

METAPHOR OF MOVEMENT IN  
THE ESSAIS OF MONTAIGNE

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.  
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PAULA B. KOPPISCH  
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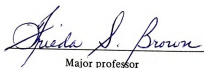
METAPHOR OF MOVEMENT IN THE ESSAIS OF MONTAIGNE

presented by

Paula B. Koppisch

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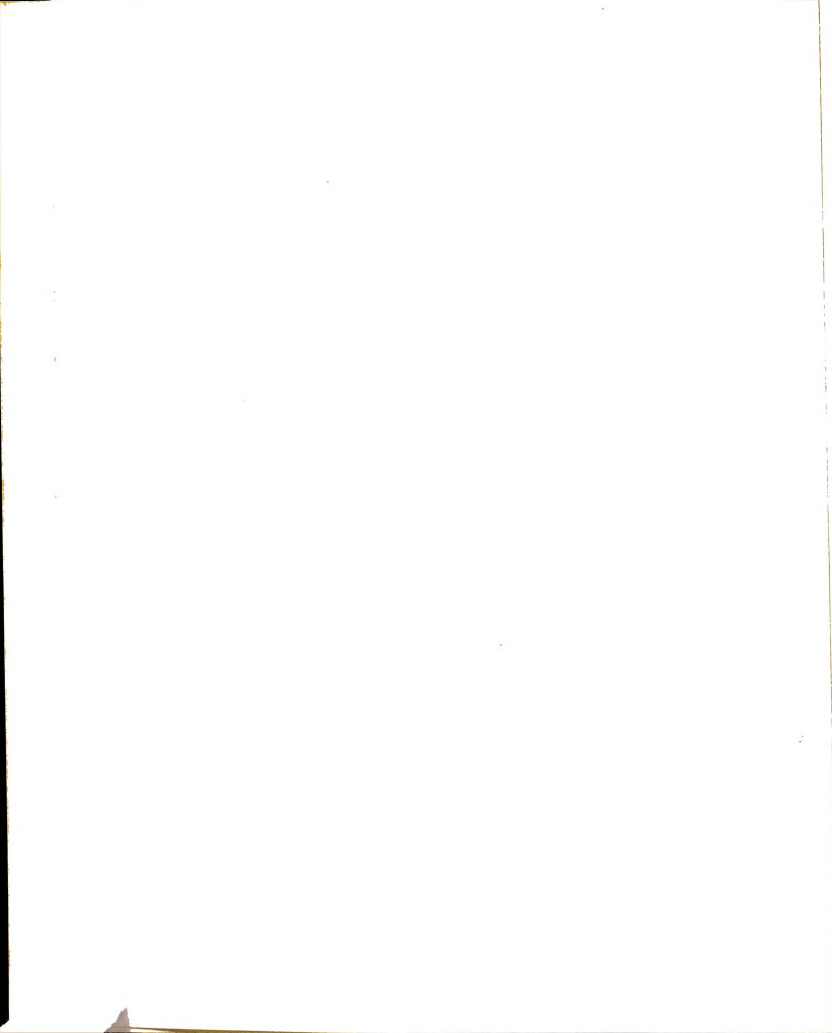


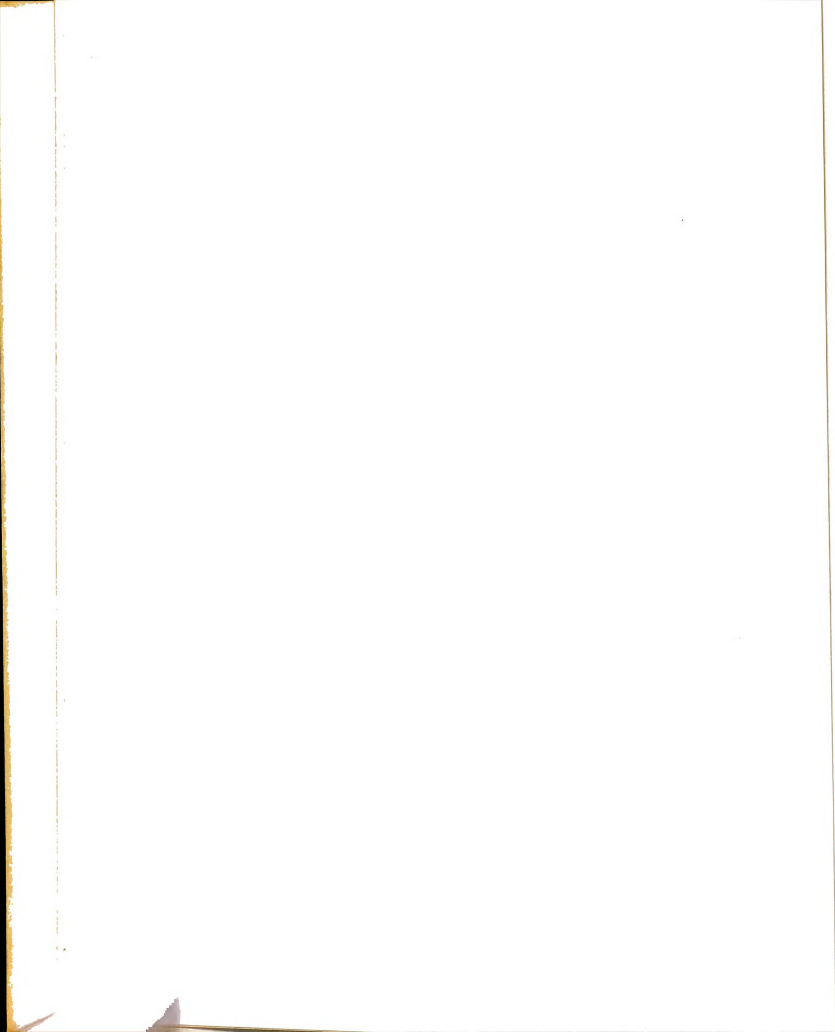


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## ABSTRACT

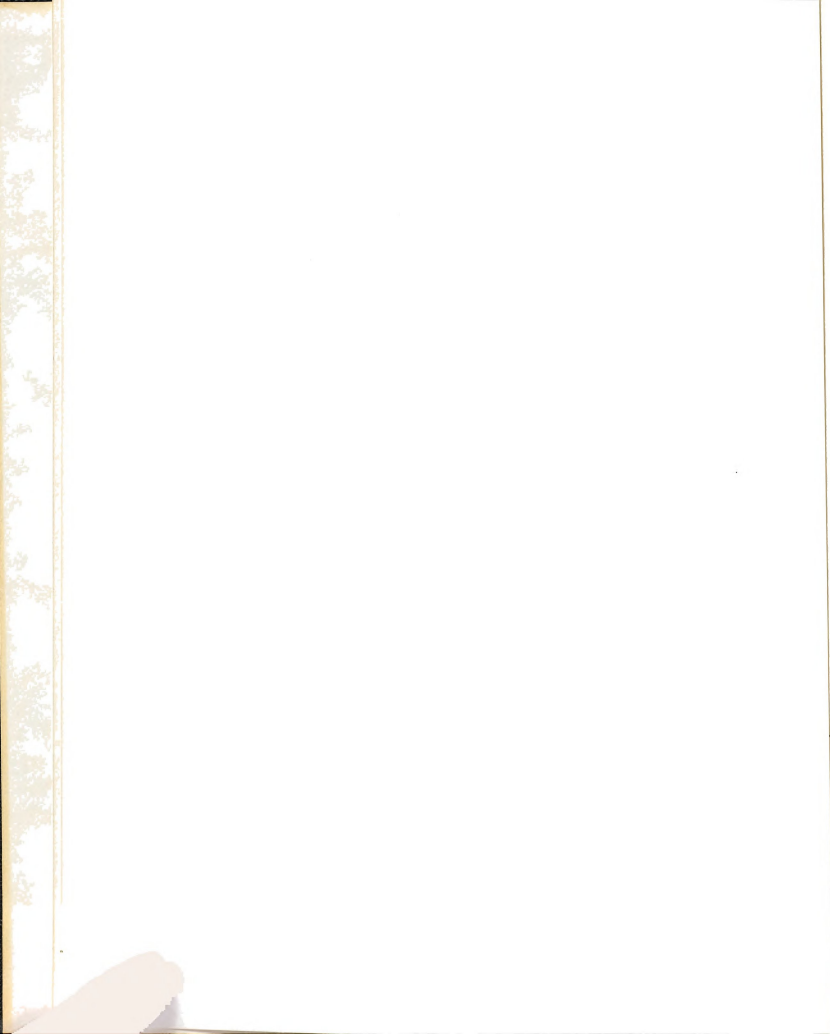
### METAPHOR OF MOVEMENT IN THE ESSAIS OF MONTAIGNE

By

Paula B. Koppisch

This study investigates the process of metaphor at work in the Essais with a view to understanding the value of metaphor for Montaigne and the nature of the relationships out of which his metaphors are created. Concentrating upon the metaphor of movement, a motif which permeates Montaigne's thought throughout the three books, I examine the way in which Montaigne's conceptions of all things in branle are shaped in the densely metaphorical language of the Essais.

The unity of Montaigne grows out of his active pursuit of the integration of contraries. His vision of the world, of man and of himself attests to the flux and diversity of all things. No two things are alike and nothing remains stable and unchanging. But Montaigne finds ways of making connections between things that are dissimilar, of perceiving relationships which, though they do not dispel difference, do enable him to integrate the diverses and ondovantes pieces of existence into a harmonious whole. Although the relationships which can be drawn from experience are faulty and imperfect, Montaigne holds that there are always 'corners' by which things can be 'joined.' From his perspective of all things being in perpetual branle, the vision he

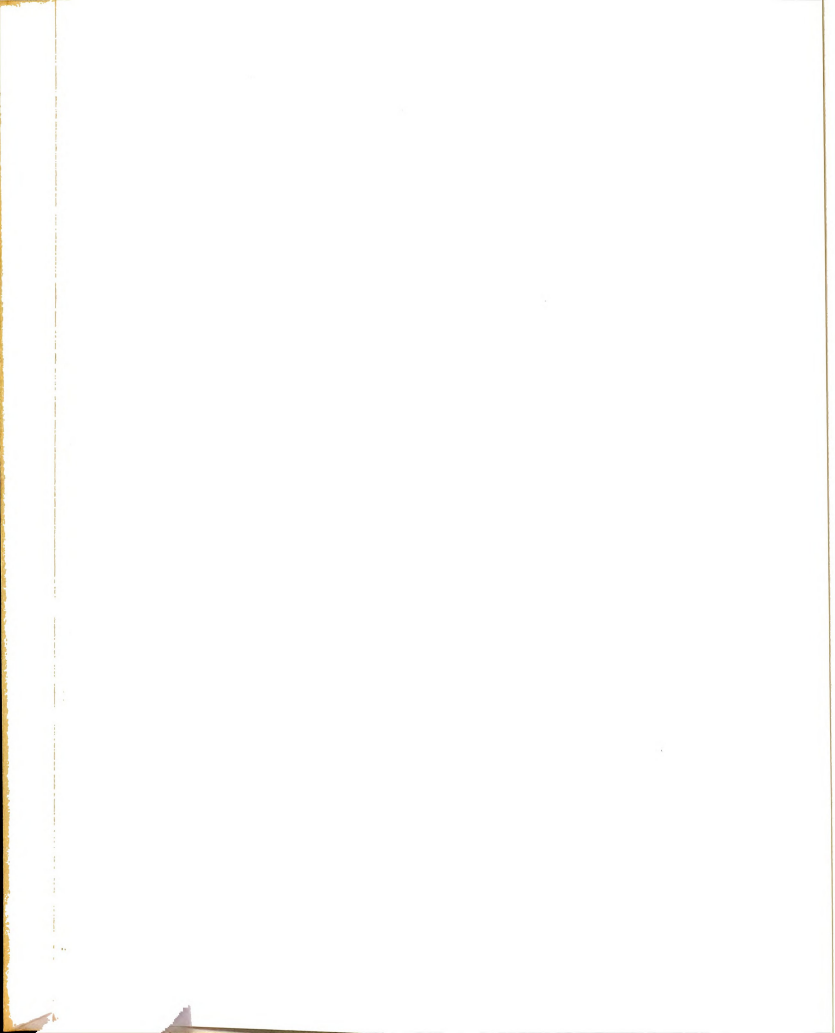


creates through the making of associations must be continually reshaped. The harmonious integration of dissimilarities and even contraries into a unified whole cannot be immobilized into a static representation, for that would deny the basic premise that nothing is constant, that all things are subject to continual change.

Movement and stability are polar opposites marking the continuing spectrum of Montaigne's thought. Throughout the Essais, there is a dynamic interplay between the forceful impulsion to movement and the contrasting urge to create and experience a sense of repos. Neither pole can be divorced from the other and taken as the exclusive characteristic or ultimate aspiration of Montaigne, for the two exist in relationship to each other. In the formulation of his thought, Montaigne operates, to a large degree, through a progression of antitheses. The mobile aspect of things is always juxtaposed to their contrasting aspect of stability.

Metaphor is a radical component of Montaigne's conception of movement and stability, for it is almost impossible to think in terms of movement and its opposite without associating them to substantial properties, without giving them corporeal quantity. Abstract concepts in Montaigne are constantly associated to concrete bodily experience through the action of metaphor. The metaphorical process bridges the separation of body and mind to fuse them into an integral experience. In the semantic motion of metaphor, interacting between tenor and vehicle, the movement of Montaigne's mind forges its own stability. His well-exercised judgment is continually making connections through

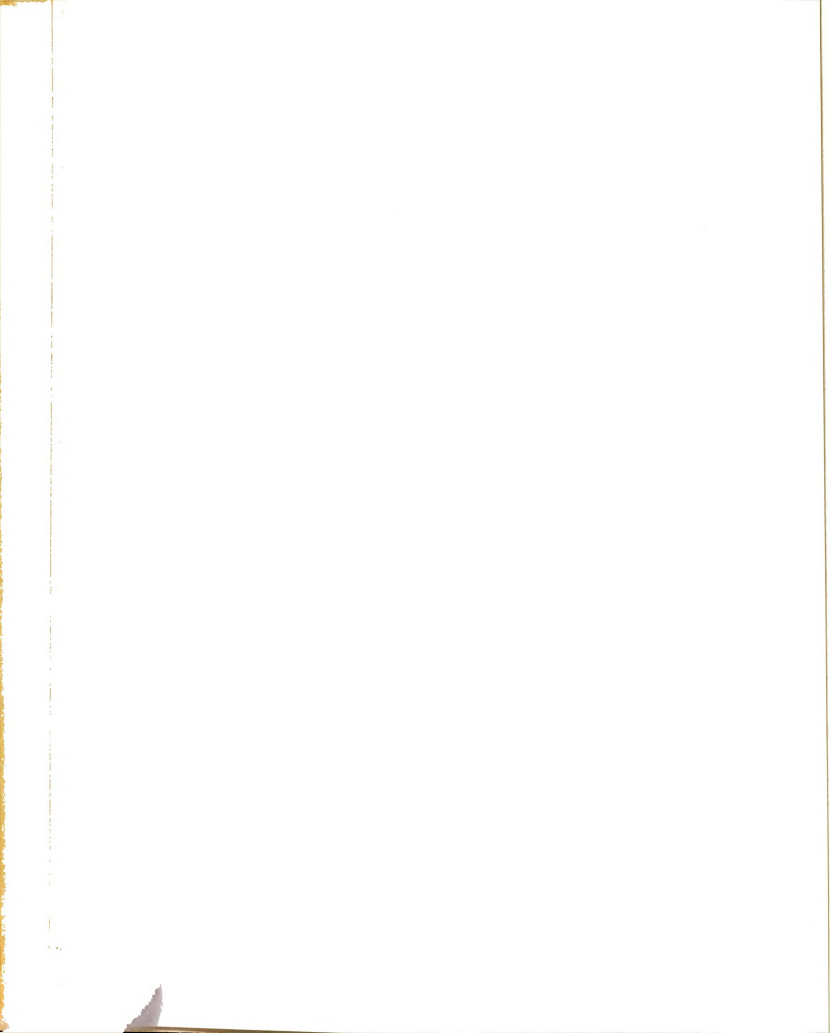




the action of language. By means of language, and more specifically metaphorical language, Montaigne's judgment is able to take possession of its objects, giving them the 'body' by which they can be grasped. The polarities of movement and stability are joined in their common relationship to the creative process of metaphor: Montaigne's dynamic opposition of movement and stability concurs with the perpetually renewed interaction of the weight and density of the body and the lightness and fluidity of the mind or soul.

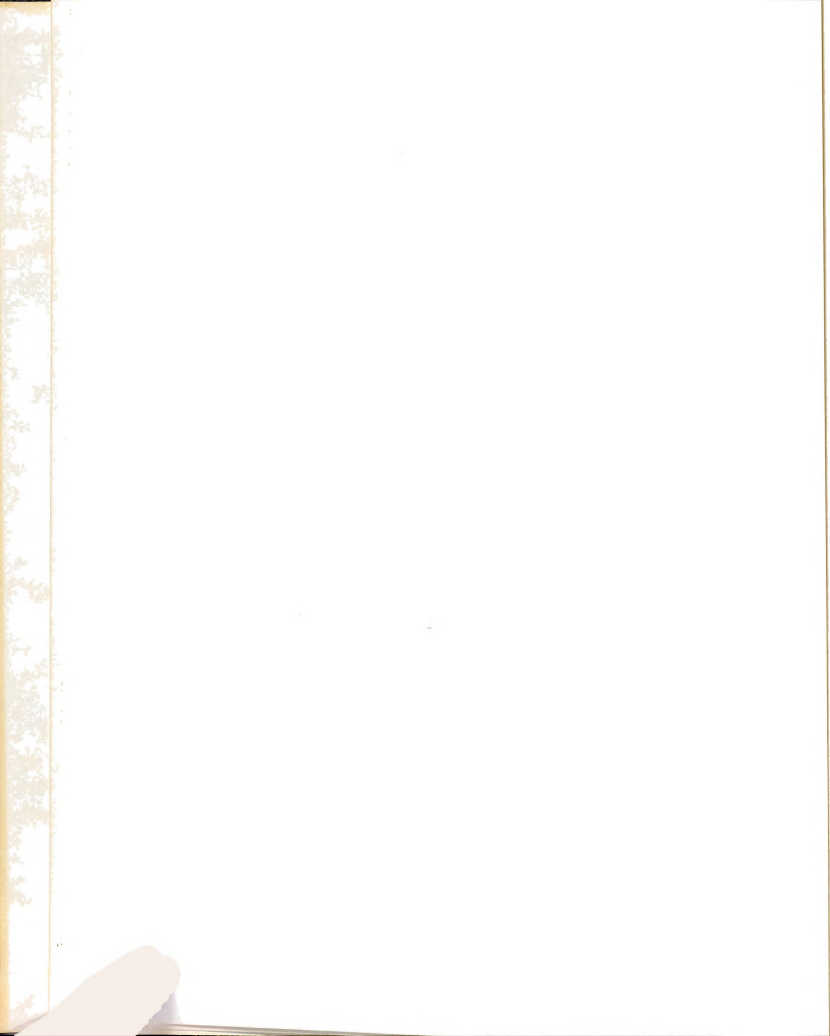
Stretching and bending language to serve his needs, Montaigne searches out a closeness between word and thought. His awareness of the separation between the 'name' and the 'thing' posits an underlying tension in his use of metaphor, a tension which energizes the interaction of the metaphorical process. As he forges corporeal expression for abstract ideas, Montaigne bridges the separation between word and conception and between mind and body. Never losing touch with the organic relationship of the physical and unphysical aspects of his being, he engenders thought in a language 'of flesh and of bone.'

The Essais are a portrait of Montaigne in language, a portrait of himself conceived in interaction with the multiple aspects of his experience, a portrait of a consciousness as it is reflected through the mediation of its objects. Reflecting himself in the 'mirror' of the world, in the opacity of physical sensation and in the 'inward folds' of a soul which 'turns in on itself,' Montaigne registers the multifarious images of these separate moments of consciousness into the duration of the book. The book, too, serves as an object of



Paula B. Koppisch

consciousness, a reflector of the self, and it, too, is made 'to turn in on itself.' As the portrait of his passage, it is to the book that Montaigne turns for the image of himself in movement. It is the book which functions as the ultimate metaphor of self.



METAPHOR OF MOVEMENT IN THE ESSAIS OF MONTAIGNE

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Paula B. Koppisch

A DISSERTATION

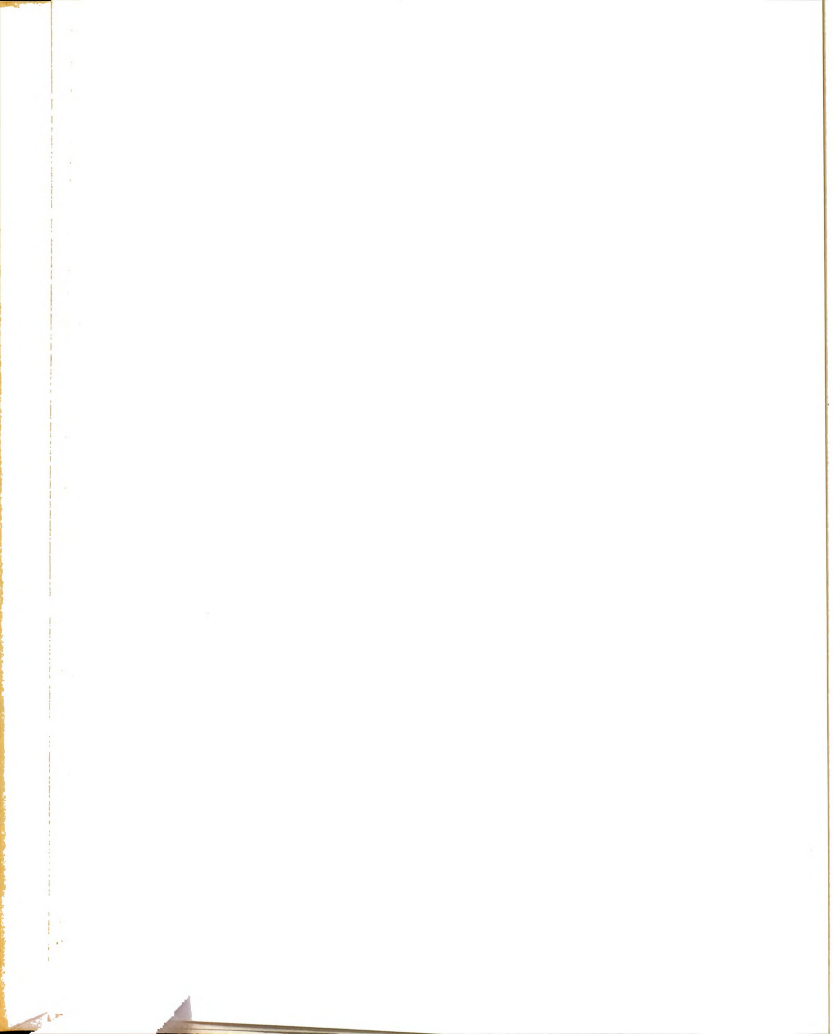
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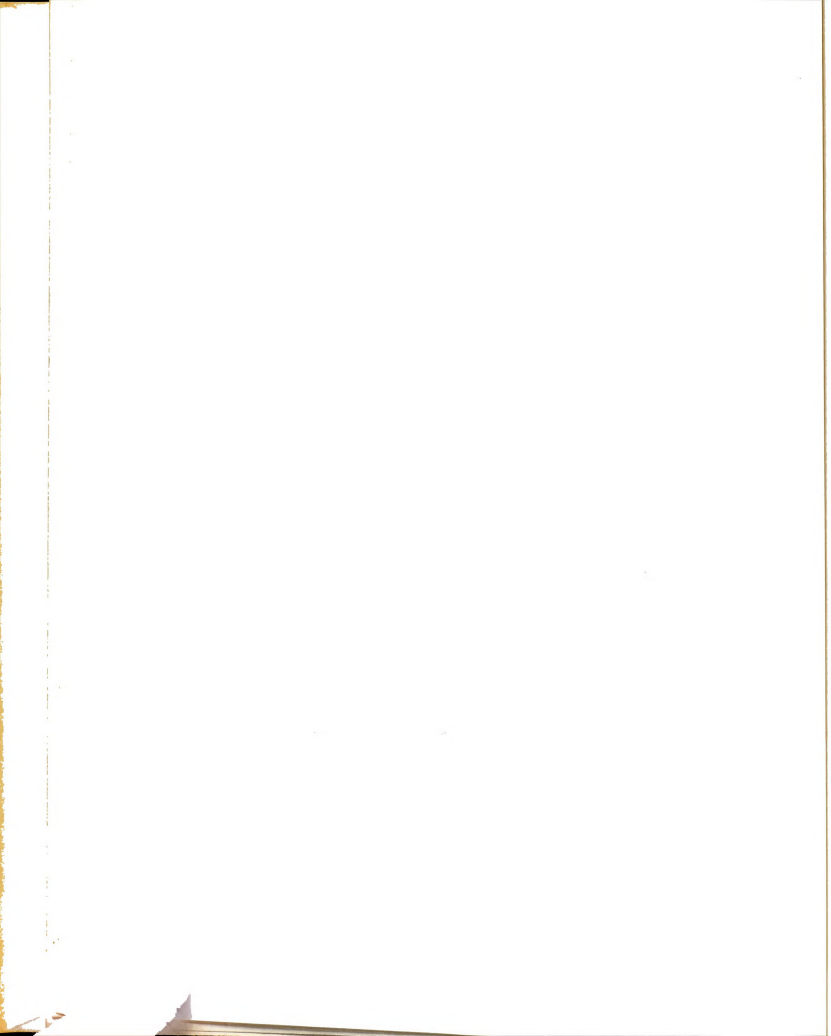
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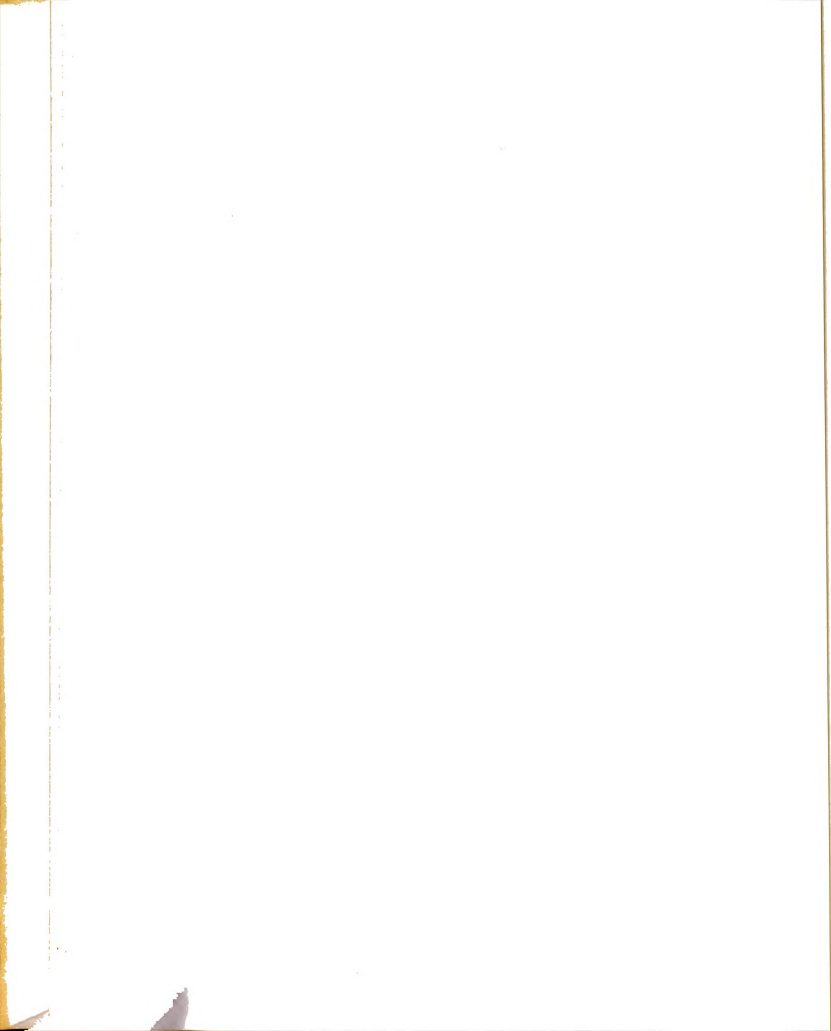




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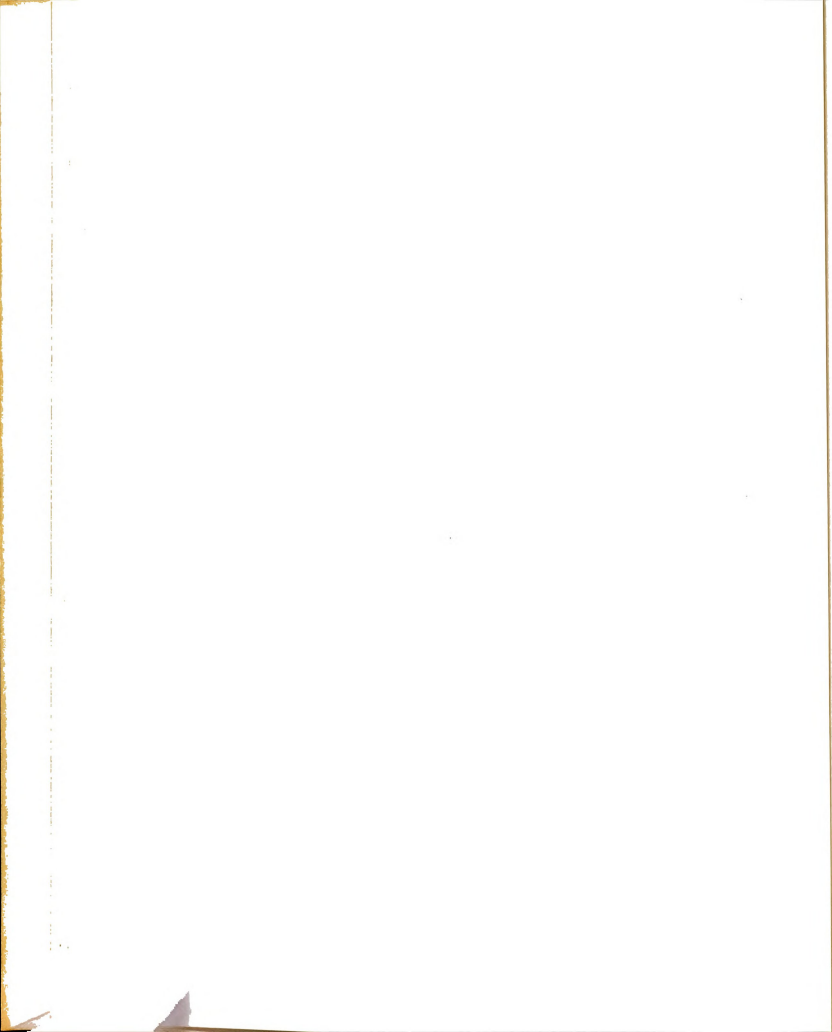
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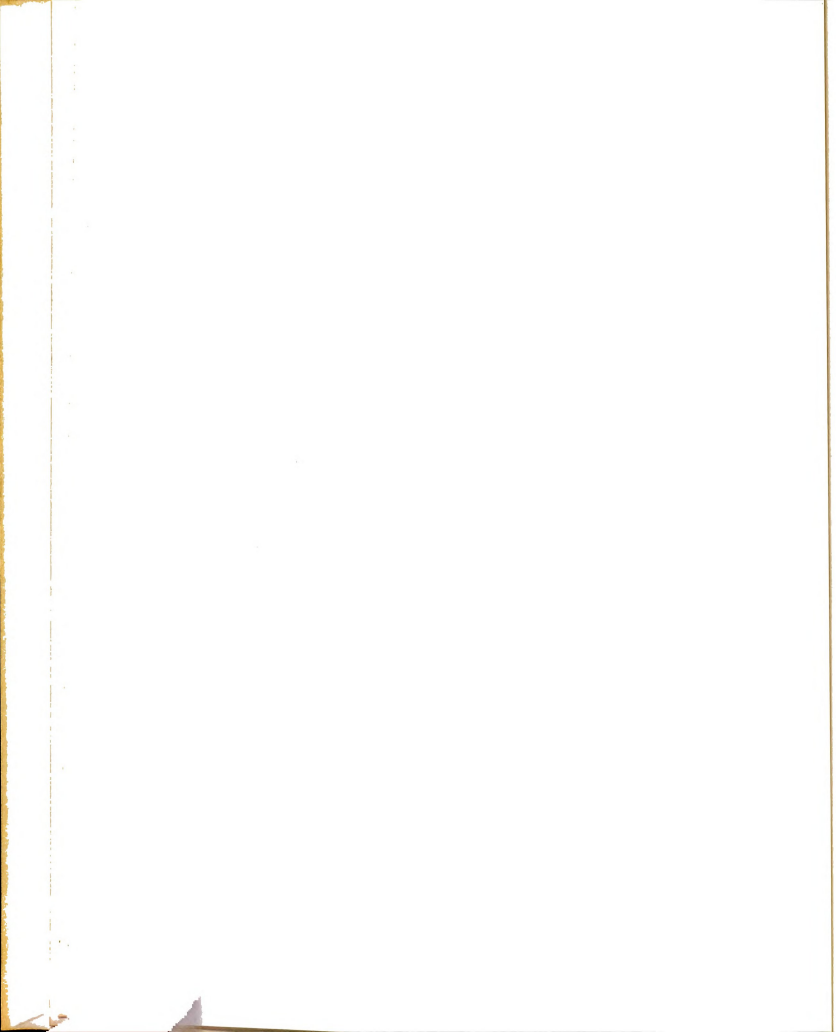
Many people, some unknowingly, have been of immeasurable assistance to me in the course of my education and in the preparation of this study. To all, I express my gratitude. Most especially, I thank Professor Frieda S. Brown for her attentive, close reading of my work, for her valuable suggestions for improving the text and, most importantly, for her warm and continuing encouragement throughout the duration of this study. My appreciation also goes to Professors Herbert Josephs, Laurence M. Porter and John F. A. Taylor for their generous attention to my text and for the stimulating critical questions which resulted from their readings.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

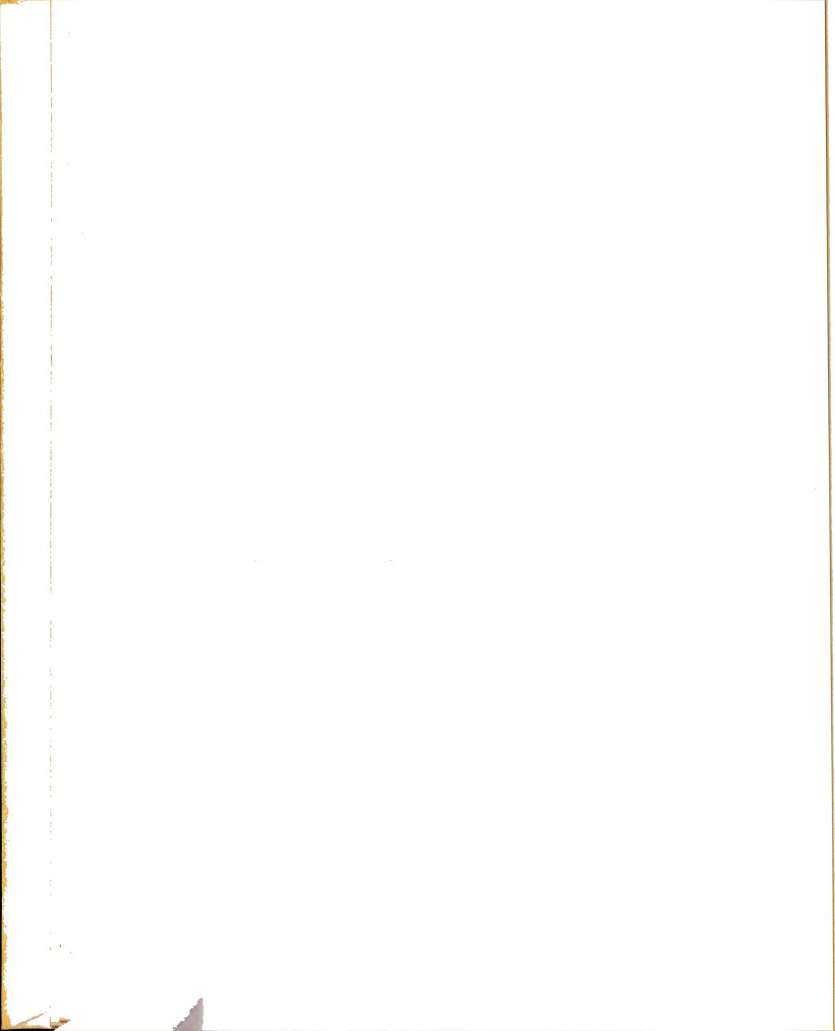
	Page
INTRODUCTORY NOTE . . . . .	1
 CHAPTER	
I. THE POLARITIES OF MOVEMENT AND STABILITY IN MONTAIGNE . . . . .	5
II. PERSPECTIVES ON METAPHOR IN THE <u>ESSAIS</u> . . . . .	46
III. METAPHORS OF THE WORLD AND MAN <u>EN BRANLE</u> . . . . .	80
IV. METAPHORS OF THE SOUL AND MIND <u>EN BRANLE</u> . . . . .	118
V. METAPHORS OF THE SELF AND THE BOOK . . . . .	163
CONCLUSION . . . . .	215
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	222



## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Renaissance is characterized by a growing awareness of expanding perspectives in man's consciousness of his universe. It is a world of discoveries, innovations and renewal. Joined to greatly altered conceptions of the expanse and shape of man's physical world are pronounced transformations in his assessment of the scope and depth of his intellectual and cultural heritage. While ties with the ancient world had never really been severed, the endeavors of the Renaissance humanists brought much that had been shadowed into the full light of active investigation. Widely diffused by the new medium of printing, the humanist movement heightened man's sense of the far-reaching dimensions of history in which he is situated. A realization of the extensive and varied traditions of the past and a confrontation with change in the present combined to produce a vision of a world ever open to change. Such a vision is not altogether desirable for what remains open to change is in itself unstable. Man, in the midst of an unstable world, must face the dilemma of his own instability.

To a large degree, the Renaissance resisted the implications of its own discoveries. Although its political and religious institutions underwent severe turmoil, they emerged as relatively stable structures within which man could continue to define himself much as before. In the domain of scientific inquiry, findings which threatened traditional

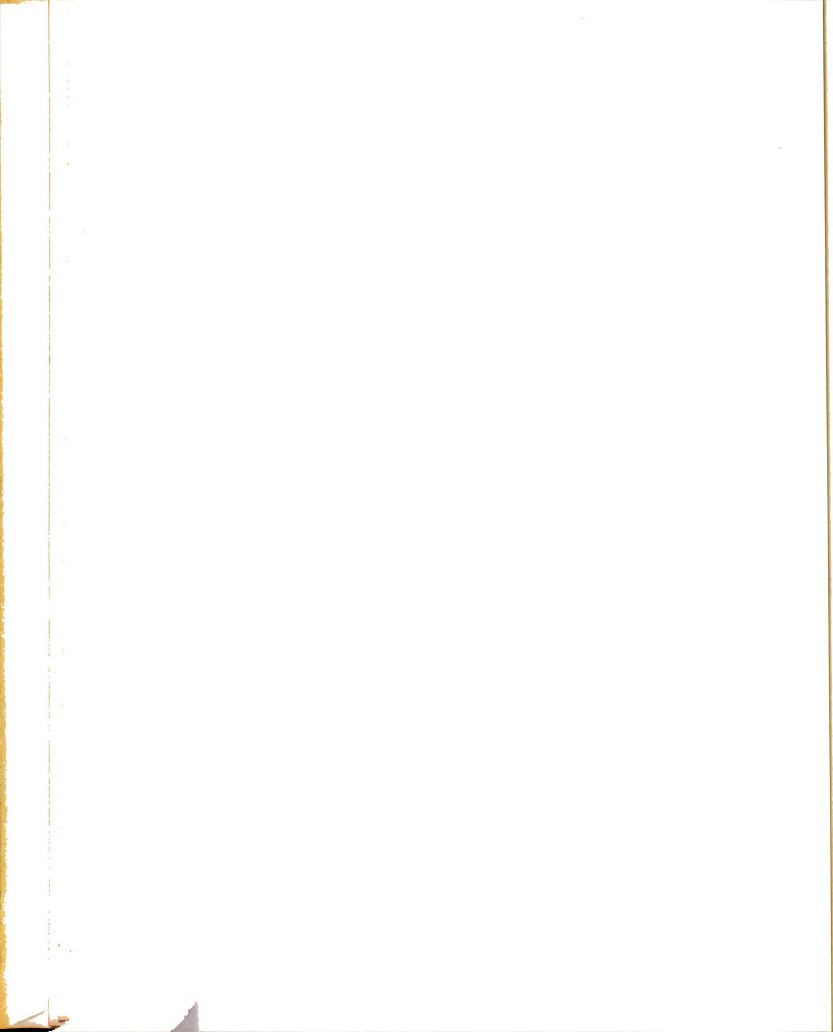


modes of thought met with official condemnation. And the expanded intellectual and cultural heritage fostered by the humanists, while inspiring some to creative fervor and critical innovation, led others to the temptations of dogmatism and sterile imitation. The Renaissance is marked by a tension between the new-found possibilities for expanding man's consciousness of himself and his world, on the one hand, and the persistence of limitations impeding the full realization of these possibilities on the other. Openness to change is partially closed by the inclination to stability.

Montaigne's Essais are the expression of an individual consciousness at the moment when the Renaissance had reached its maturity. Nurtured in the humanist tradition, Montaigne's mind was attuned to the metamorphosing nature of his world as well as to the need for a compensatory stability. But the focus of Montaigne's investigation is not so much on the world as on man--and more pointedly, on himself. Just as the tension between movement and stability is characteristic of the Renaissance world-view, so, too, is it deeply rooted in Montaigne's subjective sense of self. Exploring in the Essais his own experience of movement, he comes to know a mode of stability in the context of movement itself.

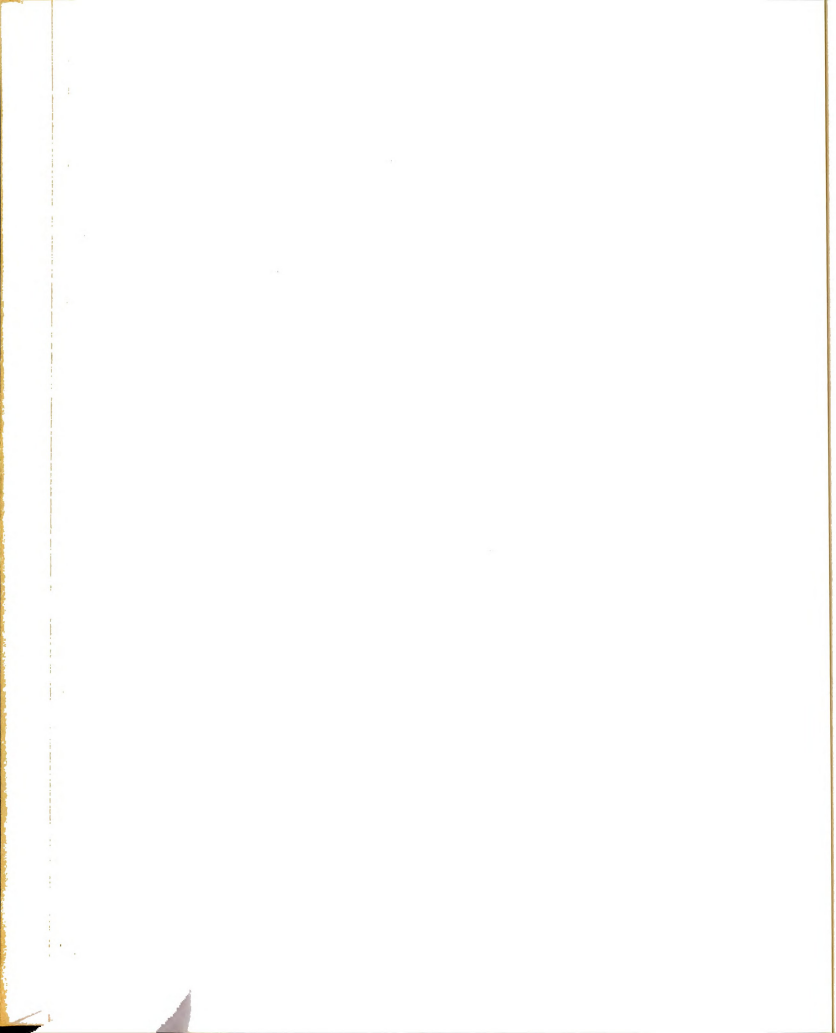
A genre new to the world of letters, the essay is Montaigne's creation and uniquely suited to his purpose. For him, the word essai literally means a test or trial. In writing the essays, he is trying out his ideas, exercising his mind, continually expanding his consciousness of the world within and without himself. To accommodate his mind



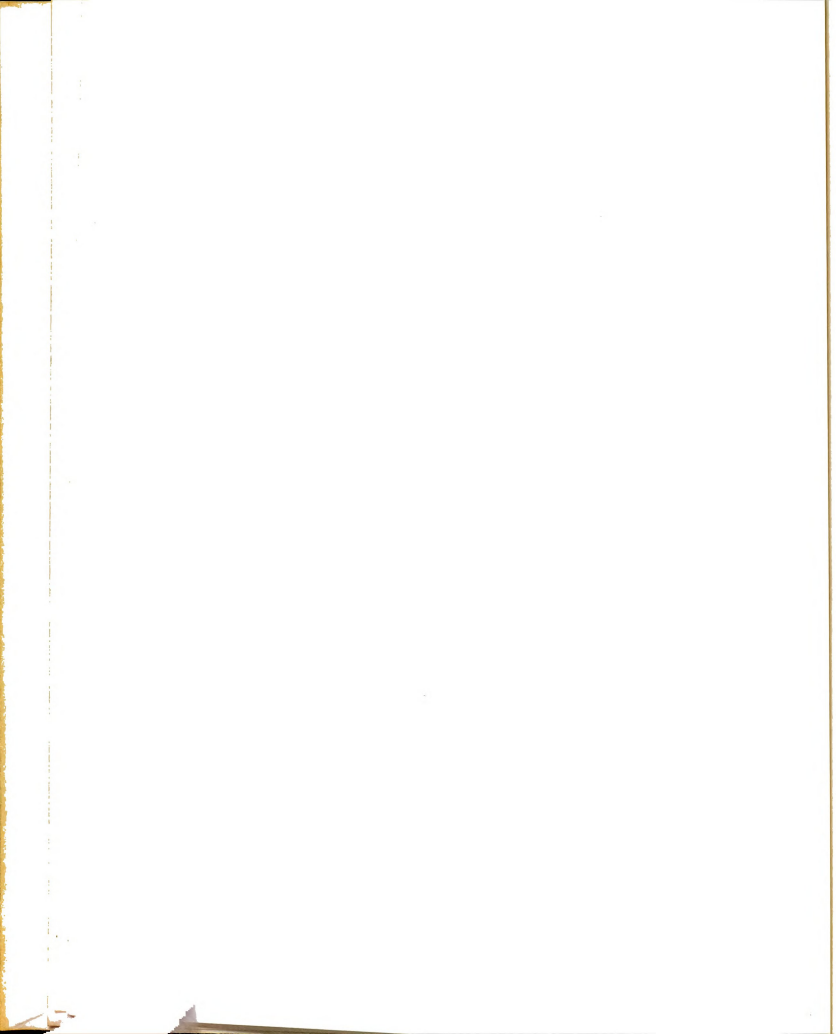


in movement, the form of the essays remains open, unbound by dictates of length, organization or predetermined structure. Montaigne's Essais are an affirmation of Renaissance openness to change. The stability the essayist experiences through the successive trials of his mind comes not from the imposition of any closures or limitations on the activity of that mind, but from his increasing awareness of his mind's capacity to act.

Movement, as the exercise of Montaigne's mind and as the mobility inherent in his perceptions of the world, of man and of himself, is incorporated into the language of the Essais through the action of metaphor. The use of metaphor is a creative process, one of drawing relationships, of making associations between things which may be similar but nevertheless distinct. Montaigne's rich handling of metaphor is a function of his judgment, that faculty of the mind which acts upon the matière before it, not only receiving, but assimilating and shaping the objects of perception according to its manière. The manner in which Montaigne formulates his ideas through metaphor is grounded in his realization of the fundamental organic unity of his being. Body and soul, the tangible and the intangible, represent separate aspects of the unified self, but their separation is really a construct of the mind, for they can only be experienced in relation to each other. Judgment, operating through experience, is constantly functioning in terms of their interaction. Out of this interaction comes the incarnation of Montaigne's thought in the densely metaphorical language of the Essais.



It is the aim of my study to investigate the process of metaphor at work in the Essais, to examine the value of metaphor for Montaigne, and to clarify the nature of the relationships out of which his metaphors are created. My study will concentrate on Montaigne's metaphors of movement. Since movement is a motif which permeates Montaigne's thought throughout the three books of the Essais, it serves to limit the scope of investigation without obscuring the continuity of Montaigne's development. The first chapter demonstrates the primacy of movement in the Essais and situates this notion with respect to Montaigne's contrasting urge for stability. The remaining chapters explore the nature of metaphor and show how the major conceptions of the Essais are embodied in the metaphor of movement.



## CHAPTER ONE

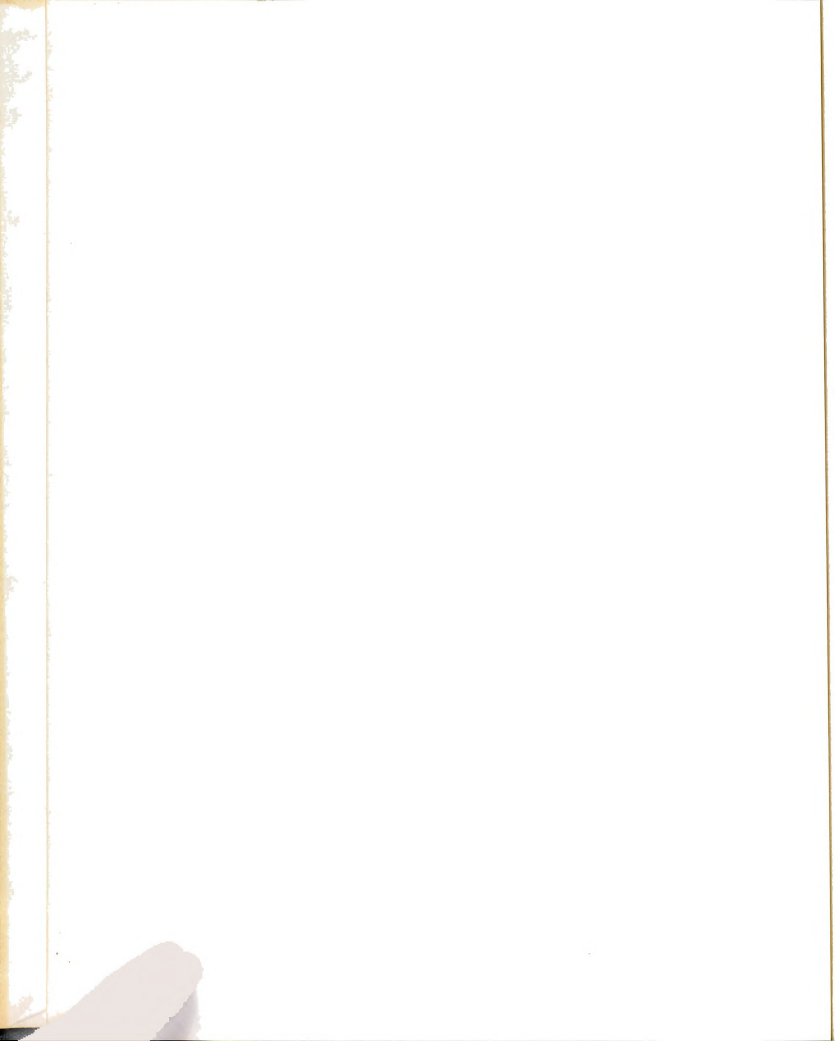
### THE POLARITIES OF MOVEMENT AND STABILITY IN MONTAIGNE

Notre vie n'est que mouvement (III:13, 1074b).<sup>1</sup>

D'autant que nous avons cher, estre; et estre  
consiste en mouvement et action. Parquoy  
chascun est aucunement en son ouvrage (II:8,  
336c).

Montaigne declares in his Au Lecteur: "je suis moymesmes la matiere de mon livre" (p. 9). In the three books of essays which follow, the reader, keeping his comment in mind, makes an ever-deepening acquaintance with this matiere--the man, the mind, that is Montaigne. Yet, treating of a multitude of subjects, the essays frequently explore matters so removed from the domain of a self-portrait that we might very well ask in what way these varied discussions related to his avowed intention to portray himself--"car c'est moy que je peins" (p. 9). Much of the sense of acquaintance with Montaigne that we derive from reading the essays comes not only from the passages where he reflects directly on his own personality, but also from the experience of participation in the process of a mind continually making contact with subjects outside itself.

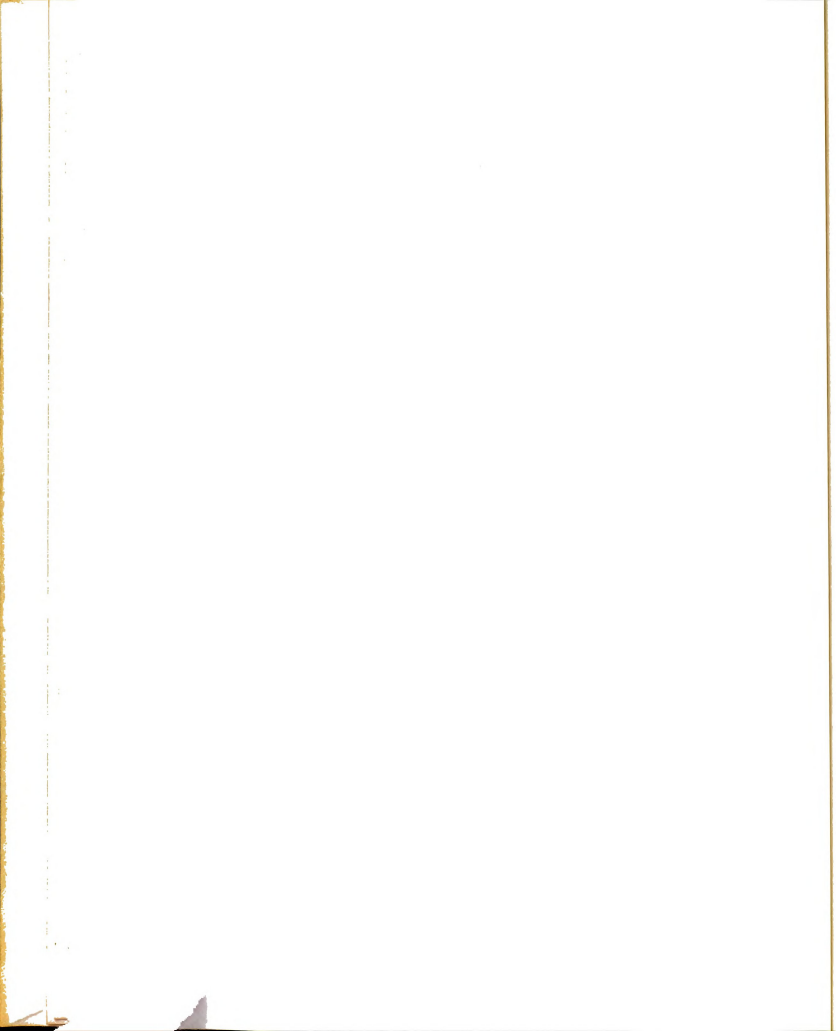
Montaigne evidences a critical awareness of his own undertaking, realizing that "chascun est aucunement en son ouvrage"--for being



consists in movement and action. "Notre vie n'est que mouvement." A man is 'somewhat' in his work in as much as the activity that goes into the creation of the work is the essence of his being. "Nous sommes nés pour agir" (I:20, 87a). Inseparable from movement, life is the period "pendant [laquelle] nous nous remuons" (I:3, 20b). And Montaigne would have death find him "plantant [ses] chous" (I:20, 87a), engaged in action, stretching the fiber of life to his very last moment.

