



# Bodin, Montaigne and the Role of Disciplinary Boundaries

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### **Bodin, Montaigne and the role of disciplinary boundaries**

Michel de Montaigne (1533-92) and Jean Bodin (1529-96) were contemporaries, compatriots and colleagues. Both served as officers in the Parlements, Montaigne as a counselor in Bordeaux and Bodin as a barrister in Paris. They both ended up dissatisfied with their lives at the center of public activity and withdrew from the political fray.<sup>i</sup> Montaigne retired to his family estate, while Bodin earned a living as a royal officer in the provincial town of Laon.<sup>ii</sup> Both owe their considerable fame, at the time and since, to their prolific writing during this period. But, at least at first view, their writings seem so strikingly different in tone as to belie any similarities of cultural context.

Montaigne's Essays, first published in 1580, and constantly revised and expanded in later versions (traditionally identified as "A," "B" and "C" texts), have delighted readers and literary critics for centuries with their digressive mix of anecdotes, pointed criticism of contemporary practices and excruciating

self-reflection. Montaigne is considered modern, even post-modern, for his questioning, challenging, often ironic, always hyper-self-conscious tone. In emphasizing the endless diversity and inconstancy of all things, including the impressions and passions that constitute the self, Montaigne erodes not only traditional beliefs and customs (which he often in the end advocates keeping for lack of anything to replace them), but also the possibility of knowledge, and the very existence of a self-consistent and identifiable subject.

Bodin on the other hand writes on a similarly wide range of topics, in separate and supposedly systematic treatises, with an unquestioning assurance of truth. In deadly earnest Bodin describes the heinous crime of witchcraft, for example, and the need for tougher persecution to eradicate it, in his Démonomanie of 1580. In other works, on the method of writing history and on political theory, Bodin's views--notably his call for a critical appraisal of sources and his new concept of sovereignty--have been praised for their modernity.<sup>iii</sup> But he is never a self-conscious author, guilty in the Method for the easy comprehension of history, for example, of the same kinds of hasty judgments and nationalist biases against which he warns his readers. In his last work, the Universae naturae theatrum or Theater of all of nature (1596), which I will discuss in more detail here, Bodin treats of "universal nature," starting with

the first principles of physics and rising through the stages of the chain of being from elements, to minerals and metals, plants and animals and finally the soul and the heavenly bodies. But this "theater," purportedly a true and complete representation of nature, is little more than a succession of unquestioned natural "facts" for which Bodin offers new causal explanations. Bodin questions neither the truth of the myriad "facts" which he has garnered from various sources, largely from ancient and modern historians, nor his method of representing all of nature through this unsystematic and idiosyncratic accumulation of specific details and explanations.<sup>iv</sup>

Whereas Montaigne's voice is heard constantly throughout the Essays, in first-person accounts and most strikingly in direct self-reflection about the purpose, nature and method of his work, Bodin reserves his very few methodological comments to an introduction and dedication and constructs the Theatrum as a dialogue between an inquiring pupil Theorus and his knowledgeable master Mystagogus. Bodin's voice is thus technically absent from the work, although there is hardly ever any ambiguity about Mystagogus' authority in presenting Bodin's own views.<sup>v</sup> But, faithful to Bodin's general strategy, Mystagogus himself speaks with treatise-like authority rather than self-reflexivity, and uses the first person only for occasional eye-witness reports.

This difference in tone and authorial strategy is a most conspicuous point of divergence between the two authors. Yet, as I will try to show, Montaigne and Bodin also have in common a number of cultural practices and presuppositions, which can be detected, notably, in the methods of composition and structure of their works, as well as in a number of their precepts about nature and about knowledge. In attempting to explain how these shared characteristics are overlaid with strikingly different voices, and to do so somewhat more systemically than by invoking differences of "temperament" or personality, I argue that the attitudes toward disciplinary boundaries of Montaigne and Bodin play a crucial in shaping their authorial strategies.

