height, depth, length or breadth—are not worth stirring our emotions or troubling our wits or our minds. (418)]

Pantagruelism, in this formulation, involves both the appreciation in value that comes with charitable reading—the interpretation of everything "à bien"—and a radical indifference to "tous les biens" that earthly life has to offer, even to the idea of appreciation itself. Written into the description of Pantagruel's inalterable state is the admission that it could be otherwise: "si aultrement se feust contristé ou alteré," he would be evicted from the manor of reason, with his imperviousness from alteration conditional, tautologically, on his not ever becoming upset, or "altered." A definition of inalterability is never sufficient in itself, always requiring an alternate, supplemental evocation of another possible state of affairs.

In the *Quart Livre,* where this philosophy is alternatively defined as a "gayeté" fortunately "conficte" in scorn for fortunate things, the necessity and sufficiency of health and moderation is deemed to be in need of repeated restatement. As if a reader could not infer herself that the ancients' comparison of moderation to gold meant they deemed it valuable, Rabelais translates it into more literal terms, only for Couillatris to re-figuralize it later: "Mediocrité a esté par les saiges anciens dicte aurée, c'est à dire precieuse, de tous louée, en tous endroictz agreable" (62, 64) ["By the sages of Antiquity the Mean was called Golden, that is to say, precious, praised by all, and everywhere delightful" (652)]. That is to say, the moderate Couillatris is rewarded with gold for choosing not gold, but the "golden mean": something only *like* gold, both equivalent to and (only eventually, potentially) more valuable than gold.[49]

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[48] Jacques Derrida, "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?", trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27.2 (Winter 2001): 174-200, 195.

[49] As Duval points out, Rabelais's definition of "mediocrité" is only *like* the classical ideal of *aurea mediocritas.* Yet this concern about the looseness of Rabelais's definitions of moderation, the slippage from classical *mediocritas* to French *mediocrité,* might be explained by Rabelais's use of "moderation" as a stylistic technique, tempering one version of moderation into another in an altering paraphrase.

When the neighbors try to lose their hatchets and get riches in return, they choose gold—the golden hatchets Mercury offers them—instead of moderation (their own hatchets). In return, they get their heads chopped off. In the narrator's accounting, "feut des testes couppées le nombre equal et correspondent aux coignées perdues. Voylà que c'est! Voylà qu'advient à ceulx qui en simplicité soubhaitent et optent chose mediocres" (86) ["And the severed heads were equal and equivalent in number to the axes which were lost. Well: there it is. There you have what happens to those who innocently wish and opt for things within the Mean" (661)]. A formal order has been preserved, as if nothing has been altered, as if, as in the directly preceding biblical lost-hatchet narrative, the hatchet gained were equal to the hatchet lost, as if value had been perfectly conserved. But the narrator's matter-of-factness about the situation ("Voylà que c'est!") makes us forget, momentarily, that nothing has been canceled out in this equation: with each lost hatchet leading to a lost head, waste—in a grossly material sense, rather than in a sense of exhilaratingly empty excess—has piled up on both sides.

III. The Dregs: Laying Up Waste

To return to the pickle barrel whence we came, another way to understand Rabelais's textual production, besides in terms of subversive excess (Bakhtin), anxious overcompensation (Cave), or grand design (Duval), is through his mundane concerns with the management of waste and the maintenance of bodily health—as endless as Bacchic barrel-rolling, but in a way more tedious than festive. Instead of solely associating Rabelais with wine,[50] in other words, we might also pair him with vinegar. Vinegar is a product of wine that has been further altered by dilution and exposure to the air, *vin* soured into *vinaigre*. A treatise by Giovanni Batista Cavigioli, one of several contributions to a vigorous mid-sixteenth-century debate about the health benefits and drawbacks of vinegar, cites the common complaint that because it is corrupted wine ("uin putrifié"), vinegar is "l'ennemy de nature," and announces his intent to convince his readers of the benefits of vinegar to human nature: "tant pour conseruation de la santé des hommes, que pour les preseruer de maladies, de pourriture, de uenins,"[51] vinegar is the most effective way to prevent or reverse the alteration of human health, and precisely because it has itself been altered from its original state. Cavigioli defines *vinaigre* as, ultimately, wine that has become something "other" than wine, in a perfectly balanced substitution of qualities: "Vinaigre est uin corrumpu, qui a perdu une chaleur, une humidité, une force, & une saueur: & a acquis une froideur, une siccité, & une aultre force, & une aultre saueur"; in

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[50] Desrosiers-Bonin reminds us how, as Barthes's use of him as "le code de référence littéraire du vin" in *S/Z* attests, the association of Rabelais with wine has become automatic (*Rabelais et l'humanisme civil*, 53). For her part, Desrosiers-Bonin sees wine as a narrative hinge ("charnière narrative") between episodes in Rabelais's books, frequently providing an "ellipse" that moderates changes in tempo (as Larmat puts it), which "assure une transition plausible, vraisemblable" (56). As a "contrepoint" to military exploits, as apéritif and digestif before and after (victorious) battles, "le motif du vin prépare et couronne donc en quelque sorte la victoire militaire" (57). Wine, Desrosiers-Bonin goes on to explain, works on the level of character as well as narrative, with individual and group dynamics fleshed out along the "axis of wine": "le vin intervient aussi…dans l'agencement des trait constitutifs (et distinctifs) des personnages de la geste rabelaisienne. Leur caractérisation semble, en effet, s'effectuer sur l'axe du vin. De plus, c'est sur cette ligne pointillée que s'articulent les antagonismes, que se découpent les factions" (58-9). See also Jean Larmat, "La Vigne et le vin chez Rabelais," *Revue des sciences humaines* 122-23 (1966): 179-92.

[51] "As much for the conservation of men's health as to preserve them from illness, from corruption, from poison." Giovanni Battista Cavigioli, *La Vertu et propriété de vinaigre* (Poitiers, 1541), A4r-A4v. Cavigioli goes on to accuse vinegar skeptics of being "si aueugles qu'ilz n'ont pas grande creance en Dieu nostre pere" if they fail to see all the ways in which God's creations, vinegar evidently among them, can cure us (A5r).

exchange for losing heat, moisture, potency, and flavor, it has acquired a chillness, a dryness, and another potency, another flavor, "une force" met equally and equivalently by "une aultre force."[52]

But for all its purported virtues, vinegar has a hard time escaping acerbic criticisms even from its defenders.[53] Galen, far less of a vinegar sympathizer than Cavigioli, explains the humors with a metaphor of winemaking gone awry. He asks us to imagine what happens when "new wine which has been not long ago pressed from the grape, and which is fermenting and undergoing *alteration* through the agency of its contained heat," produces the "residual substances" of yellow bile (what "they call the *flower*") and black bile (the "*lees*"). Potentially a benign substance, black bile can nonetheless become "sharp like vinegar," with an acidity that "corrodes the animal's body." Distempered bile "produces a kind of fermentation and seething, accompanied by bubbles—an abnormal putrefaction having become added to the natural condition of the black humour."[54] Bile, already a superfluous byproduct of fermentation, can itself be re-fermented, to fetid ends.

Doubly processed, vinegar is over-altered wine, the corrosive counterpart to sweet wine's lubrication. Its sharpness is not, evidently, always salutary. And yet it can be used to preserve perishable foods, to prevent waste and forestall alteration. (As an early seventeenth-century recipe pithily sums it up, "toutes sortes de vins sont bons, encore qu'ils soient gastez."[55]) For Rabelais, such food processing turns out to be a compelling synecdoche of civilization, in which textualization plays an important part. As in the domestic georgic impulse in humanism to restore and organize ancient knowledge in minor and not necessarily or immediately productive ways, in food processing what would otherwise be wasted or useless is made, by ingenious human manufacturing, valuable—though to what ends that value will be put remains an open question.[56] Chronicling the accomplishments of Gaster, inventor of the agricultural arts, the narrator in the *Quart Livre* asserts that no matter how astonishing we may find a technology that turns enemy bullets back on their shooters, nature has been manipulated in more extraordinary ways:

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[52] Cavigioli, *La Vertu*, A3v.

[53] Cavigioli himself gets tripped up in the paradoxes of his own explanation of beneficial putrefaction; is he trying to recast the putrefaction of wine into vinegar as salutary, or as something better described as "corruption," as distinguished from (and apparently less damning in its associations than) putrefaction ["ne fault abuser de ceste diction (corrumpu) de penser qu'elle signifie putrefaction, ou soit pourriture, car se sont deux choses toutes differentes: ueu qu'il y a beaucoup de corruptions, ou il n'y a aulcune putrefaction" (A6r)]? Making clear that "le uray Vinaigre" is not putrefied wine, but rather a new substance made from the best wine, he admits that his initial definition might have caused confusion: "ilz disent que c'est uin corrumpu, comme aussi i'ay mis en ma diffinition, ie le confesse"; but, in a fit of Panurgian inspiration, he points out that "n'est pas à dire que tout ce que uient de corruption soit mauuais," because we all come from corruption: "tout ce qui uient de generation, uient de la corruption d'ung aultre." Man is conceived when "semences" of his parents "se corrumpoient" and become something else, and when we digest we corrupt food to change it into our own "sang" (A5r), with *corruption* seemingly playing the role of *dettes* in Panurge's *éloge* of the *Tiers Livre*.

[54] Galen, *On the Natural Faculties,* trans. A. J. Brock (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 209, 211.

[55] *Secrets de divers autheurs approuvez* (Paris, 1619).

[56] Greene's description of Gaster's kingdom ventriloquizes a georgic fable that bleeds into a justification for economic inequality. Though Gaster seems like a harsh tyrant, "his influence is really beneficial, just as the access to his country is arduous but, once attained, its climate is salubrious and delightful. This allegory does not mean simply that it is hard to earn one's bread but pleasant to eat it. Rather the pages that follow sketch what is essentially an economic theory of civilization. Were it not for his compelling need to fill his stomach—so runs the theory—man would not have been stimulated to develop the arts and sciences, would remain in his barbarity without those distinctions which grace his existence on earth. He would lack that spirit of enterprise, that pursuit of excellence, which the Greeks called *arete,* would even lack Love itself, mediator between earth and heaven, Love the offspring (according to Plato's myth) of Gaster's companion Poverty and her lover Plenitude" (*Comic Courage*, 95).

…que echineis, poisson tant imbecille, arreste contre tous les vens et retient en plein fortunal les plus fortes navires qui soient sus mer, et que la chair de icelluy poisson conservée en sel attire l'or hors les puyz, tant profonds soyent ilz qu'on pourroit sonder… (458)

[…that the *echineis* (a puny fish) can stay the most powerful ships that sail the seas, countering gales and raging tempests; and that the flesh of that fish, preserved in salt, can draw gold out of the deepest wells that one can sound… (852)]

The naturally unalterable remora, useless or even detrimental to humanity in its natural state, becomes, when altered and preserved by culture and time, a means of acquiring gold.

To most readers of Rabelais, Gaster is less notable for such scientific contributions than for his self-appointed position as a tyrannically stomach-centered "Dieu Ventripotent," his insincere gestures at Lenten self-denial (his "jours maigres" menu compensates for meatlessness by including almost literally every other food), and the repressive desublimation of his subjects: "Et tout pour la trippe!" is their mandatory motto. Though excess seems the inescapable theme of the episode,[57] much of the daily operations in Gaster's regime are carried out in more temperate terms, as in the mundane odyssey of grain, a cornerstone of civilization for which Gaster is responsible. Grain begins its process of self-actualization at the mill (also Gaster's brainchild), where it is reduced (that is, refined) to flour ("reduire en farine"). The most important steps in grain's evolution come in the baking process:

Le levain pour fermenter la paste, le sel pour luy donner saveur (car il eut ceste congnoissance que chose on monde plus les humains ne rendoit à maladies subjectz que de Pain non fermenté, non salé user), le feu pour le cuyre, les horloges et quadrans pour entendre le temps de la cuycte de Pain, creature de Grain. (450)

[…yeast to leaven the dough and salt to give it its savour—for he knew as a fact that nothing in this world would make human beings more subject to illness than unleavened and unsalted bread—fire to bake it; clocks and sundials to regulate the time of the baking of that which grain produces: bread. (848)]

The process described here is one of leavening, of seasoning, of adding that which preserves the integrity of the material by slightly altering it (the preservative properties of these alterations—the warning that not adhering to this recipe threatens health—are noted in a qualifying parenthetical). Finally, the process is tempered by time, as temporal instruments are introduced to moderate the length of cooking. The necessity of undertaking this long and painstaking process is understood as a "benediction du ciel" (450): in true georgic spirit, the divine malediction to till the soil to make one's own bread is converted into blessing not by a miracle, but by laborious tempering.

At the same time, the modestly expressed ambition behind Gaster's invention of "les moyens d'avoir et conserver Grain" (chapter 61)—the provision of daily bread—provides the rationale of a highly unequal society, aiming, as georgic discourse often does, to conserve an existing political structure rather than to conserve the potential to create a new and more equal one. Gaster's ancillary inventions—military arts and weapons, medicine, astrology—have as their goal to "defendre" and "guarder" the crop "en saulveté," to keep it "hors les calamités" of intemperate

[57] For Jeanneret, the shift from a positive to a negative value on abundance does nothing to lessen the emphasis on abundance itself: "L'excès est partout: dans les conduites fanatiques des gourmands et, par contamination, dans le style. L'abandance était naguère porteuse de vie et de mouvement; elle semble ici vouée à la stérilité" ("Débordements," 112).

weather, pests, and thieves (450), but also, as Duval points out, to "keep" it in the hands of the powerful, and away from the producers of grain, using artificial technologies to impose an artificial, rather than remedy a natural, scarcity.[58] The practice of tempering, like the reasonableness that sanctions it, does not always have an evening effect.

Another version of the ethical risk of tyranny masked by a discourse of moderation is the more practical risk that such moderate and moderating fermenting, even if it sometimes appreciates the value of otherwise wasted or wasteful things, by the very force and apparent spontaneity of this conversion also runs the risk of physical corruption, of becoming corrosive black bile, of turning lost hatchets into lost heads, creating waste on both sides without any authoritative hermeneutic that would recast the waste as productive. Cave's claims of Rabelais's books that "the contamination of a principle of abundance by a principle of *écoulement* or entropy remains central"[59] might be modified to suggest that the real threat to the enjoyment of the Rabelaisian feast is "contamination" not by sterile emptiness, but by potentially contagious waste. Food in pickled form threatens to condense the metonymic transformation of food into excrement, the gradual process of digestion into a single unappetizing metaphor. Thus pickles, confits, conserves, mustards, and marinades in Rabelais always might produce rather than prevent waste, themselves produced by, or uncomfortably closely compared to, waste matter. Florence Weinberg notes the connection between a "mustard barrel" and the "lower abdomen, bowels, and their contents" and concludes that the Andouilles, the sausage-people for whom mustard is a panacean "Sangreal," are healed and born again by virtue of fecal matter, which she sees as allegorical of Luther's teachings.[60] If Rabelais hardly regarded human excrement with the same horror as some Protestant thinkers, the uncontrolled blending of bodily waste with spiritual nourishment is nonetheless presented as a problem.

The confusion of ridiculous waste with strategic wasting, of destructive reduction with (re)productive *reductio,* becomes more complicated in the case of immoderate textual traditions that may or may not have moderating effects. In the zeal for glossing classical texts Rabelais finds an unhealthy and impoverished model of linguistic production, recalling those identified by Cicero and Quintilian as abuses of *copia*: "empty prolixity," lack of *varietas,* or "Asiatic over-elaboration," as Cave describes their diagnoses.[61] Yet Rabelais nonetheless incorporates these negative examples, past the point of expository value, in his own text. The bloviating judge Bridoye would exemplify Erasmus's cautionary tale of those who "mix the sordid with the elegant, disfigure their purple with patches, thread together jewels and paste, and add garlic to Greek confections,"[62] who, in other words, poorly temper their rhetoric. Bridoye's lengthy explanation of his judicial process, which, in practice, amounts to the throwing of dice, is interlarded with gloss to the point that the seasoning begins to overtake the main ingredients:

> … je consydere que le temps meurist toutes choses; par temps, toutes choses viennent en evidence; le temps est pere de Verité, *gl. in l. j., C. de servit., Autent., de restit. et ea quoe pa., et Spec. tit de requis. cons.* C'est pourquoy, commes vous aultres, messieurs, je sursoye, delaye et differe le jugement affin que le procés, bien ventilé, grabelé et debatu, vieigne par succession de temps à sa maturité, et, le sort par après advenent, soit plus doulcettement porté des

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[58] Duval, *Design*, 76.
[59] Cave, *Cornucopian Text*, 201.
[60] Florence Weinberg, "Layers of Emblematic Prose: Rabelais' Andouilles," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26.2 (Summer 1995): 367-77, 376.
[61] Cave, *Cornucopian Text,* 5.
[62] Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, vol. 24: *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style: De duplici copia verborum ac rerum Commentarii duo,* trans. and ed. Betty I. Knott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 307.

> parties condemnées, comme *no. glo. ff. excu. tut. l. Tria onera Portatur leviter, quod portat quisque libenter*. Le jugeant crud, verd et au commencement, dangier seroit de l'inconvenient que disent les Medecins advenir quand on perse un aposteme avant qu'il soit meur, quand on purge du corps humain quelque humeur nuysant avant sa concoction. Car, comme est escript *in Autent., Hoec constit. in inno. const. prin.,* et le repete *gl. in c. Coeterum extra de jura calum.* : *Quod medicamenta morbis exhibent, hoc jura negotiis*. Nature dadventaige nous instruict cuillir et manger les fruictz quand ilz sont meurs… (*TL*, 382)
>
> […I consider that Time ripens all things; that Time brings all things to light, that Time is the father of Truth *as in the gloss on Law 1 of the Codex, "Of Servitudes"; Authentica, "Of Restitutions, and of the Woman who gives birth"; and Speculator, title, "Of Requests for Advice."* That explains why, just like you, my Lords, I prorogue, stay and postpone my judgment in order that the suit, having been thoroughly ventilated, sifted through and disputed over, may come in due time to maturity, so that the decision thereafter reached by lots may be borne more kindly by the losing parties, *as is noted by the gloss on Pandects, "Of Excusing the Tutelage," the Law, "Three Burdens": Kindly is borne what is willingly borne*. If you were to judge at the outset, when it is unripe and green, there would be a danger of the mischief which the physicians say occurs when one lances a boil before it is ripe or purges the human body of some nocive humour before it has been concocted, *for (as it is written in the Authentica: "This Constitution," Innocent IV, First constitution, and repeated in the gloss on the Canon "But"; Extravagantes: "Of Sworn Calumnies"): "What Medicines Do for Illnesses Justice Does for Difficulties."* Nature moreover teaches us: to pick our fruits and eat them when they are ripe…. (566-67)]

Bridoye's audience, to say nothing of the reader, might demur that this habit of postponing, deferring, and delaying with his banal erudition does not macerate or ripen ("meurist") judgment so much as waste time and dissolve meaning. It does not help Bridoye's case that he compares the raw ("crud, verd") matter to be judged to a harmful humor purged before its "concoction." An abscess, unlike a fruit, gains no intrinsic value by being seasoned by time, and Bridoye's unappetizing use of the language of healthy digestion to describe the progression of disease smacks of garlicky Greek sweets. Adding a more palatable adage, that we are not to eat fruit before it ripens, as an appendage, an appetizing image of food as a superfluous byproduct of the "concoction" of disease, confuses the order of eating and digestion. This, we might say, is poor menu planning on the part of the speaker.

Of course, the reader is unlikely to have come to Rabelais for legal clarification. And if the speech is nonsensical as an elucidation of the law, it is, as literature, a careful laying-up of textual material. Like many of his contemporaries, Rabelais happily offers a scornful verdict on glossing as a misguided attempt to add value to ancient texts and ideas. At the same time, Bridoye, and Pantagruel's ultimate approval of a legal approach that relies entirely on chance, make a serious appeal to readers to suspend not only our judgment but also our comprehension. As Greene says of the episode, "Nowhere else in the entire book must one remember so continuously not to be too quick to understand,"[63] a rather bold claim to make of a work that traffics so heavily in allusion, errancy, and nonsense. Even if the young Pantagruel compares Accursius's notorious mangling of the *Pandectes* to the embroidering of a golden robe with "merde," the humanist contempt for the sloppy commentaries of the previous age masked a debt that often went unacknowledged: glossing, a "brodure" made of "ordure," could ensure the copying and preservation, enrobed in a protective layer of waste, of texts that might otherwise have been lost (*P*, 90). Rabelais is not the unequivocal

[63] Greene, *Comic Courage*, 75. Greene takes seriously Pantagruel's sympathy with Bridoye, reading it as a conclusion that the rolling of dice is the proper response to imperfect human laws and the ultimate contingency on God's will (75).

celebrator of waste that some have made him out to be, but nor is he a straightforward critic of the wasted words of schoolmen, Protestants, and his other ideological enemies.

Jeanneret takes the epistemological incoherence of the *Tiers* and *Quart Livres*, with knowledge represented as contained in individual episodes, as evidence that the pursuit of knowledge is utterly self-defeating. But the fact that we receive parts of the narrative "comme les fragments d'une encyclopédie éclatée" does not mean that "le récit renonce à les sélectionner et les organiser."[64] Rather, the narrative has put these fragments into suspension, separating them the better to preserve them. This is what Seneca claims bees do with pollen, and that good humanist readers do with knowledge, keeping their sources separate in order, later, to incorporate them into a proprietary recipe of original honey (i.e., style):

> We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift through whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us—in other words, our natural gifts—we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound…[65]

Rabelais's text, in this way, freezes a moment in the Senecan composition process between gathering and synthesizing material. His willingness to preserve huge swaths of wasted words—in cheerfully excessive dinner-party descriptions, discomfiting lists of ways to "se torcher le cul," or mind-numbingly dry accounts of scholastic speeches—means that it is not waste itself, but its careful management, that Rabelais finds worth taking seriously, and worth preserving.

IV. Frozen Food: Reproducing Metabolism

Voyaging far in the north near the end of the *Quart Livre,* Pantagruel and his crew of "bons et joyeulx Pantagruelistes" encounter some frozen (but rapidly thawing) words floating in the sea. This was not an uncommon event in early modern literature. With an origin in Plutarch's *Moralia* (overlaid with back-references to Homer and Plato), the "frozen words" topos condensed and dramatized early modern debates over the substantiality of language.[66] And indeed, Pantagruel's initial response, before the pilot corrects him, is to suggest multiple possible philosophical significations of the verbal debris, which—even if discredited by the explanation that these are the remains of a cacophonous naval battle from the previous winter, a claim substantiated when the frozen flotsam begins to thaw into inarticulate sounds—have been taken by some critics as discarded possibilities worth dwelling on.[67]

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[64] Jeanneret, "Débordements," 113.

[65] Seneca, *Epistles*, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Suffolk: Loeb Classical Library, 1917), 279.

[66] John Hale, in *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), sees awakening words as a metaphor for the revival, or thawing, of ancient texts in the temperate intellectual climate of the Renaissance; Reeser notes, however, that this analogy falters when one considers that Pantagruel and his humanist-educated crew fail to understand what the words mean, which would hardly be a flattering portrait of philology (*Moderating Masculinity*, 165). Screech points to the thawing words that appear in a travellers' tale in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, as well as in Aristotle's *On Interpretation,* Plato's *Cratylus,* Ammonius Hermaeus, Celio Calcagnini, commentaries on Roman law, and the Bible; words are said to be seen in Revelations 1.12 ("I turned around to see the voice") and Exodus 20.18, where the Israelites "saw the voices" when Moses went up to the mountain (*Rabelais*, 411, 416, 434).

[67] Among these is Screech, who takes seriously Pantagruel's hypothesis that the frozen words are the byproduct of *logoi* that dwell in a platonic realm of virtue and have dripped down "comme catarrhes," or, as Screech puts it in a slippage from medical to medicinal terminology, "distillations" (*Rabelais*, 424). Drawing on commonplaces of the period, Screech sees this as part of a trickle-down cosmology: "Rabelais's universe is the same as the one we meet for example in

Duval, however, counsels us to cast aside these false etiologies as swiftly as the reasonable Pantagruel, noting approvingly, "Faced with irrefutable evidence, Pantagruel of course immediately abandons his various idealizing hypotheses." Disabused of the notion that these are "priceless nuggets of *logos*," we should, Duval maintains, acknowledge the "plain truth" that these are common and therefore worthless words: talk is cheap.[68] Rabelais's narrator, however, fails to experience this enlightenment as quickly as his hero. When Pantagruel, grabbing a gratifyingly graspable handful of as-yet-unthawed words ("qui encores ne sont degelées"), tosses them on the deck, where, shining like (laboriously candied) "dragée perlée,"[69] they make "un son tel que font les chastaignes jectées en la braze sans estre entonmées" (416) ["a sound such as chestnuts make when they are tossed un-nicked on to the fire" (829)], the narrator, his appetite piqued, suggests that they preserve some of these "motz de gueule" in oil and straw. Pantagruel summarily dismisses this plan:

> Je vouloys quelques motz de gueule mettre en reserve dedans de l'huille, comme l'on guarde la neige et la glace, entre du feurre bien nect. Mais Pantagruel ne le voulut, disant estre follie faire reserve de ce dont jamais l'on n'a faulte et que tous jours on a en main, comme sont motz de gueule entre tous bons et joyeulx Pantagruelistes. (418)
>
> [I had hoped to preserve a few gullet-words in oil, wrapping them up in very clean straw (as we do with snow and ice); but Pantagruel would not allow it, saying that it was madness to pickle something which is never lacking and always to hand as are gullet words amongst all good and merry Pantagruelists. (830)]

If Duval attributes Pantagruel's frustration to the narrator's failure to understand "the plain truth" of how prosaic and unremarkable these gullet words are—they are just "motz," mere literal words, not divine "parolles"—others, to Duval's consternation, see the words as inherently mystical and poetic, feistily resisting the narrator's attempts to condemn them to the stasis of the literal. To Jeanneret, the narrator and the rest of the crew—like most everyone else Pantagruel quarrels with—are hopeless literalists: instead of respecting, like our hero, "la polyvalence des choses et des mots," they "les figent en un sens restrictif,"[70] like so many *pierres mortes*. Pantagruel thus objects to what Jeanneret calls a "durcissement maléfique du mot," an abomination by which the words' free-

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Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. The world is seen as the ultimate recipient of the waste matter of the universe. The off-scourings, excrements and material rejects of the higher spheres sink down naturally on to our round world" (425). If these are, as Screech calls them, "globules of truth" (426), we might think more of "globules" than "truth" when they are compared to chronic mucus. Screech glosses his synthesis of inconsistent similes—Homer's lofty winged words, the downward bent of catarrh (and, more loftily in tone at least, the dew that fell on Gideon's fleece)—by explaining that "man's upward striving is linked to the distillations of catarrhal dew" (428). Jeffrey Masten, in response to Richard Halpern's discussion of sublimation in Shakespeare's sonnets, is less willing to collapse upward and downward motions of matter, noting that distillation, the process explicitly evoked in the sonnets, is the opposite process to sublimation, with far-reaching implications for conceptions of poetic creation ("Gee, Your Hair Smells Terrific: Response to 'Shakespeare's Perfume,'" *Early Modern Culture* 2 [2001], http://emc.eserver.org /1-2/masten.html).

[68] Duval, *Design,* 38, 39n. Duval thinks Screech wastes his time by taking the Platonism here far too seriously. But Duval is too eager to throw away certain possibilities and potential that Rabelais falls short of quite suppressing, even if he moves on from them. As Screech points out, the Christian dimension of Platonic myth "is quietly discarded … But it is not in fact forgotten" (*Rabelais*, 421).

[69] Screech highlights the visual effect by translating this phrase as "sweets of many colours" (829), but Judith H. Anderson emphasizes the sense of process congealed in these "crystallized sweetmeats," noting that "*perlée* means 'crystallized' in this context and suggests human making—more exactly, confecting," as well as "the notion of substance within": a *dragée*, or sweetmeat, was a nut or seed entombed in layers of crystallized syrup (*Words That Matter: Linguistic Perception in Renaissance English* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996], 239).

[70] Jeanneret, "Les paroles dégelées," 16.

flowing "mystère" is violently "domestiqué." This desire to domesticate, Jeanneret argues, denies the reality that language "ne se conserve pas, mais se recrée constamment," magically reproducing itself with a Bakhtinian natural inevitability. If Jeanneret must admit that Rabelais, as a writer, wants to mummify living language into an immortal work, wrenching from the natural life cycle that which should naturally decay and get replaced, he finds this "réflexe d'écrivain" overpowered by the irrepressible words themselves: Rabelais's text thus resists its own freezing into print. Celebrating the polysemy of the living word and resisting the ossifying effect of text, the books' characters cheerfully "érodent de l'intérieur le livre qui les porte."[71] Preservation, in this narrow reading, is as good as death: Jeanneret's concept of putting words in reserve is confined to the image of a book as an ultimately unsuccessful "tombeau pétrifié."[72]

That Rabelais's language reflexively rejects all that is "figé" has itself become a rigid critical commonplace.[73] By so blithely assuming that language spontaneously "se recrée," these arguments—like Pantagruel himself—fail to consider the necessity of the linguistic maintenance work that must be performed on both language-producing bodies and the cultural material they reproduce. The narrator's desire to "faire reserve" of that which "tous jours on a en main" is not so patently ridiculous when one considers that having words always at hand requires the invisible labor of maintaining not only linguistic material, but also our bodies' ability to access it, of preserving not just bodies but also the enzymes that allow them to digest the world, to make the world metabolically available to them. The temporary suspension—in oil, brine, or syrup—of organic material from the natural life cycle is necessary to sustain nature's ability to replenish its stores. The health of living language requires repeated acts of domestication and provisional conservation, acts that imitate the domestic and agricultural practices to which the narrator alludes with his hopeful comparison of frozen words to snow preserved in oil and straw. Language does not reproduce itself automatically, and the "bons et joyeulx Pantagruelistes" invoked as the natural producers of such language could, should they be so altered, slip into less good and joyous states. Conversation must be "alimentée" not only by real-life events, but also by words strategically thawed from the reserves of them we keep in books.

The early modern discovery and cataloging of ancient textual material has often been understood, by both scholars of the time and scholars of those scholars, as either a supernatural calling—something *more* than mere organizing—or a task better suited to support staff than authors, subordinate to the work of original creation. We have seen how Thomas Greene's "humanist necromancer-scholar," for example, heroically rescued lost texts from oblivion and miraculously resurrected them,[74] and Timothy Hampton notes Budé's comparison of ancient texts to sepulchers and epitaphs brought back to life by talented imitators.[75] On the more mundane end, Aaron Kunin

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[71] Ibid., 20.

[72] Ibid., 17, 20.

[73] For André Tournon, Rabelaisian language exists only in living exchange: "la vérité ne tombe pas du ciel, elle réside dans l'échange des paroles et des gestes" ("De l'interpretation des 'Mots de gueule,'" in *Hommage à François Meyer* [Aix-en-Provence: Publications Université de Provence, 1983], 147). Reeser too finds the would-be word-fixing narrator washed away by an inevitable flow: "The fluidity of words that cannot be held in the hand parallels the fluidity of etymology, the inability to be the authentic meaning of the modern word" (*Moderating Masculinity*, 168). For Screech, the Platonic intertext of the *Cratylus* establishes "Rabelais as an Heraclitean, accepting the doctrine that everything in the universe is in a state of flux" (*Rabelais*, 425).

[74] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 92.

[75] Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 37. See also Arendt on the dependence of action on the labor of writing to crystallize it into perpetuity. If it is hardly surprising that Jeanneret's comparison of the dead letter to a "tombeau pétrifié" fails to consider the temporary

describes "the humanist imperative to preserve cultural artifacts" as "a secondary form of culture-making" that fell short of "creation" or "transformation."[76] But in the case of Rabelais's narrator, preservation is at once as ordinary as maintenance work and as impressive as necromancy. It is a creative and transformative act, and—insofar as freezing words in print is, as Jeanneret suggests, precisely the process of writing—it is a *primary* form of culture-making, indistinguishable from the identification and maintenance of what is valuable.[77] The narrator's impulse to preserve derives from the value placed on the activity of preservation itself. To "mettre en reserve," for him, is interchangeable with to "faire reserve"; to organize and to make are one and the same.[78]

More than madly proliferating *copia* or just as anxiously rushing to cover up its underlying emptiness, the author's task is to arrange carefully the vast linguistic and cultural store he has inherited. Kathy Eden's attention to the principle of *oikonomia* in Renaissance rhetoric is relevant here: a commitment to *copia,* properly executed, may require some level of heroic ambition; but it also requires, tempering that ambition, a skill closely analogous to household management. Hampton locates Rabelais's "literary authority" in a similar ability to manage the transition from technical terms to colloquial ones, as in the toggling of the learned medical jargon and popular midwives' slang generated in response to Gargamelle's childbirthing body.[79] If Rabelais's narrative and rhetorical power resides not in simple mastery or persuasion but in the "manipulation and organization of linguistic resources,"[80] it may be that the not strictly productive and merely maintenance-minded management skills more proper to housewives or midwives and so scorned by learned men are in fact the very source of humanist authors' creative capabilities.

Not all preservative management of language is necessarily productive or positive. Taking the time and patience needed for revelations to thaw out means acknowledging the risk that not all sounds will thaw out meaningfully. Rabelais's suspension, rather than outright rejection, of a Platonic explanation for the frozen words echoes the suspension Screech finds in the *Cratylus* itself, where "Plato leaves everything undecided"; even Socrates's claim for the immutability of ideal forms "is put forward with striking tentativeness."[81] Thus we might not be surprised at Socrates's warning to the young not to try to resolve difficult problems too quickly, to take a long time in the learning process and reach maturity, like Bridoye writ large, before judging difficult matters.[82] We might also think of how the response of Rabelais (like that of Marot, Marguerite de Navarre, and others) to the broadening religious schism was to bide time, to "temporiser et miser sur l'espoir d'un compromis."[83] Such moderate, tempered approaches do not always lead to moderate and temperate

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petrifications of the culinary and medicinal worlds, he might have been expected to consider the Renaissance humanist obsession with reanimation, for which petrification was a precondition.

[76] Aaron Kunin, "Shakespeare's Preservation Fantasy," *PMLA* 124.1 (Jan. 2009): 92-106, 92-93.

[77] Jennifer Summit has made a claim for the preservation of cultural artifacts, in medieval libraries, as something like a primary form of culture-making, describing libraries as "dynamic institutions that actively processed, shaped, and imposed meaning on the very materials they contained" rather than passive receptacles (*Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008], 15). While Summit's approach aims to show that work long considered merely retentive was, on the contrary, actively transformative, I aim to trouble the distinction between retention and transformation on which her study relies.

[78] Jeanneret paraphrases Bakhtin as describing eating and drinking as a way to "faire réserve d'énergie vitale," but, strangely, a reserve in a world presented as immune to scarcity and devoid of the necessity of such a reserve, where everything is part of the "grand cycle de la fertilité naturelle" ("Débordements," 106).

[79] Hampton, "The Fallen Fundament," 173.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Screech, *Rabelais*, 418.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Jeanneret, "Débordements," 117.

results, ending just as easily in violent conflict, in the case of France, or the incoherent cries of violent conflict, as in the would-be divine *parolles* thawing into disappointingly meaningless *motz*.

The operations of preservation, more than materials themselves, require the direct application of preservative intervention: the renewing of the confiting liquid that keeps unalterable Pantagruelism unaltered. The absurdity, for Pantagruel, of preserving "motz de gueule" ("gullet words" that any good Pantagruelist's esophagus can, inverting consumption and production, produce at will) rests on the weak assumption that what can be constantly, locally provided by the body—and, by implication, the body itself—is in no danger of running out. But Rabelais does not take the body's ability to maintain itself for granted. To have words "tous jours … en main" requires that the body will maintain its ability to grasp those words; linguistic production is a metabolic function. Metabolism—which comes from the Greek word for "change," and which has a Eucharistic resonance[84]—has as its goal the preservation of the body, a preservation that occurs only by the alteration of foreign material into the stuff of the self. By putting words that suggest words' perishability in his narrator's mouth, Rabelais highlights the precarious position of his own words, which no one will be able singlehandedly to preserve forever. But the textual body, itself preserved by its own processing of waste and by its constant maintenance by a community of readers, can preserve words in a way the individual human body cannot.[85] It may be that certain words, "gullet words" among them, are simply unfit for such preservation, needing to be produced spontaneously.[86] Yet it still remains true that the conditions for the production of those words must be preserved for any words to be produced at all. Ultimately, for Rabelais, the labor of maintaining the external world is a primarily endogenous process: the best way to keep words is not by preserving them in straw, but by preserving the mechanisms that produce them from within.

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[84] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "*Metabolē* was used in Hellenistic Greek with reference to the Eucharistic elements" (*s.v.* "metabolism"). In late medieval French, it seems to have been used strictly rhetorically, as a repetition with a difference. Godefroy has *metabole* as "figure de rhétorique par laquelle on repète dans la seconde partie d'une phrase des mots employés dans la première, mais disposés d'une manière différente de manière à modifier la pensée" (*Complément du dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle,* 1895-1902).

[85] If, as Rabelais declares in the prologue to the *Tiers Livre,* his book is a "tonneau inexpuisable"—with the implication, for Jeanneret, that reading is "une opération sans fin"—it is only because readers keep refilling it. Jeanneret argues that the text poses a "défi permanent qui maintient vivante la productivité du texte," but the "défi" does not keep the text running by itself ("Débordements," 123).

[86] Cave points to Quintilian's stipulation that *copia* should not be "a store of inert goods": "there is no greater folly," Quintilian warns in Book X of the *Institutiones oratoriae*, "than the rejection of the gifts of the moment." And yet Quintilian is careful to preface this with a qualifying reminder that "it is essential to bring with us into court a supply of eloquence which has been prepared in advance in the study (*paratam dicendi copiam*) and on which we can confidently rely" (qtd. in Cave, *Cornucopian Text*, 7).

Chapter 2
Belaboring Du Bellay

> Vous souvienne de votre ancienne Marseille, seconde Athènes, et de votre Hercule gallique, tirant les peuples après lui par leurs oreilles avec une chaîne attachée à sa langue. [Remember your ancient Marseilles, the second Athens, and your Gallic Hercules, who drew the nations after him by their ears with a chain attached to his tongue.]
>
> -*La Défense et Illustration de la langue française*

Barthélemy Aneau begins his scathing critique of Joachim Du Bellay's 1549 *Défense et Illustration de la langue française* by rejecting the treatise's whole premise: how could someone author a "defense" of something no one has attacked? ("Qui accuse, ou, qui a accusée la langue Françoyse? Nul certes."[1]) Such an author, Aneau goes on, might think he is engaging in an epic endeavor by fighting on behalf of a national language and literature, but he risks earning the epithet of a *Hercules factitius,* a would-be hero who manufactures straw-man monsters for the sole purpose of easily cutting them down. This critique may have hit Du Bellay especially hard considering the epic pomp with which he ends the *Défense,* summoning a "Hercule gallique" to lead the French into literary and cultural supremacy, a heroically eloquent herald who invites comparisons to the author of this trumpet-blaring national call to arms, Du Bellay himself.[2]

Since then, Du Bellay's critics have been kinder in assessing the heroic aspirations of the *Défense,* the manifesto of the Pléiade group of poets whose stated goal was not only to defend French against its critics, but also to "illustrate"—that is, add luster to—the vernacular through the incorporation of Greek and Latin elements. Though Du Bellay is clearly aligned with humanists who sought literary rather than military glory*,* the manifesto has been read as the battle cry of an emergent nation-state in ways that do not leave bellicosity altogether behind, and that fit with what Phillip Usher reminds us was a general excitement about, if not altogether successful emulation of, "epic arts" in Renaissance France.[3] Du Bellay's manifesto explicitly calls for the writing of a French epic ("long poème français," 240) that would bring fame to the individual poet, honor to the nation, and glory to the French language. Richard Helgerson, in an introduction to his translation of Du Bellay's selected works, notes how the *Défense*'s structure mirrors classical epic (each book has twelve chapters, following the example of the *Aeneid*) and applauds, or at least admires the daring of, Du Bellay's "militant tone" and "aggressively offensive posture."[4] Even in the more resignedly quotidian Roman sonnet sequence *Les Regrets* (1558), Helgerson finds that Du Bellay's "poetics of the everyday," which revolves around a mundane routine set in the ever-weakening afterglow of

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[1] Barthélemy Aneau, *Le Quintil Horatien sur la defense & illustration de la langue Françoyse,* in Thomas Sebillet, *Art Poetique Francoys* (Paris, 1555), 81.

[2] *Les Regrets, précédé de Les Antiquités de Rome et suivi de La Défense et Illustration de la Langue française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 264. *La Défense* hereafter cited parenthetically by page number. Sonnets from the same volume will be identified by number.

[3] Phillip John Usher, *Epic Arts in Renaissance France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Usher suggests that we read the perceived "failure" of epic in the period as, instead, part of a conversation carried on between poetry and the "sister arts."