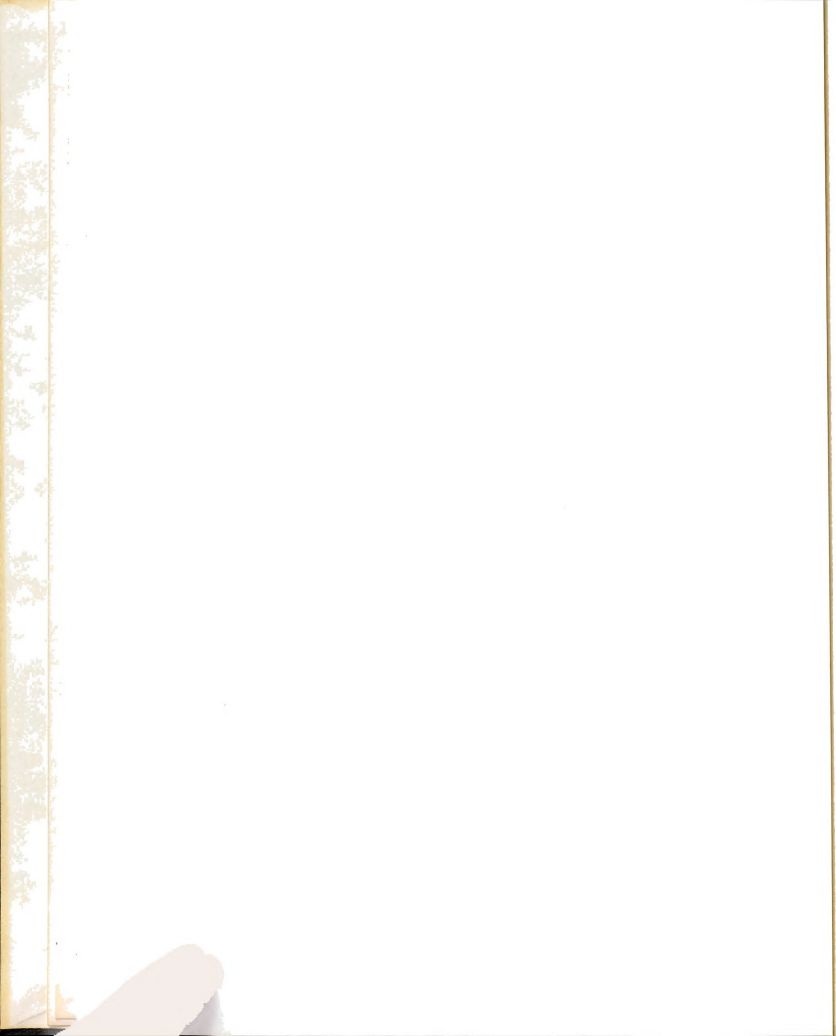
For Montaigne, his work is his book; and the book, in a very real sense, is his life--"livre consubstantial à son auteur, d'une occupation propre, membre de ma vie; non d'une occupation et fin tierce et estrangere comme tous autres livres" (II:18, 648c). The activity of the book is primarily intellectual, an effort to record, not the facts of his existence, but the movements of his mind: "Je peins principalement mes cogitations, subject informe . . . Ce ne sont mes gestes que j'escris, c'est moy, c'est mon essence" (II:6, 359c). To render a faithful portrait of so fleeting and shapeless a subject is "une espineuse entreprinse," for the mind has a vagabond pace and the path of its movement winds through inward folds of opaque depths (358c). Montaigne's pursuit in writing is in effect a quest of self-discovery. The written word gives body to the rush of minute thoughts which pass through the mind and risk most easily "de se perdre et extravaguer au vent" (II:18, 648c). Because he wants to keep a register of them, Montaigne listens more closely, more attentively to his "resveries" (ibid.); and the book enables him to see himself more solidly, in sharper form and more vivid color--"le patron s'en est fermey et





aucunement formé soy mesmes. Me peignant pour autrui, je me suis peint en moy de couleurs plus nettes que n'estoyent les miennes premières" (ibid.).

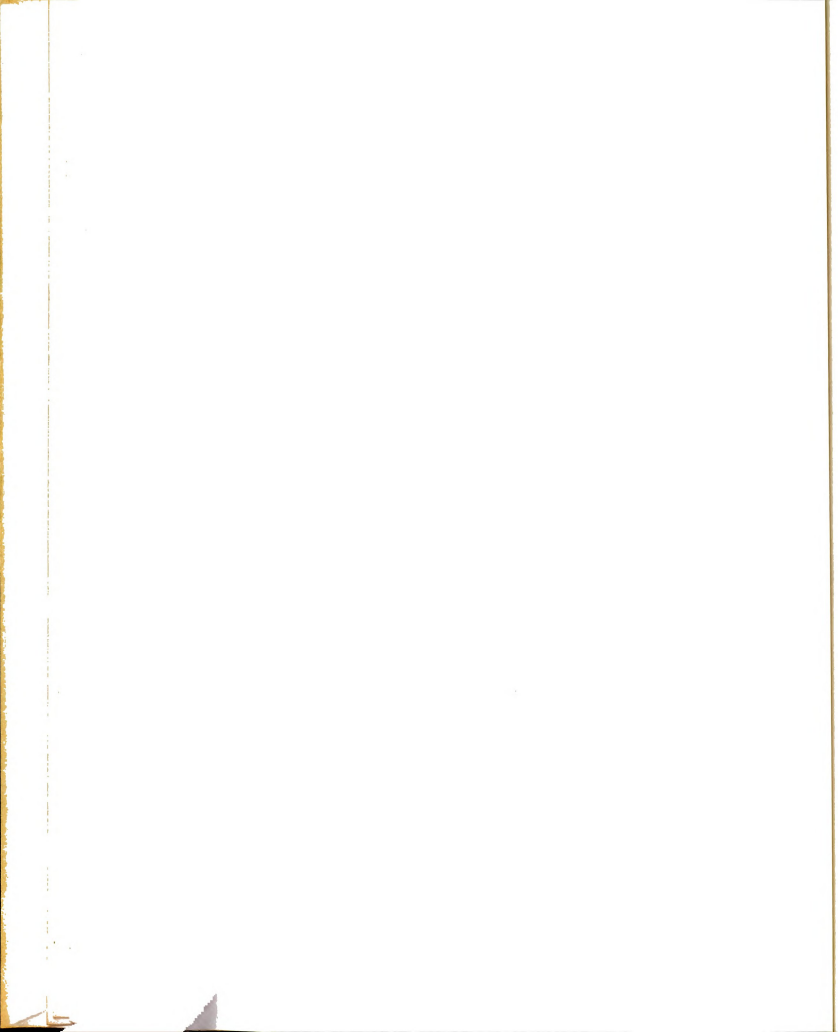
Writing is an exercise in control, a means of imposing stability on the incessant movement that is the nature of being, and so lends substance and form to the fleeting, elusive self. Retiring from the world at the age of thirty-eight, Montaigne maintains that he wished to leave his mind "en pleine oysiveté, s'entretenir soy mesmes, et s'arrester et rasseoir en soy" (I:8, 34a). But within this isolated freedom, he found that his mind took to running, "faisant le cheval eschappé," demonstrating its need for bridling and restraint. Just as a field needs sowing in order to be productive (33a), the mind requires definite subjects with which to occupy itself. Recognizing the need to direct the energies of his mind in order to perceive its workings, Montaigne's quest for self takes shape through the unending succession of subjects that make up the body of the Essais. Conscious of the infinite number of possible subjects ever before the mind, Montaigne wonders "Et quand seray-je à bout de représenter une continuelle agitation et mutation de mes pensées, en quelque matière qu'elles tombent . . ." (III:9, 923b). No matter is too trivial or irrelevant to his purpose, for every subject reveals the mind in movement. And "tout mouvement nous descouvre" (I:50, 290c).



"Qui veut découvrir Montaigne doit écouter son conseil et commencer par considérer son mouvement."<sup>2</sup> The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the notion of movement permeates Montaigne's consciousness. At the beginning of chapter two of Book Three, "Du repentir," Montaigne reflects directly on the elusory nature of his task, due to the mobility of what he seeks to capture.<sup>3</sup> The implications of the motif of movement<sup>4</sup> in this dense passage reverberate throughout the Essais. R. A. Sayce warns that "it is impossible (or at least not easy) to make any statement about [Montaigne] without immediately stating the contrary"<sup>5</sup> for the 'thought' of Montaigne is an ever-active interplay of contraries and ambiguities. In dealing with the notions of movement and instability we cannot ignore the corresponding conceptions of stability and repos. The passage from "Du repentir" affords a means of entry into both of these seemingly contradictory aspects of Montaigne's thinking.

Les autres forment l'homme; je le recite et en represente un particulier bien mal formé, et lequel, si j'avoy à façonner de nouveau, je ferois vraiment bien autre qu'il n'est. Mes-huy c'est fait. Or les traits de ma peinture ne forvoyent point, quoy qu'ils se changent et se diversifient. Le monde n'est qu'une branloire perenne. Toutes choses y branlent sans cesse: la terre, les rochers du Caucase, les pyramides d'AEgypte, et du branle public et du leur. La constance mesme n'est autre chose qu'un branle plus languissant (III:2, 782b).

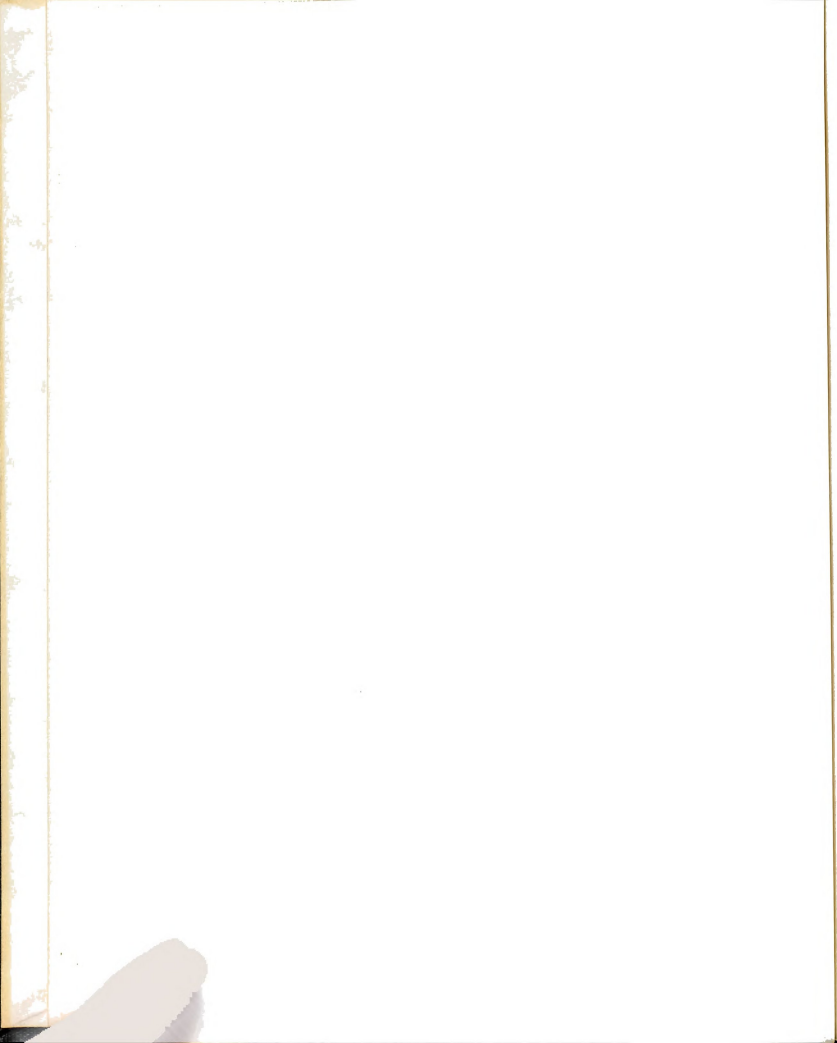
Montaigne's concept of the world in flux determines the way in which he must deal with his subject. Pointing to the descriptive nature of his depiction of man as opposed to works bent on forming or defining man, Montaigne chooses to show man not as he "ought" or would "ideally" be, but simply as he is. He recites and represents his model as



perceived, not as conceived; for a world in constant branle admits of no definitions. Further in the same essay, Montaigne insists strongly on the non-didactic nature of his writing. "Je n'enseigne point, je raconte" (784b). As the very title indicates, the Essais are not a book of lessons, but one of exercises, samplings and trials<sup>6</sup>--"ce sont icy mes humeurs et opinions; je les donne pour ce qui est en ma creance, non pour ce qui est à croire" (I:26, 147a).

The particular model for his study, himself, is, admittedly, "bien mal formé." Though declining to shape man, Montaigne observes by experience that his subject has already taken on a discernible form. And though it might be preferable to fashion him "bien autre qu'il n'est," the object of his observation is not an idealized self but what "mes-huy . . . est fait." Without betraying his subject, indeed so as not to betray it, the lines of the portrait vary and change. It must be flexible and mobile in order to be faithful to his conception of a world that is "but a perpetual see-saw."<sup>7</sup>

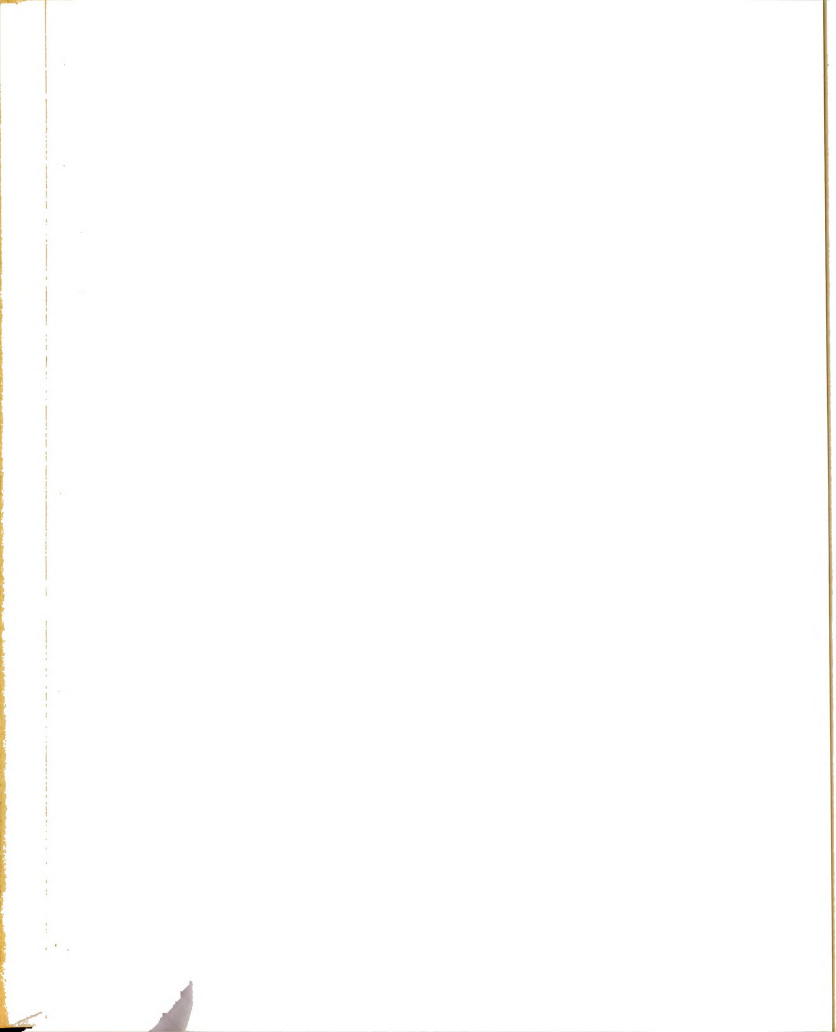
Even things marked by mass and endurance--the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the pyramids--are subject to perpetual movement. "Toutes choses y branlent sans cesse . . . et du branle public et du leur." By "du leur" Montaigne is probably referring to the gradual process of disintegration in all created matter.<sup>8</sup> From the perspective of his own personal observations, from his acquaintance with history and his knowledge of the geographical explorations of the Renaissance, Montaigne is sensitive to the metamorphic processes continually reshaping his universe. Having witnessed the erosions caused by



the Dordogne in his native region, he had a first-hand experience of the force of physical change affecting the continents: "je vois bien que c'est une agitation extraordinaire; car si elle fut tousjours allée ce train, ou deut aller à l'advenir, la figure du monde seroit renversée" (I:31, 201b). And from the ancients' account of the island of Atlantis "qui tenoit plus de païs que l'Afrique et l'Asie toutes deux ensemble" (200a) and of which no trace was later to be found, he concludes: "Il semble qu'il y aye des mouvemens, (c) naturels les uns, les autres (b) fievreux, en ces grands corps comme aux nostres" (201b).

At the time Montaigne was writing, man's world view was undergoing a radical alteration, much like that we experience today as a result of our investigations of space, technology and, in another sense, primitive cultures. The discoveries of the 'new world' demanded a total reordering of knowledge concerning the dimensions and history of the world. To the rich lore of historical and geographical materials treating of the ancient worlds, many of which had only recently become accessible to sixteenth-century readers, there were added new works dealing with Asia, Africa and--America. Montaigne's library and the Essais, especially the chapters "Des cannibales" and "Des coches," evidence the fascination these discoveries held for him.<sup>9</sup> His reaction to the change in the overall conception of the world is one of openness and readiness to meet with still other changes: "Cette descouverte d'un païs infini semble estre de consideration. Je ne sçay si je me puis respondre que il ne s'en face à l'advenir quelque'autre, tant de personnages plus grands que nous ayans esté trompez en cette-cy"

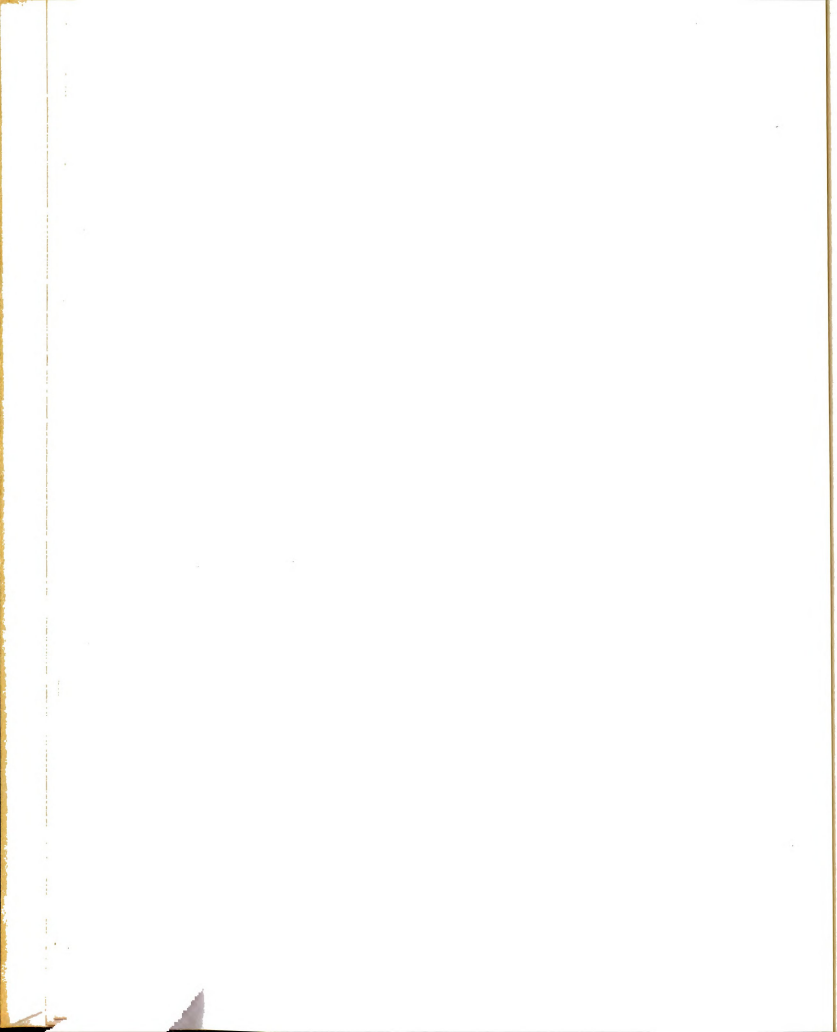




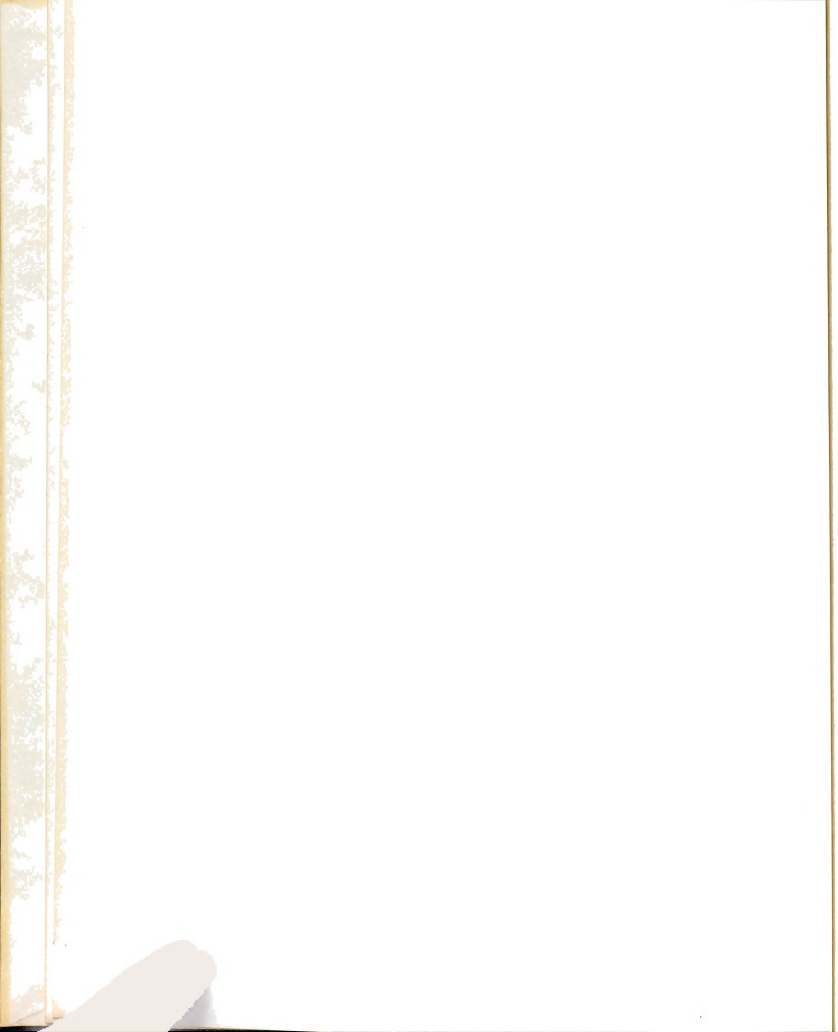
(I:31, 200a). In much the same spirit does he accept the replacement of the Ptolemaic conception of the universe by the doctrine of Copernicus--"Et qui sçait qu'une tierce opinion, d'icy à mille ans, ne renverse les deux precedentes?" (II:12, 553a).

Knowledge of the world will always be subject to revision, not only because "Toutes choses y branlent sans cesse," but because man is never capable of total knowledge. "Et de cette mesme image du monde qui coule pendant que nous y sommes, combien chetive et racourcie est la cognoissance des plus curieux!" (III:6, 886b). Even if one man were to know all that has been written about the past and if everything that has been written were true, "ce seroit moins que rien au pris de ce qui est ignoré" (ibid.). Montaigne points to the 'inventions' of printing and artillery which were regarded as miracles in his century, and then reminds the reader that these mechanisms were enjoyed a thousand years earlier in another corner of the world by the Chinese. The more man advances in his knowledge of the world, the deeper he penetrates in his understanding of a world in metamorphosis: "Si nous voyons autant du monde comme nous n'en voyons pas, nous apercevrons, comme il est à croire, une perpetuele (c) multiplication et (b) vicissitude de formes" (ibid.).

The world of Montaigne's immediate experience is one of constantly changing forms. Institutions--political, religious, cultural--are the structures that give shape to the universal branle. But these very structures in sixteenth-century France were subject to upheaval. Threatened from outside by the confrontation with societies



operating on totally different principles<sup>10</sup> and from within by the religious wars that were in essence political, France was tottering on very shaky foundations. Montaigne recognizes the instability of political bodies and likens their existence to the vulnerable and mortal condition of the human body: "Les maladies et conditions de nos corps se voyent aussi aux estats et polices; les royaumes, les republiques naissent, fleurissent et fanissent de vieillesse comme nous" (I:23, 662-663a). The laws that hold a society together are but a "cousture fortuite" (III:9, 934b). And the very foundations of religion are capable of being esbranlées by the new doctrines of Luther.<sup>11</sup> In response to the prevailing turmoil of his historical moment, Montaigne takes a firm conservative position.<sup>12</sup> His option to maintain the existing structures might appear contradictory to his awareness of universal flux and the relativity of human institutions, but this position is really the result of these testimonies. Seeing a world in constant movement, he saw the threat of an eventual 'vertigo.' Sayce observes that "the finely adjusted sensitivity to all manifestations of flux naturally produces a more than normal desire for stability, the need for some fixed point or some fixed values."<sup>13</sup> Montaigne cautions his reader: "il vous siera mieux de vous resserrer dans le train accoustumé, quel qu'il soit, que de jeter vostre vol à cette licence effrenée" (II:12, 542a). Rather than witness a total destruction of the existing order, which is far from satisfactory, Montaigne would choose to give stability to the status quo:



de nos loix et usances, il y en a plusieurs barbares et monstrueuses; toutesfois, pour la difficulté de nous mettre en meilleur estat, et le danger de ce crollement, si je pouvoy planter une cheville à nostre rouë et l'arrester en ce point, je le ferois de bon coeur (II:17, 639a).

The wheel, of course, continues to turn; by taking a conservative stance, we can give some semblance of constancy to the perpetual flow of events, but change and movement will continue their way--"La constance mesme n'est autre chose qu'un branle plus languissant."

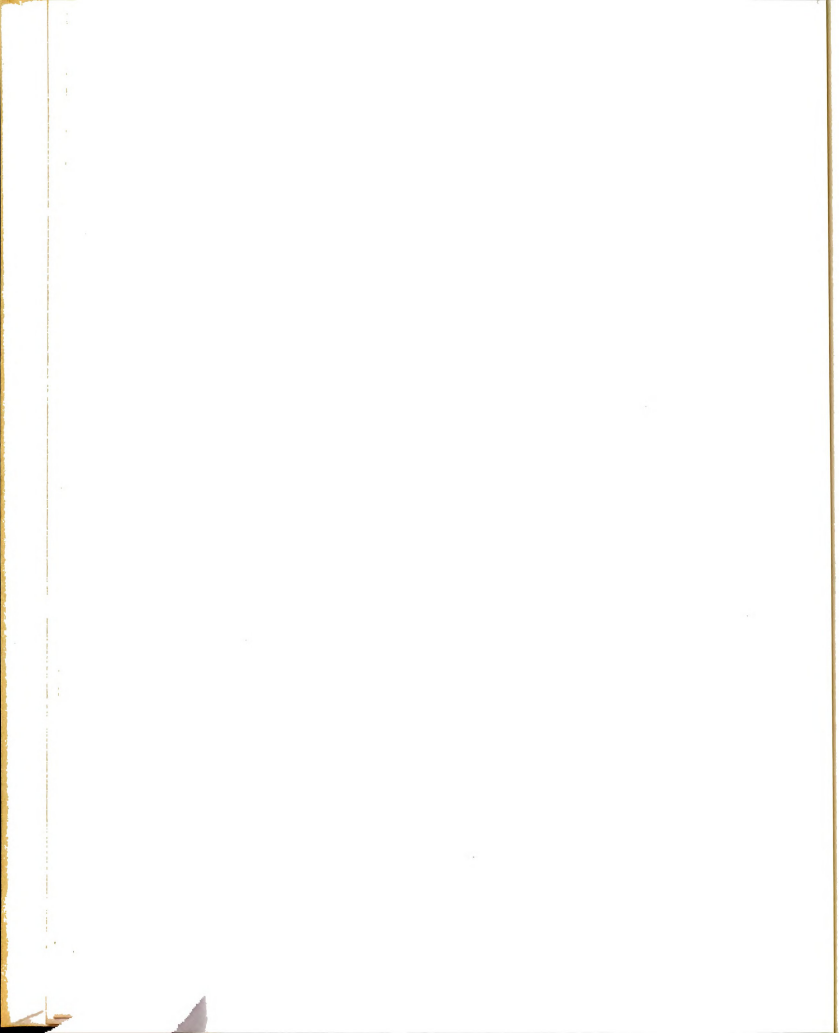
There is a still larger perspective from which Montaigne views the world en branle. All things--individual men, nations, continents--are part of a larger movement: the cosmic order or the cycle of nature. In an effort to humble man and his arrogant reason in the "Apologie," Montaigne invites him to see that "non un homme seul, non un Roy, mais les monarchies, les empires et tout ce bas monde se meut au branle des moindres mouvemens celestes" (II:12, 428a). Nature tells man that his life and his death are "des pieces de l'ordre de l'univers" (I:20, 91a) and that if he has lived one day he has seen all. For all of nature can be seen in each of her phenomena:

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

Nature, it would seem, is a process of ordered movement. And yet, it is also the proliferation of diversity and variety. "Le monde n'est que varieté et dissemblance" (II:2, 321a). Variety, diversity, dissimilitude are indeed a law of nature: "qui se presente . . . cette grande image de nostre mere nature . . . qui lit en son visage une si

generale et constante varieté . . . celui-là seul estime les choses selon leur juste grandeur" (I:26, 157a); "il n'est aucune qualité si universelle en cette image des choses que la diversité et la varieté" (III:13, 1041b); "Nature s'est obligée à ne rien faire autre, qui ne fust dissemblable" (III:13, 1042c).<sup>14</sup> Within the patterns of nature, there is continual movement, continual change, so general and constant that they are part of the order of nature. That this order is not evident, that we are more conscious of the variety and differences in nature than we are of its unity is attributable to our own failings. Montaigne would have nature as his guide but finds her path not easily discernible: "Je queste par tout sa piste: nous l'avons confondue de traces artificielles" (III:13, 1094b). His repeated attestations of constant and universal diversity provide a kind of point de repos, a fixed point à l'intérieur du branle. Movement in his mind has taken on a structure, not clearly delineated to be sure, but sufficient to provide a sense of stability in face of perpetual flux and diversity-- "La loi du mouvement est pour lui le principe unique de l'infinie variété que crée la nature et, à la fois, source de stabilité intérieure."<sup>15</sup>

The quest for a form of stability within the context of an ever-moving world is the arrière-plan of the project of the self-portrait. Not only the world, but men in general and most particularly the self oscillate between the impulsion to movement and the inclination to create and experience a sense of repos. Returning to the passage we

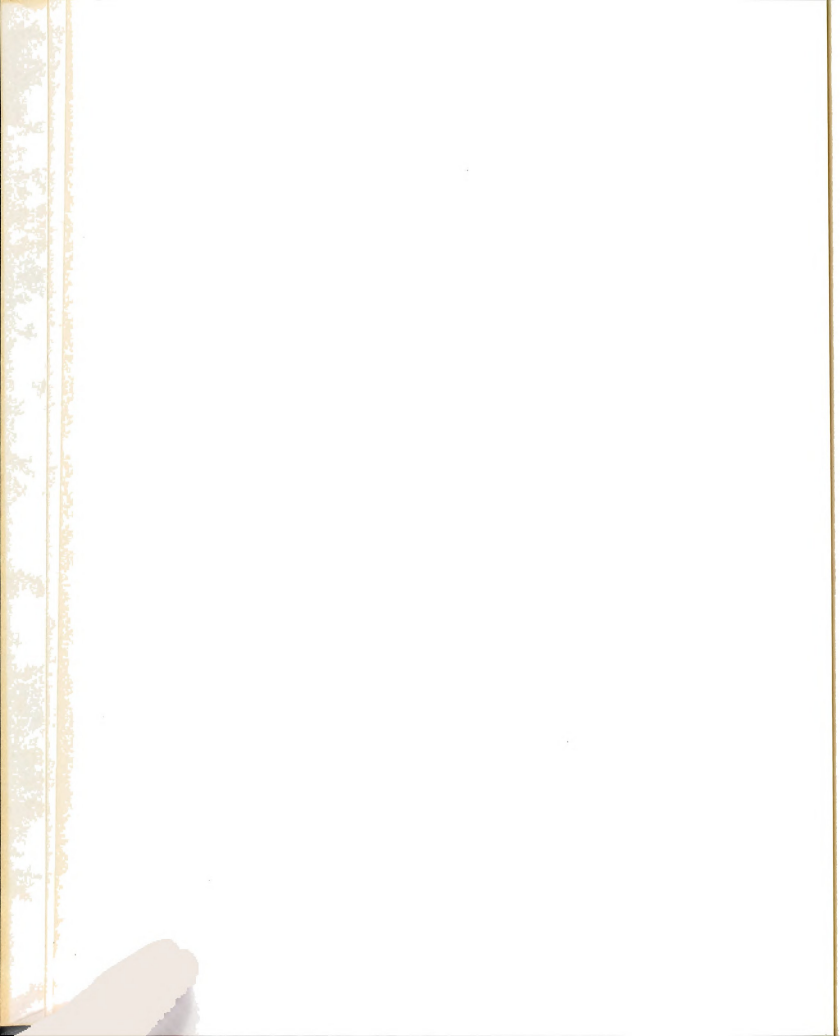




began to examine in "Du repentir," we find Montaigne jumping directly from his statement of universal branle to that of his difficulty in laying hold of his fluctuating and variable subject:

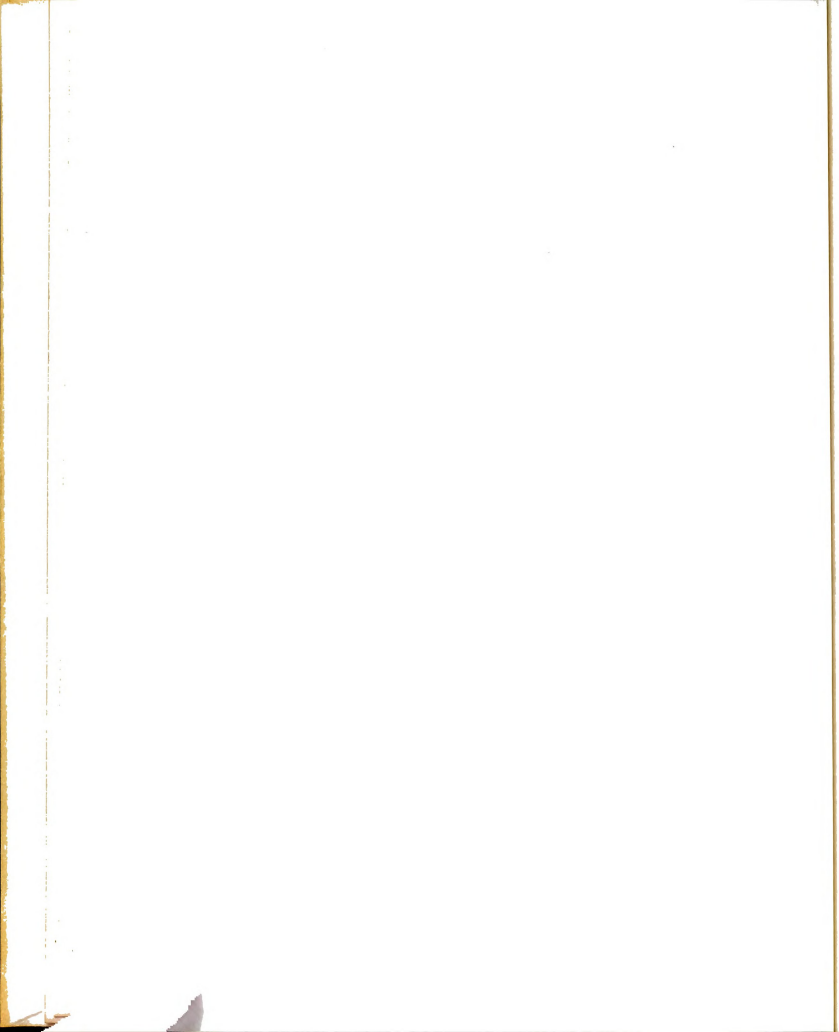
Je ne puis asseurer mon object. Il va trouble et chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle. Je le prens en ce point, comme il est, en l'instant que je m'amuse à luy. Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage: non un passage d'aage en autre, ou, comme dict le peuple, de sept en sept ans, mais de jour en jour, de minute en minute. Il faut accommoder mon histoire à l'heure (III:2, 782b).

He is unable to keep his subject still. For man, part of a world en branle, participates in the mobility of all created things. "Il n'y a aucune constante existence, ny de nostre estre, ny de celuy des objects. Et nous, et nostre jugement, et toutes choses mortelles, vont coulant et roulant sans cesse" (II:12, 586a). The theme of human mutability, as R. A. Sayce remarks, is "a commonplace of both ancient (or Renaissance) and Christian thought,"<sup>16</sup> and Montaigne openly makes reference to writers who have preceded him in this tradition (II:12, 586a).<sup>17</sup> In the Essais, this theme makes its entry in the very first chapter of Book One:<sup>18</sup> "Certes, c'est un subject merueilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant, que l'homme" (I:1, 13a), and is reflected in numerous chapter headings throughout the three books.<sup>19</sup> Montaigne is an observer of men, and his observations sensitize him to the nebulousness of any attempt to draw conclusions on men's behavior. The Essais abound in illustrations of how men's actions fluctuate under different circumstances and even under quite similar circumstances. If any conclusion is to be drawn it is that "il est malaisé d'y fonder jugement constant et uniforme" (I:1, 13a).



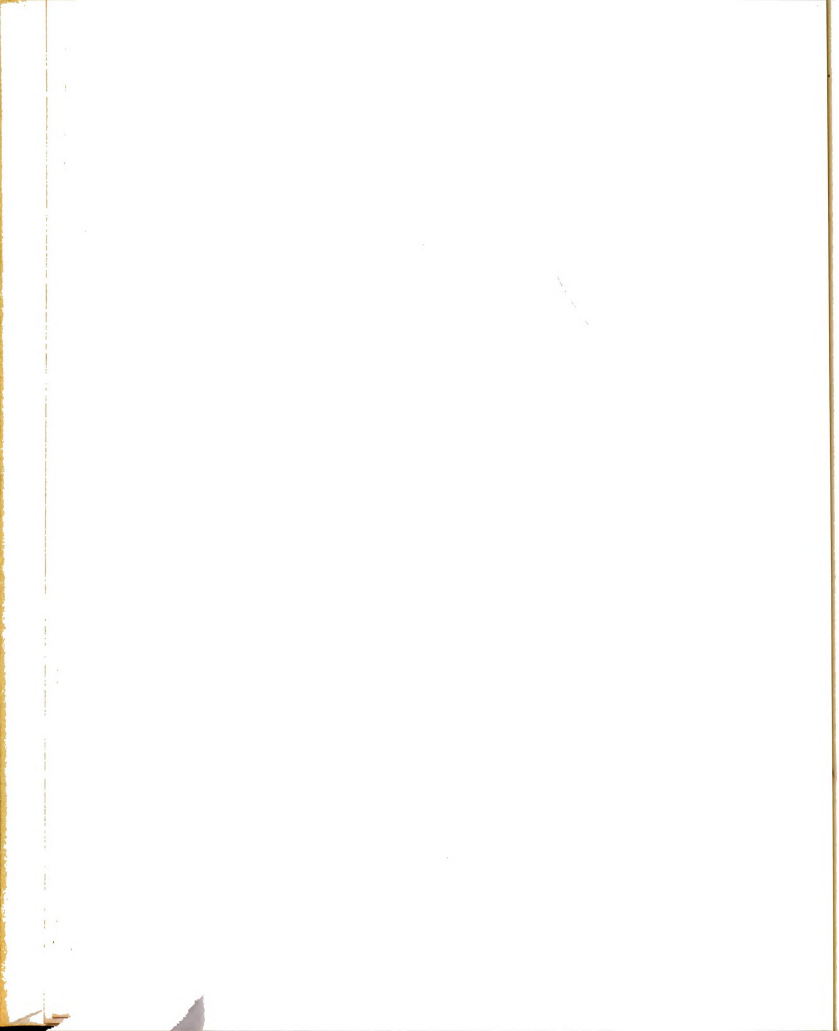
In the "Apologie" Montaigne sets out to humble man by showing him to be a part of nature, no higher than the creatures of the animal kingdom, for these creatures evidence the patterns of reasoning that are supposed to set man apart, to distinguish him as the master of creation. In fact, the more he sees that animals act in much the same way as men are credited to do, the more he witnesses the behavior of man to be unpredictable and unclassifiable: "je maintiens ordinairement, qu'il se trouve plus de difference de tel homme à tel homme que de tel animal à tel homme" (II:12, 444a). Most readers of the Essais will choose to regard his fantastic accounts of reasoning animals as fables and attribute uniquely to man the capacity for reason and judgment. But this trait which distinguishes man most from the rest of creation works at the same time to emphasize his separateness from his fellow men: "Jamais deux hommes ne jugerent pareillement de mesme chose, et est impossible de voir deux opinions semblables exactement, non seulement en divers hommes, mais en mesme homme à diverses heures" (III:13, 1044b).

Not only is man variable as a species, he is variable with respect to himself. His movement is a gait "trouble et chancelant." His thoughts, his desires, his actions are marked by inconsistency. The animals evidence some patterns in their movement, man, "une yvresse naturelle." In the chapter "De l'inconstance de nos actions," Montaigne finds irresolution to be "le plus commun et apparent vice de nostre nature" (II:1, 315a). Ever restless, ever dissatisfied with the present, man is in perpetual pursuit of an illusory future promise.



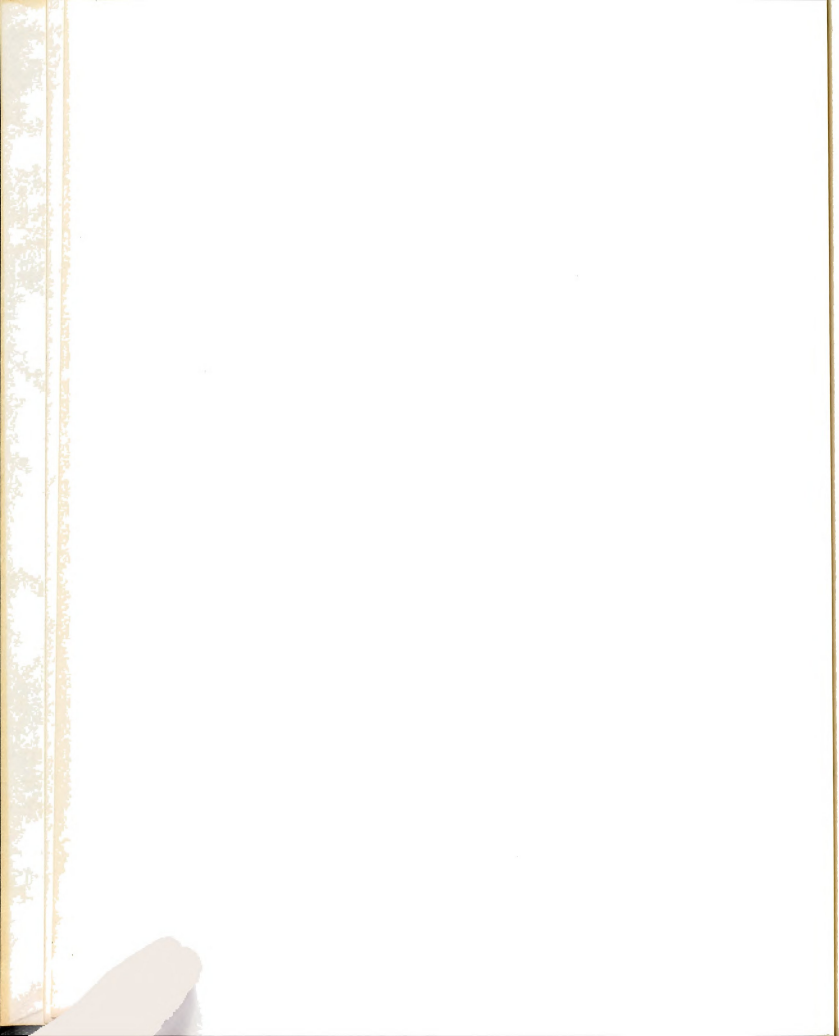
"Nous ne sommes jamais chez nous, nous sommes tousjours au delà. La crainte, le desir, l'esperance nous eslancent vers l'advenir, et nous desrobent le sentiment et la consideration de ce qui est, pour nous amuser à ce qui sera" (I:3, 18b). An insatiable curiosity propels man relentlessly toward preoccupation with the future. And his present state remains a matter of bemuddled confusion. Acts prove to be incongruent with motivation for man is not sure of what he wants; his appetite is "irresolu et incertain" (I:53, 297a). Having pursued and obtained what he once believed to be his want, he is likely to discover his achievement only brings unhappiness, but "il n'y a rien de changé, . . . nostre ame regarde la chose d'un autre oeil, et se la represente par un autre visage; car chaque chose a plusieurs biaux et plusieurs lustres" (I:38, 231a). Occasionally there are moments when man experiences genuine pleasure and satisfaction, but he is incapable of sustaining this state. Imagining man in full enjoyment of the most desirable of circumstances, supposing that each member of his body were seized with the acute sensation of sexual pleasure, Montaigne conjectures he would be incapable of enduring "une si pure, si constante volupté et si universelle. De vray, il fuit quand il y est, et se haste naturellement d'en eschapper" (II:20, 656a). What is natural for man is not to remain static, but to pursue relentless movement.

Some regularity is nevertheless to be observed in the flow of man's activities. Habit and custom provide structures within which man manages to achieve some degree of constancy in his conduct. Since "nous ne dirons jamais assez d'injures au desreglement de nostre esprit"



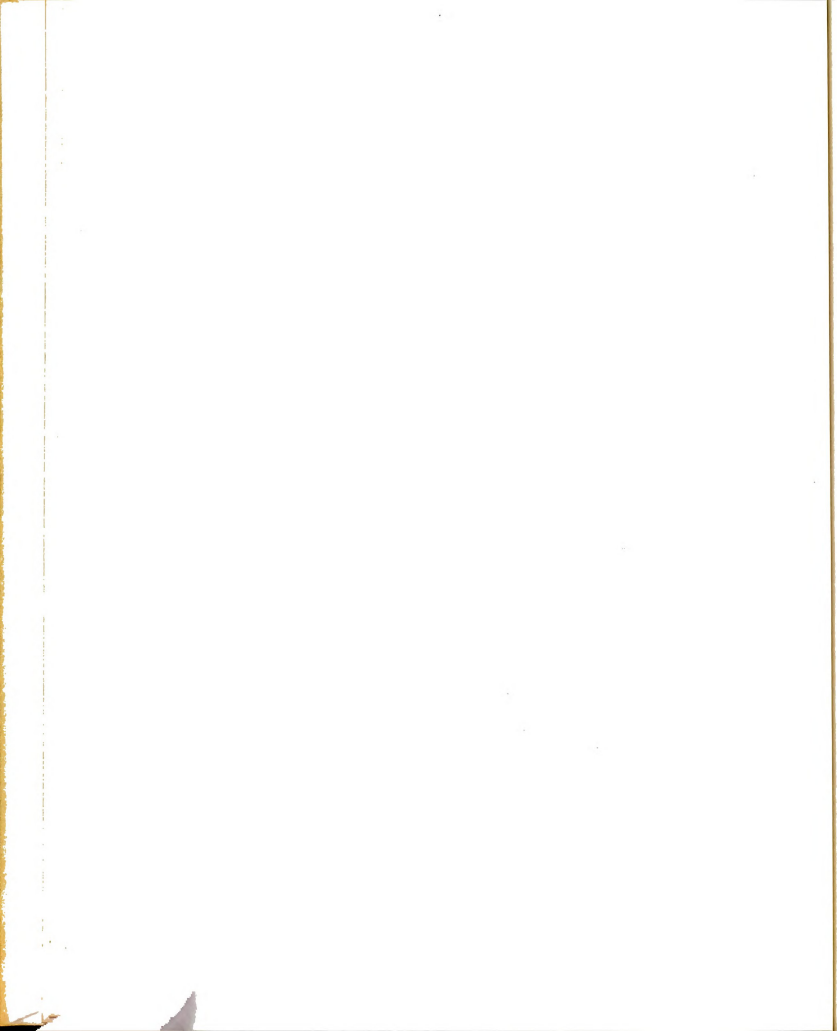
(I:4, 27b) and since our "interne volonté" is subject to endless diversity (I:37, 226b), by turning away from our powers of mind and will, we can more readily structure our lives. Habit functions as an unreflective mechanism. Movement, since movement there must be, yields to a certain control. As we have seen earlier, Montaigne takes a conservative view and chooses to accept existing structures in order to assure some degree of stability within a world in constant flux. Yet, he sees "la naturelle instabilité de nos meurs et opinions" (II:1, 315a), and he recognizes too the frequently falsifying nature of customs and habit in men's lives. "Nous ne sommes que ceremonie; la ceremonie nous emporte, et laissons la substance des choses" (II:17, 615a). The forms prescribed by culture can be worn as a kind of mask, a frequent image in the Essais:<sup>20</sup> "les hommes, se jettans incontinent en des accoustumances, en des opinions, en des loix, se changent ou se deguisent facilement" (I:26, 148b). It is at this interior level, where the stability of custom gives way to fluctuation and diversity, that Montaigne is most interested in the movement of men: "ce n'est pas tour de rassis entendement de nous juger simplement par nos actions de dehors; il faut sonder jusqu'au dedans, et voir par quels ressorts se donne le bransle" (II:1, 321a).

Montaigne is really on the road to a science not yet born in his day, the discipline of psychology. The study of man had always been relegated to the domain of philosophy, and Montaigne is well-acquainted with the philosophers.<sup>21</sup> His acquaintance only serves to reinforce the idea that man escapes definition, "car en l'estude





que je fay, duquel le subject c'est l'homme, trouvant une si extreme varieté de jugemens, un si profond labyrinthe de difficultez les unes sur les autres, tant de diversité et incertitude en l'eschole mesme de la sapience" (II:17, 617a), Montaigne finds not answers, but more questions. No one has satisfactorily explained the union of body and soul, the mystery of how a solid mass, the human body, can be subject to the reception of spiritual impressions: "la nature de la liaison et cousture de ces admirables ressorts, jamais homme ne l'a sçeu" (II:12, 520a). The categorical explanations of Aristotle, the philosopher usually credited with 'having the answers' in the scholastic tradition, do not ring true for Montaigne. He finds there the same artificial structuring that he criticizes in the ceremonies of culture, forms that do not penetrate to the substance of things--"Je ne recognois pas chez Aristote la plus part de mes mouvemens ordinaires; on les a couverts et revestus d'une autre robbe pour l'usage de l'eschole" (III:5, 852b). Montaigne is against all systems, for systems fail to take into account the endless variety of life. This refusal of systems and insistence on individuality is one of the characterizing traits of Montaigne's sagesse, as Hugo Friedrich so aptly remarks: "La sagesse de Montaigne . . . met les individualités en lumière, la sienne surtout, avec toutes leurs phases. C'est une sagesse qui a absorbé la fluctuation au lieu de l'arrêter."<sup>22</sup> What Montaigne would offer as the principal concern of wisdom, the primary subject to be presented to a student of man, is the matter of "quel ressorts nous meuvent, et le moyen de tant de divers bransles en nous" (I:26, 158a). It is a subject that can be



advanced through the reflections of philosophers, sharpened by the observation of other men's lives, but most deepened by the experience of one's self.

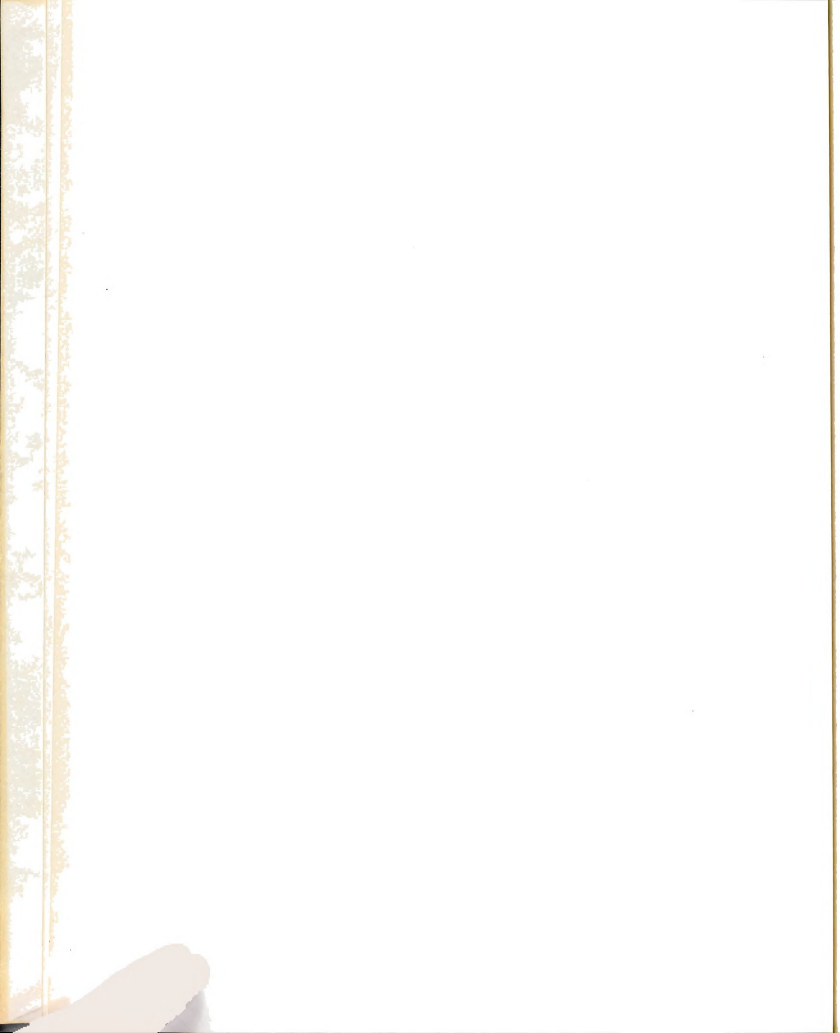
But how to experience the self when it, as all things, is in perpetual movement? Would not any description imply a solidification that would falsify its fluid nature? Montaigne proposes a method of approach through which he would not arrest the movement of his subject, but follow it. His focus will always be on the immediate, the present, rather than an extended vision which inevitably tends to abstract and generalize: "Je le prens en ce point, comme il est, en l'instant que je m'amuse à luy. . . . Il faut accommoder mon histoire à l'heure."