#### Methods of composition and structure:

Montaigne and Bodin both draw on a vast store of material collected from bookish (primarily historical) sources, using a method of reading and note-taking widely taught in Renaissance schools, which involved a commonplace book. In this personal notebook students and scholars would copy out under appropriate headings material of interest which they had encountered in their reading, selected for example for a turn of phrase, an argument, a piece of factual information or an authoritative quotation which might some day prove useful in composing prose of their own. I have presented elsewhere the indirect but

substantial evidence for Bodin's having composed his Theatrum from a book of natural commonplaces (or commonplaces about the natural world).<sup>vi</sup> Montaigne's use of a commonplace book is widely acknowledged (including by Montaigne himself) and is the indispensable source of the countless explicit quotations and tacit borrowings which pepper the thousand-plus pages of the Essays. But Bodin and Montaigne use this same method of composition from a book of commonplaces, attractive precisely because of its great flexibility, to quite different effects.

For Bodin, as I have argued in more detail elsewhere, the commonplace book serves as a storehouse of tidbits of knowledge about the natural world garnered from sources of many kinds, primarily from books, but also from personal observation, hearsay and second-hand reports, from which Bodin draws material to motivate and corroborate his new causal explanations. In the Theatrum Bodin never stops to discuss or establish these "facts" which surface as self-evident truths in Theorus' questions as well his master's answers. Why do snakes bite women more than men? Theorus asks, tacitly taking the "fact" that they do for granted (316/452); or, the effectiveness of cabbage juice as an antidote against the excessive consumption of wine is used to demonstrate the natural antipathy that Mystagogus asserts between the two plants involved (294/419). For Bodin the commonplace book is a treasury of "pre-approved" facts, so that

he is guilty of exactly the behavior that Montaigne finds so reprehensible among his witch-hunting contemporaries (and he may well have Bodin's Démonomanie in mind in writing these lines):

I see ordinarily that men, when facts are put before them, are more ready to amuse themselves by inquiring into their reason than by inquiring into their truth. ... They ordinarily begin thus: 'How does this happen?' What they should say is: 'But does it happen?' ... We know the foundations and causes of a thousand things that never were. (III, 11; 1026-27/785)<sup>vii</sup>

Montaigne uses the method of commonplaces to store not facts to be used uncritically as Bodin does, but snippets of poetry and prose and anecdotal examples, with which he illustrates or embellishes his accounts and, occasionally, supports his own skeptical conclusions. Like Bodin, Montaigne especially likes historians, both ancient and modern, which he considers "his thing".<sup>viii</sup> Thus Montaigne's unrevised early essays (e.g. book I, ch. 2-18, probably written as early as 1572) are composed as "lessons," a fairly traditional literary and moral exercise in which one compiles examples taken from one's readings, interspersing them with a few personal reflections. Montaigne's chapters on various passions, precepts of political actions or the virtues and vices (of idleness, constancy, lying and so on) are typical of this genre: cases from ancient and

modern history including his direct experience of the French civil wars are gathered to illustrate the point, for example, that "parley time is dangerous" (I, 6)--a specific case of the dictum that no one can be trusted. Over the years, in revisions and new compositions, Montaigne increasingly shifts the balance away from compilations on standard topics toward more personal reflection and an idiosyncratic association of ideas. He still builds his reflections around a plentiful supply of explicit quotations and tacit borrowings from his wide-ranging reading, "other people's flowers" as he calls them, but Montaigne increasingly turns the method of commonplaces into a process of self-discovery.

Thus, in a late essay, Montaigne defends his work against any resemblance with contemporary "concoctions of commonplaces," books which are mere feats of learning, or worse yet, "made out of things never either studied or understood, the author entrusting to various of his learned friends the search for this and that material to build it, contenting himself for his part with having planned the project and piled up by his industry this stack of unfamiliar provisions." On the contrary, Montaigne explains: "Indeed I have yielded to public opinion in carrying these borrowed ornaments about on me. But I do not intend that they should cover and hide me; that is the opposite of my design, I who wish to make a show only of what is my own" (III,

12; 1055/808). Francis Goyet has studied Montaigne's method of composition and reflection from the marginal annotations and cross-references that Montaigne left in the books he read as well as in his own copy of the Essays, where he kept track of new ideas and additions for future versions. Goyet shows how Montaigne subjected the material he selected from his reading to a complex and very personal process of "digestion." After marking a passage as interesting Montaigne would explore alternative directions in which to take it instead of just compiling it under standard headings in the manner of the "concoctors" he scorns; returning to the passage in a second reading, for example, Montaigne might correct a heading that he had proposed earlier or create a new and non-traditional one under which he would finally use the passage. The result is a very personalized journey (as Goyet concludes) in which "Montaigne is searching less for what his sources have to say, than to understand what he is seeking himself in his reading of them." <sup>ix</sup>