[4] Richard Helgerson, Introduction to Joachim Du Bellay, *"The Regrets," with "The Antiquities of Rome," Three Latin Elegies, and "The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language," A Bilingual Edition,* ed. and trans. Richard Helgerson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 27. All translations of *Les Regrets* and *La Défense* are Helgerson's.

imperial Rome, "is nevertheless charged with heroic potential."[5] The spokesman for a movement based on the bombastic and optimistic conflation of literary and imperial power, Du Bellay was especially possessed of "imperial yearnings": he was, Helgerson claims, more haunted by Rome than any other poet of the period, and the *Défense* is the most "passionate" and "fully articulated" "manifesto for the new imperial poetry" of any of its European analogs.[6] Marc Bizer, likewise hoping to rescue *Les Regrets* from the charge of unremarkableness, finds the sonnets' generic gymnastics exciting and "innovative," as opposed to the poetry of the more explicitly self-aggrandizing Pierre de Ronsard, a fellow Pléiade member whose standard Petrarchan love lyric was, at that point, stale.[7] Margaret Ferguson, if less reverent of Du Bellay's poetic project, at least recognizes the force of the *Défense*'s ambition in calling it "aggressive."[8]

Du Bellay may indeed have considered himself a kind of groundbreaking hero, or at least aspired to be one, though some readers have been skeptical of his success. René Bray puts it flatly: "Du Bellay dreamed of a French epic. But what he imagined was bad," even in fantasy falling far short of the standards set by classical models.[9] Ferguson, a bit more generously, describes the young Joachim, a soon-orphaned second son of an impoverished branch of an otherwise illustrious family, as "a man literally in search of noble labor," lacking career opportunities in war and thus driven to attempt to ennoble literary pursuits, the only avenue available to him.[10] Ferguson goes on to question the extent to which Du Bellay was convinced of his ability to fashion himself as a humanist hero, but attributing his eagerness to imitate the classics and his hyperbolic associations of himself with Hercules to his "lack of self-esteem"[11] does not adequately diagnose the sense of a gap between aspiration and reality, either.

The critical dissatisfaction with or overcompensation for the apparent lack of heroic vigor in the *Défense* stems from the fact that even though it experiments with epic conventions, the treatise is most at home not in epic but in georgic, its allegiances to local, small-scale agricultural labor rather than heroic action on a world stage. While in sixteenth-century France georgic had begun to outgrow the modest plot of the garden, becoming a testing ground for imperialist designs, Du Bellay's *domestic* georgic metaphors in the *Défense*—domestic in the smallness of their scale, the modesty of their ambitions, and the futility or uncertainty of their results—undercut his own visions of cultural (and horticultural) ascendancy. Rather than simply a sign of Du Bellay's inaptitude to fill the laureate role himself, his domestic georgic sympathies indicate that the very engineers of modernity were also planting seeds, though often abortive, for alternative futures, and for orientations to the world that put the future itself in radical suspension. Du Bellay was ultimately less concerned with the operatic pyrotechnics of epic poetry, or with the triumphant forward march of progress into modernity that he has been made to represent, than with the kinds of invisible, incessant, and uncertain labors of correction and maintenance that characterize domestic, horticultural, and poetic labor alike.

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[5] Ibid., 10-11.

[6] Ibid., 2.

[7] Marc Bizer, "Letters from Home: The Epistolary Aspects of Joachim Du Bellay's *Les Regrets," Renaissance Quarterly* 52.1 (Spring 1999): 140-179, 172.

[8] Margaret Ferguson, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 20.

[9] René Bray, *La formation de la doctrine classique en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1927, 1961), 337, qtd. in Michael Nerlich, *Ideology of Adventure: Studies in Modern Consciousness, 1100-1750, vol. 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 289.

[10] Ferguson, *Trials of Desire*, 20.

[11] Ibid., 23.

In the *Regrets* as well as in the *Défense,* if Du Bellay can be said to have a heroism at all, it is of a confined and domestic character, more mock-heroic than anything else. His annoyance with his circumstances is a far cry from the rage sung of Achilles, resonating more closely with what Sianne Ngai describes as an ugly or weak feeling, his regret and even his ambition operating on the level of such minor affects as anxiety, irritation, envy, or disappointment. These all fall short of the vehement passions that usually animate epic to sublime effect. Du Bellay instead describes and produces something more like "stuplimity," the word Ngai uses for aesthetic experiences that discomfitingly mix sublimity with boredom.[12] Put another way, what is remarkable about Du Bellay's writing is not how it dramatically transcends the irrelevance of his secretarial work, but rather how it drags its heels through the incremental and infinitesimal—that is, unremarkable—movements of poetic labor, understood as a domestic georgic activity. Like the domestic duties that he bemoans as "le soin ménager dont travaillé je suis" (*Regrets* 12, l. 1), the movements of his writing, like the "stuplime" artworks Ngai describes, "tend to draw us *down* into the sensual and material domain of language and its dulling and irritating iterability, rather than elevating us to a transcendent, supersensible, or spiritual plane."[13] To put it another way, Du Bellay's poems and prose function like what Anne-Lise François calls "open secrets," operating in the mode of "recessive action,"[14] neither assiduously kept hidden nor made manifest through emphatic self-expression. Presenting themselves from the outset as "secrétaires" (*Regrets* 1, l. 11), these poems are secrets that are, anticlimactically, simply there for the taking.

With François, I acknowledge the risk that such surface reading, such apparent dulling of interpretive faculties, might be taken as an apology for, or indifference to, the insidious work of ideology. It is not for nothing that the open secret is often considered "an ideological trick," "a trope for the implicit workings of ideology itself—for the way in which the ideological […] occupies the space of the blank page from which it can produce a consensus that no actually written document could ever yield."[15] At the same time, François argues, the open secret's recessive action can resist, or at least sidestep, particular ideological demands. Thus, in the context of "the rise of bourgeois liberal individualism" from the late seventeenth to early twentieth centuries, François looks to "those who would accept the risk of going unnoticed and returning empty-handed in response to the modern ideology of improvement that cannot admit the waste of unexploited powers."[16] Though the deflating simplicity at the heart of Du Bellay's rhetoric might be taken as proof of its effectiveness in forwarding the imperial ideology with which he is often associated, I will argue that it offers an alternative to that ideology, and to the ideology of improvement more generally, of which Du Bellay, sixteenth-century France's foremost illustrator of *illustration*, is so often said to be the proto-modern *porte-parole.*

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[12] Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 248-97. Ngai maintains that, because of its ultimate affirmation of individual autonomy even in the face of an initial failure of imagination, Kantian sublimity is the wrong aesthetic category for modern artworks that are at once awe-inspiring and truly soul-deflating, from Gertrude Stein's novels to Janet Zweig's *Her Recursive Apology*, a computer-generated sculpture of thousands of printed pages of random apologies ("Sorry. Sorry. I regret it. Please accept my apology. I'm extremely sorry. I regret my mistake. Pardon me. Pardon me. I hope you'll forgive me. I'm deeply apologetic. Do forgive me. Pardon me. Accept my apology. Do forgive me. I'm deeply apologetic. Excuse me. Excuse me. It was my own fault. Do forgive me. I'm so sorry," qtd. in Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 248).
[13] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 278.
[14] Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), xvi.
[15] Ibid., 5.
[16] Ibid., 22.

I. Oral Exercises: Domesticating Hercules

The modest and borderline ridiculous quality of Du Bellay's domestic georgic self-conception will become more clear in my discussion of *Les Regrets*, which Du Bellay wrote in between performing his duties as a secretary and *intendant*, or household manager, for his influential cousin, the Cardinal Jean Du Bellay. But even in the *Défense*, Du Bellay's famous identification with Hercules recalls not the able-bodied, Hydra-battling (or even, as was foremost in Erasmus's imagination, stable-cleaning) figure of Greek legend, but the decrepit, comical Celtic deity Ogmios, who was, as the Second Sophistic satirist Lucian relates, claimed by the Gauls—and enthusiastically reclaimed by sixteenth-century French writers and artists—as their version of Hercules. Like his Greek cousin, the Gallic Hercules wore a lion-skin, carried a club, and held the people in enraptured awe. But the elderly Ogmios was a symbol of eloquence rather than strength, revered for his brains rather than his brawn.[17] Lucian describes traveling to Gaul and being shown a painting of this local hero, whose appearance he describes as "truly grotesque."[18] Nearly bald except for a few white hairs, his skin wrinkled and tanned as a sailor's, he might be confused for a god of the underworld, or really "any one rather than Hercules."[19] As Lucian, thinking this caricature might be a jocular "cut at the Greek Gods," continues to contemplate the painting, he realizes that this Hercules draws the admiring crowd by the ears with chains emanating from a piercing in his tongue, a "flimsy bondage" to which his captives seem to submit willingly.[20]

Seeing Lucian's confusion, a cheerful Gaul approaches him and explains that for his people it is Hercules, rather than Hermes, who symbolizes eloquence. Helpfully reviewing the logistics of oral language transmission, which generally goes from tongue to ear, the Gaul informs his Greek guest that there is "nothing more natural than the way in which our Heracles, who is Eloquence personified, draws men along with their ears tied to his tongue."[21] In a further testament to his flat-footed interpretive approach, the Gaul reassures Lucian that Hercules suffered no harm from the puncturing of his tongue, because—and here he takes a proverbial phrase of a Greek comic poet *à la lettre*—"There is a hole in every glib tongue's tip" anyway.[22]

The veneration of the Gallic Hercules suggests a triumph of the figurative over the literal, of the proverbial pen over the sword (or club): in true humanist spirit, it is *lettres*, not *armes*, that win the day. As the Gaul's commitment to a plainspoken interpretation of the painting reminds us, however, the site of Ogmios's power is as anatomically muscular as that of the Greek Hercules. In contrast to a mythical figure like Orpheus, who civilized the wild beasts through the persuasion of song, the domesticating potential of Ogmios's mouth depends on how much physical weight his tongue can handle. Indeed, this only quasi-figuralized strength testifies to the stubbornness with which the Gauls were said to hold to their straightforward "frankness," what the Greek geographer Strabo

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[17] Lucian was neither the first nor the last to suggest that Hercules was something other than a figure of pure physical strength; notable predecessors include Isocrates and Seneca (Robert E. Hallowell, "Ronsard and the Gallic Hercules Myth," *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 [1962]: 242-55, 249). For an extensive study of this figure in the sixteenth-century French context, see Marc René Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1966).

[18] Lucian of Samasota, "Heracles, an Introductory Lecture," in *The Works Of Lucian Of Samosata: Complete With Exceptions Specified In The Preface*, vol. 3, trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1905), 256.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 257.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

described as their *haplotēs* (literally, singleness; also simplicity, frankness, sincerity) as opposed to the *poikilos* quality of Greek eloquence: complex and variegated, but also, in a more negative sense, duplicitous, abstruse, and unstable. For better or for worse, part of what defines the Gauls' collective identity is their inability quite to make the leap from the literalism of the body—of the anatomical *langue*—to the manifold figurative capacities of language.[23] For the Gauls, civilizing work is done not by a smooth talker, but by a beast of lingual burden, as if the word *langue* were too tied to its somatic referent for metaphors of language to stray far from the literal and material.

For sixteenth-century iconographers, it should be noted, there was nothing funny about this post-classical figure, whose compelling eloquence and association with ancient heroism made him an apt figure for François Ier, the chivalric hero-king and enthusiastic patron of learning who helped usher in the French Renaissance in the early sixteenth century.[24] A triumphal arch outfitted for the occasion of Henri II's 1549 entrance in Paris depicted a "Hercule des Gaules" with the face of the late, great, most eloquent king, "plus éloquent qu'autre roi qui ait regné en France avant lui," to whom the estates of the realm were chained in rapt admiration (as well as in chains): "Françoys premier," as one eulogy put it, "mais Hercules secund."[25] Du Bellay's treatment of the Gallic Hercules, as much as it may gesture to those heights of nationalist hero-worship, paints a picture much closer to the groaning, creaking Ogmios originally imagined by Lucian than to the sleek, trophy-hoisting, boundary-breaking Hercules called up by classical and Renaissance writers[26]: a mock hero rather than a tragic or triumphant one.[27] Yet the extent to which Ogmios is able to bridge the gap between literal and figurative *langue* provides a model—one lacking the grave certainty of François-Hercules sculpted in stone—for the hybridization of the muscular and the linguistic, a rhetorical strategy that can bind a community together by drawing on a poetic force that is material in only slight, local ways.

The militaristic conclusion to the *Défense,* which congratulates the French on arriving safely home after a long and treacherous odyssey ("Or sommes-nous, la grâce à Dieu, par beaucoup de périls et de flots étrangers, rendus au port à sûreté") and encourages them to march "courageusement" to plunder Roman and Greek ruins to adorn their own altars, ends with an imperative to remember their Gallic Hercules, pulling the nations by their ears with his tongue ("votre Hercule gallique, tirant les peuples après lui par leurs oreilles avec une chaîne attachée à sa langue," 264). Ending the vividly rendered exhortation to invade and pillage ancient civilization—and ending the entire treatise—on the word "langue," Du Bellay puts pressure on the material weight the word for both "tongue" and "language" carries. *Langue,* here, holds a lot together: labor

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[23] Timothy Hampton begins his *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century: Inventing Renaissance France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) with Pasquier's use of Strabo's anecdote, going on to explore the complexities in the ancient Gallic and early modern French identifications with "frankness."

[24] Drawing attention to the political as well as rhetorical implications of the hero's population-binding chains, Hampton points to Budé's evocation of Lucian's Hercules in a "dual role" as both "a mythological presence authorizing Gallic eloquence" and "an exemplary political leader or virtuous hero" (*Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990], 42).

[25] Jehan Brèche, *Premier livre de l'honneste exercice du Prince* (Paris, 1544), 14, qtd. in Anne-Marie Lecoq, *François Ier imaginaire: Symbolique et politique à l'aube de la Renaissance française* (Paris: Editions Macula, 1987), 425.

[26] Horace explicitly compares Hercules to an epic poet: Virgil's *Aeneid* came forth in the same way that "Herculean labor burst hell's gates" (*Odes* I.3), qtd. in William Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France, and England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 92.

[27] As Hallowell relates, even those who were not, or at least not primarily and unabashedly, looking for ways to flatter kings or join a parade of propaganda—humanists like Erasmus and Budé—were mostly deaf to the ironic tone of Lucian's narrative ("Ronsard and the Gallic Hercules Myth," 248). Even if Du Bellay did not exactly appreciate that irony, he did, I argue, make it noticeable.

with eloquence, belligerence with *belles lettres,* and the collective "nous" of the French literary community with each other.

The figure of Hercules as a model of community maintenance is, however, tenuous, constantly at risk of falling into disrepair. In sonnet 108 of *Les Regrets*, Du Bellay introduces himself as both a language-producing satirist and the inert raw material on which satire is based. The Hercules to which he compares himself in this sonnet is only a degraded representation of the legendary hero: "Je fuz jadis Hercule, or Pasquin je me nomme, / Pasquin fable du peuple" ["I used to be Hercules, but now I call myself Pasquino—Pasquino, the people's laughingstock" (ll. 1-2)], he announces, referring to a Roman statue of Hercules that at one point devolved into a totem where satirical verses were hung.[28] Despite his demotion to "fable," Du Bellay maintains his claim to a heroic "office": sessile statue though he is, he performs "toutefois / Le mesme office encor que j'ay fait autrefois," with the difference that "ores par mes vers tant de monstres j'assomme" ["I still perform the same labor as I did before, in that now with my verses I beat to death so many monsters" (ll. 2-4)]. Echoing the opening sonnet of Petrarch's *Canzoniere,* where the speaker has no sooner introduced himself than he confesses to what a pathetic "old tale" ("favola") he has become and surrenders to shame,[29] Du Bellay continues in a proud lyric tradition of embarrassment, insisting on his irrelevance precisely by associating himself with highly relevant self-proclaimed laughingstocks.

Like Erasmus battling the Hydra of "monstrous textual errors,"[30] Du Bellay here refigures a physical battle as a verbal one: as he ploddingly explains, his verses are the ones fighting the monsters now. But lyric is not, unfortunately, up to the task. Our poet-cum-Hercules-cum-Pasquino, as strong as he is ("quelque fort que je sois," l. 7), is not strong enough to overcome "cet Hydre de Rome" (l. 8), the papal court that is Hydra-like in its multiplying corruptions. The "grand Palais des Dieux" (l. 9) that Hercules took on to relieve Atlas has been replaced with the humiliating load of an unnamed "gros moyne Espagnol" (l. 13), a fat Spanish monk who is, in his crushing banality, much heavier than the heavens ("me poise trop plus que ma premiere charge," l. 14). The spiritual force of the satirical poet's verses, which seemed for a brief moment in the sonnet's first quatrain to have sublimated the gross materiality of physical force, has been reduced back to physical terms, and has been found too weak to pass muster. The humanist project that aimed to sublimate matter into spirit, to replace a boorish Hercules with a new scholar-hero who accomplished extraordinary feats through the singular power of his mind, has reached a dead end: the humanist is as weighed down by matter—whether piles of soiled and error-ridden manuscripts, onerous household paperwork, or corpulent monks—as his more literal-minded predecessors, but without the muscle mass to heave it off.

And these *vers* were basically doomed to this impotent fate from the beginning, because Du Bellay's alter ego in the sonnet was never a truth-speaking *parrhesiastes,* the spiritual source of fighting words. Whether Hercules or Pasquino, the statue is mute stone, the repository of others' words rather than a creative producer of his own eloquence. This passive collector of discourse recalls the figure of the *secrétaire* with which Du Bellay opens *Les Regrets,* and which stands in both for Du

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[28] See Leonard Barkan's discussion of Pasquino ("*Pasquino* Disfigured and Redressed") in *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[29] "Ma ben veggio or sì come al popol tutto / favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente / di me medesmo meco mi vergogno" (Francesco Petrarca, *Il Canzoniere,* ed. Nereo Vianello [Basiano: Galleani & Chignoli, 1966], sonnet 1, ll. 9-11).

[30] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus,* vol. 34 (*Adages* IIvii1 to IIIiii100), trans. and ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 173. For a discussion of Erasmus's textual Hydra battle, see the introduction.

Bellay's professional role in his employer's household and the role which he asks his sonnets to play in economic relation to himself. Explaining that his aim is not to "fouiller au sein de la nature," or "chercher l'esprit de l'univers," or "sonder des abysmes couvers" ["to pry into nature's bosom," "to seek out the spirit of the universe," "to sound the hidden depths" (*Regrets* 1, ll. 1-3)]—declining the archaeological and quasi-necromantic work of excavation that, according to Greene, was gamely taken on by all committed humanists[31]—Du Bellay circumscribes his poetic ambition to a quiet domestic life with his verses: "Je me plains à mes vers, si j'ay quelque regret, / Je me ris avec eux, je leur dis mon secret, / Comme étant de mon cœur les plus sûrs secrétaires" ["I complain to my verses if I have some sorrow. I laugh with them. I tell them my secret, as the most trustworthy confidants of my heart" (ll. 9-11)].

The secretary, like the statue of Pasquino, is more an intermediary than a speaking subject. As figures in Renaissance love lyric, secretaries tended to fall into the role of passive, and often inanimate, observers or enablers of human activity. Petrarch imagines an amorous thought as a secretary sending a message from his beloved ("Amor mi manda quel dolce pensero / che secretario antico è fra noi due"[32]); Ronsard presses nature into service as an "heureuse secretaire / De mes ennuis"[33] who should count herself lucky to receive his sighs. Jean Nicot, compiler of the 1606 *Thresor de la langue francoyse*, affords the secretary a bit more agency, defining "secretaire" as "celuy qui reçoit le secret d'autruy" but more specifically "celuy à qui est dit tout bas et comme en l'oreille, par le Roy, Prince, ou autre grand Seigneur, ce qu'il veut estre par luy mis par escrit, soit en lettres missives, ou autres despeches."[34] As intermediary, the secretary is asked both to receive and to send, even if the words he emits are not his own. Managing words on behalf of kings and princes, he performs a public service, but he never attains the status, even in Arendt's expansive sense, of a hero: someone able to disclose himself in public in his unique particularity.[35]

If the poet-secretary Du Bellay ultimately falls short, in his own estimation, of maintaining his identity as a translated Hercules, he does decide to bestow the title on an office worker higher up the diplomatic ladder. Cardinal Jean Du Bellay, Joachim's employer and distant cousin, is described, in the *Défense*'s dedication, as performing grand feats on a global scale even while confined to his "cabinet": he cuts a striking figure in the "spectacle de toute l'Europe, voire de tout le monde," with his influential role in "ce grand théâtre romain" (199). Du Bellay worries about taking this important public personage's valuable time away from the pursuit of national and personal gain ("au service de ton prince, au profit de la patrie, et à l'accroissement de ton immortelle renommée") but acknowledges that even the Cardinal needs a break once in a while, especially because his "faix des

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31 As discussed in the introduction, Thomas M. Greene describes the "archaeological, necromantic metaphor of *disinterment,* a digging up that was also a resuscitation or a reincarnation or a rebirth" as the guiding metaphor of Renaissance humanism (*The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982], 92).

32 Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, sonnet 133, ll. 1-2.

33 Pierre de Ronsard, *Les Amours* (1552), ed. Marc Bensimon and James L. Martin (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1981), sonnet 132, ll. 1-2.

34 Jean Nicot, *Le Thresor de la langue francoyse* (1606).

35 Arendt cuts the hero down to everyman-size as follows: "The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. And this courage is not necessarily or even primarily related to a willingness to suffer the consequences; courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and exposing one's self. The extent of this original courage, without which action and speech and therefore, according the Greeks, freedom, would not be possible at all, is not less great and may even be greater if the 'hero' happens to be a coward" (*The Human Condition*, 186).

affaires françaises" is so "pesant." As Du Bellay explains parenthetically, this burden is proportional to that of Hercules: "(charge vraiment digne de si robustes épaules, non moins que le Ciel de celles du grand Hercule)."[36] It is, indirectly, on account of his cousin's status as a kind of overworked but still noble Gallic Hercules—straining to perform superhuman feats of mostly discursive strength on behalf of the French people—that Du Bellay feels emboldened to "entrer au sacré cabinet de tes saintes et studieuses occupations," the inner sanctum of the Cardinal's professional life, a kind of domestic shrine stocked with "tant de riches et excellents vœux de jour en jour dediés à l'image de ta grandeur," and hang his own "humble et petit" contribution, the *Défense.* As Ferguson points out, Du Bellay here plays the role of the lover, the Cardinal that of the beloved woman whose "sacré cabinet" will be boldly breached.[37] Effecting the transition of the Cardinal's image from Hercules to a cloistered lady—one who daily ("de jour en jour") accumulates more offerings ("tant de riches et excellents vœux") as accoutrements—in the space of a few lines, the poet projects his own conflicted self-image as both superhuman (but servile) hero and helpless housebound (but praiseworthy) woman.

These versions of Hercules, who for all their masculine strength always risk falling into the realm of femininity and domesticated irrelevance, recall Du Bellay's other favorite hero, Odysseus, who appears in *Les Regrets* as a man mainly defined by missing home. The most famous sonnet of *Les Regrets*, dutifully memorized by French schoolchildren to this day as a condensation point of national pride, figures both Odysseus and the unnamed Jason as reaching the apex of life not in the action-packed midst of their heroic adventures, but in their relief that they are over:

> Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage,
> Ou comme celui-là, qui conquit la toison,
> Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,
> Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son âge! (*Regrets* 31, ll. 1-4)
>
> [Happy is the man who, like Ulysses, has traveled well, or like that man who conquered the fleece, and has returned, full of experience and wisdom, to live among his kinfolk the rest of his life!]

The only epic progress that interests Du Bellay is better understood as cyclical return: the "beau voyage" finally, mercifully, behind him, homecoming is all the hero has left. Our own hopeful hero, still stuck in Rome, is going nowhere fast: the poem's repetitive evocations of an only hypothetical future where he would see his native Anjou again ("reverrai-je … Reverrai-je," ll. 5, 7) give way to a list of comparisons ("Plus…que," l. 9; "Plus que…," l. 11; "Plus…que," l. 12; "Plus…que," l. 13; "Et plus que…," l. 14) that never resolve in synthesis. Stating that he likes his humble ancestral home more than Roman palaces, brittle slate more than firm marble, the Loire more than the Tiber, his "petit Liré" more than Palatine Hill, and Angevine air more than Italian sea breezes, Du Bellay gives us an exhaustive, and mildly exhausting, list of his personal preferences. The absence of volta in Du Bellay's sonnets consistently produces a sinking sense of anticlimax, but his lack of interest in drama does not quite deserve the distinction of what François Rigolot calls a "poetry of refusal," defined (with an anaphoric nod to Du Bellay's style) as "Refus de la belle dame sans merci … refus

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[36] Du Bellay suggests something similar in his dedication of *Les Regrets* to d'Avanson, who has, with the "nom d'ambassadeur," taken on Herculean "travaux": the king, the poet explains to his patron, has "Sur votre dos déchargea sa grandeur, / Pour la porter en étrange province" (64-65).
[37] Ferguson, *Trials of Desire*, 48.

de Rome … refus de la gloire, de ses œuvres et de ses pompes; refus de la fureur poétique…."[38] What Du Bellay offers is more like a shrugging off of refusal itself, as "refusal" is too strong of a word for an attitude better described as indifference, or a simple emptying of resources: Du Bellay finishes each sonnet when he fulfills his obligation to the fourteen lines, moving on to the next in the series only after adequately disposing of all available linguistic material on the present topic.

Sonnet 31 is happy to unfold in a low-key recursive loop, to begin with a homecoming and to return to it repeatedly as the lines bounce from Roman to Angevine landmarks. The conventionally heroic exploit is a disposable and forgotten stage of the journey, which here comes into its full expression not in firestorms of war but by the warm fire in the hearth: as Rigolot puts it, Du Bellay's "héros manqués […] délaissent les exploits pour retrouver la chaleur du foyer."[39] Du Bellay's archetypal hero longs for home, but the particularities of that home hardly sound appealing; family homesteads are filled with Hydras of their own, and dealing with those monsters may be the real feat worth admiring (or, then again, it may not be). Again comparing himself to the perpetually homesick Odysseus in *Regrets* 130—"Et je pensais aussi ce que pensait Ulysse," namely that nothing would be nicer than to see his own chimney again (ll. 1-3)—Du Bellay concedes that his house in Anjou is not, after all, strikingly different from the high-maintenance Roman estate he has been managing for the Cardinal: "Mille souciz mordans je trouve en ma maison" ["I find in my house a thousand biting cares" (l. 10)], he complains, referring, in part, to the nagging estate expenses incurred by the prodigal nephew under his supervision. As he wrote in a sonnet addressed to his friend and fellow poet Magny, also conscripted as a secretary in Rome, "Vu le soin ménager, dont travaillé je suis [. . .] Tu t'ébahis souvent comment chanter je puis" (*Regrets* 12, ll. 1, 4): it was a wonder, given the household worries to which he was subjected, that he got any poetry written at all. Indeed, "Je ne chante, Magny, je pleure mes ennuis" (l. 5), literally crying over your work being one way to get something on the page. But then—and this is what often, in Du Bellay's sonnets, substitutes for a volta—he offers a minor self-correction: "Ou, pour le dire mieux, en pleurant je les chante" (l. 6).

The insistence on correcting a clearly figurative claim that he produces his poems with tears rather than words might seem unnecessary. At the same time, the gesture is no more superfluous than claiming that what he is doing is singing rather than crying, as he is literally doing neither one: he is writing. Yet grounding flights of fancy by repeatedly and painstakingly yoking the figurative to the literal is typical of Du Bellay's domestic georgic mode. Each line of the final two tercets begins with an anaphoric "Ainsi" ("So") and compares the poet as cheerful artisan to a series of figures that grow farther and farther away from the immediate position of the poet crafting his verses: "Ainsi chante l'ouvrier en faisant son ouvrage, / Ainsi le laboureur faisant son labourage" ["So sings the worker while doing his work; so the plowman plowing the field"], with a slide or equivalence between work and labor; so too sing "le pèlerin regrettant sa maison" ["the pilgrim longing for home"] and "l'aventurier en songeant à sa dame" ["the soldier of fortune dreaming of his lady"], only slightly embellished versions of the homesick poet; and so too "le marinier en tirant à la rame" ["the seaman pulling the oar"], and, reaching a dead end, so too "le prisonnier maudissant sa prison" ["the prisoner cursing his prison"], transposing the mundanely housebound if unmoored secretary to the dramatically extreme spaces of open sea or locked cell.

The repetition of "Ainsi" at the beginning of these six lines continuously preserves the channel from the literal to the figurative, casting and recasting the poet in successive roles from unextraordinary worker to adventurer. By the end, when the poet's study becomes recast as a prison, it is hard to say that we have made any progress. The string of similes, if it goes anywhere at all,

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[38] François Rigolot, "Du Bellay et la poésie du refus," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 36.3 (1974): 489-502, 493.

[39] Ibid., 502.

proceeds modestly and obliquely, collecting specific similar qualities without taking on all the semantic weight that gets transferred with metaphor. In Rigolot's useful formulation, Du Bellay's frequent recourse to simile distances him from his worldly source material and preserves the world as "un réservoir d'analogies," the distance affording continued flexibility.[40] Making it almost painfully clear that these are only *near* equivalences, things that are *only* "like"—or something like "like"—something else, each analogy makes a half-hearted stab at identity, but, as their repetition testifies, must ultimately settle for difference.[41]

Du Bellay's sense that he falls short of identification with the Gallic Hercules, that he must give up or compromise his delusions of conventional heroic grandeur, does not mean that he considers his work utterly unimportant. Coming to the conclusion that the most important work is the sometimes imperceptible labor that sustainably maintains interpersonal relationships and readerly communities, he also realizes that the only vocabulary readily available (and communicable) for the valorization of labor is that of Herculean heroism, whether holding up the heavens, lopping off a Hydra's heads, or binding a populace by the ears. The Gallic Hercules, whose laborious toils are the same as his linguistic feats, would seem to offer more possibility than the Greek version for a poetic vocabulary that could assert the value of textual work without claiming it as superhuman or immediately and sweepingly world-changing. But unable to escape the pressures of the conventional heroic expectations for even this somewhat pathetically comic figure[42]—and accused of falling short of them by Aneau's harsh charge of *Hercules factitius*—Du Bellay hedges, adopting additional strategies of suggesting how poetic labor might be valued. Periodically in *Les Regrets,* he introduces a more mundane model of valorization, a purely mediating metaphor, free of all the epic weight of Hercules: the *lettre de change*. The letter (or bill) of exchange, a written order exacting payment that dominated medieval economics and was frequently used well into the early modern period, evokes not the highly visible, large-scale exploits of the hero but the microscopic labors that maintain local economic relationships, as well as larger virtual and political communities. An investment in these labors does not guarantee private gain, public consequence, or immortal fame. On the contrary, whatever they accomplish happens gradually, invisibly, and to slight or uncertain effect.

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[40] Ibid., 501.

[41] The collapsing move of metaphor can also, of course, draw attention to difference as well as similarity between the two equated entities. But simile, in laying the yoking mechanism bare, reveals the labor that goes into trying to make things the same, and repeated simile demonstrates that this labor is never complete. As Jacques Derrida puts it in "White Mythology," glossing Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, "metaphor puts before our eyes with vivacity what simile reconstructs indirectly and more cumbersomely" ("White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," trans. F. C. T. Moore, *New Literary History* 6.1 [Autumn 1974]: 5-74, 39). Also drawing on the *Rhetoric*, in an essay on Edmund Spenser's similes in *The Faerie Queene,* Colleen Rosenfeld uses Aristotle's suggestion that "the simile takes more time to get from 'this' to 'that'" to describe how a Spenserian simile "missteps" and "stumbles," and how its "own syntactical materials can get in the way" (Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld, "Braggadochio and the Schoolroom Simile," *English Literary Renaissance* 41.3 [Autumn 2011]: 429-61, 435). I find Derrida's more general and Rosenfeld's specific emphasis on the awkwardness of simile instructive, even if in Du Bellay's case (unlike in Spenser's) similes falter less because they have too much to do than because they don't have enough.

[42] This is true at least in Lucian's original rendering, the sense of which, I argue above, is as active in Du Bellay's imagination as the hagiographic interpretations of his contemporaries.

II. Microeconomic Poetics: Exchange without Change

David Quint's analysis of *Don Quijote* has suggested that the rise of money meant the death of the chivalric spirit: "what can be left of heroism," Quint ventriloquizes the novel as asking, "in a world in which money dominates and transforms all human activity"?[43] Money, Quint explains, "measures the distance between the heroic, aristocratic world of Don Quijote's fantasy and the modern, material world."[44] In Quint's reading of Cervantes, the novel's move from an aristocratic ethos to an acceptance of money's necessity formally enacts an accommodation to modernity.

Du Bellay's backtracking from the epic plans outlined (if imperfectly) in the *Défense* to a conceit as middling as the *lettre de change* in the *Regrets* amounts to a relaxation of the efforts of epic in favor of lower generic goals better suited not only to a "modern, material world" but also, somewhat paradoxically, to a resistance to any inevitable progress into such a world in the first place. Aware that the fantasy of a gallicized classical poem might—despite all the *Défense*'s own disavowal of chivalric romance—be just as ridiculous as a knight-errant's tilting at windmills, or simply increasingly aware that his own poetic skills might not be up to such a heroic task, a savvy poet might shift his focus from mytho-historic military feats to something more modestly sonnet-sized: minor and possibly meaningless financial transactions. I will argue in the following section, however, that Du Bellay's interest in the metaphorics of money is not a conciliatory gesture in the face or fear of epic's failure. Rather, the slight suggestions of a money economy in *Les Regrets* sketch out an alternative domestic georgic poetic economy that is collective rather than individual, based on the virtual—and always only mildly hopeful—renewals of relationships rather than the expectation of a quantifiable increase in cultural capital. The invisible or microscopic ways in which the *lettre de change* creates value, in other words, offer new possibilities for maintaining communities through literary exchange.

Du Bellay's use of the *lettre de change* metaphor, with its only hesitant predictions of profitable returns, is not quite in keeping with the confidence in cultural profits espoused by his peers. Ronsard, for example, presents his ode *Au Roy Henry II* as a kind of interest—a "petit don" offered as "usure"—in anticipation of the grander, and ultimately uncompleted, epic that would bring glory to king and nation.[45] But the problem of how to price and sell poetry—how to create, as Pierre Bourdieu calls it, a "commerce des choses dont il n'y a pas de commerce,"[46] the reduction of transcendent values to monetary ones—was especially fraught at a time when, as Natalie Zemon Davis has documented, an emergent market economy for books coexisted uneasily with a feudal system of patronage.[47]

To manage these two necessary translations—between the spiritual *bien* and the material, and between the tacit expectations of the gift and the clear profit-motives of the market—Du Bellay adopts a domestic georgic rhetoric of constant vigilance in the face of uncertain futures, a rhetoric that in some ways recalls the uncertain reciprocity of gift exchange and that is underscored by the epistolary style of many of the poems. The complex edifice of a rapidly changing economy is

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[43] Quint, *Cervantes's Novel of Modern Times: A New Reading of Don Quixote* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 60. Michael Nerlich, in *Ideology of Adventure,* suggests a more legible continuity from the chivalric hero-adventurer to the bourgeois capitalist.

[44] Ibid., 66.

[45] "Ainsi, suivant les Dieus, je te supli de prendre / A gré ce petit don, pour l'usure d'atendre / Un present plus parfait & plus digne d'un Roi / Que ja dans mon esprit je patronne pour toi" (*Au Roy Henry II*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Raymond Lebègue, Isidore Silver, Paul Laumonier [Paris: Hachette, 1914-1967], vol. 7, ll. 71-74).

[46] Pierre Bourdieu, "La production de la croyance," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 13.1 (1977): 3-43, 4.

[47] Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

absorbed into the pure linguistic exchange of the letter with Du Bellay's evocation of the *lettre de change*, which in his usage is as much platonic love note as bank note. Diverging from the route of Ronsard, who claimed his shorter poems were written to raise monetary and literary capital for the epic which, he promised, would raise France's cultural stock, Du Bellay's investment was in maintenance: rather than seeking to improve or expand, or even to *illustrer*, his own value through poetic language, his aim is only to preserve it. Any incidental improvement would be gratuitous, which I mean in something like the sense in which François provisionally calls the texts in her archive gratuitous "according to the word's full range of meanings: 'freely bestowed; granted without claim or merit; provided without payment or return; costing nothing to the recipients; free,'" with the "slippage across semantic registers—ontological, theological, aesthetic, economic, and ethical" key to her understanding of how gratuitousness and grace function in those works.[48] In Du Bellay's case, gratuitousness, while not negative in a strong sense, can come off not only as unasked for but also as mildly uncomfortable, his laborious demurrals having left him without the resources to accept the gift that is nonetheless bestowed.

It has been argued that Du Bellay's avowedly modest stance in *Les Regrets* is precisely that: a stance, strategically adopted, in the mode of *sprezzatura,* in order to advance his standing both at court and with the reading public. As Rigolot says of Du Bellay's stated commitment to literal and unadorned language, innocent of figure or flourish, "Ce parti pris pour l'absence de toute figure est lui-même figure. […] En somme, il s'agit moins pour lui de rechercher un degré zéro du style que de cultiver, consciemment, un style de degré zéro"; his apparent simplicity, in other words, is a "trompe-l'œil."[49] In a similar spirit, Helgerson posits that "the seeming artlessness of the *Regrets* is itself an artful pretense that any alert reader will easily unmask."[50] Yet even if this performance of artlessness is an artful performance, it is one that goes deep enough, in Du Bellay, to have become second nature, making it indistinguishable from real sincerity. His artlessness becomes an artificial metabolism, a way of transforming and domesticating the world to his own terms, rather than a superficial and removable mask.

This adoption of *sprezzatura* comes close to taking the Italian word's etymology literally: not gracefully dancing the courtly dance or coolly performing nonchalance, but rather deliberately and sometimes awkwardly subtracting *prezzo* from the equation. Again François's lexicon is instructive: the "uncounted" of her subtitle (*The Literature of Uncounted Experience*) "refers less to an absence of narration or failure to acknowledge than to an action of 'uncounting' (even 'dis-counting'—making light of, depositing to leave unclaimed—if this could be taken nonpejoratively)," with the parenthetical, like François's many discursive footnotes, calling attention to itself precisely as non-required reading.[51] In a sonnet outlining proper courtly discourse, Du Bellay offers advice that could well be construed as a defense of his own poetic approach, but also as a depreciation of *sprezzatura* itself:

> Surtout garde-toi bien d'être double en paroles,
> Et n'use sans propos de finesses frivoles,
> Pour acquérir le bruit d'être bon courtisan. (*Regrets* 142, ll. 9-11)
>
> [Above all keep from being duplicitous in words, and do not, without a good reason, use frivolous wit to acquire a reputation as a good courtier.]

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[48] François, *Open Secrets*, 11-12.
[49] Rigolot, "Du Bellay," 299.
[50] Helgerson, *"The Regrets,"* 12. See also Floyd Gray, *La poétique de Du Bellay* (Paris: Nizet, 1978).
[51] François, *Open Secrets*, 13.

Seeing through the courtier's posture of modesty, Du Bellay discovers linguistic excess, over-the-top flattery, and naked ambition, which he opposes to his own (he says) sincerely self-effacing voice and simple values, his expression of impoverishment, indebtedness, and insignificance in a properly plain style. This ode to poverty would seem at odds with the *Défense*'s call for the *enrichissement* of the French language, to increase its cultural value through the addition of classical allusion, neologism, and stylistic flourishes, a call better heeded (as Du Bellay elsewhere acknowledges) by the epic ambitions and textual brocade of Ronsard, whose *poikilos* prolixity would make "double en paroles" an understatement.

What Du Bellay objects to is not, however, simple abundance, but rather its poor management, and here his domestic georgic ethos echoes Rabelais's. "Surtout garde-toi bien," he begins the tercet, enjoining his reader to employ, first and foremost, care. The use of "finesses frivoles" is unadvisable only because they are heedlessly "sans propos," and the reputation of "bon courtisan" is senseless "bruit," unprocessed by discursive treatment. The fact that, as he goes on to explain, "L'artifice caché, c'est le vrai artifice" (l. 12), means that art only has value if it is carefully kept and invisibly managed. Du Bellay's commitment to the simple *genus humile*, his constant devaluation of his own literary and economic worth, can thus be read as a mode of preservation: a denial of value that has as its goal the conservation (or, potentially, modest increase) of value over time.