The present moment affords the only solid contact he can make with his self. For our existence is subject to the incessant flow of time:

"c'est chose mobile que le temps, et qui apparait comme en ombre, avec la matiere coulante et fluante tousjours, sans jamais demeurer stable ny permanente; et à qui appartiennent ces mots: devant et après, et a esté ou sera . . ." (II:12, 588a). Time can only be conceived as

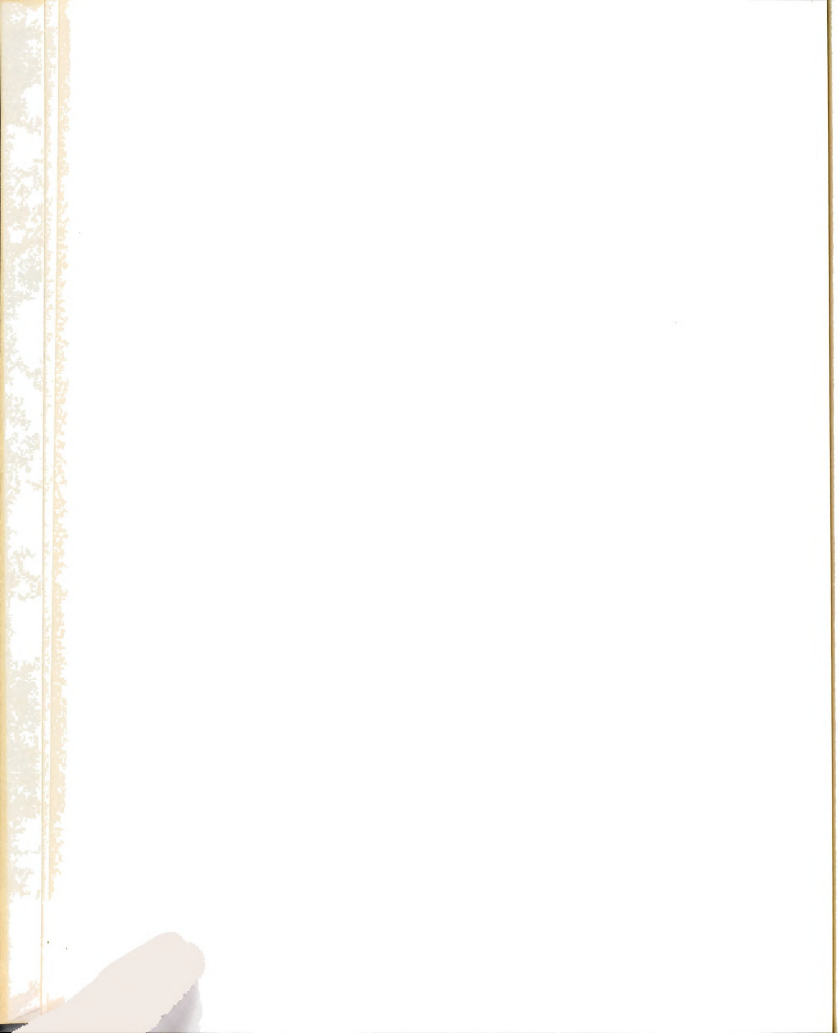
the succession of ever fleeting presents. By tracing the various instants of his subject's existence, Montaigne proposes to give "un registre de durée" (II:18, 648a). F. Joukovsky, in his study of

Montaigne et le problème du temps, defines duration as "le champ où notre réalité incomplète continue à s'élaborer";<sup>23</sup> time is "ce qui nous sépare de l'être"; it is "l'existence dans le devenir sensible."<sup>24</sup> L'être for Montaigne is that which is not subject to the mutations of time,<sup>25</sup> and he concludes that God alone IS; He is l'Etre, "non point



selon aucune mesure du temps, mais selon une éternité immuable et immobile, non mesurée par temps, ny subjecte à aucune déclinaison" (II:12, 588a). Man, on the contrary, has no communication with being because "toute humaine nature est toujours au milieu entre le naistre et le mourir" (586a). Man's reality is to be ever moving, in his ultimate dimension--ever moving toward death.

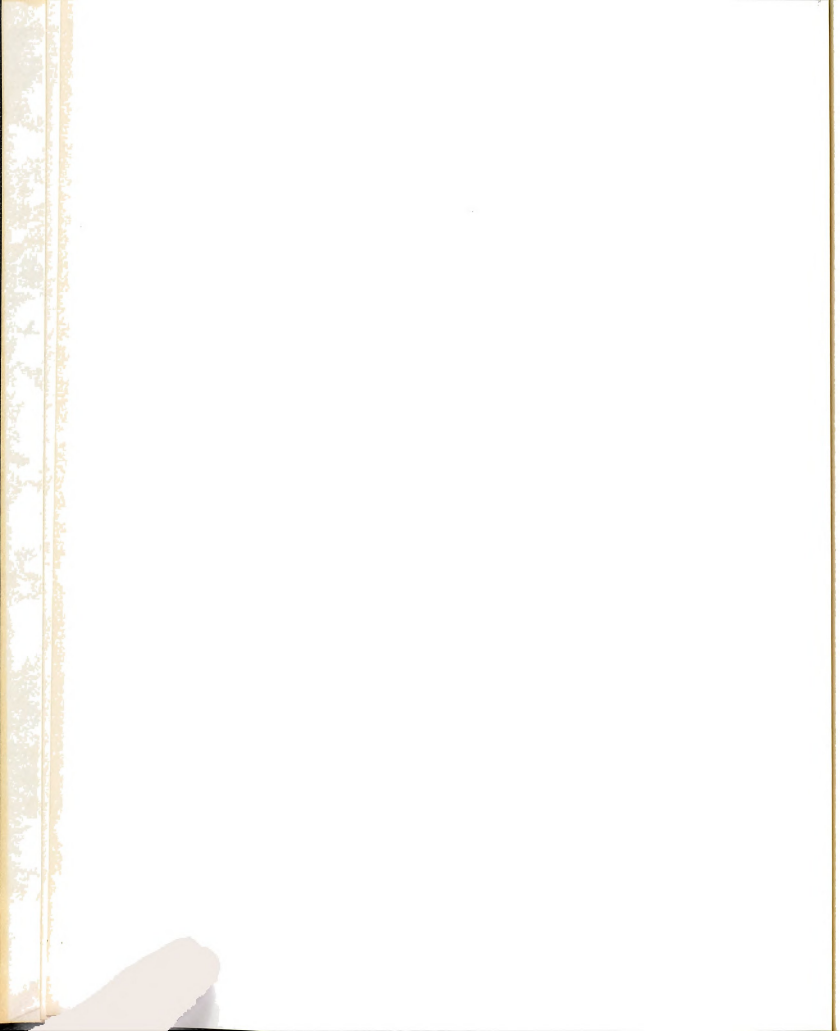
The portrayal of man, then, must be a portrayal of the process of becoming, a portrait of man's duration as a succession of instants. "Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage." Montaigne wants to portray movement--not the movement which can be stored in memory, "un passage d'aage en autre, ou comme dict le peuple, de sept ans en sept ans,"<sup>26</sup> but the movement of actuality, "de jour en jour, de minute en minute." Seeking to capture the most intimate possible awareness of movement, he intends the Essais to be a minute, conscientious history of his consciousness of the moment. Whatever the particular subject that comes into discussion in the Essais, the subject is the occasion for the activity of his mind. The mind is always mobile, in constant agitation, in need of objects upon which to exercise itself--"Si on ne les [minds] occupe à certain sujet, qui les bride et contreigne, ils se jettent desreiglez, par-cy par là, dans le vague champ des imaginations" (I:8, 33a). Montaigne proposes to his mind an endless succession of objects which reflect to him the movement of his mind. Poulet has suggested that the subject of Montaigne's thought in the Essais is "anything and nothing. . . . It is what is present to the mind and that is all. . . . It is simply occasion for pure thought, pure pretext



for thinking and for watching oneself think."<sup>28</sup> It is in this sense that the varied discussions and seeming digressions relate to his intention to portray himself--"car c'est moy que je peins" (p. 9).<sup>28</sup> The self revealed in the essays is mobile, changing and even contradictory. And yet, "in the end there is unity and truth; in the end it is his essential being which emerges from his portrayal of the changing."<sup>29</sup>

Je pourray tantost changer, non de fortune seulement, mais aussi d'intention. C'est un contrerolle de divers et muables accidens et d'imaginacions irresoluës et, quand il y eschet, contraires; soit que je sois autre moymesme, soit que je saisisse les subjects par autres circonstances et considerations. Tant y a que je me contredits bien à l'aventure, mais la verité, comme disoit Demades, je ne la contredy point. Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied, je ne m'essalerois pas, je me resoudrois; elle est tousjours en apprentissage et en espreuve (III:2, 782b).

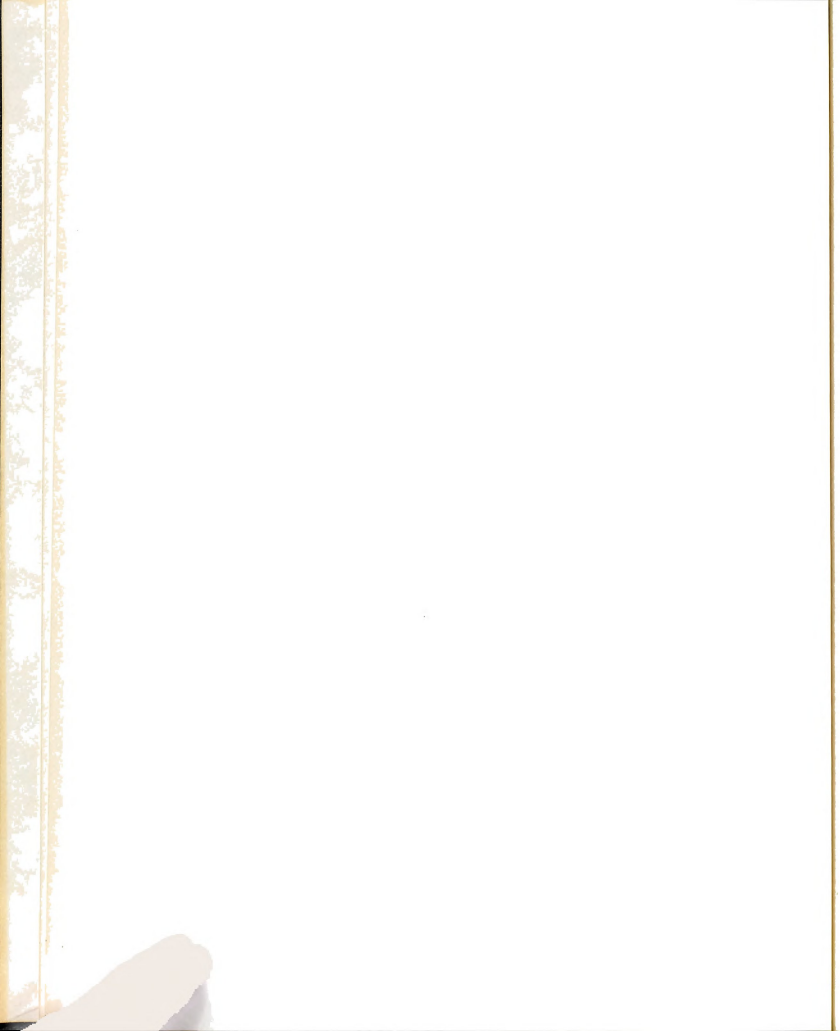
Watching himself think, watching himself live, Montaigne is closely in touch with his own personal mobility. He conceives of his life as a voyage (III:9, 955b), a progression forward in time with the process of aging moving him steadily forward to his natural end in death. And he experiences the difficulty or even impossibility of maintaining a hold on the present: "A chaque minute il me semble que je m'eschape" (I:20, 86a). His profound understanding that movement is the essence of life generates within him a love of movement, a love which finds expression in physical reality. From the time he was a child, he manifested a restlessness of body, a difficulty in keeping still: "j'avois de la follie aux pieds, ou de l'argent vif, tant j'y





ay de remuement et d'inconstance en quelque lieu que je les place" (III:13, 1085c). He is a man who likes and needs to walk, for the rhythm of his pacing gives momentum to the activities of his mind. Were it not for the hindrances of trouble and expense, he would have a gallery added to his tower library: "Tout lieu retiré requiert un proumenoir. Mes pensées dorment si je les assis. Mon esprit ne va, si les jambes ne l'agitent" (III:3, 806c). It is on horseback that he enjoys his most pleasurable and comfortable sense of movement. "Je ne démonte pas volontiers quand je suis à cheval, car c'est l'assiette en laquelle je me trouve le mieux, et sain et malade" (I:48, 278a). And it is there that ideas come to him most easily (III:5, 854b). In contrast, Montaigne tells us in "Des coches" that he cannot tolerate for long "ny coche, ny littiere, ny bateau" (III:6, 878b). He prefers an "agitation rude" or an "agitation unie" to the languid rocking of a boat or carriage. His preferred rhythms are those which match the élan of his temperament, the sometimes smooth, sometimes, and most often, staggering gait of his mind. "Mes conceptions et mon jugement ne marche qu'à tastons, chancelant, bronchant et chopant" (I:26, 145a).

Without doubt one of the most satisfying responses to his compulsion for movement comes to Montaigne through the experience of travel. He readily admits to a certain unrest and irresolution which enhance the pleasures of travel for him. Given that these are "nos maistresses qualitez, et praedominantes" (III:9, 966b), he goes on to say that "je ne vois rien, seulement en songe et par souhait,

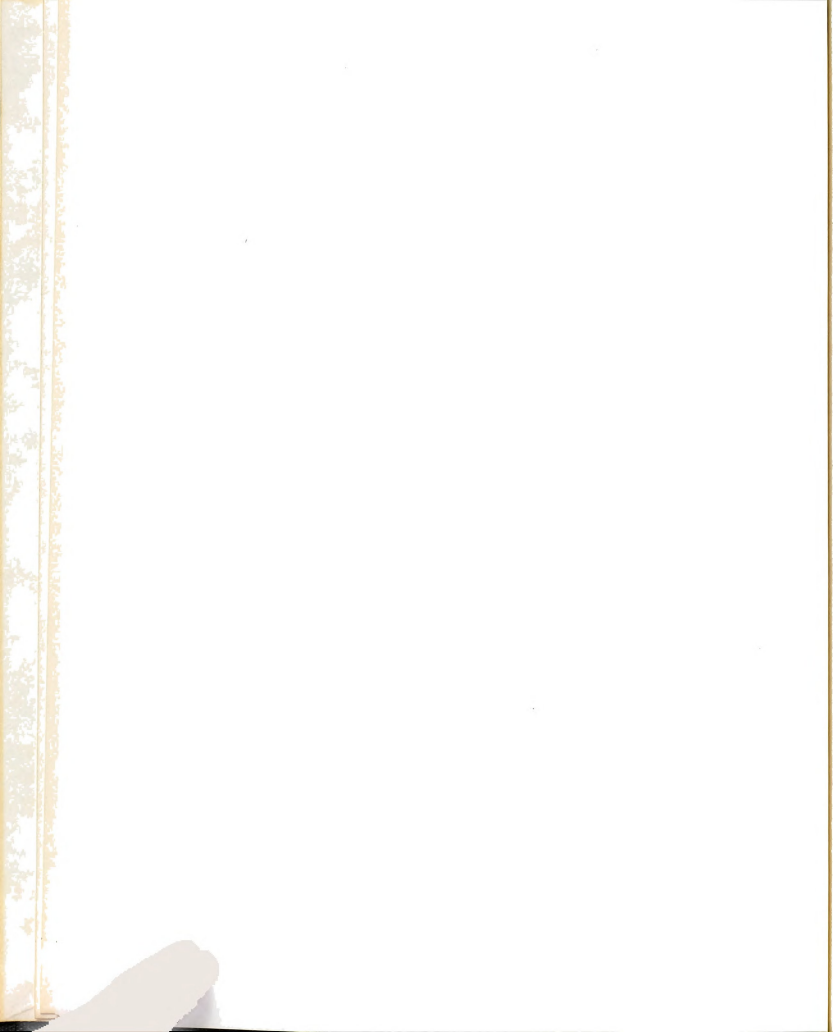


où je me puisse tenir; la seule variété me paye, et la possession de la diversité, au moins si aucune chose me paye." While "cette humeur avide de choses nouvelles et inconnues" (III:9, 925b) nourishes his desire for travel in a positive sense, he also seeks release from the tedium of domestic affairs. Travel takes him away from the surveillance of his household, a task he finds "trop uniforme et languissant" (ibid.). To those who ask his reasons for traveling, he answers: "je sçay bien ce que je fais, mais non pas ce que je cherche" (949b). There is no need to establish any particular goals in traveling; travel is a 'profitable exercise' in its own right:

L'ame y a une continuelle exercitation à remarquer les choses incogneues et nouvelles; et je ne sçache point meilleure escolle . . . à former la vie que de luy proposer incessamment la diversité de tant d'autres vies, (c) fantasies et usances, (b) et luy faire gouter une si perpetuelle variété de formes de nostre nature (III:9, 951b).

It is really movement for the sake of movement that most lures Montaigne to travel. His concern upon setting forth on a trip is neither his destination nor his return: "j'entreprends seulement de me branler, pendant que le branle me plaist (c). Et me proumeine pour me proumener" (955b).

Whereas travel affords a welcome relief, an exteriorization of the need for movement and diversity, it does not alter the branle constantly operating within us. "Si on ne se descharge premierement et son ame, du fais qui la presse, le remuement la fera fouler davantage" (I:39, 234a). We can remove ourselves from the "vaines peintures" (III:9, 927b) which trouble our calm, but we cannot so



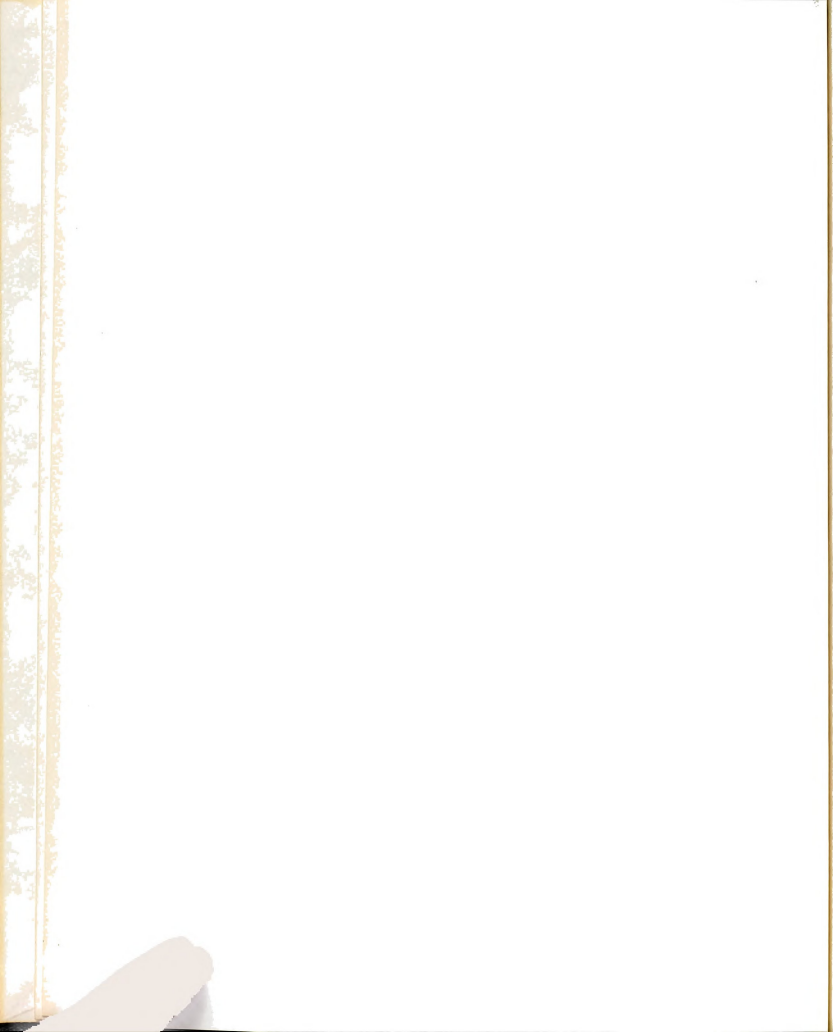
easily resolve the conflicts of our own inconstancies and susceptibility to esbranlement. Corresponding to the physical, externalized motions of walking, riding, traveling, are the incessant comings and goings of Montaigne's mind and moods. "Je pourray tantost changer. . . ."

The slightest change in circumstances is likely to precipitate a complete turnabout in his manner of dealing with the world:

J'ay le pied si instable et si mal assis, je le trouve si aysé à croler et si prest au branle, et ma veüe si desreglée, que à jun je me sens autre qu'après le repas; si ma santé me rid et la clarté d'un beau jour, me voylà honneste homme; si j'ay un cor qui me presse l'orteil, me voylà renfroigné, mal plaisant et inaccessible (II:12, 548-549a).

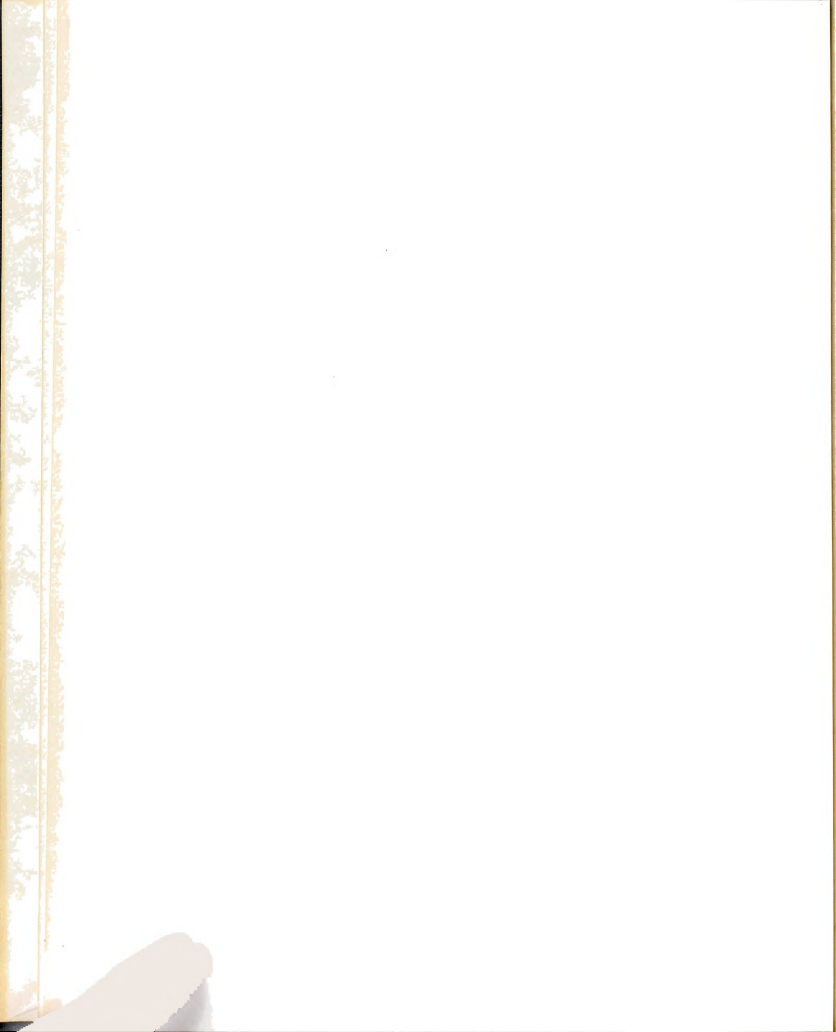
Conscious of the fluctuating and deceptive relationship between his own acts and motives, he takes self-examination to a deeper level where he uncovers the truth behind surface appearances. "Je trouve que la meilleure bonté que j'aye a de la teinture vicieuse" (II:20, 656b). Matters of taste, thought, opinion, none are immune to the vicissitudes of his mobile self. His inconstancy is not simply a result of a change in circumstances or an alteration in the perspective from which he views a particular subject, "mais aussi d'intention"---"je me remue et trouble moy mesme par l'instabilité de ma posture" (II:1, 319b).

The experience of movement in himself is not necessarily a passive one, subject to the 'winds' of circumstance and the play of mysterious inner 'springs.' Montaigne cultivates consciously and actively his capacity for movement. He opposes 'nailing' oneself to a fixed mood and temperament so tightly that one cannot stray from a path of singlemindedness. "Les plus belles ames sont celles qui ont



plus de variété et de souplesse" (III:3, 796b). For himself, he cannot think of any one path to which he would wish to attach himself so firmly as not to be able to disengage himself, for life is "un mouvement inegal, irregulier et multiforme" (ibid.). And so he actually seeks stimuli to movement, occasions upon which to exercise his mind. His love of books and, even more so, of conversation, grows out of a thirst for commerce with other minds as a means of exercitation. Reading serves "to put his judgment to work" (III:3, 797b) and discussion is considered "le plus fructueux et naturel exercice de nostre esprit" (III:8, 900b).

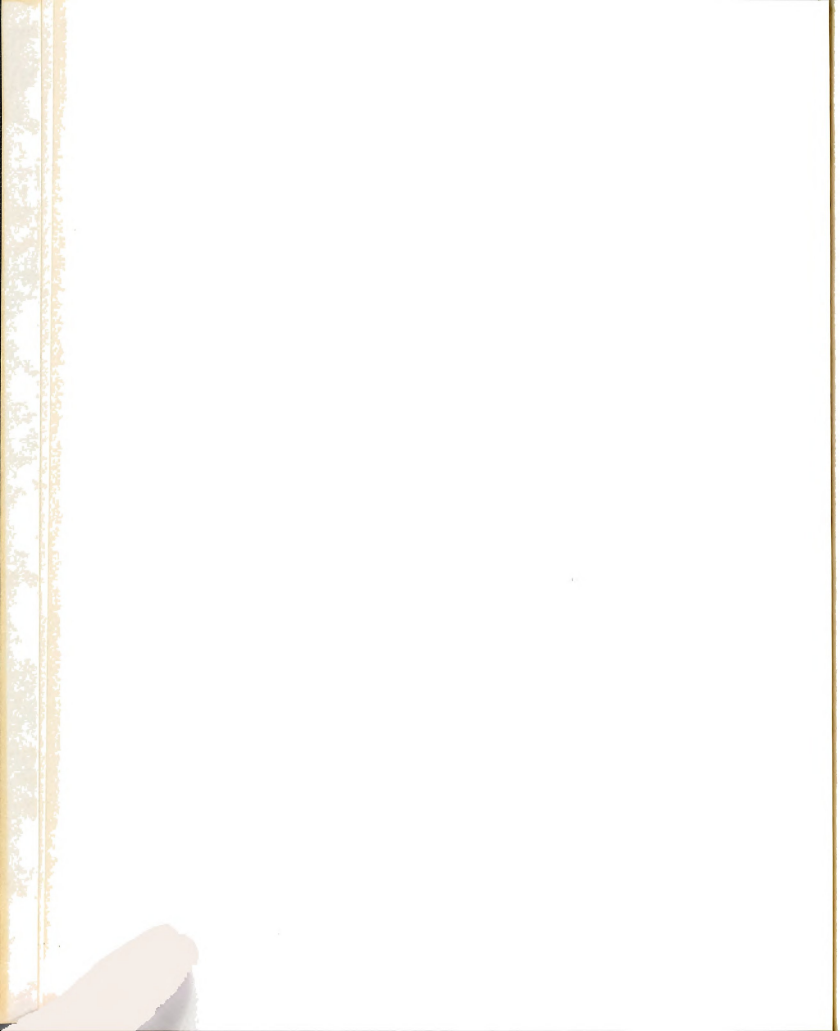
The deliberate activity of the mind, the operation of judgment, is the form of movement which dominates the Essais. It works as a generating principle, that which causes them to come into being. Starobinski makes the observation that out of Montaigne's sense of his own instability, his lack of substance, comes a "force compensatrice . . . la vigilance du jugement." Judgment is a "pouvoir intact, non compromis par la débilité interne à laquelle il fait face." It is constantly exploring and questioning in "un élan qui se reprend perpetuellement."<sup>30</sup> Montaigne refers to his judgment as a 'tool' for handling any subject and which meddles everywhere: "aux essais que j'en fay ici, j'y emploie toute sorte d'occasion. Si c'est un subject que je n'entende point, à cela mesme je l'essaye" (I:50, 289a). Judgment is not employed here in the sense of coming to a conclusion, but as the power of the mind to deal with the objects immediately before it. By an act of judgment the mind apprehends, lays hold of





its subject and makes it its own. Knowledge and judgment are not the same thing for knowledge is the acquisition of information, judgment the action of the mind upon it. It is the act of integrating the object of its contemplation into the mind and transforming the object into one's own experience. Montaigne stresses the necessity of 'forming' the judgment as the primary goal in education. The exercise of judgment serves to strengthen and sharpen its powers of apprehension, making it ever more able to deal with the flow of changing objects before it. Each new instant provides a fresh occasion for the operation of judgment, and "this act can happen only in the very moment in which the consciousness operates."<sup>31</sup> Taking consciousness of an object, and so of the instant, Montaigne progressively takes consciousness of himself.

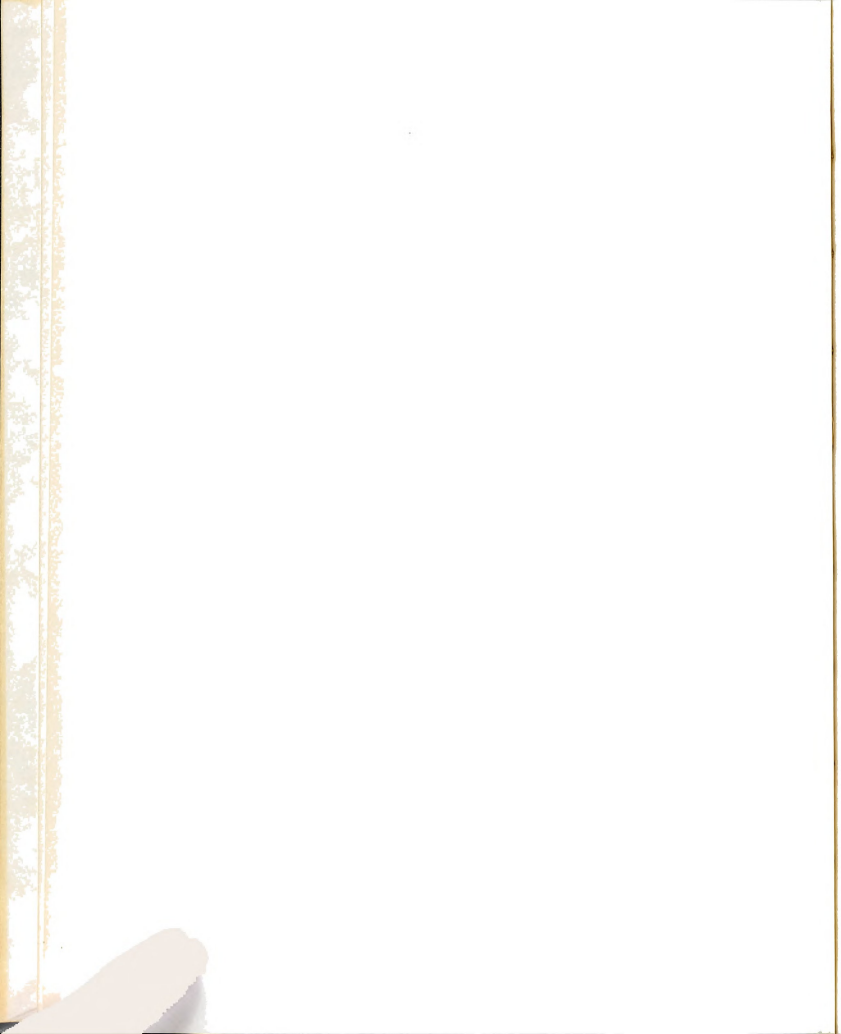
The self-portrait is "un contrerolle de divers et muables accidens et d'imaginations irresoluës et, quand il y eschet, contraires." These are the objects upon which Montaigne exercises his mind--the multifarious happenings of experience and the unresolved products of the imagination. The imagination too is an active force; it has a valuable role in that "it provides the material on which the judgment can work."<sup>32</sup> Imagination, in Montaigne, must not be taken in the modern sense of 'originality,' but in the sixteenth-century understanding of it as an intermediary faculty, passing the sense impressions of experience, past or present, on to the higher faculties of the mind.<sup>33</sup> Conjuring up images upon which the judgment takes action, the imagination is an "essential component of the structure" of movement in Montaigne.<sup>34</sup> Of its own, the imagination is not a faculty to be



trusted. Easily subject to error and possessed of powerful forces of impression, the imagination is capable of effecting actual physical transformations in its possessor.<sup>35</sup> "Chacun en est heurté, mais aucuns en sont renversez" (I:21, 95c). To the powerful activity of the imagination, it is necessary to bring an equally forceful control on the part of the judgment.

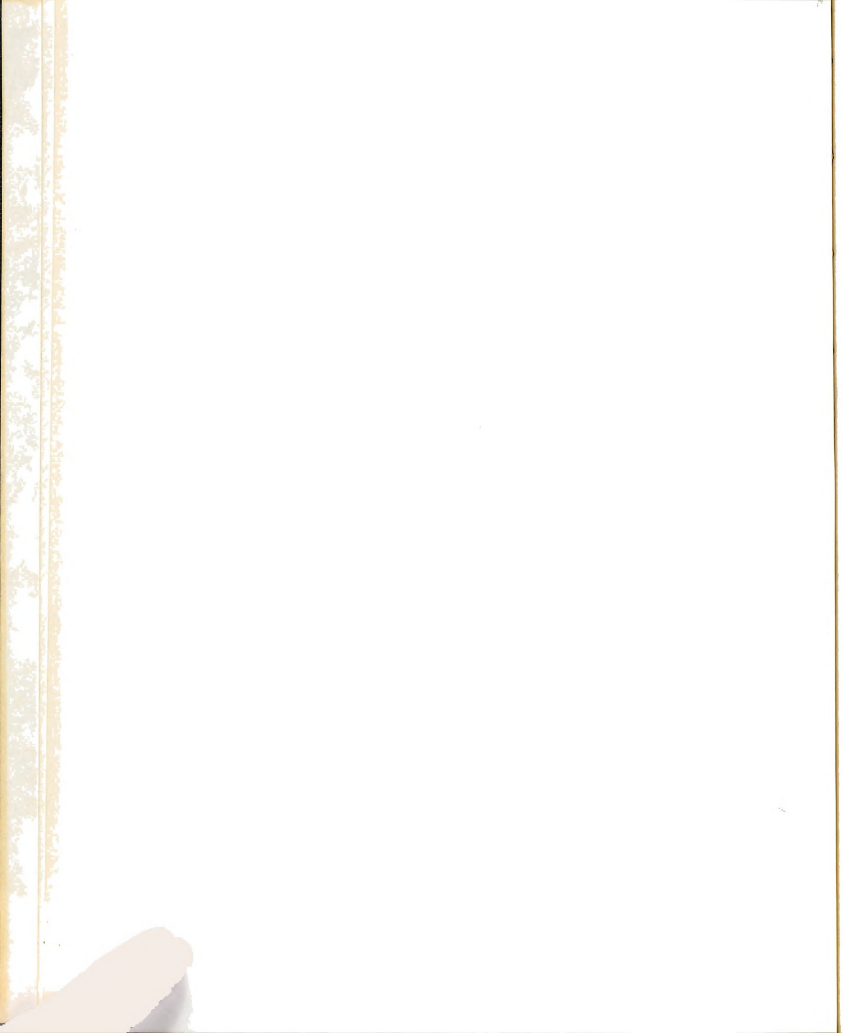
The judgments Montaigne makes are changing and "quand il y eschet, contraires." But what remains constant is the power of the judgment, its virtual capacity to take possession of the present. The more Montaigne exercises his judgment, the more he keeps it in training, the more aware and sure he becomes of its constant potential. Poulet concludes his article on Montaigne in human time by observing: "Out of the flux and duration into which the mind was plunged, thanks to the exercise the mind performs, there emerges, delineates, forms, and affirms itself in that mind an idea of it, forever free and forever faithful, which . . . no longer flutters between birth and dying, but is and endures."<sup>36</sup> Judgment comes to occupy in Montaigne "un siege magistral" (III:13, 1052b), and Craig Brush observes that "wherever Montaigne speaks of himself as stable and unchanging, or barely changing, it is of his judgment that he speaks."<sup>37</sup>

In a world where everything, "et le jugeant et le jugé," are in continual mutation and branle (II:12, 586a), Montaigne's judgments are given to contradicting themselves. Indeed we find contradictions on the very subject of judgment.<sup>38</sup> But Montaigne is not troubled by these inconsistencies. "Tant y a que je me contredits bien à



l'aventure, mais la vérité . . . je ne la contredy point." Truth is accessible to man in a relative mode, always changing its appearance in the context of fluctuating reality. Montaigne does not contradict truth, for he refrains from making dogmatic declarations on it. Rather, he exposes the contradictory nature of truth. Merleau-Ponty suggests that by showing that every truth contradicts itself Montaigne perhaps ends up realizing that "la contradiction est vérité."<sup>39</sup> Functioning uniquely in the present, judgment affords him but a possession of the instant. It is the continuous application of judgment and the relentless pursuit of variety which permit him a 'possession of diversity.'<sup>40</sup> This is the activity of the essays. Were he to possess truth he would no longer need to make these 'trials' of his judgment which constitute the Essais--"Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied. . . ." But he is unable to come to a resolution, he is "tousjours en apprentissage et en espreuve." The exercise of judgment is one of continual movement which finds no stopping place.

The refusal to come to conclusions in favor of suspending one's judgment in a constant exercise of movement is the mark of the skeptic. Thibaudet equates Montaigne's sense of universal mobility with his skepticism--"Pyrrhonisme: sentiment de la fluidité."<sup>41</sup> The profession of the Pyrrhonist is "de branler, douter et enquerir, ne s'asseurer de rien, de rien se répondre" (II:12, 482a). In the skeptics' persistent quest of truth and in their equally persistent refusal to lay dogmatic claims on it, Montaigne recognizes an inner stability. Exempt from the turbulence provoked by the knowledge and

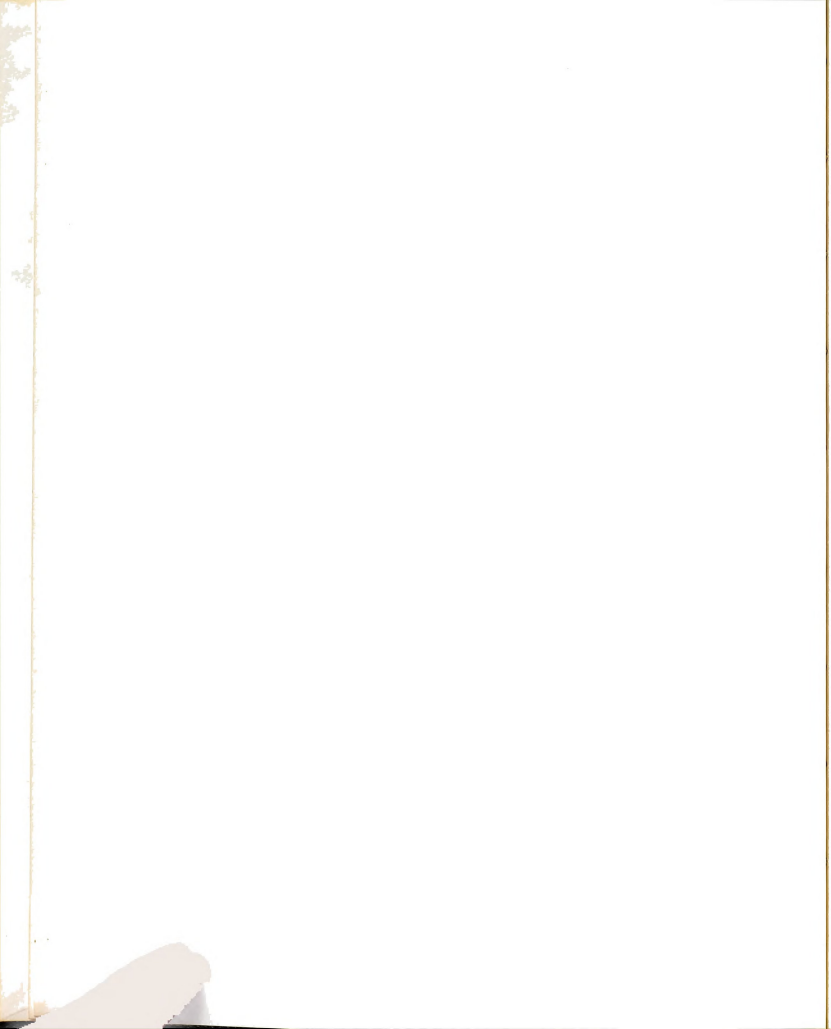


opinions men think they have of things, the skeptics enjoy "une condition de vie paisible, rassise" (483a). The constant exercise of judgment for Montaigne is an active skepticism which evolves into the wisdom of "l'ignorance savante."<sup>42</sup>

From the trials of his judgment, Montaigne attains an awareness of both his judgment-making capacity and of his limitations. It is necessary to have pursued the truth in order to understand one's limited grasp of it: "[il] faut pousser à une porte pour sçavoir qu'elle nous est close" (III:13, 1052b). This 'knowledgeable ignorance' provides Montaigne with a certain sense of repos--not a stopping place, for man's nature is to branler--but, for the well-exercised judgment, a restful balancing point within the context of nature's movement: "O que c'est un doux et mol chevet, et sain, que l'ignorance et l'incuriosité, à reposer une teste bien faicte!" (III:13, 1050-51c). Skeptical wisdom expediently chooses the adherence to given forms, political, religious, social--not because these forms derive from absolute, 'realist' values, but because they give a structure, an appearance of constancy, to a world of relative values.

In contrast to his preoccupation with movement and flux in all things, including himself, Montaigne manifests a stability and desire for stability in his personal life:

Or de la cognoissance de cette mienne volubilité j'ay par accident engendré en moy quelque constance d'opinions, et n'ay guiere alteré les miennes premieres et naturelles. Car, quelque apparence qu'il y ayt en la nouvelleté, je ne change pas aisément, de peur que j'ay de perdre au change. Et, puis que je ne suis pas capable de choisir, je pren le choix d'autrui et me tien en l'assiette où Dieu m'a mis. Autrement, je ne me sçauroy garder de rouler sans cesse (II:12, 553a).





The agitation of indecision and the necessity of making choices is a state he would readily avoid, finding it "la plus pénible assiette" (II:17, 627b). Whereas he is little apt to be markedly disturbed by passions (I:2, 17-18b), Montaigne feels himself easily vulnerable to the commotion of deliberation, and so he dodges any unnecessary upsets. "J'essaie à tenir mon ame et mes pensées en repos" (III:10, 998b). As mayor of Bordeaux, he was criticized for having passed his terms of office "sans marque et sans trace" (III:10, 999b), but Montaigne was free from the political ambitions that incite men to seek action for the sake of recognition and was content to take credit only for "la douce et muette tranquillité qui a accompagné [sa] conduite" (1002b). Again in the matter of travel, the source of so much pleasure to him, he is careful not to let it produce unnecessary aggravations in his life and declines to set forth on a voyage when its realization would present a hardship to the financial management of his affairs or necessitate his traveling with an "équipement non nécessaire, seulement, mais encores honneste. . . . Je ne veux pas que le plaisir du promener corrompe le plaisir du repos; au rebours, j'entens qu'ils se nourrissent et favorisent l'un l'autre" (III:9, 926c).

Movement and repos are cultivated simultaneously. Each is a necessary component of the other. Through diversity and change, Montaigne intensifies his experience of an inner 'stable self,' and through the careful protection of his repos, guarding it from the intrusions of unnecessary and distracting agitation, he is better able to come closer to his inner movements. Just as the voyage

represents the concretization of the movement so necessary to him, the tower embodies his need for stability, for a sheltered haven--within which takes place the activity of the Essais. In like manner, Montaigne's ready acceptance of established structures and customs provides a solid edifice on the outside--within which take place the undisturbed movements of his inner self. Thibaudent speaks directly to this double-leveled structure in Montaigne: "Le problème qui se pose inconsciemment pour Montaigne est celui-ci: armer le maximum de liberté intérieure par le maximum de mécanisme extérieur, le second constituant le mur, la défense, l'armature protectrice, l'habillement de l'autre. La liberté de Montaigne est une liberté habillée."<sup>43</sup> The freedom afforded by this outer shell permits Montaigne to study and know himself more fully. At the same time, it liberates him from the artificial distinctions which divide men and enables him to recognize the universality that expands the mobile self-portrait to a representation of the human condition.

Je propose une vie basse et sans lustre, c'est tout un. On attache aussi bien toute la philosophie morale à une vie populaire et privée que à une vie de plus riche estoffe; chaque homme porte la forme entière de l'humaine condition.

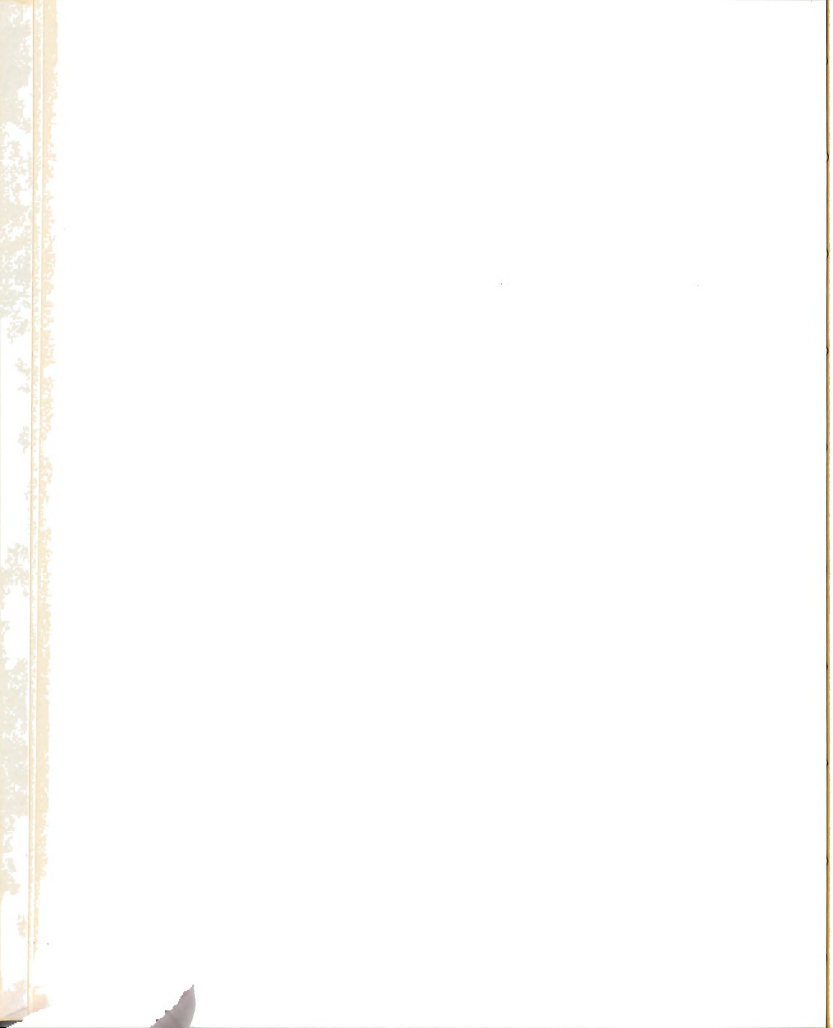
(c) Les auteurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque particuliere et estrangere; moy, le premier, par mon estre universel, comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien, ou poëte, ou jurisconsulte. Si le monde se plaint de quoy je parle trop de moy, je me plains de quoy il ne pense seulement pas à soy (III:2, 782b-783c).

A comprehensive portrait of Montaigne would embrace numerous roles:<sup>44</sup> dutiful son, humanist, military man, magistrate, lord of the



chateau, mayor of Bordeaux, Gascon, Frenchman. But no one of these can be singled out as the voice speaking to us through the Essais. Refusing to fix his identity in any specific role, Montaigne wants to communicate his "estre universel," the mobile self that is the potential for any and all of these functions. Behind the multi-faceted public figure is "une vie populaire et privée," the self that enjoys its likeness with all other selves. He holds himself to be "de la commune sorte," but exceptional "en ce que je m'en tiens" (II:17, 618c). From his "arriere boutique" (I:39, 235a), Montaigne reflects on the inner movements of his being, abstracted from relationships to family, society and professional responsibilities. These conversations with himself probe questions of pain and pleasure, questions of conscience, questions of his limitations and of his possibilities. True, the same matters could be examined in any other life, for "Les ames des Empereurs et des savetiers sont jettées à mesme moule . . . ils sont menez et ramenez en leurs mouvemens par les mesmes ressorts que nous sommes aux nostres" (II:12, 454a). But to no other subject could Montaigne make the audacious claim that never did a man treat a subject more knowledgeably than he does this one (III:2, 783b). Of other lives we observe only the exterior, what Montaigne calls l'art; only the self study offers an inner perspective, exposing the truths of la nature (785b).

Montaigne further declares in III:2 that never did anyone penetrate so deeply into his material, "ny en esplucha plus particulièrement les membres et suites" (783c). The act of introspection, to be faithful to its undulating object, must operate much like a



moving camera, constantly changing angle and focus so as not to lose sight of its subject. Montaigne tells us that he presents himself standing and lying down, from the front and from the back, the right and the left--in all of his "naturels plis" (III:8, 922b). Drawing closer to his subject, he directs his vision inwards and enters the 'folds' of his material: "je replie ma veue au dedans, je la plante, je l'amuse là . . . je me roule en moy mesme" (II:17, 641a). With this gesture of rolling into himself, the movement of Montaigne's mind, as Starobinski shows so well,<sup>45</sup> takes on a corporeal nature. The experience of the self becomes a physical sensation of motion in a defined space, the self being both the "espace exploré" and the "énergie explorant."<sup>46</sup> An inner-directed focus is much more difficult to maintain than one projected outward. Looking away from the self--the way of le monde--is to glide along with the current, whereas the movement inward necessitates a struggle against the natural flow. The self is a moving body, much like the sea, "[qui] se brouille et s'empesche ainsi quand elle est repoussée à soy" (III:9, 979b). But Montaigne desires to wage this inward struggle in an effort to realize the aim of the Delphic oracle: "'Regardez dans vous, reconnoissez vous, tenez vous à vous; vostre esprit et vostre volonté, qui se consomme ailleurs, ramenez la en soy; vous vous escoulez, vous vous respandez; appilez vous, soutenez vous'" (979b). By turning his energies inward, Montaigne guards against their being consumed and dissipated in the vastness of the world. Though his self is characterized by its "insuffisance," and by what Starobinski defines as

Sujet  
Object

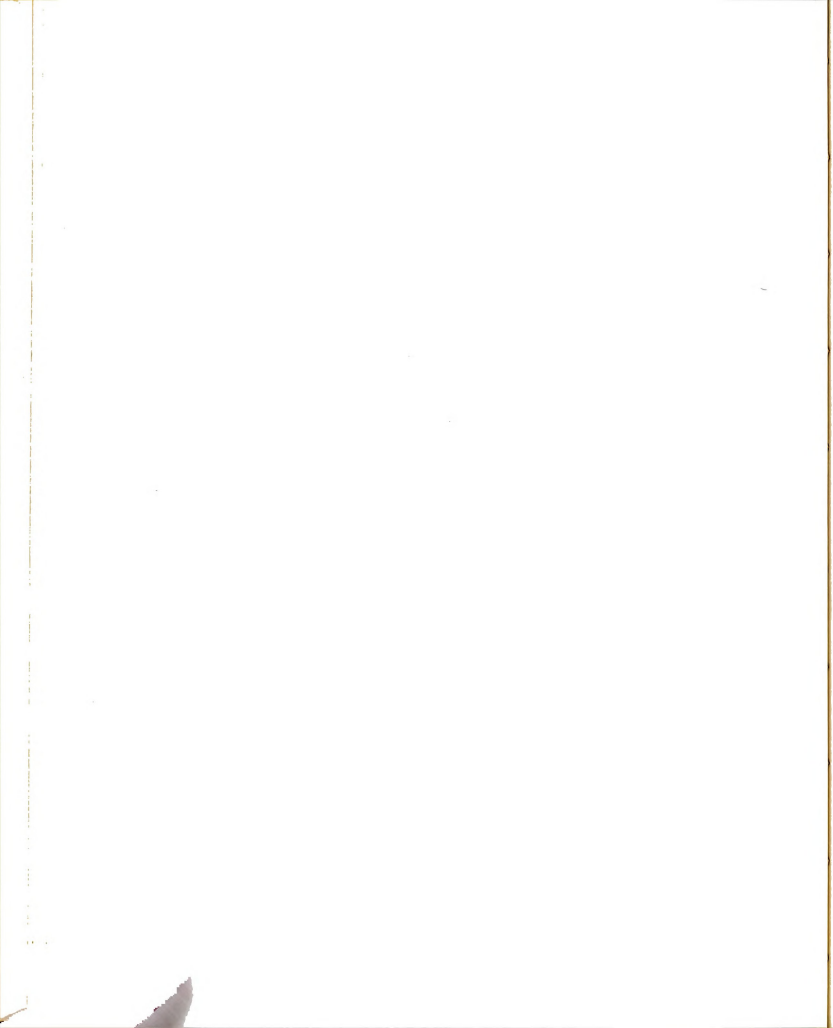
"l'absence d'un soutien intérieur,"<sup>47</sup> it provides a field of exploration "moins estendue" (980b) in which his energies can 'pile up' and condense, giving some semblance of solidity. Because of its mobility, the self can never become an 'object' of knowledge, but there is possible an experience of the self resulting from the act of introspection. The self can acquire a "conscience musculaire" of its own movement of self-inspection--and nothing more.<sup>48</sup>

The 'muscular' movement of Montaigne's mind finds expression in a language which Imbrie Buffum calls "incarnational."<sup>49</sup> Reserving a more concentrated study of this aspect of Montaigne's language for later chapters, we can for the moment observe two opposing kinds of movement expressed in the types of words the author employs to communicate the movement of the self. On the one hand, there is a decided frequency of verbs generating active motion--saisir, prendre, aller, marcher, bander--which depict the subject as acting of its own powers. On the other, there is a contrasting prevalence of verbs expressing a more passive kind of motion, a submission to forces originating outside the self--couler, glisser, être emporté or esbranlé. Starobinski analyzes the interplay in Montaigne of the "mouvement-geste" and the "mouvement-écoulement" as the relationship between the judgment and l'être naturel: "Au jugement appartient la tension; à l'être naturel la fluidité."<sup>50</sup> The experience of self for Montaigne derives from the action of the active judgment upon his passive, 'natural self': "Il faut bien bander l'ame pour luy faire sentir comme elle s'escoule" (III:13, 1085c). It is only by means of this reflective tension that he is able to take possession of the self in movement.

The "mouvement écoulement" is presented as both a negative and positive value. In the essay where Montaigne examines "l'incommodité de la grandeur," he criticizes the lack of obstacles and tension in the lives of powerful people as the enemy of any kind of pleasure: "c'est glisser, cela, ce n'est pas aller; c'est dormir, ce n'est pas vivre" (III:7, 897b). But elsewhere he praises "une vie glissante, sombre et muette" (III:10, 999b). In its negative context, glissement is the absence of activity on the part of the judgment; in its positive sense, a surrender to the movement natural to one's condition. The flow which he experiences and celebrates is that of the rhythm of nature. Having recognized man's incapacity to grasp truth in abstract principles, he consents to making nature his guide: "J'ay pris . . . bien simplement et crument pour mon regard ce precepte ancien: que nous ne sçaurions faillir à suivre nature, que le souverain precepte c'est de se conformer à elle" (III:12, 1037b). The instruction of nature is not apprehended through reason, but through experience; it is the non-intellectual wisdom of 'felt truths'--"je me laisse ignoramment et negligemment manier à la loy generale du monde. Je la sçauray assez quand je la sentiray" (III:13, 1050b).