Rather than the stock of truisms which it generated for Bodin and most contemporaries, the commonplace method for Montaigne constituted a process of self-discovery, which he shares with his readers by leading them down the idiosyncratic path of his reflective reading and borrowing. Thus it is not a failing, but rather an essential part of Montaigne's intention

that the issues treated in each chapter stray so notoriously from the heading (often characteristic of a commonplace book) which he has chosen for the title. "Of the lame" (III, 11), for example, famous for Montaigne's denunciation of the witchcraze, opens with a discussion of calendar reform and ends with a discussion of the Italian saying that lame women are more fulfilling in bed, interspersed with quotations from Persius, Vergil, Tacitus and Erasmus among other favorites. Montaigne's point is to show, as he says somewhere in the middle of this ramble, how "our reasons often anticipate the fact, and extend their jurisdiction so infinitely that they exercise their judgment even in inanity and non-being" (III, 11; 1034/791). Our imagination is so powerful as to "anticipate the fact," to attach great significance to events that are paltry or even non-existent. Thus the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in France in 1582, which involved dropping ten days from the month of December, caused much more disruption in people's mental anticipation of it, Montaigne notes, than in the actual event itself: "my neighbors have determined the favorable and unfavorable days in exactly the same places as before" (III, 11; 1026/784). Similarly, he implies, witchcraft looms larger in the imagination than in reality, as do the greater sexual charms of lame partners.<sup>x</sup>

Montaigne's message that, subject as we are to such

delusions, we can never trust ourselves nor the supposed powers of our reason, is conveyed appropriately enough, he indicates, through a meandering and diverse collection of material. In both the Theatrum and the Essays the method of commonplaces produces texts constructed loosely by association of ideas and juxtaposition of borrowed tidbits, in an open-ended structure to which new material could be added indefinitely. Indeed Montaigne constantly added to his essays new quotations and reflections.<sup>xi</sup> Bodin's succession of questions and answers would have lent itself easily to expansion too, if Bodin had been so inclined (which I tend to doubt, since, as I will argue, he perceived his unsystematic work as complete); in any case, Bodin died a few months after the Theatrum was published. But although both texts are equally "mobile" in Terence Cave's characterization of much French Renaissance literature,<sup>xii</sup> Bodin and Montaigne differ absolutely in the ways they present and perceive their work. Montaigne is happy to speak "in disjointed parts" (III, 13; 1076/824); he calls his work at various points a "fricassée" (III, 13; 1079/826) or a "bundle of disparate pieces" ("fagotage" II, 37; 758/574). By choosing the unusual title of Essays Montaigne suggests tentativeness, experimentation and exploration. Bodin, on the other hand, announces in both his introductory remarks and his title (I argue), that his treatment of "all of nature" will be orderly and systematic, even though

the text itself is fragmented and loosely organized.

Bodin's text moves idiosyncratically (like Montaigne's) through topics and themes as they are called up by the discussion immediately preceding. He considers the horns of cattle and deer, for example, but the teeth of hares and horses (which are flat), and operates a seamless transition between the two clusters of questions with a discussion of sexual differentiation in deer (creating the link to the first cluster) and hares (leading on to the second one) (355-60/509-16). By and large Bodin does follow the broad topical sections announced in the table of contents at the beginning of the work (such as "snakes," "quadrupeds" and "fish"), and the order which he proudly explains in his introduction, rising up the chain of being from simplest to most complex. But the text itself proceeds in chunks of some one hundred pages of continuous prose with no indication of these subsections, meandering along a loosely associative chain of thought which is carefully prepared by thematic or rhetorical transitions and yet entirely unpredictable and unsystematic.