Du Bellay's suggestion that linguistic richness is perhaps less a matter of focused profit-seeking than of noticing and arranging what is "simply there for the taking"[52] can mean that the richest poetic language is that which preserves the ambiguity of spiritual or material *bien* by failing to decide between the two. *Regrets* 11, with its claims of material impoverishment, at first suggests that poetry has nothing to do with enrichment at all, affirming the poet's renunciation of any material gain:

> Bien qu'aux arts d'Apollon le vulgaire n'aspire,
> Bien que de tels trésors l'avarice n'ait soin,
> Bien que de tels harnais le soldat n'ait besoin,
> Bien que l'ambition tels honneurs ne désire:
> Bien que ce soit aux grands un argument de rire,
> Bien que les plus rusés s'en tiennent le plus loin,
> Et bien que Du Bellay soit suffisant témoin
> Combien est peu prisé le métier de la lyre:
> Bien qu'un art sans profit ne plaise au courtisan,
> Bien qu'on ne paye en vers l'œuvre d'un artisan,
> Bien que la Muse soit de pauvreté suivie,
> Si ne veux-je pourtant délaisser de chanter,
> Puisque le seul chant peut mes ennuis enchanter,
> Et qu'aux Muses je dois bien six ans de ma vie.
>
> [Though the vile masses do not aspire to the arts of Apollo, though greed does not care for such treasures, though the soldier does not need such armor, though ambition does not desire such honors,
> Though to the great a subject of laughter, though the most cunning stay furthest away, and though du Bellay is witness enough to how little valued is the craft of the lyre,

[52] François, *Open Secrets*, 10.

> Though an art without profit cannot please a courtier, though you cannot pay with a poem for the work of a craftsman, though the Muse is followed by poverty,
> Nevertheless I do not wish to abandon singing, for song alone can charm away my troubles, and to the Muses I owe a good six years of my life.]

The speaker begins by lamenting his product's utter lack of value on the market: his art "sans profit" generates no revenue, and as merchants are unwilling to accept payment "en vers," the poet's purchasing power is severely limited. His only compensation for his poetry is the poetry itself: "le seul chant peut mes ennuis enchanter," making the poet an admirable manager of his psychic economy, able to spin out of a single "chant" enough enchantment to calm all his worries. If Du Bellay puts himself at the center of the poem, what could be an attention-getting centrality is also a self-domesticating ensconcing, his name cushioned safely within the poem's outer walls.

The linguistic manipulation of the sonnet offers a model of value that reflects this modest sense of economy. The sequence of the anaphoric lines amounts to an accumulation of linguistic "biens" that formally offsets the poet's complaint of poverty. This cumulative echoing, augmented by the lines' grammatical and semantic congruences, is an enrichment rhetorically different from the eloquent neologisms advocated in the *Défense,* not least because such a repetition could as easily indicate rhetorical poverty: only a poet with a paltry store of words would need to drag out the same one so many times. Though the "biens" are used as concessive qualifiers, rather than as substantives, the word's insistent reuse does solidify the word's material connotation, its minimal semantic value outweighed by a quantified physical presence; and yet the resulting effect is a sense that material goods are less convenient than clunkily superfluous. The excessive repetition involved in communicating the poem's simple message—that most people find no value in writing poetry—presents the reader with a confusing suggestion: does the parade of "biens" insist that poetry *does* hold value, and that the semantic overlap promises a smooth transition from symbolic to material wealth? Or is it an empty mockery, only exposing the unbreachable distance between the grammatically depreciating phrase "bien que" and the real economic appreciation of *biens*? Whether or not this translation would be possible, whatever literary richness the poem has generated may already have a claim on it. As the unresolved final line indicates, the poet owes the Muses a debt; how is it to be repaid? Fortunately, the Muses, unlike "l'artisan," can be paid for their inspirational services "en vers," and the poem itself could be read as at least the partial settling of this debt, the Muses' enchantment of the poet repaid, inversely, with his "chant."

The manipulation of small linguistic values—the minor but magical addition of "en" to the verb "chanter," the hopeful translation of a time sentence to be served into poetic phrases, and of linguistic into material *biens*—finds figural form in the *lettre de change,* an institution able to effect the conversion from verbal to economic value on a regular basis. Presenting a *lettre de change* represents a payment "en vers," or at least in writing. At the exact center of the *Regrets,* the paradoxical pinnacle of Du Bellay's equivocation, the poet expresses a rare explicit (though highly qualified) desire for payment, directly acknowledging his (reluctant) participation in a market economy:

> O Déesse, qui peux aux princes égaler
> Un pauvre mendiant qui n'a que la parole,
> Et qui peux d'un grand roi faire un maître d'école,
> S'il te plaît de son lieu le faire dévaler:
> Je ne te prie pas de me faire enrôler
> Au rang de ces messieurs que la faveur accole,
> Que l'on parle de moi, et que mon renom vole
> De l'aile dont tu fais ces grands princes voler:

Je ne demande pas mille et mille autres choses
Qui dessous ton pouvoir sont largement encloses,
Aussi je n'eus jamais de tant de biens souci.
Je demande sans plus que le mien on ne mange,
Et que j'aie bientôt une lettre de change,
Pour n'aller sur le buffle au départir d'ici. (*Regrets* 96)

[O Goddess, who can raise a poor beggar who has nothing but words to the level of a prince and who can make a schoolmaster of a great king if you feel like toppling him from his place,
I do not pray that you inscribe me in the register of those gentlemen whom favor embraces, so that people will speak of me and so that my fame will fly on the wing on which you make those great princes fly.
I do not ask for thousands and thousands of other things that are easily within your power, for I have never craved such an abundance of goods.
I ask only that what is mine not be devoured and that I soon get a bill of exchange, so that when I leave here I will not have to ride an ox.]

After exhaustively, paraleptically listing the worldly rewards that he is emphatically *not* demanding, Du Bellay concludes with a modest request for a *lettre de change.* Uninterested in the excess of "mille et mille autre choses," Du Bellay seems to be asking only for a fair exchange, devoid of profit, simply to spare himself the embarrassment of destitution. Claiming indifference to his own material advantage, he insists he wants nothing more than to come out even; the conservation of value is a desirable end in itself. He does not even ask for this payment right away, denying himself any instant gratification: he would be satisfied with receiving, preferably "bientôt" but not necessarily immediately, a written text that could, in turn, be exchanged for money.

This temporizing of payment through the *lettre de change* may—potentially—constitute profit even as it rhetorically effaces it. As explained by Raymond de Roover, the *lettre de change* functioned in the medieval and early modern periods as a letter of credit and was widely used in international commerce as well as by individual travelers. In drafting such a *lettre*, one party would order a second party, usually in a different country, to pay a certain sum of money to a third party. While it could be used as a kind of traveler's check, a text that represented the universal signifier of money across national borders, it was also a conservative form of investment. While the return was almost always modest, fluctuations in national currencies ensured that, provided knowledge of current exchange rates, profit was (virtually) guaranteed. As such, de Roover argues, the *lettre de change* amounted to sanctioned usury: because profit was technically uncertain, the Church did not place the return made on *lettres de change* in the same forbidden category as accrued interest.[53] Thus Du Bellay's efforts to differentiate himself from those seeking profit from poetry are potentially subverted by the hidden profit motive of the *lettre de change,* a device that convinces both the Church and the reader that Du Bellay is innocent of avarice. In equating his poems with the purely textual, barely profitable, and self-effacing letter of exchange, Du Bellay insists that whatever value his poetry might add will be immeasurably slight, the product of repetition, even redundancy, rather than linguistic innovation, generic disruption, or heroically high-risk investment schemes.[54]

Before we encounter the negating force of denial that pervades sonnet 96, the poem opens with a suggestion of profit. Implicit in the poem's first quatrain is the hint that the "Déesse," or

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53 Raymond de Roover, *L'évolution de la lettre de change* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1953), 143.
54 On the exploits of the medieval and early modern merchant-adventurer, see Nerlich, *Ideology of Adventure.*

some other benefactor, could perhaps help a poet do more than simply reverse his debts, and might instead bring him riches. The poet praises the goddess for her facility in reversing fortunes, her ability to "égaler" a rich royal and a pauper at a whim. Yet the chosen figures of poverty, attached to (meager) linguistic capital, hopefully pose the goddess as the invisible hand of the literary market: the prince becomes of equal value to the "pauvre mendiant qui n'a que la parole," and the king to a "maître d'école," with vast political and economic capital pitted against the meager cultural capital of speech and the school. While this conversion model may be generous, the beggar and schoolmaster are presented as possessing cultural capital (however limited) rather than as lacking significant economic *biens*. There is hope, then, for a poet like Du Bellay, who also banks entirely on his "parole": if *his* words prove to have value as poetry, he might not need divine intervention to convert that symbolic value into financial gain.

As if to quiet these murmurings of profit, sonnet 96 ends by presenting the request for a *lettre de change* in the rhetoric of the gift economy. As Davis discusses, the axiological status of the book, and its role in a system based on gifts and patronage, was complicated in the sixteenth century by printing and the rise of a commercial economy. Davis argues that the shift from gift to commerce was far from complete, and that despite the fact that "the book was being produced by one of the most capitalistic industries in Europe, it continued to be perceived as an object of mixed not absolute property, of collective not private enterprise."[55] The medieval notion that the book, like all learning, was a gift from God to humanity, rather than a product conceived and crafted by an individual, still ran deep, and the foregrounding of the collaboration involved in the book's production—the title page prominently featuring the publisher's name along with the author's—dispersed any human textual authority. The widespread sale of books, then, did not supplant a patronage system based on the gift, and Davis shows how gratuity was used to complement commerce and commercial printing was used to expand the scope of gift-giving.

The poet's desire for a *lettre de change* seeks to preserve poetry from commercial contamination by positing a relationship of pure reciprocity, with words (a poem) exchanged for words (*une lettre*) as gifts rather than for profit. This concealment of economic origins by linguistic means is not, of course, complete; a *lettre de change* may be epistolary in name, but it is undeniably economic in nature, playing an important if no longer central role in contemporary commerce. Yet Du Bellay twists the *lettre* image to correspond more to a gift economy than to one of sale. He is not explicitly seeking to make a profit on poetry, using negation and the subjunctive to qualify his demand for "sans plus" than that his meager assets are not stripped, and that he might "bientôt" receive a piece of writing, which he can then exchange for money, to assure him that he will not have to flee from his own ruin. Such deference and deferral resists the ready logic of sale, which Ronsard expresses as *troque pour troque*,[56] even while using a commercial vocabulary.

In sonnet 152, Du Bellay's hedging of selling and gift-giving becomes more completely absorbed within its own linguistic economy, with the overdetermined *lettre de change* as the figural focus of the poem. Rather than describing or demanding an economic exchange of poetry for (the signifier or promise of) material value, the *lettre de change* is a metaphor for a purely linguistic exchange:

> Si mes écrits, Ronsard, sont semés de ton los,
> Et si le mien encor tu ne dédaignes dire,

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[55] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France: The Prothero Lecture," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5.33 (1983), 87. Davis addresses the relation between the gift and the market economy more generally in *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France.*

[56] Ronsard, *Ode de la Paix*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, l. 472.

D'être enclos es mes vers ton honneur ne désire,
Et par là je ne cherche en tes vers être enclos.
Laissons donc, je te prie, laissons causer ces sots,
Et ces petits galants, qui, ne sachant que dire,
Disent, voyant Ronsard et Bellay s'entr'écrire,
Que ce sont deux mulets qui se grattent le dos.
Nos louanges, Ronsard, ne font tort à personne:
Et quelle loi défend que l'un à l'autre en donne,
Si les amis entre eux des présents se font bien?
On peut comme l'argent trafiquer la louange,
Et les louanges sont comme lettres de change,
Dont le change et le port, Ronsard, ne coûte rien.

[If my writings, Ronsard, are strewn with your praise and if you, too, do not disdain to praise me, your reputation does not seek to be enclosed in my poems and I likewise do not seek to be enclosed in yours.
Then let us leave, I pray you, let us leave those fools to prate and those petty gallants who, short of wit, declare, when they see Ronsard and Bellay writing of each other, that we are two mules scratching each other's backs.
Our praises, Ronsard, wrong no one. And what law forbids us to praise one another, if between themselves friends commonly exchange gifts?
One can trade in praise as in money, and praises are like bills of exchange, whose brokerage and transport, Ronsard, cost nothing.]

If in sonnet 96 the poor poet is at the mercy of the *lettre de change*'s equalizing power, here the *lettre* is entirely controlled by the poet, having been revalued as a metaphor for value. The usual metaphor for value—money—here becomes the commodity to be exchanged, as Du Bellay compares the exchange of praise to the trafficking of money itself. The *lettres de change* are presented as a literal translation of value, a process that is emphatically not usurious: "quelle loi défend," the speaker asks rhetorically, two friends' innocent exchange of "présents"? Praise buys praise, money buys money, and, as with the infertile mules who "se grattent le dos," no profit or loss will come of the transaction. Du Bellay goes so far as to nullify any potential interest or transaction cost: "le change et le port" of the letter "ne coûte rien." A *lettre de change* can be exchanged, according to the logic of the poem, not for money (and, presumably, interest), but for another *lettre de change*. One piece of correspondence (in theory) corresponds to another.

In Marc Bizer's argument for placing the *Regrets,* in which many of the poems are apostrophically addressed to friends, within the epistolary literary genre, he notes Du Bellay's ambivalence towards his official function as his cousin's secretary. Though Du Bellay draws corollaries between poetry and secretarial work even as he bemoans the tedium of official writing, the *Défense*'s project of *enrichissement* emphatically excludes the prose letter,[57] a form enthusiastically embraced by Aneau, who says he would gain more from reading the letters of secretaries, lawyers, shopkeepers, and friends than by slogging through Du Bellay's "elegies larmoyantes."[58] Du Bellay perhaps deemed this provisional cordoning off of personal or literary letters from official or commercial letters necessary in order to draw any literary profit from economic metaphors. As Lisa Freinkel explains in her analysis of usury in Dante, the "spiritual usury where the very displacement

[57] Bizer, "Letters from Home," 157.
[58] Aneau, *Quintil,* 158-9.

of commerce yields the highest profit margin" can free economic language from its material origins even while establishing the economic worth of the discourse—in this case, Du Bellay's poetry—into which that language is recontextualized.[59] The *lettre de change,* as a form of commerce that is already linguistically mediated and that can be assimilated into a rich literary letter-writing tradition, makes for especially profitable spiritual usury.

In the immediately following poem, addressed to his fellow Pléiade poet Etienne Jodelle, Du Bellay continues his endorsement of equivalence: just as "On donne à l'officier les droits de son office, / On donne au serviteur le gain de son service" ["they give the officeholder the rights of his office; they give the servant the wages of his service" (*Regrets* 153, ll. 6-7)], the pleasure of writing poetry provides the reward of pleasure itself. But because sonnet 153 recapitulates the previous poem's metaphorically economic exchange in explicitly economic terms, the circulation of *louange* for *louange* in a closed system becomes threatened. Reproaching Jodelle for expecting a "loyer" for his poetic labor that should be its own reward—"Car quel loyer veux-tu avoir de ton plaisir, / Puisque le plaisir même en est la récompense?" ["For what payment do you expect from your pleasure, since pleasure itself is its own reward?" (ll. 13-14)]—Du Bellay introduces the possibility of monetary surplus value even while rejecting it. In this light, sonnet 152's pure exchange of praise (*louer*) gains the economic resonance of *loyer*.

The specter of *loyer,* the surplus value that goes beyond reciprocal linguistic exchange, haunts another poem dedicated to dedication, another *louange* of *louange*. None of the poems concerning Marguerite, Henri II's sister, address her directly, operating instead, like the *lettre de change*, by mediation through a third party. In sonnet 182, Du Bellay explains that he is not interested in selling his praise of Marguerite for a price:

> Je ne suis pas de ceux qui robent la louange,
> Fraudant indignement les hommes de valeur,
> Ou qui, changeant la noire à la blanche couleur,
> Savent, comme l'on dit, faire d'un diable un ange.
> Je ne fais point valoir, comme un trésor étrange,
> Ce que vantent si haut nos marcadants d'honneur,
> Et si ne cherche point que quelque grand seigneur
> Me baille pour des vers des biens en contr'échange.
> Ce que je quiers, Gournay, de cette sœur de roi,
> Que j'honore, révère, admire comme toi,
> C'est que de la louer sa bonté me dispense.
> Puisqu'elle est de mes vers le plus louable objet:
> Car en louant, Gournay, si louable sujet,
> Le los que je m'acquiers m'est trop grand' récompense.
>
> [I am not one of those who conceals praise, unfairly defrauding worthy men, or who, turning black into white, can, as they say, make an angel of a devil.
> I do not display, like a rare treasure, what our merchants of honor so loudly proclaim nor do I wish for some great lord to give me goods in exchange for poems.
> What I seek, Gournay, from that sister of the king, whom I honor, revere, admire as you do, is that her goodness permit me to praise her;
> Seeing that she is the most praiseworthy object of my poems, for in praising, Gournay, such a praiseworthy subject, the praise I acquire is more than enough of a reward for me.]

[59] Lisa Freinkel, "*Inferno* and the Poetics of *Usura*," *MLN* 107:1 (1992): 1-17, 5.

Despite allowing that language can, however dishonestly, "faire valoir" and be sold by "marcadants," Du Bellay declines any form of material "contr'échange" of equal value to the verses he offers. Instead, all he desires in return for his praise of Marguerite is the preservation of the conditions of praise, like the "chant" that is its own reward in sonnet 11 or the self-inducing "plaisir" of sonnet 153.

As with the "biens" in sonnet 11, the repetition of which both accumulates a quasi-material weight and threatens to empty out the word's semantic value, the insistent and seemingly vacuous repetition of "louer" and its variants gains a certain interest within the logic of the poem, until, by the end, "le los" is "trop grand' récompense," something exceeding that of the previously refused "contr'échange." The potential economic signification of "louer"—soon converted to the more realized "loyer" in sonnet 183—comes to the fore in the final tercet, where its proliferation obscures the relationship between the poet and his potential patron to the point where it is unclear who is giving and who is receiving:

> Puisqu'elle est de mes vers le plus louable objet:
> Car en louant, Gournay, si louable sujet,
> Le los que je m'acquiers m'est trop grand' récompense.

Marguerite is clearly the object of the poet's praise; she is also the subject of his poem. But the unclear grammatical antecedent of the "si louable sujet," further obscured by the interjection of Gournay's name, and the (if both object and subject are Marguerite) unnecessary repetition of "louable" reminds the reader of the poet's role as speaking subject. This perfect symmetry of praiseworthy object and praiseworthy subject suggests the exchange between the two parties involved in the *louange* should go both ways, that to "louer" deserves the equalizing response of a "loyer," the economic answer to a literary plea. The supposed voluntary participation in a gift economy becomes, through the force of repetition, an insistent necessity, blurring the line between the gift and the enforced reciprocity of a commercial exchange, *troque pour troque.* The poet's modest gesture of claiming that the product he generates himself amounts to "trop grand' récompense" could also be read, in light of his explicit rejection of excess in favor of "contr'échange," as a hint that a different form of compensation—a "loyer" rather than more "louer"—might be a more appropriate (that is, better proportioned) reward than his own superfluous, overdetermined praise.

The accumulation of iterations of "louer" over the course of these lines thus opens up the possibility that Du Bellay's patrons might take the French language's cue and conflate *louer* with *loyer,* praise with monetary compensation. The directly following sonnet 183 makes this paronomasiac suggestion more explicit:

> La louange, à qui n'a rien de louable en soi,
> Ne sert que de le faire à tous montrer au doigt,
> Mais elle est le loyer de cil qui la mérite. (ll. 9-11)
>
> [Praise of one who has nothing praiseworthy about him serves only to make him a universal laughingstock, but praise is the reward of those who deserve it.]

Yet Du Bellay's spiritually usurious endowment of words with surplus linguistic value, exploiting economic discourse for literary profit, did not seem to have enacted much actual conversion of symbolic capital to economic capital. If this was his primary goal, the clever concealment of his economic motives seems to have been too subtle; he was far less successful than Ronsard at court

(which he was, to his detriment, less subtle than Ronsard at criticizing), and died destitute at his writing desk.[60] The strategy of the *lettre de change*, as a surface reading of the economic tool would corroborate, is better suited to maintenance, in this case of the continued cultural value of the French language, than to personal profit.[61] The goal of the *lettre de change* is, like that of the project outlined in the *Défense,* to *illustrer*: to add luster or value, but also, in a semantically proleptic sense, merely to represent. In Du Bellay's usage, *illustration* slides from its early modern meaning to its modern one, the connotation gaining in modesty of ambition.

III. Yard Maintenance: Hedging on and for the Future

The figures of the Gallic Hercules and the *lettre de change* represent, with varying degrees of literalness, models for holding communities together by a logic of equivalence that is flexible enough to allow for difference, where subjects, in all their plurality, are tied to the same standard in a way that maintains both individuals and relationships. In the *Défense,* Du Bellay wants to help build these subjects a home:

> Pource que le poète et l'orateur sont comme les deux piliers qui soutiennent l'édifice de chacune langue […] j'ai bien voulu, pour le devoir en quoi je suis obligé à la patrie, tellement quellement ébaucher celui qui restait, espérant que par moi, ou par une plus docte main, il pourra recevoir sa perfection. (231)
>
> [Since the poet and the orator are like the two pillars that support the edifice of each language […] I wanted, out of the duty I owe my fatherland, to sketch out as well as I can the one that remained, hoping that it may be brought to perfection by me or by some more learned hand. (362)]

The poet and orator hold up the edifice of language in a way that recalls the heroic labor of Hercules as Atlas's proxy. But the poet and orator have become permanent fixtures, seamless parts of the architecture rather than the singular figures that showily hoist it on their shoulders, and Du Bellay has quietly taken it upon himself to support these supporters, to begin to "ébaucher" the rest of the building, "espérant que" either a future version of himself or someone else—the perfection of each possibility equally dependent on hope—will build incrementally on his labor.

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[60] Helgerson, *"The Regrets,"* 9.

[61] Du Bellay's decision to divest temporarily from his cultural capital-building project to write poems in Latin, which was on the one hand out of necessity for immediate economic capital, could also be understood as part of a longer and less linear process of cultivation. Du Bellay's immediately unnoticed *enrichissement* produces value that, like a *lettre de change,* simultaneously translates and increases value across time and space, and can do so more freely because its profit motives are so well concealed as to be impossible to discover with any certainty. As Helgerson puts it, "bilingualism and its inner accompaniment, spiritual dual-citizenship, provide, to use one of his own favorite horticultural metaphors, the well-cultivated ground from which a new imperial culture, and, with it, a new identity and new allegiance can grow" (26). But this need not suggest that Du Bellay's rhetorical strategies are of interest solely as an idiom of imperialism. Part of my aim is to show how the inevitability of empire, as a product of linear progress, is challenged by the infinitesimal ambivalences and hesitations in Du Bellay's writing. It is of course true that epic, the imperialist genre par excellence, is also characterized by a progression that is not exclusively linear and by the radical uncertainty of military action. But when heroism emerges in epic, it is to rescue action from that indeterminacy and set it down into history; Du Bellay has no such interest.

The program outlined in the *Défense* endorses domestic cultural growth, but only with qualification: this growth is modeled on individually unremarkable operations that seem not to (and may never) amount to much, and which accrue profit only gradually and invisibly, if at all—the kinds of operations associated more, in the sixteenth century, with private interior spaces than with the emerging national stage. Du Bellay's vision for France, and for his own poetry, ultimately looks more like contained sustainability than the expansionist proto-imperialism for which Helgerson and others have read the *Défense* symptomatically. As his models for poetic value in the *Regrets* corroborate, his hopes for the continued cultural currency of French poetry are pinned on means that are gradual, minor, and nearly imperceptible, and that thus risk insignificance.

Throughout the *Défense*, Du Bellay makes his sweeping patriotic pronouncements through images of laborious reproduction rather than of singular acts of linguistic heroism. His dramatic invocation of the Gallic Hercules was laughable to Aneau partly because the tract's ambitious goals for French poetry seem disproportionately great given the very local operations that he prescribes. Even though he is intent on achieving literary grandeur on a national scale, Du Bellay's *Hercule gallique*, like Erasmus's Herculean scholar, favors tactics so local in their scope and gradual in their implementation as to be almost imperceptible; in this case, the small-scale georgic tactics of the gardener. Just as Latin authors, "en guise de bons agriculteurs," discarded weak aspects of their language and, "pour échange," grafted Greek scions onto their own rootstock, so too should Du Bellay's readers splice ancient literary forms with French to produce poems motored by hybrid vigor. If this horticultural maneuvering is performed smoothly, the new linguistic branches will appear like part of the original plant, "si bien entés et faits semblables à leur tronc que désormais n'apparaissent plus adoptifs, mais naturels," and go about producing the healthy flowers and fruit of rhetoric, "ces fleurs et ces fruits colorés de cette grande éloquence" (207-8). The goal of this genetic modification is to increase yields, but not by the linguistic equivalent of splicing salmon genes with corn, manufacturing mutant portmanteaux. On the contrary, sustainably profitable poetic production looks just like natural *re*production, the mere replication of existing organic material.[62] By transplanting material from foreign ("sauvage") soil to "domestique," cutting off superfluous branches ("inutiles rameaux"), and replacing them with "rameaux francs et domestiques," it becomes restored—"restaurée"—to its natural, frank state. That the "francs" branches are, in Du Bellay's example, the Greek elements grafted by the Romans suggests that what is Greek could easily become *franc,* which, as attested by contemporary competing etymologies of "France," could be synonymous with *domestique*.[63]

The gardener was a frequent figure in French Renaissance discourse for the management of cultural and economic resources, as well as good government. The gardener's profession, though materially based in the dirt, was also aesthetically minded (the "ordering" of plants was a high

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[62] Here and throughout this dissertation I mean to evoke the early modern meaning of "reproduction" in both French and English as in keeping with the notion of simple replacement, whether natural or artificial. The term was used in a botanical context "à l'égard des nouvelles tiges que des racines repoussent chaque année, & aussi à l'égard des rejets que produisent des arbres coupés jusques sur leurs racines. Ces reproductions sont les unes naturelles, les autres forcées." In the eighteenth century, it could refer to a plant "qui se fait par le moyen de leurs semences," but in the animal kingdom it applied only to creatures like crawfish and other possessors of self-renewing body parts, like "Les nouvelles pattes qui succèdent à celles qui ont été arrachées. Il se dit aussi de la queue des lézards qui se reproduit lorsqu'elle a été mutilée" (Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, 1762). Godefroy's *Complément* has, simply, "produire de nouveau."

[63] William Kennedy documents the variety of opinions regarding the name's origin in the sixteenth century: "France" could come from Franks (German *franc*, ferocious/barbarous), the conquerors of the Gauls; free (Latin *fractum*, broken off; Greek *phragma*, independent unit); and Francus, Hector's supposed son who escaped Troy to found a new empire in France (Kennedy, *Site of Petrarchism*, 81).

priority), and the persistence of the metaphorics of the "flowers of rhetoric" (the best of which were plucked and arranged in *florilegia*) and "garden of letters" smoothed the transition between botanical flowers and their linguistic equivalents. Hugues Salel's allegorical poem featuring François Ier as a "Jardinier Françoys" tending his "jardin gallicque" is indicative of the impulse to identify France as a fertile garden, though whether, as Timothy Hampton points out, it was a *locus amoenus*—"a temperate space in which all subjects share a character 'naturally' produced by climate"—or a *hortus conclusus*, "a walled space defined only by its difference from enemies"—was a question that continued to inform France's evolving self-conception throughout the sixteenth century.[64] The humanist doctor Symphorien Champier's *Hortus Gallicus,* a complete catalog of French medicinal herbs that correspond to the highly valued ones that grow in the East, has the effect that "the metaphorical image of rhetoric as flower is re-literalized," as Hampton puts it: "transplanting flowers becomes translating empire, and vice versa."[65]

For Du Bellay, by contrast, translation did not neatly map onto the narrative of progress implied by *translatio imperii et studii,* whereby empire and learning follow a steady westward trajectory. William Kennedy, noting Du Bellay's inconsistencies in dealing with the historical legacy of Rome, explains that for Du Bellay, "cultural transmission is neither linear nor direct"[66]: because languages are cultivated like plants, they follow instead a cyclical pattern of planting, maintenance, harvest, and replanting. They also follow a lateral pattern, though not on the grand scale of *translatio.* Culture is transplanted in minor and imperceptible ways, not on the grand scale of the mass botanical relocation evoked by Champier, and Du Bellay's disjointed account of plant growth undermines any attempt he might be making to naturalize the rise of an impending French empire.

Aneau's snide comparison of the *Défense* to shoddy gardening highlights the difference between Du Bellay's rhetoric and that of other proponents of a national georgic. Deriding the choppy, patchwork quality of the treatise's language as glaringly artificial linguistic grafting, Aneau suggests that Du Bellay's habit of mixing metaphors of eating, gardening, and building ("commençant par manger, moyennant par planter, et finissant par bâtir, en parlant toujours de mêmes choses") amounts to a "translation vicieuse, et inconséquente," a random and tortured logic that strays far from a natural flow of ideas.[67] Driven crazy by these incongruous images, sloppy transitions, and examples "assemblées sans ordre,"[68] Aneau plants a damning criticism: just as the land of an orchard (to take up, Aneau explains, Du Bellay's own ridiculous metaphorics) does not itself produce any "lyaison des entes, & treilles"—it is the gardener who does the crucial work of grafting and trellising—language does not produce, autocthonically, its own *richesse.* Enrichment is the job of the orator, who carefully arranges language: his job is to "adresser, ordonner & conjoindre,"[69] skills that Aneau judges sorely lacking in Du Bellay.

Du Bellay's fragmented plan to naturalize cultural translation does not let us forget how fragile that naturalization is, and how progress—far from being just as inexorable as natural time—is in fact always at risk of interruption or derailment. Making his sweeping patriotic pronouncements through images of ordinary maintenance work rather than of extraordinary acts of heroism, Du Bellay emphasizes the necessity of repeatedly preventing cultivated cultural forms from reverting to wildness. If the ancient Romans were as negligent of their linguistic cultivation ("eussent été aussi négligents à la culture de leur langue") as the French have been, he points out, they would never

[64] Hampton, *Literature and Nation*, 18.
[65] Ibid., 16.
[66] Kennedy, *Site of Petrarchism*, 90.
[67] Aneau, *Quintil,* 86.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 88.

have achieved literary greatness (207). This constant need for re-cultivation (or re-naturalization) is registered on the sentence level by constant self-interruptions, inserted to refine a statement or cast salutary doubt: parenthetical checks to (what would otherwise seem to be) the inevitable realization of an idea. As he outlines his competitive gardening program, Du Bellay first presents French as a language that is flowering but not fructifying, before taking it back: French is, rather, like a plant that has not even yet begun to flower, and its fruit, far from a sure thing, is expressed not in the future tense but in the past subjunctive and conditional ("tant se faut qu'elle ait apporté tout le fruit qu'elle pourrait bien produire," 207). He performs a similar retraction in the dedication to the *Défense*, which concludes with a description of the treatise's contents as "les premiers fruits, ou pour mieux dire, les premières fleurs du printemps" (200)—the promise of substantial fruits quickly withdrawn and potentially fruitless flowers offered in their place. Even the prophetic invocation of a golden age of French literature is deflated within a few words: "Le temps viendra (peut-être)" when France will be able to boast of its own Homers and Ciceros; that time will come, but only maybe, and only if, by the way, the French language isn't already dead and buried, "tout ensevelie," which—Du Bellay goes on to concede in a parenthetical and not entirely unserious pun on the name of the late king and "jardinier François"—it could be (208). Du Bellay simply cannot say if what is happening underground is the invisible activity of putting down roots or the inertia of death, and can only hope "que notre langue (si avec Français n'est du tout ensevelie la langue française) qui commence encore à jeter ses racines, sortira de terre" (208).

In the meantime, Du Bellay advises French poets to take up their pruning shears. If the treatise fails to put us in an epic mood, it does put us in a georgic one, with all its checking, pruning, correction, and protection of language at the most local levels. Du Bellay gets out no more than three words in the first sentence of the treatise before he interrupts himself with a parenthesis acknowledging a parade of qualifications and doubts: "Si la nature (dont quelque personnage de grande renommée non sans raison a douté si on la devait appeler mère ou marâtre)…" (203) ["If Nature (of whom a person of great renown has, not without reason, wondered whether we should call her mother or stepmother)" (322)]. His constant insertions of parenthetical imagined dialogue throughout the treatise—"(dira quelqu'un)," "(comme dit quelqu'un)," "(comme ils disent)"—may be meant simply to pre-empt his critics, but they have the effect of summoning, or leaving a place for, a community of hedgers and pruners collectively refining his language along with him. If, as the treatise's first paragraph goes on, "les Langues ne sont nées d'elles mesmes en façon d'herbes, racines & arbres," not born like plants with inherent strength or weakness but acquiring all their strength from human cultivation ("mais toute leur vertu est née au monde du vouloir & arbitre des mortelz," 203), Du Bellay's readers are called to a collective duty to tend their garden together.

Du Bellay's temperate zeal for gardening practices echoes some of the more literally horticultural discourse that was taking root in France at the time and that often hybridized natural philosophy, practical advice, and religious or political propaganda. The Protestant ceramicist and engineer Bernard Palissy's 1563 agricultural-alchemical-spiritual guide *Recepte véritable* offers, as its complete title boasts, "tous les hommes de la France" the opportunity to "multiplier & augmenter leurs thresors & possessions" by learning about and working with nature, which activities have the added benefits of enriching their souls. Palissy's recipe for improvement takes the form of *réduction*: in order to communicate practical and spiritual knowledge to the public, the secrets of "la parfaite Agriculture" must be "reduits par une methode de si facile cognoissance"—*reduced* to such an easily learned method—that even lowly and ignorant minds, "les esprits plus grossiers & ignorants," can comprehend them.[70]

[70] Bernard Palissy, *Recepte veritable,* in *Oeuvres de Bernard Palissy, revues sur les exemplaires de la Bibliothèque du Roi,* ed. Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond (Paris: Ruault, 1777), 489.

Palissy's way of "multiplier & augmenter" existing treasures involves, in form and content, not a progression into new heights of original linguistic and agricultural creation, but a reduction to plain language and the basic re-creation of what already exists in nature and the self, operations that, for all their simplicity, require labor to sustain. The agricultural-spiritual laboratory he proposes in the *Recepte* is an Edenic garden where he can "me retirer, & recreer mon esprit," a refuge from the "divorces, pestes, epidimies, & autres tribulations" ravaging France.[71] His natural philosophy is one based on salt, which, he explains, is the substance to which all other substances can be reduced: everything "se reduit en sel," and when the salt that constitutes the essence of fertilizer washes away it is no longer possible to say that the manure is still manure, that "fumier demeure fumier."[72] A world without salt for Palissy is like Rabelais's world without Pantagruelion, a world where nothing could remain itself, where "nulle chose ne se pourrait tenir en son estre."[73] Palissy cannot emphasize enough how important it is that the integrity of natural substances be preserved, and that loss of salt be prevented, so that maintenance of the land, rather than its improvement, is the end of agriculture.

Even manuring is, for Palissy, meant most directly not for improvement but for maintenance, or literal reformation: putting back into the earth what has been taken out of it. Just as the stars and planets, which the naked eye mistakes for immobile, are never idle, so is the earth, Palissy contends, always laboring to recreate itself. It constantly works to replenish and reform that which has been regularly expended: "ce qui se consomme naturellement en elle, elle le renouvelle, & le reforme derechef, si ce n'est en une sorte, elle le refait en une autre. Et voila pourquoy tu dois porter les fumiers en terre, afin que derechef la terre prenne la mesme substance qu'elle luy avoit donnée."[74] Here Palissy slips between natural and artificial reproduction, inviting human hands to interfere in the earth's cyclical regeneration and efface their labor, folding it into a natural process. And whether the process of regeneration involves human intervention or not, it means that creation did not end in the Book of Genesis; it is continuously happening, in the present progressive form. As Palissy puts it, since countless stones are destroyed every day, they must be constantly replaced, or we would have no stones at all: "si les pierres n'eussent esté aucunement formées, creuës, & augmentees depuis la premiere creation escrite au livre de Genese, qu'il seroit aujourd'huy difficile d'en pouvoir trouver une seule."[75] The world owes itself to recreation as much as, if not more than, to creation.

Writing on the popularity of the Protestant-leaning polymath Charles Estienne's gardening manual *La Maison Rustique*, first translated from Latin to French in 1564, Tom Conley has speculated, "It may be that with the Wars of Religion the formal practice of belief, having become dangerous for whoever ventured to make manifest their tenets, could metamorphose into daily activities" like gardening, a public and apparently productive activity that could allow for the private or oblique expression of faith.[76] For writers like Palissy and Estienne, gardening could take on—to mix horticultural and digestive language inconsequently—a metabolic function in individual moral life, a way less of concealing than of negotiating private beliefs, approaching Marx's definition of labor more generally as "first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man

71 Ibid., 497.
72 Ibid., 506, 504.
73 Ibid., 521.
74 Ibid., 526.
75 Ibid., 528.
76 Tom Conley, "Civil War and French Better Homes & Gardens," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 98.4 (Fall 1999): 725-59, 730.

mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature."[77] Writing in the seventeenth century, the Jansenist Robert Arnauld d'Andilly echoes the rhetoric of gardeners who tried to graft their beliefs onto their plants during the wars of religion. In his anonymously published 1652 masterpiece of tree-pruning philosophy, *La manière de cultiver des arbres fruitiers,* Arnauld d'Andilly shares Palissy's concerns not only with religious retreat but also with the continuous and often invisible recreation that characterizes both gardening and processes of a more cosmic scale. He confesses that he cannot understand those who complain about the "soin" required in caring for trees, for this care is precisely what constitutes the pleasure of gardening:

> C'est cette peine qui attache par des charmes secrets le Jardinier à son travail; c'est elle qui donne un plaisant entretien pendant tout le cours de l'année, mesme lors que les arbres sont inutiles, & qu'ils semblent estre entierement morts; c'est elle qui anime cette douce esperance, qui bien souvent est plus agreable que la jouissance des fruits, & qui fait que nous avons presque autant de divertissement à planter des arbres, qu'à les voir tous venus; c'est elle qui nous fait considerer les belles productions de la nature comme nos propres ouvrages…[78]

The "peine" of gardening is incessant, but the labor is a pleasure, though its "charmes" are "secrets" and likely to go unnoticed. The yearlong "plaisant entretien" includes the time in which trees do not produce—when they are "inutiles" and seem to be "entierement morts"—and it is precisely labor that animates "cette douce esperance," which is often "plus agreable que la jouissance des fruits," the laborious expectation of the harvest sweeter than the fruits themselves. Labor is also what allows us to appropriate "les belles productions de la nature comme nos propres ouvrages": to metabolize, in other words, nature's *poiesis* into our own body of work. Gardening is a conversation with nature that cultivates the earth in order to cultivate communities and selves, a way to, as Arnauld d'Andilly puts it, "raisonner avec la terre, pour apprendre à bien raisonner avec les hommes, & mieux encore avec soy-mesme."[79]

Through this metabolic negotiation, the marriage as if by grafting of self and world, plants and letters grow by art in conjunction with nature. Borrowing a line from Virgil's *Eclogues,* Arnauld d'Andilly suggests that the love of gardening itself follows the model of horticultural development, explaining that it

> se fortifie dans les esprits bien reglez, à proportion que les arbres jettent de fortes racines dans les bonnes terres; & je pourrois, ce me semble, emprunter ces paroles du Poëte pour en faire la devise d'un veritable Jardinier: *Crescent illae, crescetis amores*.[80]

Like the inscriptions on the oaks that Ronsard asks to serve as secretaries of his misfortune—"Soyez de mon mal-heur fideles secretaries, / Gravez-le en vostre escorce, afin que tous les mois / Il croisse comme vous"[81]—the "devise d'un veritable Jardinier" will quite literally, but slowly and

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[77] Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy,* trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992), 283.

[78] Robert Arnauld D'Andilly, *La manière de cultiver les arbres fruitiers, où il est traitté des pepinieres, des espalliers, des contr'espalliers, des arbres en buisson, [et] à haute tige* (Paris: Chez Antoine Vitré, 1658), xxxii.

[79] Arnauld d'Andilly, *La manière de cultiver,* vii.

[80] Ibid., xvi.

[81] "Be faithful secretaries of my misfortune, engrave it on your bark, so that month by month it will grow like you" (Ronsard, "Pièces ajoutées au second livre des *Sonets pour Hélène* [1587]," in *Les Amours*, ll. 5-7).

imperceptibly, grow on the time scale of trees, and his vegetable love will grow along with it. The transplantation of Virgil's bucolic image of hopelessly lovelorn tree-scribbling into Arnauld d'Andilly's praise of horticultural labor complicates the conventional divide between idyllic pastoral and muscular georgic. Writing on bark may be a minimal intervention into natural processes, it may not produce any fruits, and if the letters can be said to grow at all, it will be at a pace practically geological. But the pastoral "devise" can serve as an emblem for georgic labor in its association with the invisible progress that is (probably) taking place both in the soil underground and in the "esprits" of gardeners learning to appreciate the potential value of that invisible progress.