Without pretending to define nature, Montaigne maintains a vigilant watch over the natural movements he experiences concretely in his own existence. The subject of his study is always himself. This is his metaphysics, indeed his physics (1050b). As he acquires a fuller understanding of himself, the portrait becomes more and more a reflection of his corporeal being. Life for him consists in movement





and, more specifically, physical movement: "La vie est un mouvement materiel et corporel, action imparfaicte de sa propre essence, at desreglee; je m'emploie a la servir selon elle" (III:9, 967b). With the deepening of this estimation of life, Montaigne devotes most of his last essay, "De l'experience," to an exploration of the dimensions of his physical being. We find there detailed accounts of his personal habits of sleeping, eating, drinking and elimination, for these are a part, a most integral part, of his experience of self.

Habit and custom join with nature in shaping the movements of his life--"C'est à la coustume de donner forme à nostre vie, telle qu'il luy plaist" (III:13, 1058b). While Montaigne recognizes the dangers of custom as a source of discord among men and even more as a betrayal of the rules of nature (I:23, 106a), he also understands its function as "une seconde nature, et non moins puissante" (III:10, 987b) in the life of the individual. Even the voice of conscience, generally considered to be born of nature, can be seen to grow out of custom, for each man venerates the opinions held in approval by his fellows (I:23, 114c).

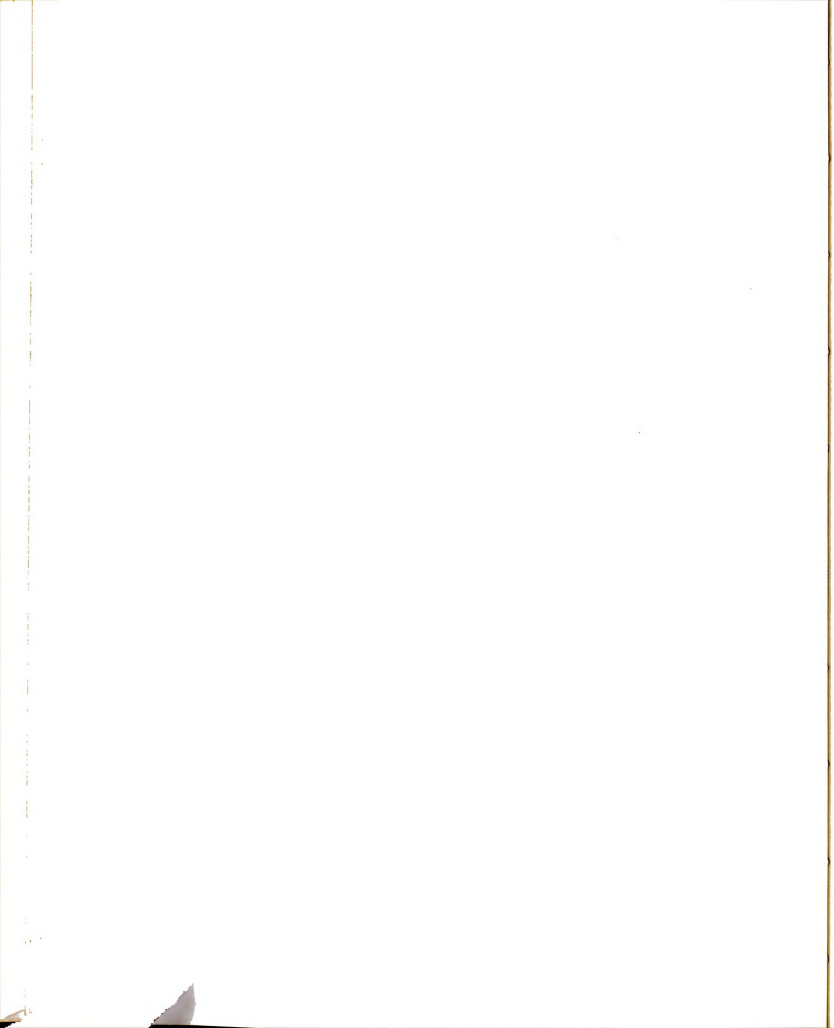
There is, however, in Montaigne, a belief in conscience that goes beyond the dictates of custom, the voice of an integrity "née en nous de ses propres racines par la semence de la raison universelle empreinte en tout homme non desnaturé" (III:12, 1037b). Genuine self-knowledge, in the spirit of the Delphic counsel, demands that we take self-study to this most private examination where we make contact with "un patron au dedans, auquel toucher nos actions, et selon iceluy,



nous caresser tantost, tantost nous chastier" (III:2, 785b). Montaigne speaks of holding court with himself, where he alone is judge of his actions according to his laws (ibid.). Here he observes himself in his estat rassis, his naïve assiette (788b). Here is the central core around which radiate the fluctuating, staggering movements of the self in constant branle. To know oneself is to maintain a closeness to this inner 'court,' a position possible only through the continually renewed exercise of the judgment. Most men escape themselves, seeking the support for their identity "aux appuis estrangers. . . . Chacun court ailleurs et à l'advenir, d'autant que nul n'est arrivé à soy" (III:12, 1022c). Montaigne, on the contrary, has a sensation of 'having arrived at himself.' Self-knowledge for him is a 'place,' a spatialized concept of identity:

De moy, je ne me sens guere agiter par secousse, je me trouve quasi tousjours en ma place, comme font les corps lourds et poisans. Si je ne suis chez moy, j'en suis tousjours bien près. Mes débauches ne m'emportent pas loing (III:2, 789b).<sup>51</sup>

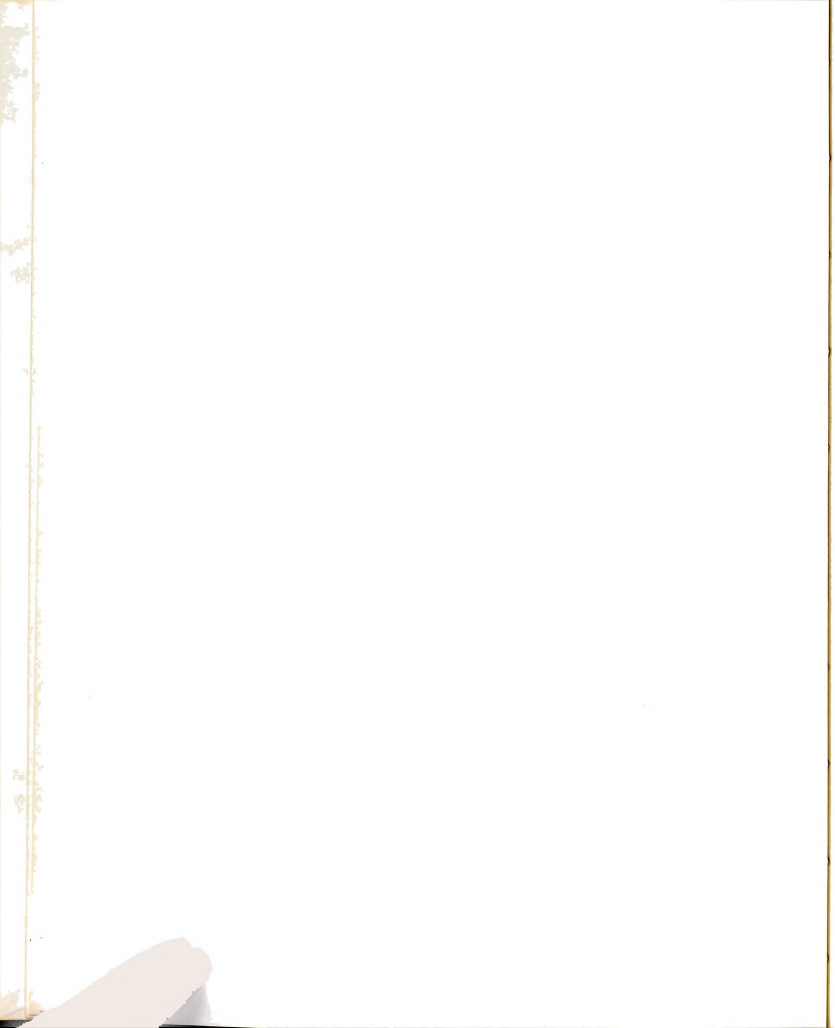
Realizing that the self is ever in movement, for life is only movement, Montaigne is nevertheless able to achieve a constancy and stability à l'intérieur du branle by gauging his movements according to the 'space' in which he finds an authenticity of self, what he refers to as his "forme sienne, une forme maistresse" (789b). Instead of projecting life along the path of a horizontal line whose end is always elsewhere, Montaigne advises circumscribing the movement of our desires within a limited area--"en rond, duquel les deux pointes se tiennent et se terminent en nous par un bref contour" (III:10, 988b).



Movement is not curtailed, but controlled so as to permit a denser experience of the self. Out of this experience grows the realization of the meaning of "l'humaine condition"--the joyful acceptance of the limitations and depths which constitute man's being in the world: "C'est une absolue perfection, et comme divine, de sçavoyr jouyr loiallement de son estre. Nous cherchons d'autres conditions, pour n'entendre l'usage des nostres et sortons hors de nous, pour ne sçavoir quel il y fait" (III:13, 1096b). In the understanding that even "au plus eslevé throne du monde, si ne sommes assis que sur nostre cul" (1096c), Montaigne finds the means to foster a genuine enjoyment of life. Life is to be loved and cultivated "telle qu'il a pleu à Dieu nous l'octroier" (1093b). It must be carefully handled in order to be fully enjoyed, for the measure of enjoyment depends on the measure of application which we bring to it. Montaigne has learned to cultivate life within the limited context of his condition. Movement for him is not the incessant coulement and eschappement of lives that turn away from themselves, but the perpetually renewed possession of the instant which gives weight and solidity to his existence:

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

The more he experiences the flight of l'être naturel in conformity with the rhythm of nature, the greater effort he employs to take hold

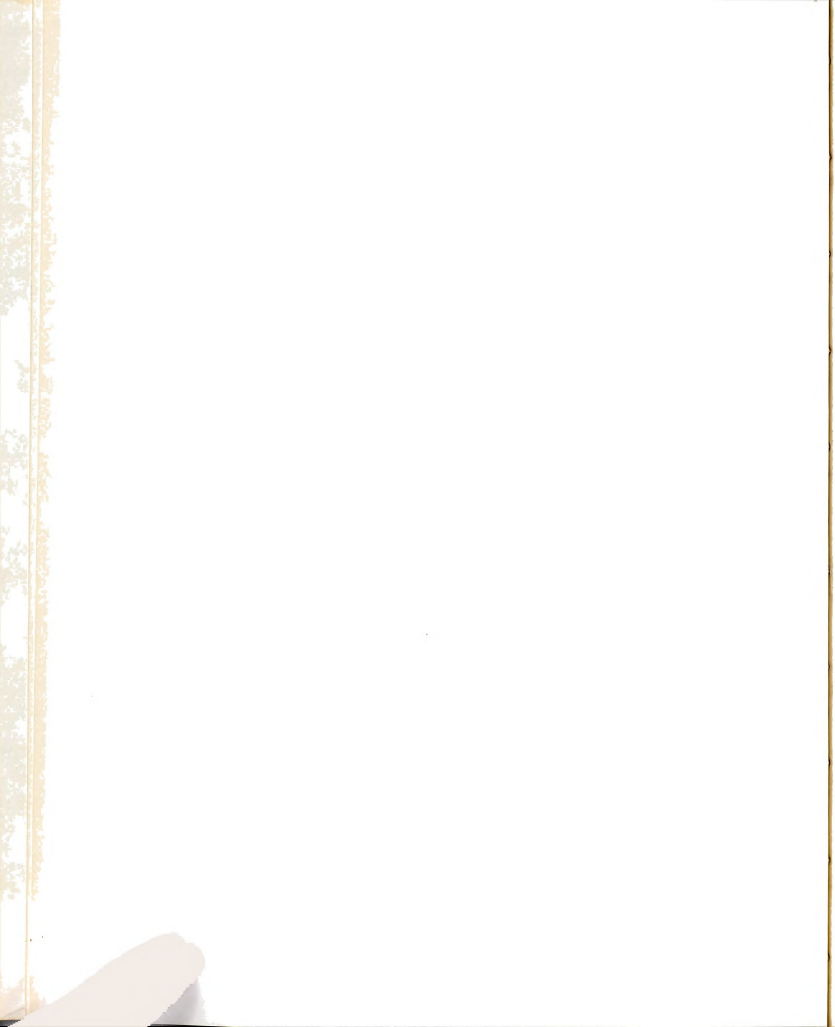


of the passing instants through the tension of his reflective powers. Life is always slipping away from him, but it is also eminently "prisable et commode" (1092b).

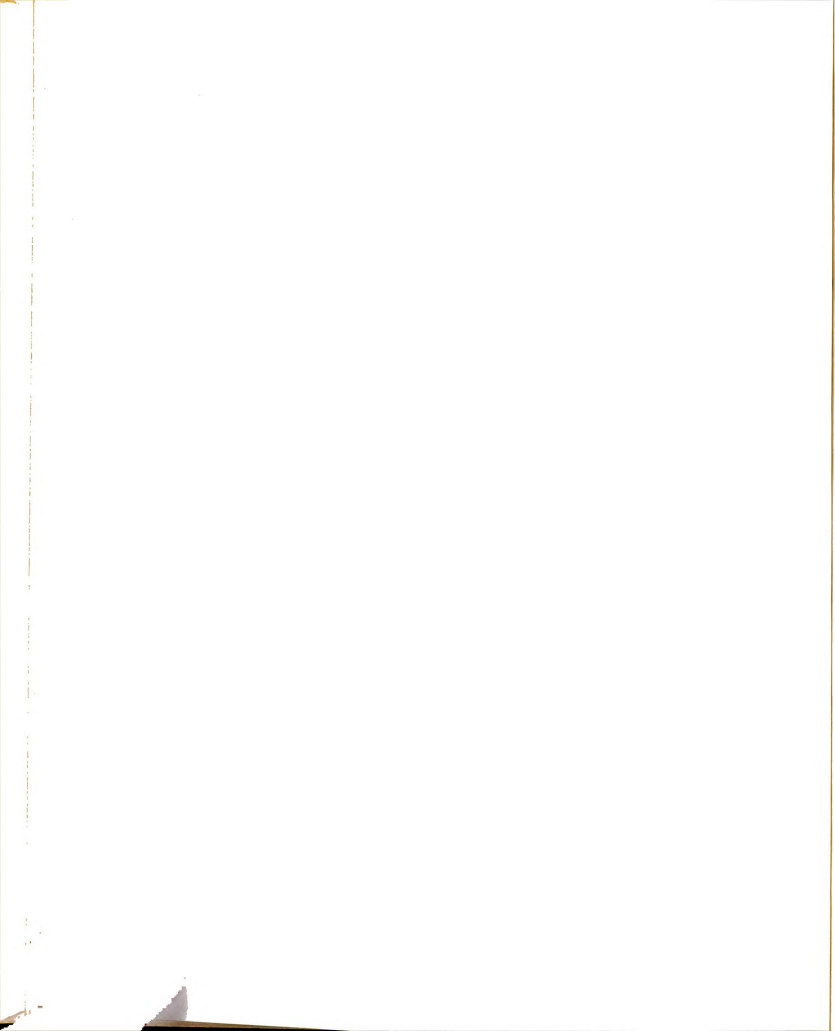
Throughout this discussion we have observed Montaigne's thinking fluctuating between his consciousness of movement, change and the proliferation of variety and his sense of repos, stability and the necessity for structure. In a world in constant metamorphosis, he discerns the underlying order of nature and the need for institutional structures which render the "branle plus languissant." The vanity and variability of human behavior are offset by the determinative shaping of society and custom. And beneath both the surface fluctuations and the superimposed order of human conduct, Montaigne recognizes a more fundamental shaping, "la forme entiere de l'humaine condition." His own sense of mobility, his love of diversity and his subjective experience of inconstance contrast with his growing awareness of a personal inner stability, "une forme sienne, une forme maistresse." Structured in part by the forms of culture and habit, in part by the patterns of nature, but most vigorously by the constant exercise of his judgment, his experience of self is one of continual movement directed from and toward the estat rassis of his inner conscience and consciousness.

Movement and repos in Montaigne are not contradictories, but polarities. "To say that opposites are polar is to say much more than that they are far apart: it is to say that they are related and





joined--that they are the terms, ends, or extremities of a single whole. Polar opposites are therefore inseparable opposites, like the poles of the earth or of a magnet."<sup>52</sup> Such is indeed the relationship of movement and repos in Montaigne. Each is necessary to the perception of the other,<sup>53</sup> and each is desired in contrast to the other. Montaigne would no more wish life to yield to a furious vertigo than he would have it fixed, planté, in a set, immutable mold. By cultivating the flexibility of his mind to deal with the branle sans cesse, Montaigne experiences a sense of his own stable being, a stability which grows with the continual renewal, the unremitting movement of his essais.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Michel de Montaigne, Oeuvres complètes, ed. Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1967). Henceforth all references to the text of the Essais will be made to this edition and will be identified by the book, chapter and page numbers in parentheses. The strata indications (a, b, c) show whether the passage appeared prior to 1588 (a), in 1588 (b), or after 1588 (c).

<sup>2</sup>Jean Starobinski, "Montaigne en mouvement," NRF, 15 (1960), 11. Other critics who have dealt with the topic of movement: Alexander Micha, "Le Mouvement," Le Singulier Montaigne (Paris: Nizet, 1964), pp. 106-120; P. Michel-Côte, "Le Mobilisme de Montaigne," Mercure de France, 252 (1934), 225-241; R. A. Sayce, "Movement and Change," Montaigne: A Critical Exploration (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), pp. 99-112; R. A. Sayce, "Montaigne et la peinture du passage," Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese, 4 (1963), 11-59; Albert Thibaudet, "Le Mouvement de la vie," Montaigne (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), pp. 163-188; and Nicole Trèves Atlas, "Mobilité et essai de résolution chez Montaigne," Diss. Rice University, 1971.

<sup>3</sup>This same passage is examined by Erich Auerbach, "L'Humaine condition," in Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), pp. 249-273. Whereas Auerbach concentrates on the logical progression of ideas and the experimental method of Montaigne, I shall work with the implications of movement in this chapter with respect to the whole of the Essais.

<sup>4</sup>"I call the pervading conception of movement a 'motif' rather than a 'theme.' Theme would better apply to the individual subjects treated in the Essais (politics, religion, women, the self-portrait, etc.)—all of which are influenced by the recurring idea of movement. For Hugo Friedrich, the vocabulary of movement in Montaigne points to the 'motif of instability': "Un des termes les plus significatifs des Essais est branle, branler, branloire. Des synonymes ou des mots approchants comme mutation, passage, ondoyer, etc., qui reviennent aussi souvent, soulignent ce motif central de sa conception du monde, l'instabilité." Montaigne, trans. R. Rovini (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 151.

<sup>5</sup>A Critical Exploration, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>See Andreas Blinkenberg, "Quel sens Montaigne a-t-il voulu donner au mot Essais dans le titre de son oeuvre?" ESAM, 3<sup>e</sup> sér., 29 (1964), 22-32; and E. V. Telle, "A propos du mot 'essai' chez Montaigne," BHR, 30 (1968), 225-247.

<sup>7</sup>Translation of J. M. Cohen, Essays (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 235.

<sup>8</sup>Pléiade ed., p. 1620, n. 1 to p. 782.

<sup>9</sup>See Pierre Villey, Les Sources et l'évolution des Essais de Montaigne (Paris: Hachette, 1908), I, 260-270, for a list of the works of history in Montaigne's library and their probable significance to the Essais.

<sup>10</sup>For Montaigne's discussion of the relativity of moral and cultural values, see I:23, I:31, and III:6.

<sup>11</sup>See the "Apologie," II:12, 416a.

<sup>12</sup>See Frieda S. Brown, Religious and Political Conservatism in the Essais of Montaigne (Genève: Droz, 1963).

<sup>13</sup>A Critical Exploration, p. 233.

<sup>14</sup>Emphasis in all quotations from Montaigne is added unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>15</sup>Michaël Baraz, L'Etre et la connaissance selon Montaigne (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1968), p. 11. Emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup>A Critical Exploration, p. 109.

<sup>17</sup>While a study of the sources of Montaigne's thought does provide a valuable historical perspective on the Essais (see Villey, Sources, I), it is the intent of this study to accept his sources as "une pièce à l'appui de ses propres conceptions" (Friedrich, p. 152). I am dealing with the Essais as an independent creation and am concerned not with the problem of where Montaigne derived his ideas, but of how he deals with them.

<sup>18</sup>Villey tells us that "la place occupée par ce chapitre lui vient non de sa date de composition, mais de l'idée qu'il exprime: Montaigne y montre combien l'homme est ondoyant et divers, c'est encore l'idée par laquelle il achève ses Essais de 1580 (cf. II:37), celle aussi par laquelle il ouvre le deuxième livre (II:1)." Sources, I, 337. This same idea finds expression in the final essay of the total work: "Mais quoy, nous sommes par tout vent" (III:13, 1087c).

<sup>19</sup>I:1, I:24, I:38, I:47, I:51, II:1, II:20, II:23, III:9.

<sup>20</sup>See Keith Cameron, "Montaigne and the Mask," L'Esprit Créateur, 8 (1968), 198-207.

<sup>21</sup>See Villey, Sources, I, 246-249.

<sup>22</sup> Montaigne, p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> (Paris: Nizet, 1972), p. 180.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>25</sup> Montaigne is expressly contrasting être with existence here to emphasize the mobile, unfinished nature of man's being. Elsewhere he uses être in a freer, less restricted manner, as in "son estre et son bien est en indigence" (III:8, 898b).

<sup>26</sup> The passage "d'aage en aage, de sept ans en sept ans" might be viewed as the progress of evolution in Montaigne's thought. This evolution has been thoroughly traced by Villey (Sources, II).

<sup>27</sup> Studies in Human Time, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> We shall return to the question of how Montaigne realizes his portrayal of passage in the last chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Auerbach, p. 257.

<sup>30</sup> "Montaigne en mouvement," p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Poulet, p. 47. See also Raymond C. La Charité, The Concept of Judgment in Montaigne (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968).

<sup>32</sup> Ian D. McFarlane, "Montaigne and the Concept of the Imagination," in The French Renaissance and Its Heritage: Essays Presented to Alan M. Boase (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> See S. J. Holyoake, "Further Reflections on the Concept of the Imagination in Montaigne," BHR, 31 (1969), 495-523. Also: Grahame Castor, Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Thought and Terminology (Cambridge: The University Press, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> McFarlane, p. 133.

<sup>35</sup> The force of the imagination is due to the "estroite cousture de l'esprit et du corps s'entre-communiquants leurs fortunes" (I:23, 103a). Montaigne relates numerous amusing examples of the effects of the imagination in this essay.

<sup>36</sup> Studies in Human Time, pp. 48-49.

<sup>37</sup> "Reflections on Montaigne's Concept of Being," in From Marot to Montaigne: Essays on French Renaissance Literature, ed. Raymond C. La Charité, KRQ, 19, Supp. No. 1 (1972), 164.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. II:12, 545a and I:26, 156a; I:50, 289a; III:2, 790b.

<sup>39</sup> "Lecture de Montaigne," Temps modernes, 3 (1947), 1044.

<sup>40</sup> See above, pp. 23-24, the quotation from III:9, 966b.

<sup>41</sup> Montaigne, p. 165. For a fuller discussion of Montaigne's skepticism, see Don Cameron Allen, Doubt's Boundless Sea: Skepticism and Faith in the Renaissance (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), pp. 75-110. Also: Philip P. Hallie, The Scar of Montaigne: An Essay in Personal Philosophy (Middletown: Wesleyan University, 1966), pp. 22-52; and Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), pp. 44-66.

<sup>42</sup> Friedrich, p. 327.

<sup>43</sup> Montaigne, p. 103.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of roles and role-distancing in Montaigne, see Frederick Rider, The Dialectic of Selfhood in Montaigne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), pp. 5-23.

<sup>45</sup> "Montaigne en mouvement," Part I, pp. 11-22 and Part II, pp. 254-266.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 26-29.

<sup>50</sup> "Montaigne en mouvement," p. 264.

<sup>51</sup> The spatialized concept of self can be seen again in the following: "Et en matiere d'opinions universelles, dès l'enfance je me logeay au poinct où j'avois à me tenir" (III:2, 790b); "Je m'atache à ce que je voy et que je tiens, et ne m'eslongne guiere du port" (II:17, 628a).

<sup>52</sup> Alan W. Watts, The Two Hands of God: The Myths of Polarity (New York: George Braziller, 1963), p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 21: "According to the Gestalt theory of perception, we are not aware of any figure--be it an image, sound, or tactile impression--except in relation to a background."

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERSPECTIVES ON METAPHOR IN THE ESSAIS

. . . Only man can make statements which are, strictly speaking, not true. Paradoxically, the ability to make such statements--the ability to formulate metaphors--is sometimes necessary to the comprehension of ideas and almost invariably underlies the perception of beauty, not only in literature but also in history, philosophy and the sciences.<sup>1</sup>

The language of the Essais formulates their 'message' through a remarkably dexterous and dense exercise of metaphor. We reluctantly speak in the dichotomous terms of 'message' and 'metaphor' with regard to Montaigne for, as Sainte-Beuve so aptly stated, "pensée, image, chez lui, c'est tout un."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in order to draw closer to this fundamental unity of Montaigne and his word, we are obliged to assume a certain critical distance and to adopt some of the vocabulary of the perspective of criticism. 'Imagery' and 'metaphor' are terms common to us all, yet, an investigation into some of their definitions and applications will permit a fuller understanding of how they function in language.

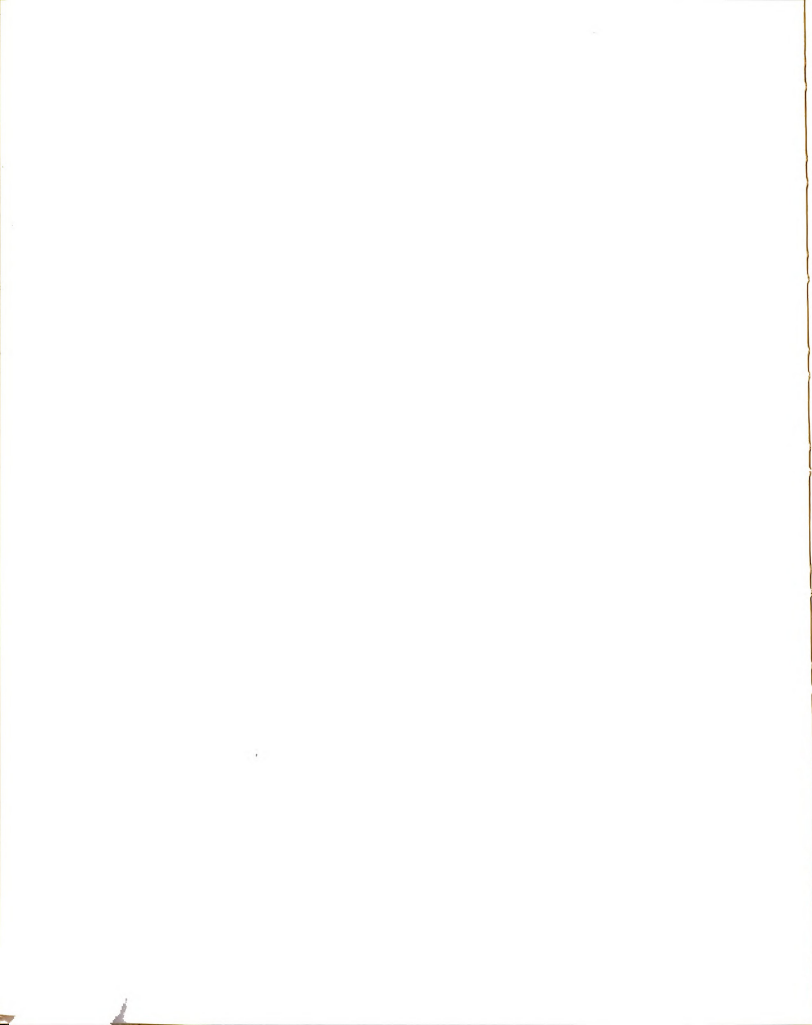
John Middleton Murry remarks that "metaphor is as ultimate as speech itself, and speech as ultimate as thought."<sup>3</sup> By its very etymology, metaphor reveals itself ultimately suited to the thought



and language of Montaigne in particular for "the word implies motion (phora) that is also change (meta)--the reference being to semantic motion of course, not physical."<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, metaphor has been regarded as a figure of speech which effects a transference of meaning through the substitution of one term for another. This is the thrust of Aristotle's definition in the Poetics--"metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is proportion."<sup>5</sup> In the first two of his categories we recognize the trope that is more precisely designated synecdoche,<sup>6</sup> a figure which effects change in meaning in only a limited way, but which serves to give concreteness and greater vividness to expression. Synecdoche is operating in Montaigne's occasional substitutions of parts of the body for the whole man, as when at the end of II:12 he criticizes man's foolish efforts to transcend his human condition: "de faire la poignée plus grande que le poing, la brassée plus grande que le bras, et d'esperer enjamber plus que de l'estandue de nos jambes, cela est impossible et monstrueux" (588a). Although Aristotle's third category of transference, from species to species, has been interpreted as metonymy,<sup>7</sup> it should be argued that the terms need not be necessarily contiguous and so not always metonymous. In Montaigne's metaphor of his mind as "le cheval eschappé" (I:8, 34a) we witness transference from species to species. Hedwig Konrad and Christine Brooke-Rose both consider this third category in Aristotle's definition the description which best applies to all metaphor.<sup>8</sup> Transference by analogy or by

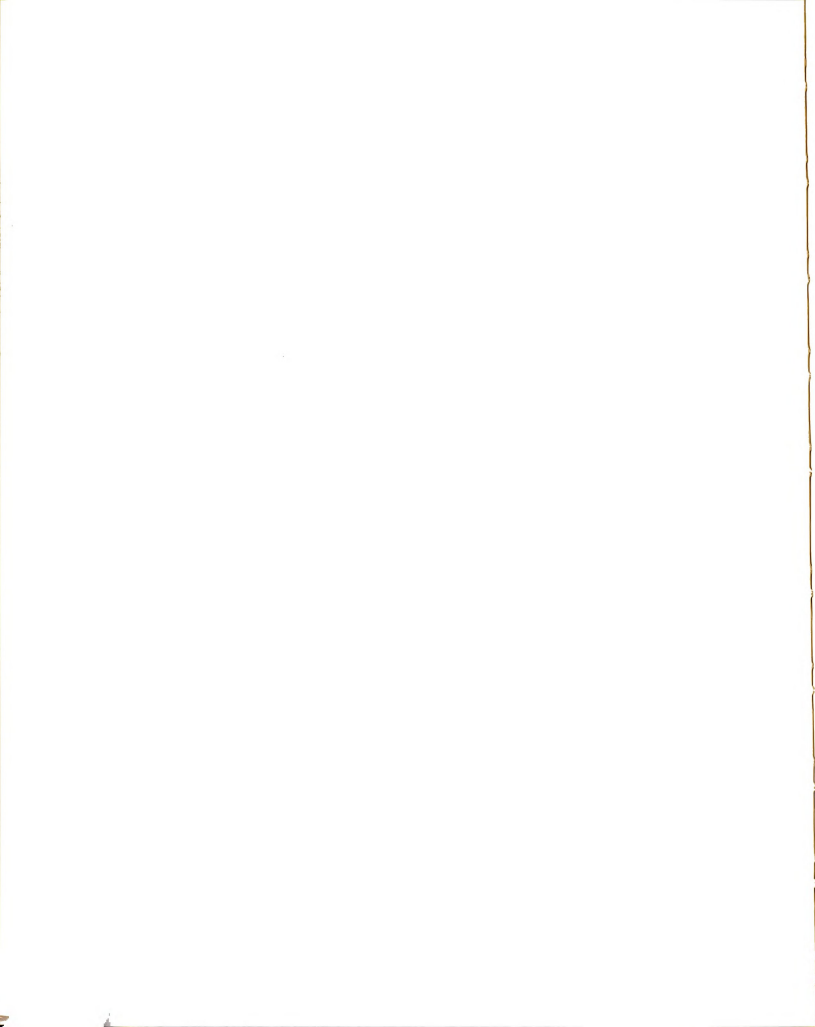
proportion, rather than constituting a legitimate new category, really serves to describe the way in which the semantic motion from species to species operates. "Analogy or proportion is when the second term is to the first as the fourth to the third. We may then use the fourth for the second, or the second for the fourth."<sup>9</sup> When Montaigne speaks of "la santé de cet estat" (III:12, 1019b), the peace and well-being of the nation are analogous to the health of the human body, and the terms are easily interchanged.

The simile in Aristotle's observation belongs to the category of metaphor, differing only in its lesser degree of impact. Defining simile as "a metaphor with a preface," he finds it "less pleasing because it is more lengthy; nor does it affirm this is that; and so the mind does not even inquire into the matter."<sup>10</sup> Montaigne's "[nous] changeons comme cet animal qui prend la couleur du lieu où on le couche" (II:1, 316a) would have more metaphorical density were it to state "nous prenons la couleur du lieu où on nous couche" or "nous sommes des caméléons." For Aristotle, the superiority of the metaphor lies in its capacity to stimulate us toward new knowledge and in so doing, to provide pleasure: "Strange words have no meaning for us; common terms we know already; it is the metaphor which gives us most . . . pleasure."<sup>11</sup> The reader's delight in metaphor contains the surprise element inherent in the perception of riddles and puns.<sup>12</sup> The mind perceives connections between words and finds gratifications in their aptness. And metaphor should serve to give Actuality to the thing described by "setting things before the eyes."<sup>13</sup> This end is best served when things are described



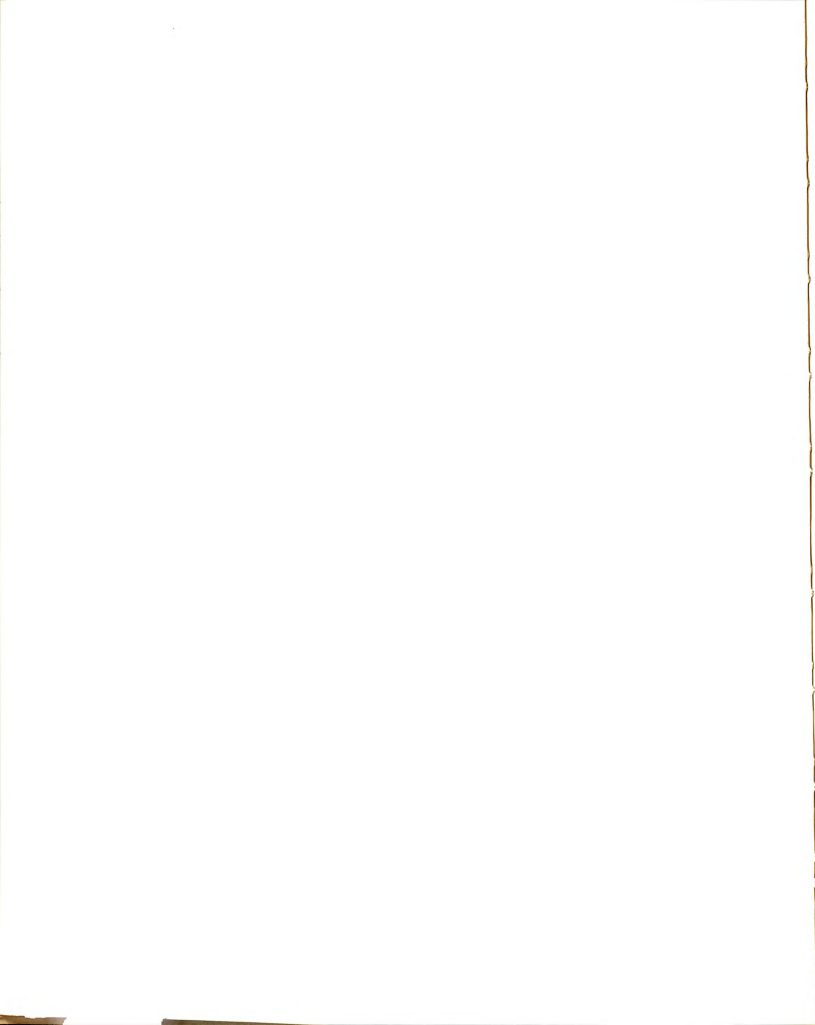
in an active state, and Aristotle specifies: "an active state is movement."<sup>14</sup> The Essais, as this study will demonstrate, abound in metaphors of this type. To say that he has a slow and hesitant mind, Montaigne portrays its movement as analogous to the physical motion of walking: "Mes conceptions et mon jugement ne marche qu'à tastons, chancelant, bronchant et chopant" (I:26, 145a), and so manages 'to set the thing' before the reader's eyes.

For the writer, Aristotle finds that the greatest gift is "to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances."<sup>15</sup> Thus the grounds for the "application of an alien name" to something by a process of transference is rooted in the notion of similarity. The degree of importance given to the role of resemblance has been widely discussed from Aristotle's time to the present. More recent critics have objected to a 'substitution view' of metaphor, taken from the rhetorical treatises of the successors of Aristotle who view metaphor as a simple substitution of names--the figurative (M) is used to denote the literal (L)--and "it is the reader's task to invert the substitution, by using the literal meaning of M as a clue to the intended literal meaning of L."<sup>16</sup> Quintilian explains the function of metaphor in the context of this view: "A noun or a verb is transferred from the place to which it properly belongs to another where there is either no literal term or the transferred is better than the literal. We do this either because it is necessary or to make our meaning clearer or, . . . to produce



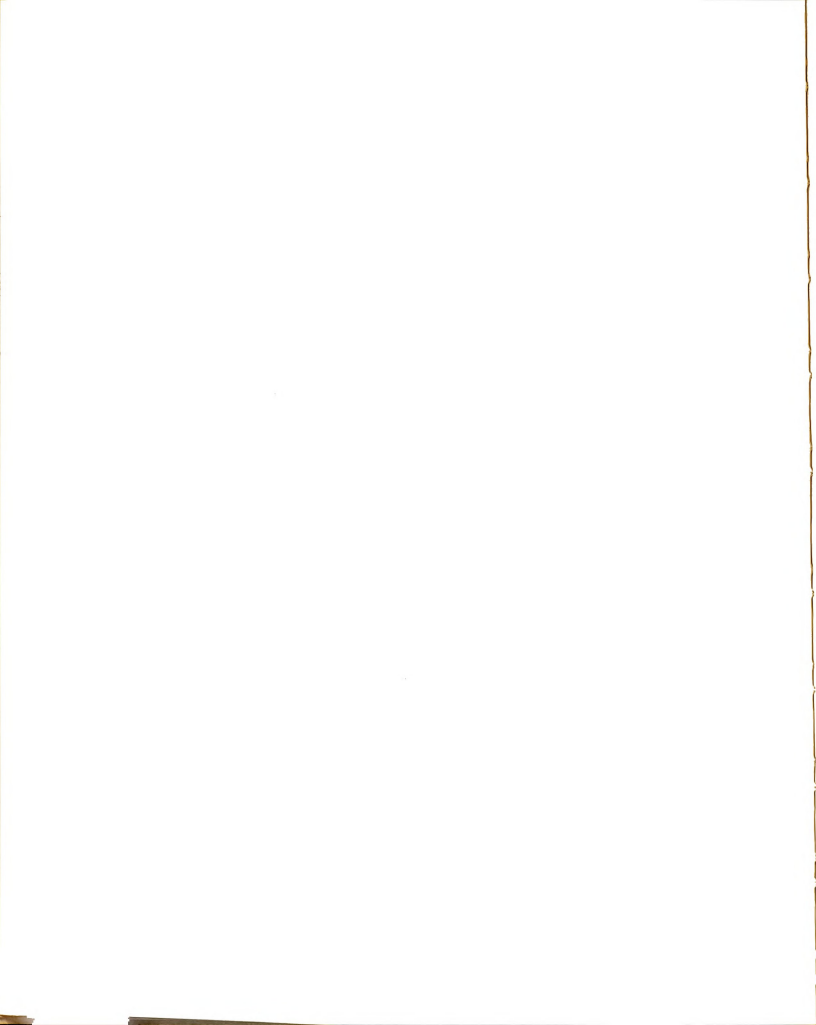
a decorative effect."<sup>17</sup> When Montaigne repeatedly speaks of "les ressors intérieurs" he is filling a gap in his vocabulary, borrowing a term from the vocabulary of physical motion to find expression for the inner psychological impulses he experiences, but for which there exists no literal term.<sup>18</sup> Using "digerer" in place of "assimiler" in reference to the learning process gives his idea greater clarity and more force. (But rarely if ever does Montaigne use a metaphor merely to produce a decorative effect--the function of metaphor in the Essais is intimately related to the author's thought process.) Now if we invert the terms of the substitutions and use the literal meanings of ressors and digerer to elucidate the intended meanings of the replaced terms, we discover the transformation is made on the grounds of likeness. The inner psychological impulses, like springs, are characterized by a quality of sudden bounce, a movement of darting forth, a rapid movement upward and out; the process of right learning, like the digestive process, is the taking in of material and treatment of it so that it can be retained, used for growth, 'incorporated.' An investigation into the grounds for substitution leads us back to Aristotle's "eye for resemblances" and to what modern critics label the 'comparison view of metaphor.'<sup>19</sup>

Although the substitution and comparison views of metaphor will serve as the foundation for our exploration of the function of metaphor in Montaigne, we can sharpen our understanding of its operation by following the development of the theory of metaphor into what is termed the 'tension' or 'interaction' view. I. A. Richards, finding



the conventional language for treating metaphor a restriction on our capacity to understand fully the action of metaphorical statement, introduced the terms tenor (for the literal term) and vehicle (for the figurative).<sup>20</sup> Metaphor refers not just to the figurative term, but to the interaction between the two terms--"fundamentally it is a borrowing between and intercourse of thought, a transaction between contexts."<sup>21</sup> This slight shift in the focus on metaphor places the emphasis on the semantic motion in process, indeed sending us back to the etymological roots of the word, meta and phora. The "transaction between contexts" is explained by Max Black as an extension of meaning imposed on the focal word (vehicle) by the new context.<sup>22</sup> In the statement "c'est un outrageux glaive que l'esprit" (II:12, 541b), glaive is taken out of its usual context and given a new, extended meaning. Hedwig Konrad sees the word used metaphorically as a generalized abstraction of one or more attributes which make up the network of interrelated attributes comprising the concept designated by a word in its literal use.<sup>23</sup> The glaive is a sharp blade of metal, made for cutting, dangerous to handle. Certain of its attributes, notably its sharpness and its danger, are abstracted and generalized in the transference from glaive to esprit; and glaive takes on an extended meaning in its new context, for the mind and a sword are not sharp and dangerous in at all the same way. By heightening our awareness of the duality in the metaphor and the tension present between the two terms, we have a better sense of the process of interaction. The grounds for the metaphor, that is the basis for the association of the two terms, is here

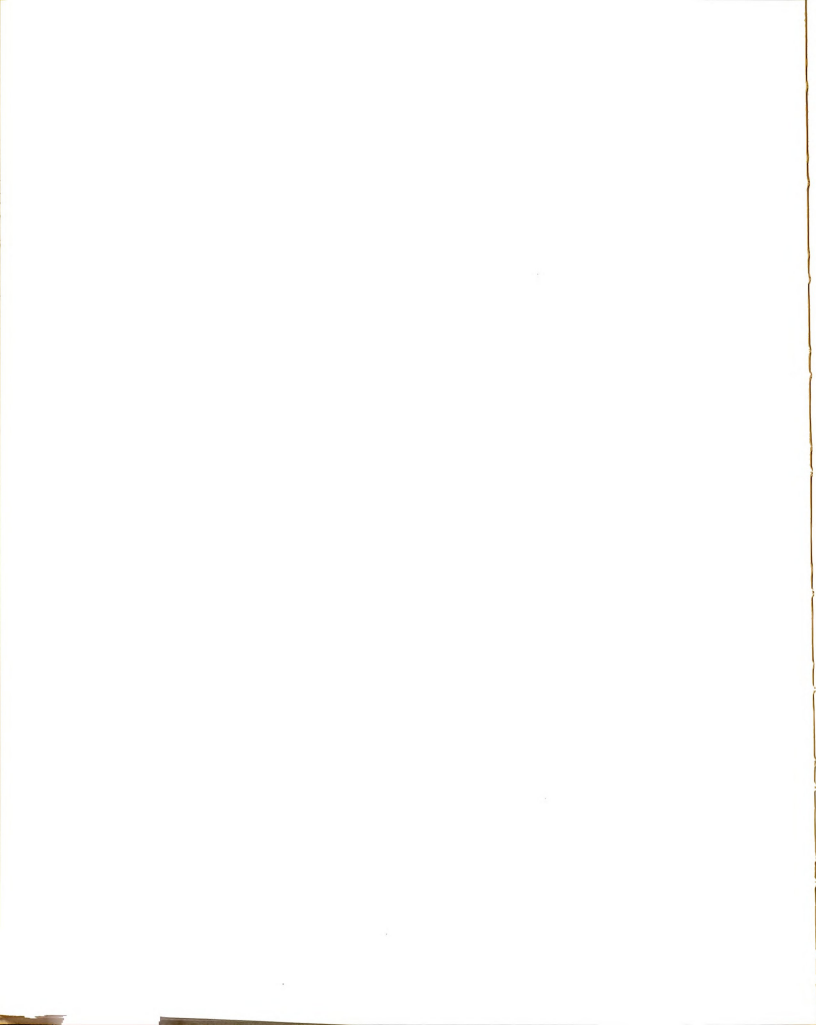




a readily recognizable resemblance (both terms are alike in their sharpness and danger). But to focus only on the likeness, only on the substitution of one term for another, is to weaken our appreciation of the metaphorical complex.

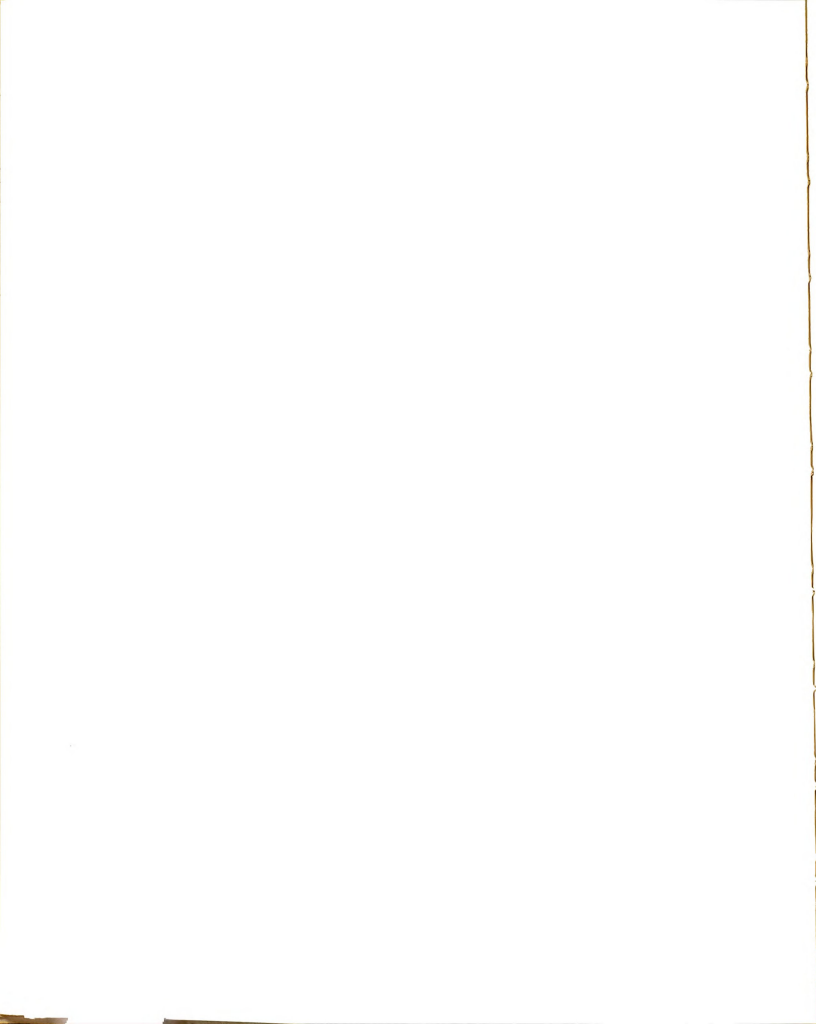
Richards observes that the tension in metaphor is greater as the two terms brought together are more remote,<sup>24</sup> and he also maintains that "the 'grounds' for a metaphor need not always be that of resemblance."<sup>25</sup> Some metaphors derive from our perception of one thing in terms of another, or our attitudes toward one thing transferred to the other, rather than from a common attribute shared by both things. We might say that Montaigne perceives the state in terms of a building and that his attitude toward sickness is transferred to the religious wars in France to explain some of his common metaphors; but it would be much more accurate to recognize that the state and a building have similar qualities, as do war and sickness.<sup>26</sup> Truly remote associations producing metaphors of the greatest tension and not arising from a perceptible likeness in the two terms are not characteristic of Montaigne.<sup>27</sup>

To determine what constitutes a metaphor in our study, we shall adopt the general criterion set down by Richards that we begin "by deciding whether, in the given instance, the word gives us two ideas or one; whether, . . . it presents both a tenor and a vehicle which co-operate in an inclusive meaning."<sup>28</sup> Rather than stop at the "grammarians familiar distinction between metaphor and simile,"<sup>29</sup> we shall view the simile as an extended metaphor. Both of course



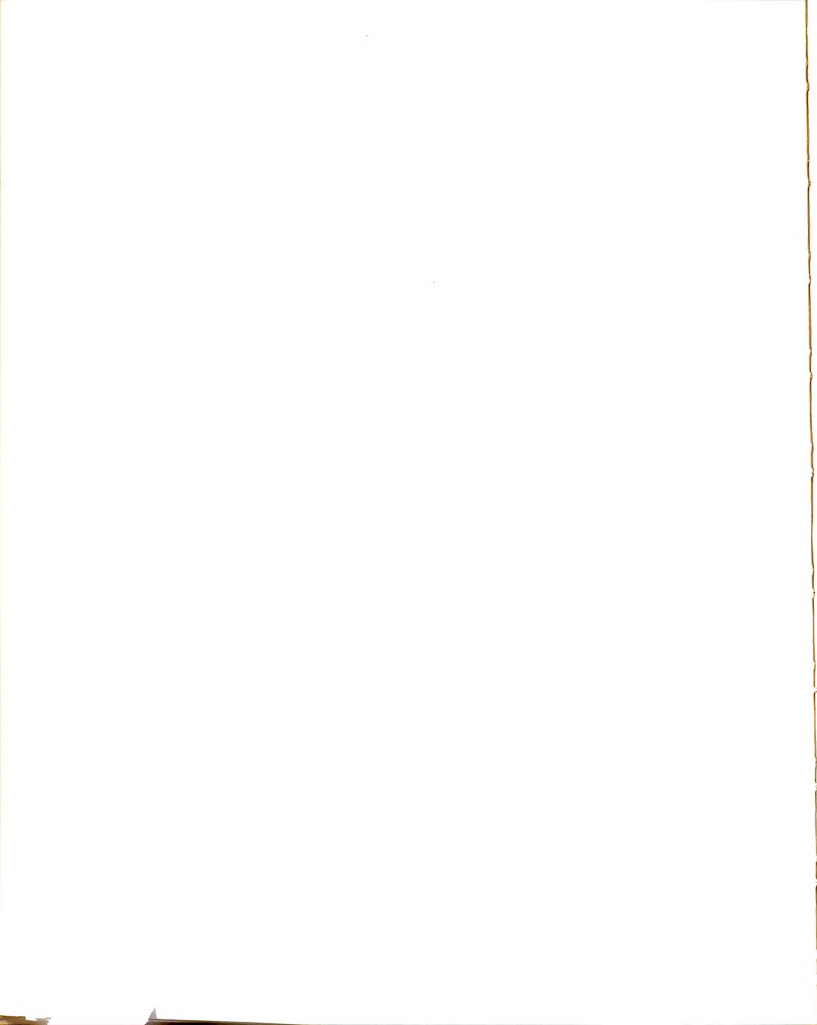
are included in the more generic term imagery, defined by Sayce as "any concrete word which evokes a response of the senses, especially when it is used to enliven or illustrate abstract argument."<sup>30</sup> The literary image must be carefully distinguished from the visual image, proper to the genre of painting, as well as from the mental image, literally a picture of something produced by and within the mind.<sup>31</sup> In the literary image we meet with an activity in process, an interaction between words that invites the reader to an active participation. This is the activity which concerns us most in the metaphor of movement in Montaigne.

Metaphor has its origin in the efforts of the human mind to find expression for thoughts that go beyond the restriction of the literal language. Recourse to figurative language is, according to Bally, the result "de l'infirmité de l'esprit humain, des nécessités inhérentes à la communication des idées et de l'insuffisance des moyens d'expression."<sup>32</sup> Because our knowledge of the world comes to us directly from the experience of sensation, we seek expression for that which is not sensation, indirectly, by allying it to our sensual experience. Through metaphor, we seek "to express insensuous thought by sensuous terms."<sup>33</sup> Linguists tell us that "in none of the languages whose history it is possible for us to study is there an abstract word which, if its etymology is known, is not resolvable into a concrete word."<sup>34</sup> 'Apprehend' can be traced back to meaning 'to grasp at'; 'comprehend' originally meant 'to grasp together,' but now both are common abstract terms for acts of the mind.<sup>35</sup> Once the concrete term



gains widespread usage for the expression of an abstract concept and its users are no longer aware of its figurative nature, it is considered a 'fossil metaphor' or an image morte. Reading in Montaigne: "Nous courons à peu près mesme fortune" (III:5, 862b), we understand courir in the sense of s'exposer à without making any associations with the physical act of running. As foreigners to a language or as readers coming several hundred years after the time when a work was written, we must exercise caution not to take a word in its strict etymological sense when usage had already established a more abstract meaning for it. For our purpose, Huguet's Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle is a valuable reference.