Contrary to Montaigne who revels explicitly in his inconstancy, Bodin assumes that his collection of natural facts constitutes a theater or an orderly and distributive table of "all of nature." Bodin explains that "the Theater of Nature is nothing other than a sort of table of the things created by the

immortal God placed for all to see, so that we may contemplate and love the majesty ... and admirable providence of the author himself in things great, middling and small."<sup>xiii</sup> With characteristic ambiguity Bodin has phrased his sentence so that the "Theater of Nature" could designate either nature itself or the book that he has written to describe nature, or both. I see this as evidence of a conflation of the object (the theater of nature) with its description or representation (the book entitled "Theater of nature") that runs throughout Bodin's work and is both cause and consequence of his unselfconscious strategy. One gets a better sense of Bodin's ideal of "the theater which is nothing other than a sort of table" from a later passage in which the pupil asks Mystagogus to "unfold, if you will, the table of the universe, as in a theater, so that, when the distribution of all things is displayed for the eyes to see, the essence and faculty of each thing can be more clearly understood" (129/170).<sup>xiv</sup> What exactly "the table..., as in a theater" designates is still unclear to me: possibly a stage backdrop, a poster or program,<sup>xv</sup> or a theater like Camillo Delminio's (as described by Frances Yates<sup>xvi</sup>), a free-standing structure in which you could contemplate the elements of philosophy brought together under one roof. In any case, it is clear from Mystagogus' answer what Bodin thinks a table in natural philosophy should be: in response to this request, the

master outlines a kind of verbal dichotomous diagram (of the type associated with Peter Ramus, although it was by no means exclusively Ramist<sup>xvii</sup>), in which plants and animals are sorted into groups and subgroups--ruminants, for example, according to whether they have horns or not, are covered with hair or wool, are domestic or wild, and so on. This systematic overview is a far cry from what Bodin actually provides in the rest of the text--by modern standards at least: Bodin never mentions ruminants as a category in the text and applies such diverse criteria to each species he discusses that there is no hierarchical subdivision possible. Yet Bodin does not comment on any discrepancy between theory and practice; on the contrary he concludes in his introduction that "there is nothing we have searched for more diligently than the succession of all things and the indissoluble coherence of nature, its interrelations and agreements, and how the first things correspond to the last, the middle ones to both extremities and everything to everything else" (6/[7]).<sup>xviii</sup> I can only conclude that Bodin feels satisfied that his accumulation of particulars is the theater of nature, as if his discussion constituted a transparent and immediate representation of nature itself. Similarly, in Bodin's prefatory praise of natural philosophy his proclamations of the nobility of the discipline insensibly become a paean to the beauties of nature itself. Nature and its representation in natural

philosophy are unselfconsciously conflated.

Philosophical principles:

In an attempt to explain why Montaigne and Bodin turn similar textual methods and structures to such different uses, I will briefly compare some of their philosophical principles--in particular, their attitudes toward knowledge and doubt, which are remarkably harder to distinguish than one might expect, and, more conclusively, their divergent stances on the role of disciplinary boundaries.

Stated bluntly, a comparison of the two authors' epistemological positions would seem to pit skeptic against dogmatist, but I will suggest that the picture is actually more complex, to the extent that it cannot suffice to explain their different authorial strategies. To Bodin, nature speaks loud and clear of the greatness, goodness and providence of God. Human reason is thus an effective tool against the impious. Applied to the particulars of nature it produces causal explanations that reveal the divine plan. Applied to the principles of natural philosophy, reason successfully refutes the eternity of the world and proves the immortality of the soul, as Bodin claims to do in books I and IV of the Theatrum. With the confidence of a rationalist Bodin hails natural philosophy as the ultimate weapon with which to assail the impious:

How valuable it is that those who cannot be dragged by any precepts of divine laws or oracles of the prophets from their ingrained folly or led to the worship of the true deity, are forced by the most certain demonstrations of this science, as if under the application of torture and questioning, to reject all impiety and to adore one and the same eternal deity!<sup>xix</sup>

Bodin also uses this striking torture metaphor later in the text, to argue against philosophical skeptics who would assert that one can know nothing: "an infinite number of mathematical demonstrations forces them to confess willy-nilly, as if under torture, the truth which they would not acknowledge" (474/684).<sup>xx</sup> By upholding the possibility of certain knowledge, Bodin grounds a natural theological project designed to show both philosophical and religious skeptics that there can be no doubt about the sacred attributes of the godhead.