This poetically—that is, barely—marked growth is precisely what escapes Aneau's notice in one of his most vehement attacks on the *Défense,* where he accuses Du Bellay of extolling the richness of the classics and denigrating the French language's poverty

> sans y remedier nullement et sans l'enricher d'un seul mot, d'une seule vertu, ne bref de rien, sinon que de promesse & d'espoir, disant qu'elle pourra estre, qu'elle viendra, qu'elle sera, etc. Mais quoy? quand et comment? Est-ce là defense & illustration, ou plustot offense & denigration?[82]
>
> [without remedying it in any way and without enriching it with a single word, with a single quality, or with anything at all, except with promises and hope, saying that it might become, that it will arrive, that it will be, etc. But what? When and how? Is this a defense and illustration, or rather an offense and denigration?]

Du Bellay's domestic georgic, where minimal and local but constant activity becomes definitive of the self and the national community, makes him less focused on reaping the fruits of his labor than on the laborious regular practices of watering, pruning, and protecting language: "l'arroser, la tailler … défendre de ronces et épines qui lui faisaient ombre" (207). The "promesse" and "espoir" that Aneau deems so negligible is, for Du Bellay, precisely the valuable product of poetic labor: an "illustration" so slight that it may look like mere repetitive demonstration or even "denigration," a flowering whose fruition is uncertain, and whose potential must be constantly maintained.

[82] Aneau, *Quintil*, 87.

Chapter 3
Montaigne in Agitation

> (b) Vaines pointures, (c) vaines par fois, (b) mais tousjours pointures. [Trivial pinpricks: sometimes trivial, but always pinpricks.]
>
> -"De la vanité"

> J'ay assez affaire à disposer et ranger la presse domestique que j'ay dans mes entrailles, et dans mes veines, sans y loger, et me fouler d'une presse estrangere … [I have enough to do to order and arrange the domestic pressures that oppress my entrails and veins, without giving myself the trouble of adding extraneous pressures to them …]
>
> -"De mesnager sa volonté"

In "De l'oisiveté" ("Of Idleness," I, 8), in a kind of belated preface to the first book of the *Essais*, Montaigne explains how his planned pastoral retirement has mutated into never-ending domestic georgic drudgery. His hopes of pasturing himself to his tower, to "ne me mesler d'autre chose, que de passer en repos, et à part, ce peu qui me reste de vie"[1] ["to bother about nothing except spending the little life I have left in rest and seclusion"[2]] has horribly, depressingly backfired. His mind, instead of mildly maturing unto death, has become perversely productive, bearing him so many random and malformed monsters ("m'enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques, les uns sur les autres, sans ordre, et sans propos") that he has no choice but to devote his time to organizing and managing them all, turning to practices of household accounting and casting himself in the role of what Virginia Krause calls "contemplative as bookkeeper"[3]: "j'ay commencé de les mettre en rolle" (33) ["I have begun to put them in writing" (21)]. But if the proclaimed goal of this accounting is, eventually, to make his mind ashamed of itself ("avec le temps, luy en faire honte à luy mesmes") by showing it its formless excretions for what they are, it seems as Sisyphean a task as Erasmus's slog through the "monstrous scribal errors" of the textual laborers who came before him.[4] By the beginning of "De la vanité" (III, 9)—deep in the third book of the *Essais,* after hundreds of pages of this *mise en rolle*—Montaigne is at the point of asking, in vain, "quand seray-je à bout de representer une continuelle agitation et mutation de mes pensées" (579) ["when shall I make an end of describing the continual agitation and changes of my thoughts" (721)]? The answer, we may guess at this point, is never. Even in the space of Montaigne's rhetorical question, the idea of describing his disordered mental activity as *agitation* seems to require immediate rethinking, demanding a mollifying—or is it exacerbating?—modification into *mutation.*

The uncertainty on both Montaigne's part and our own about whether the effects of this management of mental and textual agitation are calming or only further agitating is central to my

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[1] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey and Verdun-Louis Saulnier (Paris: P. U. F., 2004), 33. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number and, when useful for clarification, volume and chapter number.

[2] Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), 21. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page number.

[3] Virginia Krause, *Idle Pursuits: Literature and* Oisiveté *in the French Renaissance* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 166.

[4] Erasmus, "Herculei labores," *Collected Works of Erasmus,* vol. 34 (Adages IIvii1 to IIIiii100), trans. and ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 173. See the introduction for a more extensive account of Erasmus's slog.

account of Montaigne's domestic georgic ethos, his attempt to manage both his present experience of civil war and the precarious future of France in slight, local, and temporary ways. "Nous nous corrigeons aussi sottement souvent comme nous corrigeons les autres" (964) ["We often correct ourselves as stupidly as we correct others" (736)], Montaigne complains; often, but not always, and much depends on what hangs in the balance of Montaigne's many qualifying suspensions: he is less categorically excluding self-correction than correcting any expectation that it will always be salutary. As Timothy Hampton points out, drawing attention to Montaigne's declaration in "De l'experience" that he has learned to mistrust his gait and strives to regulate it—"j'apprens à craindre mon alleure par tout, et m'attens à la reigler" (1074)—self-regulation tends to be "deferred to an indefinite future: 'je *m'attens* à la reigler.'"[5] Montaigne's mania for self-correction, coupled with his lack of faith or interest in self-improvement and even in the future itself, means that his life's work is the management (or rather, the forestalling of management) of contingency.

The centrality of contingency to Montaigne's thought has been expanded upon to various degrees by, for example, Ann Hartle, Richard Regosin, and, using Montaigne as a point of departure for seventeenth-century thinking about randomness and order, John D. Lyons.[6] Lyons calls attention to the falling roof tile in "Que philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir" that for Montaigne "represents the unpredictable, sudden and trivial cause that can end life at any moment in any place" before going on to emphasize that "less dramatic aspects of a person's life are also apparently random: one's tastes and opinions vary unaccountably from one day to the next," and "political, military and judicial doctrines are all the result of chance and subject to it."[7] Most readers, however, find the contingency that runs through the *Essais* either benign or unremarkable. Montaigne's commitment to the endless description (and re-description) of his unpredictable agitations is often understood as an ethically exemplary practice of calm introspection even in the face of uncertainty. His constant vigilance over his body and mind is taken as a philosophically sophisticated technology or accounting of the self, a *mise en rolle* that, whatever its practical failures, adequately fulfills a moral imperative to tell the truth about oneself.[8] At the same time, this open-ended self-examination is often taken as one of our essayist's purely literary or aesthetic, even decadent, charms: his frequent close-ups on his idiosyncratic quirks have been likened to shameless selfies, a harmless narcissism that makes us feel better about our own self-involvement by being so completely autotelic, too absorbed in its own process to make any ethical claims at all.[9]

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[5] Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 189.

[6] Ann Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Richard Regosin, "Prudence and the Ethics of Contingency in Montaigne's *Essais,*" in *Chance, Literature, and Culture in Early Modern France,* ed. John D. Lyons and Kathleen Wine (New York: Routledge, 2016); John D. Lyons, *The Phantom of Chance: From Fortune to Randomness in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

[7] Lyons, *The Phantom of Chance*, ix, x.

[8] Jean Starobinski is typical in this regard: "Whatever the outcome of our actions (which outcome depends on God alone), Montaigne is in no doubt as to the correct moral choice: insistence on veracity remains his unvarying standard of judgment, his permanent criterion for criticizing morals and for governing his own behavior. […] Such is his concern for honesty that it is untouched even by his recognition of the mutability of all things" (*Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985], 4).

[9] Phillippe Desan discusses how Montaigne's recent popularization has included the French media crediting him with inventing the concepts of the "blog" and the "selfie." Desan cites as particularly indicative of this trend Serge Raffy, "Montaigne notre contemporain," *Le Nouvel Observateur,* August 14, 2014 (*The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 5). Sarah Bakewell, in her popular *How to Live: or, A Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2010),

When Montaigne diverges from such topics of import as theology, education, cruelty, judgment, and honorable death and devotes the same careful attention to salad, thumbs, cats, and laziness, readers tend to experience not agitation but charm. But looking to Montaigne as either an ethical exemplar or a blogger *avant la lettre*, lofty and laudable or comfortingly close to home, prevents us from seeing the profound—or rather, profoundly *superficial*—agitation and irritation pulsing awkwardly and irregularly on the surfaces of both the *Essais* and the human body with which Montaigne claimed his book was "consubstantial."[10] The annoyances of domestic life and the pain of his kidney stones, like the agitation of his thoughts, can only be temporarily quieted by constant adjustments, and the resulting smoothing out of irritation, only ever partially and provisionally successful, in a kind of incomplete exfoliation, is the stylistic form of Montaigne's domestic georgic: the constant, iterative, small-scale labor that works to keep text, body, and community as themselves.

This chapter will take Montaigne's complaint of "continual agitation" seriously, if not quite to heart, as a manifestation of his domestic georgic spirit. Elizabeth Guild's recent effort to "unsettle Montaigne" poses an important challenge to self-help-friendly readings of Montaigne's tolerance and equanimity: the goal of Montaigne's writing, she states at the outset of her book, is "not tranquillity, but a more provisional containment of anxiety."[11] When she addresses Montaigne's thinking through and performance of the unsettling affects like agitation, however, Guild concludes with a serene assurance that ethical ends are always clearly in Montaigne's sights: "For the soul to be moved to act well, it must be shaken out of tranquillity."[12] The implied causal connection here between being shaken and acting well suggests that the point of being agitated out of tranquility is then to recollect oneself *in* tranquility, an end that, if ever temporarily achieved in the *Essais*, is continually shaken off. When Guild goes on to focus on intense, operatic feelings of fear and grief and attributes to Montaigne's unsettlement a therapeutic function, she can make it sound like Montaignean peace of mind may have to be worked for, but it can be heroically achieved nonetheless. I will suggest, by contrast, that both the apparent capacious calm and the apparent benign playfulness of the *Essais* are unsettled not by surges of emotion that can then be cleanly assimilated into an ethical program, but rather by what Sianne Ngai calls, in her diagnosis of textual irritation, "a minor but continuous state of inflammation or discomfort."[13] This state is caused by an affect that is "explicitly *a*moral and *non*cathartic, offering no satisfactions of virtue, however oblique, nor any therapeutic or purifying release."[14] Montaigne's excruciatingly local discomforts, deeply but only literally internal to his house and body, should complicate readers' impulse to identify with the essayist either ethically or

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asserts that Montaigne took pleasure in the randomness of his writing process. Referring to a seventeenth-century reader who compared "essaying" to "firing a pistol to see if it shoots straight, or trying out a horse to see if it handles well," she emphasizes Montaigne's equanimity: "Montaigne discovered that the pistol shot all over the place and the horse galloped out of control, but this did not bother him. He was delighted to see his work come out so unpredictably" (8).

[10] "Je n'ay plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict, livre consubstantiel à son autheur, d'une occupation propre, membre de ma vie; non d'une occupation et fin tierce et estrangere comme tous autres livres" (665); "I have no more made my book than my book has made me—a book consubstantial with its author, concerned with my own self, an integral part of my life; not concerned with some third-hand, extraneous purpose, like all other books" (504).

[11] Elizabeth Guild, *Unsettling Montaigne: Poetics, Ethics and Affect in the* Essais *and other Writings* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), 2.

[12] Ibid., 183.

[13] Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 207.

[14] Ibid., 6.

aesthetically, as well as our understanding of the relationship Montaigne models between the private self and the public, political world.

I. Irritating Humors: Montaigne in Trouble

The disproportionate discomfort caused by kidney stones and household chores (incongruously paired, in my analysis and in the *Essais* themselves, under the same affective rubric) is akin to what Ngai calls the "weak feeling" of irritation, an affect defined primarily by both its association with semipermeable boundaries between self and world—like the skin, or, in Montaigne's case, the urethra—and its incommensurability with its object, if it has an object at all. Defining irritation as "a mood" as opposed to an emotion, Ngai draws on Annette Baier's distinction: while emotions are "about something," "moods, if they are about anything, seem to be about nearly everything"; they are "either objectless, or have near all-inclusive and undifferentiated objects. They sometimes involve emotions searching for appropriate objects."[15]

Part of what makes Montaigne's irritation—and writing about that irritation—so irritating is that, at some moments and under certain light, it does not *quite* seem to qualify as irritation, chafing against the category discordantly, if only slightly so. Montaignean irritation is a kind of mildly frustrated expression, the low-level but unshakeable sense that some kind of vague blockage is disrupting the normal commerce between internal and external spaces, or between signifier and signified. In this, it sits most comfortably with Ngai's definition of irritation as "offishness," "incongruity," "disproportionality,"[16] or "a strangely aggressive kind of weakness"[17]—a kind of perpetual micro-aggression. Ngai derives her understanding of this feeling in part from Aristotle, who diagnoses the irritable man as one who is affected too much or for too long (we are "irritated *by the wrong things, more severely and for longer than is right*"[18]), and adds a corollary: we are irritated by people who not feel outraged *enough*, or who feel merely irritated, at what really should be upsetting.[19] In Ngai's case study, Nella Larsen's 1928 novel *Quicksand*, when the biracial protagonist displays the same psychosomatic annoyance when confronted with unattractive teacups as she does with assertions of racial inferiority, readers balk. They accuse her not exactly of feeling the wrong thing, but of feeling it incorrectly and in the wrong proportion, or of confusing bad aesthetics—which should merely irritate us—with bad politics or ethics, which should enrage us.[20]

Some theorists of the passions have, however, seen irritation as salutary, or at least as preservative of virtue. The Renaissance humanist Juan Luis Vives saw irritation as less an improper

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[15] Annette Baier, "What Emotions Are About," *Philosophical Perspectives* 4 (1990): 1-29, 3, qtd. in Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 179.
[16] Ibid., 175.
[17] Ibid., 191.
[18] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 106, qtd. in ibid., 175.
[19] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 175.
[20] Ibid. Ngai is, of course, writing about a much different literary text and a much different social and political context than Montaigne's, and I do not mean to suggest any equivalence between Montaigne and Larsen or her fictional character. But I do find Ngai's diagnosis of the misguided expectation of Larsen's readers that affect can and must "legibly, unambiguously, and immediately" respond to social and political realities to be instructive: "irritation's radical *in*adequacy—its stubborn 'offishness' or incommensurateness with respect to objects […] calls attention to a symbolic violence in the principle of commensurability itself, when there is an underlying assumption that an appropriate emotional response to racist violence exists, and that the burden lies on the racialized subject to produce that appropriate response legibly, unambiguously, and immediately" (188).

than a preliminary response, the early stirrings of what may ripen into the full-fledged feeling of hatred, anger, or envy: an "initial brush" or "first contact with something discordant or harmful," a small shock to warn us that we have crossed, if only infinitesimally, an invisible moral boundary, checking evil's seductions and teaching us what our body and soul ought to want.[21] In eighteenth-century German philosophy, irritation can be found working at the heart of life itself, or, in Johann Gottfried Herder's account, at the heart of the heart. "Has anything more wonderful ever been seen than a beating heart with its inexhaustible irritation?" Herder asks, noting how such irritation "spreads out from this inexhaustible fount and abyss through our whole *I*, enlivens each little playing fiber."[22] In this sense of small-scale energetic animation, irritation rubs up against what is elsewhere referred to as "agitation." Steven Goldsmith's *Blake's Agitation* takes as its point of departure the convergence—in Blake, in Enlightenment and Romantic thought, and in our own contemporary critical practice—of agitation's two senses: affective and political. Agitation is at once "an interior, *affective* state" of unsettled emotion, what Jean-François Lyotard calls a "visceral vibrato, an excitation of the life force,"[23] and a form of public activism that aims to unsettle a political state.[24]

For Montaigne, however, agitation's continual excitation is not exactly exciting, and the interior commotion of his irritation never seems to produce any kind of discernable echo in the political world. If agitation, in Goldsmith's account, articulates a bridge between private and public, making internal feelings "legible on the body's surface,"[25] the effects of Montaigne's "continual agitation" are often invisible; sometimes, the invisibility of effects is precisely the *cause* of irritation. That his household affairs are quite materially limited and particular to his estate literalizes the "domestique" use and "commodité particuliere" Montaigne circumscribes in "Au Lecteur" as his book's only purview (3), and his failure to discharge his kidney stones means not only that his pain continues, but also that he lacks an external referent to express his pain. Both his bodily and his linguistic products are, he complains when calling his writing "des excremens d'un vieil esprit" barely more presentable than the contents of a chamber pot, "tousjours indigeste" (946).

The somewhat illegible and somehow incomplete character of irritation makes it like those minor, microscopic movements of and between bodies identified by affect theory as worthy of consideration not despite but because of how they elude our detection, wafting somewhere under the threshold of the more vehement passions. In their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader,* evocatively titled "An Inventory of Shimmers," Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth sometimes make the sifting out of these ineffable phenomena sound like a foraging expedition in an enchanted forest, the specimens collected in (and gently released from) the "sieves of sensation and sensibility" with an awe at their "vaporous evanescence," their "intracellular divulgences."[26] For theorists like these, affect, even or especially in its most ephemeral appearances, always proves excessively seductive, always teasingly escaping the bounds of our reason. But for all such romanticizing of the "mere" and the "slight," irritation—that which is just plain annoying—while just as minor as any

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[21] Juan Luis Vives, *The Passions of the Soul: The Third Book of De Anima et Vita,* trans. Carlos G. Noreña, *Studies in Renaissance Literature Vol. 4* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 60.

[22] Johann Gottfried Herder, "On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul," *Philosophical Writings,* trans. and ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 189, 190.

[23] Jean-François Lyotard, "Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx," trans. Cecile Lindsay, *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 327-28, qtd. in Steven Goldsmith, *Blake's Agitation: Criticism and the Emotions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 49.

[24] Ibid., 43, 49.

[25] Ibid., 56.

[26] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregg and Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

fleeting flight of fancy, is far less charming. What Montaigne offers us is an inventory not of shimmers, but of pinpricks. Somehow flat even in their sharpness, recurrent enough to feel constant but never regular enough to be predictable, what Montaigne calls, describing his household cares in "De la vanité," "vaines pointures" ["trivial pinpricks"] suspend themselves on the surface of the skin, never quite reaching the intensity of passion—or the significance of the properly political—despite their occasional half-hearted gestures in that direction.

In his book on Montaigne's ethical and political commitments, David Quint argues that Montaigne does, in fact, provide a more than adequate response to his political situation with the *Essais*, taking us into an enlightened ethical age with his forward-thinking attempts to reform the French nobility out of the pettiness and cruelty that had led to the country's current "troubles":

> Montaigne responds to the contemporary crisis of civil war by propounding in the *Essais* a new ethics to counter the model of heroic virtue that prevailed in his culture and his noble class. Against the hard-liner who never yields, even in the face of death—the constant Stoic, the honor-bound aristocrat, the religious zealot—he offers a pliant goodness that is the product not of heroic effort and philosophical discipline, not even of Christian charity or meekness, but rather of ordinary fellow feeling. Where the old virtue was autarchic and self-reliant, the new moral behavior that Montaigne advocates is accommodating to other human beings.[27]

Even in his qualification that Montaigne's proposed ethic of accommodation is "not a perfect morality, merely the best available,"[28] Quint's quiescence about the "best available"—he later ventriloquizes Montaigne as saying "it is heroic enough to be a human being"[29]—is perhaps too mimetic on the critical level of the easygoing ethic he wants to describe. Congratulating himself along with Montaigne in absorbing all potential conflict into a flexible and forgiving moral program, Quint overlooks some of the weaker, messier moments in the *Essais*, moments that do not quite muster a resistance into assimilation into tolerance and tranquility, but that, as Guild puts it, can provide only a "precarious suspension of excessive 'trouble,'" with that word carrying both affective and political weight.[30]

I aim to trouble as well as be troubled by Montaigne not only by taking his negativity seriously, as Guild does, but also by not seeking to recuperate negative moments as part of a healthy moral program and by instead preserving them in suspension.[31] In this I follow Ngai, whose stated goal is to "dwell on affective gaps and illegibilities, dysphoric feelings, and other sites of emotional negativity" in order to explore "ambivalent situations of suspended agency."[32] This, Ngai says, is the aim of *Ugly Feelings*, the chapters of which

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[27] David Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy: Ethical and Political Themes in the* Essais (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), ix.
[28] Ibid., xii.
[29] Ibid., 141.
[30] Guild, *Unsettling Montaigne*, 21.
[31] Here I depart again from Quint, who, dismissing Gregory Sims's critique of Starobinski's claim that Montaigne's "motion" has ethical content, proudly takes up the mantle of Sims's hypothetical reader who "insists, come what may, on reading Montaigne as a moralist" (Sims, "Stoic Virtues/Stoic Vices: Montaigne's Pyrrhic Rhetoric," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 [1993]: 235-66, 252n, qtd. in Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy,* 165n).
[32] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 1.

> draw together two seemingly disparate philosophical definitions—Hannah Arendt's claim that "what makes man a political being is his faculty of action" and Baruch Spinoza's description of emotions as "waverings of the mind" that can either increase or diminish one's power to act—and attend to the aesthetics of the ugly feelings that index these suspensions.[33]

My aim, then, is to exfoliate how the private, trivial, and futile preoccupations of Montaigne's *Essais*, especially in "De la vanité" and "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," constitute a political dimension, barely dimensional though it may be, that complicates not only the (early) modern conceptual separation of action and passion but also Arendt's particular distinction between the non- or pre-political (labor and work, the distinction between which Montaigne troubles as well) and the political (action). The merely skin-deep, shaky, and non-cathartic affect of irritation is Montaigne's response not only to his medical condition and his task of estate management, but also to his deeply and utterly disordered age of which endless writing is both a symptom[34] and, if only potentially, a management strategy.

The demotion from the vehement passions that are the focus of Guild's study to the more minor and mundane affect of irritation and its management is part of what makes Montaigne's *Essais* an example of domestic georgic. Ugly feelings, characterized by a "flatness or ongoingness" rather than the dramatic entrances of emotions like anger or fear,[35] require management. Writing about "De mesnager sa volonté," the essay that treats Montaigne's mayoralty at greatest length, Hampton discusses how Montaigne's "struggle to define a position for the subject that is both politically engaged and psychologically and emotionally disengaged" requires the "complex interweaving of discourses" condensed in the essay's title, "which juxtaposes the 'management' techniques of home economics with the self-transformative dynamics of traditional moral philosophy." [36] This management of and between domestic and moral economies is thus attempted, in part, through the management of text. Pointing to the characteristic instance of textual adjustment in the essay's opening sentence—"peu de choses me touchent, ou, pour mieux dire, me tiennent" (1003) ["few things touch me, or, to put it better, hold me" (766)]—Hampton finds in "the halting *correctio*, 'pour mieux dire,'" that the problem of describing a public service that is "engaging but not entangling" "is both a problem of ethical action and a problem of writing."[37] Retouching his sentence to insist on his indifference to what touches him superficially is one iteration of how Montaigne's smoothing out of, or glossing over, the effects of his irritation can bear an uncanny resemblance to irritation itself. When he goes on to elaborate on the difference between what touches him and what holds him, what engages him and what entangles him, Montaigne agitates to and fro through repeated examples, as if entangled in his own refusal of entanglement. Of "affaires estrangeres," he says he has agreed

> de les prendre en main, non pas au poulmon et au foye; de m'en charger, non de les incorporer; de m'en soigner ouy, de m'en passionner nullement: j'y regarde, mais je ne les

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33 Ibid., 2.
34 "L'escrivaillerie semble estre quelque simptome d'un siecle desbordé" (946).
35 Ibid., 7.
36 Timothy Hampton, "Difficult Engagements: Private Passion and Public Service in Montaigne's *Essais*," *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850*, ed. Victoria Kahn, Neil Saccamano, and Daniela Coli (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 34.
37 Ibid., 35.

> couve point. J'ay assez affaire à disposer et ranger la presse domestique que j'ay dans mes entrailles et dans mes veines, sans y loger, et me fouler d'une presse estrangere … (1004)
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> [to take them in hand, not in lungs and liver; to take them on my shoulders, not incorporate them into me; to be concerned over them, yes; to be impassioned over them, never. I look to them, but I do not brood over them. I have enough to do to order and arrange the domestic pressures that oppress my entrails and veins, without giving myself the trouble of adding extraneous pressures to them … (767)]

Montaigne's obsessively rehearsed policing of the borders of his body, patrolling back and forth between what he will and will not do, suggests that even his refusals to manage external pressures require syntactical management on the page.

In "De la vanité," Montaigne's irritation comes from both the obvious incommensurability of his own trivial occupations with the crisis of civil war, on the one hand, and, on the other, his suspicion that talking about his own stupid life maybe really *is* an appropriate way to respond to the degraded political climate—even more appropriate, somehow, than either his actual engagement as Mayor of Bordeaux and member of the Politiques[38] or any ideal, philosophical retirement from public concerns altogether. The *Essais* are peppered with expressions that express so little that we are left unsure whether to be pleased with their aphoristic pith or irritated by their self-negating glibness, recalling the self-annihilating rhubarb that figures the skeptic's proposition in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond."[39] "De la vanité" opens with a self-reflexivity so annoyingly satisfying it seems to settle the subject as soon as it is posed: "Il n'en est à l'avanture aucune plus expresse que d'en escrire si vainement" (945) ["There is perhaps no more obvious vanity than to write of it so vainly" (721)]. Here what irritates is not "offishness" but a too-perfect coincidence of content and form, as involuted as an ingrown hair: the perfect example of vanity is writing vainly about vanity, which is exactly what this sentence does. At once an index and an exhaustion of Montaigne's limited resources, this opening does not prevent the chapter from going on for fifty-five pages, in which vanity begins to take on, and periodically shake off, political dimensions. After suggesting that his idle cataloging of agitations ought to be illegal, Montaigne backtracks: in such ignoble times, doing nothing is "comme louable" (946)—"practically praiseworthy," but not quite. A page later he adjusts himself again; far from a check on the national trend of corruption, his personal "desolation" in fact perfectly coincides with that of his age, "se rencontre à la desolation de mon aage" (947). If the personal is political for Montaigne, it is only insofar as both are completely hopeless, and yet both are in constant need of comment, and those comments in constant need of revision.

If the situation is hopeless, however, it is not serious, or at least, not spectacular, not dramatic, and not transformative. Montaigne responds to his deeply and utterly "ungovernable age" with the merely skin-deep, shaky, and non-cathartic affect of irritation. Ngai explains that irritation, like each of the apparently trivial affects she documents, functions as "a mediation between the

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[38] For accounts of Montaigne's political activity, see Madeleine Lazard, *Montaigne* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), 281–310, Geralde Nakam, *Montaigne et son temps* (Paris: Nizet, 1993), 302–24, and Zachary Sayre Schiffman, "An Intellectual in Politics: Montaigne as Mayor of Bordeaux," in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 307– 24, as well as Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, especially chapter 4, and Hampton, "Difficult Engagements."

[39] The skeptic's paradoxical affirmation of doubt effectively purges itself along with its doubt, "ny plus ny moins que la rubarbe qui pousse hors les mauvaises humeurs et s'emporte hors quant et quant elles mesmes" (527).

aesthetic and the political in a nontrivial way."[40] She attributes the etiolated state of contemporary emotional life to the fact we no longer live in a time when our emotions translate as smoothly into political terms as they did for thinkers like Aristotle or Hobbes, who understood the affective dimension of politics under the sign of "relatively unambiguous emotions like anger or fear."[41] But affective responses to politics could be ambiguous even *before* late capitalism, and for Montaigne, agitated both in sympathy with the corrupted social and political body and by the incongruity of that sympathy, ambiguous emotions may have been all that was available.

II. Vain Things: Montaigne at Home

That both the personal and the political could be understood as some kind of constant and incorrigible agitation is thus a sign less of a satisfying homology of private and public states than of their unhappy coincidence. If we might find in Montaigne's toggling, in "De la vanité," between his worries about the *police,* or "polis," and "cette police d'affaires domestiques" (951) an instructive analogy between estate management and civil government, or a suggestion that his private experience might have some significance for public life, he is quick to pre-empt any such neat conclusion by claiming that his activities are so politically meaningless that he would be among the last to be held to account—which would give him, luckily, ample time to reform his ways. But his professed lack of interest in being of public use is not because of any preference for home economics. Even when Montaigne admits the pleasure he derives from running his household, it is "too monotonous and languid a pleasure" ("trop uniforme et languissant"), and what's more, the pleasure is "necessarily mingled with many bothersome thoughts" ("par necessité meslé de plusieurs pensements fascheux"), to the point that it hardly seems a pleasure at all: at the end of the day, "c'est un'occupation plus empeschante que difficile" (949) ["more bothersome than difficult" (723)].

As if to prove this, Montaigne has a hard time getting away from this topic he has so little interest in, constantly impeded by his compulsion to narrate yet another chore that irks him. "Je ne suis pas philosophe," he finally says in exasperation, insisting that the inconveniences of estate management simply are what they are, and oppress him in exact accordance with their weight: "les maux me foullent selon qu'ils poisent" (950). But just as he seems about to close the issue with a summarizing "In short" ("En fin…"), his irritation subsumes his entire being, becoming at once verb, subject, and object: "pour sotte cause qui m'y aye porté, j'irrite mon humeur de ce costé là, qui se nourrit après et s'exaspere de son propre branle; attirant et emmoncellant une matiere sur autre, de quoy se paistre" (950) ["however stupid the cause that so impelled me, I irritate my humor in that direction, and then it feeds and exasperates itself by its own movement, attracting and accumulating matter to feed on" (725)]. Montaigne's "humor" is motored by irritation, until the humor seems to become irritation itself, chafing against itself ("s'exaspere") as it sustains itself ("se nourrit"), or even sustaining itself *by* chafing against itself. (Cotgrave's dictionary has "exasperer" as "to make sharpe, harsh, rough, or angrie; to aggravate, provoke, vex; incite unto crueltie, urge unto curstnesse, whet unto choller"[42]—or, we might say, to irritate both physically and spiritually, without a sharp distinction made between the two.)

The close proximity of self-nourishing to self-exasperation informs Montaigne's approach to managing not only his household but also his writing. In the midst of explaining—and, with his constant additions and recapitulations, performing—how something always goes wrong ("Il y a

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40 Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 3.
41 Ibid., 5.
42 Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London, 1611).

tousjours quelque piece qui va de travers"), Montaigne once again seems on the point of pithily summing it all up: "Vaines pointures," the 1588 text runs, "mais toujours pointures." But he adds, in the 1595 edition, for some reason, a qualifier: "Vaines pointures, (c) vaines par fois, (b) mais toujours pointures" (950) ["Trivial pinpricks: sometimes trivial, but always pinpricks" (725)]. This point—emphasizing the sometime triviality, which has already been established, without elaborating on what, if not trivial, these *pointures* might be—adds nothing, except another syntactical tic, extending our experience of pinpricks without clarifying anything, suggesting that, even if they are not always *vaines,* no other word seems to be available to describe them, and so here we are again, redoubling the prick of triviality even if the point was to temper it.

Throughout the *Essais*, Montaigne associates his innovative literary form with unremarkable, housebound activity, identifying writing as a cyclical compositional and recompositional labor more evocative of the daily ephemeralities of domestic life than of the singular act of literary publication, much less the invention of a new genre. Montaigne's constant references to his own triviality or marginality are in keeping with his conceit of confinement to a domestic space whose activities, he suggests in the opening "Au Lecteur," ought to be irrelevant to anyone outside it, even if necessary to those within it: his only purpose, famously, is one that is "domestique et privée," his only material "frivole" and "vain" (3). His style, he claims in "Consideration sur Cicéron," makes his writing unfit for public consumption, being "trop serré, desordonné, couppé, particulier"; in short, "comique et privé" (252). He claims his book is "massonné purement" of the recycled "despouïlles" (721) of Seneca and Plutarch; he describes his reading process as "remplissant et versant sans cesse" like the mythical Danaïdes, attaching "quelque chose à ce papier, à moy, si peu que rien" (146). If the first metaphor of gathering scraps to make an original recipe recalls the resourcefulness of an economical housewife, the second, with words rolling like water through a sieve, offers a more pessimistic image of cyclical labor: here, insofar as Montaigne's work is housework, it is in the dead-end production that, in Arendt's schema, leads only to its products' depressingly immediate consumption and the incessant demand for further production, a *mise en rolle* whose enrollment will always have an interminable backlog.

Montaigne thus complements his commitment to irrelevance by insisting, repeatedly, on his impermanence, falling short not only of the heroic immortality of Arendtian action but also of the more modest longevity of work. In "De la vanité," after pages of complaining about the never-ending demands of his household staff and and ever-renewed necessities of building maintenance, he explains his decision to write in the flimsy, contemporary (and, he surmises, temporary) domestic vernacular rather than in the eternal and universal language of Latin:

> J'escris mon livre à peu d'hommes et à peu d'années. Si ç'eust esté une matiere de durée, il l'eust fallu commettre à un langage plus ferme. Selon la variation continuelle qui a suivy le nostre jusques à cette heure, qui peut esperer que sa forme presente soit en usage, d'icy à cinquante ans? Il escoule tous les jours de nos mains et depuis que je vis s'est alteré de moitié. Nous disons qu'il est à cette heure parfaict. Autant en dict du sien chaque siecle. (982)
>
> [I write my book for few men and for few years. If it had been durable matter, it would have had to be committed to a more stable language. In view of the continual variation that has prevailed in ours up to now, who can hope that its present form will be in use fifty years from now? It slips out of our hands every day, and has halfway changed since I have been alive. We say that at this moment it is perfected. Every century says as much of its own. (751)]

If we are to take Montaigne at his word, his essay-writing, far from resulting in a monumental and unique work, would be categorized, in Adam Smith's terms, as "unproductive labour," its imminently obsolete language making it liable to be replaced with new material within a few years, which strikes our author more as a relief than as cause for concern. The French language "escoule tous les jours de nos mains," trickling away like the Danaïdes' water supply, and has not even been able to keep up its form for the brief span of Montaigne's life, having been in that time "alteré de moitié." Like the menial services that "generally perish in the very instant of their performance, and seldom leave any trace or value behind them,"[43] and unlike the nonperishable traces left in the collective memory by Arendt's archetypal public man, Montaigne's activity ideally leaves nothing, or very little, behind: "J'en attache quelque chose à ce papier; à moy, si peu que rien." But if the Danaïdes' constant filling up and pouring out added up to nothing, Montaigne, who puts his reading in parallel to their incessant labor, ends up with "quelque chose." And if "si peu que rien" is less than something, it is not exactly nothing, either.

In these throwaway, microscopic, apparent self-cancellations and self-corrections, something—"quelque chose"—accrues, although what that something is, beyond words on the page, can be difficult to say. Terence Cave's influential reading of *copia* in the *Essais* alerts us to the "risk" that, "in the cornucopian text, empty repetition is always the alternative face of productive proliferation."[44] But what looks in Montaigne like empty repetition—or alternatively, in an Arendtian reading, futility—is more properly considered a form of iterative, reproductive[45] activity, or "labor," whose results are not fully distinguishable from those of either what Arendt calls productive "work" or, in their fundamental unpredictability, "action." Pretending at something like—but not quite achieving—the immediate loop between production and consumption that for both Smith and Arendt defines all menial labor, Montaigne deliberately confuses stasis and change, moving us infinitesimally and unexpectedly while claiming to get us nowhere. When he qualifies a statement about his gleaner-like reading practices by saying he "keeps" none of the sentences that he reads, because he has no place to put them—"non pour les garder (car je n'ay point de gardoire)" (136)—the aside's secure parenthetical encasing reads like a typographical joke.

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[43] "[T]he labour of the manufacturer fixes and realizes itself in some particular subject or vendible commodity, which lasts for some time at least after that labour is past. It is, as it were, a certain commodity of labour stacked and stored up to be employed, if necessary, upon some other occasion [...] The labour of the menial servant, on the contrary, does not fix or realize itself in any particular subject or vendible commodity. His services generally perish in the very instant of their performance, and very seldom leave any trace or value behind them, for which an equal quantity or service could afterward be procured" (Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* ed. Edwin Cannan [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976], 351-52).

[44] Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 276.

[45] Although the current semantic range of the term should signify in some way here, I am interested in thinking about "reproduction" not as (or at least not primarily as) sexual reproduction (a meaning not yet current in French, or in English), but as replacement; the aim is to preserve material that already exists in a much more direct and literal way than does sexual reproduction (which aims to preserve the species by creating new, similar but clearly different, versions of existing individuals into the future). To reproduce the 1762 Académie Française dictionary definition from the previous chapter: "REPRODUCTION. s.f. (1) Terme de Botanique. Il se dit à l'égard des nouvelles tiges que des racines repoussent chaque année, & aussi à l'égard des rejets que produisent des arbres coupés jusques sur leurs racines. Ces reproductions sont les unes naturelles, les autres forcées. Il se dit aussi Du renouvellement des plantes qui se fait par le moyen de leurs semences. (2) Dans les animaux tels que les Écrevisses, on appelle *Reproductions,* Les nouvelles pattes qui succèdent à celles qui ont été arrachées. Il se dit aussi de la queue des lézards qui se reproduit lorsqu'elle a été mutilée."

Asides, self-corrections, suspensions, and their relatives are the mechanisms by which Montaigne's metabolic machine reproduces itself, repeating with a minor or unquantifiable difference, preserving meaning by slightly altering it.[46] Unsatisfied by conventional modes of transmission, Montaigne avails himself of more provisional—and less predictable—reproductive technologies. That his micro-movements lead us forward would be an overstatement, but they do not lead us in circles, either. As he puts it in "De la vanité":

> Nous nous corrigeons aussi sottement souvent comme nous corrigeons les autres. (c) Mes premieres publications furent l'an mille cinq cens quatre vingts. Depuis d'un long traict de temps je suis envieilli, mais assagi je ne le suis certes pas d'un pouce. Moy à cette heure et moy tantost sommes bien deux; mais, quand meilleur, je n'en puis rien dire. Il feroit beau estre vieil si nous ne marchions que vers l'amendement. C'est un mouvement d'yvroigne titubant, vertigineux, informe, ou des joncs que l'air manie casuellement selon soy. (964)
>
> [We often correct ourselves as stupidly as we correct others. (c) My first edition was in the year 1580. Since then I have grown older by a long stretch of time; but certainly I have not grown an inch wiser. Myself now and myself a while ago are indeed two; but when better, I simply cannot say. It would be fine to be old if we traveled only toward improvement. It is a drunkard's motion, staggering, dizzy, wobbling, or that of reeds that the wind stirs haphazardly as it pleases. (736)]

His form taking a cue from his content, Montaigne declines even to follow through with the image of the staggering drunk, shifting mid-sentence to some randomly blowing reeds.

Putting this disavowal of linear progress in parentheses, the next section of this chapter will experiment in moving mostly incrementally, but not without inconsequent leaps, through an essay that takes a continuity through ancestral lines as its ostensible subject but which ultimately does not itself progress in a continuous manner. In "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," the end result of life's "drunkard's motion" is maintenance: a movement that is paradoxically sustained by its constant, minor, unexpected alterations. That these alterations sometimes take the form of irritation alerts us to how staggering, oblique movement is not necessarily beneficial to the health of the body or the soul. But the maintenance work performed by that movement is a necessary precondition for anything else to happen, or, for that matter, not happen.

III. Living Stones: Montaigne in His Kidneys

The constant "vaines pointures" of household cares, which Montaigne then renames as "espines domestiques" (950), or domestic thorns—these compulsive, miniscule self-corrections that are both exasperating and sustaining to whatever animates the text—intrude everywhere in the *Essais*. In "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," we find these thorns further domesticated, into Montaigne's own body, in the form of his extremely irritating kidney stones.

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[46] Guild points out that minor features like repetitions and hesitations leave traces of Montagine's "unsettled" affect, but identifies her own focus as the broad workings of "figuration," including irony, anamorphosis, and "highly charged" motifs (*Unsettling Montaigne*, 3). By contrast, I attend to small formal traces as signs of affect's role not as a big mover and shaker in Montaigne's writing, but as an iterative, irritating, and (temporarily) maintaining presence.

In the chapter of the *Essais* most explicitly, or at least nominally, concerned with the progressive transmission of personal qualities through generational lines, Montaigne focuses instead on the stone, a recurrent metabolic formation of his own body. His "qualité pierreuse" (763) ["stony propensity" (578)] is his body's capacity to petrify biological material into crystalline formations that, though they thankfully do not endure forever, last longer than their sufferer might hope. Arriving intermittently, neither with predictable punctuality nor with the habituating permanence of other innate qualities, Montaigne's kidney stones preserve a family legacy in private, comic, and temporary ways. For Montaigne owes this "qualité pierreuse," like the estate that so vexes him, to his father, Pierre.