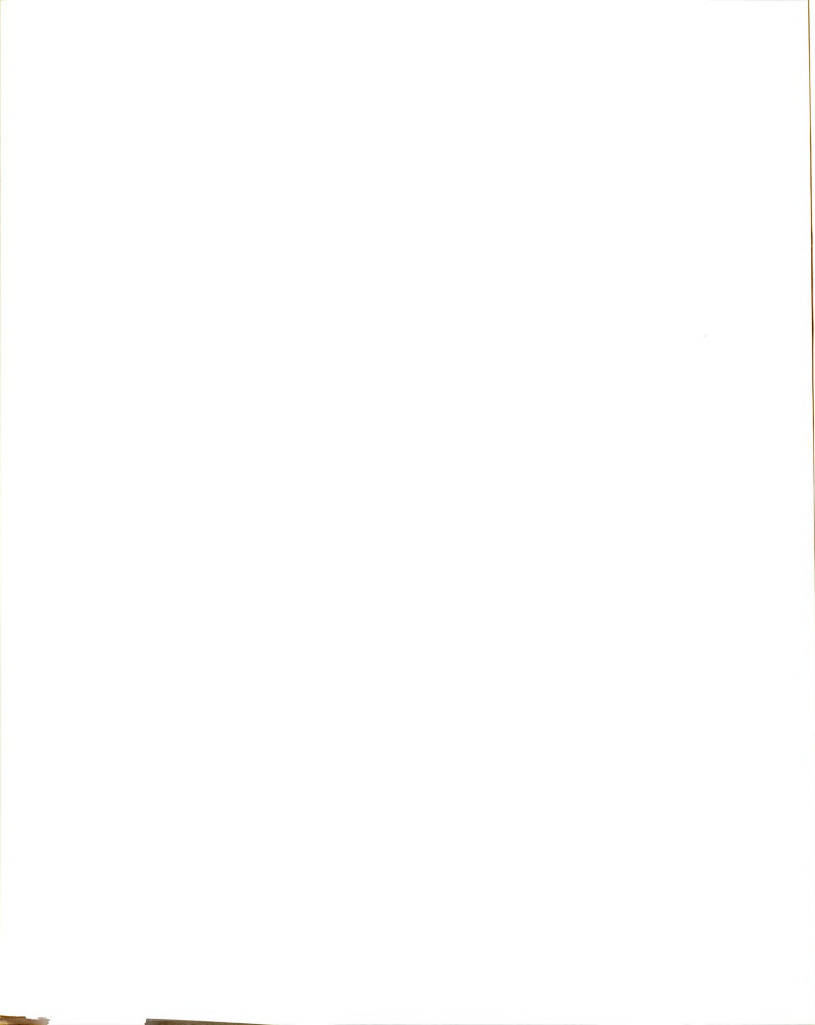
Bally points to the figurative use of words which are not yet images mortes, yet no longer genuine images concrètes--metaphors which are commonly used to express abstract ideas, but which still carry emotional overtones or some sense of their original concrete meanings.<sup>36</sup> With these images affaiblies, the transfer of sense is automatic, the reader is not called upon to make a 'new meaning,' but he nevertheless experiences the force of the original sense. When Montaigne employs the word bride to mean constraint in speaking of Alexander's anger--"si elle eust receu la bride" (I:1, 14c)--he makes use of an image affaiblie. Style in literature often works to revivify images common to ordinary usage by the addition of detail which restores their original plasticity. Montaigne speaks of the world's tendency to attach sadness to virtue and goodness in the familiar image of 'clothing': "Ils en [de la tristesse] habillent la sagesse, la vertu,



la conscience: sot et monstrueux ornement" (I:2, 15c). The subsequent comment reflects back on the verb habiller and gives it greater freshness. Sometimes an image finds its development and renewal after an interval of several sentences or paragraphs. In "De l'oisiveté," Montaigne begins by saying that minds need a definite subject "qui les bride et contreigne" (I:8, 33a); a little further in the essay, he describes his own mind "faisant le cheval eschappé" (34a) and the verb brider becomes an image rajeunie. In a later chapter we shall examine more closely Montaigne's handling of developing and metamorphosing images and how they provide a ready vehicle for the progressive movement of his thought.

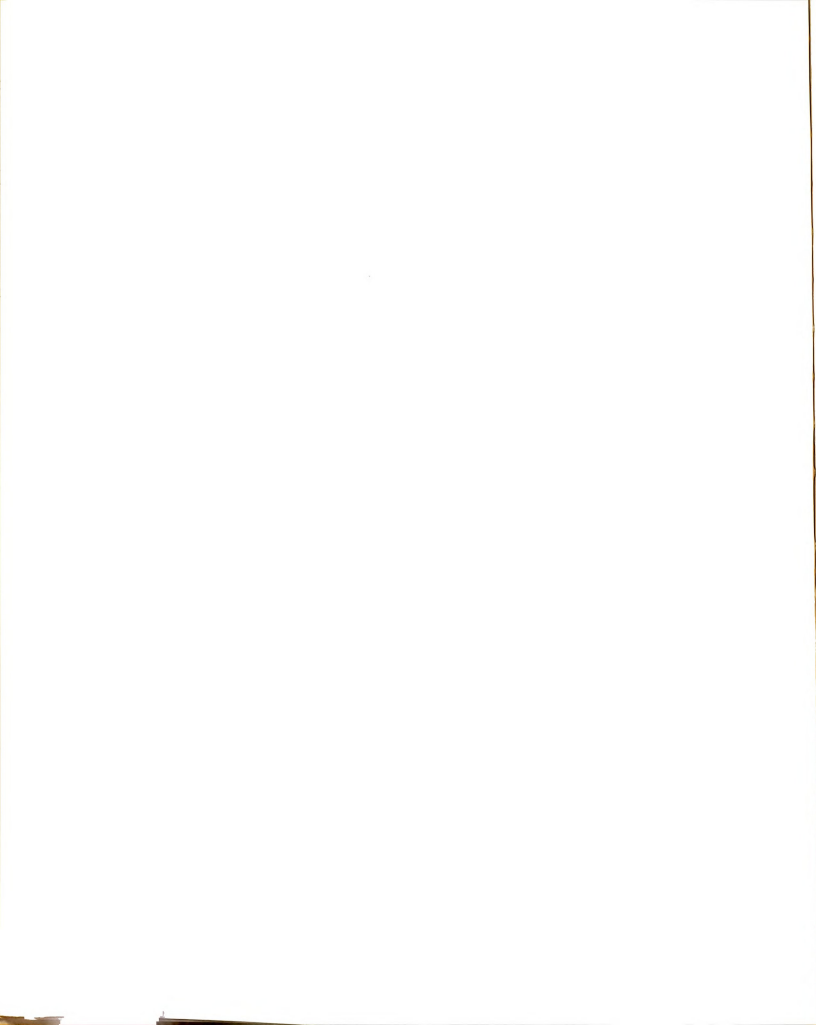
The preceding discussion of the technique of metaphor might seem a bit foreign to the domain of Montaigne who evidenced a distinct wariness and frequent condemnation of the exaggerated attention given to the forms of language by grammarians and rhetoricians. Primarily attentive to the substance of expression--in those he reads as well as in his own communications--Montaigne holds in scornful mockery the laborious attempts of scholars to call words by other words which do nothing to advance our understanding of a given utterance. "Oyez dire metonomie, metaphore, allegorie et autres tels noms de la grammaire, semble-t-il pas qu'on signifie quelque forme de langage rare et pellegrin? Ce sont titres qui touchent le babil de vostre chambriere" (I:51, 294b). The proliferation of works on language, from Dindyme's six thousand volumes on the subject of grammar alone to the





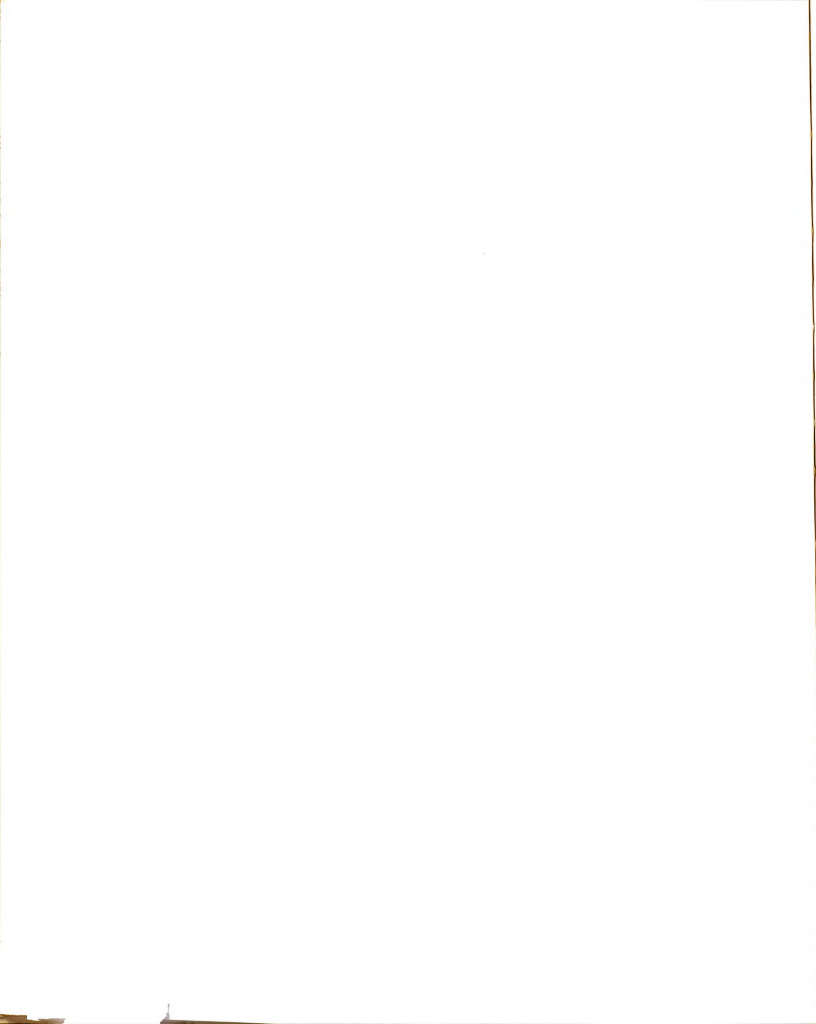
escrivainerie of his own time (III:9, 923b), incites Montaigne to wish more heed had been paid to Pythagoras' counsel to his disciples to keep silence for two years.<sup>37</sup>

If treatises on grammar appear futile and superfluous to him, the business of the rhetoricians provokes an even stronger reaction. The grammarians at worst waste our time, diverting our attention from more serious pursuits, but the rhetoricians risk doing us genuine harm. All too frequently, the 'art of speaking and writing well' can be translated as the 'art of deception through words.' Montaigne recalls the description of a rhetorician of times past who viewed his trade as "de choses petites les faire paroistre et trouver grandes" (I:51, 282a). And he adds--"Ariston definit sagement la rhetorique: science à persuader le peuple; Socrates, Platon, art de tromper et de flatter; et ceux qui le nient en la generale description le verifient partout en leurs preceptes" (293c). The application of rhetorical devices to speech is much like putting make-up on a woman's face, only Montaigne sees the consequences of the former as much graver for the fard tricks only our eyes, whereas the wielder of rhetoric seeks to deceive our judgment--"et d'abastardir et corrompre l'essence des choses" (292a). Such willful deception in the employment of words runs directly counter to Montaigne's own preoccupations with truth and its relationship to language. The right use of words is the unmasking of truth; its corruption, the lie, is "un maudit vice. Nous ne sommes hommes et ne nous tenons les uns aux autres que par la parole" (I:9, 37c).<sup>38</sup>



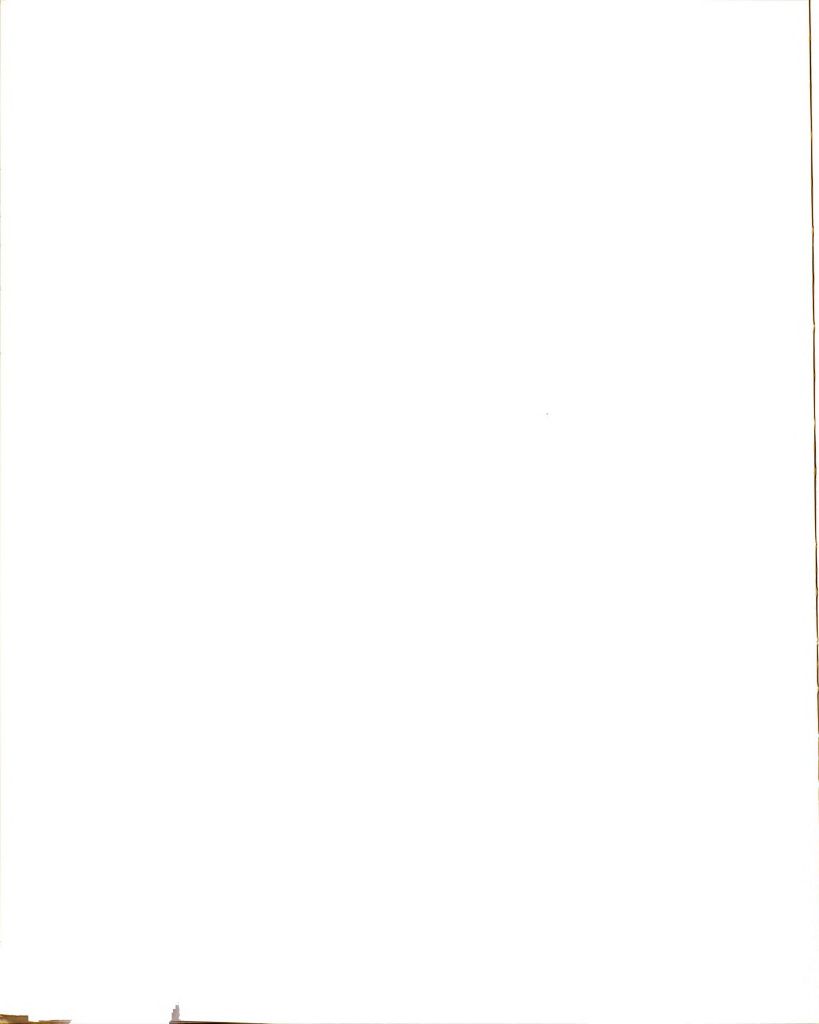
When rhetoric is employed, not to deceive, but merely to add luster to expression, it still foments Montaigne's disapproval. "L'éloquence faict injure aux choses, qui nous destourne à soy" (I:26, 171c). Words which draw attention to themselves rather than serve the needs of thought and communication are usually characteristic of a mind impoverished of actual substance. Just as in affectations of dress or mannerisms, "c'est pusillanimité de se vouloir marquer par quelque façon particuliere et inusitée" in matters of language (171c). The quest for original turns of expression and rare words is the mark "d'une ambition puerile et pedantesque" (172c). Montaigne would much rather err in the opposite direction and give an impression of non-chalance, an air of proud neglect, in his use of language. And so the words he finds most apt for expressing his thoughts are "ceux qui servent aux haies à Paris" (172c).<sup>39</sup>

In the essay "Des livres" (II:10), Montaigne discusses his preferences as a reader. His quest for knowledge of man in general is nourished by the historians and by the moralists, Plutarch and Seneca. But Cicero, who would also be likely to feed his interest in moral philosophy, meets with resistance: "à confesser hardiment la verité . . . sa façon d'escrire me semble ennuyeuse, . . . ce qu'il y a de vif et mouelle, est estouffé par ses longueries d'apprets . . . la plus part du temps je n'y treuve que du vent" (393a). This rejection of "le pere de l'eloquence Romaine" (390c) for a style inappropriate to the matter being treated should not be construed as a condemnation of style in language or as a plea for an absence



of style. Certain writers, especially certain poets, appeal to Montaigne precisely for their graceful and individualized handling of language. It is for reasons of style that Montaigne admires the poetry of Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus and Horace. Prizing style that is one with the substance of poetry, Montaigne distinguishes the merit of these poets to lie in having avoided "l'affectation et la recherche, non seulement des fantastiques elevations Espagnoles et Petrarchistes, mais des pointes mesmes plus douces et plus retenues, qui font l'ornement de tous les ouvrages Poëtiques des siecles suyvens" (391a). Speaking of Virgil in particular in a later essay (III:5), Montaigne turns to a positive description of the poet's art. The vividness, the depth, the vigor of Virgil's expression issue from the quality of his mind--"je ne dicts pas que c'est bien dire, je dicts que c'est bien penser. C'est la gaillardise de l'imagination qui esleve et enfle les parolles" (850-851b). Style--the figures of speech, the choice of vocabulary, the shapes of sentences--has its origin in the mind conceiving, not in a superimposed quest for originality. A mind which conceives simply will speak simply; another seeing "plus cler et plus outre dans la chose" will demand an expression "outre l'ordinaire" (851b). When it is meaning which seeks out and produces expression, the resultant style is "non plus de vent, ains de chair et d'os" (ibid.).

The word, consubstantial with idea, is the expression Montaigne strives to achieve in his Essais. In the sixteenth century the French language was approaching the maturity and fullness which would permit the production of a literature in the vernacular worthy of comparison



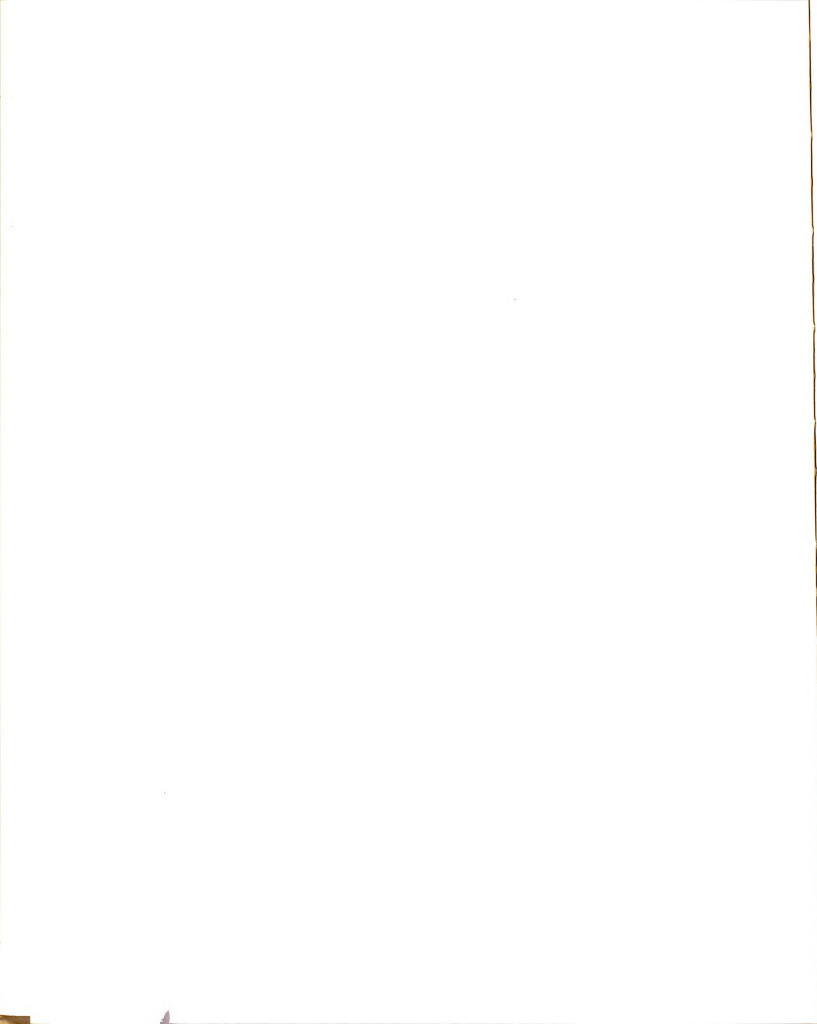
to the masterpieces of the ancients. Already Montaigne recognizes that "Ronsard et Du Bellay ont donné credit à nostre poësie François" (I:26, 170a), and he finds them "guieres esloignez de la perfection ancienne" (II:17, 645a). Surely his decision to write in French was made not only because he was writing "à peu d'hommes et à peu d'années" as he tells us in III:9 (960b), but also out of desire 'to illustrate' the French language in the spirit of Du Bellay's Deffence. The gifted writer, whom Montaigne finds a rarity among "tant d'escrivains françois de ce siecle" (III:5, 851b), expands and enriches the possibilities of his idiom:

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

Though not partisan to the Pléiade's theoretical program to enrich the French language through the introduction of neologisms, archaisms and the stylistic imitation of Latin and Greek authors,<sup>40</sup> Montaigne does recognize with them room for development within the domain of terms already comprising the French language--

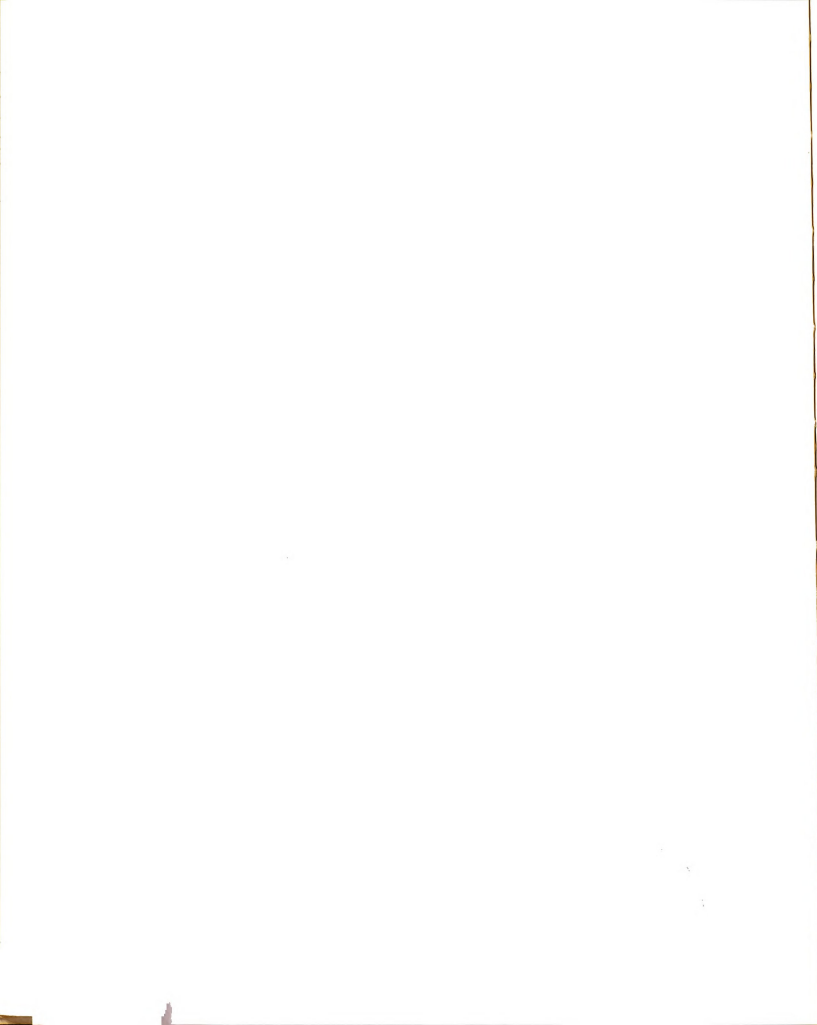
En nostre langage je trouve assez d'estoffe, mais un peu faute de façon; car il n'est rien qu'on ne fit du jargon de nos chasses et de nostre guerre, qui est un genereux terrain à emprunter; et les formes de parler, comme les herbes, s'amendent et fortifient en les transplantant. Je le trouve suffisamment abundant, mais non pas (c) maniant et (b) vigoureux suffisamment. Il succombe ordinairement à une puissante conception (851-852b).<sup>41</sup>





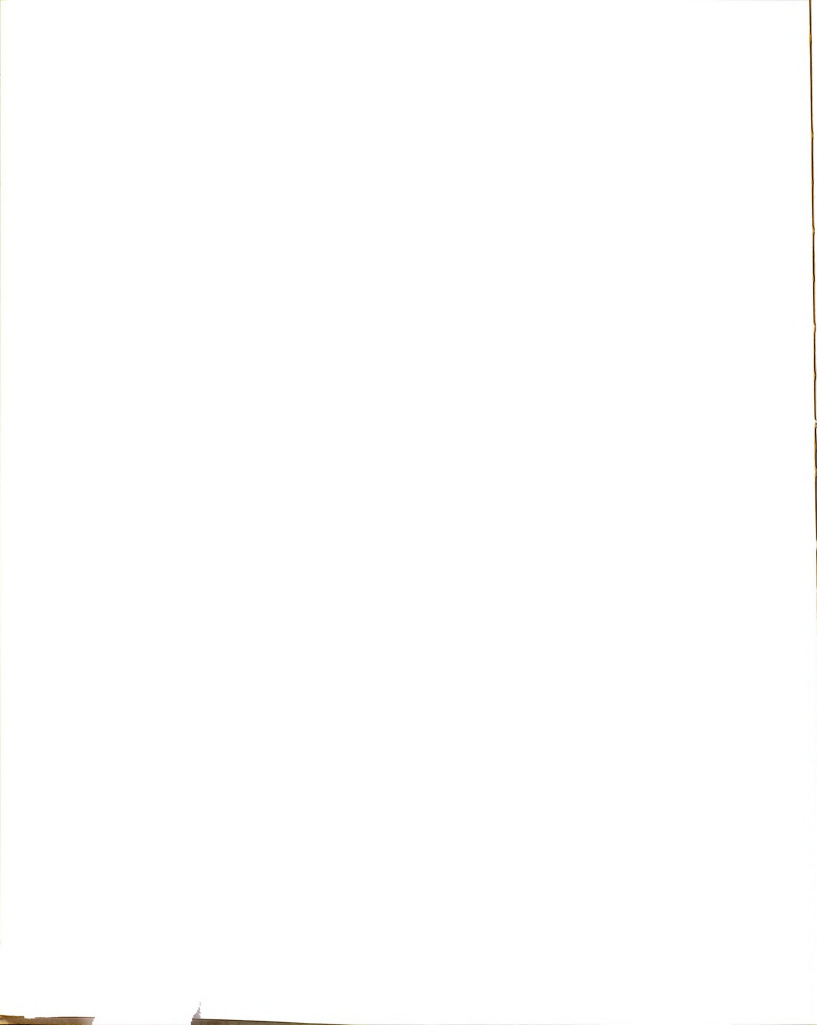
This very resistance of French in its ordinary usage to a forcefully conceived idea nurtures the imaginative writer's inclination toward metaphor. As a reader, Montaigne is sensitive to the beauty and energy of metaphor, even when frequency and usage have dulled their original freshness--"cela n'oste rien du goust à ceux qui ont bon nez" (852b). As much as he scorns the affected and purely decorative in the use of metaphor, he has a perspicacious appreciation for metaphor used well. Not unaware of the density of imagery in his own handling of language--for he had been told he was "trop espais en figures" (853b)--Montaigne finds expression through metaphor natural to his way of thinking and speaking. "Est-ce pas ainsi que je parle par tout? me represente-je pas vivement? suffit! J'ai faict ce que j'ay voulu: tout le monde me reconnoit en mon livre, et mon livre en moy'" (ibid.).

Montaigne's recurrent statement of the naturalness and integrity of his expression in the Essais has met with varying degrees of acceptance among his critics.<sup>42</sup> We can recognize that the seemingly artless, conversational tone he achieved in his writing did not come without some conscious effort. And he too remarks "qu'à force de vouloir eviter l'art et l'affectation, j'y retombe d'une autre part" (II:17, 621a). Above all Montaigne wants to escape the label of 'professional writer,' so he shuns any resemblance to those with pedantic or literary pretensions. However, were he to be of the métier, he would seek to naturalize art as others have 'artified' nature (III:5, 852c). Acknowledging that the "fin principale et perfection" to which he seeks to bring the Essais "c'est d'estre exactement [sien]" (853b),



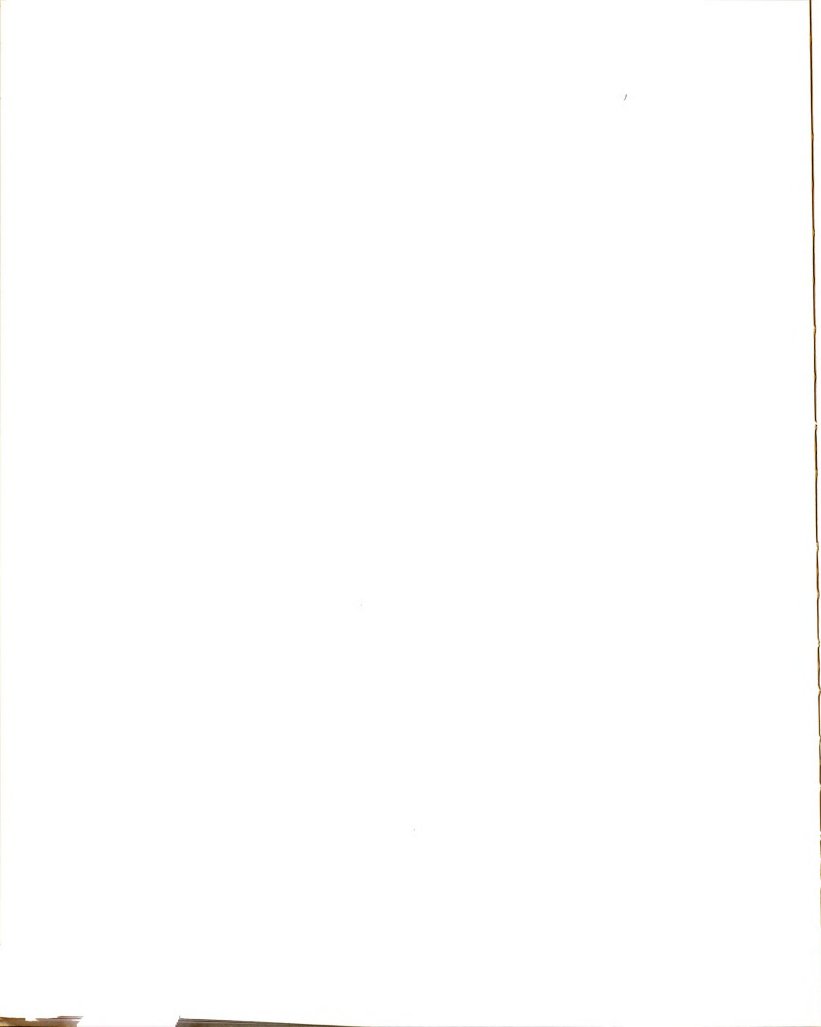
we can go on to ask how metaphor fits into so deliberately natural an expression.

Floyd Gray has observed that "le vocabulaire de Montaigne est déterminé par sa méfiance vis à vis du mot abstrait, du mot vide. S'il emploie une expression abstraite, il juxtapose en même temps une expression concrète qui l'explique, qui le rend sensible."<sup>43</sup> Montaigne's avoidance of the abstract and cultivation of the sensuous in expression concur with the way in which he perceives the mind to operate. Abstract concepts do not exist independently, but have their origin in concrete experience. In his critique of reason in the "Apologie," Montaigne begins with the epistemological premise that "toute cognoissance s'achemine en nous par les sens: ce sont nos maistres. . . . (a) La science commence par eux et se resout en eux" (II:12, 572c). As the mind moves in the direction of abstractions, it distances itself from the source of its conceptions and runs the risk of erring in the empty structures of its own creation. It is always to experience, to the foundation of the concrete, that Montaigne looks for a grasp of truth. The mind must not be disassociated from the body, but directed toward maintaining their natural cooperation and mutual dependency: "A quoy faire desmembrons nous en divorce un bastiment tissu d'une si joincte et fraternele correspondance? Au rebours, renouons le par mutuels offices. Que l'esprit esveille et vivifie la pesanteur du corps, le corps arreste la legereté de l'esprit et la fixe" (III:13, 1094-1095b). For language to express thought grounded in experience it must constantly have recourse to the concrete,



integrating the abstract with its sensual correlative. Montaigne's use of the metaphor expresses this perpetual interaction of mind and body experience and his keen awareness that "c'est tousjours à l'homme que nous avons affaire, duquel la condition est merveilleusement corporelle" (III:8, 909b).

With the development of Montaigne's arguments against reason in the "Apologie" however, the senses too are shown to be unreliable indicators of truth. Sense perceptions are subject to distortion due to the perspective imposed by distance (II:12, 576a) or to a defect in the sense organs themselves. And there is also the problem as to whether the five senses of which man is possessed are adequate to the perception of phenomena in their completeness. Do not the animals evidence senses we do not have? (573a). There is really no way of knowing whether there exist more senses than those we experience for "c'est le privilege des sens d'estre l'extreme borne de nostre aperceance; il n'y a rien au-delà d'eux qui nous puisse servir à les descouvrir; voire ny l'un sens n'en peut descouvrir l'autre" (573a). You cannot speak to a man blind from birth in images of light for nothing in his experience can utilize such images. Montaigne relates the example of a blind man who had imitatively adopted the speech patterns of seeing people, though he had no experience of what he spoke. The same man even participated in the sports of hunting and tennis without being able to see the rabbit or the ball at which he foolishly, though unknowingly so, took aim. From this anecdote, Montaigne draws an analogy to the way men reason and speak about



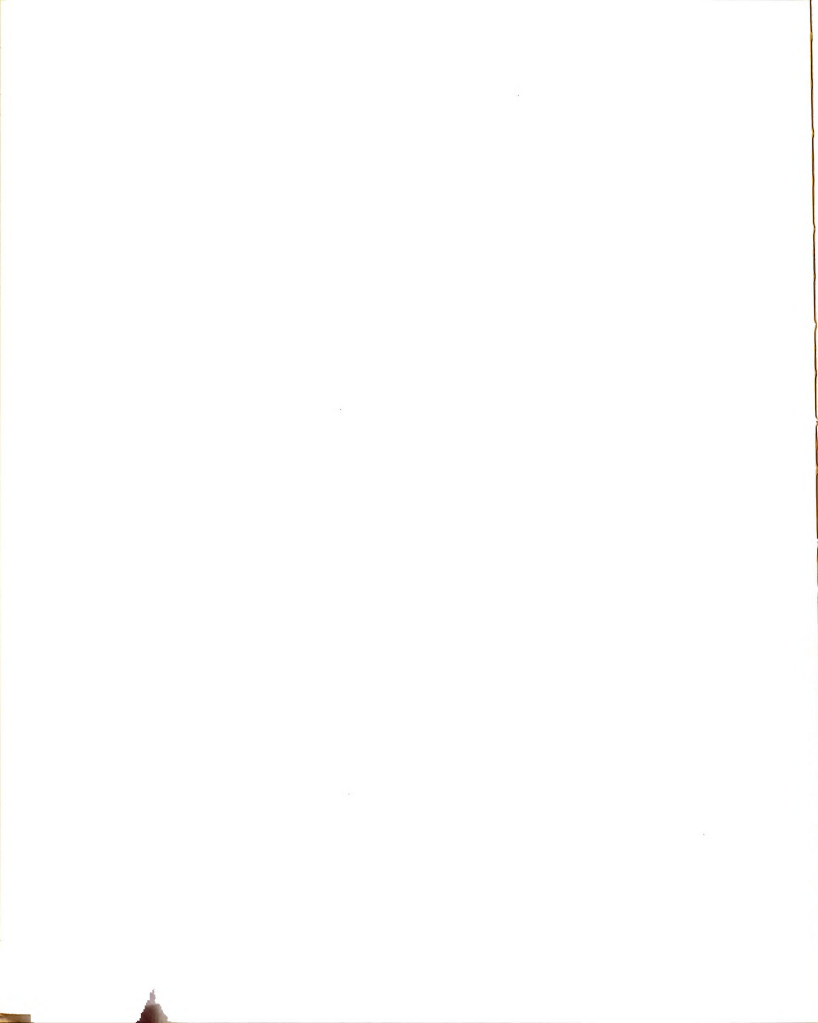
matters beyond the domain of their limited possibilities of certitude:

"Que sçait-on si le genre humain faict une sottise pareille, à faute de quelque sens, et que par ce defaut la plus part du visage des choses nous soit caché?" (574a). The point he is making is that the presumptuous claims and debates among philosophers and theologians are ventures into matters about which we cannot produce positive verification and that ultimately we must confess to our "nécessaire bestise" (576c).

But is there not also a parallel to be made with his own use of language—with his marked preference for concrete terms in lieu of abstractions?

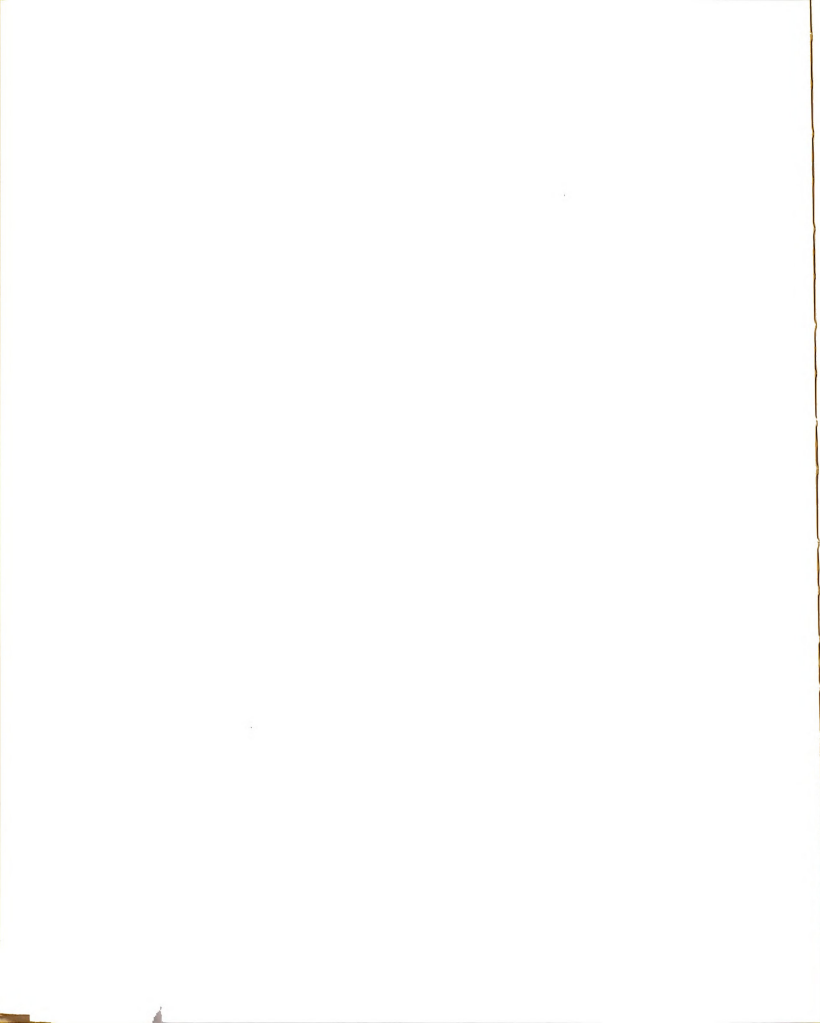
Metaphorical statements are "strictly speaking, not true,"<sup>44</sup> for they consist in "the presentation of the facts of one sort as if they belonged to another."<sup>45</sup> Turbayne finds such confusion in certain models of present-day science just as Montaigne did in the theological and philosophical models used to explain God, nature or the soul—"Et certes la philosophie n'est qu'une poésie sophistiquée" (II:12, 518c). Those lured into believing in the 'myths of metaphor' presume to know the essence of things, forgetting they are only dealing with images of essence. The Renaissance, in quest of a unified concept of the world, was given to holding the conviction that the image was an "instrument de connaissance."<sup>47</sup> Avowing that "nous n'avons aucune communication à l'estre" (586a), Montaigne reacts against so didactic an intent in metaphor. His own images are mobile, open, changing—in harmony with his vision of a world qui branle sans cesse: "chaque chose peut être rapprochée de n'importe quelle autre. . . . Pas de termes de comparaison





privilégiés; ainsi l'âme revêt tantôt l'apparence physique d'une personne . . . tantôt elle apparaît comme un objet inanimé . . . et aucune de ces figures ne prétend nous révéler la nature cachée de l'âme."<sup>48</sup> Never mistaking the image for the thing to which it relates, Montaigne uses imagery to communicate his vision of the world--an organic, harmonious cosmos of which man is a part, but of which man can possess no comprehensive, fixed and closed knowledge.

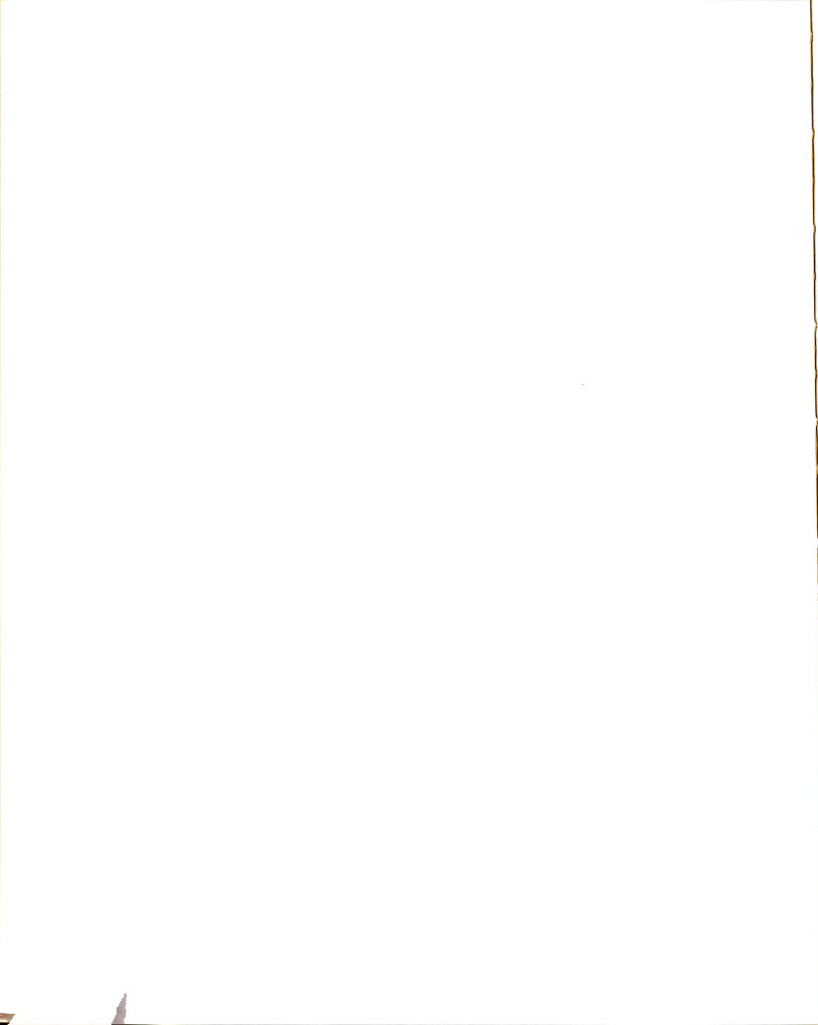
While man might not have certain knowledge of the world, he does have experience of it. The image gives expression to the unknown in terms of the known, and most especially in terms of what is most immediate to our experience, the senses. Through the senses, we perceive not only the phenomena proper to the operation of each sense taken individually, but also the numerous consequences and conclusions drawn from comparing one sense to another. Lest this comparative perception be confused with direct sensual experience, Montaigne admonishes: "Nous avons formé une verité par la consultation et concurrence de nos cinq sens; mais à l'avanture falloit-il l'accord de huict ou de dix sens et leur contribution pour l'appercevoir certainement et en son essence" (575a). Throughout the "Apologie," the emphasis is on the insufficiency of man's powers of apprehension, for the essay is intended to combat the arrogance of man's reason. In "De l'experience," Montaigne again speaks to the quarrels growing out of the use of words and the pretensions to fix essence in words. Here he weighs the comparative process in a more positive, though still cautious, vein:



Comme nul evenement et nulle forme ressemble entierement  
à une autre, aussi ne differe nulle de l'autre entierement.  
. . . Toutes choses se tiennent par quelque similitude,  
tout exemple cloche, et la relation qui se tire de  
l'experience est tousjours defaillante et imparfaicte;  
on joint toutesfois les comparaisons par quelque coin  
(III:13, 1047b).

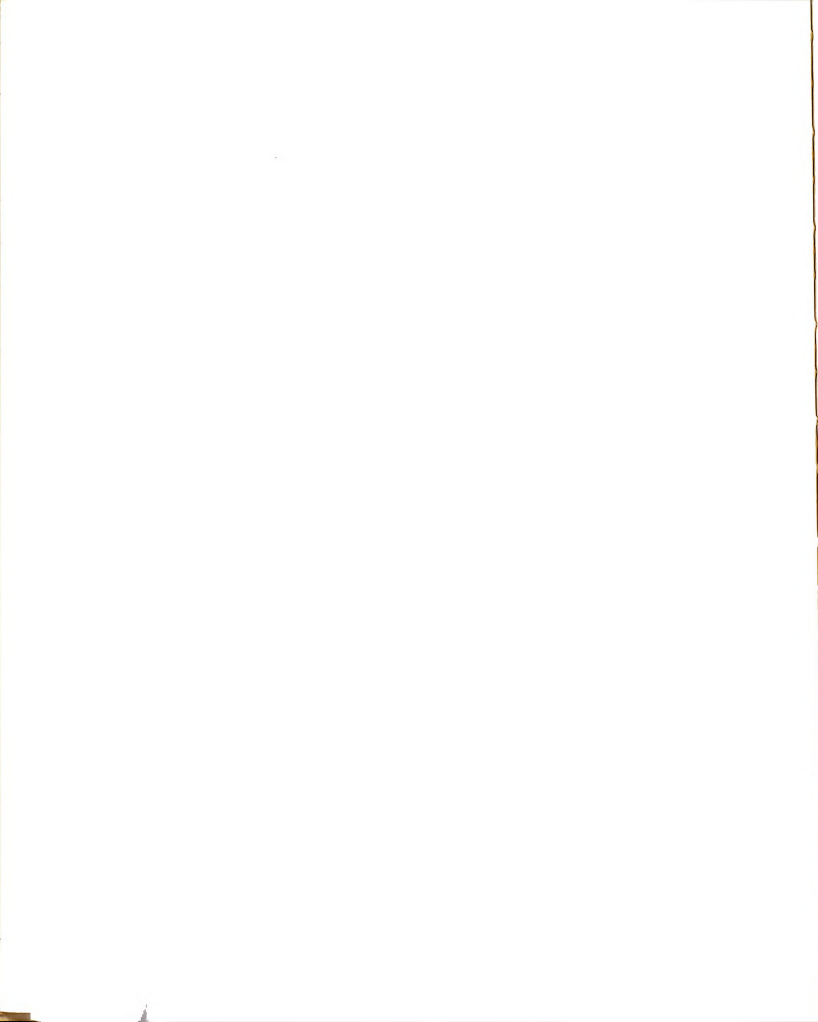
By making analogies, by joining perceptions through metaphor, we arrive at an approximate understanding of reality; our associations remain faulty and imperfect, for every example limps. Nevertheless, there are similarities to be perceived and so our comparisons are not "wholly false or misleading."<sup>49</sup> Rather than assume the stance of the extreme skeptics who hold that nothing can be known or stated about anything at all, Montaigne finds a way of dealing with knowledge that is admittedly relative and of giving expression to his experience.

Language for Montaigne is a tool that can be used badly or well. The rhetoricians and showy poets use it to deceive or to affect a studied and empty elegance. The gifted poet, inspired by his 'divine fury,'<sup>50</sup> can wield language so as to "[nous] transpercer et transporter" (I:37, 228c), and this, Montaigne tells us, he has experienced since his early youth. The aim of poetry is not to persuade our judgment; "elle le ravit et ravage" (ibid.). As such, the inspired and deeply impressive handling of language in poetry stands in contrast to what Hallie labels the language of the Assertive imagination.<sup>51</sup> In the latter, "old words are radically altered in their usage, and new words are introduced to which no clear meaning can be attached without intricate study. And paradoxically, the use of the Assertive imagination does not often involve metaphor. . . . [Rather, it] involves us in inferences from



our images to facts or statements beyond those images."<sup>52</sup> Hallie attributes to Montaigne "a milder kind of poetic function of the imagination: the use of metaphor to illumine or vivify ordinary language."<sup>53</sup> He goes on to ally Montaigne with the contemporary "ordinary language philosophers."<sup>54</sup> Like the logical positivists, they assign metaphysical, non-verifiable statements to the category of "nonsense"; but unlike them, they manifest a faith in the power of ordinary language to achieve effective communication. Content with the words "qui servent aux haies à Paris," Montaigne bends, transplants and stretches his vocabulary to meet the needs of his conceptions. Metaphor serves to render his fantaisies, the objects of his imagination, "intellectuellement sensibles, sensiblement intellectuels" (III:13, 1087b). And from his words, "non de vent ains de chair et d'os," comes into being the "livre consubstantiel à son auteur."<sup>55</sup>

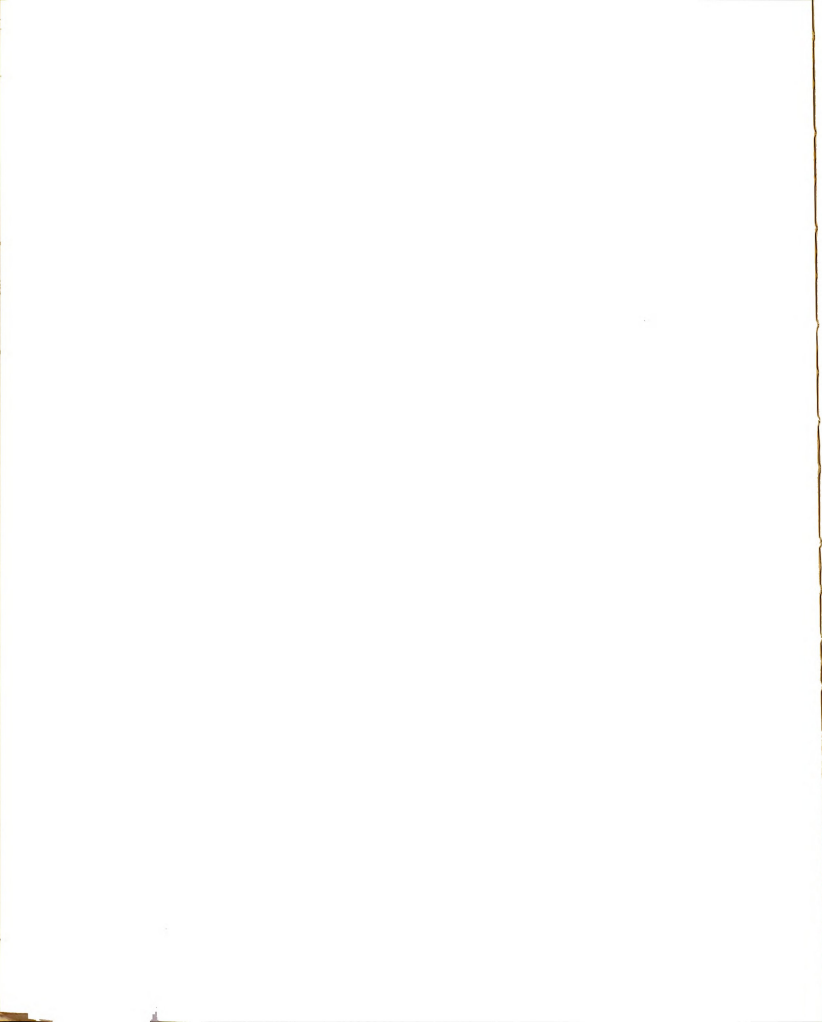
To realize the weighty significance of imagery, and more specifically metaphor, in the writing of Montaigne, one only has to consider the results of several counts which have been done on the Essais. Thibaudet numbers the images at "près de cinq cents,"<sup>56</sup> Walter Schnabel at 1263.<sup>57</sup> In I:26, Gilbert Mayer finds seventy-seven images, all but four of which are metaphors.<sup>58</sup> Baraz counts one hundred eleven images in III:10 (with only six similes).<sup>59</sup> Mayer and Baraz are in agreement with Gray who finds that "la métaphore chez Montaigne est une fleur d'une vigueur et d'une abondance tropicales, mais les Essais offrent un terrain maigre à la culture de la comparaison. Si on voulait



les compter, on en trouverait peut-être une centaine dont la plupart seraient dans les essais de l'édition de 1580."<sup>60</sup> But Yves Delègue, focusing on the simile, arrives at a quite different result, finding some one hundred seventy similes in three essays alone.<sup>61</sup> Quite clearly he is working from a broader interpretation of simile than the other critics, including in his count expressions which others would list as metaphors.<sup>62</sup> Probably the most meaningful use to which a count may be put is to translate it into proportional terms as Colin Dickson has done. Working with the images in three essays of the Third Book he finds "342 images or an average of four per page. . . . This is double the density of imagery in Rabelais . . . and four times the density in Proust."<sup>63</sup> And Dickson affirms that 90 percent of the images in his count are metaphors.<sup>64</sup>

The use to which these lists have been put provides greater interest for our purpose. Schnabel goes no further than to compile a list of images according to technical categories of vocabulary "with meager commentary,"<sup>65</sup> but his statistics serve to show the increasing density of metaphor with the successive additions to the Essais.<sup>66</sup> Thibaudet has catalogued his findings under four descriptive headings: "Dedans et dehors--Sensations organiques--Mouvement et changement--Images visuelles."<sup>67</sup> Within these groups he observes that the smallest number fall into the category of visual images, contrary to the tendency of most "faiseurs d'images," and that by far the largest group, virtually half of his listing, belongs to the heading of Mouvement et changement. From this he concludes that "sur deux images, il y a



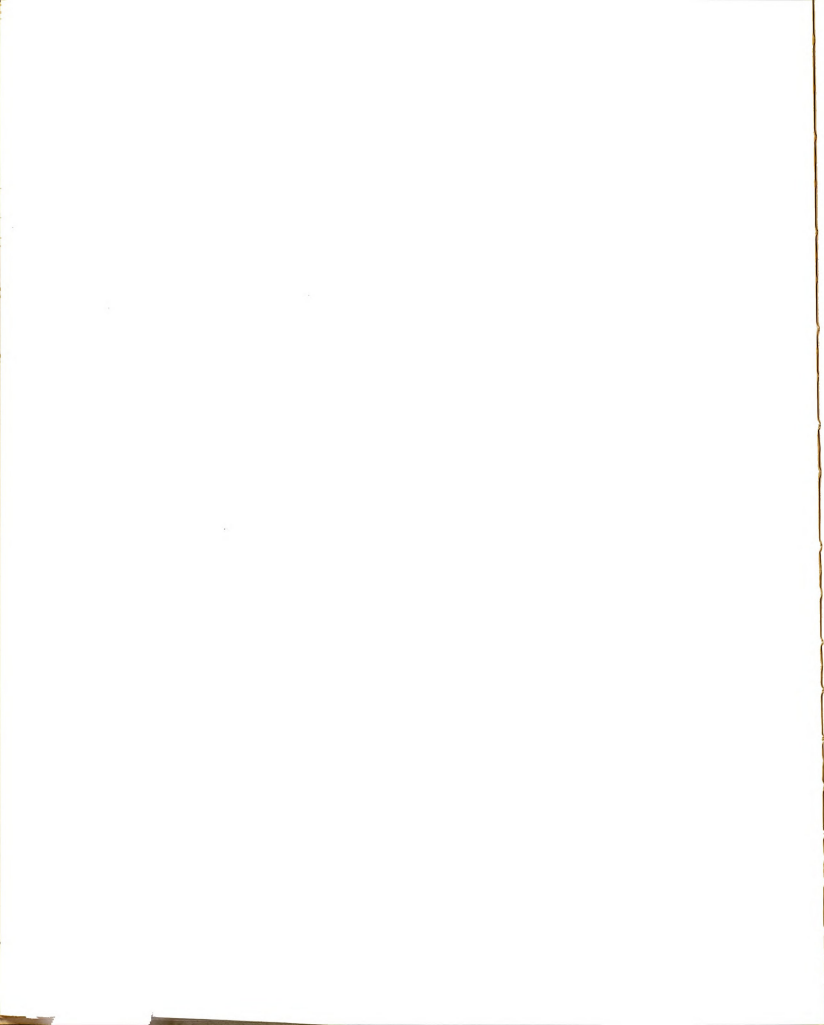


chez Montaigne une image motrice, et que la plupart des images qui ne sont pas à proprement parler motrices correspondent à un sentiment et à une bâtisse de la vie intérieure, où le corps devient l'expression physique de l'âme, et, dans son détail même, la métaphore de l'âme."<sup>68</sup>

Unfortunately time did not permit Thibaudet to develop his work on imagery much beyond the catalogue.<sup>69</sup>

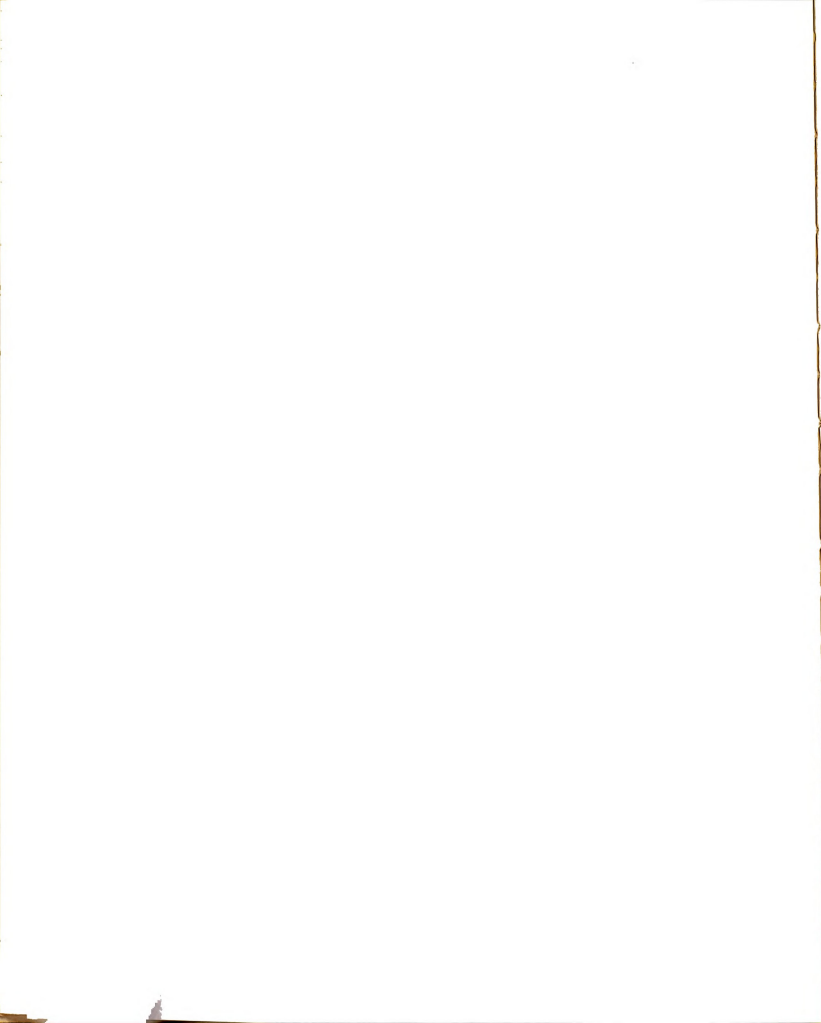
Both Floyd Gray and Glyn P. Norton base their imagery studies on the catalogue of Thibaudet, each treating three of his four groupings, including the category of movement and change. Part of a comprehensive study of style in Montaigne, Gray's pages on this particular aspect of imagery are in the main quite general.<sup>70</sup> He best shows how imagery expresses Montaigne's mobility of mind in his analysis of I:26 where he analyzes the antithetical interplay of images at work.<sup>71</sup> For Norton, the function of the metaphor in Montaigne is "to crystallize the major introspective themes of the work."<sup>72</sup> Writing in the confines of a brief article, Norton selects representative 'metaphorical clusters' to examine the organic operation of metaphor and theme. He looks at two passages from "De l'expérience" which illustrate the metaphor of movement giving expression to the mind's activity. Both studies point the way to a more intensive treatment of this category of imagery.