On the other hand, Bodin does not dogmatically resolve all the questions he poses. Some causal explanations are not asserted but suggested as questions themselves: Why do snakes bite women more than men? perhaps because snakes are wily and choose as victims those who are weaker? or because divine providence wisely preserves men from their attacks, who are most useful? or is it because of a natural antipathy which stems from that fateful encounter in the Garden of Eden? (316/542). And,

more strikingly, the Theatrum also includes questions to which Mystagogues declines to offer a solution. Thus, after ridiculing the theories of Aristotelian meteorology, which would explain comets, earthquakes, storms or the formation of metals from the condensation or combustion of earthly vapors,<sup>xxi</sup> Mystagogus declares that it is enough to refute false reasons and offers no alternative explanations of his own. Instead of overreaching our abilities in the search for rational explanations, he concludes, we should modestly confess our ignorance.<sup>xxii</sup> At most, we can attribute these inexplicable phenomena to the action of demons; even this solution serves less for its explanatory value itself than because it places the topic beyond the purview of the physicist who deals only in natural causes: at least this strategy, as he explains in applying it to the cause of violent storms, "refutes the opinions of those who prefer to repeat silly causes of things rather than referring them to demons or confessing ignorance" (178/243-4).<sup>xxiii</sup> Nonetheless, even as it fails, reason teaches the greatness of God. Bodin concludes for example his discussion of the inexplicable phenomena of magnetic attraction: "it is better to admire in silence the majesty of the greatest Workman than to want rashly to go insane with reasoning" (249/349).<sup>xxiv</sup> Similarly, in giving hoarfrost the power to burn plants although it is not even as cold as snow, the "Creator wanted to make something as if against the laws of

nature, so that he would draw men to a greater admiration and love for him" (206/284).<sup>xxv</sup> Bodin's sense of the weakness of reason combined with the omnipotence of God can lead to prudent confessions of ignorance, as in these cases, but in other cases can serve to justify his acceptance of "facts" that cannot be understood, such as the travel of witches to the sabbath. Who are mere mortals to decide what is and is not possible? the fact that we cannot explain something does not invalidate its existence.

For Montaigne, to read the book of nature and the signs of divine providence in nature is virtually impossible. But in his perversely argued "apology" for the natural theology of Ramon Sebon Montaigne allows that Sebon is successful in demonstrating the existence of God through nature because the faith guiding his arguments makes them "firm and solid" (II, 12; 448/327). Montaigne then goes on to show at great length how human reason, unaided, can establish nothing certain, not against religion (to that extent Montaigne "defends" Sebon's arguments), but not for it either. Montaigne believes that divine providence is present in things great and small (529/394), but questions our ability to uncover it: "God has left the stamp of his divinity on these lofty works, and it is only because of our imbecility that we cannot discover it" (II, 12; 447/326). Ironically, though, his conclusion at times rejoins that of Bodin: the infinite power of

nature and of God combined with the awareness of human ignorance and weakness should make us guard against the presumption of disdaining what we do not comprehend (I, 27; 179/134). So that, at one point, Montaigne actually criticizes Bodin, whom he considers in general to be of good judgment (words probably written before the Démonomanie), for being excessively incredulous. Notably when Bodin dismisses as fabulous Plutarch's report of the extraordinary stoicism of a Lacedemonian boy who let a fox hidden under his shirt rip out his bowels rather than disclose his theft. Montaigne complains that the story should not be considered unbelievable simply we could not imagine ourselves capable of such a feat. He acknowledges that Bodin is not in fact generally guilty of this kind of arrogance common to many "who balk at believing of others what they themselves could not do" (II, 32; 725/546, 548). But clearly Montaigne too would have us guard against hastily rejecting seemingly unbelievable facts--like the travel to the witches' sabbath? No--on that issue he questions the belief rather than the disbelief.

The difference between Bodin and Montaigne seems to be less one of theory or epistemology, but more a matter of practice and emphasis: both acknowledge and make use at various points of both natural theology and doubt. But Montaigne extends his doubt everywhere, systematically, attacking facile certainties wherever they are, whereas Bodin uses it only here and there to

tear down a traditional construction or two. On balance, Bodin thinks he can represent and explain nature, whereas Montaigne retreats from the investigation of the world out there to an investigation of the self, and even there refuses to find certainty. "It is only personal weakness that makes us content with what others or we ourselves have found out in this hunt for knowledge" (III, 13; 1068/817). But we are left trying to explain why Montaigne pushes in one direction and Bodin in another within a similar theoretical framework. In the face of the inevitable uncertainties of human judgment Bodin and Montaigne take different stances on the same question. Is it better to be inclusive, even if it means accepting some false facts, for fear of losing some true ones (Bodin's emphasis), or is it preferable to be cautious, perhaps at the cost of losing from some truths (Montaigne's choice)? One might compare this epistemological decision to the legal one that both magistrates faced in the case of witchcraft: Bodin preferred to condemn a few innocent witches rather than let any guilty ones go. Montaigne, on the other hand, would rather let the guilty go than condemn someone to death falsely.