What irritates him about these recently inherited internal pinpricks is their instability: the pain he feels is excruciating, but it only arrives in unpredictable intervals; his condition persists as a constant "qualité," but its existence is only proven when it (temporarily) no longer exists, and even when the stone passes, the puny physical evidence is in comic disproportion to the intensity of the pain it caused. Though Montaigne makes gestures in the direction of ennobling his long struggle with kidney stones, and though the condition causes excruciating pain, there is something irrevocably comical about the stubborn interiority, smallness, and ordinariness of the "stone," in spite or even because of the inordinate suffering it causes and its frustration of the body's most basic natural functioning. In her analysis of Montaigne's *Journal de voyage*, in part a chronicle of his attempts to cure himself of the condition while in Italy, Alison Calhoun argues that Montaigne's passing of a stone provides concrete proof of his suffering, "though perhaps comically"—a "perhaps" that I find to be an understatement.[47] Calhoun's parenthetical admissions of the comic element of kidney stones do not go far enough, in my view, to give us a sense of just how unheroic this condition is for Montaigne, whose essayistic metabolism in "De la ressemblance" transmutes the stone not into a talisman of heroic action, but into a product of domestic labor.[48]

By attending to Montaigne's commitments to frivolity, drudgery, and deep irritation, we avoid reading his treatment of his kidney stones, household management, and other phenomena on the border of his interior self and the exterior world as simple reversals of traditional aristocratic values. Calhoun notes that, as deaths from illness began to overtake military deaths in the late sixteenth century, men of the noble classes had to think of more creative ways to stage heroic deaths—even dying defending one's religious beliefs during the civil wars fell short of the epic ideal, which required dying on foreign soil. From Montaigne's account, the courageous performance of La Boétie on his deathbed would seem to elevate an ignoble death from the plague into a final act worthy of praise.[49] But in "De la ressemblance," rather than preparing for a singular, monumental act of death—*la belle mort* carefully planned by any *gentilhomme* deserving of the name—Montaigne

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[47] Alison Calhoun, "Redefining Nobility in the French Renaissance: The Case of Montaigne's *Journal de Voyage*," *MLN* 123.4 (Sept. 2008): 836-54, 845. Montaigne mentions in the *Journal* that one stone was "de la grandeur et longueur d'un côté comme une fève, et elle avait exactement la forme du membre masculin." Calhoun, while expressing doubt as to whether we should read this "seriously," suggests that the stone could be a "subconscious substitute" for Montaigne's manhood, his condition having rendered him impotent (845). It seems to me that describing an ejected stone as penis-shaped is less triumphantly reclaiming masculinity than pissing it away, in a resigned admission that whatever is left of his masculinity is in the toilet.

[48] Calhoun's suggestion that the stone, insofar as it provides concrete evidence of suffering, is tantamount to an arrow extracted from a battle wound ("Redefining Nobility," 845) is less compelling when one considers that the source of suffering in Montaigne's case is endogenous, and comically domesticated in Montaigne's descriptions as "comme une fève" or "plus grosse qu'un gros grain de froment." However painfully situated the stones may have been, beans and cereals hardly evoke the awe of a lethal weapon.

[49] Calhoun, "Redefining Nobility," 840, 843.

treats the formation of his legacy as metabolic labor, to be constantly altered, adjusted, and corrected, with expectations that are both modest and never guaranteed.

Montaigne's chapter titles are notorious for having little to do with their content, but the opening to "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres" does address that theme directly, if figuratively. Montaigne begins by telling the origin story of that body that is consubstantial with his own, his *Essais*: "Ce fagotage de tant de diverses pieces se faict en cette condition, que je n'y mets la main que lors qu'une trop lasche oisivité me presse, et non ailleurs que chez moy" (758) ["This bundle of so many disparate pieces is being composed in this manner: I set my hand to it only when pressed by too unnerving an idleness, and nowhere but at home" (574)]. It is perhaps not flattering to the *Essais* to say that they were conceived for lack of anything else to do, under extreme conditions of housebound boredom. It is important, though, that the book has been composed piecemeal, a "fagotage" gathered up like sticks to feed the stove and that "s'est basty à diverses poses et intervalles, comme les occasions me detiennent ailleurs par fois plusieurs moys" (758) ["has built itself up with diverse interruptions and intervals, as occasions sometimes detain me elsewhere for several months" (574)]. Unlike a child, whose conception is discrete and whose growth can be understood as continuous, the *Essais* are built in fits and starts, at their maker's convenience, without a satisfying linear narrative of development. The closest they come to a final form is as a bunch of sticks whose implied ultimate purpose is their own destruction, flimsy twigs fit for kindling.

But for all Montaigne's implied willingness to throw his pages to the flames, he announces his commitment to preserving the potential of his book to grow, if not as his child, then as a representation of his interior state over time. Still in the opening paragraph of "De la ressemblance," he assures us, "je ne corrige point mes premieres imaginations par les secondes" ["I do not correct my first imaginings by my second"] a claim immediately (or, rather, several years later) tempered by the C-text correction that follows: "ouy à l'aventure quelque mot, mais pour diversifier, non pour oter" (758) ["—well, yes, perhaps a word or so, but only to vary, not to delete" (574)]. Correcting his claim that he never corrects himself by adding that he does sometimes add things, Montaigne gives credence to the claim that follows (which, as part of the A-text, chronologically precedes the first): "Je veux representer le progrez de mes humeurs, et qu'on voye chaque piece en sa naissance" (758) ["I want to represent the course of my humors, and I want people to see each part at its birth" (574)]. The "naissance" that matters to Montaigne is not the monumental publication of the book itself, but the emergence of each "piece"—it is unclear whether he means pieces of his moods or, more logically, of the *Essais*-cum-"fagotage." Either way, the *Essais* record their author's presence in a way that is both continuous and fragmentary, pieced together over time.

That the *Essais* are both the faithful reproduction of Montaigne's basic personal information, as if they were his child, and, at the same time, disposable pieces of a languorously gathered bunch of sticks, makes Montaigne's relation to them both proprietary and casual, as if they were less his child than his hair, or dead skin.[50] A valet who served as his amanuensis for a time and thought he

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[50] Montaigne's relation to his only child to survive past infancy could itself be described as casual; she barely warrants mention in the *Essais*. Léonore de Montaigne is perhaps nowhere more strikingly ignored than in a bizarre construction Guild points to in "De l'affection des peres aux enfans" that privileges books over hypothetical (to say nothing of actual) children. Montaigne claims that, just as Augustine, if he had children (and to Montaigne's knowledge he did not), would have been right to bury them before his writings, Montaigne himself would rather produce a perfectly formed offspring with the muses than with his wife: "Ce seroit à l'adventure impieté en Sainct Augustin (pour exemple) si d'un costé on luy proposoit d'enterrer ses escrits, dequoy nostre religion reçoit un si grand fruit, ou d'enterrer ses enfans, au cas qu'il en eut, s'il n'aimoit mieux enterrer ses enfans. (b) Et je ne sçay si je n'aimerois pas mieux beaucoup en avoir produict ung,

had made off well in "m'en desrober plusieurs pieces choisies" ["stealing from me several pieces chosen to his taste"] has in fact, Montaigne assures us, robbed his employer of very little: "Cela me console, qu'il n'y fera pas plus de gain, que j'y ay fait de perte" (758) ["It consoles me that he will gain no more by it than I have lost" (574)]. Someone robbed of a very large sum could say the same—the thief of a bag of gold might gain no more than a bag of gold, and still be quite satisfied—but the statement of equality here has the effect of reduction. It is as if because the value gained from theft is equal to the value lost, nothing has really been lost; Montaigne understands this loss as a restoration of equality. The pilfered pages of writing—an irreplaceable record of the movements of their author's interiority, on the one hand, and a commodity more or less worthless on the market, on the other—are both priceless and unable to fetch a price outside the domestic sphere to which they are appropriate. For Montaigne, this pricelessness and worthlessness are, ultimately, more or less the same.

The indifference to divergent quantitative values—"ça m'est égal" would work as a paraphrase for many of Montaigne's declarations—applies to time as well as to material wealth. "Je me suis envielly de sept ou huict ans depuis je commençay" (759), Montaigne informs us, the micro-corrective "ou" converting certainty to ambiguity and reducing accounting to approximation, as if whether he has aged by seven or eight years since beginning his project were not significant enough to warrant precision, but significant enough that the field of possibilities should be narrowed to two years. His indifference extends even to indifference: as explained in a parenthesis, the afflictions most people find "horribles" are—in a disproportionate affective response—"à peu près indifferentes" to Montaigne, who with his "à peu près" declines to specify the exact relationship of this feeling to true indifference (760). If the steady and, in theory, exactly quantifiable progress of chronological time is not the most important metric for Montaigne, it is because he has another system of measurement available, both more immediate and, paradoxically, less knowable (*contra* Elaine Scarry's well-known claim, Montaigne's great pain gives him little certainty[51]): the development of his kidney stones.

The stones provide one answer to the question of what, in the *Essais*, actually accrues; their acquisition is a direct result of time, and, as he puts it, a gift afforded him directly by the years themselves. Reflecting on "la liberalité des ans," Montaigne avers, "Leur commerce et longue conversation ne se passe aisément sans quelque tel fruit" (759). The fruit of his temporal commerce is not, Montaigne is at pains to make clear, the one he would have preferred, and he wonders if the years could be so cruel as to have given him this affliction knowing the extent of his dread for kidney stones, "que j'eusse en plus grande horreur, dès mon enfance" (759). The stones themselves might come and go with infuriating unpredictability, but Montaigne's fear of them goes back to his childhood, a continuous strain of anxiety imparted from the child to the man. Montaigne is quick to let his readers know, though, that over the course of the eighteen months of his affliction, he has managed to accommodate himself to it, as he has to the other inconveniences of life. He describes

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parfaictement bien formé, de l'acointance des muses, que de l'acointance de ma femme" (401; qtd. in Guild, *Unsettling Montaigne*, 256).

[51] What Scarry attributes to secondhand accounts of pain—"When one hears about another person's physical pain, the events happening within the interior of that person's body may seem to have the remote character of some deep subterranean fact, belonging to an invisible geography that, however portentous, has no reality because it has not yet manifested itself on the visible surface of the earth"; "to have pain is to have great certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt"—applies as well to Montaigne's experience of his own pain, which, for all its immediacy, he holds at arm's length in his writing, and which breeds endless uncertainty (Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985], 3, 7).

his "five or six" previous episodes with the stone essayistically: "J'en ay desjà essayé," implicitly comparing his *Essais,* as he does explicitly in the reference to the "excremens d'un vieil esprit" in "De la vanité," to metabolic byproducts. But these experiences have not gone to waste, for there is "en cet estat dequoy se soustenir"; something about them has been sustaining, and even profitable, though this profit is described as coming out even, and coming out even means coming to nothing: "J'ay aumoins ce profit de la cholique, que ce que je n'avoy encore peu sur moy, pour me concilier du tout et m'accointer à la mort, elle le parfera; car d'autant plus elle me pressera et importunera, d'autant moins me sera la mort à craindre" (760) ["I have at least this profit from the stone, that it will complete what I have still not been able to accomplish in myself and reconcile and familiarize me completely with death: for the more my illness oppresses and bothers me, the less will death be something for me to fear" (576)]. This creative, if not exactly smooth, way of accommodating death is one place where Montaigne, as he puts it, enters into composition with his rocky condition, where "composition" is understood as at once essayistic invention and experiential equanimity: "J'entre des-jà en composition de ce vivre coliqueux" ["I am already growing reconciled to this colicky life"], he says, finding in it "de quoy me consoler et dequoy esperer" (759) ["food for consolation and hope" (575)]. Irritation is woven into the structure of his text, just as when he irritates his humor he becomes one with irritation—exasperating himself both into and out of being.

Later in the essay, Montaigne's accommodating process of composition leads him back, circuitously, to his title. Awestruck at how a single drop of sperm could contain a panoply of characteristics passed on from father to son, Montaigne deflates his admiration for the miracle of biological reproduction in a B-text addition that emphasizes how erratic this transmission of physical and mental qualities can be. The "impressions" passed through family lines follow "un progrez si temeraire et si desreglé que l'arriere fils respondra à son bisayeul, le neveu à son oncle" (425) ["so heedless and irregular a course that the great-grandson will correspond to his great-grandfather, the nephew to the uncle" (578)], discontinuous and avuncular lines as well as straight and paternal ones. As an example of this heedless and irregular "progrez," Montaigne cites an intermittent recurrence of cartilage-covered eyes in one famous ancient family, where the three cases, he clarifies in an aside, did not appear in successive generations: "non de suitte, mais par intervalles" (763).

That sons are seldom carbon copies of their fathers would seem obvious, and was a common humanist topos: Petrarch famously insisted that humanist *imitatio* should strive for the slightly divergent similarity of son to father, rather than the mechanically imitative replication a portrait makes of its sitter. Humanists following Petrarch generally embraced the fact that family resemblance necessarily involves difference, seeing in the accrual of difference a model of the progress of knowledge and culture: the Renaissance's improvement on the past did mere reproduction one better.[52] As Petrarch puts it, taking up a couple of his classical ancestors and doing them one better, "This is the substance of Seneca's counsel, and Horace's before him, that we should write as the bees make sweetness, not storing up the flowers but turning them into honey, thus making one thing of many various ones, but different and better."[53] For Montaigne, by contrast, making new material out of the old does not imply improvement. Progress, in his example, is both heedless and irregular and exactly, repetitively reproductive of a specific genetic trait.

Taking issue with those, like Jean Starobinski, who characterize Montaigne's time as "a prescientific and premodern moment in which it was not possible to think of progress and place

[52] A notable exception would be Shakespeare, who, in Leontes' paranoia over his son's paternity in *The Winter's Tale* and in the reproductive rhetoric of the sonnets, finds the conceit of child-as-perfect-copy dramatically and poetically productive.
[53] Qtd. in Thomas M. Greene, *Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 98.

hope in the future," David Quint makes the claim, based on Montaigne's criticism of aristocratic prerogative and advocacy for a strong central monarchy, that Montaigne was actually "progressive."[54] French political history may indeed have progressed from feudalism to a centralized state, but this strict teleological sense is a strange way to define "progressive" attitudes, either in Montaigne's terms or ours. While Quint is convincing when he points out that to think there could be no conception of progress before Bacon "ignores the long Renaissance humanist tradition," including Giordano Bruno and Protestant chiliasts, "in which truth was understood to be the daughter of time," his conclusion would seem to affirm that Montaigne was only ever accidentally progressive: "A future of progress was certainly thinkable for Montaigne, and his not thinking it should be understood as a deliberate choice, most likely directed to a political situation in which change and innovation inevitably evoked the Protestant challenge to national stability."[55] David Simon's definition of Montaignean "progrez" as "simply a temporal trajectory or mutation," without any implications of Baconian teleology—a definition Simon associates as well with Andrew Marvell[56]—is one way of understanding Montaigne's attitude toward the future as domestic georgic. Rather than associating progress with the building of the modern nation-state, in the Baconian georgic sense, Montaigne understood it as the constant derailing and temporary correction of forward movement, as small-scale, as constant, and as provisional as domestic labor. This idea of progress as mutation can also be seen in Montaigne's superlative praise of Virgil's *Georgics*, that middle ground that Renaissance imitators so often leaped over on their way from pastoral to epic, as "la plus accomply ouvrage de la Poësie"—the *Aeneid,* while overall pretty good, has some noticeable spots where the author could have applied an additional "tour de pigne" had he had the "loisir" (410). Disregarding the hierarchy of the Virgilian literary career—if the *Aeneid* was generally understood to be unfinished, that was not normally its defining characteristic—Montaigne finds the pinnacle of style stuck precisely in the middle, while what is usually regarded as its height remains, he reminds us, in need of additional adjustment.

Sidesteps, tangents, and disappointing repetition with only trivial differences define Montaigne's engagement with the past, whether textual or ancestral. Like the constant mollification of recurring irritation, history repeats itself without necessarily passing down any coherent lessons. When we learn, a bit belatedly, the provenance of "cette qualité pierreuse" in Pierre Eyquem, this is only a probability ("Il est à croire"), not a certainty (763). And it is not, after all, the "pierres" themselves that Montaigne has inherited, but the potential—"qualité"—they qualify. The stubborn propensity to produce stones *ad infinitum*—if, that is, it could continue to be passed on—could outlast any stone monument that endures into the future, though its sometime products are both unpredictable and undesirable. Montaigne himself, who later in the chapter claims to have devoted himself to creating his life rather than his book, seems to have infinitesimally self-monumentalized in a manner akin to that of his self-forming kidney stones. Having spent a lifetime building himself up but, frequently stalled by contradictions and aporia, not quite getting anywhere, Montaigne finds an equivalence between the body of medical knowledge—riddled with inconsistencies but still, apparently, holding strong—and his own opinion, which are both based on examples and experience: "La medecine se forme par exemples et experience; aussi fait mon opinion" (764). By this account, the micro-tradition of an individual life—which again, for Montaigne, does not progress forward so much as move in small lateral ways, like the "titubant, vertigineux, informe" movement of a drunkard—is as valid as tradition passed down cumulatively, with the illusion of

[54] Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, 162n, 104.
[55] Ibid., 162n.
[56] David Carroll Simon, "Andrew Marvell and the Epistemology of Carelessness," *ELH* 8.2 (Summer 2015): 553-88, 573.

knowledge accumulating over time, through generations.[57] Citing the long, medicine-free lives of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, Montaigne deems these self-contained, local "exemples domestiques" sufficient. And yet, Montaigne avers, his "antipathie" for the medical art is "hereditaire" (764); or, as he rephrases later, "derivée en moy par mes ancestres" (785). His distrust for tradition has itself been passed down through generations, its origins superfluous to the bounds of the individual body, making his examples "domestiques" in a broader or deeper sense than he lets on.

Thus hereditary history structures Montaigne's understanding of how transmission works, but his conception of the family—as suggested by his opening the chapter on fathers and sons with a meditation on his literary creations—is expansive. "Je veux faire deux contes" (778), Montaigne suddenly announces at a later point in the essay, explicitly taking on the role of storyteller. In the second story, only loosely related to the first (both feature mutilated goats and medical cons), we move in a flashback to his pre-stone days, "avant ma subjection graveleuse," when Montaigne decides to follow the dubious health trend of raising a goat on a special diet and drinking its blood, which was purported to be "une manne celeste" sent for "la tutelle et conservation de la vie humaine" (779). Upon the goat's slaughter, though, despite having fed and cared for it exactly by the book ("selon la recepte"), Montaigne's cook finds three stones, evidence of "quelque qualité petrifiante" (780)—a forerunner of Montaigne's own "qualité pierreuse"—in its intestines. Like an haruspex, Montaigne orders the entrails to be brought into his presence so he can examine and interpret them. Of the three stones, he counts "l'un perfect en rondeur, à la mesure d'une courte boule; les autres deux, un peu moindres, ausquels l'arrondissement imperfect, et semble qu'il s'y acheminat" ["one perfectly round, the size of an ordinary ball, the other two a little smaller, imperfect in roundness but seeming to be progressing toward it" (593)], which he discovers, upon inquiry, is an anomaly: "un accident rare et inusité" (779). The goat's stones, having reached the roundness of an everyday object, or getting there, follow a development more akin to Montaigne's haphazardly collected pile of sticks than to the more clearly progressive development of other entities that we might expect to find gestating in a creature's midsection.

Positioning this anecdote in arbitrary juxtaposition to another story, and in a patently absurd but strongly suggestive relation to his own condition, Montaigne implies a causality between the goat's stones and his own even while almost mocking us for believing such a relation to be worth considering. It is, he suggests, plausible that these stones are "cousins" to "ours"—"Il est vray-semblable que ce sont des pierres cousines des nostres" (779-80)—that their relation to human kidney stones is lateral and indirect but still, like that between uncle and nephew, familial. This alternative line of transmission works by contingency, not necessity. More than that, the existence of the goat's stones in the first place was "un accident rare." Coming after Montaigne's reflections on the imperfect and irregular inheritance of familial traits, the insinuation that these stones are his own stones' "cousines" extends that logic of accidental kinship to outside the human family.

Near the end of the essay and feeling near the end of his life, Montaigne reiterates his conviction that progress is no more than "un mouvement d'yvroigne," or the more literal residue of wine: "Je suis sur le fond du vaisseau," he says, not exactly melancholically, "qui sent tantost le bas et la lye" (784) ["I am at the bottom of the barrel, which begins to taste of the lees" (784)]. The lees, a form of waste necessary in order to preserve for the future (and that Galen compares to the form black bile takes in a healthy, functioning body), are the defining feature of Montaigne's environment.

[57] Richard Regosin registers Montaigne's frustrated resignation to the simultaneous gravity and instability of medical knowledge: "la science la plus importante qui soit en nostre usage, comme celle qui a charge de nostre conservation et santé" is "la plus incertaine, la plus trouble et agitée de plus de changemens" (qtd. in "Prudence and the Ethics of Contingency," 131).

The idea that a certain amount of waste would be necessary to preserve healthy material calls back to earlier in the essay, when Montaigne, in the midst of assaying the medical community's infinite contradictions, provisionally reduces the entirety of medical knowledge and practice to the sole end of voiding the bowels (which, he adds, could easily be accomplished by any number of home remedies, or "simples domestiques") but then inserts a B-text emendation: "Et si ne scay si c'est si utillement qu'ils disent, et si nostre nature n'a point besoing de la residence de ses excremens jusques à certaine mesure, comme le vin a de sa lie pour sa conservation" (767), the uncomfortable necessity of containing our own waste itself neatly contained in a distancing formula of uncertainty.

Emerging from these cloudy vinicultural depths near the end of the essay, Montaigne suggests that these preservative lees are indeed efficacious. As he embarks on a long, isolated aside to Madame de Duras,[58] expressing his hope that Madame will remember the qualities of his that she has so graciously overestimated, Montaigne describes his essays as, ideally, providing a secure container for those qualities:

> …je les veux loger (mais sans alteration et changement) en un corps solide qui puisse durer quelques années ou quelques jours après moy, où vous les retrouverez quand il vous plaira vous en refreschir la memoire, sans prendre autrement la peine de vous en souvenir; aussi ne le valent elles pas. (783)
>
> […I want to lodge [them] (but without alteration or change) in a solid body that may last a few years, or a few days, after me, in which you will find them when you are pleased to refresh your memory of them. (595)]

Montaigne makes no explicit mention of waste in this outline of a preservation plan, but his suspension of superfluous possibilities in textual asides performs a similar function. Having carefully packaged his virtues in the "corps solide" of the present book, to stave off (he clarifies parenthetically) any "alteration et changement," he appends a strange subordinate clause that effectively limits the duration of that container to "quelques années ou quelques jours" after his death. To circumscribe his legacy to "a few years"—which could simply be an understatement for "many years"—would be strange enough, but to correct that to "a few days" is even stranger, as if years and days were interchangeable, or to abruptly disallow the reader's natural inclination to interpret "a few years" as, perhaps, a few hundred years. Madame, he continues, should limit herself to remembering his qualities only when it pleases her, and no more often than that: "aussi ne le valent elles pas."

This performed indifference to the difference between the products of labor—which last, at best, a few days—and the products of work, which endure significantly (at least for a few years) into the future, appears more explicitly in Montaigne's further claim that he does not intend his *Essais* as any kind of hoard for his heirs: he is writing "non pour en faire magasin et reserve à mes heritiers" (784). He does, however, acknowledge that "faire magasin et reserve" is an important measure to take on his own behalf, though his reserve is as much of abstract possibility as of books and quotations. Starobinski emphasizes that the goal of Montaigne's so-called retirement to his estate

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[58] Richard Regosin, commenting on how the feminine is a "diverse and potentially disruptive element that the *Essais* cannot fully admit nor fully master," notes that this is one of three moments in the *Essais*, "all specific moments when Montaigne treats the composition of his text," when "he addresses women readers as if to implicate the female in its conception" (Regosin, *Montaigne's Unruly Brood: Textual Engendering and the Challenge to Paternal Authority* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 8).

was not to avoid his public responsibilities, but rather "to have secured the *possibility* of occupying his own private territory," and of "withdrawing at any moment into absolute solitude"[59]: of reserving, in other words, an "arriereboutique" (241) preserved from—but, as precisely a "back shop," contiguous to—the commercial concerns of the public realm. If, as Montaigne claims near the end of "De la ressemblance," home economics ("oeconomie de sa maison") is a more meaningful activity for a man to embark on than quests for literary glory (784), the only estate management he himself seems to regard as anything other than irritating inconveniences is that of books and papers. Having carefully edited the works of La Boétie, a man he considered his brother, and taken pains to preserve and disseminate all he could of his friend's life and work after his untimely death—not to mention his absorption of La Boétie's library into his own—he entrusted his own literary estate to Marie de Gournay, his quasi-adopted *fille d'alliance*.

The annoying labors of "oeconomie"—the careful arrangement and managed transmission of what the domestic sphere contains—ultimately interest Montaigne far more than the grand fantasy of progress or improvement over generations, or of the enjoyment of life in the present moment. The very triviality of domestic economy, the set of tasks he describes in "De la vanité" as "plus empeschante que difficile," the "vaines pointures" that are, despite what appears at first to be a mollifying qualifier, "tousjours pointures," is what accounts for its persistence. Those little pinpricks are by no means lessened by the later tempering addition of "par fois," which, even in obliquely suggesting that the pricks are sometimes more than trivial, still does nothing either to give them any gravity or to make them go away. Avowing that he does not care to get better over time—"Je ne cherche aucunement qu'on m'ayme et estime mieux mort que vivant" (783)—Montaigne betrays a desire to stay the *same* over time, to maintain his current level of insignificance.

The mere reproduction of the same, no matter how trivial, requires a work of maintenance and, in its transmission, an altering accommodation. As Montaigne explains near the end of "De la ressemblance," summing up his polemic against medicine:

> J'ay pris la peine de plaider cette cause, que j'entens assez mal, pour appuyer un peu et conforter la propension naturelle contre les drogues et pratique de nostre medecine, qui s'est derivée en moy par mes ancestres, afin que ce ne fust pas seulement une inclination stupide et temeraire, et qu'elle eust un peu plus de forme… (785)
>
> [I have taken the trouble to plead this cause, which I understand rather poorly, to support a little and strengthen the natural aversion to medicine which I have derived from my ancestors, so that it should not be merely a stupid and thoughtless inclination and should have a little more form … (597)]

Montaigne understands his task as not simply defending what is "derivée" from his ancestors, but actively maintaining it: supporting and reinforcing it in order to give it form. The distaste for blindly following tradition may be inherited, but to inherit this distaste automatically would be a contradiction in terms.

Citing Montaigne's complaint that commentators have run amok, so that there are more books about books than about any other subject, Starobinski still believes that the *Essais* were meant to inspire a form of reproduction: "Montaigne hoped to find an *adequate* reader, one who could imagine the *infinite essays* for which his book might serve as a pretext."[60] I would temper Starobinski's enthusiasm by suggesting that if Montaigne hoped for a reader who would have the capacity to

59 Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 6-7.
60 Ibid., xi.

preserve his essays by using them to infinite transformative ends, the ends he imagined are as minor as his own: the conversion of material at one's disposal from "une inclination stupide et temeraire" into something with "un peu plus de forme."

Chapter 4
Marvell in the Meantime

> Meantime, whilst every verdant thing
> Itself does at thy beauty charm,
> Reform the errors of the spring …
>
> -"The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers"

> Meantime ye fields, springs, bushes, flowers,
> Where yet she leads her studious hours,
> (Till Fate her worthily translates,
> And find a Fairfax for our Thwaites)
> Employ the means you have by her …
>
> -*Upon Appleton House*

In Andrew Marvell's "The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers," an adult speaker observes a young girl with an attention so rapt as to inspire charges of pedophilia from critics.[1] At the same time, as John Rogers has argued, this nymph enjoying a pastoral pastime might play a role far exceeding both the garden's prospect and the speaker's erotic imagination. She is, as Rogers puts it, "a potential agent of an unknown revolution"[2]: "Who can foretell for what high cause / This Darling of the gods was born!"[3] That Marvell's speaker would express such excitement at the uncertainty of little T. C.'s future, such wonder at "what high cause" she may be destined for, is especially surprising given how much the poem seems to be a straightforward prehistory of the child's eventual, inevitable marriage. If the predicted details of her courtship take on a violent, dramatic tone, veering from the Petrarchan cliché of "conq'ring eyes" (18) that "wound" (19) suitors to the more epic register of eyes as "glancing wheels" that "drive / In triumph over hearts that strive" (20-21), this bluster is destined to settle eventually. The conjuring of these "glories" is preceded by the confident prophecy of one who will make them irrelevant: "Happy, who can / Appease this virtuous enemy of man!" (15-16).

The arrival of this happy husband is, however, indefinitely forestalled. The poem takes place in the "[m]eantime" (25), in what might seem to be a lingering pastoral prelude before the outbreak of epic battle, "whilst every verdant thing / Itself does at thy beauty charm" (25-26). But T. C. is tasked with doing more than enjoying a floral vacation. She is set to work, though not to perform any traditionally muscular or straightforwardly productive georgic feats; she is not asked to to plow, plant, or harvest, but simply to make some temporary adjustments. "Reform the errors of the spring," the speaker demands, charging her with the quasi-culinary labor of sweetening the tulips

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[1] William Kerrigan, "Marvell and Nymphets," *Greyfriar* 27 (1986): 3-21, 3. Kerrigan goes so far as to claim that "[Marvell's] famous lyrics are pedophilic, such that this is an erotic genre predicted and implied by the poetry, and by the same token the pedophilia is poetic, such that the lyrics draw into their own excellence the troubled logic that creates and sustains this erotic genre" (8).
[2] John Rogers, "The Enclosure of Virginity: The Poetics of Sexual Abstinence in the English Revolution," in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. John Michael Archer and Michael Burt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 243.
[3] Andrew Marvell, "The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers," in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* ed. Nigel Smith (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2003), 9-10. Subsequent citations from the poem will be cited parenthetically by line number.

("Make that the tulips may have share / Of sweetness," 28-29), the pacifying task of dethorning roses ("And roses of their thorns disarm," 30), and the medical miracle of extending the lifespan of violets ("procure / That violets may a longer age endure," 31-32). In the speaker's famous final exhortation, it becomes clear that T. C.'s job is not only to manage the garden's existing resources, but to preserve its potential for growth that is to take place in some undetermined future time: "Gather the flowers, but spare the buds" (35), he commands, articulating an economy that will spare not only future potential floral lives but also that of the bud-like T. C., and "all our hopes" along with her (40).

Marvell's preoccupation with little girls in, or as, flowers—seen elsewhere in "Young Love," "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Faun," "The Garden," and, as we will see, *Upon Appleton House*—is often understood, as Diane Purkiss understands it, as "a retreat from masculine pain into a child's world of feminine pleasure," to a world "that is private, enclosed, retired, safe from the public world of war and politics and the state."[4] Missing from this characterization is the precarity of the enclosed green world: temporary, though with a potential to change the whole world, and in need of constant maintenance or "reform," the "[m]eantime" of floral life requires the constant work of moderating and organizing nature, sometimes on a scale so small as to seem to approach irrelevance, especially given the charged political context of the English Civil War.[5] Rather than locating Marvell in the dramatic end times imagined by Margarita Stocker, who has argued that "the whole range of his works should be seen as a coherent and integrated expression of his apocalyptic preoccupations,"[6] I find him in the meantime, stuck in a state of suspended poetic and political ends. Gesturing towards an indeterminate, medium-term future, Marvell's poetry—particularly his 1651 *Upon Appleton House*, which will be my focus here—takes up the provisional ethos of domestic georgic: the constant, minimal labor of tempering certain things of the world in order to keep them as they are, for now. Sweetening, dethorning, and putting flowers on life support belongs in the category of domestic georgic because it may not be the public work of the state, but it is not a retreat from either work or the "hopes" of the community, and in this the green spaces of Marvell's feminine-populated gardens are much like the spaces of early modern aristocratic and middling English households, overseen by housewives. Both of these kinds of spaces—holding areas for public life, where the materials for politics are maintained in suspension—are governed by the domestic georgic labor of adjusting, tempering, organizing, and preserving, always to only provisional ends.

The English housewife's obligations to manage her environment are outlined (in ways more prescriptive than descriptive) in Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*, a key source text for the early modern domestic manuals that proliferated in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.[7] These manuals figured the ideal household economy as divided between acquisitive husbands and frugal wives,

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[4] Diane Purkiss, "Marvell, Boys, Girls, and Men: Should We Worry?", in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood,* ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 189.

[5] Marvell likely wrote "The Picture of Little T. C." at his patron Lord Fairfax's estate, Nun Appleton—both the subject matter and the site of composition of *Upon Appleton House.* This period was a kind of "meantime" for Marvell's career as well: as Nigel Smith posits in his dating of the poem to 1652, "Before this period, [Marvell] was either abroad or engaged in London poetry and politics; after this period, he was preoccupied with the search for patronage and in the writing of political verse" (Smith, introduction to "The Picture of Little T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers," in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* 112).

[6] Margarita Stocker, *Apocalyptic Marvell: The Second Coming in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), xiv.

[7] See the introduction to Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), for an account of the use of Xenophon in these manuals.

where a husband's job was "to get goods" and the wife's "to gather them together, and save them."[8] At one point in Xenophon's dialogue, the eponymous estate-manager rhapsodizes to his wife about neatly arranged household items. "What a fine impression is given by footwear of all different kinds when it is kept in rows!" Ischomachus exclaims:

> What a wonderful sight is clothing of all kinds, and blankets, and metalware, and tableware, when each item is stored separately! What a wonderful sight is a regular display of jars all kept nicely separate! (I know it particularly provokes superficial people to mockery, but profound people agree.) This regularity explains why everything else too looks more beautiful when it is arranged and ordered. We are faced with a dance-troupe of utensils, and the unobstructed space between them all is beautiful too, just as the dancers in a circle-dance are not only beautiful to watch themselves, but the space in the middle also looks beautiful and clear.[9]

Ischomachus's insistence on the spectacular aesthetic effect of the proper storing and dispensing of household items, an apparently superficial effect that can in fact only be appreciated by "profound people," seems to be reflected in only muted form in the popular country house poems of the seventeenth century. These poems, most often associated with Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" but probably initiated by Aemelia Lanyer's more gynocentric "Description of Cooke-ham," indeed celebrated the *magna mater*, or female figure who presided over the aristocratic house and grounds, whose duties might include sorting shoes and storing metalware, or at least supervising those activities, but whose primary role was to symbolize the ready fertility of the estate.[10] But Marvell's take on the genre in *Upon Appleton House* affords the housewife a role analogous to the domestic georgic poet himself: both figures are less interested in creating than in preserving, and their power is not in their fail-proof fecundity, but rather in their ability to keep things temporarily separated and organized, to preserve the "space in the middle," as Ischomachus rapturously puts it, and do so in a kind of temporal middle, in between immediate effectiveness and certainty about future results. The vague hope, but not guarantee, of productive future use is maintained by keeping things in their existing relations, if only for the moment.

Perhaps the more obvious association of Marvell's attachment to the meantime, his resistance to—or suspension of—predictable outcomes, is not with housewifery but with queerness, in particular with queer temporality as defined by Annamarie Jagose: "a mode of inhabiting time that is attentive to the recursive eddies and back-to-the-future loops that often pass undetected or uncherished beneath the official narrations of the linear sequence that is taken to structure normative life."[11] Even if comparing a young girl to a budding flower might be disqualifying for queer theorists whose motto is, as Valerie Traub puts it, "'just say no' to futurity,"[12] the attractions

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8 Dod and Cleaver, *Godlie Forme of Household Government,* qtd. in Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter*, 20.

9 Xenophon, *The Estate-Manager,* in *Conversations with Socrates (Socrates' Defence; Memoirs of Socrates; The Dinner-Party; The Estate-Manager*), tr. Hugh Tredennick and Robin Waterfield (New York: Penguin, 1990), 320.

10 In "To Penshurst," Ben Jonson describes the praise due to a lady who will always "have her linen, plate, and all things nigh, / When she was far" (in *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets,* ed. Hugh Maclean [New York: W. W. Norton, 1974], 86-87). This lady is less an active presence than a remote manager of the house, but her virtue is the necessary supplement to those of the estate. The speaker begins to wrap up the poem with a summation that requires an immediate appendix: "These, Penshurst, are they praise, and yet not all. / Thy lady's noble, fruitful, chaste withal" (89-90).

11 Annamarie Jagose, "Feminism's Queer Theory," *Feminism and Psychology* 19.2 (2009): 157-74, 158, qtd. in Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA* 128.1 (January 2013): 21-39, 22.

12 Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," 21.

of Marvell—lifelong bachelor, gleeful transgressor of generic boundaries, romancer of plants—for queer theory are many. His polymorphously perverse interests in trees, solitude, and poetry itself could be called "queer" insofar as they demonstrate a reluctance to circulate sexual and economic assets through socially acceptable channels, and insofar as a refusal to yield to traditional literary and historical understandings, even to understandings of queerness itself, could be called "queer," Marvell's indefinite and vaguely anti-heterosexual ideas and lifestyle would seem to comport with Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon's project of queer "unhistoricism,"[13] or with Carla Freccero's open-ended invitation to allow the word "queer" to continue "to exploit its productive indeterminacy as a word used to designate that which is odd, strange, aslant" and to resist the word's "hypostatization, reification into nominal status as designating an entity, an identity, a thing, and to allow it to continue its outlaw work."[14] That Marvell is participating in a kind of "outlaw work" has been indirectly suggested, in less explicitly queer terms, by more historicist readers like Andrew McRae, who is typical in pronouncing the man "elusive" and his writing "hedged with caveats,"[15] Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker, who call him an "androgyne,"[16] and Nigel Smith, the subtitle of whose biography, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon*, puts his undecidability in no uncertain terms.[17] Attitudes like these may help produce the inclination to associate Marvell with "queerness" in as imprecise a sense as possible, where imprecision on the part of critic and poet alike is often lauded as a virtue.[18]

The pleasure with which we locate queerness in early modern literature, however, can blind us to the ways in which content or form that is "odd, strange," or "aslant" often helps reproduce the very normative structures it ostensibly undermines, "outlaw work" that only further entrenches the law. Marvell's ardent attention to the sexual possibilities of plants in poems like "The Garden," for example, has been celebrated as offering alternatives to heteronormative structures of desire. Writing of that poem's solitary speaker, who luxuriates in flowers and melons and prefers a life "without a mate," Marjorie Swann has claimed that Marvell's erotic tree-hugging can be understood as a version of Timothy Morton's concept of "queer ecology," because, as she quotes Morton, "[t]o contemplate ecology's unfathomable intimacies is to imagine pleasures that are not heteronormative, not genital, not geared to ideologies about where the body stops and starts."[19] And yet, as this chapter will show,

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[13] Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, "Queering History," *PMLA* 120.5 (October 2005): 1608-17. Goldberg and Menon explain that "to produce queering as an object of our scrutiny would mean the end of queering itself, a capitulation to a teleology…'at once heterosexual and heterosexualizing'" (1608-9).

[14] Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Freccero goes so far as to argue that "all textuality, when subjected to close reading, can be said to be queer" (5).

[15] Andrew McRae, "The green Marvell," in *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell,* ed. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 122.

[16] Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker, "Andrew Marvell and the Toils of the Patriarchy: Fatherhood, Longing, and the Body Politic," *ELH* 66.3 (Fall 1999): 629-654, 631.

[17] Nigel Smith, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[18] Margarita Stocker takes on this blurry image of Marvell, what she calls "the central cliché of Marvell studies," bluntly: "The essential purpose of this book," she announces early in *Apocalyptic Marvell*, "is to alter radically the received image of Andrew Marvell … as a difficult, elusive, elegant, poised—one might say even etiolated—poet" (viii). As much as I maintain that Stocker was right to point this out, and as much as this cliché still holds, I do not agree with her that Marvell's ambiguities evaporate under the harsh light of his chiliastic obsession.

[19] Timothy Morton, "Guest Column: Queer Ecology," *PMLA* 125.2 (2010): 273-82, 280, qtd. in Marjorie Swann, "Vegetable Love: Botany and Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature,* ed. Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 153.

pleasures and practices can be polymorphous, "not genital," and not explicitly heteronormative themselves, and still work, as they do in Marvell's poetry, in the service of heteronormative ideology.

Thus the domestic georgic mode, which could potentially work to preserve possibilities for futures that are different from the present, here appears as a more straightforward agent of conservatism. My reading of Marvell is in part an experiment in what Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus describe in "Surface Reading" as "register[ing] the ways that constraints structure existence as much as breaking free of them does."[20] To acknowledge the ways in which an apparently "queer" Marvell works to (temporarily) keep gender- and class-based constraints in place might, as Best and Marcus anticipate of critiques of surface reading, "be dismissed as politically quietist, too willing to accept things as they are,"[21] a silencing of queer potential or a reactionary resignation to the inevitability of heteronormativity. But "things as they are," for Marvell as for the "nymphs" on which he fixates, are far less certain than our hindsight can lead us to believe. The constant precarity that characterizes domestic georgic infuses both the most basic and the most grandiose of Marvell's visions of personal and political futures. "Who can foretell," as Marvell asks of little T. C., whether the expectations of heterosexual life—that virgins will marry; that houses will be kept; that dynastic lines will be maintained—will really come to pass in the ways we hope for, expect, or dread?