The image in the form of simile is the focus of the Delègue article. Gray too isolates the simile in his discussion, viewing it as a continuation of Montaigne's thought while the metaphor "est la pensée; elle ne s'attache pas à l'idée, elle naît en même temps qu'elle."<sup>73</sup> Delègue goes on to make a distinction between Montaigne's



"comparaisons poétiques"--usually introduced by connecting words, serving style more than thought, and largely borrowed from ancient sources--and his "comparaisons de correspondance et de similitude"--intimately related to Montaigne's inclination to think by analogies.<sup>74</sup> The latter type of image gives to the thought and expression of the Essais "le solide, le stable, meme au niveau des réalités les plus banales et infimes;" the metaphor, on the other hand, expresses "le mouvant, l'indéterminé."<sup>75</sup> Since the metaphor for Delègue is characterized by the absence of the tenor, its role is "d'en donner non pas l'idée, mais l'équivalent sensible pour l'imagination."<sup>76</sup> While we are working from a broader understanding of metaphor (including simile as a kind of metaphor), we shall take into consideration Delègue's observation that movement and stability find expression differently, in one and the other of these forms of imagery.

The chapter on imagery in Baraz's book contributes to his overall exploration of Montaigne's concept of being and knowledge. Since "l'être de l'homme est une unité organique, fait de sentir et de savoir, de concret et d'abstrait," the language giving expression to man's being must reflect this organic unity: "il faut allier les moyens du langage intellectuel et ceux du langage figuré."<sup>77</sup> Montaigne's imagery bridges the gap between "les pensées immatérielles" and "des choses étendues et pesantes," and corresponds to what Baraz finds to be "l'idée maîtresse de sa philosophie--celle de la consonance de l'homme et de la nature."<sup>78</sup> Knowing that man cannot reach absolute knowledge either by pure speculation or by purely factual means,



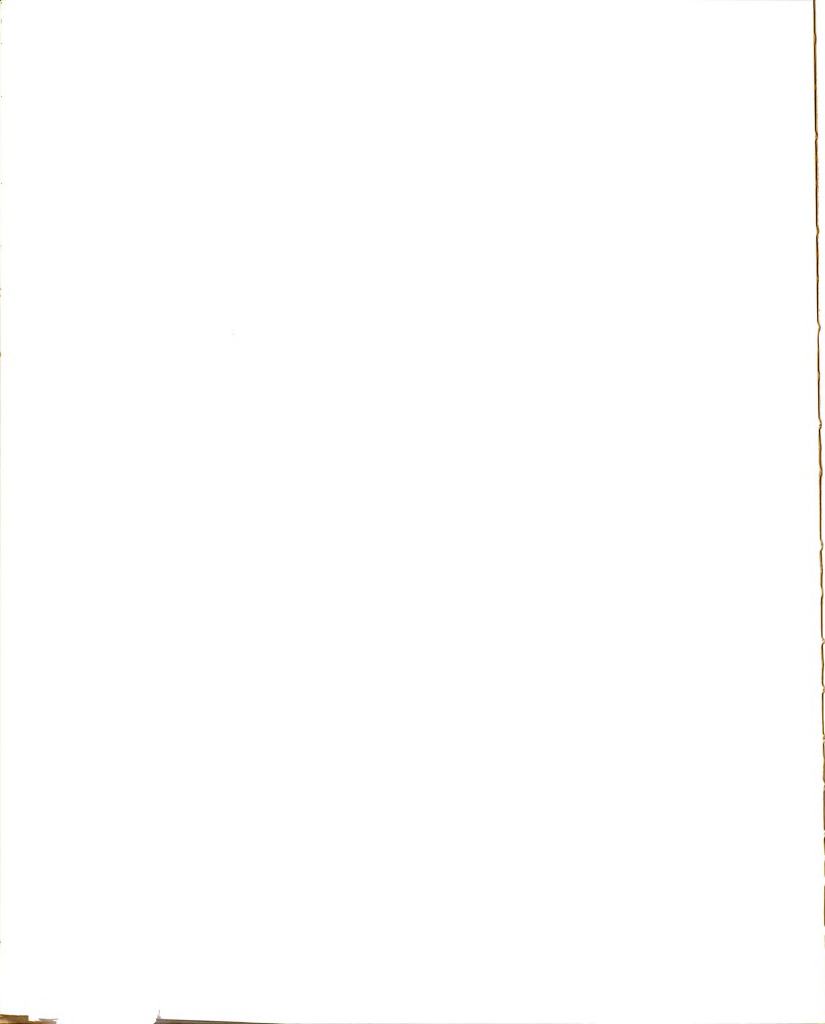
Montaigne pursues not knowledge, but "l'être réglé du sage."<sup>79</sup>

Based on the notion of inscience, Montaigne's philosophy is opposed to traditional, Platonic, hierarchical concepts of the universe, and his images frequently illustrate this opposition. Through "des images matérialisantes et dévalorisantes," "l'image des bas lieux" and the image of horizontal (as opposed to transcendental) movement, Montaigne's language reveals a liberation from traditional modes of thinking.<sup>80</sup>

The organic nature of his images, their frequent prolongation en devenir and the concentration of dynamic verbal images express not the ultimate unity of being, but "l'aspiration à l'unité de l'être."<sup>81</sup>

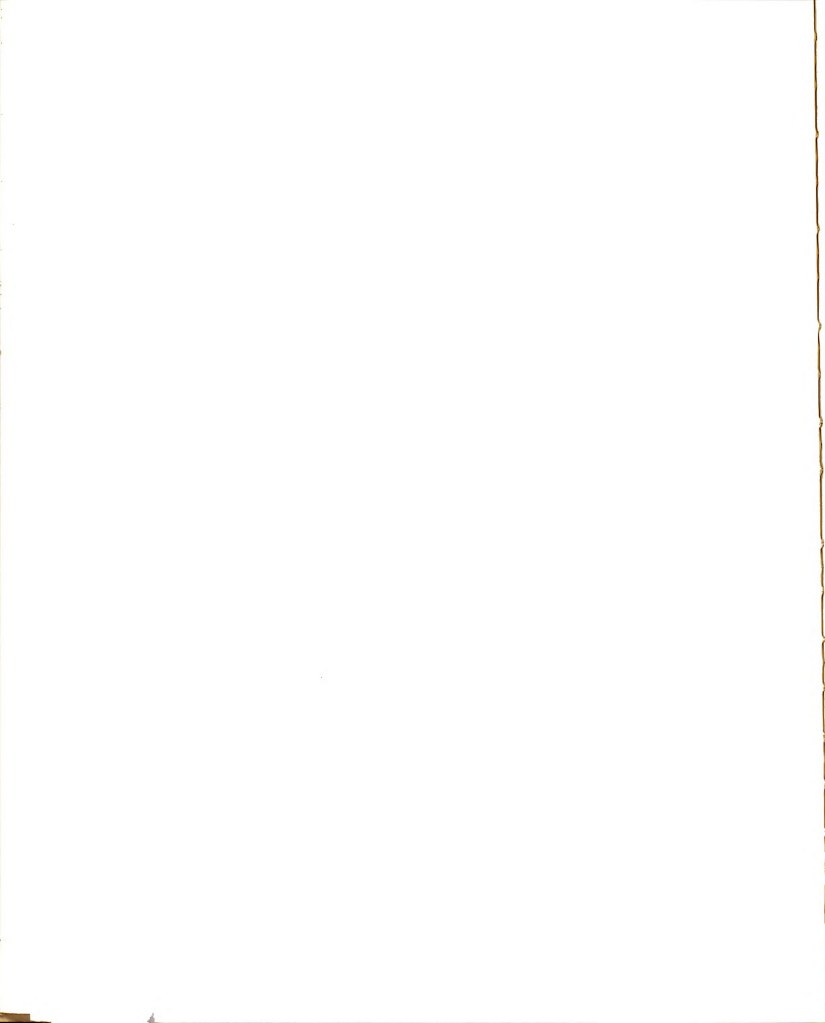
Several critics have looked at Montaigne's use of imagery in the context of particular essays. Gilbert Mayer studies the images in I:26, identifying them first according to vehicle and then according to form--simple, parallel to a literal expression, developed in the same sentence, and developed later in the essay.<sup>82</sup> In her study of III:10, Marcelle Hamel examines images borrowed from ancient sources and the way Montaigne integrates them into his text.<sup>83</sup> By far the most thorough examination of the function of Montaigne's images in context is the doctoral dissertation of Colin Dickson.<sup>84</sup> He does a long, detailed study of three chapters, discussing formal, thematic and dynamic aspects of the imagery.

Two excellent articles by Carol Clark<sup>85</sup> treat of the historical context and literary sources of Montaigne's imagery. Professor Clark objects to the classification of imagery by subject matter (according to vehicle) and the tendency to deduce all sorts of biographical and

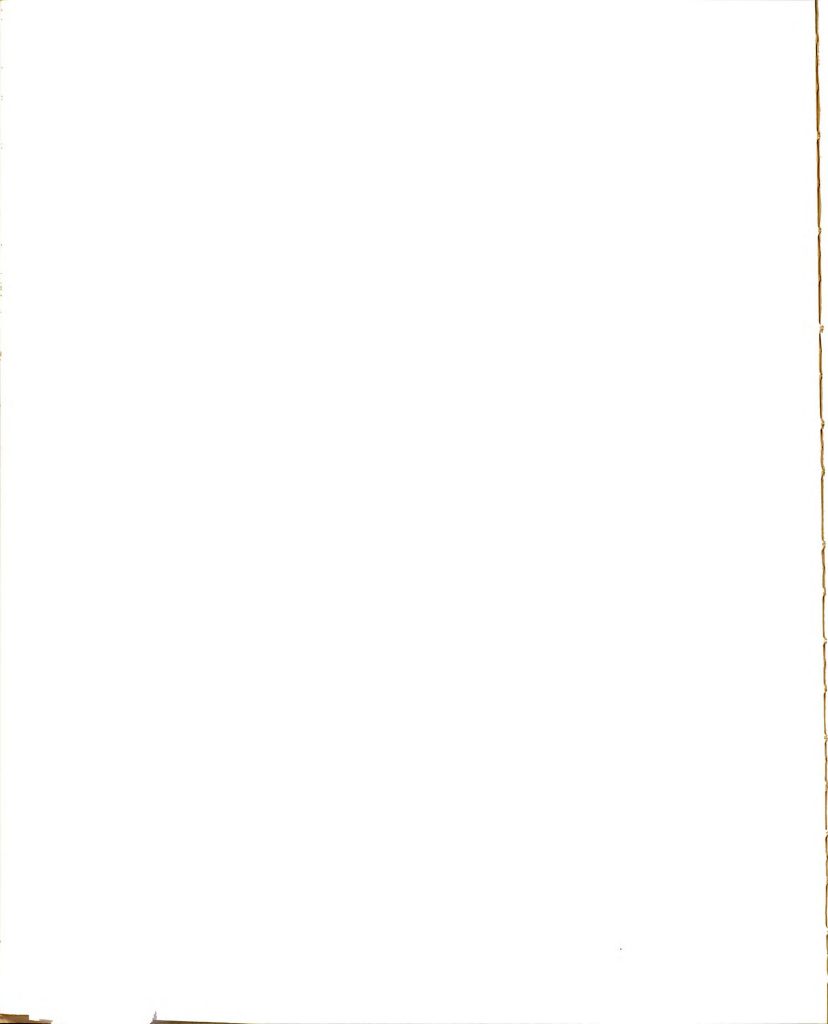


psychological insights from such classifications.<sup>86</sup> Whereas this approach has its place with a nineteenth- or twentieth-century author who is indeed in search of "striking, personal imagery,"<sup>87</sup> it is likely to be crudely misleading when applied to an author like Shakespeare or Montaigne.<sup>88</sup> In the domain of political discourse, Clark points to the strong tradition of conventional imagery used to effect political arguments. Montaigne draws heavily on these stock images; however it is to be noted that his use of these images is much more complex and original, much less schematized than that of other sixteenth-century political writers.<sup>89</sup> Examining certain predominating images of Montaigne in conjunction with Seneca's use of imagery in the Letters to Lucilius, Clark shows the extent to which Montaigne was indebted to the Latin writer for much of his metaphorical expression. Putting aside the stock classical images which both authors share with many writers of their periods, Clark finds Montaigne's most frequent borrowings from Seneca to lie in "the field of images attempting to differentiate between the real and the spurious"--images of masks and the stage, images of the solid and massive as opposed to the hollow and empty, and images of outer crusts as contrasted with deep, hidden mines.<sup>90</sup> Though the source of these images can be clearly located in Seneca, Montaigne's handling of a given image is frequently independent and sometimes contradictory to Seneca's own usage. By the Third Book, Clark finds that Montaigne has transformed the Senecan imagery into an "extremely concise and personal language."<sup>91</sup>





Quite clearly, Montaigne's imagery offers a rich domain of exploration for the literary critic. From the work already done we can gauge the directions in which there remains room for further study. Hugo Friedrich has drawn our attention to the need for a study which will demonstrate the actual creative process involved in Montaigne's use of metaphor. Friedrich suggests that one proceed not from the families of vehicles, but from the perspective of ideas taking shape "tantôt de telle façon, tantôt de telle autre."<sup>92</sup> Any work attempting to show how all the ideas in the Essais find expression in imagery would be a vast and unwieldy undertaking. Limiting our focus to the metaphor of movement, we shall pursue the development of this motif in the language of images. Frequently our treatment will deal with images from Thibaudet's category of Mouvement et changement; but from the family of vehicles denoting movement, we shall carry our investigation into the more intimate and elusive question of the process of metaphor at work.



### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Owen Thomas, Metaphor and Related Subjects (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>Port Royal, III, 3 (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1953), 864.

<sup>3</sup>Countries of the Mind: Essays in Literary Criticism (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Phillip Ellis Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 69.

<sup>5</sup>On the Art of Poetry with a Supplement on Music, trans. S. H. Butcher, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1956), XXI, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>Synecdoche is "that figure of speech in which a part or individual is used for a whole or class, or the reverse of this." Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 1479.

<sup>7</sup>This is the explanation offered by the editor of the edition of The Rhetoric used for this study, The Rhetoric of Aristotle, trans. Sir Richard Claverhouse Jobb, ed. John Edwin Sandys (Cambridge: The University Press, 1909), p. 156, n. 1. Metonymy is defined as the "use of the name of one thing for that of another associated with it or suggested by it." Webster's, p. 927.

<sup>8</sup>Hedwig Konrad, Etude sur la métaphore, 2e éd. (Paris: Vrin, 1958), ch. III. Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), p. 208.

<sup>9</sup>Aristotle, On the Art of Poetry, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>The Rhetoric, III, x, 3, pp. 166-167.

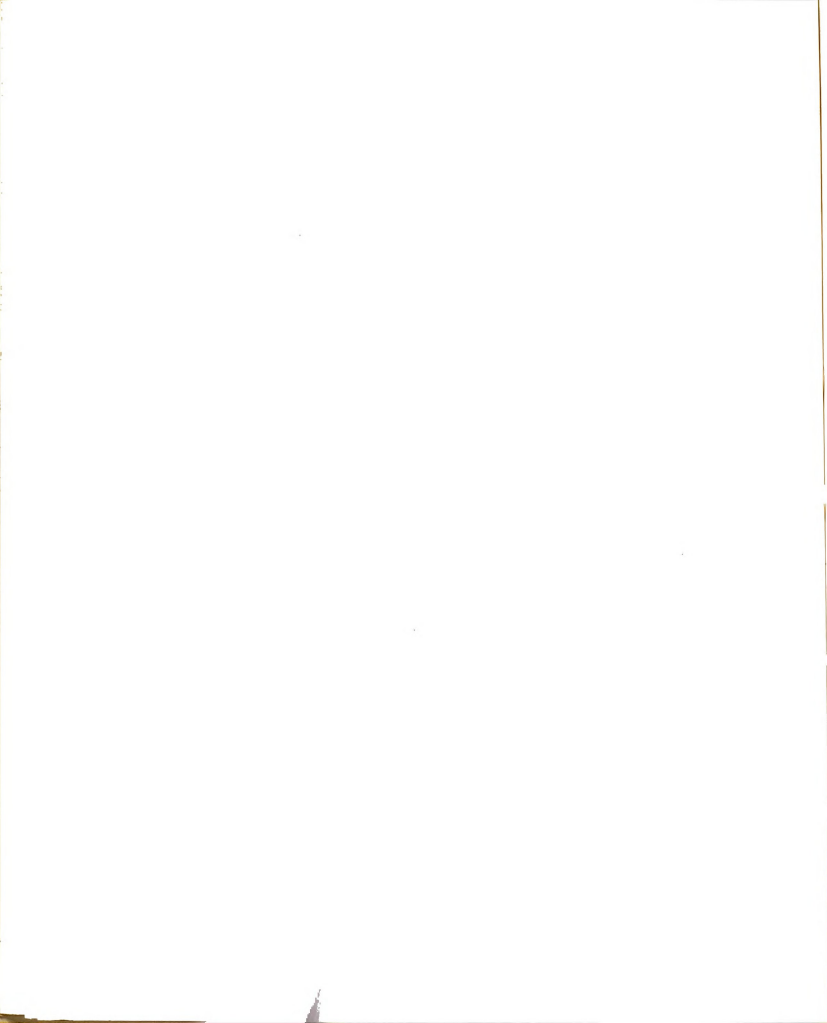
<sup>11</sup>Ibid., III, x, 2, p. 167.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., III, xi, 6, p. 173.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., III, xi, 2, p. 171.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 171-172.

<sup>15</sup>The Art of Poetry, XXII, p. 31.



<sup>16</sup>Max Black, Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 31. Also discussed by Paul Ricoeur in his talk, "The Function of Similarity in Metaphorical Statements," delivered at Michigan State University on May 11, 1973.

<sup>17</sup>The Institutio Oratoria, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), VIII, vi, p. 303.

<sup>18</sup>Huguet defines ressort: "Fait de pousser, de croître." He gives "Rebondissement" as a figurative usage. Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle (Paris: Didier, 1965), 6, 549.

<sup>19</sup>Max Black, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup>The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 96.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup>"Metaphor" in Aristotelian Society Proceedings, 55 (1954-55), 286.

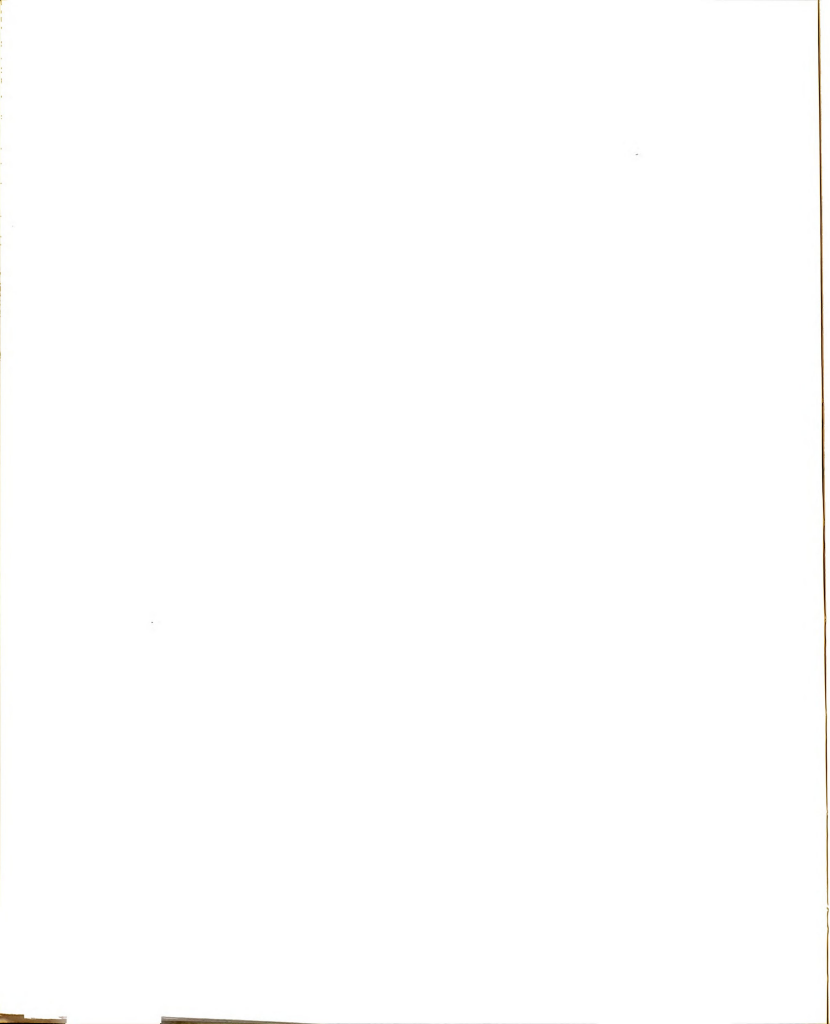
<sup>23</sup>Konrad, ch. III.

<sup>24</sup>Richards, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>26</sup>We recognize too that these are conventional metaphors in sixteenth-century prose. See Carol E. Clark, "Montaigne and the Imagery of Political Discourse in Sixteenth-Century France," French Studies, 24 (1970), 337-354.

<sup>27</sup>The metaphors best served by this perspective of the interaction theory are to be found in the literature, especially poetry, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where the destruction of logical barriers leads to greater audacity and the prizing of unwonted associations in the creation of metaphor. However, even here it has been suggested that similarity has a function. When the poet brings together two completely unrelated things having no grounds in resemblance, does not his metaphor, by bringing them together, create a resemblance where none existed previously? We find no shared attributes between the sun and melancholy or between the sun's rays and blackness until the poet creates a new relationship: "le soleil noir de la Mélancolie" (Gérard de Nerval, "El Desdichado," OEuvres, ed. H. Lemaître (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1958), I, 693). Within this



metaphorical complex we can perceive likenesses resultant of the interaction of terms. Paul Henle calls this an "induced similarity" as opposed to an "antecedent similarity," "Metaphor," in Language, Thought and Culture, ed. Paul Henle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 191.

<sup>28</sup> Richards, p. 119.

<sup>29</sup> Wheelwright, p. 71. He finds the distinction one to be "largely ignored," (ibid.). The view that simile should not be separated from metaphor is shared by R. A. Sayce, Style in French Prose: A Method of Analysis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); Murry, Countries of the Mind; Stephen Ullmann, "The Nature of Imagery," in Language and Style (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), pp. 174-201; and Colin Dickson, "Imagery in Book III of Montaigne's Essais: A Study of Three Chapters," Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1972. Brooke-Rose and Henle take the opposite view.

<sup>30</sup> Style in French Prose, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> See P. N. Furbank, "Do We Need the Terms 'Image' and 'Imagery'?" Critical Quarterly, 9 (1967), 335-345.

<sup>32</sup> Traité de stylistique française, 3e éd. (Genève: Klincksieck, 1951), I, 184.

<sup>33</sup> S. J. Brown, The World of Imagery (New York: Haskell House, 1927), p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 30, quoting from M. Arsène Darmester's La Vie des mots.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 35. He provides numerous examples of familiar abstract words and their concrete origins, pp. 33-41.

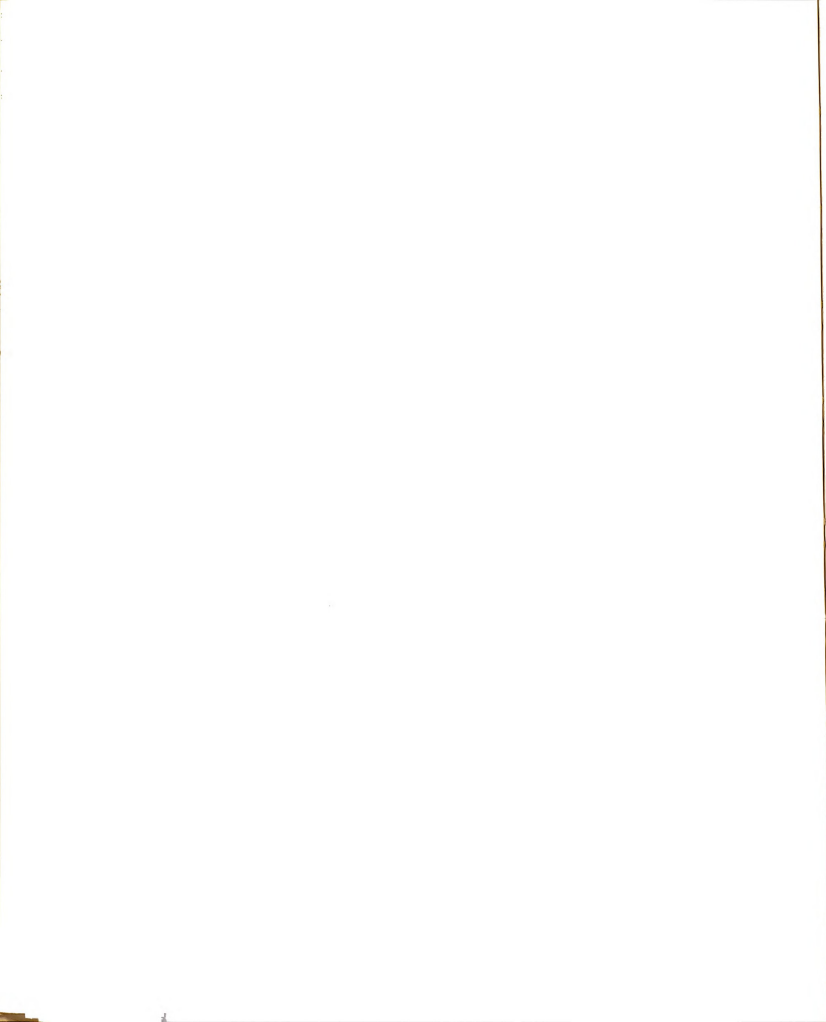
<sup>36</sup> Traité, p. 195.

<sup>37</sup> Pléiade ed., p. 1646, n. 2 to p. 923.

<sup>38</sup> For a more developed investigation into the relationship of truth and language in Montaigne, see Dilys Veronica Winegrad, "Expression and Being and the Essais of Montaigne," Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1970. Especially her section on LANGUAGE, pp. 14-65.

<sup>39</sup> "Montaigne, qui condamne le vocabulaire pédantesque de la Pléiade, devance ici Malherbe disant 'que les crocheteurs du port-au-foin étaient ses maîtres pour le langage,'" Pléiade ed., pp. 1473-74, n. 1 to p. 172.





<sup>40</sup> See Joachim Du Bellay, La Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1966), Livre I, ch. VIII and Livre II, ch. VI.

<sup>41</sup> "On lit dans l'Abrégé d'Art Poétique de Ronsard: 'Tu practiqueras bien souvent les artisans de tous métiers, comme de marine, verrerie, fauconnerie, et principalement les artisans de fer, orfèvres, tondeurs, maréchaux, minérailliers, et de là tu tireras maintes belles et vives comparaisons.'" Pléiade ed., p. 1633, n. 4 to p. 851.

<sup>42</sup> With respect to Montaigne's various references to the naïveté and lack of artfulness in his style, Barbara Bowen comments: "of these and other similar statements there are three possible interpretations. (1) Montaigne believes exactly what he says, and it's true (Friedrich); (2) Montaigne believes exactly what he says because he is not aware that his style is very different from this (Thibaudent, Gray); and (3) Montaigne is perfectly well aware that his style is not like this, and he is indulging in deliberate self-deprecation (Baraz, Parslow, Traeger). The last interpretation seems to me the only possible one; Montaigne's style is much too well-balanced, too intellectual, and too metaphorical to be unconscious. . . ." The Age of Bluff: Paradox and Ambiguity in Rabelais and Montaigne (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 114.

<sup>43</sup> Le Style de Montaigne (Paris: Nizet, 1958), p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> Owen Thomas, Metaphor, p. 3.

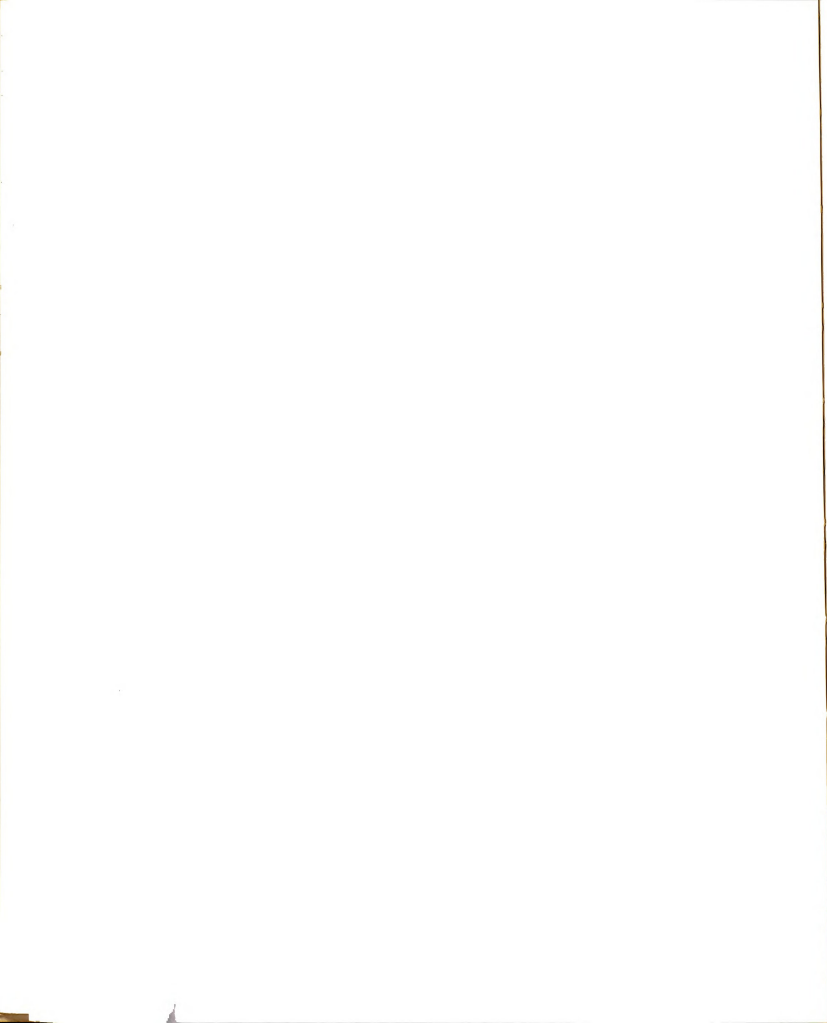
<sup>45</sup> Colin Murray Turbayne, Myth of Metaphor (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>47</sup> Baraz, p. 61. And he explains: "De là le caractère intellectuel très prononcé de l'imagisme de ce temps. Les néoplatoniciens pensent que l'image symbolique peut révéler les secrets du monde supra-sensible. . . . Les néopétrarquistes puisent abondamment dans la répertoire des images métaphysiques (notamment celles de la lumière) et dans une mythologie interprétée spéculativement. Les auteurs d'emblèmes sont d'accord pour attribuer à leur art une fonction didactique . . . ," pp. 61-62.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>49</sup> Sayce, A Critical Exploration, p. 179.



<sup>50</sup> "At the heart of Montaigne's conception of poetry is the Platonic notion of the poet's fury or madness, which was already familiar from its adoption by Ronsard and the Pléiade. Montaigne perhaps carries it further and certainly understands it better." Ibid., p. 44. See I:37, 227-228c.

<sup>51</sup> The Scar of Montaigne, p. 77.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Bowen sees this expression as "a boutade, and a rather daring one in view of the theological controversies of the times," not as a "serious statement." The Age of Bluff, p. 117. While I agree that the phrase should not be interpreted literally, I feel she too readily dismisses the metaphorical truth involved.

<sup>56</sup> "Le Quadricentenaire d'un philosophe," Revue de Paris, janv.-fév. 1933, p. 767.

<sup>57</sup> Gray, p. 153, n. 7. The extraordinary discrepancy in the figures of the two counts is due to the fact that Schnabel includes expressions which are hardly metaphorical and lists recurring images which appear only once in Thibaudet's list. Gray discovers still other images which are not in the list of either Thibaudet or Schnabel. For his own purposes, Gray finds it would be "impossible de donner une liste ou même de parler de toutes les images de Montaigne" and restricts his discussion to the images he finds most striking, *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> "Des images dans Montaigne d'après le chapitre 'De l'institution des enfants,'" in Mélanges Edmond Huguet (Paris: Boivin, 1940), pp. 110 and 118.

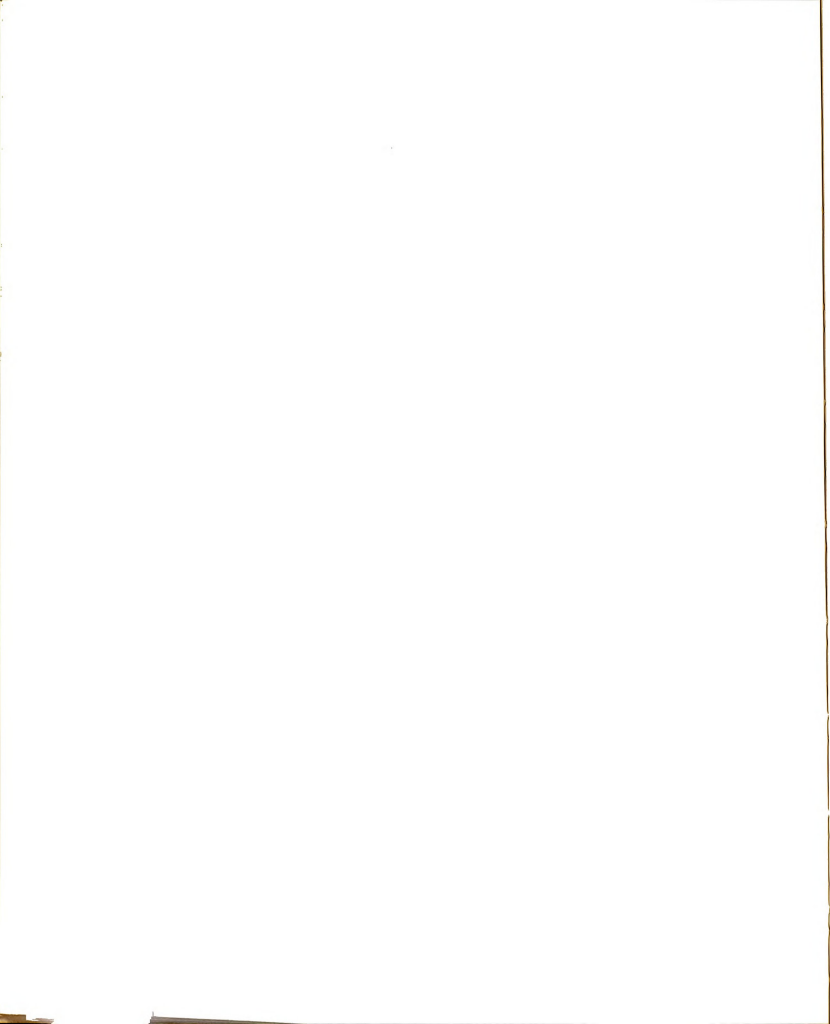
<sup>59</sup> L'Etre et la connaissance, p. 54, n. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Le Style de Montaigne, p. 139.

<sup>61</sup> "Les comparaisons dans les 'Essais' de Montaigne," RHLF, 66 (1966), 596. He counts 32 similes in I:26, 97 in II:12 and 41 in III:10.

<sup>62</sup> Delègue considers metaphors introduced by the verb être as similes, believing Montaigne's omission of the 'like' or 'as' to be a means of avoiding needless repetition, *ibid.*, p. 595.

<sup>63</sup> "Imagery in Book III of Montaigne's Essais, p. 32, n. 1.



<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>66</sup> "D'après la statistique effectuée par Walter Schnabel, il y aurait 454 métaphores dans le texte de 1580, 1582 et 1587; 450 dans celui de 1588 bien que sa longueur ne dépasse pas un tiers du texte initial; 359 dans les additions ultérieures, dont le volume représente pourtant à peine un cinquième de celui des Essais de 1588," Baraz, p. 56.

<sup>67</sup> "Le Quadricentenaire," p. 767.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 767-768.

<sup>69</sup> The catalogue with some commentary is reproduced at the end of Thibaudet's Montaigne in the text established by Floyd Gray from Thibaudet's notes, pp. 505-566.

<sup>70</sup> Gray, pp. 166-173.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 210-222.

<sup>72</sup> "Image and Introspective Imagination in Montaigne's Essais," PMLA, 88 (1973), 282.

<sup>73</sup> Gray, p. 155. Whenever Gray speaks of 'image' in this chapter, he is referring to metaphor. See p. 137, n. 10.

<sup>74</sup> "Les comparaisons," pp. 598-601.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 606.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> L'Etre et la connaissance, p. 60.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

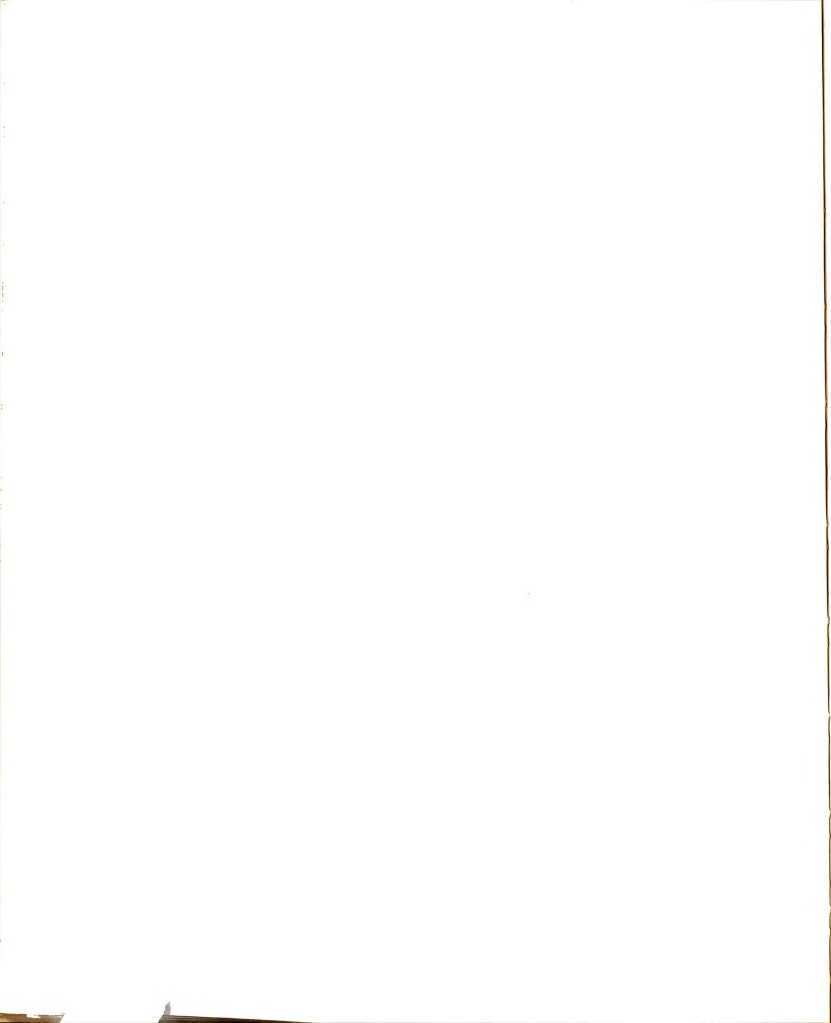
<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 68-85.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-85.

<sup>82</sup> "Des images dans Montaigne." Gray's analysis of the same essay gives a more coherent and complete result.

<sup>83</sup> "Les images dans l'essai 'De mesnager sa volonté' (III:10): Quelques emprunts de Montaigne," Mémorial du Ier Congrès des Etudes Montaignistes (Bordeaux: Tafford, 1964), pp. 101-107.



<sup>84</sup>"Imagery in Book III." Dickson examines III:3, III:10 and III:13.

<sup>85</sup>"Montaigne and the Imagery of Political Discourse," and "Seneca's Letters to Lucilius as a Source of Montaigne's Imagery," BHR, 30 (1968), 249-266.

<sup>86</sup>"Imagery of Political Discourse," p. 337.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

<sup>88</sup>See Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935). Lillian Herlands Hornstein shows the inaccuracy and inadequacy of Spurgeon's method in "Analysis of Imagery: A Critique of Literary Method," PMLA, 57 (1942), 638-653.

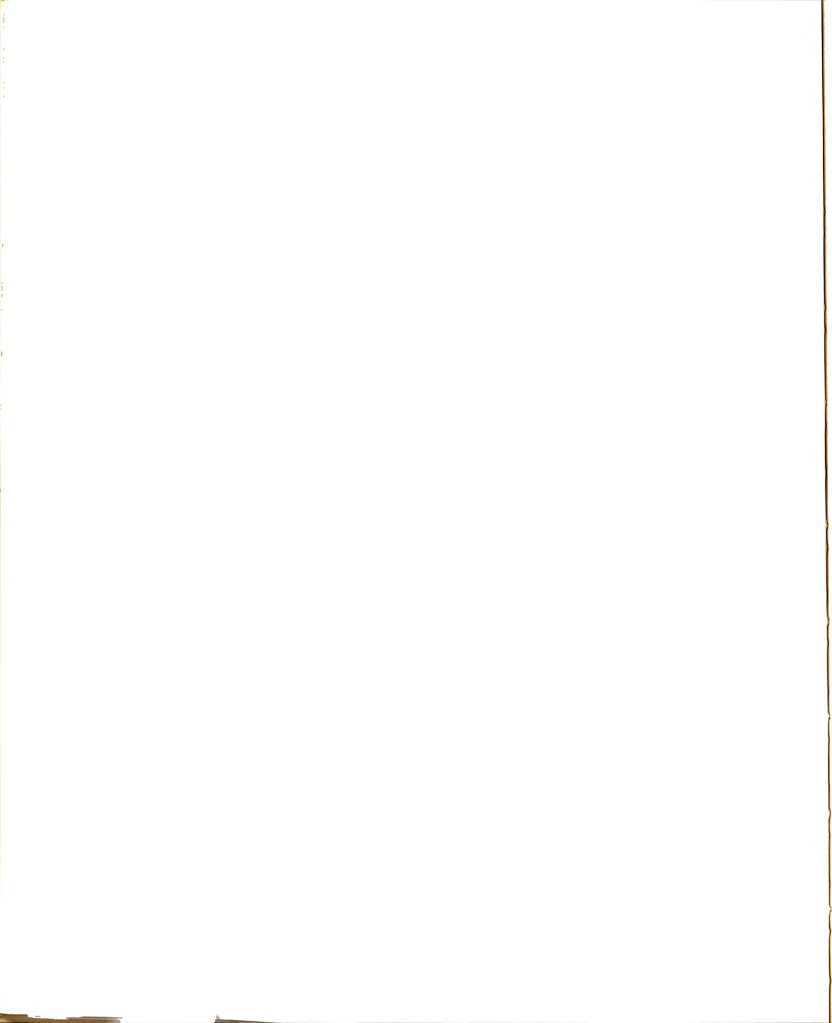
<sup>89</sup>Clark, "Imagery of Political Discourse," pp. 348-349.

<sup>90</sup>"Seneca's Letters to Lucilius," pp. 233-266.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., pp. 262 and 265.

<sup>92</sup>Montaigne, p. 422, n. 327.



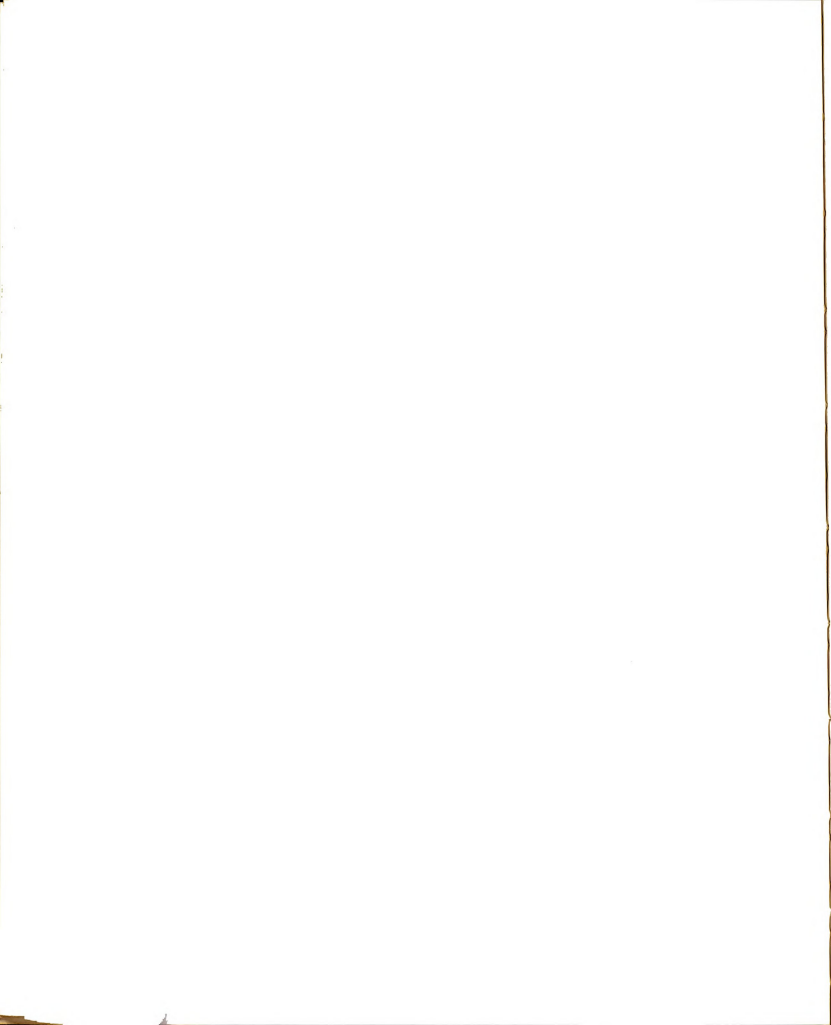


### CHAPTER THREE

#### METAPHORS OF THE WORLD AND MAN EN BRANLE

Drawing from experience of the concrete to give expression to the abstract inclinations of his thought, the metaphors of Montaigne serve to give body to his writing. His use of figures works to stabilize that which is mobile. The world "en branle," the fluctuating nature of man and his own elusive self become fixed and palpable through the verbal creation of the Essais without ever relinquishing their mobile aspect. Words are skillfully chosen to seize things in their active state---in movement, as Aristotle specifies<sup>1</sup>---so that which is fixed is fixed in its mobility. In this dual capacity, we can see in Montaigne a veritable language of paradox.<sup>2</sup>

"Ce grand monde . . . c'est le miroüer où il nous faut regarder pour nous connaistre de bon biais" (I:26, 157a). The world for Montaigne serves as a reflector, sending back to us images of ourselves which we cannot perceive without mediating our focus. Looking to the world we find "tant d'humeurs, de sectes, de jugemens, d'opinions, de loix et de coustumes. . . . Tant de remuements d'estat et changements de fortune publique. . . . Tant de noms, tant de victoires et conquestes ensevelies sous l'oubliance. . . . Tant de milliasses d'hommes enterrez avant nous . . ." (ibid.), and we situate ourselves in "cette mesme image du monde qui coule pendant que nous y sommes" (III:6, 886b).

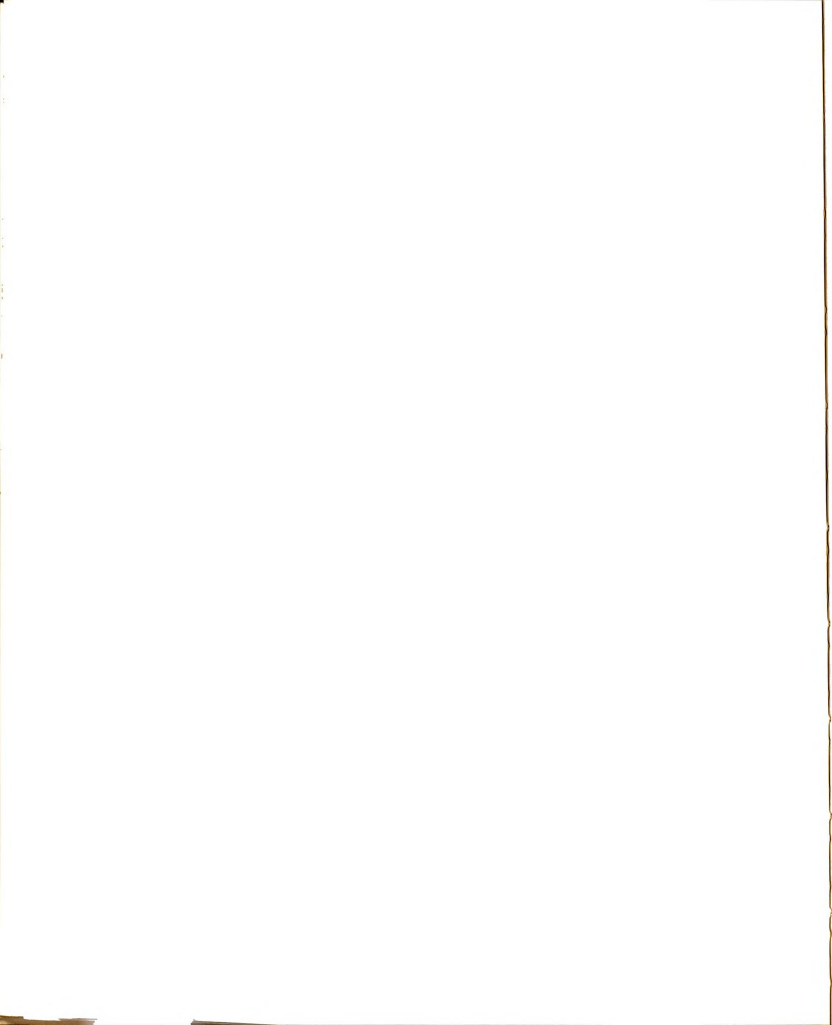


The verb metaphor couler, attributing to the world the fluid properties of water, conveys Montaigne's experience of "un mouvement sans logique et une succession sans lien."<sup>3</sup> The kind of motion Montaigne ascribes to the branloire perenne is emphasized in similar images from the "Apologie": "avec la matiere coulante et fluante tousjours" (II:12, 588a); "et toutes choses mortelles vont coulant et roulant sans cesse" (586a); "c'est une mesme nature qui roule son cours" (445a). Akin to the flow of water is the roll of waves or of a cylindrical body--movements propelled forward by their own perpetual momentum.

But other images of nature and the world point to a sense of order implicit in the cosmic movement. Montaigne refers to the earth as a machine (II:12, 424a and III:10, 995b), a metaphor suggesting a systematic whole of parts functioning together. On one level, the world serves as a miroüer providing us images of ourselves in the progressive flow of unstable events; but on another level, it reflects an intelligent order, the image of a creator, seen as architect and builder:

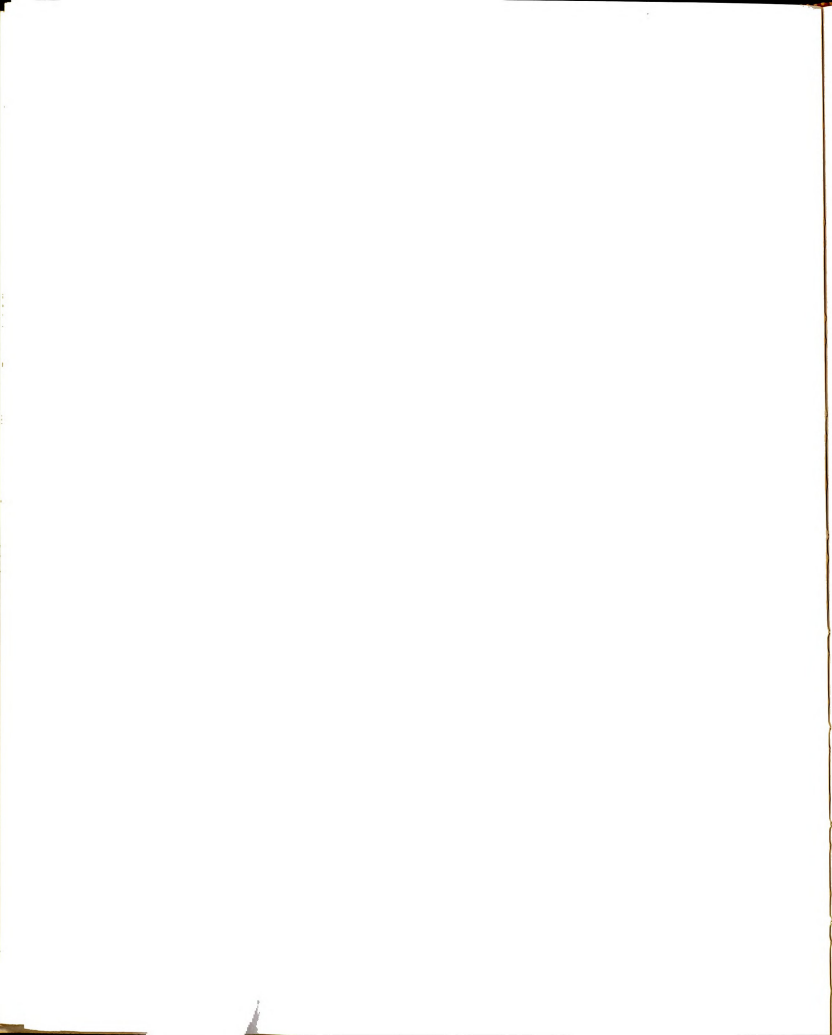
Aussi n'est-il pas croyable que cette machine n'ait quelques marques empreintes de la main de ce grand architecte, et qu'il n'y ait quelque image és choses du monde raportant aucunement à l'ouvrier qui les a basties et formées (424a).