What distinguishes the two thinkers more decisively than these divergent emphases in the application of doubt, is an apparently minor philosophical precept to which Bodin is nonetheless forcefully attached, as he explains in his

introduction:

We consider that there is nothing more ugly nor more depraved than confusion and disorder ..., which blame Aristotle himself incurred ... when in the books about nature he tried to explain the way of teaching it, a topic which is appropriate rather to the dialecticians. (2/[2])<sup>xxvi</sup>

Bodin is only being consistent with this principle, therefore, when he forgoes any meta-level discussion in the text itself. A self-conscious tone, such as we might like to see him take (like Montaigne's), would be a major breach of methodological propriety as far as Bodin is concerned. Instead Bodin relegates his few reflections on his work (of which in fact this is the principal one) to a separate introduction; in the body of the text he only reiterates the absurdity of wanting "to treat a science at the same time as the way of knowing it" (13/7).<sup>xxvii</sup>

Bodin is deeply attached to the traditional separation of the disciplines: dialectic, mathematics, physics, metaphysics, each has its own separate subject matter, principles and place, not only in the university curriculum but also beyond it (indeed the Theatrum is certainly not a university textbook). Thus physics must not treat of the first principles on which it rests (which are proper to metaphysics) nor with the order in which it should be presented (a topic appropriate for dialectic): as a result it can never legitimately question the parameters of its practices.

For Montaigne, on the contrary, these disciplinary distinctions are part of a blindered scholastic system that he would like to see brought down:

In this trade and business of knowledge, we have taken for ready money the statement of Pythagoras, that each expert is to be believed in his craft. ... For each science has its presupposed principles, by which human judgment is bridled on all sides. If you happen to crash this barrier, in which lies the principal error, immediately they have this maxim in their mouth, that there is no arguing against people who deny first principles. (II, 12; 540/403-4)

Montaigne's self-reflexivity is thus an explicit attack on the standard classification and separation of the disciplines, which Bodin (who never mentions Montaigne) would have found utterly shocking. Montaigne's willingness to create disorder among the disciplines is a crucial prerequisite to his radical challenge of received knowledge and methods and to his stunningly "modern" authorial strategy. Conversely, Bodin's insistence on respecting strictly the traditional boundaries between the disciplines, compounded by the format of the Theatrum which treats natural philosophy as a long series of separate questions, perpetuates the scholastic tendency to atomize and subdivide knowledge. As Edward Grant has argued, this strategy insured the long survival of the medieval system of knowledge, through the sixteenth

century and even beyond, by easily accommodating new opinions and observations (including Bodin's humanist interests and anti-Aristotelian explanations) and by keeping in separate categories, and thus invisible, many potential contradictions and logical inconsistencies.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Although I may not have finally explained why Montaigne and Bodin are so different despite their similar backgrounds and methods, I hope I have indicated at least how further study of the diversity of positions on the classification of knowledge in the early modern period holds the promise of interesting results.

## NOTES

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Nannerl Keohane, Philosophy and the State in France: the Renaissance to the Enlightenment (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 79ff, 99ff.

ii For biographies of the two, see Donald Frame, Montaigne: a Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965) and Kenneth McRae ed., Jean Bodin, The Six Bookes of the Commonweale (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), introduction.

iii See Julian H. Franklin, Jean Bodin and the Sixteenth-Century Revolution in the Methodology of Law and History (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), ch. 9; and, most recently, Julian Franklin ed., Jean Bodin, On Sovereignty: four chapters from the Six Books of the Commonwealth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), introduction.

iv For more development of this point, see my "Restaging Jean Bodin: the Universae naturae theatrum (1596) in its Cultural Context," Ph.D. dissertation in History, Princeton, 1990, ch. 5; forthcoming in The Theater of Nature in the Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press), ch. 4.

v For the one exception, see Jean Bodin, Universae naturae theatrum (Frankfurt: Wechel, 1597), p. 221; tr. François de Fougères, Le théâtre de la nature universelle (Lyon: Pillehotte, 1597), p. 309. All further citations to be by page number to these Latin/French editions. English translations of this work are my own.