Upon Appleton House is perhaps the poem that most seductively puts forward the invitation to read a liberating queerness into Marvell's poetry. The poem's indeterminate modes and resistance to linear temporality can easily be read as subversive of poetic convention, aristocratic values, and general heterosexuality. Straying from the expected county house poem formula of civic-minded aristocratic patriarch, chaste and very organized *magna mater*, magnificent (but tasteful) estate in perfect harmony with nature, and assured looks backward to forefathers and forward to heirs, *Upon Appleton House*'s main attractions include sybaritic nuns, pastoral self-pleasuring, and the complication of dynastic lines.[22] However, the network of normative ideologies behind the country house genre's conservative, deeply heteronormative conventions, of which patriarchy is perhaps the most apparent, thrives on just such safe "subversion" of chronology and genealogy. The poem dramatizes, particularly through figures of aristocratic housewives and their analogs, how heterosexuality—in order to fill in its own gaps, gloss over its own contradictions, and maintain its position of natural inevitability—relies on that which seems to subvert it. This "paradoxical life support system," as Lee Edelman describes queerness' relation to heterosexuality in another context,[23] diverges from the New Historicist concept of "subversion and containment," summarized by Louis Montrose as the "capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion so as to use it to its own ends."[24] The dominant order in Marvell's case was, after all, in utter upheaval and did not have a clear enough view of its own "ends" to generate anything of predictable use. The continuous, minor subversion Marvell generates in *Upon Appleton House* is less a rejection or confirmation of teleology than a suspension of it, preserving the tools of heterosexual ideology—as housewives preserved fruit, flowers, and household order—for possible later, or indirect, use.

Understanding *Upon Appleton House* through a lens of teleological suspension offers an alternative way of explaining Marvell's "queerness" or ideological illegibility. Even more than his

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[20] Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108.1 (Fall 2009): 1-21, 18.

[21] Ibid., 16.

[22] For the ideological investments of the English country house poem see Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[23] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 114.

[24] Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8.

other poetry, *Upon Appleton House* has earned such blurbs as "unsettling" and "bafflingly private," "one of the most eclectic poems of the seventeenth century," a work of "dazzling subversion," "slipperiness," and "scandal."[25] Frustrating as Marvell's amphibious habits in this poem are to readers, they also inspire admiration and delighted speculation: it's more fun to read syntactical confusion, dilatory tactics, and unspecified sexuality as loosely subversive than as, in certain specific ways, conservative. And yet the very traits we may be tempted to identify with subversion, up to and including forays with flora, are in fact better understood precisely as conservative. Marvell, even in and precisely through his slippery subversions, works to preserve the ideology of patriarchy even as he challenges it. *Upon Appleton House,* by celebrating the kind of activity that appears at odds with futurity but that contributes to reproducing dominant social and cultural values, demonstrates how freezing forward movement can be crucial in keeping progress-oriented sexual and economic ideologies going—especially when, as in the troubled case of Marvell's patron, those ideologies are facing real-world complications. The cloistered stanzas of Marvell's epyllion stage as domestic drama the struggle between what R. Howard Bloch calls "the genealogical discourse of the epic" and "the lyric disruption" that threatens it.[26] The upshot of this struggle in *Upon Appleton House* is that lyric disruption can *yield* epic continuity[27]; even "queer" interventions can serve the continuation of genealogical discourse.[28] More than simply exploring the tension between what David Quint calls, in a variation on Bloch's formulation, the "linear teleology" of epic and the "random or circular wandering" of romance[29]—the end-oriented narrative of history's victors on the one hand and the dilatory, interior exploration of losers on the other—Marvell suggests that the latter can provide the tools to effect the former.

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[25] Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker, *Andrew Marvell, Orphan of the Hurricane* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 46; J. M. Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 232; Wallace, 244; Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane*, 46; Wallace, 233; Jonathan Crewe, "The Garden State: Marvell's Poetics of Enclosure," in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 283.

[26] R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 174.

[27] This is also something like how Jeffrey Knapp has shown how Spenser's pastoral relapses could, if only negatively and temporarily, serve as incitement to empire ("Error as a Means of Empire in the *Faerie Queene* 1," *ELH* 54.4 [Winter 1987]: 801-34, 803).

[28] Patricia Parker identifies this dynamic in *The Faerie Queene,* which "seems to be exploring the implications of this opposition [between lyric and epic] in its very form—narrative in its forward, linear quest and yet composed out of lyric stanzas that, like the enchantresses within it, potentially suspend or retard" (Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* [New York: Methuen, 1987], 66). For Parker, the opposition between forward motion and suspension amounts to a suspension in itself: "A poem, finally, as dedicated as Spenser's to the polysemous perverse could easily encompass the psychological dynamic of the overpowering of a potentially castrating female, the covert political allegory of the overgoing of a lyricism associated with Elizabeth, and a simultaneously aesthetic and moral uneasiness about the seductiveness of lyric 'charm,' even if that charm is an inseparable part of the attraction of his own poetry, its own tantalizingly suspending instrument" (66). Where Parker keeps the ends of this ambivalence open—and I will expand on the implications of her argument at the end of this chapter—I argue that when early modern poetry acts as such a suspended and suspending instrument, it is often functioning conservatively.

[29] "To the victors belongs epic, with its linear teleology; to the losers belongs romance, with its random or circular wandering. Put another way, the victors experience history as a coherent, end-directed story told by their own power; the losers experience a contingency that they are powerless to shape to their own ends." David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 9.

This apparently disruptive but fundamentally preservative labor is crystallized, in *Upon Appleton House*, in the narrated practices of physical preservation performed by the nuns and, late in the poem, by young housewife-to-be Mary Fairfax. In the course of their organization and management of the house's resources, early modern housewives, in an oft-cited concentricity, were charged with preserving both perishable organic material and the health of its eaters—people consumed preserves to help preserve themselves—and, by extension, preserving the larger cultural narrative in which the woman-run household played an increasingly central part. Housekeeping was about "keeping" in a very broad sense that covered, in Wendy Wall's survey of the word's semantic range, being "productive, chaste, organized, silent, insulated, modest, and gifted at recycling, classifying, and preserving."[30] In manuals aimed at housewives, instructions for preserving foods emphasized that the end goal was to put off the question of productive ends until later: recipes for everything from chickens to rose petals conclude with the injunction to "keep all the year," to keep things as they are for the near-term future, or until further notice. The centrality of preserving to early modern households, and to Marvell's poem, dramatizes how the conservation of symbolic order requires activity that appears to be at odds with the furthering of the dominant ideology, or, to put it another way, that suspends in order to allow for the possibility of future furthering.

I. Nuns Preserving Badly: The Pre-meantime

The first batch of preservation technologies in the poem operate outside, or oblique to, the aristocratic order, and they do not, for that reason, last long. The poem's genealogical narrative begins with an abbey acquired by the Fairfax family shortly after the dissolution of the monasteries a century before and thereafter converted into the current Fairfax residence at Nun Appleton. An early invitation to read something like queerness in the poem comes with Marvell's imaginative conception of aristocratic lineage as something other than biological reproduction, with the Fairfax house as the legitimate if miraculous child of the pre-existing abbey: "A nunnery first gave it birth / (For virgin buildings oft brought forth)."[31] This revelation of the parthenogenetic abbey's intimate role in a Protestant family's history does nothing to soften the poem's Protestant suspicion of the place as a papist stronghold, money-hoarding Cave of Mammon, brothel, and lesbian love nest all in one, a manifold threat to the continuation of aristocratic bloodlines and to what Edelman calls "reproductive futurism"[32] more generally. And these nuns, even more than most nuns, are the avowed enemies of reproductive futurism: we learn they're trying to confine a young, rich, perfectly marriageable girl to a life of cloistered *jouissance* among women. Isabel Thwaites, future wife to William Fairfax, is a ward of the abbess, and the nuns are waging a campaign to keep her in their custody—whether on account of her personal charms, personal fortune, or both, is unclear.

The erotic as well as economic undertones of the nuns' interest in Isabel come out most clearly when one cunning nun launches into a lengthy recruiting pitch highlighting the abbey's most attractive features: incessant prayer and weeping are like spa treatments, working wonders on the complexion ("And holy-water of our tears / Most strangely our complexion clears," 111-12), Isabel will be treated like a princess, exempt from the rules ("The rule itself to you shall bend," 156), and, best of all, every night Isabel will get a new "virgin bride" to sleep with her, lying "As pearls together billeted. / All night embracing arm in arm, / Like crystal pure with cotton warm" (186, 190-92). The

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[30] Wendy Wall, "Forgetting and Keeping: Jane Shore and the English Domestication of History," *Renaissance Drama* 27 (1996): 123-56, 125.
[31] Marvell, *Upon Appleton House, To My Lord Fairfax*, in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* 85-86.
[32] Edelman, *No Future*, 2.

speech concludes with the nun inviting Isabel to join the sorority on a trial basis, no strings attached ("The trial neither costs, nor ties," 196), and Isabel seems to be on board: "The nun's smooth tongue has sucked her in" (200). Like the monastic order in the Protestant imagination more generally, this nun's advertisements for self-indulgent, gynocentric living would tempt Isabel away from her feminine duty of what Diane Purkiss calls "building a new and properly reproductive nation," a collective undertaking that had the English family at its center.[33]

But for all the nun's smooth talk of candies, crystal, and same-sex sleepovers, the idyll she describes is far from a den of isolated idleness. Despite the Protestant superstition that monastic lands were cursed by God with decay, infertility, and a lack of productivity, these nuns' comfort with commerce—as their spokeswoman alludes to commodities like crystal, cotton, and mass-produced altar hangings[34]—makes them sound *too* productive. Natasha Korda has argued that, while an early modern nunnery was "hardly a 'green world' removed from the urban commerce that surrounded it," that very enmeshment in a commercial world meant that nuns could operate in an alternative economy of transmission, acting "as obstacles to patrilineality" by passing on "the privilege of property, matrilineally, to their female disciples or 'children,'" effectively establishing "an oeconomy both inhabited and regulated by singlewomen outside of the familial household."[35] What is so insidious about the living arrangements of these "subtle nuns" (94) and their bid to thwart Isabel's prospects of Protestant housewifery is not only their seductive stance against reproduction but also the asexual productivity that they seamlessly and surreptitiously mix in with carnal pleasure. Marvell prefaces the nun's speech by saying she "weaved, / (As 'twere by chance) thoughts long conceived" (95-96), where careful craft is dissimulated as aimless "chance" chatter, and "long conceived" conceits are passed off as spontaneous emissions. What the nun is trying to slip Isabel is a life not of sinful loafing, but of sinfully productive labor. Even the nun's assurance that the convent will allow ample time for leisure paints a picture of never-ending domestic industry:

> 'Nor is our order yet so nice,
> Delight to banish as a vice.
> Here pleasure piety doth meet;
> One perfecting the other sweet.
> So through the mortal fruit we boil
> The sugar's uncorrupting oil:
> And that which perished while we pull,
> Is thus preserved clear and full. (169-76)

Rather than posing a threat to piety, pleasure sweetly perfects it, just as, over in the convent kitchen, fruit is preserved with sugar. But the nun oversells the restorative powers of the "uncorrupting oil":

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[33] Diane Purkiss, "Thinking of gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell,* ed. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 68.

[34] Purkiss, "Thinking of gender," 69. Hirst and Zwicker argue that the nun's promise that Isabel's features will appear in a thousand embroidered portraits of "our Lady" evidences "a veritable reproductive technology, other ways of sowing, multiplying, disseminating" (*Orphan of the Hurricane,* 47). They go on to explain this suggestion of "female autonomy" as "question[ing] and counterpoint[ing] masculine prerogative" (47), but one reason this mechanical reproduction does not exactly threaten heterosexual ideology is that it produces mere copies, more like commodities than children—reproduction is, like so much else in the nuns' imagination, all too literal.

[35] Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 166, 175.

because the fruit had already "perished" as soon as it was plucked, its apparent preservation by sugar will do nothing to restore its rotten core.[36] With the "mortal fruit" suggesting not only the natural process of decay but also the fatal forbidden fruit itself, this procedure only superficially sugarcoats the effects of the fall, confecting Eve's apple into a literally sinful dessert.

The kind of preservation-minded culinary labor the nuns perform might otherwise be too boring to be damning. Noting the recipe-like instructions in Shakespeare's procreation sonnets, Richard Halpern quips that sonnet 5's heavy family-planning emphasis "makes sex seem as exciting as putting up preserves."[37] The presumed unsexiness of putting up preserves in early modern kitchens has been convincingly contested by Wendy Wall,[38] but at least in prescriptive literature on domestic management, preserving's focus was clearly on function rather than fun. Sugary fruit products were prepared in bulk and kept on hand for use in medicines, desserts, and preservatives, and women of all classes could be involved, to varying degrees, in their production. While sugar could be synecdochal for the lavish expenditure of banquets, using sugar to preserve food was a foundational practice of thrifty housewives and central to a lived philosophy of frugality.[39] But the nuns' candies are not intended to nourish. Rather, like the confectionary "void" of a banquet spread, they are made only to vapidly impress, or to tantalize potential new recruits. Passing off rotten fruit ("that which perished") as "clear and full," the nuns are guilty of false advertising.

This is a dead end in more ways than one. Even if they are indeed uncorrupted, the fruits play no part in the operations of a healthy household; the nuns' unhusbanded housewifery does not participate in the narrative of genealogical continuity that Isabel Thwaites, by leaving the nunnery and marrying William Fairfax, will soon buy into. Unlike many other variations on the theme of

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[36] One early eighteenth-century encomium to sugar (when sugar was beginning to extend in use) commends the product's ability not only to correct but also to "anticipate" nature, hastening the ripening of fruit: "It is Sugar we call upon to correct the Harshness or remaining Sowreness in our most sweet and delicate Fruits, even in their ripe State, even the sweetest Strawberries and Rasberries are mended by strowing Sugar upon them …. *Sugar* may be prov'd to be a lower Sort of Vicegerent to the Glorious Planet the Sun, by anticipating the ripening Vertue of this most Illustrious Star" (Frederick Slare, *A vindication of sugars against the charge of Dr. Willis, other Physicians, and Common Prejudices. Dedicated to the Ladies,* appendix to *Experiments and observations upon oriental and other bezoar-stones, etc.* [London, 1715], 14). For Slare, sugar's virtue as a ripening agent flows naturally into the opposite, its power to stave off corruption: "all the perishing *Fructus horarii* are kept the Year round in the Consistence of a Jelly …. In like manner, some of the most pleasant Fruits are kept in the Syrup of *Sugar,* whole and fair in their Shape and Substance, the Revolution of a whole Year … in this pleasant and most delicious Pickle," and some parts of fruits, like citrus rinds, "are not only preserv'd from spoiling, but improved, being incorporated with Sugar" (15). (Slare is soon overtaken by an idolatry that surpasses even Marvell's nuns': "Had I been of that Nation who chose Onions, Leeks, and Garlicks for Dainties, or for a Deity, I should have neglected those Idols, and embrac'd this noble *Indian* Plant in its flourishing Flag, or rather its candid Beauty and charming Taste, made into a Pyramid of Sugar; and have paid my Devotion to it sooner than to any Vegetable whatever, or even to other Idols of polish'd Marble, or Gold, or Silver" [16]).

[37] Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare's Perfume: Sodomy and Sublimity in the Sonnets, Wilde, Freud, and Lacan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 14. Halpern accounts for this seeming unsexiness by gesturing to the discourse of alchemy, the sublimation of corporeal (and feminine-coded) impurities, performed by men in closed-off rooms.

[38] Wall contends that Halpern's dismissal of culinary preservation as boring unwittingly gestures to "a domestic discourse in which function and pleasure are unusually intertwined" (Wall, "Distillation: Transformations in and out of the Kitchen," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories,* ed. Joan Fitzpatrick [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010], 102).

[39] Amy L. Tigner, "Preserving Nature in Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-Like Closet; or Rich Cabinet,"* in *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity,* ed. Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 135, 132.

applying sugar to fruit, candied whole fruit was a delicacy, meant for sale and not for regular household consumption. Candying fruit "clear and full" was costly and labor-intensive, unnecessary and hardly habitual within the confines of a home.[40] The nun's casual reference to this market-driven culinary practice, as opposed to subsistence-level production for home use, underscores how, for all the insistence on their cloistered exemption from the world of men, the nuns speak the language of commercial exchange. Their labor is visible, shamelessly advertised rather than obliquely lyricized, and gestures to possibilities outside of home use. Thus it has no place in the domestic space that, as Korda argues, had begun to be strategically preserved, if only in theory, from commerce with the world outside: "the emergence of the ideological separation of feminine and masculine spheres of labor" in the late sixteenth century was meant to guard against the threat of "the market's infiltration of the household through the commodity."[41] The bad influence that the nuns would exert on Isabel stems from the fact that their concept of domestic activity is not cleanly ideologically separated from the commercial sphere.

II. Securely Playing, or, Quick Work

The abbey's preservative labor, then, is too at odds with the ideology of Protestant domesticity to be absorbed by it. It is, however, translated. If the poem spends what seems an inordinate amount of time on the question of the virgin Thwaites's fate, any anxiety over her assimilation into ascendant Protestant family values is assuaged when William Fairfax, the ancestor of Marvell's current patron, rescues (or, possibly, rapes) Isabel, the happy couple goes on its procreative way, and the commercially oriented, morally questionable preservation of mortal fruit gives way to the domestically oriented, morally sanctioned preservation of the Fairfax patriarchy. After the nunnery conveniently dissolves into thin air (269-72), the poem introduces a new cloistered entity: the poet-speaker himself, who recedes into his own mind as he wanders the estate's gardens, hallucinates a pastoral re-enactment of the Civil War, and then retires to the woods in a way reminiscent of the current Lord Fairfax's recent, possibly ignoble retirement from public life.

Unlike the hyper-productive nuns, the speaker in these middle sections of *Upon Appleton House* is defined by his idle errancy. The long middle section of the poem would seem to offer, even more than the extended dallying with the nuns, evidence for an "odd, strange, aslant" Marvell, a renegade, self-sabotaging poet doing what Freccero calls the "outlaw work" of queerness. Even in the tamer meadow portion, readers have seen in the figure of Thestylis an indication that Marvell is letting his poetic world spin out of control, and that her female voice, like the nun's, exposes the vulnerability of the male speaker's power. While it is true that Thestylis, a pastoral stock character elsewhere seen in Marvell's œuvre making hay-ropes and forestalling Ametas's advances,[42] inserts herself into the narrative in answer to the speaker, her role is less to break the poem's frame than to sustain it. After one of the mowers mistakenly, and much to his distress, mows down a young rail hidden in the grass, Thestylis decides to make the best of the situation by serving the bird for lunch. (She then bags another one, for later.) Appearing to have overheard the speaker's comparison of the mowing camp to Israelites at line 389, Thestylis offers "to make his saying true," substituting the slaughtered rails for the quails of Exodus 16:

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40 Theodora Jankowski, "Good Enough to Eat: The Domestic Economy of Woman-Woman Eroticism in Margaret Cavendish and Andrew Marvell," in *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England,* ed. Corinne S. Abate (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 96.

41 Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 72.

42 "Ametas and Thestylis Making Hay-Ropes," *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* 147.

> But bloody Thestylis, that waits
> To bring the mowing camp their cates,
> Greedy as kites has trussed it up,
> And forthwith means on it to sup:
> When on another quick she lights,
> And cries, 'He called us Israelites;
> But now, to make his saying true,
> Rails rain for quails, for manna, dew.' (401-8)

Hirst and Zwicker identify in "bloody Thestylis" a "masculine enterprise … mockingly transfigured into female brutality, exultation, and appetite,"[43] but as unhappy as the "orphan parents" (413) of the mowed rail may be, Thestylis' aims are fundamentally restorative. Supplying the mowers with the provisions ("cates") they need to sustain their own labor, she acts as a preservative laborer who plays a supporting role in a much larger drama, as if Marvell had outsourced some of his own frame-supporting work to her. Available for the male laborers when they need her, Thestylis "waits" both in the sense of deferring action and in the sense of serving as an attendant at table. Thestylis's trussing begins the work that converts death into life, redeeming the mower's senseless destruction. Bloody as she may be, her "quick" work is economical rather than excessive—mirrored in the economy of the poet's "on another quick she lights," where "quick" could describe both Thestylis' pace and the bird's status as alive, which will quickly become obsolete as its life is subsumed into the ongoing project of sustaining the mowers' lives.

As the speaker retires, in stanza 61, to his "sanctuary in the wood," he retreats from the imagined fields of domestic politics and domestic labor, but he retains an interest in the structuring principles of those spheres. If his world descends into disorder, it also sets itself up, by maintaining the appropriate instruments, to be more perfectly reordered when the time comes. Purkiss contrasts the speaker-poet's "pastoral" and "natural" reveries with the dreamy scenes evoked by the nun, which "are the result of and metaphorized through craft and artisanal labour,"[44] but this glosses over the extent to which the "pastoral" and the "natural" are always, and here in quite explicit ways, constructed by and described in terms of labor and craft, much as the nun stitches literal and metaphorical labor together even in her evocation of idle self-indulgence. The poet "weaves" prophecies from leaves to construct an artifact "Like Mexique paintings" (578, 580) and proceeds to "embroider" himself in an "antic cope" of oak leaves that reduces the old ("antic," or antique) religion of Catholicism to a costume gag (587-92). Finally, "languishing with ease" (593), he finds an inviting mossy bank where he can, in a holdover of his fanciful military mode, "[encamp his] mind" and "securely play" (602, 607), which seems to mean wrapping himself in the "silken bondage" of vines—an echo of the warm cotton embraces suggested by the nun—and acting out a masochistic *imitatio Christi* fantasy, complete with "courteous briars" for nails (614, 616). That the speaker, for all his prancing around, never does anything but "securely play" speaks to how the apparent paradox of conservative security and liberating play dissolves when play is understood as a fixture of a conventional system.

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43 Hirst and Zwicker, "Toils of the Patriarchy," 636.
44 Purkiss, "Thinking of gender," 69.

III. Preservation Restored: The Magna Mater in Training

Order is formally restored to this apparently antic world with the entrance of Lord Fairfax's young daughter, and Marvell's tutee, Mary Fairfax, who catches her tutor in flagrant idleness:

> But now away my hooks, my quills,
> And angles, idle utensils.
> The young Maria walks tonight:
> Hide trifling youth thy pleasures slight.
> 'Twere shame that such judicious eyes
> Should with such toys a man surprise;
> She that already is the law
> Of all her sex, her age's awe. (649-56)

The languishing poet is embarrassed to have Maria even look upon his "idle utensils," his "hooks," "quills," and "angles"—his fishing gear, but also, by implication, the tools of his other form of unproductive recreation, writing. Maria goes on to manifest herself as "the law / Of all her sex" in the following stanza, with her mere presence spurring the sun, like the poet, to pull itself together in shame ("The sun himself, of her aware, / Seems to descend with greater care," 661-62).

What Maria is doing—or not doing—is a form of symbolic labor that reverses, or forestalls, the decomposition of her surroundings. Simply by providing herself as an organizational principle, and without the aid of sugar, she restores disintegrating material: "See how loose Nature," Marvell entreats us, "in respect / To her, itself doth recollect" (657-58). The "respect" nature affords Maria could be understood as both an affective and a formal relation: she inspires both spiritual awe and a physical reconfiguration of a degenerate scene, such that to "recollect" is both an ethical and a practical act by which the environment becomes more properly itself.

Maria's feminine power to organize the landscape is nothing new in pastoral poetry—it goes back at least to Virgil—but here it functions is a mode less pastoral than domestic georgic. Her organizational skill fits the job description of the early modern housewife, whose role was transitioning from the industrious producer of household goods to the savvy consumer and curator of goods from outside. Natasha Korda explains how the valorization of the housewife's domestic leisure that Thorstein Veblen locates in the late nineteenth century was beginning to appear in England as early as the late sixteenth century. Relieved of her duties to brew, bake, wash, spin, and card, which were outsourced to lower classes, a woman of a certain status could devote herself to what Veblen calls the "performance of leisure," in the sense that "little or no productive work is performed."[45] Her primary function as a housekeeper requires symbolic, rather than productive, labor,[46] with both her semiotic and her manual labor understood as "unproductive" in Adam Smith's sense.[47] The housewife's task was thus not only to keep house, but also, and even primarily, to keep

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[45] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 58, qtd. in Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 56.

[46] Ibid., 56-57. Korda assimilates Veblen's views on housewifery to Jean Baudrillard's in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign,* trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos, 1981).

[47] Smith's roster of unproductive laborers includes kings, government officers, "churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds," as well as "players, buffoons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers" and household servants, who all perform a form of labor that—unlike the "sort of labour which adds to the value of the subject upon which it is bestowed" and "adds, generally, to the value of the materials […]

a cultural network of signs together. Unlike the nuns, whose economy was altogether self-referential, the housewife's aim is to preserve her household in order to help keep that larger system of signs intact.

This arranging and manipulating of signs, an integral part of Maria's role, is continuous with physically preserving them. The manual aspect of housekeeping blurs with its function as symbolic organization when Maria "vitrifie[s]" the world, making it congeal like glass, or crystallized sugar (688). Like the "modest halcyon" who, in accordance with its fabled calming abilities, "Admiring Nature does benumb" and makes "stupid fishes hang, as plain / As flies in crystal overta'en," or as carp suspended in jelly,[48] Maria oversees the sort of divinely sourced and approved kitchen experiments that reduce the world to an exquisite stillness: "by her flames, in heaven tried, / Nature is wholly vitrified" (672, 677-78, 687-88). Like an alchemist, she purifies matter through fire, and in a manner far more effective and sanitary than the "giddy rockets […] / Which from the putrid earth exhale" (685-86). But the resulting transformation is hardly as dramatic as that of base metal to gold. As Marvell concludes in the poem's penultimate stanza, the difference between "Paradise's only map" (768)—Nun Appleton—and the rest of the world—"a rude heap together hurled" (762)—is almost imperceptible. The "lesser world" is almost "the same," just a little tidier, "in more decent order tame": a better home and garden, but not by much.

That this extended encomium climaxes with a would-be housewife's small but focused power to curate a portion of the world's "rude heap" makes clear that not all the workings of heteronormativity are directly related to sexual reproduction, even if they are related indirectly. In the case of the mythical "modest halcyon," biological reproduction plays an implicit role in the effecting of quiescence; the bird is only able to charm stormy seas into stillness when it is breeding.[49] The kingfisher that swoops into Marvell's poem takes on, with its poetic moniker, these ancient associations with both reproduction and environmental calming without needing to actually *be* the fabulous halcyon, or even needing to be fertile. Marvell performs a similar operation of association by calling to mind the presiding woman of the house whose domestic management in other country house poems goes hand in hand with motherhood. Marvell can cast Maria, thirteen years old and at the cusp of menarche and marriageability, as a potential *magna mater*; the poem takes place in the "[m]eantime" before her marriage (745), when she will be, Marvell parenthetically informs us, "worthily translate[d]" into a modern-day Isabel Thwaites and matched with a man similarly translated into "a Fairfax" (747-48). This kind of willful translation on Marvell's part is necessary for the line to continue at all: Mary, Fairfax's only child, cannot carry on the family name the way a son could, no matter how good a household manager she proves to be. Summoning the phantom, indefinite male "Fairfax" who would somehow carry on the family name—despite coming from

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worked upon"—instead "adds to the value of nothing" (*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 351-52.

[48] Nigel Smith, in explanation of the "jellying stream" (675) that is benumbed along with the rest of nature, calls attention to alchemists' interest in the halcyon's proverbial abilities: "in alchemical theory, the halcyon was believed to calm seas by making them solid with a substance called *halcyonium,* 'spuma maris concreta' (solidified sea foam)" (*The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* ed. Smith, 238). But a compilation of typical contemporary recipes offers a more banal analog to Maria's effects on the world. "To souce Tench" requires that you make a brine ("liquor"), "strain the Liquor thro' a Jelly-bag," and add isinglass, a binding agent made from swim bladders. Once the liquor is boiled, "lay your Fish into the Dish, strain the Liquor through the Bag into the Dish, let it stand 'till it is cold, and serve it. This Jelly will serve to jelly Lobsters, Prawns, or Cray-fish; hanging them in some Glass by a Thread at their full Length, and filling the Glass with the Jelly while it is warm" (John Nott, *The Cooks and Confectioners Dictionary: Or, the Accomplish'd Housewives Companion* [London, 1724], Ll4).

[49] *Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.* "halcyon."

outside the family—papers over that problem. Setting the scene in the "[m]eantime," with this impossible translation safely shelved in parentheses, conveniently keeps any such future in suspension.

This situation in the mundane meantime, rather than in the dramatic end times imagined by Margarita Stocker in her influential reading of the poem, suggests that the calm wrought by vitrification is, like the halcyon's hibernal nesting, a regular, secular phenomenon.[50] The apocalyptic overtones Stocker sees in Maria's vitrification of nature could just as easily describe everyday conditions in an early modern kitchen; eschatological events can be thus recast as ordinary culinary routines. The vivid present in which the poem's closing stanzas are, as Hirst and Zwicker put it, "brilliantly fixed"[51] was also the tense that, in recipes for preserves, governed the brilliant fixation of fruit in sugar. Instructions on how "To keepe Barberyes" note the desired fixity of the syrup—"lyke Birdlyme"—and end, like many recipes of the kind, by projecting that present fixity into the future, with an entreaty to "kepe" things that way:

> Take claryfied Suger, & boyle it tyll it be thick, which you shal perceve yf you take a little betweene your fingers, it wyl rope lyke Birdlyme: Then put in your Barberyes, and let them boyle with a soft fyre, untyll you perceave thei be tender, then put them in a Glasse and cover them: and so kepe them.[52]

Hirst and Zwicker conclude of Marvell's treatment of Maria that "[t]he child frozen in time, withheld from futurity," amounts to "a denial of name, lineage, and inheritance: the promise the child bears in a progenitive order" in a way they find to "question the very ideology of dynastic continuity."[53] As the preceding pages have shown, however, if Marvell is questioning that ideology, he is also gesturing to strategies for responding to such questioning, showing just how resilient the patriarchal model is: its logic is carried out in the non-genital reproductive labor performed by good housewives and perverse poets alike.

Even in its avoidance of the future, then, Marvell's poetry participates in the ideology of reproductive futurism as defined by Lee Edelman, who equates that ideology with politics itself. "For politics," Edelman writes, "however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* a social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child."[54] This conservative core can hold even when the social order is not functioning as seamlessly as its most privileged participants would like. Hirst and Zwicker declare that English political patriarchy in the mid-seventeenth century had "exploded" and that marriage within Marvell's demographic was on the decline. They conclude, "It is of course in the nature of ideology not to be wholly coincident with social reality, and the greater the distance between them, the greater the violence ideology performs on social reality."[55] Yet something other than "violence" may be in order when social reality fails to follow the pattern of ideology: namely, the more

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[50] Stocker, *Apocalyptic Marvell*, 60-63. See also John Rogers on Maria's role in transmuting and crystallizing the world's "rude heap" in *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry, and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 101.

[51] Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane,* 49.

[52] John Partridge, *The treasurie of hidden secrets, commonly called, The good-huswives closet of provision, for the health of her houshold […] practised by men of great knowledge* (London, 1633), n.p.

[53] Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane,* 50, "Toils of the Patriarchy," 634.

[54] Edelman, *No Future*, 2-3.

[55] Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane,* 72.

aesthetically appealing but no less effective avenues of legerdemain, suspension, and distraction. Marvell's "subversive" machinations effect a suspension of Fairfax's particular patrilineal continuity that will prove necessary to the preservation of patriarchy as ideology.

IV. The Green World: Grafting On

If aristocratic reproduction relies on its strategic disruption at a narrative level, it also relies on it at a practical level. In a different context, Barry McCrea explains the supposedly insular aristocracy's counterintuitive dependence on outside interference with a reading of the opening of Marcel Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah,* when the narrator waxes botanical while idly lying in wait for the arrival home of his aristocratic landlords. After implying that flowers, sessile though they may be, act coquettish with pollinating insects and do not await an apian "ambassador" any more passively than a writer-in-training awaits his experiences, the narrator continues to think about which modes of reproduction produce sweet flowers, and which offspring are more likely to meet with base infection:

> If the visit of an insect, that it is to say the transportation of the seed from another flower, is generally necessary for the fertilisation of the flower, this is because self-fertilisation, the insemination of a flower by itself, would lead, like a succession of intermarriages in the same family, to degeneracy and sterility, whereas the crossing effected by insects gives to the subsequent generations of the same species a vigour unknown to their forebears.[56]

In McCrea's reading of what follows, the narrator—as he watches unfold before his eyes not the awaited homecoming of a heterosexual aristocratic couple but, instead, a scene of cruising between a middle-aged baron and a younger man of a lower class—comes to identify queerness with exogamous fertility, and aristocratic heterosexual reproduction with inbred sterility. Queerness, as the narrator is able to realize here in his idle repose (but not later, obsessing over Albertine's possible affairs with women), is not simply an aesthetically refreshing or ideologically destabilizing alternative to the dull linearity of hereditary lines. Rather, the continued dull linearity of those hereditary lines depends on its habitual commerce with queerness.

This can help explain how Marvell's antisocial quirks could strengthen Fairfax's sense of security in his precarious social role. Hirst and Zwicker carefully tease out how Marvell's slightly off-kilter mirroring of Fairfax's flaws—the poet both demonstrating the virtues of his patron's new apolitical lifestyle and displacing its more uncomfortable aspects from his patron to himself—allows Fairfax to "have it both ways."[57] Marvell's goal, though, is not just to absolve Fairfax for his choice

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[56] Marcel Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah,* tr. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D.J. Enright (London: Random House, 1993), 3. "Si la visite d'un insecte, c'est-à-dire l'apport de la semence d'une autre fleur, est habituellement nécessaire pour féconder une fleur, c'est que l'autofécondation, la fécondation de la fleur par elle-même, comme les mariages répétés dans une même famille, amènerait la dégénérescence et la stérilité, tandis que le croisement opéré par les insectes donne aux générations suivantes de la même espèce une vigueur inconnue de leurs aînées" (Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* [Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1993], 65).

[57] "To locate the moral dangers of retirement in the psyche of the troubled youth, and moreover to shape the crisis so exactly to the personal circumstances of the poet and tutor who had followed his patron to Nun Appleton, is both to acknowledge the allurement of retreat and to exclude Lord Fairfax from its dangers. Marvell allows his patron to have it both ways: watchful and wary in the garden, Fairfax enjoys retirement as escape from the stains and toils of public life and yet remains clear of the vices of ease. The forest episode acts to diffuse self-accusation, to acknowledge criticisms – the moral and spiritual dangers so vividly signaled

of retirement; he must also recast Fairfax's failure to issue an heir as, effectively, a non-issue. In other words, Marvell serves as a "surrogate," as Hirst and Zwicker put it, in a sense beyond acting as a repository for potential accusations against Fairfax; he must also perform a task on par with producing a child. Outsider that he is, it is precisely Marvell's strangeness that makes him a fit for the role of perpetuating the family name. As McCrea reminds us, defining the "queer secret" at the heart of heterosexuality as the simple fact of exogamy, family names are *always* carried on by strangers:

> Queerness already has a structural role in the genealogical narrative template, and it is not so hidden and subversive. […] Because genealogical continuity relies on the destruction of the nuclear family unit and the incorporation of an outsider into the line, an element of queerness, in the sense of a rival to the family, is an inherent part of the process.[58]

(The current Lady Fairfax, considered "outspoken" and having gained notoriety for twice loudly interrupting Charles's trial,[59] is all but absent from *Upon Appleton House,* her undomesticated "element of queerness" proving too difficult for the poet to assimilate.)

Thus the challenge the dysfunctional Fairfaxes pose to their encomiast is met by Marvell's insistence on an extra-biological continuation of the family name. In this case, destabilizing convention is the best way of ensuring its survival. If there will be no entailment, in the legal sense, of Fairfax's property to a son, then "goodness doth itself entail / On females, if there want a male" (727-28), where immaterial goodness "itself" stands as the more ideal form of mere material goods. After deriding vain women who place all their "useless study" on their faces, instead of cultivating their souls ("knowledge only could have filled / And virtue all those furrows tilled," 735-36), Marvell implies that Maria is a much more effective cultivator: "Hence she with graces more divine / Supplies beyond her sex the line" (737-38). This praise for the "divine" graces Maria enlists in order to surpass what is expected of women places her virtues squarely in a world "beyond" one governed by male primogeniture, where they will "keep" well into the future.

Bequeathing a legacy of "goodness" and "graces" rather than of little Fairfaxes, performing "beyond" (while also, crucially, less than) the normal duties required of her sex, Maria would supply a line that was not patrilineal. But that does not mean her role is not wholly compatible with heteronormative ideology; rather, it is necessary to that ideology's maintenance. An occasional reprieve from understanding things in straightforwardly patrilineal terms is necessary, Northrop Frye argues, for the reproduction of the heterosexual couple as an institution. In Frye's schema, the child's transition from his parental home to his own new household is interrupted by a foray into a "green world," a literal or figurative forest, as McCrea paraphrases, "free of parental supervision and social constraint, and it is characterized by unchecked erotic impulses, gender bending, and altered or mistaken identities,"[60] as in the comic confusion that makes up much of the action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With these "queernesses" safely out of the child's system, the comic plot resolves with weddings and foretellings of procreative futures. Patricia Parker, also in reference to *Dream*, argues by contrast that the reestablishment of an aristocratic heterosexual order in Act V

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in the luxuriance of the forest – but to demur: *the idle poet serves as surrogate,* scapegoat for charges that might have been laid to the patron's account" (Hirst and Zwicker, "High Summer at Nun Appleton, 1651: Andrew Marvell and Lord Fairfax's Occasions," *The Historical Journal* 36.2 [June 1993]: 247-269, 257, emphasis added).

[58] Barry McCrea, *In the Company of Strangers: Family and Narrative in Dickens, Conan Doyle, Joyce, and Proust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 9-10.

[59] Hirst and Zwicker, "High Summer at Nun Appleton," 260.

[60] McCrea, *In the Company of Strangers,* 10.

highlights how that order is just as constructed as the laborious, manual "joining" performed daily by "rude mechanicals."[61] Parker assumes that revealing the "Elizabethan World Picture" as artificially constructed would shake its very core, but a well-constructed plot proves the opposite to be true: more than affording "aery nothing / A local habitation and name," as Theseus scoffs before the workmen-players take the stage, the story maintained by poetic labor "grows," as Hippolyta gently corrects her husband, "to something of great constancy."[62] Calling attention to the growth potential of constructed forms, to how a well-sustained human artifact "grows" as if in nature, allows for the power of poetic labor to fix meaning even in the absence of a solid foundation in the physical world.

In *Upon Appleton House,* any dalliance in a green world, or in "queerness" more generally, more successfully serves as preparatory work for heterosexual coupling than offers any real alternatives to it. The "green world," moreover, provides models for passing off artificial connections as natural ones. Taking stock of the wood he has stumbled into in stanza 62, the speaker marvels at how the planted grove resembles a joint family tree as much as a series of independent biological organisms:

> The double wood of ancient stocks
> Linked in so thick, an union locks,
> It like two pedigrees appears,
> On one hand Fairfax, th'other Vere's. (489-92)

That cultural artifacts could be indistinguishable from natural formations is a convenient truth for a poet seeking to use his poem as cover for the lack of a dynastic heir.

Botanical language smooths over the progeniture problem most directly in stanza 93, where Mary, who "like a sprig of mistletoe / On the Fairfacian oak does grow" (739-40), is compared to what is botanically a parasite. But despite its leeching of nutrients from its host tree, mistletoe becomes, when processed by culture, a fruitful bearer of meaning: Druid mythology assigns the vine, in conjunction with the oak, the symbology of fertility.[63] In reference to Marvell's announcement that "Whence, for some universal good, / The priest shall cut the sacred bud" (741-42), Hirst and

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[61] Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies,* 124. The workmen's botched theatrical production "has the effect of laying bare the mechanics of that *Ordo,* of that 'meete placing of words' (Peacham) spoken of in the [rhetoric] handbooks as a 'naturall' order …. They serve, that is to say, to call attention to the process of construction itself …. In evoking the language and larger implications of proper joining both in matrimony and in discourse, and of the controlling or disposing of a potentially wayward *materia,* Shakespeare is *not necessarily, as some readers of this play's ending conclude, dramatically validating, for better or for worse, the Elizabethan World Picture, but rather laying out and laying bare, demonstrating precisely as a 'process,' its own forms of construction*" (124-5, emphasis added). Parker concludes by referencing how rhetoric handbooks "reveal, deliberately or not, that what is presented in all these different contexts as ostensibly 'naturall & necessary' is instead something both constructed and manipulable" (125).

[62] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974). Theseus sees the job the workmen-players have done as transparent and thus just a bunch of "tricks" (5.1.18). Hippolyta answers with a defense of the collective maintenance done on works of poetic labor. The play's protagonists' enduring commitment to consensus turns the merely "strange" into "something of great constancy": "But all the story of the night told over, / And all their minds transfigur'd so together, / More witnesseth than fancy's images, / And grows to something of great constancy; / But howsoever, strange and admirable" (5.1.23-27). Theseus is spared having to consider this by the entrance of the lovers.