As a creation, the world en branle is a unified whole, an object of contemplation, though always beyond man's powers of comprehension: "ce monde est un temple tressainct, dedans lequel l'homme est introduit pour y contempler des statues" (424b), "une poësie oenigmatique" . . . une peinture voilée et tenebreuse, entreluisant d'une infinie varieté



de faux jours à exercer nos conjectures" (II:12, 518c). Serving man as an instructive force, nature is frequently personified<sup>5</sup> in the Essais as "nostre mere nature" (I:26, 157a) or "un doux guide" (III:13, 1094b), a voice which can reveal the unity of the cosmic order, "si nous sommes capables d'entendre" (424b). But nature's poetry is "oenigmatique," the painting is "voilée," and while Montaigne "queste partout sa piste," he finds that "nous l'avons confondue de traces artificielles" (III:13, 1094b).

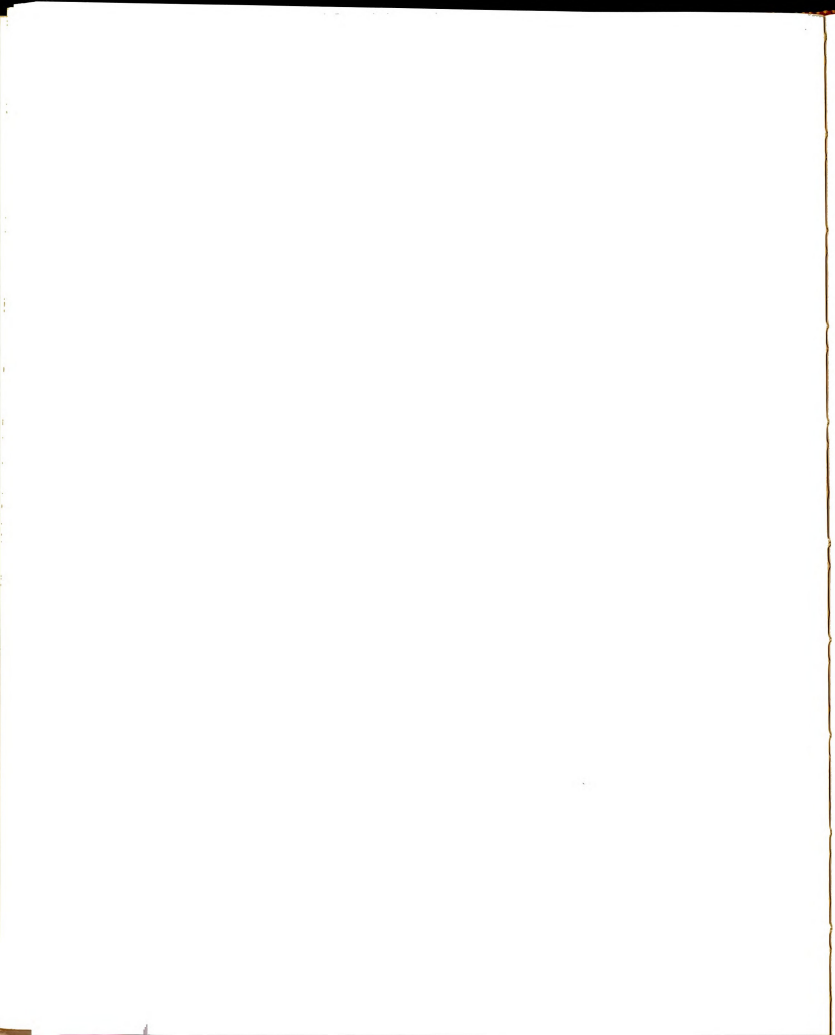
That the paths of nature are never completely decipherable is due not only to man's inadequacies, but also to the play of the unpredictable force of chance, the role of fortune personified throughout the Essais.<sup>6</sup> "L'inconstance du bransle divers de la fortune fait qu'elle nous doit presenter toute espee de visages" (I:34, 217a). The intervening hand of fortune (I:24, 126a) and her various faces are the manifestations of an invisible power which Montaigne transfers into the image of wind: "selon que le vent des occasions nous emporte" (II:1, 316a), "Non seulement le vent des accidens me remue" (318b). In the interaction of wind and fortune, movement is experienced as a tangible force, not seen but felt. We witness not the actual branle of wind/fortune, but its varying effects. Wind, like fortune, can be gentle and beneficial or violent and harmful. Montaigne likens the havoc wreaked by fortune to the destructive force of storms: "comme les orages et tempestes se piquent contre l'orgueil et hautaineté de nos bastimens, il y ait aussi là haut des esprits envieux des grandeurs de ça bas" (I:19, 78a). Here the comparison to the action of storms



and tempests qualifies the personification of fortune as "des esprits envieux"--both images implying the extra-terrestrial source of this unwarranted force. Another metaphorical personification, "Les dieux s'esbattent de nous à la pelote, et nous agitent à toutes mains" (III:9, 937b), conveys the capricious turns of fortune as a game of pelota in which the events of men and the world serve as balls tossed among the gods for their amusement. Recognizing the unavoidability of this force which moves us, beyond our volition and understanding, Montaigne consents to be its "serviteur" (III:12, 1024b) and recognizes its benevolent disposition to him: "Et suis homme, en outre, qui me commets volontiers à la fortune et me laisse aller à corps perdu entre ses bras. De quoy, jusques à cette heure, j'ay eu plus d'occasion de me louer que de me plaindre" (1038b). Montaigne's use of the word fortune seems at times synonymous with his concept of nature as the principle governing the movement and organization of the world. For its suggestion that this order is random and irrational, an un-Christian and Machiavellian concept, the word provoked objections from the Roman censors.<sup>7</sup> But ultimately, nature, for Montaigne, is the superior unifying principle in the flow of movement which characterizes the world, and fortune, the 'wind' of incalculable change impeding our perception of an overriding unity.<sup>8</sup>

Montaigne's conception of life, "un mouvement inegal, irregulier et multiforme" (III:3, 796b), grows out of his vision of the world's harmonious diversity. Both find expression in a musical image:





Nostre vie est composée, comme l'armonie du monde, de choses contraires, aussi de divers tons, douz et aspres, aigus et plats, mols et graves. Le musicien qui n'en aymeroit que les uns, que voudroit il dire? Il faut qu'il s'en sçache servir en commun et les mesler. Et nous aussi, les biens et les maux, qui sont consubstantiels à nostre vie (III:13, 1068b).

The analogy to the harmony of the world (what might be termed une image affaiblie) is developed into a more vivid metaphor through the succession of antithetical qualities--"sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, soft and loud"<sup>9</sup>--parallel to "les biens et les maux" of the tenor. Life and music, "nous" and "le musicien," interact in the contrasting qualities "consubstantiels" to each. Though not a frequent image in the Essais,<sup>10</sup> music is ideally suited to expressing Montaigne's concept of life, for its essence derives from sounds in progressive movement.

Just as the musician introduces order and harmony into the progression of "divers tons" to render them musical, we are charged with ordering the events of our lives into a harmonious whole. "Mon mestier et mon art, c'est vivre" (II:6, 359c). . . . "J'ay mis tous mes efforts à former ma vie. Voylà mon mestier et mon ouvrage" (II:37, 764a). The image of life as an art, a trade, is developed more concretely in the following metaphorical sequence:<sup>11</sup>

[A] A qui n'a dressé en gros sa vie à une certaine fin, il est impossible de disposer les actions particulieres. Il est impossible de renger les pieces, à qui n'a une forme du total en sa teste. [B] A quoy faire la provision des couleurs, à qui ne sçait ce qu'il a à peindre? [A] Aucun ne fait certain dessain de sa vie, et n'en deliberons qu'à parcelles. [C] L'archier doit premierement sçavoir où il vise, et puis y accommoder la main, l'arc, la corde, la flesche et les mouvemens. [A] Nos conseils fourvoyent, parce qu'ils n'ont pas d'adresse et de but. [D] Nul vent fait pour celuy qui n'a point de port destiné (II:1, 320a).

The passage illustrates well the progression by analogy which characterizes the branle of Montaigne's thought and writing. The tenor (A) interacts first with (B), then (C), then (D), three distinct vehicles all contributing to the same metaphorical complex. The painter and his colors, the archer and his bow, the sailor and wind, each requires an object, a goal, in order to direct his movements. And so we with the separate 'pieces' of our lives. The last image, "Nul vent . . . port destiné," emphasizes life as movement in need of purpose, life conceived as a voyage, an image densely incorporated into the language of the Essais.<sup>12</sup>

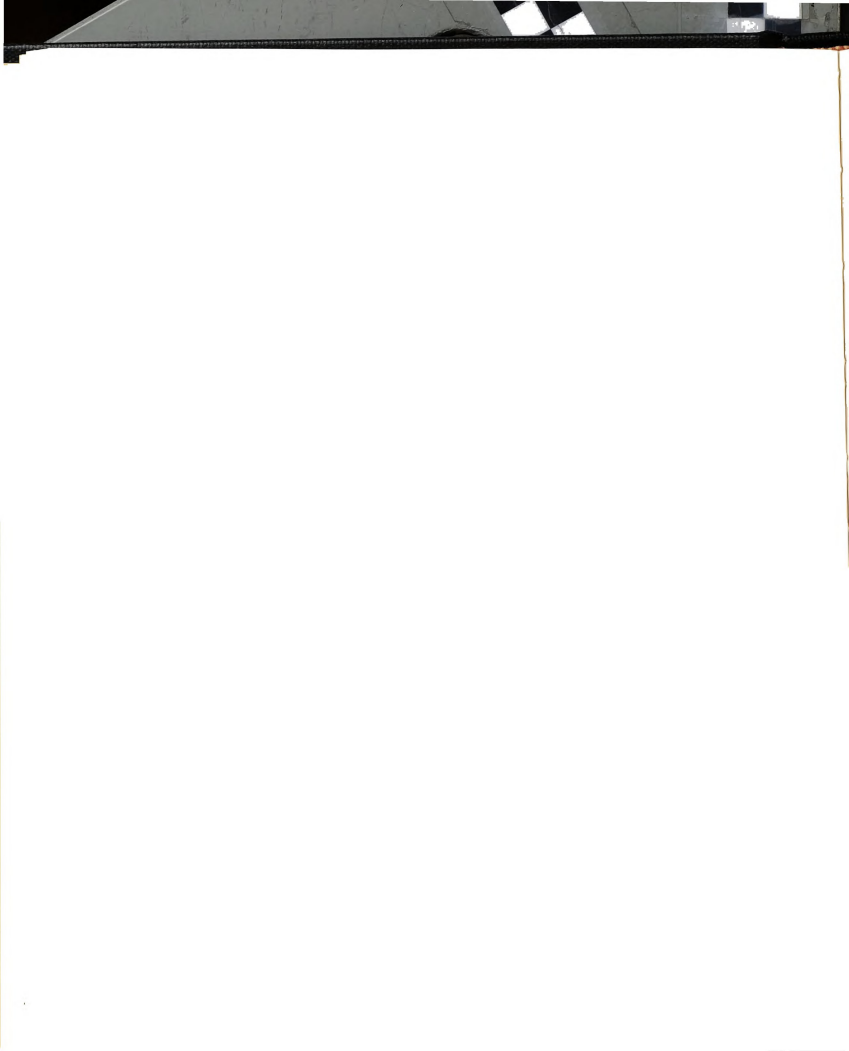
Montaigne refers to life as "cet humain voyage" (III:3, 806b) and to "le voyage de ma vie" (III:9, 955b), looking upon life as a passage, a movement in time through the physical life cycle. "Tous les jours vont à la mort" (I:20, 94c); "L'homme marche entier vers son croist et vers son décroist" (III:2, 795b). The voyage image is one which expresses man's submission to a movement over which he has no control as well as his potential capacity to determine the directions in which he 'travels.' On the larger plan it is nature who leads us "d'une douce pente et comme insensible, peu à peu, de degré en degré, elle nous roule dans ce miserable estat et nous y apprivoise" (I:20, 89b). Within nature's plan man can undertake a "certaine voie" (II:1, 316a) if only he would set his mind to it, "mais nul n'y a pensé. . . . Nostre façon ordinaire, c'est d'aller d'après les inclinations de nostre appetit, à gauche, à dextre, contre-mont, contre-bas" (ibid.). Man's voyage through life is characterized

as a walk, "trouble at chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle" (III:2, 782b). And his staggering gait is not improved with his advance through nature's cycle, for the aging process works to exaggerate his unsteadiness: "Il feroit beau estre vieil si nous ne marchions que vers l'amendement. C'est un mouvement d'yvroigne titubant, vertigineux, informe, ou des jonchets que l'air manie casuellement selon soy" (III:9, 941-942c). The image of the drunken walk is allied to the sway of reeds in the wind, a movement subject to exterior forces. Lacking firmness of will and mind, man's gait fluctuates with the designs of fortune and nature as well as with the inner bramble of "les inclinations de [son] appetit."

But there are possibilities for choice. Man may resist or yield to the exterior and interior brambles, quicken or slacken his pace, and to some degree control his experience of life as movement. Montaigne maintains that "Il faut courir le mauvais et se rasseoir au bon" (III:13, 1091b), and he criticizes those "qui ne pensent point avoir meilleur compte de leur vie que de la couler et eschapper, de la passer, gauchir, et, autant qu'il est en eux, ignorer et fuir" (1092b). The gestures of letting flow, escape, pass by, sidestep and flee all contrast with the verb se rasseoir. Rather than being rushed along in the flow of universal movement, man can himself impose stability, taking hold of the good, for life for Montaigne proves to be "prisable et commode" as well as "perdable de sa condition" (ibid.). Since the stability Montaigne experiences is an interior one, we shall examine the form it takes in a later section dealing with the images of the self.

The quality of life finds expression in images alternating between an opposition and a concession to the movement of flow. Consistent submission to the inner branle results in too unidirectional a path, for life is "un mouvement inegal, irregulier et multiforme. Ce n'est pas estre amy de soy et moins encore maistre, c'est en estre esclave, de se suivre incessamment et estre si pris à ses inclinations qu'on n'en puisse fourvoyer, qu'on ne les puisse tordre" (III:3, 796b). And too masterful a control of exterior events (as in the case of powerful rulers) produces a flaccid facility devoid of any pleasure: "c'est glisser, cela, ce n'est pas aller; c'est dormir, ce n'est pas vivre" (III:7, 897b). The passive actions of sliding and sleeping emphasize the active nature of aller and vivre. To live, in the fullest sense, is to pursue active, volitional movement. Yet, Montaigne praises "une vie glissante, sombre et muette. . . . Je suis nay d'une famille qui a coulé sans esclat et sans tumulte" (III:10, 999b). He counsels those caught between the warring parties of his time "de couler en eau trouble sans y vouloir pescher" (III:1, 771b), and again, "Il y a tant de mauvais pas que pour le plus seur, il faut un peu legierement et superficiellement couler ce monde. (c) Il le faut glisser, non pas s'y enfoncer" (III:9, 982b). The images of flowing and gliding take on a positive, active force as a way of responding to the surface fluctuation and turmoil of the world. Starobinski observes:

L'imagination dynamique de Montaigne ne connaît pas seulement le mouvement-écoulement et le mouvement-geste: elle invente leur résultante, un composé mixte où les deux expériences contraires se mêlent et se confondent. . . . Le glissement flexible est la forme achevée et heureuse du mouvement composé. . . . Ce n'est presque plus un acte: c'est un glissement guidé. . . .<sup>13</sup>



Whereas Montaigne would have us "se rasseoir au bon," he advocates gliding over troubled waters "sans y vouloir pescher," "non pas s'y enfoncer." In contrast to the pejorative value of glisser in "c'est glisser, cela, ce n'est pas aller," the metaphor becomes a meliorative one in a different context, depending on the degree to which glisser suggests a volitional movement.

The images of life as movement, life as a voyage, find their completion in the corresponding images of death as "un port tresasseuré . . . le bout de la fusée" (II:3, 331a). The maladies of old age are "symptomes des longues années, comme des longs voyages la chaleur, les pluies et les vents" (III:13, 1067c). Indeed all maladies, even those which doctors say "n'aller point de droit fil à la mort" are fatal: "Qu'importe s'ils y vont par accident, et s'ils glissent et gauchissent aysément vers la voye qui nous y meine" (III:13, 1070b). Death is the ultimate voyage, the one to which the "long chemin" (II:37, 737a) of life leads; and we prepare ourselves for death as for a journey: "plions bagage; prenons de bonne heure congé de la compagnie" (I:39, 236a).

Montaigne conceives of death as "une profondeur muette et obscure, qui [l'] engloutit d'un saut et accable en un instant d'un puissant sommeil" (III:9, 949b). The approximation of death to sleep as a passage into a state of unconsciousness, "une profondeur muette et obscure," is more than a literary metaphor for Montaigne. It represents his personal experience on the occasion of the fall from his horse, described in "De l'exercitation:"

Il me sembloit que ma vie ne me tenoit plus qu'au bout des lèvres; je fermois les yeux pour ayder, ce me sembloit, à la pousser hors, et prenois plaisir à m'alanguir et à me laisser aller. C'estoit une imagination qui ne faisoit que nager superficiellement en mon ame, aussi tendre et aussi foible que tout le reste, mais à la verité non seulement exempte de desplaisir, ains meslée à cette douceur que sentent ceux qui se laissent glisser au sommeil (II:6, 354a). . . .

Je me laissoy couler si doucement et d'une façon si douce et si aisée que je ne sens guiere autre action moins poissante que celle-là estoit (357a).

We are struck by the recurring verbs conveying the composite motion of a "glissement guidé." The action of allowing oneself to aller, glisser, couler into unconsciousness is experienced as a pleasurable sensation, and Montaigne states "C'eust esté sans mentir une mort bien heureuse" (357a). Though his perception of his slipping into unconsciousness is "une imagination qui ne faisoit que nager superficiellement en mon ame," his grasp of the situation permits him a sense of participation in the élan which carries him toward the sleeplike state. The ideal death for Montaigne would be "une mort agie,"<sup>14</sup> one permitting "à voir escouler la vie peu à peu" (II:13, 591a). The mastery of consciousness over its own descent into oblivion appears to be the final victory in the struggle to take possession of one's elusive and fluid life.

The experience of movement in Montaigne is both an internal and external one. To the inner branle of life's flow toward death is joined the impetus of human institutions determined by custom and usage, taking shape in the Essais in images of flow and metamorphosis. The laws of the country are "cette mer flotante des opinions d'un peuple ou d'un Prince, qui me peindront la justice d'autant de couleurs et la



reformeront en autant de visages qu'il y aura en eux de changemens de passion" (II:12, 563a). The image of an 'undulating sea' conveys an impression of a precarious mobility, reinforced in the ensuing image of vacillation--the portrait of justice painted in as many colors and redone with as many faces as there are whims in the lawmakers. Custom is also the arbiter in matters of philosophy and les sciences humaines which metamorphose according to usage:

on ne regarde plus ce que les monnoyes poisent et valent, mais chacun à son tour les reçoit selon le pris que l'approbation commune et le cours leur donne. On ne plaide pas de l'alloy, mais de l'usage: ainsi se mettent également toutes choses (II:12, 542a).

From the context the reader understands the monetary image to correspond to the value of doctrines in all fields of learning. The image is first developed in some detail: weight and quality of metal are ignored in determining the value of coins, common approbation and currency decide the rate of exchange; the last phrase, "ainsi se mettent, . . ." relates the vehicle back to the tenor, concluding the analogy as an express simile.<sup>15</sup>

Man's relationship to custom is a passive one: "la coustume et l'usage de la vie commune nous emporte. La plus part de nos actions se conduisent par exemple, non par choix" (III:5, 830b). This idea is further concretized in images of custom as a river:

[A] Après la premiere qui part, les opinions s'entrepoussent suivant le vent [B] comme les flots (III:10, 991c). [A] Les loix prennent leur autorité de la possession et de l'usage; il est dangereux de les ramener à leur naissance; elles grossissent et s'ennoblissent en roulant, [B] comme nos rivières; [C] suivez les contremont jusques à leur source, ce n'est qu'un petit surjon d'eau à peine reconnoissable, qui s'enorgueillit ainsi et se fortifie en vieillissant. Voyez les anciennes considerations qui ont donné le premier branle à ce fameux torrent . . . (II:12, 567a).

In both instances, what begins as a verb metaphor (A) is given precise expression in the simile (B). The second passage continues the image still further with a metaphorical development (C) which pursues the movement to its source. Montaigne's ideas on law and custom expand and take shape in terms of his developing image. Beginning as "un petit surjon d'eau," a simple dictum "s'enorgueillit . . . et se fortifie" with usage, growing into "ce fameux torrent" which carries everything in its wake.

Man's own freedom of movement is hampered by the force of custom. Montaigne speaks of "la barriere de la coustume, [qui] a soigneusement bridé toutes nos avenues" (I:36, 221a). In this context, custom is viewed in its fixity vis à vis individual endeavor. Elsewhere it is seen as a "masque" (I:23, 116a) "[qui] nous desrobbe le vrai visage des choses" (115a), for the true face of things is mobile, changing, incompatible with the rigidity of custom. But in its manner of operation, custom is an active and aggressive power: "le principal effect de sa puissance, c'est de nous saisir et empieter de telle sorte, qu'à peine soit-il en nous de nous r'avoir de sa prinse" (114a)--a personified force which takes us unaware in its fixed and determined hold.

The state and society are embodied in the Essais in images of a whole of parts fortuitously joined and constituting a precariously stable entity: "la société des hommes se tient et se coust, à quelque pris que ce soit" (III:9, 933b); "La nécessité compose les hommes et les assemble. Cette cousture fortuite se forme après en loix" (934b);

"une police, c'est comme un bastiment de diverses pieces jointes ensemble, d'une telle liaison, qu'il est impossible d'en esbranler une que tout le corps ne s'en sente" (I:23, 118a). The traditional analogy of the state to a building<sup>16</sup> provides Montaigne with a vivid means of expressing the danger of corruption he witnesses in his times: "Ce sont erreurs superficielles, mais pourtant de mauvais pronostique; et sommes advertis que le massif se desment, quand nous voyons fendiller l'enduct et la crouste de nos parois" (I:43, 261b). What might appear to be but a 'crack in the wall' is indicative of a weakness in the solid masonry structure. Viewing the structure of the state with the eye of a cautious architect, Montaigne expresses his political conservatism as a policy of preventive maintenance:

Rien ne presse un estat que l'innovation: . . . Quand quelque piece se démanche, on peut l'estayer. . . . Mais d'entreprendre à refondre une si grande masse et à changer les fondements d'un si grand bastiment, c'est à faire à ceux (c) qui pour descraiser effacent, (b) qui veulent amender les deffauts particuliers par une confusion universelle (III:9, 935b).

A sagging edifice can be supported much more readily than it can be rebuilt. There is progress in remedying "les deffauts particuliers" of society but none in demolishing the whole and attempting to lay a totally new foundation. This is true for Montaigne because he maintains a belief in the basic stability of the state. Though it is subject to branle,

Tout ce qui branle ne tombe pas. La contexture d'un si grand corps tient à plus d'un clou. Il tient mesme par son antiquité; comme les vieux bastimens, ausquels l'aage a desrobé le pied, sans crouste et sans cyment, qui pourtant vivent et se soustiennent en leur propre poix (III:9, 938b).

What has weight and solidity offers resistance to movement and change, and it is to these qualities in the state that Montaigne looks for an equilibrium in the external bramble of his world.

A frequent metaphor of the state in the Essais is that of the human body. The image of a living organism brings into play the active functioning of parts within the vital whole and the polarities of sickness and health. Witness to the social, political and religious upheavals of sixteenth-century France, Montaigne portrays her as a sick body replete with "mauvaises humeurs" (II:23, 663a), "ces humeurs peccantes" (664a), which maintain her in a state of febre so grave as to threaten her ruin. Left unchecked, the infectious disease spreads to contaminate the entire body: "En ces maladies populaires, on peut distinguer sur le commencement les sains des malades; mais quand elles viennent à durer, comme la nostre, tout le corps s'en sent, et la teste et les talons" (III:12, 1018b). The ensuing wars intended to purge France of her corruption prove to aggravate the illness rather than alleviate it, for they work as a dangerously poisonous medicine:

les humeurs qu'elle vouloit purger en nous, elle les a eschauffées, exasperées et aigries par le conflict, et si nous est demeurée dans le corps. Elle n'a sceu nous purger par sa foiblesse, et nous a cependant affoiblis, en maniere que nous ne la pouvons vuider non plus, et ne recevons de son operation que des douleurs longues et intestines (I:23, 121b).

Opposed to the wars, Montaigne objects to "une drogue si mortelle" (III:12, 1019b); his conservative political stance questions the

revolutionaries who seek to "guarir les maladies par la mort" (III:9, 935b). The richly developed medical images interlock with the architectural metaphors in shaping Montaigne's political vision. Just as he expressed confidence in the capacity of a sturdy building to withstand deterioration, he recognizes the potential of a living organism to survive the ravages of disease:

Nostre police se porte mal; il en a esté pourtant de plus malades sans mourir" (III:9, 937b). . . .

Qui sçait si Dieu voudra qu'il en advienne comme des corps qui se purgent et remettent en meilleur estat par longues et griefves maladies, lesquelles leur rendent une santé plus entiere et plus nette que celle qu'elles leur avoient osté? (939b).

While the building image conveys the sense of weight and stability Montaigne attributes to political and social institutions, the body image allows for the tumultuous branle at work within the structure and for the hope of progress in the organic healing process.

Still another image of the state and social institutions, that of a moving vehicle, enters into Montaigne's political conceptions. Confronted with the dangers of radical social change, he would like to "planter une cheville à nostre rouë et l'arrester en ce point" (II:17, 639a) for fear of where the rolling wheel will take him. Recalling the image of the world where "toutes choses vont coulant et roulant sans cesse," the wheel metaphor stresses the forceful momentum of social movements. In this perspective, the nation itself is conceived as a "Pauvre vaisseau, que les flots, les vents et le pilote tirassent à si contraires desseins!" (III:10, 994b). The forces assailing the ship come not only from within: "Peu de vaisseaux fondent de leur propre

poix et sans violence estrangere" (III:9, 938b). But again, as with the building and body metaphors, the image functions to express Montaigne's confidence in the strength of the state to survive its tempestuous passage. To both the Prince piloting the ship and the people carried along by it, Montaigne urges faith in the designs of Providence: "Ainsi comme ainsi, nous faut il souvent, comme à la dernière ancre, remettre la protection de nostre vaisseau à la pure conduite du ciel" (III:1, 778b); "Heureux peuple . . . qui se laisse mollement rouler après le roulement celeste" (II:17, 639-640c). The ship image situates the branle of the state in the larger context of the roulement universel, and man takes his post as a voyager on the vessel, carried along by the roll of historic events.

Man himself is viewed in the Essais as "un subject merveilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant" (I:1, 13a). His unstable and fluctuating nature takes shape in images of a piecemeal assembly, lacking solidity and unification. "L'homme, en tout et par tout, n'est que rapiessement et bigarrure" (II:20, 656b). "Nous sommes tous des lopins et d'une contexture si informe et diverse, que chaque piece, chaque momant, faict son jeu" (II:1, 321a). "Nostre faict, ce ne sont que pieces rapportées" (320a). As in a mosaic, each piece contributes to the vision of the whole, and the more pieces brought together, the more complete the total image. Knowledge of an individual and knowledge of man in general ("la forme entiere de l'humaine condition") is built upon the accumulation of particular observations and experiences.

Montaigne's frequent inclusion of historical and personal anecdotes in the Essais functions to actualize this patchwork conception. The essayist decries the tendency in many good writers "de s'opiniâtrer à former de nous une constante et solide contexture" (II:1, 315b), for "Qui en jugeroit en destail (c) et distinctement piece à piece, (b) rencontreroit plus souvent à dire vray" (316b). Nevertheless, certain images of man in Montaigne disclose the possibility of a harmonious whole, of parts functioning in well-tuned unison. Such is the description of the younger Cato, whom Montaigne singles out as a man of extraordinary virtue: "qui en a touché une marche, a tout touché; c'est une harmonie de sons très-accordans, qui ne se peut démentir" (317c). And such is the image of the truly educated man who has successfully integrated learning and experience: "Comme en un concert d'instruments, on n'oït pas un lut, une espinette et la flutte, on oyt une harmonie en globe, l'assemblage et le fruict de tout cet amas" (III:8, 909c). The analogy to music which had expressed the harmonious movement of life and the world<sup>17</sup> again suggests a unifying principle in the piecemeal assembly which is man.

Unlike Cato and the sage, most men fail to achieve the integration of exterior and interior being which constitutes a harmonious life. They present to the world a fixed surface appearance which is an unfaithful representation of their real selves. Montaigne shows this dichotomy in man's public and private identity through his various images of dedans et dehors.<sup>18</sup> Seeing men in their social roles as "joueurs de comedie" (I:42, 252a), Montaigne requires us to penetrate

"derriere le rideau" (253a). The idea in the theatrical metaphor finds numerous forms of expression:

ce ne sont pourtant que peintures (252c).

c'est le pris de l'espée que vous cherchez, non de la guaine. . . . La base n'est pas de la statue. Mesurez le sans eschaces; . . . qu'il se presente en chemise (I:42, 251a).

[Nous] loüons un cheval de ce qu'il est vigoureux et adroit, . . . non de son harnois (ibid.).

nous nous tenons aux branches et abandonnons le tronc et le corps (II:17, 615a).

leur devoir est le marc, leur honneur n'est que l'escorce (II:16, 614a).

chacun peut faire bonne mine par le dehors, plein au dedans de fièvre et d'effroy (II:16, 609a).

Il y en a de qui l'or coule à gros bouillons par des lieux sousterreins, imperceptiblement; d'autres l'estandent tout en lames et en feuilles (III:9, 932-933b).

Each of the images provides the reader with an implied or explicit contrast, juxtaposing the superficial with what is the true measure of a man's worth. The range of vehicles in cooperation with the same tenor illustrates Montaigne's dexterous imagination in operation. "Tantôt de telle façon, tantôt de telle autre,"<sup>19</sup> his idea seeks out new metaphors in a continual process of concretization. A given concept, the relationship of surface to substantial content, is not fixed in a specific image (which through repetition would become a symbol), nor is a given image restricted solely to one idea. Interacting in a multiplicity of combinations, idea and image demonstrate the mobile process of Montaigne's 'incarnational' thinking.



Looking beyond the roles and exterior coverings which man dons, Montaigne evaluates man by his conduct. Beneath the pretensions and ostentation, he finds that "les hommes ne s'enflent que de vent, et se manient à bonds, comme les balons" (III:12, 1014b). The wind image communicates the idea of empty and weightless content; to it is joined the image of a bouncing, erratic movement, finally concretized in the analogy to "balons." As so frequently in Montaigne, the initial image suggests a further development which serves to expand the abstract concept as well as the image itself. Another wind-image passage shows this same tendency in a more extensive development:

[A] Moy qui me vante d'embrasser si curieusement les commoditez de la vie, et si particulièrement, n'y trouve quand j'y regarde ainsi finement, à peu pres que du vent.  
 [B] Mais quoy, nous sommes par tout vent. [C] Et le vent encore, plus sagement que nous, s'ayme à bruire, à s'agiter, et se contente en ses propres offices, [D] sans desirer la stabilité, la solidité, qualitez non siennes (III:13, 1087b).

From the first image of the pleasures of life being no more than wind or emptiness (A), Montaigne applies the metaphor to man in all his undertakings (B), then elaborates on the vehicle, wind, in its propensity to agitating movement (C), and finally contrasts man and wind by pointing to their marked difference (D). Man is like the wind in his emptiness and agitation, but distinct from it in his desire not to be so. His very presumption to be other than what he is reverts to the same image of weightless unsubstantiality: "Il semble . . . que nature, pour la consolation de nostre estat miserable et chetif, ne nous ait donné en partage que la presumption. . . . Nous n'avons que du vent et de la fumée en partage" (II:12, 468a). Closely allied to the metaphor

of presumption as wind, or smoke, is the image of gloire as a shadow: "Elle va aussi quelque fois davant son corps, et quelque fois l'excede de beaucoup en longueur" (II:16, 605c). Wind, smoke and the shadow all point to the lack of stability and solidity in man's projected images of himself, for these remain "qualitez non siennes."

Man's inclinations to shape himself in multifarious ways are conceived in images of metamorphosis. He adapts to his environment "comme une herbe transplantée en solage fort divers à la condition, se conforme bien plustost à iceluy qu'elle ne le reforme à soy" (III:9, 970c). The plant image echoes the analogy "[Nous] changeons comme cet animal qui prend la couleur du lieu où on le couche" (II:1, 316a), illustrating the concept of a tendency to accommodation taking precedence over any fixed identity. A still more serious metamorphic process threatens man's being from within. His mind is subject to deterioration with the advent of age or through the stultification of rigorous routine. This interior metamorphosis is expressed in images of molding and fermentation: "et ne se void point d'ames, ou fort rares, qui en vieillissant ne sentent à l'aigre et au moisi" (III:2, 795b); "Un jeune homme doit troubler ses regles pour esveiller sa vigueur, la garder de moisir et s'apoltronir" (III:13, 1061b). Drawing upon the metamorphic processes in nature, Montaigne gives physical density to the interior and exterior changes in man's undulatory existence.

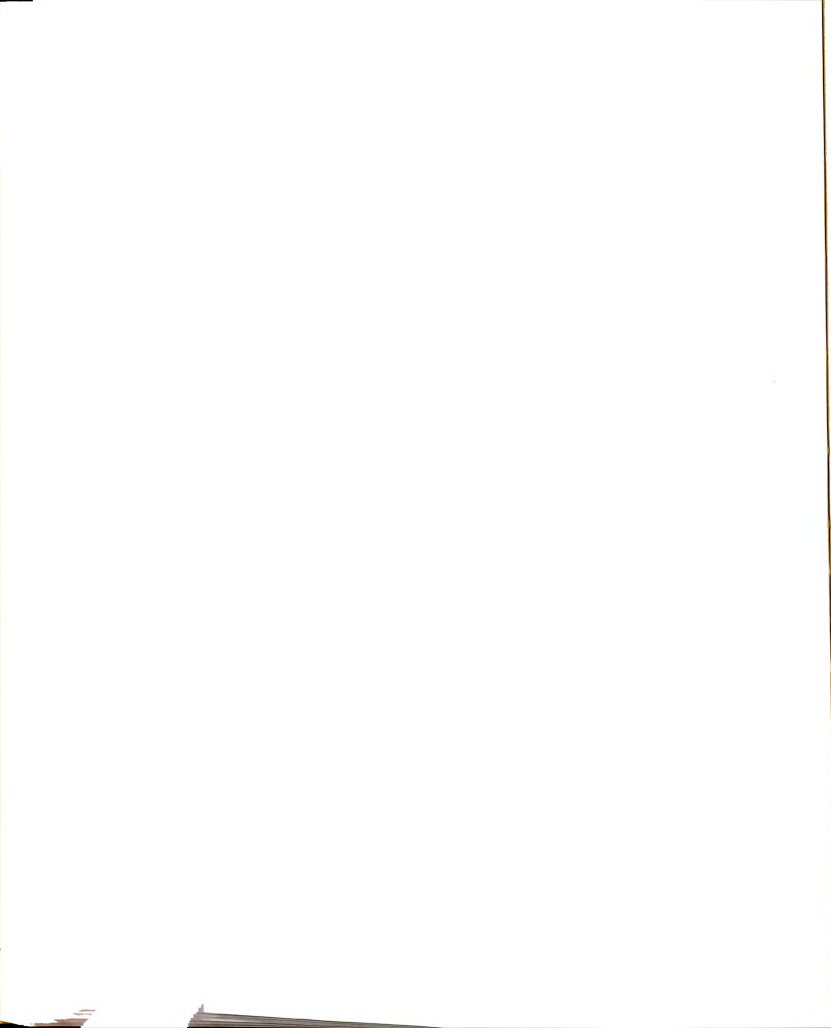
The metamorphic images of man's nature connect with the portrayal of life as a voyage on which man advances with a staggering gait.<sup>20</sup> Our indecisiveness renders our travels erratic and wayward.

"Nous flottons entre divers advis" (II:1, 317c). The image of 'floating' implies movement lacking direction, subject to the climate of external circumstances: "Nous n'allons pas; on nous emporte, comme les choses qui flottent, ores doucement, ores avecques violence, selon que l'eau est ireuse ou bonasse" (316a). Montaigne contrasts the movement of yielding to the current of exterior forces with the action of resisting the flow and directing one's energies inward: "Nous allons en avant à vau l'eau, mais de rebrousser vers nous nostre course, c'est un mouvement penible: la mer se brouille et s'empesche ainsi quand elle est repoussée à soy" (III:9, 979b). Running counter to man's propensity toward fluid movement, the act of introspection demands a conscious and vigorous effort, vividly plasticized in the metaphor of water's forceful resistance to being held back.

The impulse of the branle to which man is subject is always ailleurs, away from himself. "En toutes choses les hommes se jettent aux appuis estrangers pour espargner les propres, seuls certains et seuls puissans, qui sçait s'en armer. Chacun court ailleurs et à l'advenir, d'autant que nul n'est arrivé à soy" (III:12, 1022c). In a passage from "De mesnager sa volonté," Montaigne develops this idea through a succession of interlocking metaphors:

[A] Les hommes se donnent à louage. Leurs facultez ne sont pas pour eux, elles sont pour ceux à qui ils s'asservissent; leurs locataires sont chez eux, ce ne sont pas eux. Cette humeur commune ne me plaict pas: il faut mesnager la liberté de nostre ame et ne l'hypothequer qu'aux occasions justes; lesquelles sont en bien petit nombre, si nous jugeons sainement (III:10, 981b). . . .

[B] Ils ne cherchent la besongne que pour embesongnement. Ce n'est pas qu'ils vueillent aller tant comme c'est qu'ils



ne se peuvent tenir, ne plus ne moins qu'une pierre esbranlée en sa cheute, qui ne s'arreste jusqu'à tant qu'elle se couche (981c). . . .

[C] Leur esprit cherche son repos au branle, comme les enfans au berceau. . . . [D] Personne ne distribue son argent à autrui, chacun y distribue son temps et sa vie (981b).

First viewing man's pursuit of involvement outside himself in terms of a commercial enterprise (A), Montaigne likens man's occupations to 'giving oneself for hire,' selling oneself to slavery. The other, in such relationships, becomes one's 'tenant' and takes possession of him, dislodging the true self. Man's inner freedom is conceived spatially as a place to be carefully managed and 'mortgaged' only on rare, deserving occasions. Several lines down, (B) Montaigne compares the pursuit of "business only for busyness"<sup>21</sup> to the impetus of a falling stone, a movement propelled forward by its own weight and momentum, much like the rush of water in images discussed earlier. The inherent attraction in the branle to which men give themselves is subsequently seen as the pacifying effect of a cradle's rocking (C) and then again put to question in the monetary image at the end of the passage (D). Taking the passage as a whole, we see that Montaigne begins and ends with commercial images exposing the waste of man's embesongnement, while the middle images exhibit man's urgent drive to s'embesongner. The progression of thought, making its way through the successive analogies, oscillates between judgment (A and D) and observation (B and C).

Part of man's impulsion to branle is imposed on him from without by the pressures of society: "La plus part des reigles et

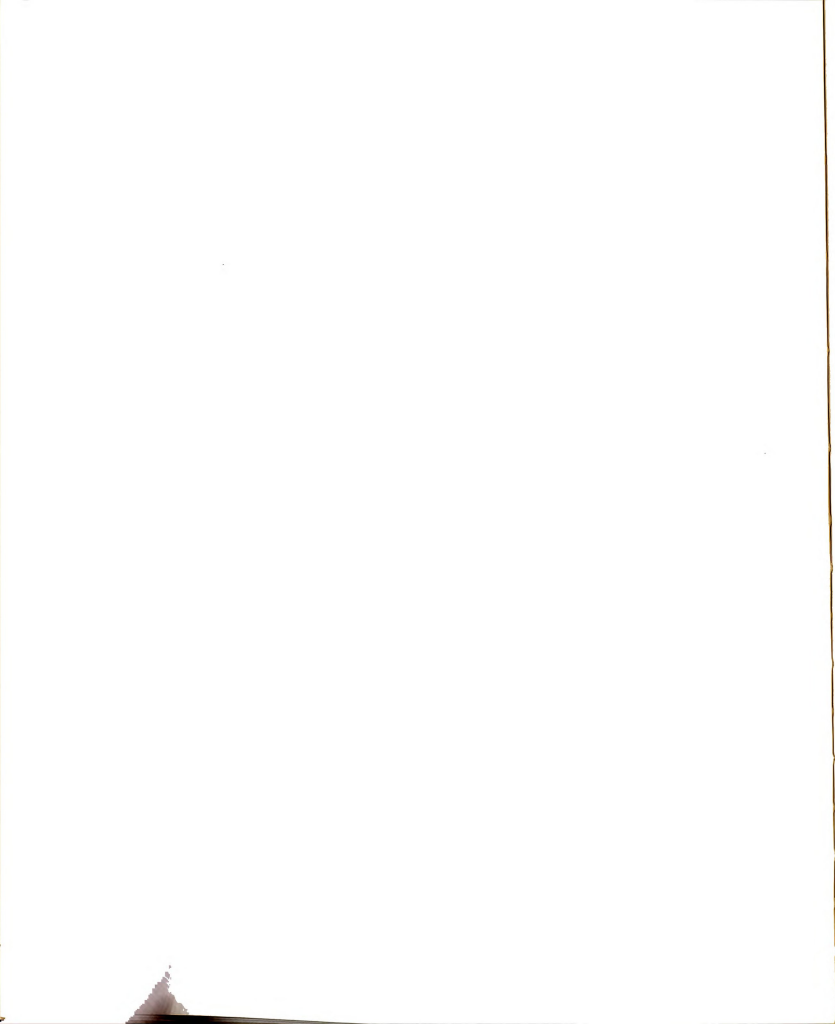
preceptes du monde prennent ce train de nous pousser hors de nous et chasser en la place, à l'usage de la société publique" (III:10, 983b). Montaigne interprets this coercion as a means of preventing an exaggerated self-centeredness, and he illustrates this 'corrective' pressure with gestures of physical rectification: "ils representent l'art des archiers qui, pour arriver au point, vont prenant leur visée grande espace au-dessus de la bute. Pour dresser un bois courbe on le recourbe au rebours"<sup>22</sup> (983b). But rather than overshooting one's mark, or bending in the opposite direction--movements directed away from the central self--Montaigne advises that we project our gaze directly inward and search out the inner forces of motivation pressing upon us: "il faut sonder jusqu'au dedans, et voir par quels ressors se donne le branle" (II:1, 321a). The 'springs' for Montaigne "figurent l'image du mouvement allant du dedans au dehors."<sup>23</sup> They represent the passions and desires determining man's irregular and multi-dimensional movement in life.

Montaigne describes the operation of the passions in terms of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "medicine of humors."<sup>24</sup> While the scientists seemed to take the theory quite literally, Montaigne manipulates it as a metaphoric model:

il faut considerer comme nos ames se trouvent souvent agitées de diverses passions. Et tout ainsi qu'en nos corps ils disent qu'il y a une assemblée de diverses humeurs, desquelles celle là est maistresse qui commande le plus ordinairement en nous, selon nos complexions: aussi, en nos ames, bien qu'il y ait divers mouvemens qui l'agitent, si faut-il qu'il y en ait un à qui le champ demeure. Mais ce n'est pas avec si entier avantage que, pour la volubilité et soupplasse de nostre ame, les plus foibles par occasion ne regagnent encor la place et ne facent une courte charge à leur tour (I:38, 229-230a).

Comparing, not identifying, the movement of humors in the body and the agitation of passions in the soul, Montaigne depicts the soul as a spatial entity to which various passions lay siege. The strongest maintains domination, though lesser passions too take possession--"pour la volubilité et souplesse de nostre ame." The image posits a separation between man and his passions, making them easier to identify and hence easier to control. Self-study seeks out the advent of these movements: "Si chacun espioit de près les effects et circonstances des passions qui le regentent . . . il les verroit venir, et ralantiroit un peu leur impetuosit   et leur course. Elles ne nous sautent pas tousjours au colet d'un prinsaut; il y a de la menasse et des degretz" (III:13, 1051-1052b). Control of passions demands early perception of the initial branle so we can avert their entry and possession: "Qui n'arreste le partir n'a garde d'arrester la course. Qui ne s  ait leur fermer la porte ne les chassera pas entr  es" (III:10, 994b).

The movement of the passions is experienced as a force dominating our higher faculties. Fear and anger especially work to upset the performance of judgment--"et disent les medecins qu'il n'en est aucune [passion other than fear] qui emporte plustost nostre jugement hors de sa deu   assiette" (I:18, 74a); "Il n'est passion qui esbranle tant la sincerit   des jugemens que la colere" (II:31, 692a). The effect of the passions on us is seen to precipitate or inhibit our actions. Fear is figured in familiar images of speed and fixation: "Tantost elle nous donne des aisles aux talons . . . tantost elle nous clo  e les pieds et les entrave" (I:18, 75a). The effect of





sadness is "de nous sentir saisis, transis, et comme perclus de tous mouvemens" (I:2, 16a). Anger, called an arm to virtue and bravery by Aristotle, is regarded as "un arme de nouvel usage: car nous remuons les autres armes, cette cy nous remue; nostre main ne la guide pas, c'est elle qui guide nostre main" (II:31, 698a).<sup>25</sup> Jealousy and ambition, too, are personified as forces dominating our movements: "Lorsque la jalousie saisit ces pauvres ames foibles et sans resistance, c'est pitié comme elle les tirasse et tyrannise cruellement" (III:5, 842b); of Caesar's ambition Montaigne concludes that "elle tenoit le timon et le gouvernail de toutes ses actions" (II:33, 711a). Not a physiologist, Montaigne is not in a position to demonstrate scientifically the operation of the passions; but through the repetition of images showing man as the object of passion's manipulation--"un arme [qui . . .] nous remue," "elle nous cloüe les pieds," "elle tenoit le timon"--he manages to illustrate the power of the ressors playing so central a role in the shaping of our lives.

The image most commonly associated with passion is that of the flame or fire for it communicates the sensation of heat and burning we experience inwardly. Something felt, passion is best expressed through the sense of touch. Montaigne uses the fire image to show passion's destructive force: "Ce feu [anger] estourdit et consomme leur force" (III:10, 985a), and to illustrate how desire feeds on the challenge of obstacles, "Car il se sent évidemment, comme le feu se picque à l'assistance du froid, que nostre volonté s'esguise aussi par le contraste" (II:15, 596a). Joined to the fire images are other

sensations of touch in images of sharpness, tickling and pricking. Montaigne speaks of "des pointures de la peur" (I:18, 76c) and the "pointe" of passions which is better directed outwards, released, than turned inward against oneself (II:31, 697b). A pleasurable passion, however, in particular that of impassioned love, is to be savoured in its qualities of sharpness and burning. In contrast to marital love, "un plaisir plat," Montaigne speaks of passionate love as a pleasure "plus chatouillant, plus vif et plus aigu; un plaisir attizé par la difficulté. Il y faut de la piqueure et de la cuisson. Ce n'est plus l'amour s'il est sans fleches et sans feu" (III:5, 831b). Love is a sensation experienced in its movement, in the consuming flame of desire and the cutting point of desire's unappeased appetite. The satisfaction of desire, which man knows in marriage, "esmousse la pointe de l'affection et du desir" (ibid.). Once the point of the blade is dulled, it loses its sharpness and no longer produces the same cutting sensation. The passion of love for Montaigne moves toward its own extinction in its quest to satisfy desire:

Car ce mesme chatouillement et esguisement qui se rencontre en certains plaisirs . . . cette volupté active, mouvante, et, je ne sçay comment, cuisante et mordante, celle là mesme ne vise qu'à l'indolence comme à son but. L'appetit qui nous ravit à l'accointance des femmes, il ne cherche qu'à chasser la peine que nous apporte le desir ardent et furieux (II:12, 473a).

Pleasure is paradoxically experienced in terms of pain--"cuisante et mordante," and finds its existence in the active movement toward its own cancellation.

If it is from within that man experiences the commanding branle of the passions, their piqueure and bruleure, it is most often through external phenomena that these inner sensations are provoked. For Thibaudet, "la piqûre exprime toujours chez Montaigne le contact inattendu et vif avec le dehors."<sup>26</sup> When the essayist refers to the annoyances of petty household worries, he calls them "vaines pointures" and "ces espines domestiques" (III:9, 927b). But while these sensations may be stimulated from without, they are experienced internally and sharpened by our own awareness: "Il est aisé à voir ce qui aiguise en nous la douleur et la volupté, c'est la pointe de nostre esprit" (I:14, 57c). Mediated by l'imagination and la fantaisie, external phenomena will affect us more or less according to the way in which we perceive them. The imagination is a force which moves us much as do the passions; indeed, it stirs up the passions themselves and can even produce actual physical effects: "Nous tressuons, nous tremblons, nous pallissons et rougissons aux secousses de nos imaginations, et renversez dans la plume sentons nostre corps agité à leur bransle, quelques-fois jusques à en expirer" (I:21, 95-96a). As with the passions, we find ourselves manipulated by the force of the imagination: "Chacun en est heurté, mais aucuns en sont renversez" (95c). And the immediate experience of imagination's assault is expressed in images of pricking and stabbing: "Son impression me perse" (ibid.); "Il est impossible que d'arrivée nous ne sentions des piqueures de telles imaginations" (I:20, 86a).

Throughout our discussion of the images of man en branle, the passages cited show a density of verb metaphors. Man is heurté and renversé by his imagination, emporté, esbranlé, remué by his passions. The passions are seen to venir, ralentir, sauter d'un prinsaut and social constraints to "nous pousser hors de nous et chasser en la place." The living of our lives is expressed in verb images of running, floating, being carried along, and throwing ourselves forward. A verb metaphor functions in a special manner, to be distinguished from images created through nouns. Brooke-Rose explains that "the chief difference between the noun metaphor and the verb metaphor is one of explicitness. With the noun, A is called B, more or less clearly according to the link. But the verb changes one noun into another by implication. And it does not explicitly 'replace' another action."<sup>27</sup> She goes on to show that the four-termed relationship in Aristotle's 'A is to B as C is to D,' understood to be the structure underlying all metaphors, expands into a six-termed relationship when the metaphor is created through a verb. In Montaigne's "Nous flottons entre divers avis," the verb flotter, by implication, changes nous into a ship.<sup>28</sup> The structure resulting from the implied metaphor is that we (A) are to a ship (B) as divers avis (C) are to the sea (D). But it also compares the action of making judgments (E) to the action of sailing or floating (F). While the noun metaphor men/ship is an implied one, the interaction between tenor and vehicle is actually more explicit, for the metaphor is expressed in terms of the interaction, the verb flotter. As such, the metaphor is more immediate, more direct. The noun metaphor links

two terms through certain shared qualities or attributes, or even modes of action, by a process of abstracting a particular quality, attribute or action from the complex network comprising a specific noun.<sup>29</sup> We and the ship are alike in one respect, but distinct in many others. But a verb, as Brooke-Rose points out, does not lend itself to the same sort of abstraction of components: "Its full meaning depends on the noun with which it is used, and can only be decomposed into a species of itself, according to the noun with which it is associated."<sup>30</sup> The full meaning of flotter applies to both the ship and men, altering slightly and extending its meaning so as to seem natural with each noun. A ship floats, that is floats on water; men float, that is float among divers advis. The verb's "adaptability to the noun is so great that its relationship to it is direct, and much stronger than its relationship to the action it is 'replacing.'"<sup>31</sup> In "nous flottons entre divers advis," the reader is less likely to contrast the action of making judgments with the action of floating than to attribute directly the action of flotter to nous. And the implied comparison of men to a ship or to anybody floating on the surface of water is less weighty than the relationship of the concept 'flotter' to the subject, nous. The verb metaphors in Montaigne can be duly regarded as the metaphors of movement par excellence, for they strongly and directly shape the movements in which man en branle engages and to which he is subject. Couler, glisser, rouler, chanceler, choper all contribute to concretize and hence sensualize the realization that "Nostre vie n'est que mouvement."

The metaphors of movement, be they noun or verb metaphors, frequently suggest a spatial conception of man's spiritual life in that movement is conceived to occur within a spatial context. The onset of the passions is expressed as their entry into the spatial domain of the self: "Qui ne sçait leur fermer la porte ne les chassera pas entrées" (III:10, 994c). Vice, toward which the passions may very well push us, is seen as logé, enraciné and ancré en nous (III:2, 785b) when it becomes habitual. Beyond the image of the self as a spatial recipient, there develops the iconography of a course of life pursued in figurative terms of linear spatiality. The irresoluteness of most lives zigzags along a path "à gauche, à dextre, contre-mont, contre-bas" (II:1, 316a), while the opposite, too resolute a life, proceeds "de se suivre incessamment," so controlled by a fixed temperament "qu'on n'en puisse fourvoyer" (III:3, 796c). Calculating and measuring movement with respect to the central self, Montaigne traces the path of virtue and sagesse in terms of a circular movement. "La grandeur de l'ame n'est pas tant tirer à mont et tirer avant comme sçavoir se ranger et circonscrire" (III:13, 1090c); "La carriere de nos desirs doit estre circonscripte et restraincte à un court limite des commoditez les plus proches et contigües; et doit en outre leur course se manier, non en ligne droite qui face bout ailleurs, mais en rond, duquel les deux pointes se tiennent et terminent en nous par un bref contour" (III:10, 988b). Through images of the 'lines' traced by movement, Montaigne illustrates the values he ascribes to the diversified patterns of behavior observed in human existence. Lines directed upward and

outward, like the gesture of the archer overshooting his mark,<sup>32</sup> express the erroneous impulsion of the branle away from the self. But the path of a circle traces a line on which each point is equidistant from a fixed center, a movement gauged in relationship to the central self.

A network of images of heights and depths<sup>33</sup> introduces vertical dimension into the figurative space in which Montaigne conceives the movement of life. The attainment of exceptional virtue takes the direction of an ascent to rarefied heights--"Je veux prendre l'homme en sa plus haute assiete. Considerons le en ce petit nombre d'hommes excellens et trieux qui, ayant esté douez d'une belle et particuliere force naturelle, . . . l'ont montée au plus haut point (c) de sagesse (a) où elle puisse atteindre" (II:12, 481a). What is viewed to be 'high' must be seen in relationship to something 'lower.' Montaigne measures height with respect to his own 'earthbound' position: "Rampant au limon de la terre, je ne laisse pas de remarquer, jusques dans les nuës, la hauteur inimitable d'aucunes ames heroïques" (I:37, 225a). The ordinary man might occasionally attain exceptional heights, but he does so with a staccato gesture which interrupts the rhythm and level of his natural movement: "Quand nous arrivons à ces saillies Stoïques . . . qui ne juge que ce sont boutées d'un courage eslançé hors de son giste? Nostre ame ne sçauroit de son siege atteindre si haut" (II:12, 329-330a); "Il nous eschoit à nous mesmes . . . d'eslancer par fois nostre ame, esveillée par les discours ou exemples d'autrui, bien loing au-delà de son ordinaire" (II:29, 683a). Such saillies

break through the circumscribed movement in harmony with oneself and are not to be confused with "une resolute et constante habitude" (ibid.).