vi "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: the Commonplace Book," Journal of the History of Ideas 53 (1992), 541-51.

vii References to the Essays are made by book and chapter, then by page number to Pierre Villey ed., Les Essais (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965) and to the English translation which I have used: Donald Frame tr., The Complete Essays of Montaigne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965). For a helpful introduction to the Essays, see I. D. McFarlane and Ian Maclean eds., Montaigne: Essays in memory of Richard Sayce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

viii "Les historiens sont ma droite bale." (II, 10; 417/303)

ix Francis Goyet, "A propos de 'ces pastissages de lieux communs' (le rôle des notes de lecture dans la genèse des Essais)," Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Montaigne 5-6 (1986), 11-26 and 7-8 (1987), 9-30; quotation from (1987), p. 25.

x I am indebted to Jean Céard for his interpretation of this essay, which he presented in a paper delivered at Princeton University in April 1990.

xi See, most recently, Michel Jeanneret, "Montaigne et

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l'oeuvre mobile," in Carrefour Montaigne, Quaderni del Seminario di Filologia Francese 2 (Pisa-Geneva, 1994).

xii Terence Cave, The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 22.

xiii "Et quidem Naturae Theatrum aliud nihil est quam rerum ab immortalis Deo conditarum quasi tabula quaedam sub uniuscuiusque oculos subiecta, ut ipsius auctoris maiestatem, potentiam, bonitatem, sapientiam, atque etiam in rebus maximis, mediocribus, minimis admirabilem procurationem contemplemur et amemus." Bodin, sig. 3v (not in the French translation).

xiv "Explica, si placet, universitatis tabulam, velut in theatro, ut quasi ob oculos rerum omnium distributione ad intuendum proposita, essentia cuiusque ac facultas planius intelligatur."

xv In introducing his dichotomous "tables" summarizing the Theatrum, the French translator Fougerolles refers to them as a "door or planche with which to enter the theater." Fougerolles, "Au lecteur," p. 917 (not in Latin edition).

xvi Frances Yates, The Art of Memory (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1966).

xvii See Charles Schmitt, Aristotle and the Renaissance (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 56-9.

xviii "Nihil autem curiosius consecrati sumus, quam rerum omnium seriem atque indissolubilem naturae cohaerentiam, contagionem et consensum, et quemadmodum responderunt prima extremis, media utrisque, omnia omnibus."

xix "At illud quanti est, quod qui nullis divinarum legum perceptis, nullis Prophetarum oraculis ab inveterata amentia deduci, aut ad veri numinis cultum perducere possunt, certissimis huius scientiae demonstrationibus, quasi tormentis et quaestionibus admotis, omnem impietatem exuere, atque unum eundemque aeternum numen adorare cogantur." Bodin, sigs. 3r-v (not in the French translation).

xx "Quaquam innumerabiles Mathematicorum quaestiones, veritati vim inferendo, ab invitis quasi adhibita quaestione, assensionem extorquere videmus."

xxi See Friedrich Solmsen, Aristotle's System of the Physical World (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), pp. 404ff.

xxii See his conclusions on the causes of earthquakes (174/237), violent storms (178/243-4), comets (217/302-3), magnets (243-4/342), on the origin of metals (259/363-4) and the nature of hoarfrost (206/284).

xxiii "Eatenus pertinet [disputatio de natura geniorum] quatenus refellendae sunt opiniones eorum, qui malunt ineptissimas rerum causas ingerere, quam ad genios, referre, vel de ignorantia confiteri."

xxiv "Sed praestat silentio summi Opificis maiestatem admirari, quam temere cum ratione insanire velle."

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xxv "Illud tantum subiiciam, quamplurima mundi Conditorem, quasi contra naturae leges facere voluisse, ut homines in maiorem sui raperet admirationem et amorem: nec aliter a nobis naturae princeps esse putaretur."

xxvi "Confusione vero, ac perturbatione nihil aspectu foedius, aut deformius esse iudicamus.... Quam reprehensionem ne ipse quidem Aristoteles effugit, cum libris de Natura quaestionem de ratione docendi, quae Dialecticorum propria sit, explicare conatur, quam tamen indiscussam reliquit."

xxvii "Denique absurdum est scientiam simul et sciendi modum tradere velle."

xxviii Edward Grant, "Aristotelianism and the Longevity of the Medieval World View," History of Science 16 (1978): 93-106.