[63] Vitaliy Eyber, *Andrew Marvell's "Upon Appleton House": An Analytic Commentary* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 237.

Zwicker gloss, "when Marvell contemplates Mary Fairfax's entry into that frame [of heterosexuality], he does so not in terms of marital and sexual union but in a language of grafting—neutered, violent, and programmatically deployed," with "implications of dismemberment and displacement."[64] But gardening books, not to mention any number of poems, describe grafting as evolving organically from natural processes, and, often, in the terms of romantic love. Gentlemen gardeners were advised that a rootstock must not simply tolerate the foreign scion joined to it, but positively rejoice in its company. The author of *The Country-mans Recreation* explains the seriousness of the commitment by reminding readers "How Graffes never lightly take": the saps of stock and scion "must be set in just one with another: for ye shall understand, if they doe not joyn, and the one delight with the other, being even set, they shall never take together."[65] Or, as the disguised Polixenes explains to Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*:

> You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend Nature—change it rather; but
> The art itself is Nature.[66]

The archaic meaning of scion as "branch" or "shoot"—the natural outgrowth of a tree—later came to mean a cutting taken from one tree and grafted onto another,[67] as if natural operations were etymologically evolving into (horti)cultural ones. If grafting is, as Hirst and Zwicker suggest, "neutered, violent, and programmatically deployed," it is not any more so than the marriages of heterogeneous parts at the center of dramatic plots and the dominant sexual ideology.

To return to the question of "subversion and containment," I want to emphasize that the "ends" of the dominant order are, both in Fairfax's case and on a national level, a bit frayed; the best thing to do for the moment is not to further them, but to suspend them in a poetic fabric. And to return to Quint's distinction between epic's victors and romance's losers, Lord Fairfax lives uneasily between the two: powerful enough to hold on to the trappings of aristocratic power and keep a personal poet in his employ, he is still not enough of a clear winner to let history, or genealogy, speak for itself.

Upon Appleton House is an encomium to the kind of symbolic labor that maintains the fiction of aristocratic lineage in particular and of the linear narrative of history more generally *as a fiction* in a way that, following Parker, we might think would threaten the naturalized institution by outing it as "both constructed and manipulable."[68] But Marvell, for all his rhetorical self-positioning as a "trifling youth," is no rude mechanical, and he uses the power of poetry, like agricultural grafting or preservative culinary techniques, as an artificial mode of giving artificial constructions all the legitimacy of, and more longevity than, the natural. The principle behind this is what Victoria Kahn calls "poiesis," which she defines as "the principle, first advocated by Hobbes and Vico, that we know only what we make ourselves. This kind of making encompasses both the art of poetry and

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[64] Hirst and Zwicker, "Toils of the Patriarchy," 635.

[65] Thomas Barker, *The Country-mans Recreation, or The Art of Planting, Graffing, and Gardening, in Three Books* (London, 1654), 29.

[66] Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale,* in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* 1589.

[67] *Oxford English Dictionary*, *s.v.* "graft."

[68] Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies,* 125.

the secular sphere of human interaction, the human world of politics and history."[69] While Kahn's main interest lies in arguments that politics has no need of transcendent backing and can thus function perfectly well without religion, her reasoning could apply as well to social institutions, like the family, whose legitimacy must be continually renewed by cultural—or, in a broad sense, poetic—labor. *Upon Appleton House* presents literary production as the preservative and conservative domestic labor of putting futurity itself into suspension. This constant labor of maintaining the fiction of the family is performed both by those outside the dominant order—poets, idlers, and, imperfectly, nuns—and by the real and hopeful housewives within it.

[69] Victoria Kahn, *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3.

Chapter 5
Tempering Milton

> In his *Georgics,* Lord, what pleasant variety there is; the divers grains, herbs, and flowers that be there described, that, reading therein, it seemeth to a man to be in a delectable garden or paradise.
>
> -Thomas Elyot on Virgil

> What are sheaves bound up in a Barn to the Phalanx that hem'd *Satan?*
>
> -Richard Bentley, note to *Paradise Lost* 4.977-85

The "pleasant variety" that charmed Elyot in the plant life of Virgil's *Georgics* has been taken as a hallmark more generally of the georgic mode, the poetic medium between pastoral and epic, associated with the mixed blessings of rural labor rather than with leisure or war. But if georgic, a mode distinguished by a looseness that makes it difficult to pin down,[1] can delight with its temperate mixing of styles and topics, georgic's tendency to mix itself into other genres, and to ground lofty epic flights, can cause consternation. Bentley was neither the first nor the last reader of *Paradise Lost* to complain that moments of epic intensity—here, at the end of Book 4, the fiery angelic phalanx is closing in on Satan in an attempt to prevent the Fall of Man—can rapidly deflate into something more like modest Virgilian georgic, in this case a literal description of farming practices: the combatant angels are compared to ears of wheat swaying in the field, which "the careful Plowman"[2] hopes to harvest and painstakingly prepare for storage. So widely noted are Milton's georgic downgrades that even the author of a book entitled *Milton's Grand Style* could conclude that the poet's greatness lies, counter-intuitively, in the careful moderation of minutiae. Christopher Ricks closes his influential study by defining Milton's grandness as "balance": "A balance that is not precarious and is the result of a strength manifesting itself in innumerable tiny, significant, internal movements—this is the balance of Milton's Grand Style."[3] In these "innumerable tiny, significant, internal movements," the grandness of Milton's style is not a groaning contradiction held together with a singular Herculean effort, but a constant and nearly imperceptible process of tempering. Such tempering, I will argue, is a reflection of Milton's inclination not only to the temperate tones of Virgilian georgic, but also to a further tempering, in his modification of that mode to reflect something more like household chores than the farmer's furrowing in the open field. Faced throughout his literary career with uncertain political futures, Milton adopted the spirit of a kind of labor more domestic, more feminine, and less heroic than traditional georgic, relying on the rhetoric and practices of medicinal and culinary tempering in an effort to maintain local life in the face of collective future uncertainty. This tactic of tempering, unlike the balance posited by Ricks, *is* precarious; it demands a constant recommitment of minor acts of labor, visible, in Milton's prose and poetry, on the local level of the line.

Readers of Milton are often surprised to learn that "temperance"—usually associated with not drinking, not eating too much, and other puritanical prohibitions—becomes, along with the more prosaic "tempering," a positive and active virtue in Milton's poetry and prose. Tempering, defined as

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[1] Alastair Fowler, "The Beginnings of English Georgic," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 124.

[2] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Riverside Milton,* ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 4.983. All references to Milton's poems are from this edition and will be hereafter cited parenthetically by line number.

[3] Christopher Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 150.

the promiscuous gathering and mixing of diverse emotions, impressions, ideas, and materials,[4] is, Milton announces in his 1644 tract *Areopagitica,* the recipe for virtue: "Wherefore did [God] creat passions within us, pleasures round about us," Milton asks, "but that these rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu?"[5] By considering Milton's participation in the georgic mode through the lens of domestic tempering in *Areopagitica*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Regain'd,* I mean both to call attention to Milton's georgic commitment to tempering as craft—his conception of his writing as the measured and laborious gathering, combining, and adjusting of textual ingredients[6]—and to emphasize the radical uncertainty, subject to infelicities of time and season, of that tempering. My turn to domestic georgic thus offers a new avenue for thinking about the relationship between craft and contingency in Milton's poetry and thought.

Uncertainty, as Kevis Goodman has shown, is integral to Virgil's poetics in the *Georgics,* as it is to agricultural labor itself, though it is often overlooked in the classical poem's early modern reception, where both the heroic struggle to conquer nature—what Joshua Scodel calls the "hard" strain of georgic—and the quasi-pastoral collaboration with the landscape, or "soft" georgic, are more apparent and more appealing.[7] Citing Bentley's scoffing remark about Milton comparing the army of angels surrounding Satan to something as mean as "sheaves bound up in a Barn," Goodman points out that the swaying ears of wheat standing in for Adam and Eve's heavenly would-be protectors are not yet, in Milton's simile, safely bound in the barn, and their undetermined status in the field is the source of all the dramatic tension: if the sheaves "[p]rove chaff," they will be worthless to the plowman, and our hopes for the first couple will be dashed.[8] Goodman takes this simile as emblematic of both the unpredictable outcomes of georgic labor and Milton's approach to Virgil's *Georgics*, where hopeful possibility and fragile precarity grow up side by side, and where the famous line celebrating all-conquering labor—"Labor omnia vicit"—is tempered, after an enjambment, with a clarification that this conquest did not take place once and for all, and will always be accompanied by the necessity that first occasioned it: "Labor omnia vicit / improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas" ("Toil conquered the world, unrelenting toil, and want that pinches when life is hard").[9]

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[4] In his careful survey of the semantic range of "moderation" and its synonyms, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), Joshua Scodel stresses that one important meaning of "the mean" in the period, and for Milton, was the mixing, or tempering, of elements of the extremes. He claims that Milton's early pair of poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso,* for example, far from representing negative extremes of mirth and melancholy, are to be taken together as an assertion that the ideal is to be found in their combination (101). Joanna Picciotto highlights how, far from "a merely negative virtue," for Milton "temperance is the active art of tempering and composing," a definition with surprising implications: "Innocent temperance actually *requires* promiscuity" (*Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010], 431). This is a broader articulation of Diane Kelsey McColley's reassurance that we need not be alarmed by the "wanton growth" of unfallen Eden in *Paradise Lost*, because "for Milton choosing and ordering amid fertile efflorescence is just what temperance is" (*Milton's Eve* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983], 111).

[5] Milton, *Areopagitica,* in *The Riverside Milton*, 1010. All references to Milton's prose are from this edition and will hereafter be cited parenthetically by page number.

[6] This textual temperance is central to Dayton Haskin's account in *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), particularly in his reading of *Paradise Regain'd*, to be discussed below.

[7] Scodel, *Excess and the Mean*, 84.

[8] Kevis Goodman, "'Wasted Labor'? Milton's Eve, the Poet's Work, and the Challenge of Sympathy," *ELH* 64 (1997): 415-446, 420.

[9] Virgil, *Georgics* 1.145-46, qtd. in ibid., 420.

Goodman's study of Miltonic georgic, focusing on the Orphic "wasted labor" of *Georgics* 4 and Eve's affective labor in *Paradise Lost*, is meant to "testify to the challenge of imagining sympathetic and erotic passion as productive action."[10] But her emphasis on georgic precarity, on the "unrelenting toil" that follows, interminably, toil's indeterminate conquest, also has implications for imagining mundane and minor maintenance work—work that, though it may be affective, fails to arouse the interest of "passion"—as a necessary, though not sufficient, precondition for any productive action in the future. Maintenance work tends to be undervalued at the best of times, when things seem to be sustaining themselves just fine, and at the worst of times, when more pressing crises take priority. But in the optimism of the 1644 prose no less than in the post-revolutionary defeat of the 1667-74 poetry, Milton sees local maintenance work, or domestic georgic, as vital to the reformation, in the sense of continual forming-again, of biological and intellectual life, whether that life is under the immediate threat of violence or the eventual threat of negligence.

Beginning in *Areopagitica* with what I read as the domestic technologies that preserve the "living labours of publick men" in books, and coming full circle to end with the Son's return "to his mother's house" in the final lines of *Paradise Regain'd,* this chapter will center on *Paradise Lost*—an epic of cosmic proportions, but also, as we have begun to see, a georgic of much smaller ones, animated by the tempering movements of sustainable gardening and good housekeeping.[11] If georgic becomes associated in the seventeenth century with public agricultural programs, nascent imperialism, and the muscular, masculine enterprise of literally and figuratively breaking new ground,[12] the domestic georgic mode I see in Milton operates on a more modest scale, and in much closer—even cloistered—quarters. As Adam and Eve labor to maintain the garden, the poem's minor linguistic operations of repetition, rephrasing, and correction temper the text into being. Milton's paradise, and our own paradisal work of reading Milton, often understood in terms of progress and steady (self-)improvement, can also be understood as the more modest, and less assured, work of incremental maintenance. In this way, Milton's intellectual labors, and our own, model the rhythms of domestic labor: of carefully combining ingredients in hopes of preserving ourselves and our communities, as a necessary but not sufficient precondition for any future transformative change on a larger scale.

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[10] Ibid., 440.

[11] Attention has been paid to the georgic elements of *Paradise Lost* before, by, for example, Barbara Lewalski in "*Paradise Lost" and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Anthony Low in *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Goodman in "'Wasted Labor'?", Scodel in *Excess and the Mean*, Seth Lobis in "Milton's Tended Garden and the Georgic Fall," *Milton Studies* 55 (2014): 89-111, and Andrew Wadoski in "Milton's Spenser: Eden and the Work of Poetry," *SEL* 55.1 (Winter 2015): 174-96. Those who have discussed Eve's domesticity include Lewalski in "Milton on Women—Yet Once More," in *Milton Studies VI* (1975): 3-20, McColley in *Milton's Eve*, and Laura Lunger Knoppers in *Politicizing Domesticity from Henrietta Maria to Milton's Eve* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). As I will explain in the next sections, my approach differs from these georgic and domestic readings in focusing on the provisional and iterative, rather than either proto-bourgeois or politically progressive, nature of both georgic labor and domestic economy in the poem.

[12] Though usually associated with the eighteenth century—where domesticity is also thought to have had its first major literary moment—following Dryden's 1697 translation of the *Georgics* and Addison's accompanying essay, important studies have located a strong georgic influence in seventeenth-century literature and thought, of which Bacon's evocation of a "georgics of the mind" is a key condensation point. See, in addition to the examples noted directly above, Fowler, "The Beginnings of English Georgic," and Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

I. Subliming for Survival: Kitchen Georgic in Areopagitica

> Each bird and foul, so moulded from the life,
> And after cast in sweet compounds of arte,
> As if the flesh and forme which nature gave,
> Did still remaine in every lim and part.
>
> -Hugh Plat, *Delightes for Ladies*

Areopagitica, written in response to a 1643 act authorizing pre-publication censorship, has been read as such an unqualified endorsement of the virtues of books that quotations from it have been emblazoned on the walls of libraries.[13] In a famous passage that has furnished some of those quotations, Milton conjures up what has often been understood as a kind of mausoleum but what I see as a virtual home apothecary. Books are imagined as immortal essences housed, strangely, in what sound like commonplace medicine vials:

> I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how Bookes demeane themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors: For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand, unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but hee who destroyes a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the Image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great losse; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the losse of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole Nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books; since we see a kinde of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdome, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kinde of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe, slaies an immortality rather then a life. (999)

As Stanley Fish has observed, this panegyric to preserved relics has a decidedly un-Miltonic ring: the veneration of sacred treasures is for papists, not the friends of truth who scorn idol-worship and are tasked with the constant and internal labor of forming and reforming themselves in virtue. Fish concludes that, despite or rather because of the enthusiasm here, Milton's tract is ultimately meant to cultivate indifference towards books: virtue, after all, can reside only in the soul, and since "ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so" no matter what you give "them" to read (1010), the question of whether books are really vials of treasured-up life-blood or not is, according to Fish, beside the point. The idolatry of books is a preliminary phase the reader, and the tract itself, must

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[13] John D. Schaeffer, "Metonymies We Read By: Rhetoric, Truth and the Eucharist in Milton's *Areopagitica," Milton Quarterly* 34.3 (2000): 84-92, 84.

pass through "*in order* to move away from it,"[14] as part of a dialectic of internal self-formation. The apparent praise of books, like a licentious book itself, is thus a test, one of the world's whetstones against which the reader is to sharpen her virtue and close reading skills. Taking Spenser's temperate Guyon in the cave of Mammon and the bower of bliss as a model, readers must expose themselves to ideological as well as physical temptation, keeping in mind that "that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary" (1006).

In this reading, the attractive artifacts offering themselves up as idols are fit only to be smashed by the heroic, iconoclastic reader. Any potential hero might take pause, however, when confronted with the somewhat oppressive ordinariness, from an early modern perspective, of Milton's stock of images:

> For Books are not absolutely dead things … nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them…
> … a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life…
> We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of publick men, how we spill that season'd life of man preserv'd and stor'd up in Books…
> …whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elementall life, but strikes at that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason itself, slaies an immortality rather than a life.

The repeated emphasis on small-scale storage here makes the exemplary "good Booke" less tantalizingly magical and more coldly clinical, and as the references to embalmed preserves pile up, the forbidden trove of treasures takes the increasingly prosaic shape of a supply of fluids sitting in containers,[15] or, as in a typical description from a 1631 play, a woman's medicine cabinet: "With limbecks, viols, pots, her Closet's fill'd / Full of strange liquors by rare art distilled."[16] With the belabored reminders that we are entrenched in a material world of perishable objects, even if those objects strive for a (somewhat redundant) "life beyond life," we are brought down from the grandiose dreams of alchemists and back to earth: even an "ethereal and fift essence," even "an immortality," requires continuous preservative action lest it be "slai[n]." The escalation of the violence Milton describes, in a dramatic crescendo—homicide; martyrdom; massacre—takes on the tone of mock epic when we remember that the potential victims have been figured as the kinds of items commonly kept by women for the purposes of mundane medical care.

Milton thus translates what might be a total transubstantiation of flesh to word into a physical and approximate process, "the living labours of publick men" clinging to a vegetative existence as "not absolutely dead" books. The "life beyond life" that authors can reach through their published works is reduced from a triumphant transcendence to the dragged-out extension of worldly existence, a temporary suspension of death rather than a bold refusal of it: this kind of "life

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[14] Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 195.

[15] James Grantham Turner, pursuant to his claim in "Libertinism and Toleration: Milton, Bruno and Aretino" that the real concerns of *Areopagitica* lie in pornography—in literally promiscuous books rather than figuratively promiscuous reading—sees the arrangement of books-cum-vials as a literary sperm bank (in *Milton and Toleration,* ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007]). In my view, the contents of the vials seem not to have even the vaguely instrumental designs we might associate with sperm, and are to be understood more in terms of their suspension than of any discrete future purpose.

[16] Ralph Knevet, *Rhodon and Iris* (1631), qtd. in Wendy Wall, "Distillation: Transformations in and out of the Kitchen," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories,* ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 90.

beyond life" is better provided for by household medicinal mixing and food preservation than by esoteric sorcery. Books are different from living things in degree rather than in kind, so that immortality gets tempered into longevity, the forbidden fruit of idolatry refigured as the preserved quinces of early modern domestic pharmacopoeia.

Just as books' producers remain trapped in a worldly if prolonged existence, their consumers too will have to adjust any expectation that books can provide an escape from their precarious lives. The beneficial effect of reading is health rather than immortality, and reading, as much as writing, is more like the everyday concoction of medicines and home remedies than the elite, ethereal activities of alchemical laboratories. As Milton goes on to explain, books are "imbalm'd and treasur'd up," "preserv'd and stor'd up" only for the purpose of being utilized as ingredients in the tempering operations of the judicious reader, as "usefull drugs and materialls wherewith to temper and compose effective and strong med'cins, which mans life cannot want" (1008). The necessity of gathering available materials, no matter how gross, in order to refine them into health-giving substances applies as well to vices not contained in books, as part of the holistic medical plan overseen by God: the provision of passions and pleasures that "rightly temper'd are the very ingredients of vertu."

The descriptions and prescriptions of this imagined pharmacy thus call to mind the integral role, in early modern life, of daily feats of domestic georgic: the household labor necessary to preserve organic material that was at constant risk of rotting. The distillation of medicines had been, like alchemy, a male-dominated practice, and by the eighteenth century it would be largely professionalized outside the home,[17] but in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, medicinal mixing was mostly women's work, performed domestically,[18] and to a certain extent—insofar as it was involved in the making of traditional home remedies—it always had been.[19] In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as literacy spread and housewifery separated out from the larger domain of husbandry, a cottage industry of domestic manual-writing arose in England, recommending techniques for cooking, healing, and the preservation of fruits, herbs, flowers, fish, poultry, and other culinary and medicinal ingredients for the benefit of an expanding class of housewives.[20] Wendy Wall, in her study of culinary conceits in Shakespeare's sonnets, emphasizes how these manuals' recipes were "preservative" twice over, prescribing the preservation of foods that could in turn preserve bodies.[21] Wall observes in Shakespeare the same rhetorical sliding I identify in *Areopagitica*: that of purely poetic preservative vessels solidifying, when activated by the context of women's medicinal mixing, into more ordinary household stuff. She notes how both the sonnets and contemporary domestic manuals blur the line between immortality through the reproductive technology of print, on the one hand, and the continuation of one's biological line

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[17] Patrick Wallis's discussion of medical commerce in the eighteenth century notes how while medicinal mixing was at that point still part of the knowledge women were expected to have, it was increasingly the province of professional apothecaries, who often made exorbitant profits ("Consumption, Retailing, and Medicine in Early-Modern London," *The Economic History Review,* New Series 61.1 [Feb. 2008]: 26-53, 43).

[18] Wendy Wall, "Distillation: Transformation in and out of the Kitchen," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories,* ed. Joan Fitzpatrick (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2010), 92.

[19] Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 486.

[20] McKeon, *Secret History*, 487.

[21] "Numerous books assure readers that strawberries, artichokes, quinces, or barberries can be made to 'keep' all year or that medicinal syrups will last many years and prolong life. As such, recipe books locate humans in the mortal world of fruits and animals even as they attempt to thwart natural cycles that erode living things" (Wall, "Distillation," 91).

through sexual reproduction, on the other.[22] This line blurs even more, as Wall suggests, when the immortality of souls or forms gets confused with the prolongation of life, otherwise conceived as the metabolic reproduction of the healthy body.[23]

While many of these recipe books offer tips for the mundane maintenance of health, acknowledging bodily needs, this meeting of necessity is often indistinguishable from the enhancement of life through pleasure and art.[24] A volume by John Murrell appends the immediate practicality of meal preparation to a diverse array of novelties mostly fun but also functional, advertising itself as both "Delightfull" and a "Daily Exercise" and containing "the secrete misteries of the purest preservings in Glasses and other Confictionaries, as making of Breads, Pastes, Preserves, Suckets, Marmalates, Tartstuffes, rough Candies, with many other things never before in Print. Whereto is added a Booke of Cookery."[25] One of the most popular contributions to the genre, Hugh Plat's *Delightes for Ladies,* advertises its specialty as the preservation of "life" in a way that casts practical provisions as purely artistic. As Plat explains in his prefatory poem:

> I teach both fruits and flowers to preserve,
> And candy them, so Nutmegs, cloves, and mace:
> To make both marchpaine paste, and surged plate,
> And cast the same in formes of sweetest grace.
> Each bird and foul, so moulded from the life,
> And after cast in sweet compounds of arte,
> As if the flesh and forme which nature gave,
> Did still remaine in every lim and part.[26]

In a sense on which this chapter will expand, Plat's promise to help readers reproduce living forms in almond paste, to "cast" the stuff of life "in formes of sweetest grace" and "sweet compounds of arte," deliberately confuses practical preservation and fanciful art. The descriptions of culinary processes emphasize not their novelty, but their continuity with what already exists, even their

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22 Jeffrey Masten goes even further in his diagnosis of Shakespeare's sonnets as a kind of preservative project in line with the workings of a feminized household: "'procreation' in these sonnets is more about 'storage' than about creating something new … I would thus describe the procreation sonnets as *re*creation sonnets: poems about men storing more men" ("Gee, Your Hair Smells Terrific: Response to 'Shakespeare's Perfume,'" *Early Modern Culture* 2 [2001], qtd. in ibid., 100).

23 As in previous chapters, here I will use the word "reproduction" to refer, on a sliding scale of literalness, to the metabolic regeneration of living tissue, or, more broadly, to the simple iteration of existing forms—something in line with the first definition of the word offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "The action or process of forming, creating, or bringing into existence again," with an example offered of Robert Boyle's reconstitutive experiments in the "Reproduction of Salt-Petre" (*s.v.* "reproduction").

24 While on the one hand the sugar central to most of the confections described in these recipes was associated with preservation, self-sufficiency, and the domestic (both in the sense of the increasingly private home and in the sense of English identity), such values were in tension with the fact that English sugar was a product of colonial expansion and enslaved labor. See Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), and Kim F. Hall, "Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects and Subjectivities,* ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

25 John Murrell, *A Delightfull Daily Exercise for Ladies and Gentlewomen* (London, 1621).

26 Hugh Plat, *Delightes for Ladies to adorne their persons, tables, closets, and distillatories, with beauties, banquets, perfumes and waters* (London, 1630), A2V-A3R.

redundancy: the original quinces and rose petals remain suspended in syrup, the shape of the animal repeats itself in marzipan. Often, in fact, preservation itself—more than pleasure or actual utility—seemed to be the whole point. The recipes offered by *A Delightful Daily Exercise,* and by many similar collections, tend to conclude with the instruction to "kepe all the yeare": keeping the stuff, rather than eating or otherwise using it, is often as far as we get. The repeated formula can give these books a liturgical feel: the final "and kepe all the yeare" serves as a kind of refrain that makes reading through them feel like a soothing spiritual exercise.

The seemingly unambitious, but nonetheless remarkable, promise of preserving existing forms by reproducing them was the aim of the daily labors not only of housewives but also of scholars, editors, anthologists, and commentators. As Ann Blair discusses in her study of the early modern proliferation of printed compilations, commonplace books, and *florilegia,* foremost in many compilers' minds was the hope "to safeguard the material they collected against a repetition of the traumatic loss of ancient learning,"[27] to maintain the knowledge they painstakingly assembled by inviting the mimetic efforts of an equally conscientious readership.[28] Carefully arranged like the selections of flowers after which they were named, the designs of anthologies and *florilegia* were not meant to be retentive once and for all: their techniques of holding diverse pieces of textual material in variously organized suspensions aimed to inspire, rather than obviate, similar repetitive labors in their readers.[29]

We can now return to the vials of *Areopagitica,* which have been conveniently preserved for our later use. Considering these seasoned blood samples in the contexts of domestic production and editorial labor raises the possibility that their utility to the literary and ethical formation of the reader is not limited to their timely iconoclastic smashing, and that they have a value in themselves, precisely *as* agents of suspension. Rather than serving as temporarily tempting papist icons or as target practice for iconoclasts, these preservative vials hold life and labor, as well as action, in suspension, a suspension that is necessary to the continuation of basic spiritual and material life. The goal of preserving textual material, for Milton, is not transcendence but survival, a reproduction of existing forms of life that keeps things, for the moment at least, as they are, but only by forming them anew.

The question of how best to practice such preservative re-formation of ideas has been central to theories of translation, both in early modernity and today. To return to a passage from the first chapter of this dissertation, Jacques Derrida in his essay on "relevant" translation takes up this redefinition of "reform" as a mode of spiritual and material maintenance when he defends his

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[27] Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, 6. See also Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[28] Blair distinguishes between information, data, and knowledge as follows: "I use the term 'information' in a nontechnical way, as distinct from data (which requires further processing before it can be meaningful) and from knowledge (which implies an individual knower). We speak of storing, retrieving, selecting, and organizing information, with the implication that it can be stored and shared for use and reuse in different ways by many people—a kind of public property distinct from personal knowledge" (2). I use "knowledge" here interchangeably with "information" out of a sense that compilers operated by what Pamela Smith calls "artisanal literacy," which allows for "gaining knowledge neither through reading nor writing but rather through a process of experience and labor" (*The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004], 8). Although, unlike the artisans Smith discusses, compilers' experience and labor had much to do with reading and writing, they were, like those artisans, focused primarily on "making knowledge productive," seeing language as material to be manipulated for others' use.

[29] Blair, *Too Much to Know,* 61.

choice of the French "relever"—which means, among other things, "to lift up"—to translate the verb "season" ("When mercy seasons justice") in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*:

> *Relever* first conveys the sense of cooking [...], like *assaisonner*. It is a question of giving taste, a different taste that is blended with the first taste, now dulled, remaining the same while altering it, while changing it, while undoubtedly removing something of its native, original, idiomatic taste, but also while adding to it, and in the very process, *more* taste, while cultivating its natural taste, while giving it *still more of its own taste,* its own, natural flavor—this is what we call "relever" in French cooking.[30]

Derrida's language here is emphatically iterative. His terms require a constant refinement that results in nothing more than their reconstitution: he is justifying his replacement of Victor Hugo's translation of "seasons"—"tempère"—by tempering the verb "to temper" into something that more appropriately conveys a specific mode of tempering. As Derrida goes on, the association of the word "relever" with cooking is deemed as apt as its application to transcendence ("Sublimation, elevation, exaltation, ascension toward a celestial height") and to Hegelian sublation. He concludes that the "relevant" translation is one that can "guarantee the *survival* of the body of the original," calling on the double sense Walter Benjamin assigns "survival" in "The Task of the Translator": "*fortleben* and *überleben:* prolonged life, continuous life, *living on,* but also life after death,"[31] or, to put it another way, life beyond life.

The form of preservative labor Derrida associates with translation—whether understood as seasoning, sublimation, or a mode of survival—is so focused on the reproduction of the same that, if difference emerges at all, it is as an afterthought, the sediment that accrues only after many repetitive iterations. The tedious, tempering activity of continuously reforming and reformulating language and material may indeed result, eventually, in some form of transcendence. But, as we will see in the cases of both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd*, true paradise can only be preserved and effected through a commitment to the reproductive, in the metabolic sense, labor of tempering. The constant necessity of this labor makes it georgic; its almost microscopically local character is what makes it domestic.

II. Suspending Sublimation: Reformation Georgic in Paradise Lost

> For know, whatever was created, needs
> To be sustained and fed …
> -Raphael to Adam, *Paradise Lost* 5.414-15

In *Paradise Lost,* the end of Adam and Eve's labors is to uphold their current state by keeping the future in suspension. They can only stay innocent in Eden as long as their consciousness begins and ends with doing what they are already doing, maintaining their flesh exactly the way it is, and becoming who they already are.[32] Needless to say, they eventually fail in this, and we can better

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[30] Jacques Derrida, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?", trans. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader,* ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2000), 440.

[31] Ibid., 443.

[32] Reading Adam and Eve's unfallen existence as iterative could be seen as a domestication of Regina Schwartz's metaphysical reading in *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in Paradise Lost* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), which argues that, in *Paradise Lost*, "the original act is an iteration" (1).

understand why by considering the surprise visit from the "affable archangel" Raphael in book 5, when Adam and Eve become unable to reconcile the life of maintenance work they have led so far with the idea of transcending their current state. Having been masters of suspension throughout their brief lives, they are now no longer able to sustain a suspension of the desire for improvement.

When Adam and Eve's activities in *Paradise Lost* have been recognized as both domestic and georgic, it has usually been in the sense of what we might today call "working on their relationship." Joshua Scodel sees the couple's "joyful form of self-regulation" as part of Milton's georgification of epic, his shift of the genre's focus from heroic military deeds to the virtuous pleasures (and dangers) of daily conjugal life.[33] This builds off Thomas M. Greene's influential reading of the poem's emphasis on interiority as looking forward to the bourgeois novel, with depoliticized private life taking the place of public action as the source of national values.[34] Joanna Picciotto has argued compellingly against this view of Adam and Eve's conjugal society as proto-bourgeois, claiming instead that their collaboration in the garden models in miniature the collectivist politics of a public experimentalist community.[35] While I agree with Picciotto's rejection of the evacuation of politics from Milton's domestic sphere, and with her claim that Milton saw in "labors of innocence" the potential to restore paradise in a fallen world, my reading, recalling Goodman's instructive preoccupation with georgic precarity, emphasizes that Adam and Eve's domestic georgic is only *potentially* political. Their constant labors work to maintain this potentiality, rather than to instantiate any actuality.

My emphasis on this spiritual subsistence farming thus runs counter not only to readings of the poem as centered on private domestic drama but also to those that read Milton's Eden as a laboratory for a public-facing Baconian georgic, whether in the sense of political progressivism and scientific pursuit or in the sense of capitalist profit and imperialist expansion. Picciotto, calling Eden "[l]iterally imperfect" in its current state, likens Milton's attitude toward labor to those of both contemporary experimentalists and political reformers like the Diggers, whose efforts were focused on improving the land, farming it to its as-yet unrealized potential, in the service of progressively increasing human knowledge.[36] Adam and Eve are constantly "reforming" the garden, which Barbara Lewalski takes to mean that they must "raise to higher levels of perfection the world which

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[33] Scodel, *Excess and the Mean*, 256.
[34] Ibid., 283.
[35] Picciotto, *Labors*, 472. See also Knoppers, *Politicizing Domesticity*, for an argument that "Milton appropriates domesticity in *Paradise Lost* boldly to figure not only domestic but civic virtues essential for political participation and liberty in a Commonwealth, looking back nostalgically, and perhaps defiantly, to the now-lost English Republic" (142-43). While I would argue that "boldly" and "defiantly" are precisely the wrong ways to understand Milton's treatment of Eve's domestic labor, I appreciate Knoppers's subtle analysis of the ways in which the mutual regard in Adam and Eve's marriage is undercut by the fact that Adam fails to appreciate her domestic labors (152-53) and her acknowledgement that the path from domestic to civic virtue Milton's picture of domesticity proposes is hardly clear, though it may be less of a lost cause than Knoppers suggests.
[36] Crucially, Picciotto understands progress in the fallen world as a work of "paradisal recovery" not categorically different from work in unfallen Eden. The Diggers, like the experimentalists, "strategically scrambled the means and ends of paradisal return: not just a means of paradisal recovery, their 'delving' was paradise itself." At the same time, the linear bent of this project was undeniable: "Using innovations in applied knowledge to 'quietly improve the Waste and Common Land' in the Baconian confidence that it would soon be 'increased with all sorts of Commodities,' the Digger project was not analogous to Baconian instauration but an instance of it" ("Reforming the Garden: The Experimentalist Eden and *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 72 [2005]: 23-78, 36).

has been made for them,"[37] with the two of them likewise "growing in perfection"—meaning, in part, graduating from pastoral stasis to georgic progress.[38] When Maureen Quilligan protests that the first couple's work, because it is necessary to perform on a daily basis, is "apparently insufficient,"[39] she echoes Eve's impatience, in book 9, with their failure to meet production goals. And it is true that Milton's first couple, who in theory could sit back and enjoy their time in paradise, choose instead to spend all day working on the garden, pruning and harvesting, resting only after dutifully attending to their "sweet Gardning labour" (4.328). On a more practical level, their campaigns against trees' "[f]ruitless imbraces" (4.214) and attempts to arrange botanical marriages suggest an interest in the progress of flowers into fruit, and Adam emphasizes that their "disburdening" of nature makes it "more fruitful," implying that the strategy behind their pruning is to produce greater yields (5.319-20).

But paradisal labor does not, as Quilligan would have it, "[fall] short of its goal of reformation,"[40] because in an unfallen world, reform simply means maintaining existing forms, reconstituting them in order to ensure their survival. Just as the reader of *Areopagitica* can be satisfied with the healthy reproduction and reforming of text and self without feeling the need to label it as itself transcendence, improvement, or even progress, the reader of *Paradise Lost* should not be too hasty to conflate restorative and curative labor on a tract of land with improvement over tract of time.[41] Picciotto, in a crucial nuance of her account of paradisal progress, also sees deferral as central to that progress. In her reading of the poem's collectivist bent, "the gradual cooperative striving toward fulfillment brings its own pleasure," a version of Eve's "amorous delay" in book 4: "forestalling the subjective satisfaction of certainty" is as key to the experience of Milton's poem as it was to experimentalist science.[42] But while Picciotto sees this suspension of results as a "dialectical struggle," "an agon between the modern intellectual's two bodies"—one fallen and privatized, the other innocent and collective[43]—I see that suspension working in Milton less as a heroic and ultimately victorious battle than as a precarious practice of domestic maintenance.

This maintenance work does not preclude improvement, but, crucially, it does not guarantee it, either. Adam and Eve's innocent efforts are geared not towards progress, but rather toward survival, in the sense in which John Berger describes a culture that "envisages the future as a sequence of repeated acts of survival," without any prospective gain, as opposed to a "culture of progress" that imagines the future as infinite expansion, with production increasing over time.[44] In Eden, where "[w]anton growth" must be "lop[ped]," and fallen branches must be cleared (4.625-33), the focus is on maintenance, not improvement, on keeping the garden the way it is, not increasing its production capacity; they are already harvesting more than enough fruit.[45]

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[37] Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton on Women," 7.

[38] Lewalski, *"Paradise Lost" and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms,* 196.

[39] Maureen Quilligan, "Freedom, service, and the trade in slaves: the problem of labor in *Paradise Lost*," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture,* ed. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 223.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Lewalski is insistent on this conflation, taking Milton's suggestion that Adam will catch up Eve on Raphael's astronomy lesson "later" as a *fait accompli*: Adam and Eve "can preserve their happiness only *if* they attain a full and conscious understanding of their condition" (*Rhetoric,* 197-198).

[42] Picciotto, *Labors,* 467-68.

[43] Picciotto, "Reforming the Garden," 25.

[44] John Berger, *Pig Earth* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), xix.

[45] This goes farther—or, rather, emphatically less far—than a claim like Wadoski's, where constant georgic correction and maintenance is crucial to Eden but goes hand in hand with the linear, teleological work of reform ("Milton's Spenser," 191).

As they labor in the garden, Adam and Eve perform repetitive tasks that fold future possibility into the present in a way that makes the future, as we might understand it, almost nonsensical. When they work to disentangle plants' "[f]ruitless imbraces" in book 4, the embraces remain in the present tense, so that the fruitlessness is never more than a false prolepsis, taking place in a future that will never itself come to fruition. Every morning, they arrive at the orchard and set to work

> where any row
> Of Fruit-trees overwoodie reach'd too farr
> Thir pamperd boughes, and needed hands to check
> Fruitless imbraces: or they led the Vine
> To wed her Elm; she spous'd about him twines
> Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
> Her dowr th' adopted Clusters, to adorn
> His barren leaves. (4.211-19)

The Virgilian georgic trope of the marriage of the elm with the vine, if it happens at all (the typically Miltonic "or" is ambivalent as to whether this is an additional or an alternative activity to pruning), will yield nothing but a pleasing decoration; the goal here is "to adorn … barren leaves," not to make them fruitful,[46] allowing the vine's arms to be suspended in a "marriageable" state without ever having to actually marry anything. Adam and Eve's daily work, then, arranges the world in a way that does nothing more, in this case, than prevent a non-event, checking fruitlessness rather than necessarily instantiating fruit. Reform in Eden means ensuring the continuation of an existent state by reconstituting it, or by pre-emptively reversing its failure, so that paradisal gardening is akin to the metabolic repair of the body, a state of affairs that becomes even more literally true, as we will see, in *Paradise Regain'd*.[47]

That paradise—and even the eventual sublimation of humans into angelic bodies—would really be about subsistence, and not about progress or perfection, might sound disappointing. As Anne-Lise François discusses in her gloss of Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason*, a desire for "just-enoughness" seems less than human. "Kant praises the Lord's Prayer," François explains, for "hardly being a prayer at all, as it does not ask for things to be otherwise but only that we may be what we already stand to be by virtue of the act of prayer itself."[48] Kant's praise here is, François admits, not unequivocal, and the spiritually modest request to be constituted as a prayerful subject, which seems to have much to do with grace, sits uncomfortably with the materially modest request

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[46] In her tracing of the ancient Greek concept of *hybris* to its roots in botany, Ann Michelini explains how Theophrastus called plants hybristic that put their surplus resources to producing their own excessive leaves and branches, rather than properly reproducing by bearing fruit, and the term's shift and eventual centrality to tragedy is echoed in early modern moral discourse's appropriations of botanical vocabulary ("Hybris and Plants," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 82 [1978]: 35-44, 38). While I do not mean to suggest there is anything hybristic about Adam and Eve's decoration of the elm with the vine—they create order rather than excess—it does suggest a model for plant life that does not have fruit as its ultimate goal, where in fact fruits—"adopted Clusters," brought by the vine as her "dowr"—pre-exist the marriage.

[47] It is in something of this spirit that Marx called Milton an "unproductive worker," who "produced *Paradise Lost* as a silkworm produces silk, as the activation of *his own* nature," writing only to become who he already was and not with the intention of increasing anyone else's capital (Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I,* trans. Ben Fowkes [New York: Penguin, 1976], 1044; emphasis in original).

[48] Anne-Lise François, "'O Happy Living Things': Frankenfoods and the Bounds of Wordsworthian Natural Piety," *diacritics* 33.2 (2005): 42-70, 65-66.

for a subsistent amount of food, which answers a much less lofty concern. And why, one might further protest, aim so low as to request that God "give us this day our daily bread" when we could probably get away with asking for quite a bit more—or, indeed, owe it to our human dignity to ask for more? Only animals, after all, want no more than to satisfy their immediate bodily hunger; as Lear famously laments, "Allow not nature more than nature needs, / Man's life is cheap as beast's."[49]

And yet the provisionality of the request for daily provisions, its mere one-day warranty, is a necessary—though not sufficient—condition for anything more, if one is to take to heart Milton's imperative, in *Areopagitica*, to commit "ev'n to the reforming of the Reformation itself" (1019). Improvement comes, if it comes at all, only by suspending the logic of improvement and provisionally placing value on reconstitutive, rather than progressive, reformation. Adam and Eve make an attempt to maintain this innocent but precarious sense of suspension when, shaken by Eve's disturbing, hair-disordering dream at the opening of book 5 (she wakes from a premonition of Satan's temptation to transcendence "[w]ith Tresses discompos'd"), they successfully, if temporarily, recompose themselves, a process culminated with the singing of their daily prayers:

> Lowly they bow'd adoring, and began
> Thir Orisons, each Morning duly paid
> In various style, for neither various style
> Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
> Thir Maker, in fit strains pronounc't or sung
> Unmeditated, such prompt eloquence
> Flowd from thir lips, in Prose or numerous Verse,
> More tuneable then needed Lute or Harp
> To add more sweetness … (5.144-52)

However unsettled by Eve's dream ("of evil sprung I fear" is Adam's diagnosis; "Yet evil whence?", 5.98-99), they are, at the end of their perfectly tempered orisons, relieved to find that "to thir thoughts / Firm peace recover'd soon and wonted calm" (5.209-10). With just the right amount of gusto, the sweetness level of the song perfectly adjusted, the prayer is described as a recipe in negative: no need to add various style, holy rapture, lute, or harp. Making use of a tempered "various style," a phrase whose doubling in line 146 at once insists on its sufficiency and offers us a refill, restoratively tempers a variation in their mental lives and helps Adam and Eve commemorate the reproduction of their healthy, calm, and peaceful state.

A couple hundred lines later, the spiritual repair of prayer is converted into the bodily repair of lunch. While Eve is composing a salad inside the bower and Adam is enjoying the sunshine directly outside (and this is a division of labor, or rather of labor and leisure, to which we will return[50]), Adam suddenly discerns Raphael arriving on the horizon, and he implores Eve to harvest everything in the garden, empty her stores, and put everything in place in order to entertain their

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[49] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear,* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), II. iv. 266-67.

[50] Picciotto points out that the "verdant wall" (4.697) surrounding the flower-covered bower is jointly cultivated by the couple, at least by implication; God, as "sovran Planter," has done nothing more than designate the place for their "delightful use" (4.691-2), as "a platform for human labor" (*Labors,* 479). But even if Adam might help control the border between the bower and the outside world, inside the bower—in the narrowest of Eden's rooms—it is Eve who arranges things: "Here in close recess / With Flowers, Garlands, and sweet-smelling Herbs / Espoused Eve deckt first her nuptial Bed" (4.708-10).

celestial guest. Eve, chiding her husband's ignorance of how the domestic economy is run, reminds him that in an overabundant paradise, there is no need to harvest any more than immediately necessary, because they run no risk of scarcity: "small store will serve, where store, / All seasons, ripe for use hangs on the stalk" (5.322-23). Curiously, though, she goes on to qualify this statement: "Save what by frugal storing firmness gains / To nourish, and superfluous moist consumes" (5.324-25). Here she makes an exception for a category of materials for which an early harvest, followed by "frugal storing," might be advisable. This aside could thus be read as a hope for a tempered gain, for an improvement redefined as reconstitution: a hope that fruits will become more firm, and thus more properly themselves, when they are preserved, so that if they are improved—or, in Derrida's terms, *relevés*—it is simply in that they are saved.

We are not, however, given much time to dwell on the innocent implications of this aside. Her mini-lecture on housekeeping concluded, Eve quickly sets to work making lunch, promiscuously gathering and carefully ordering materials like a diligent, if hasty, reader of *Areopagitica,* executing a salad recipe that she seems to have internalized:

> So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste
> She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
> What choice to chuse for delicacie best,
> What order, so contriv'd as not to mix
> Tastes, not well joynd, inelegant, but bring
> Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change,
> Bestirs her then, and from each tender stalk
> Whatever Earth all-bearing Mother yields
> In *India* East or West, or middle shore
> In *Pontus* or the *Punic* Coast, or where
> *Alcinous* reign'd, fruit of all kindes, in coate,
> Rough, or smooth rin'd, or bearded husk, or shell
> She gathers, Tribute large, and on the board
> Heaps with unsparing hand; for drink the Grape
> She crushes, inoffensive moust, and meathes
> From many a berrie, and from sweet kernels prest
> She tempers dulcet creams, nor these to hold
> Wants her fit vessels pure, then strews the ground
> With Rose and Odours from the shrub unfum'd. (5.331-49)

Well-joining her tastes and tempering her creams in an exemplary practice of domestic georgic, Eve combines the diverse elements of Eden into a delicate balance. (What exact elements she chooses, however rationally, are not in themselves essential: they could be from the East Indies, "or" the West Indies, "or" the Punic Coast, "or" wherever, with the Miltonic "or" again attesting to how the tempering, or mixing, of possibilities is also a suspension of multiple possible worlds.) Like the self-reforming moral subject who promiscuously tastes and then tempers a wide range of materials to compose useful and effective medicines, Eve knows to be at once unsparing in her initial selections and careful in her ensuing combinations. Eve's domestic labors may be important, as Ricks claims of the couple's labors in general, because they are imbued with impending tragedy, but they also have the much more mundane value of modeling the Miltonic cultivation of language, the continuous process of correcting excess in order to let what Ricks calls "living tissue" thrive.[51] The introduction

[51] Ricks, *Milton's Grand Style,* 143, 52.

of the idea of inelegant tastes might be less a depressing glimpse into postlapsarian salad-making than a careful and controlled correction, on the part of Milton and Eve alike, of negative possibilities with positive ones. Eve's work to keep the garden and its ingredients in a sustainable suspension, to "bring / Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change," demonstrates that tempering tastes, by correctly mixing them together, is precisely what *upholds* taste, and what upholds paradise itself.

As Adam, Eve, and Raphael are enjoying their well-combined meal in a leisurely fashion (and this, Milton reminds us, is raw cuisine, so there is, mercifully, "no fear lest dinner coole," 5.396), Adam starts to make some innocent-enough small talk, and asks his new angel friend about life in heaven. He starts off with a topical question: How's the food? Raphael starts gushing about his usual diet of mellifluous dews and pearly grain, but, perhaps worried about offending his host, he assures Adam that earthly fruits will not wreak havoc on his angelic digestive system, since the substance of angels and humans differs in degree, not in kind. Appropriately enough for a lunch served in a garden, and in keeping with the rhythms of Edenic life so far, Raphael goes on to use a half-botanical, half-digestive metaphor to illustrate this continuum from human to angel:

> So from the root
> Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
> More aerie, last the bright consummate floure
> Spirits odorous breathes: flours and thir fruit
> Mans nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd
> To vital Spirits aspire, to animal,
> To intellectual, give both life and sense … (5.479-485)

The trees become increasingly ethereal as they rise from their roots up through their stalks, their "more aerie" leaves, and finally their spirit-breathing flowers. Raphael goes on to explain how humans, by simply reproducing themselves *as* human through their digestion and assimilation of nutrients, can progress from eating earthly fruits to imbibing the celestial food of heaven. And here he describes how Adam and Eve can themselves gradually sublime into more rarefied, spiritual forms:

> time may come when men
> With Angels may participate, and find
> No inconvenient Diet, nor too light Fare:
> And from these corporal nutriments perhaps
> Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit,
> Improv'd by tract of time, and wingd ascend
> Ethereal as wee … (5.493-99)

Now things begin, however haltingly, to shift away from this regimen of preservation, maintenance, and metabolic reproduction—the domain of domestic georgic—and into a new paradigm of progress, improvement, and teleological georgic. "Improv'd" and "sublim'd," Adam and Eve will ("perhaps") one day be able to "ascend": this, it seems, is progress. It is also what is earlier promised, or presented as already accomplished, by Eve's oneiric interlocutor as he offers her a corporal nutriment that promises to turn her body to spirit at once: "Thy self a Goddess," the Satanic premonition addresses Eve, "not to Earth confind" (5.78).

Raphael concludes, however, by reminding his listeners to remain "obedient," and to respect the limits currently imposed on them: "Mean while enjoy / Your fill what happiness this happie state / Can comprehend, incapable of more" (5.503-5). The angelic instruction, unlike the Satanic one

and like the later injunction to be "lowlie wise," is squarely in the "georgic spirit," to use Anthony Low's preferred phrase, as is Adam's response to the latter: "to know / That which before us lies in daily life, / Is the prime Wisdom" (8.173, 192-94).[52] The couple are told merely to *survive* space and time, remaining "confind" by their parameters, and perhaps *by* survival—by continuing to sustain themselves on the "corporal nutriments" to which they are already accustomed—only *then* to surpass themselves, to achieve a life beyond life. The "gradual scale" by which they may eventually be sublimed is so gradual as to be imperceptible. They must, in other words, suspend the idea of progress or improvement, however delicious, and focus, for the time being, merely on maintenance.[53]

But if Raphael's advice is meant to reassure Adam and Eve to focus on this self-reproduction, and be happy with their happy state, it also introduces a concept of linear progress of which Adam and Eve had originally been innocent, and which their modest, merely self-reconstituting prayer aimed to prevent. Time has up till now been an organizational principle of pleasant alternation between day and night, work and rest: "God hath set / Labour and rest, as day and night to men / Successive," Adam helpfully explains as he guides Eve to bed in book 4 (612-14). But now it is suddenly possible to understand time as an uninterrupted "tract," a narrative with an endpoint. And so too have the daily, cyclical labors of the digestive tract been proleptically converted into the forward trajectory of fallen history.

Fast-forwarding to book 9, we find Eve on the fast track of this trajectory. Faced with the forbidden fruit, she is seduced by the promise of instantaneously surpassing her present happy state, and bypassing the blood-brain barrier:

> …what hinders then
> To reach, and feed at once both Bodie and Mind?
> So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
> Forth reaching to the Fruit, she pluck'd, she eat … (9.778-81)

Thus the precise locus of Eve's transgression is not only in *that* she eats, but also in *how* she eats, reaching with "rash hand" and plucking, eating, in a frenzied asyndeton, without any kind of tempering, without even a pause for a conjunction. This is not to suggest that eating the fruit would have been inconsequential as long as Eve had first taken some deep breaths and a meditative walk around the garden, but rather that the temporal collapse of the form is inseparable from the content of the act. The whole appeal of the fruit is that eating it will afford immediate results, dispensing with all the incremental cultivation, minor self-corrections, and drawn-out suspensions that have been integral to paradisal life. The valorization of efficiency that informs her action—to "feed at

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[52] Low, *Georgic Revolution,* 321.

[53] Picciotto understands this tension as a clear dramatization of Milton's experimentalist ethos: "The systematically ambiguous identity of Adam, suspended here between his individual and collective instantiations, prefigures the very dialectic between the intellectual laborer's two bodies that propelled experimental progress" (*Labors,* 468). By following his suggestion of sublimation with a command of obedience, "Raphael dangles before Adam the prospect of gaining angelic insight into matter's secrets even while urging him to accept his epistemological limitations," where "Adam" is twofold, both the corporate person capable of boundless progress and a limited individual: "Adam's modest acceptance of his limits as an individual is compatible with his participation in the intellectual progress of the humanity it represents; indeed, the personal modesty that expresses itself in an individual contentment with 'this happie state' is a necessary condition of that progress" (467). If contentment is a necessary condition for progress, however, it is not sufficient; Raphael's repeated qualifications—"may," "may," "perhaps" (493, 494, 496)—emphasize the precarity of any promise of progress.

once both Bodie and Mind" certainly does sound economical—continues what Maureen Quilligan calls the "proto-capitalist" line of reasoning that had led Eve to propose that she and Adam "divide [their] labours" (9.214) in the first place, leaving her alone and vulnerable to Satan.[54] Why drag out the workday by seasoning their labor with conversation and kisses, Eve had protested to her husband, when they could get more done, in less time, apart?

When Eve suggests this, Adam commends his helpmeet on her well-"imployed" thoughts, which indicate her commitment to "studie houshold good" and promote "good workes" in her husband, to the profit of them both:

> Well hast thou motion'd, well thy thoughts imployd
> How we might best fulfill the work which here
> God hath assign'd us, nor of me shalt pass
> Unprais'd: for nothing lovelier can be found
> In Woman, then to studie houshold good,
> And good workes in her Husband to promote. (9.229-34)

If the gendered division of labor in the middle books separates Adam's intellectual commerce with Raphael from Eve's manual labor within the bower, Adam here ascribes "studie" to Eve and "workes" to himself. Even if Adam, as Quilligan convincingly claims, is conceiving of works theologically and is arguing against Eve's "model of wage-labor" in favor of a feudal arrangement of service to their Lord,[55] the gender inversion of intellectual and manual labor here is striking. To put it another way, if Eve's thinking is too oriented to the economic, in the proto-capitalist sense, Adam's is not economic enough, in the sense that he is inept in the study of *oikos*: home economics, or household good.[56]

Reacting to feminist criticism that Eve is left out of worthwhile paradisal activities, "relegated" to the boring bower, Barbara Lewalski argues instead that Eve "transcends" her domestic role. Noting that the two of them garden side by side and that Eve overhears almost all of Adam's intellectual exchange with Raphael, Lewalski would save Eve from irrelevance: "Eve, far from being confined to her bower and her domestic concerns while Adam forges forth in the outside world, is imagined to share fully with her mate in the necessary work of that world."[57] But it must also be said that Adam is shut out—or shuts himself out—of the bower, and is unable or unwilling to share fully in the work of the *inside* world, both of the kitchen and of the mentally interior gathering, storing, tempering, and organizing that accompany the housewife's bodily activities. Adam's inability or unwillingness to participate fully in the domestic economy is a failure

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[54] Quilligan, "Freedom, service, and the trade in slaves," 225.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Lobis points out that, in anticipatory appreciation of what Eve has accomplished during their separation, Adam "sets out to glorify her labor and does so by undertaking traditional woman's work—weaving," and with his thoughtful flower garland seems to earn the epithet of "domestick *Adam*" afforded him during the separation colloquy, where he speaks with "care" (9.318) ("Milton's Tended Garden," 102). But Adam's poor sense of timing in adopting a domestic role—Lobis notes "the sad, even awkward, effect that the poem has passed Adam by; he thinks he is still in the familiar georgic mode of book 4" (104)—disqualifies him from ever inhabiting it. As Eve's awareness of the difference between fruits that are better fresh and that which "firmness gains / To nourish" over time (5.324-25) suggests, timing can be everything in housekeeping.
[57] Lewalski, "Milton on Women," 6, 7.

to conceive of paradisal labor as an activity that is neither fruitless nor productive and progressive, but that, for the time being, preserves the world through repeated acts of tempering.[58]

Mary Nyquist has taken issue with the "apologetic tendency" she sees in arguments like Lewalski's, making clear that, however much readers looking for feminism or formal balance might see Adam and Eve's roles as symmetrical, they are in fact "ordered hierarchically and ideologically": Milton's granting Eve the task of naming the flowers, for example, is hardly an egalitarian gesture when one considers this is "revealed only incidentally," and "in such a way that it seems never to have had the precise status of an event," a wistful, lyrical lament unlike Adam's rational, authoritative act of naming the animals.[59] In Nyquist's understanding, we should associate Eve's utterance "with the affective responsibilities of the domestic sphere into which her subjectivity has always already fallen."[60] Nyquist concludes that "Milton's epic seems to testify to the progressive privatization and sentimentalization of the domestic sphere" that would soon find expression in novels.[61] As much as I agree with her critique of liberal feminist readings of Eve that find that Eve's early experiences of privacy and autonomy "are equivalent to a potentially empowering freedom from patriarchal rule"—such a reading, as Nyquist puts it, "obviously does not want to submit the category of personal experience to ideological analysis"—this critique overlooks the imaginative possibilities that domestic space offered not just to Eve, but also to Milton.

Back in book 5, Eve had understood—in a way Adam, so anxious to impress Raphael with conspicuous consumption, had not—that household good, like Milton's poetic labor, was all about tempering and preserving available materials, not accumulating new ones, and this understanding was intimately tied to her vocation as a domestic laborer. (As Diane Kelsey McColley has put it, "Milton's Eve is distinguished from all other Eves by the fact that she takes her work seriously."[62]) When Eve mentions that some fruits do better in storage, the possibility of any kind of improvement is only an afterthought, a possibility suspended, or saved, as if in parentheses: "Save what by frugal storing firmness gains / To nourish, and superfluous moist consumes." In this unfallen aside, Eve imagines gains as coming only when the labor of harvesting has been suspended. C. S. Lewis's famous criticism of the last two books of *Paradise Lost* as an "untransmuted lump of futurity" and thus an "inartistic" inadequacy,[63] a reading since replaced with more charitable evaluations of the ending's poetic success, might be revalued and restored: an "untransmuted" state might be read not as an infelicity, but as the preservation of potential, the kind of as-yet-untransmuted lump that, in Milton's simile for Raphael's angelic digestion, "The Empiric Alchemist / Can turn, or holds it possible to turn / … to perfet Gold" (5.440-42), where the felt possibility of the alchemist's transmutation is as worthy of mention as his actual ability.

Before moving to the "Eden rais'd" of *Paradise Regain'd*, and the "second Eve" who raises the Son of God, I want to reiterate my suggestion that Eve's domestic georgic—where a kind of interior labor aims to preserve, not necessarily to improve—offers us a new conception of, or

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[58] After the fall, Adam does exclaim a sudden instinct to preserve, but that instinct is for monumental rather than provisional preservation: "So many grateful Altars I would reare / Of grassie Terfe, and pile up every Stone / Of lustre from the brook, in memorie, / Or monument to Ages" (11.323-326). He desires to set Eden apart as a museum, rather than seeking to reinstate daily acts of preservation in the fabric of daily life.

[59] Mary Nyquist, "The Genesis of Gendered Subjectivity in the Divorce Tracts and in *Paradise Lost*," in *Re-Membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (New York: Methuen, 1987),
99-100.

[60] Ibid., 100.

[61] Ibid., 120.

[62] McColley, *Milton's Eve*, 110.

[63] C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to "Paradise Lost"* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 129.

alternative to, Bacon's "Georgics of the mind," the heroic intellectual labor that would lead to the advancement of learning, commerce, and imperial power. When seventeenth-century experimentalists looked to the figure of the innocent Adam—with his cheerful labor, his perfect vision, and his encyclopedic naming of the animals—as the exemplar of human knowledge,[64] they foreclosed the possibilities for intellectual labor that might be modeled by Milton's unfallen Eve, whose georgic energies are focused on maintaining the conditions that make intellectual life possible.

III. Reproducing the Incarnation: Metabolic Georgic in Paradise Regain'd

> What doubts the Son of God to sit and eat?
> These are not fruits forbidden […]
> Thir taste no knowledge works, at least of evil,
> But life preserves, destroys life's enemy,
> Hunger, with sweet restorative delight.
>
> -Satan to the Son, *Paradise Regain'd* 2.368-73

Paradise Regain'd, the perhaps redundant sequel to *Paradise Lost*,[65] offers a more sustainable model of subliming by gradual scale than Adam and Eve could imagine. The effect, to readers' eternal disappointment, is even more gradual and less sublime than the model proposed by Raphael, and both more georgic and more domestic in character than that of *Paradise Lost.* As Jesus—usually called (with reference, I would argue, as much to Mary as to God[66]) "the Son"—greets Satan's frenetic temptations in the wilderness with a series of preternaturally calm refusals, the reader herself, as Stanley Fish suggests, feels tempted to shake the idle hero into action, or at least to sympathize with Satan when he sputters, "What dost thou in this World?" (4.372). Some critics have defended the Son's passivity with reference to Milton's own political position, as the only recourse, besides perhaps Samson-style terrorism, for a righteous person under an unlawful regime. Picciotto has suggested that the account of the Son's persecution is a kind of "generalized biography" of his pupil and reader Thomas Ellwood and other besieged Quakers during the Restoration.[67] Others

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[64] Picciotto opens her *Labors of Innocence* by identifying the prelapsarian Adam as "the innocent observer," a figure called upon in the seventeenth century "to justify experimental science, an emergent public sphere, and the concept of intellectual labor itself" (1). Eve, "literally made of fancy" (474), is on her own "a zealous but incompetent natural philosopher" (475). Only when joined with Adam, who himself "realizes his identity in conference with others" and "submits his own person to collectivist discipline through his ongoing collaboration with Eve" (472), can Eve participate in the "productive sacrament" (8) of cultivating knowledge.

[65] Redundant in at least the sense that Milton already provided instructions for regaining paradise the first time around. His amanuensis Thomas Ellwood claimed that his trenchant critique of *Paradise Lost* ("Thou has said much here of *Paradise lost,* but what hast thou to say of *Paradise found?*"), precipitated the appearance of *Paradise Regain'd,* since Ellwood's question was, supposedly, one the poet "had not thought of" (Flannagan, introduction to *Paradise Regain'd*, in *The Riverside Milton*, 711). Evidently, though, the matter of finding paradise again had not slipped Milton's mind; in *Paradise Lost,* Adam is told he can find a "Paradise within thee, happier farr" (12.587), and the Son does no more than that here. As Picciotto puts it, in response to Ellwood's claim that his question astonished Milton into a "Muse," "perhaps Milton was wondering how his friend could have imagined that his pointedly anticlimactic poem, which concludes with fairly explicit instructions on how to extend paradise beyond the garden, was about anything else" ("Reforming the Garden," 38).

[66] It is not for nothing that, having rejected Satan's invitation to his own "Fathers house" (3.175), the Son returns to his "Mothers house" in the final line of the poem (4.639).

[67] Picciotto, *Labors*, 497.

have sought to save the Son from the charge of passivity in the first place, reframing his apparent idleness as a form of crypto-heroic action. But like the attempted redemption of Eve's "relegation" to domesticity, this approach passes over the possibility that the Son's interior work could be directed toward provisional maintenance: the incremental preservation of biological and intellectual life that must be performed privately and incessantly until conditions allow for that life to be lived publicly. Rather than trying to convert the Son's stance into a form of legibly productive action, the reader could, if she is able to put her desires for productivity on hold, focus in the meantime on the Son's reproductive labor that, while conducted individually for now, could prove a model for collective life.

Readers of *Paradise Regain'd* might immediately expect, upon hearing some celestial trumpet-blaring at the beginning of book 1, to witness the Son in heroic action. If they were versed in the study of the georgic mode, they might modify this expectation with an awareness of how this "brief epic" is tempered at every turn by elements of the *Georgics*: both poems employ the rare four-book structure, both are written in a middle style that frequently gestures to both epic heights and pastoral humility, and both, if we take Milton's hints that his basis was the Book of Job, focus their praise on a hard-working, farmer-like figure.[68] The poet, "who e're while the happy Garden sung, / By one mans disobedience lost," still seems committed to the form of epic, and now takes as his topic "Recover'd Paradise to all mankind, / By one mans firm obedience," and lest this sound too neatly symmetrical to be of interest, we are also promised a tale of "deeds / Above heroic, though in secret done" (1.1-4, 14-15). The flight of heroism no sooner announced than reduced with the concessive "though," we are alerted that this poem will be a record less of accomplishment than of modification and correction, with each deed elevated to a state "above heroic" only to be immediately domesticated down to a lower order, with epic triumph tempered by and into domestic georgic.

After enduring the spotlight at his baptism, which had turned into a surprise coming-out party for the Son of God (as Satan recounts at 1.79-85), and while "they in Heav'n their Odes and Vigils tun'd" in joyous anticipation of how he will "vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles" (1.182, 175), Jesus abruptly decides to take a meditation retreat. Though his internal dialogue with himself, or God—he is "alone," but with "the Spirit leading"; he is immersed in "his deep thoughts, the better to converse / With solitude" (1.189-91)—is nominally a planning meeting for how he might "[p]ublish his God-like office now mature" (1.188), the Son apparently has some maturing work left to do. "Musing and much revolving in his brest," he feels ill-equipped to organize "a multitude of thoughts at once / Awakn'd in me," and he is unable to make his inward state accord with what he has heard about himself, "[i]ll sorting with my present state compar'd" (2.196-97, 200). This internal revolving, sorting, and comparing—a kind of tempering, but less apparently so than the explicitly georgic pruning and explicitly domestic salad-making of Adam and Eve—goes on for more than a hundred lines.

The Son acquires this frustrating habit from his mother, who, by continuously reflecting upon words and signs she has received from her son and elsewhere in the past, works to inure herself to the uncertainty of his current unannounced absence from home. The distressed Mary can only assuage the worried thoughts "rais'd" in her breast after having "clad" them "in sighs" (2.64-65). This swaddling takes the form of an extended speech ("which she in sighs thus clad"), an account of the events of her life as a mother and expectant mother, the words of the prophets, and the recent and past actions of her son. She ends by recalling what happened when the twelve-year-old Jesus ran away to the temple, and how she "mus'd" upon it afterwards:

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[68] Low, *Georgic Revolution*, 324.

… what he meant I mus'd,
Since understand; much more his absence now
Thus long to some great purpose he obscures.
But I to wait with patience am inur'd;
My heart has been a store-house long of things
And sayings laid up, portending strange events. (2.99-104)

Reframing past events in terms of current ones, and tempering her mental response accordingly, Mary shares Eve's foresight in saving that which would not, to casual observers, seem to require gathering up and storing away (there would seem no more need to collect freely produced speech, or to treat actions as collectible items, than to put up fruit in a world innocent of scarcity). Furthermore, she echoes Eve in her attention to ordering and tempering, rather than merely retaining, her materials. Or, perhaps more appropriately, both Eve and Mary share a sense that "mere" retention necessarily requires the proper ordering and tempering of materials over time, in order to adapt things and sayings to changing circumstances while still keeping them as themselves. Consciously fashioning herself into a repository instead of unwittingly serving as one, Mary has prepared herself as a vessel (it is in part by having protectively "clad" her worries "in sighs" that she can be "inur'd" with patience), and her preparations continue once the storing begins: "pondering oft, and oft to mind / Recalling," "with thoughts / Meekly compos'd" (2.105-8). In the "store-house" of Mary's breast, words are allowed to ripen within the body, so that "what he meant I mus'd, / Since understand," crude language "[s]ince" processed into digestibility and comprehensibility. Laboring thus internally, she does not, as some critics contend, count herself among those "who only stand and waite."[69] Stanley Fish, who includes Mary in his claim that "[w]aiting is the only action (or nonaction) the characters in *Paradise Regained* ever take," reads as a "declaration of passivity"[70] what I take as an account of internal, reproductive labor, a labor that has defined Mary's existence since the conception of the Son of God and that did not cease after his birth.

This mode of gathering and culturing material, Dayton Haskin argues, is also reflective of the methods of Milton himself, who painstakingly "gathered, compared, and synthesized diverse biblical passages" with the intent of forming them into his final "brief epic."[71] Milton's description in *De Doctrina Christiana* of storing up passages into a "treasure [*thesaurum*] which would be a provision for my future life" echoes a wealth of contemporary discourse about "laying up" Scriptural treasure to ensure a mature life "of *growing in grace and knowledge,* and of *growing rich in good workes*,"[72] as well as Milton's prescription for biblical reading in *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.* Since Christ has scattered "the heavenly grain of his doctrine like pearle heer and there, which requires a skilfull and laborious gatherer,"[73] readers must take up a vocation of gathering, saving, and storing in order to have access to that doctrine at all. In a more collective call to curation, at a political moment when such organizing work felt more immediately possible, Milton envisions in *Areopagitica* "the sad friends of Truth" as together conscripted into "imitating the carefull search that *Isis* made for the mangl'd body of *Osiris,*" with the restorative goal of "gathering up" the "hewd" and "scatter'd" pieces of what was once the "perfect shape" of Truth (1017-18). Haskin concludes that the biblical account of Mary's attitude towards the circumstances of Jesus' birth—she kept them (*sunetērei*), putting them together

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69 "When I Consider" (Sonnet XIX), in *The Riverside Milton,* 256.
70 Fish, *How Milton Works*, 329.
71 Haskin, *Milton's Burden*, 130.
72 Ibid.
73 Milton, *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,* in *The Riverside Milton*, 969.

(*sumballousa*) in her heart (Luke 2:19)—affords Mary the poetic role of creation, a role imitated by the Son and meant to be imitated, in turn, by the actively creative reader.[74]

While critics like Haskin aim to elevate such organizing labors to the status of productive work,[75] the poet's role—like Mary's, and the Son's, and the reader's—is more properly considered in relation to domestic georgic: more reproductive than productive, more reconstitutive than creative of something new. The invisible work performed on that which is kept "laid up," so easily confused for a lack of activity or redefined as a heroic form of action, is thus better understood as a modestly reproductive labor that commissions time to help both process and preserve material that might otherwise be lost. Here it might be useful to return to Low's definition of the georgic as between private (pastoral) and public (epic/tragic), and how the georgic Son mediates between the two: "He works in obscurity, yet his deeds have public results" (i.e., "deeds / Above Heroic, though in secret done"); the action, such as it is, is set between Jesus' baptism and the beginning of his public ministry.[76] Yet these public results never, in the space of the poem, come to fruition; we are left, when in the poem's last line the Son "Home to his Mothers house private return'd" (4.639), in doubt as to whether big things will indeed ever come from these small movements. Even if secret, private deeds gesture to public futures, those futures are only ever speculative.

Satan, as he tempts the Son throughout the poem, does not understand that ripeness can be a product of such studied composition, rather than the inevitable and unwanted result of passing time. He cannot, in other words, conceive of a work of culture that occurs internally and invisibly. In the opening salvo of book 3, as he mounts the argument of the temptation to glory, Satan casts over-ripeness as the stage that inevitably follows ripeness: "Thy years are ripe, and over-ripe … / Yet years, and to ripe years judgment mature, / Quench not the thirst of glory, but augment" (3.31, 37-38). A Satanic model of ripening goes from "ripe" to "over-ripe" without any intervening action, without the storing and saving practices that continue beyond the natural process of ripening to prevent superfluity from being consumed. Denise Gigante argues that, when Satan says of Jesus that he has "found him, view'd him, tasted him, but find / Far other labour to be undergon" (2.131-32), he "finds him to be something he cannot digest,"[77] but perhaps more to the point, Satan is uninterested in digestion, or in any tasting or testing that goes beyond the superficial.

The Son, by contrast, spends the entire poem cultivating an internal practice of cultivation that simply allows him to continue being who he is, "[t]hought following thought, and step by step led on" (1.192), with no discrete destination ever proposed. After some hand-wringing attempts to resolve those "[i]ll sorting" contradictions that had been plaguing him, he implicitly acknowledges the merit of his mother's internal interpretive model. Reproducing Mary's compressed narration of his life to him (1.229-58), he recalls how his response was to call upon the Scriptural material available to him, and thus to confirm his mother's account of his identity:

> This having heard, strait I again revolv'd
> The Law and Prophets, searching what was writ
> Concerning the Messiah, to our Scribes
> Known partly, and soon found of whom they spake
> I am … (1.259-63)

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[74] Haskin, *Milton's Burden,* 133.
[75] See also Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), for an argument that the apparently merely retentive work of medieval libraries is better understood as actively productive.
[76] Anthony Low, "Milton, *Paradise Regained,* and Georgic," *PMLA* 98.2 (1983): 152-169, 168.
[77] Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 39.

Fish claims, as part of a larger argument about Milton's "redefinition of action as interior,"[78] that, here, what seems to be passivity in Jesus is a form of action; the Son's heroism redefines action as something that occurs internally. This may be true in the *Nativity Ode,* where, Fish points out, the baby Jesus "does not stir himself, but simply shows himself"; indeed, "no sooner has he appeared than he lays his head on a pillow and falls asleep."[79] But in *Paradise Regain'd,* unlike in the *Nativity Ode,* the cosmic battle is not the point. The Son's activity, like Mary's, is more properly understood as labor—revolving, composing, musing, searching—than as action, and the purpose of that labor is the very local reproduction of his own biological life.

Here we may recall how, when Mary labors in her breast, turning thoughts over in her mind without exactly producing anything new, it is only the continuation of the reproductive labor she underwent in giving birth to Jesus. She begins her monologue as a way to deal with those "troubl'd thoughts" or "Motherly cares and fears," "rais'd" in her mind, which she treats in a correspondingly motherly way, making sure they are adequately "clad" by her sighed speech (2.64-65). And even as she despairs that her conception of her son was a past act that has no bearing on the present, her concern is assuringly answered by its own expression: "O what avails me now that honour high / To have conceiv'd of God" (2.66-67). As with the thoughtful ruminant animals who, in *Paradise Lost,* head "Bedward ruminating" (4.352)—and as with the praying subjects who fulfill the Lord's Prayer simply by praying it—the distinction between having conceived her child and continuing to conceive of what the future may hold in store for him dissolves.[80]

Meanwhile the Son, a couple hundred lines later, processing his thoughts in solitude, begins to ruminate on the prospect of turning incorporeal fare into corporeal substance. Having wandered in the desert for forty days, he only just now realizes he is hungry: "But now I feel I hunger, which declares, / Nature hath need of what she asks" (2.249-50). Despite his slight discomfort, though, the Son is forced to admit that his hunger has no real, material effect on him:

> yet God
> Can satisfie that need some other way,
> Though hunger still remain: so it remain
> Without this bodies wasting, I content me,
> And from the sting of Famine fear no harm,
> Nor mind it, fed with better thoughts that feed
> Mee hungering more to do my Fathers will. (2.251-59)

Jesus is confident that his hunger will continue to be "[w]ithout this bodies wasting," with no effect on his body. The only explanation for this is that he has really, literally, been fed by "better thoughts." These are not the pleasing thoughts of consolation or distraction, some spiritual food that will figuratively sustain him through, or transcend, inevitable physical degradation, or that will one day prove to be food for poetic thought. Rather, these thoughts will literally and immediately

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78 Fish, *How Milton Works,* 323.

79 Ibid., 320.

80 Mary Carruthers shows how *ruminatio* was a figure for both reading ("the memory is a stomach, the stored texts are the sweet-smelling cud originally drawn from the gardens of books") and writing: Bede tells of the cowherd Caedmon composing poetry "by recollecting it within himself ('rememorandum rerum') and ruminating like a clean animal ('quasi mundum animal ruminendo')." Like Milton, Caedmon was said to thus ruminate at night (though, unlike Milton, accompanied by actual ruminants) (*The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 206).

preserve his body, like a miraculous weight-loss-prevention formula that counteracts any "harm" or "wasting" by continuously converting incorporeal thoughts into reconstitutive corporeal matter. In other words, he is fed by himself, or by what he has endogenously incorporated from a "Father" to whom, despite Milton's insistence in *On Christian Doctrine* that the Son is not "of the same essence"[81] as the Father, the Son can claim unmediated access. His commerce, in other words, is entirely with himself, from "I feel I hunger" to "I content me."

The "Paradise within" promised in *Paradise Lost* (12.587) is here, to draw upon Michael Schoenfeldt's instructive literal-mindedness,[82] "within" in a physiological sense, in the purely self-sustaining body, in a way that both subsumes and nullifies a more metaphorical kind of inwardness—such that in the Son, counter-intuitively and counter-typologically, it is the literal that fulfills the figurative. The Son thus reverses the transubstantiating digestion performed by Raphael in *Paradise Lost*, as Adam observes in wonder the angel's healthy appetite for Eve's earthly food:

> … nor seemingly
> The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
> Of Theologians, but with keen dispatch
> Of real hunger, and concoctive heate
> To transubstantiate … (5.434-38)

Raphael's quasi-alchemical "transubstantiation" of food into angelic substance, which occasions the explanation of the cosmic "gradual scale" discussed in the previous section, is part of what so confuses Adam and Eve, who had only understood transformative processes, and time itself, as cyclical. The Son, by continuously completing the other half of this process of transubstantiation—metabolically turning spirit into flesh as surely as Raphael turned flesh into spirit—restores a paradisal circularity to time and transformation, recasting these processes as reproductive rather than productive, as enabling of survival rather than of progressive sublimation.

If the premise of *Paradise Regain'd* is that the Fall was not, contrary to orthodox Christian doctrine, reversed once and for all by the crucifixion—but that, instead, Jesus almost maternally (and with his own mother's implicit help) "rais'd" a new Eden through his temptations in the wilderness (1.7)—Milton thus suggests the additional heterodoxy that the Son's incarnation is achieved not once and for all by his birth, but is rather produced continuously, metabolically, by the ongoing, reproductive sacrament of self-examination. The immediacy of this conversion of word into flesh is not in its instantaneity—the nutritional value of thoughts is only made available when they have already been thoroughly thought through—but in the constancy and locality of the process. This does not quite demonstrate, as Denise Gigante argues it does, that "Milton's God, or the divine Word of Christianity, becomes a thing that can be *tasted,* which is to say, consumed and sublimated into spirit—or expressed." Though I agree with Gigante that through the Son "Milton confronts the ontopoetic power of taste as more than a matter of subjective discernment: it becomes constitutive of subjectivity,"[83] Gigante's treatment of taste here is misleading in the ease of expression it assumes, relying on a post-Enlightenment conception of taste as always already communicable. It is more difficult, and time-intensive, to wrench taste, in the early modern sense exemplified by the Son, from the recesses of the private self and make it available for possible public use.

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[81] Milton, *On Christian Doctrine,* in *The Riverside Milton*, 1169.
[82] Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[83] Gigante, *Taste*, 24.

Taste, in early modernity, was nearly synonymous with digestion, and could only be formed by a protracted and private process. Thus Joachim Du Bellay, partially digesting Seneca, admires Latin authors' practice of, over time, "imitating the best Greek authors, and, transforming themselves into them, devouring them, and after having digested them well, converting them into blood and nourishment,"[84] such that cultural taste constitutes itself only through reproduction. Petrarch, taking the rhetoric of metabolism to heart, says of his communion with the classics,

> I ate in the morning what I would digest in the evening; I swallowed as a boy what I would ruminate upon as a man. These writings I have so thoroughly absorbed and fixed, not only in my memory but in my very marrow, these have become so much a part of myself, that even though I should never read them again they would cling to my spirit, deep-rooted in its inmost recesses.[85]

Petrarch's account of his ingestion of his favorite Latin writers drags taste out over the course of a day or a lifetime. Milton's Jesus likewise gradually, through thinking over a tract of time, comes to the conclusion that thoughts will sustain him, working through the logical steps: "But now … yet … though …. so." Paradise is thus regained, in Milton's poem, not by a finite self-sacrifice but by a continuous self-reproduction, and likewise incarnation, no more final than crucifixion, is not achieved once and for all by the divine birth: Jesus must constantly metabolize spirit, constantly make the Word flesh. Culturing his stores of textual material into physical sustenance, the Son makes of biblical interpretation a metabolic process that is both bodily and invisible.

Paradise Regain'd tends to be read as being in conflict with Milton's earlier work, particularly *Areopagitica*. Yet however problematic the Son's rejection of literally all books besides the Bible as "toys," "trifles," or "pibles on the shore" (4.328-30), the poem's focus on internal processing places *Paradise Regain'd* squarely in the tradition of the earlier tract. The Son, like the good reader, does nothing other than gather "usefull drugs and materialls wherewith to temper and compose effective and strong med'cins" and ensure that the "passions within us" and "pleasures round about us" are "rightly temper'd" into "the very ingredients of vertu" (1008, 1010). It is as the extension of this domestic georgic model that we can understand the Son as making the cultural, cultivating activity of interpretation the very stuff of natural, biological life. The Son is fed by himself, or by the education he has incorporated from his mother, which—when he thinks about it long enough—amounts to his identity as his Father's Son.

The Son's literal self-absorption might seem like an alarming end of an argument for the potential political power of Milton's poetry, and indeed might seem Satanic. Noting that the "paradise within" (12.587) promised to Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost,* and carefully tended to by the Son in *Paradise Regain'd,* is in disturbing parallel to Satan's claim that "[t]he mind is its own place" (*PL,* 1.254), Seth Lobis argues that, by making the mind the terrain for georgic labor, Satan serves as a negative exemplum for the Protestant emphasis on interiority.[86] Lobis contrasts Adam and Eve's innocent georgic—their local "tending" of each other and the garden's lesser life forms—with Satan's dark georgic, which "tends" in the sense of tension or stretching to greater ambitions. If Satan, particularly in *Paradise Regain'd,* who caps off his offer of the Roman Empire with an

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84 "…imitant les meilleurs auteurs grecs, se transformant en eux, les dévorant, et après avoir bien digérés, les convertissant en sang et nourriture," Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Regrets, suivi de La Defense et Illustration de la Langue Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 251.
85 Qtd. in Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 99.
86 Lobis, "Milton's Tended Garden," 98.

exhortation to the Son to "[a]im therefore at no less than all the world" (4.105), tends to nothing less than imperial overreach, this serves as a reminder that georgics of the mind can be as easily excessive as moderate, as irresponsibly expansive as temperately sustainable. In domestic georgic, ripeness is all, and yet is never, on its own, enough: the "store" that "ripe for use hangs on the stalk" in Eden, and of which Eve sets aside small provision anyway; the Son's "ripe" years, construed—mistakenly, we are led to believe—by Satan as "over-ripe"; and the "field / Of Ceres, ripe for harvest" that Milton compares to the phalanx of angels surrounding Satan and that, the plowman all too rightly fears, may "[p]rove chaff" (4.980-81, 985).

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