Since most men are capable of ascending to the 'heights' of extraordinary virtue on only very rare occasions, a virtuous life, for the ordinary man, must be conceived at a level more naturally accessible to him. Montaigne proposes the life of Socrates "[qui] fait mouvoir son ame d'un mouvement naturel et commun" (III:12, 1013b) as an example of virtue to which we might realistically aspire: "Il fut aussi tousjours un et pareil et se monta, non par saillies mais par complexion, au dernier point de vigueur. Ou, pour mieux dire, il ne monta rien, mais ravala plustost et ramena a son point originel et naturel et lui soubmit la vigueur, les aspretez et les difficultez" (1014b). Rather than darting forth to encounter obstacles beyond his natural reach, Socrates lowered them to the range of movement circumscribed around his "point originel et naturel." The virtue of Socrates stands in sharp contrast to that of the younger Cato, who maintained a consistent elevation in the conduct of his extraordinary life: "Car en Caton, on void bien à clair que c'est une alleure tenduë bien loing au dessus des communes; . . . on le sent tousjours monté sur ses grands chevaux" (ibid.). For Montaigne, it is not Cato, but Socrates whom he declares "le plus digne homme d'estre conneu et d'estre présenté au monde pour exemple" (ibid.).

The image of virtue as an elevated height undergoes a significant change in its geographical contours with the maturation of Montaigne's thought in the Essais. In "De la cruauté," Montaigne



insists on the difficulty of the ascent to virtue: "Elle demande un chemin aspre et espineux; elle veut avoir . . . des difficultez estrangeres à luicter" (II:11, 402a). But in a (c) addition to I:26, the essayist describes virtue in a sustained metaphor of marked contrast:

. . . la vertu . . . n'est pas . . . plantée à la teste d'un mont coupé, raboteux et inaccessible. Ceux qui l'ont approchée, la tiennent, au rebours, logée dans une belle plaine fertile et fleurissante, d'où elle voit bien souz soy toutes choses; mais si peut on y arriver, qui en scait l'adresse, par des routes ombrageuses, gazonnées et doux fleurantes, plaisamment et d'une pente facile et polie, comme est celle des voutes celestes (160-161c).

Still at a height "d'où elle voit bien souz soy toutes choses," virtue is here seen to dwell in an accessible and, more importantly, inviting plain--an extension of level surface permitting free and easy movement within its boundaries, once it has been reached. Both the movement toward virtue and its actual location are portrayed as fertile and pleasurable through the metaphorical details of shade, grass and flowers. From his landscape metaphor, Montaigne shifts to an architectural one in the analogy to "des voutes celestes," capturing the feel of a graceful, arching, strong movement. Montaigne, in this passage, gives lyrical expression to the vigorous pleasure of virtue itself and the movement toward its attainment.

Metaphors of elevation and lowness are indeed usual ways of expressing grandeur and commonplaceness. Montaigne's handling of the metaphor, however, frequently works to enhance our perception of the vehicle and to revitalize the image affaiblie. The public official's

superficial grandeur is deflated when the trappings of his office are removed: "il laisse avec sa robe ce rolle; il en retombe d'autant plus bas qu'il s'estoit plus haut monté" (III:2, 786-787b). The image focuses our attention on the vertical dimension of grandeur and the movement involved in its attainment and loss. The following passage uses the same image to illustrate the option of the grands to relinquish their privileged position: "En general, [la grandeur] a cet evident avantage qu'elle se ravalle quand il luy plaist, et qu'à peu près elle a le choix de l'une et l'autre condition; car on ne tombe pas de toute hauteur; il en est desquelles on peut descendre sans tomber" (III:7, 894b). The flexibility 'to step down,' to be able to adjust oneself to the various 'heights' to which fortune may move us is an important value in Montaigne. He praises "un'ame à divers estages, qui sçache et se tendre et se desmonter, qui soit bien par tout où sa fortune la porte" (III:3, 799b). Marking the vertical dimensions of character, the "ame a divers estages" lends spatial substance to the disponibilité which permits a man to enjoy his potential for mobility. "Les plus belles ames sont celles qui ont plus de varieté et de souplesse" (796b)--"qui sçache[nt] et se tendre et se desmonter." With the verb metaphors of stretching and relaxing Montaigne illustrates the muscular flexibility of the supple and multi-leveled soul.

The "ame à divers estages" poses a more modest ideal than "la hauteur inimitable d'aucunes ames heroïques." While Montaigne harbors a certain admiration for these heroic figures, he puts a pejorative value on the images of unrealistic, exalted expectations for the rest

of mankind. "A quoy faire ces pointes eslevées de la philosophie sur lesquelles aucun estre humain ne se peut rassoier . . ?" (III:9, 967b); "Ces humeurs transcendantes m'effrayent, comme les lieux hautains et inaccessibles" (III:13, 1096c). In his compulsion to move away from himself, man strives towards unattainable goals, the "pointes eslevées" and "lieux hautains" of Montaigne's spatial imagination. Always stressing the necessity that man recognize the realistic limits of his mobility, Montaigne shows the foolishness of attempts to assume unnatural postures of elevation with the gently chiding images at the end of the Essais: "Si, avons nous beau monter sur des eschasses, car sur des eschasses encores faut-il marcher de nos jambes. Et au plus eslevé throne du monde, si ne sommes assis que sus nostre cul" (III:13, 1096c). Juxtaposed to the illusory elevation of walking on stilts and sitting on a high throne is the earthbound realism of our own legs and bottom. Reducing the illusions of loftiness to the humble members of the human body, Montaigne circumscribes man's movements and spatial domain to the modest dimensions of la condition humaine.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>See above, ch. II, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>The role of paradox in Montaigne is lucidly investigated by Margaret M. McGowan, Montaigne's Deceits: The Art of Persuasion in the Essais (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), pp. 65-83.

<sup>3</sup>Thibaudet, Montaigne, p. 548.

<sup>4</sup>A phrase Montaigne acknowledges borrowing from Plato. See p. 518 in the text and p. 1566, n. 1.

<sup>5</sup>We shall not pursue the role of personification in the Essais in this study. A thorough treatment of this figure has recently been completed by Naomi Luba Holoch, "Personification in the Essais of Montaigne," Diss. Columbia University, 1972.

<sup>6</sup>Montaigne's numerous references to fortune are listed in Eva Marcu's Répertoire des idées de Montaigne (Genève: Droz, 1965), pp. 205-218.

<sup>7</sup>Sayce, A Critical Exploration, pp. 206-207 and 254-255. See also Montaigne's Journal de Voyage en Italie, pp. 1228-29.

<sup>8</sup>Baraz comments upon the dual movement of nature in Montaigne in L'Etre et la connaissance, p. 12: "On peut distinguer chez lui deux niveaux de l'existence, dont chacun implique une vision différente de la nature en mouvement. Au niveau inférieur, opposé à la sagesse, la nature apparaît comme un enchaînement matériel de mouvements, dont l'homme est un jouet. Au niveau supérieur, c'est l'unité du mouvement qui s'impose avec le plus de force à la conscience, et l'on entrevoit que l'infinie diversité mouvante découle de cette unité, qu'on ne saurait concevoir comme purement matérielle."

<sup>9</sup>Translation of Donald M. Frame: The Complete Essays of Montaigne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 835. The source of Montaigne's comparison is Plutarch. Pléiade ed., p. 1672, n. 2 to p. 1068.

<sup>10</sup>See Thibaudet, pp. 554-555.

<sup>11</sup>The use of capital letters to mark sections of a quotation is my own insertion and will be employed throughout the remaining chapters.

<sup>12</sup>Thibaudet, pp. 549-553.

<sup>13</sup>"Montaigne en mouvement," pp. 261-262.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>15</sup> While Yves Delègue finds the simile in Montaigne an expression of "le solide, le stable" (see above, ch. II, p. 69), we recognize instances of it expressing "le mouvant, l'indéterminé," in the same way as the metaphor. In addition to the metamorphic content of the image under discussion here, the pattern of development (tenor/vehicle/tenor) traces the simple but nonetheless mobile interaction in Montaigne's handling of the simile.

<sup>16</sup> See Carol Clark, "Montaigne and the Imagery of Political Discourse."

<sup>17</sup> See above, pp. 83-85.

<sup>18</sup> See Thibaudet, pp. 507-514.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich, p. 422.

<sup>20</sup> See above, pp. 85-86.

<sup>21</sup> Frame translation, p. 767.

<sup>22</sup> The second image is taken from Seneca. Pléiade ed., p. 1658, n. 2 to p. 983.

<sup>23</sup> Thibaudet, p. 517. Other ressors images in the text: I:18, 74a; II:12, 454a; II:17, 617a; and III:10, 995b.

<sup>24</sup> Michel Foucault discusses this theory in Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: The New American Library, 1967), pp. 77-100.

<sup>25</sup> Montaigne borrows this image from Seneca. Pléiade ed., p. 1606, n. 2 to p. 698.

<sup>26</sup> Thibaudet, p. 520.

<sup>27</sup> A Grammar of Metaphor, p. 206.

<sup>28</sup> This specific implication is given for the sake of illustrating the structure of the metaphor. We realize that any object which floats, including the human body, could be the implied noun metaphor.

<sup>29</sup> See above, ch. II, p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> A Grammar, p. 209.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> See above, p. 102.

<sup>33</sup> Thibaudet lists "Le mouvement de bas en haut" and "Le mouvement de haut en bas," pp. 540-542. Some discussion of vertical images may be found in the dissertations of Colin Dickson, p. 101ff., and Dilys Winegrad, p. 148ff.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METAPHORS OF THE SOUL AND MIND EN BRANLE

A mesure que la composition des Essais devient plus intérieure, les images deviennent plus fréquentes.<sup>1</sup>

Montaigne's metaphors shaping his conceptions of the world and men are the creation of a consciousness in confrontation with that which is exterior to itself. This world is perceived and expressed, and to a large degree created, in terms of the subjective spectator. Looking into the 'mirror'<sup>2</sup> of the world, his perception of its reflection is determined by his own powers of scrutiny and the language of his personal vision. The skepticism of Montaigne with regard to objective truth, so evident in the "Apologie," is inseparable from his sense of an essentially self-based relativism: "Or nostre estat accommodant les choses à soy at les transformant selon soy, nous ne sçavons plus quelles sont les choses en verité" (II:13, 584a). Exterior reality passes first through the filter of the senses where it is already subject to alteration and falsification (ibid.). But beyond that, and even more importantly, it undergoes another kind of modification in what Montaigne terms the 'soul' of the perceiving subject. As a man's experience of the outer world is not strictly phenomenological (at least not in sixteenth-century thinking), acts of conceptualization and valuation enter into the determination of an individual's perception of the world

external to himself. And these processes, much more than the incertitude of sense perceptions, produce images of a world that is ever variable, ever in flux, coulant et roulant sans cesse: "La santé, la conscience, l'autorité, la science, la richesse, la beauté et leurs contraires se despouillent à leur entrée, et reçoivent de l'ame nouvelle vesture, et de la teinture qu'il lui plaist: brune, verte, claire, obscure, aigre, douce, profonde, superficielle" (I:50, 290c). The soul 'clothes' and 'colors' the ideas we have of the world and, in so doing, influences the language we use to articulate these ideas.<sup>3</sup> The soul is the dynamic force propelling the artist in his creative process, which is essentially one of making images, of forging "the metaphoric bond that joins known being to the unknown phenomena. . . . [The artist's] metaphor is a bridge . . . that bears his own form and image, a thrust of the subjective self into external reality."<sup>4</sup>

Given Montaigne's perspective on the soul as central to the production of ideas and their expression in metaphor, we would do well to elucidate what he understands by 'soul.' He of course will not supply us with a fixed definition. The soul is something he experiences, something he observes in movement, but something about which he and all the philosophers he has read cannot make certain, verifiable statements. Too many before Montaigne have made assertions about the origin, nature, immortality and even location of the soul, but Montaigne finds in all this philosophy only a "poésie sophistiquée" (II:12, 518c).<sup>5</sup> The soul, an intangible essence, can only be discussed metaphorically, and too often the philosophers lose awareness of



their own use of images.<sup>6</sup> Montaigne is careful to label 'opinion' the description of the soul he finds most plausible:

Et la plus vraysemblable de leurs opinions est que c'est tousjours une ame qui, par sa faculté, ratiocine, se souvient, comprend, juge, desire et exerce toutes ses autres operations par divers instrumens du corps (comme le nocher gouverne son navire selon l'experience qu'il en a, ores tendant ou lâchant une corde, ores haussant l'antenne ou remuant l'aviron, par une seule puissance conduisant divers effets); et qu'elle loge au cerveau: . . . de là, il n'est pas inconvenient qu'elle s'escoule par le reste du corps: . . . comme le soleil espad du ciel en hors sa lumiere et ses puissances, et en remplit le monde (II:12, 528-529a).

Here, the soul is viewed as capable of a variety of activities which operate through the body. Various functions of the soul are specified, but the soul itself is only indirectly expressed through the images which follow. The two similes, "comme le nocher" and "comme le soleil," do not effect a genuine interaction with the noun 'soul.' Their focus is rather on the interaction of the movement or action of the soul with those of the sun and of the ship's pilot. It is primarily through the verbs that the images make their impression: in various gestures of the pilot, the controlling power of the soul is emphasized; the metaphor "elle s'escoule" then focuses on the way in which this force permeates the body over which it exercises its power; and the ensuing simile goes on to expand the notion of flow into the diffusion of the light of the sun filling the world. Collectively, the images create a tangible notion of the soul without ever saying exactly what it is.

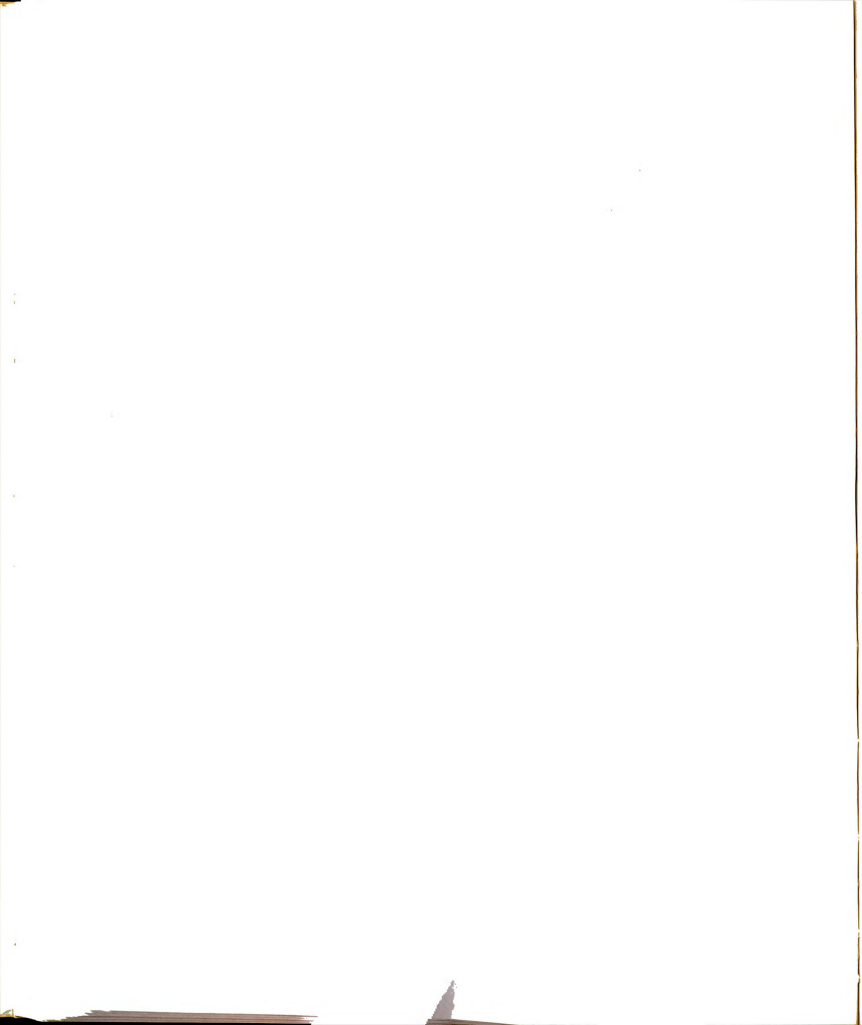
While Montaigne discusses the soul as something distinct from the body, he repeatedly insists on the inseparability of the two. "Nous sommes bastis de deux pieces principales essentielles, desquelles la

separation c'est la mort et ruyne de nostre estre" (II:12, 500a).

Again we have the image of man as an assemblage of pieces,<sup>7</sup> but here we are dealing with the "deux pieces essentielles" whose separation effects the destruction of man's being. The flow of life is experienced through the two working together, "le sentiment du corps se meslant à celui de l'ame" (II:13, 591a). Montaigne does not specify exactly what constitutes the nature of the relationship of the soul and body; the notion alters as it is shaped first by one image, then by another. We see the body serving as a receptacle for the soul, "son estuy" (II:12, 543a), an image which communicates something of the spatiality of the body to the soul, making its presence more readily palpable. But what seems to concern Montaigne most in the joining of the soul and body is that the two be envisioned as functioning harmoniously together: "comme une couple de chevaux attelés à mesme timon" (I:26, 164-165a); the soul must not separate itself from the body, but "l'espouser en somme et luy servir de mary" (II:17, 623a).<sup>8</sup> Both of these last images express an idea of partnership, but in the latter, there is an implication that one, the soul, is in a position to rule over the other. The husband (in the traditional concept of marriage) is the one who makes decisions, manages and guides the operation of the household. And so the soul is assigned not only to cherish the body, but "luy assister, le contre-roller, le conseiller, le redresser et ramener quand il fourvoye" (622-623a).

Montaigne's formulation of the nature of the body and soul relationship is consistent with Church and Aristotelian doctrines<sup>9</sup> which posit the idea of the duality of man's nature and then stress the necessity of the mutual cooperation of the two parts in view of working out Christian salvation or Aristotelian well-being. For man to achieve and maintain the ideal balance, he must take care not to be overly partial to one or the other side of his nature. A man inclined toward introspection and speculation in the manner of Montaigne could easily be given to emphasizing the spiritual side over the physical, and Montaigne in the Essais is frequently struggling against this tendency. Montaigne insists that "le corps a une grand' part à nostre estre" (622a) and pays increasing attention to drawing a physical portrait of himself, culminating in a veritable celebration of his own corporeal existence in the last of the Essais. The same struggle against the separation of body and soul can be related to the generation of the Essais themselves as Montaigne's conscious effort to give 'body' to the wanderings of his mind. And in returning to his images of the soul, we find numerous passages which "treat the soul as if it were corporeal,"<sup>10</sup> where language serves to bridge the gap between the opposing sides of man's nature and to fuse them into a harmonious unity.

Images of the soul are almost exclusively images dealing with movement. The soul is subject to movements exterior to itself, an agent acting upon things outside itself of its own force, and, in its most essential sense, movement pure and simple. Thibaudet refers to the soul in Montaigne as the principle of mobility constituting man's being:



"ce mouvement qui vient de l'intérieur, que fait l'homme, [autokinētos]." <sup>11</sup> The "bransles de l'ame" (616a) are more precisely those ressors which Montaigne urges men to examine: "il faut sonder jusqu'au dedans, et voir par quels ressorts se donne le bransle" (II:1, 321a). Probing to reach the inner springs is the search for an understanding of that which makes sortir the movements which characterize man's existence. This inner mechanism is not peculiar to each man but common to all: "Les ames des Empereurs et des savatiers sont jettées à mesme moule . . . [les princes] sont menez et ramenez en leurs mouvemens par les mesmes ressorts que nous sommes aux nostres. . . . Pareils appetits agitent un ciron et un elephant" (II:12, 454a). Here, the image of springs combines with that of the "mesme moule" to indicate that the notion of soul is something which takes on a form. The soul is not the ressors themselves so much as the principle ordering the ressors. <sup>12</sup> Montaigne illustrates this principle by an abrupt juxtaposition with a similar operation in the order of animal life--"Pareils appetits agitent. . . ." Reducing the complex motivation of lives at all levels of society to a single 'mold' and then allying it to the workings of nature, Montaigne's images simultaneously concretize and demystify the unsubstantial essence of man.

The movements to which the soul is most subject are those passions which stir it from within, the "souffle de ses vents" (550a). Montaigne pursues his familiar wind metaphor in this instance to suggest that without the impulsion of the passions, the soul would lose its characteristic mobility: "sans leur agitation, elle resteroit sans

actions, comme un navire en pleine mer que les vents abandonnent de leurs secours" (ibid.).<sup>13</sup> The comparison to a ship reawakens the image of life as a voyage, life conceived as movement, and the idea of a motionless soul, unmoved by its own forces, appears all the more unlikely. As the passions are viewed in their relationship to the soul, the latter takes on an increasingly substantial aspect. Montaigne describes someone having "toute l'ame teinte et abreuvée de colere" (547a), treating the soul as a material capable of absorbing and assuming the color of the passion.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere he speaks of seeing "ces ames assaillies et essayées par [deux passions différentes], en soutenir l'un[e] sans s'esbranler, et courber sous l'autre" (I:1, 12a). The verb metaphors here attribute to the soul the quality of a solid body, at times resilient, but at other times bending under the forceful weight of the passions.

What we begin to notice is that it is in its movement that the soul assumes the firmness and texture by which it becomes perceptible. Characteristically, its action is expressed in terms such as roidir, dresser, eslever<sup>15</sup>--verbs emphasizing the rigidity, the tautness, of a 'muscle' poised for action. Montaigne affirms that "il faut bien bander l'ame pour luy faire sentir comme elle s'escoule" (III:13, 1085c). But the fluidity which Montaigne assigns to the natural movement of the soul does not easily lend itself to this tightening necessary to render it tactile. If we set our minds to taking hold of this essence, "ce sera ne plus ne moins que qui voudroit empoigner l'eau: car tant plus il serrera et pressera ce qui de sa nature coule par tout,

tant plus il perdra ce qu'il vouloit tenir et empoigner" (II:12, 586a). As the object to be grasped, the soul, like water, is continually escaping; and as the subject, straining to take possession of its object, the very same liquid property hinders its operation: "cette contention de l'ame trop bandée et trop tenduë à son entreprise, la met au rouet, la rompt et l'empesche, ainsi qu'il advient à l'eau qui, par force de se presser de sa violence et abondance, ne peut trouver issuë en un goulet ouvert" (I:18, 41a). Too much concentration produces a tautness that is tortuous and blocking, one that arrests the soul's movement. When Montaigne says "il faut bien bander l'ame," he does not propose an intensification of effort so powerful as to stop its flow. For the soul to perceive and be perceived, it must not be forced into an unnatural fixity. "L'agitation est sa vie et sa grace" (ibid.).

Where the movement of the soul is most readily apprehended is in its operation on something exterior to itself, where its energies exercise their potential and become manifest. "L'ame esbranlée et esmeue se perde en soy-mesme, si on ne luy donne prinse; il faut tousjours luy fournir d'object où elle s'abutte et agisse" (I:4, 25a). Activity, any activity, offers us an opportunity to experience the action of the soul. Montaigne suggests that a game of checkers would be just as apt as a field of battle for understanding the soul in operation. "Voyez combien nostre ame grossit et espessit cet amusement ridicule; si tous ces nerfs ne bandent; combien amplement elle donne à chacun loy, an cela, de se connoistre . . ." (I:50, 290-291c). In the images communicating the soul in operation, the soul is frequently

personified, but always in terms of the physical manifestations of the personification: "elle s'abutte et agisse," "ces nerfs ne bandent" as it "swells and magnifies"<sup>16</sup> its object. Montaigne continually varies the verbs he uses to express "la prise et la serre de l'ame" (III:10, 986b) for no single metaphor is meant to be taken as final. A constant reworking of the expression he gives to the activity of the soul perpetually renews our perception of its essential characteristic, its power to take and to experience action:

Entre les fonctions de l'ame il en est de basses; qui ne la void encor par là, n'acheve pas da la connoistre. Et à l'aventure la remarque lon mieux où elle va son pas simple. Les vents des passions la prennent plus en ces hautes assiettes. Joint qu'elle se couche entiere sur chasque matiere, et s'y exerce entiere, et n'en traite jamais plus d'une à la fois. Et la traite non selon elle, mais selon soy. Les choses, à part elles, ont peut estre leurs poids et mesures et conditions; mais au dedans, en nous, elle les leur taille comme elle l'entend (I:50, 290c).

Nous empeschons au demeurant la prise et la serre de l'ame à luy donner tant de choses à saisir. Les unes, il les luy faut seulement presenter, les autree attacher, les autres incorporer. Elle peut voir et sentir toutes choses, mais elle ne se doit paistre que de soy, et doit estre instruite de ce qui la touche proprement, et qui proprement est de son avoir et de sa substance (III:10, 986b).

The first passage treats the action of the soul on different types of materials in spatial images: the soul operates on varying levels, from low to high. It is on the lower levels that we most easily observe it in its natural "gait" for the winds of passions "take hold" of it in the higher altitudes. From this general metaphor of the soul moving in a multileveled construct, Montaigne narrows his focus to the

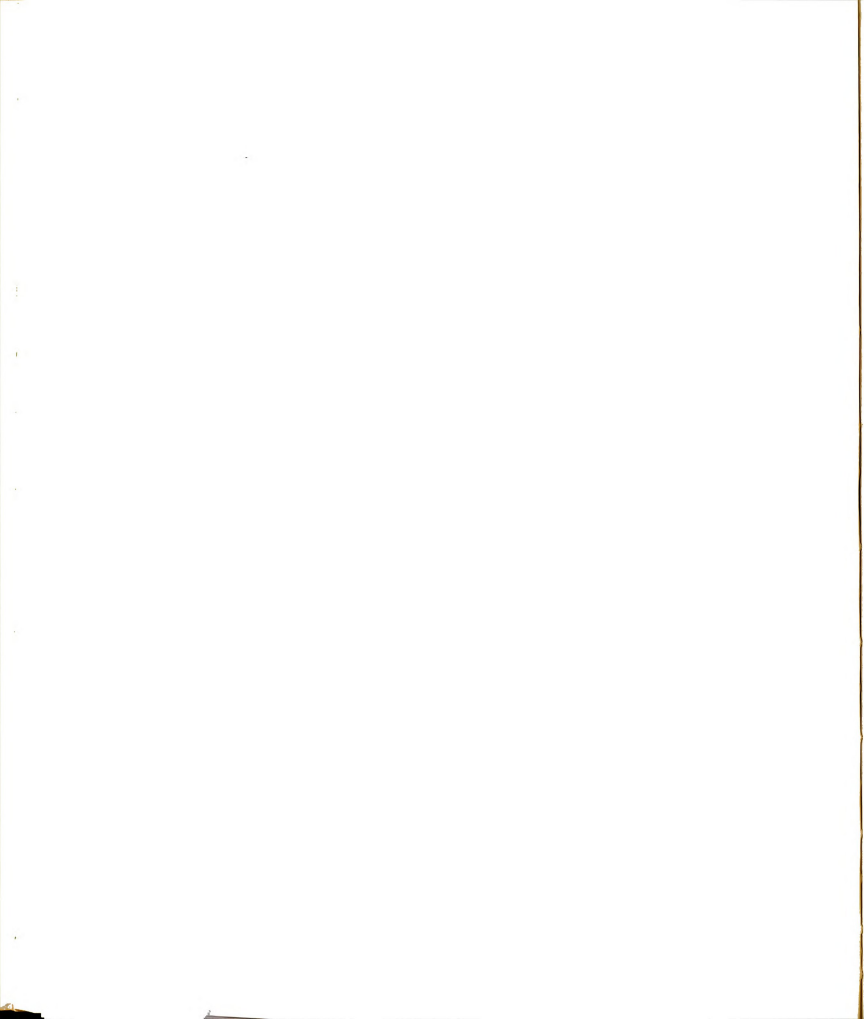


particular action of the soul on each object of its attention. The soul's gestures--"se couche," "s'y exerce," "les leur taille"--are personifications which give it the capacities of a conscious body controlling its actions. In the second passage the images contrast purely perceptive acts, "voir et sentir," with the soul's more active involvement in "incorporer" and "se paistre." When the soul is dealing with that which "proprement est de son avoir et de sa substance," things of a spiritual nature like the soul itself, its action is experienced in images which not only lend it qualities of a body, but images which directly point to the process of incarnation. The soul feeds itself and incorporates into itself certain experiences. In so doing, it takes on more body itself. The images here serve to articulate the metaphorical process as it operates in all the images of the soul in movement.

Montaigne's repeated creation of an image of the soul in terms of weight, tension and other corporeal properties counterpoises his perception of the emptiness and lightness of the soul. Its weightlessness, its softness, render it easily vulnerable to the branle of the passions from within and the shock of forces from without. He criticizes "la volubilité et souplesse de nostre ame" (I:38, 230a) and a "creance contournable comme une girouette" where the soul, "estant molle et sans resistance, seroit forcée de recevoir sans cesse autres et autres impressions, la dernière effaçant tousjours la trace de la précédente" (II:12, 554a). The soul in these images is not without substance, but it is lacking the weight and firmness necessary to assert its own shape. Fluctuations in the beliefs which are able

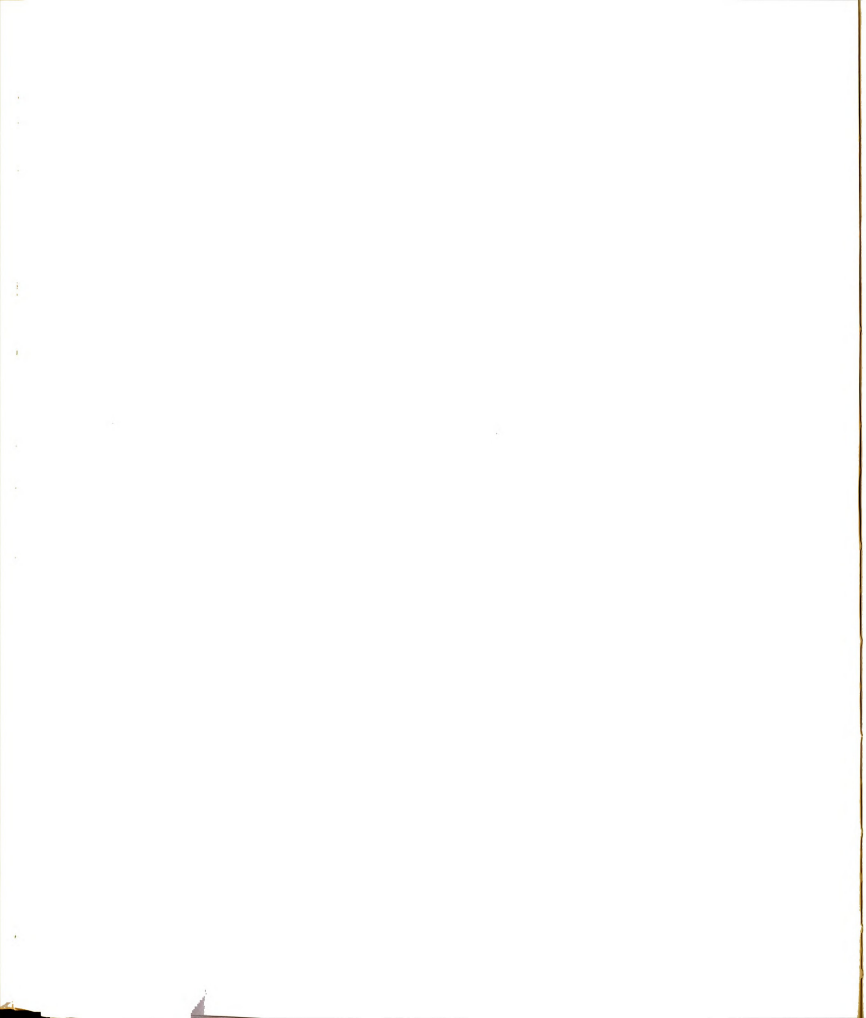
to make their own impression on the soul relate to the "mesure qu'elle se trouvoit plus molle et de moindre resistance. . . . (c) D'autant que l'âme est plus vuide et sans contrepoids, elle se baisse plus facilement sous la charge de la première persuasion" (I:27, 177a). What are quite clearly pejorative images of the soul are inevitably applied to those occasions where the soul is not a free agent, but subject to the determination of other forces. The same tenor finds expression in yet another vehicle, this time one of a movement constrained by physical bondage: "Nostre ame ne branle qu'à credit, liée et contrainte à l'appetit des fantasies d'autrui, serve et captivée sous l'autorité de leur leçon. On nous a tant assubjectis aux cordes que nous n'avons plus de franches allures" (I:26, 150b).

The "franches allures" are precisely what Montaigne would prescribe as the ideal movement of the soul. In its very pliability, its variability, when not "assubjecti[e] aux cordes" or "forcée de recevoir sans cesse autres impressions," the soul exercises its most felicitous movement. "Les moins tandues et plus naturelles alleures de nostre ame sont les plus belles" (III:3, 798b)--"Les plus belles ames sont celles qui ont plus de variété et de souplesse" (796b). Montaigne shows the movement of the soul in its continual diversity by comparing it to the action of the rays of the sun:<sup>17</sup> "On dict que la lumière du Soleil n'est pas d'une pièce continuë, mais qu'il nous elance si dru sans cesse nouveaux rayons les uns sur les autres, que nous n'en pouvons appercevoir l'entre deux:<sup>18</sup> . . . ainsin eslance nostre ame ses pointes diversement et imperceptiblement" (I:38, 231a).



Focusing our attention first on the vehicle and then introducing the tenor, Montaigne's metaphor heightens our perception of the interaction at work. What appears to be an unbroken emanation from the sun is really composed of numerous, diverse shafts of light. But elsewhere, it has been observed that in the manifestations of the soul, we begin with quite the contrary impression: most evident to our eyes are the incessant inconsistencies of our existence. The simile in this passage invites an understanding of likeness. Although we perceive them differently, the soul and the sun operate in much the same way, for in both there is a single source generating diversity. The thrust of the image is to communicate the unity in the force of the soul, permeating the fluctuations of our lives with the onset of its diverse and imperceptible "pointes."

If in the movements of the soul there is a fundamental unity, then it is through an understanding of this principle that we can derive some sense of stability within the branle propelling us from within. Given that "les ames des Empereurs et des savatiers sont jetées a mesme moule" (II:12, 454a), there is a degree to which all our movements correspond to our participation in "l'humaine condition." But, as Friedrich emphatically points out, Montaigne will always resist the temptation to make general, abstract formulations on the nature of man.<sup>19</sup> The way of Montaigne is to proceed from the individual toward an understanding of the general. And so, rather than dealing in terms of a forme generale, Montaigne proposes something much more limited, much more precise: "Il n'est personne, s'il s'escoute, qui ne descouvre

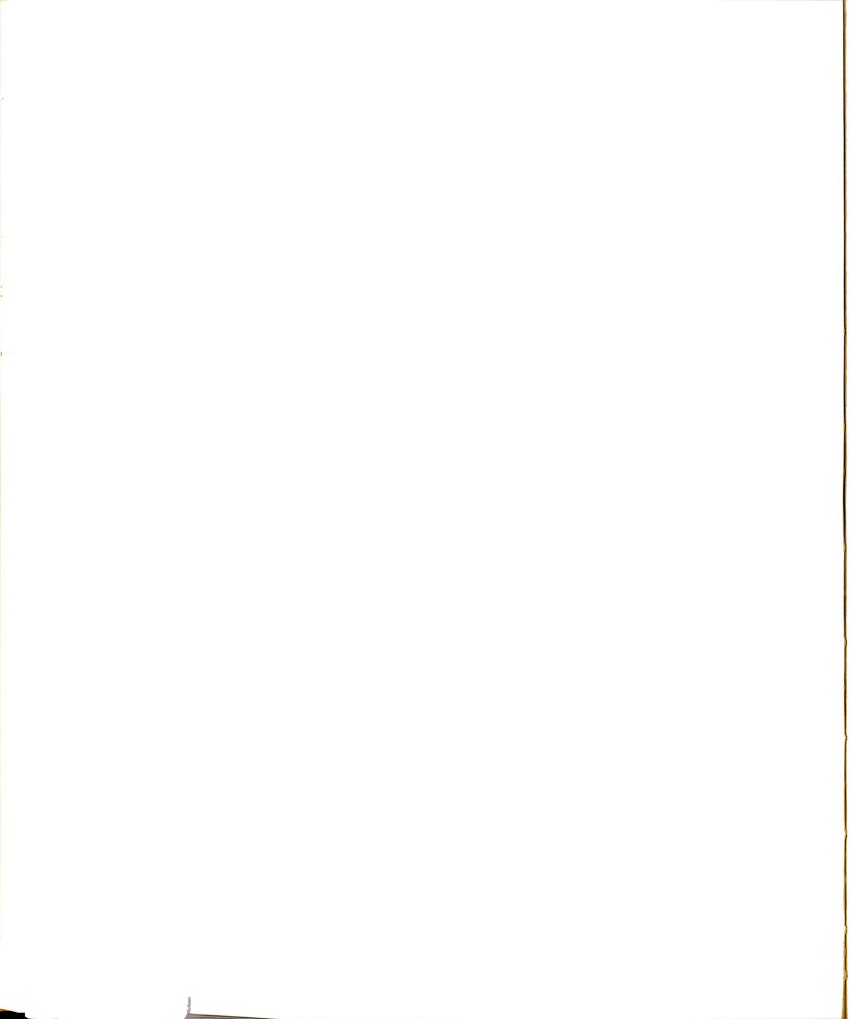


en soy une forme sienne, une forme maistresse, qui luicte contre l'institution, et contre la tempeste des passions qui luy sont contraires" (III:2, 789b). Reaching for an understanding of the "forme sienne," that which gives a coherent shape to all our movements, demands the attentive introspection Montaigne reserves for the domain of the "arriere boutique" (I:39, 235a). Divorced from all involvements with the external world, one can turn his attention to "[l']ame contournable en soy mesme" (ibid.). But this turning of the soul back upon itself involves the difficult flexing of the "il faut bien bander l'ame . . ." which we noted above.<sup>20</sup> Too great a tension arrests the movement that shapes the "forme maistresse" we are trying to observe.

Montaigne nevertheless does treat the soul as knowable, or at least possibly knowable. He does so in images which again spatialize the movement of the soul and which suggest a state of rest that would seem to contradict its mobility:

Comme les ames vicieuses sont incitées souvent à bien faire par quelque impulsion estrangère, aussi sont les vertueuses à faire mal. Il les faut doncq juger par leur estat rassis, quand elles sont chez elles, si quelque fois elles y sont; ou au moins quand elles sont plus voisines du repos et de leur naïfve assiette (III:2, 788b).

The image of an "estat rassis," immediately thrown into question by the "si quelque fois elles y sont" must not be isolated from its context. The "settled state"<sup>22</sup> is meant to contrast with those sallies of the soul moved by "quelque impulsion estrangere," movements which take exception to its natural rhythm. While it is not possible, or even desirable, to take hold of the soul in an absolutely fixed position,



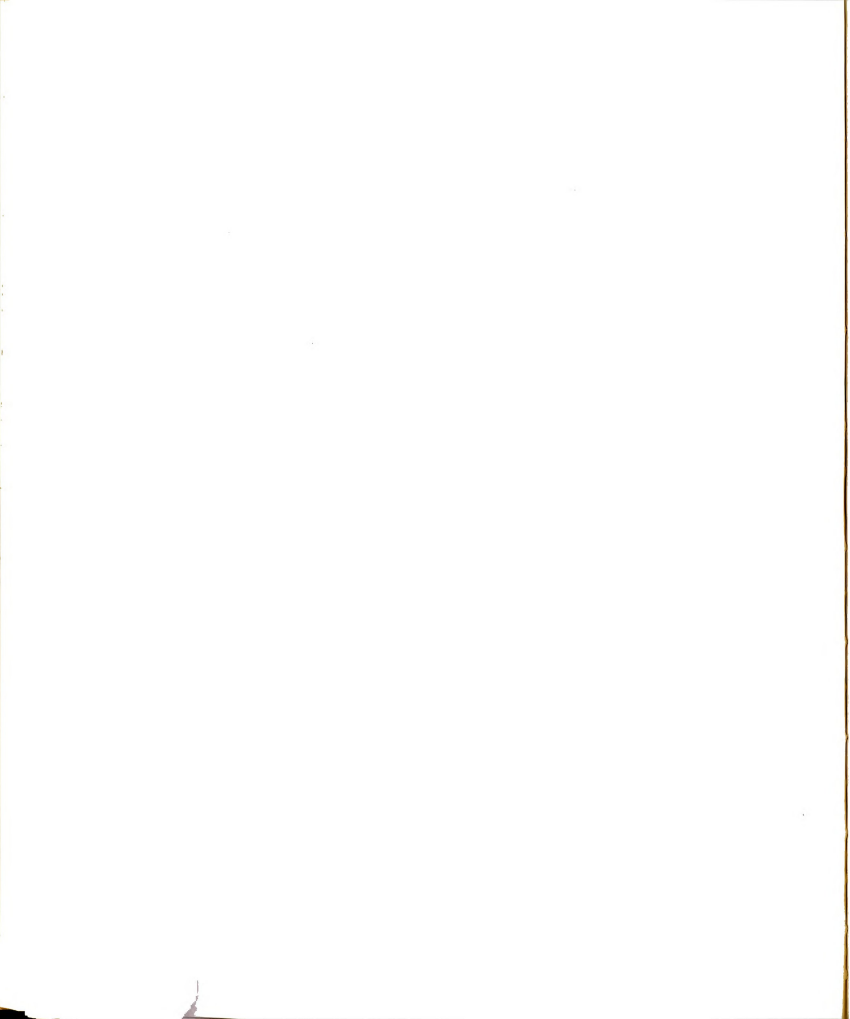
one can hope to study it "plus voisine [. . .] du repos et de [sa] naïfve assiette." "Closest to repose" and in its "natural position,"<sup>21</sup> the soul will still exercise its movement, but the movement natural to itself, not one forced upon it by extraneous circumstances. Montaigne's comment on the branle du monde, "La constance mesme n'est autre chose qu'un branle plus languissant" (782b), would seem equally applicable to the branle de l'ame. This is precisely his analysis of the Stoics' assumed pose of fixity in their celebrated Ataraxie: "mais le mesme bransle de leur ame qui leur fait fuir les precipices et se mettre à couvert du serein, celui là mesme leur presente cette fantasie et leur en faict refuser une autre" (II:12, 562a). If even the effort to suspend movement is in itself a "bransle de [l']ame," then what Montaigne calls the "estat rassis" cannot be conceived as devoid of movement, but rather as "les moins tandues et plus naturelles alleures de nostre ame" (III:3, 798b). The 'form' of the soul, that which lends stability to what is ever en branle, is the soul in its ideal movement, the movement most natural to it. "Le pris de l'ame ne consiste pas à aller haut, mais ordonnéement" (III:2, 787b). It is in this regular movement that the 'shape' of the soul becomes discernible, but no single image defines its contours. Like the flow of a liquid or the diffusion of light, the movement of the soul escapes confinement.

Frequently in Montaigne, the distinction between âme and esprit is barely perceptible, and there are passages in which the two become virtually synonymous.<sup>22</sup> On the whole we can regard his use of âme as



pertaining to the general flow of life, a spiritual force animating our physical existence and comprising our various mental faculties as well as more elusive components of the human personality--instinct, volition, emotions and temperament. Esprit may be taken to apply generally to the faculties of the mind--reason, memory and judgment<sup>23</sup>--those powers distinguishing man from the animals by virtue of his intelligence. In turning our investigation to Montaigne's use of metaphor in this more limited sector of man's functions, we encounter an increased richness in figurative language. As his focus becomes more particular, his language takes on greater precision.

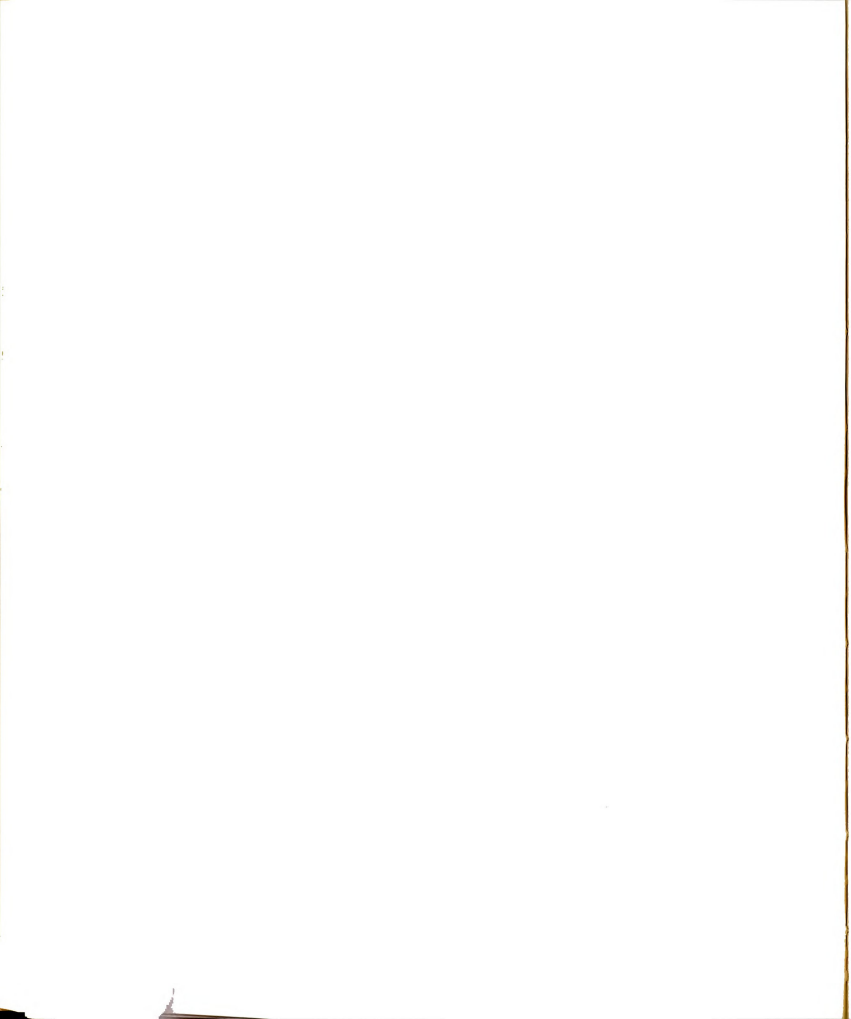
Mindful of Montaigne's insistence on the 'marriage' of body and soul, we find the same bond reiterated in terms of the mind. But here, the nature of the joining is more explicit: "A quoi faire desmembrons nous en divorce un bastiment tissu d'une si jointe et fraternele correspondance? Au rebours renouons le par mutuels offices. Que l'esprit esveille et vivifie la pesanteur du corps, le corps arreste la legerté de l'esprit et la fixe" (III:13, 1094-95b). Montaigne first opposes the divisive terms "desmembrons" and "divorce" with a mixed metaphor referring to the union he envisions. A building is not tissu, nor are its parts to be renoués, but this progression in vehicles serves to strengthen the tenor, the "si jointe et fraternele correspondance," by insisting in more than one way on a 'bringing together of parts.' Then Montaigne examines the way in which these parts interrelate. Body and mind 'interwine' in a play of weight and lightness, of fixity and movement. Each communicates to the other something of the quality it



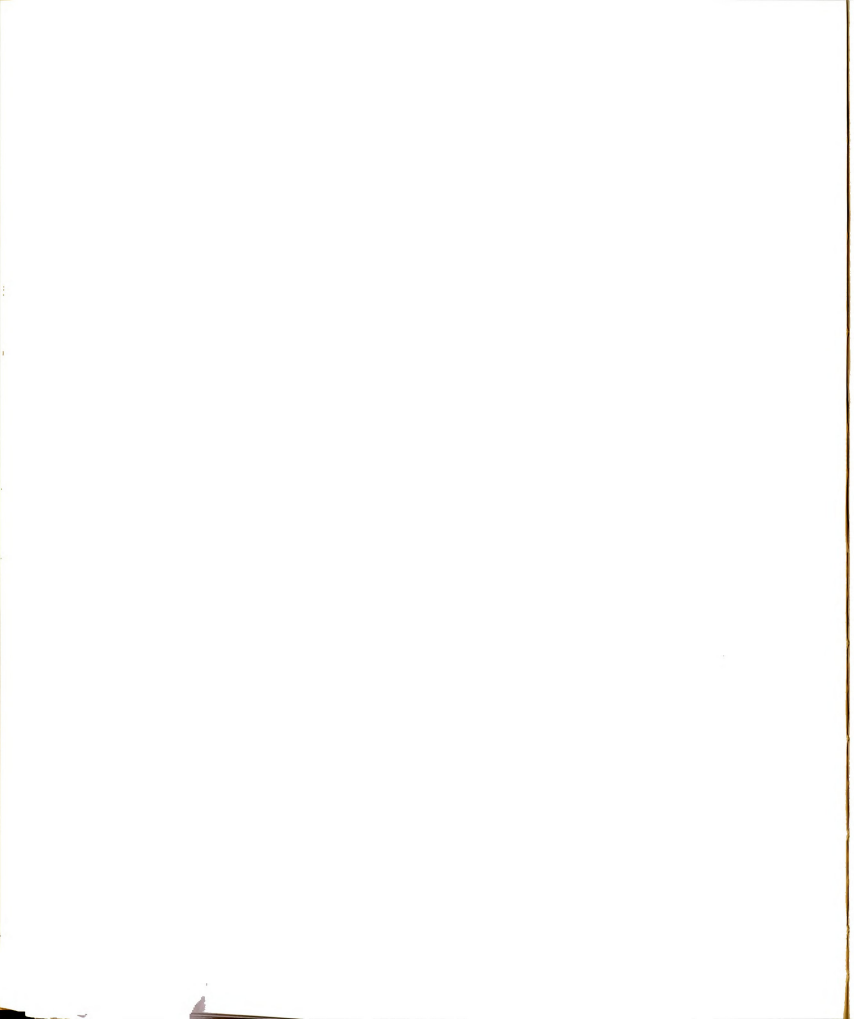
has in excess so that "par mutuels offices" they can effect a harmonious balance.

At the same time, Montaigne would not have the mind relinquish its own vivacity in its association with the body. "Je hay qu'on nous ordonne d'avoir l'esprit aux nues, pendant que nous avons le corps à table. Je ne veux pas que l'esprit s'y cloue ny qu'il s'y veautre, mais je veux qu'il s'y applique, (c) qu'il s'y sée, non qu'il s'y couche" (1087b). Though he objects to their divorce, emphatically illustrated in the images of their separate pursuits--"aux nues" and "à table," he carefully qualifies the way in which the mind is to engage in the life of the body. By his antitheses of verb metaphors, he shapes and reshapes (in the c addition) the distinction he makes between the way he would and would not have the mind proceed.<sup>24</sup> The actions of nailing and wallowing involve a fixedness and a slackness incompatible with the mind's movement. The action of the mind is one of application. It may permit itself interims of rest as it focuses on physical rather than mental phenomena. But even in its repose, it must remain poised for action, "qu'il s'y sée, non pas qu'il s'y couche."

Maintaining a working balance between mind and body results in a continuous struggle of polarities. The mind pulls in the direction of its flight "aux nues" against the weighted fixedness of physical existence, anchored to the exigent demands of bodily needs. Despite his desire that the mind not surrender to the dictates of the body, Montaigne sees that in "cette colligeance" (III:5, 821b) the body will inevitably have a powerful effect on the life of the mind. Old age and



youth, sickness and health determine, despite all our protests, the vigor or lack of vigor in our mental state. An image of the mind in 'blossom' while the body advances in age is projected as an expression of wishful thinking: "qu'il verdisse, qu'il fleurisse ce pendant, s'il peut, comme le guy sur un arbre mort" (ibid.). The verb metaphors of the mind's youthful productivity, accented by the simile, "comme le guy," meets with a harsh contrast in the image of the aged body as "un arbre mort." Experience, ever the most reliable indicator for Montaigne of the way things are, impugns the likelihood of realizing such a wish. "Il n'y a point d'allegresse en ses productions [de l'esprit], s'il n'en y a quand et quand au corps" (ibid.). In his experience, the ebullient health of "la verdeur des ans" accounts for those rare moments of "des eslancements extraordinaires de l'esprit. . . . Ce feu de gayeté suscite en l'esprit des eloises vives et claires, outre nostre portée naturelle. . . . Or bien ce n'est pas merveille si un contraire estat affesse mon esprit, le clouë et faict un effect contraire" (821c). The polarized movements of the mind are embodied in the contrastive images of "des eloises vives et claires" and the familiar state of being weighted or nailed down. What is common to both these extremes of the mind is their shared origin. Inseparable from the body, the mind, in all its movements, is influenced by the movements of the body. This association is the bond between extremities, for as Alan Watts has noted, "to say that opposites are polar is to say . . . that they are related and joined--that they are the terms . . . of a single whole."<sup>25</sup> In its most disparate images, the



mind, "affréré au corps" (821b), manifests the reaches of its continuous extension.

Glimpsing the mind in its extremes, either cloué au corps or eslancé dans une eloise vive, is not yet to see it in its characteristic mobility, its "volubilité" (III:11, 1009b). Montaigne finds the effort to follow the operation of the mind a difficult undertaking: "[A] C'est une espineuse entreprinse, et plus qu'il ne semble, de suyvre une alleure si vagabonde que celle de nostre esprit; [B] de penetrer les profondeurs opaques de ses replis internes; [C] de choisir et arrester tant de menus airs de ses agitations" (II:6, 358c). In the repeated reformations so frequent in Montaigne (A, B, C), the passage exemplifies the kind of movement it is meant to describe. Montaigne works out his idea first in terms of a loose voyage metaphor: following the vagabond gait is a thorny enterprise; then, in a more sensuous metaphor, he refers to the operation of the mind as 'inward folds,' the difficulty of the enterprise becomes "les profondeurs opaques," and the effort to follow sharpens into "penetrer." The concluding phrase (C) states more precisely what is contained in the metaphors. Following and penetrating lead to selecting and stopping the minute variations of the mind's "agitations." The very effort to 'follow the mind's movement' must be taken metaphorically. It can only be accomplished intermittently, through a constantly renewed perception of particular movements. This is, of course, the method of the Essais. Montaigne, nevertheless, can still speak, always metaphorically, of the general élan of the mind.

In the following passage, he employs a richly varied array of verbs to communicate the vitality of "l'esprit genereux":

il pretend tousjours et va outre ses forces; il a des eslans au delà de ses effects; s'il ne s'avance et ne se presse et ne s'açcule et ne se choque, il n'est vif qu'à demy; (b) ses poursuites sont sans terme, et sans forme; son aliment c'est (c) admiration, chasse, (b) ambiguité. . . . C'est un mouvement irregulier, perpetuel, sans patron, et sans but. Ses inventions s'eschauffent, se suyvent, et s'entreproduisent l'une l'autre (III:13, 1045c).

Joined to the rush of verbs insisting on the dynamic impulsion of the "spirited mind"<sup>26</sup> are epithets qualifying its movement as "sans terme et sans forme," "irregulier, perpetuel, sans patron et sans but." The impression that has built up in Montaigne's relentless accumulation of predicates and attributes finally crystallizes in the verses from La Boétie which Montaigne inserts immediately after this passage:<sup>27</sup> "Ainsi voit l'on, en un ruisseau coulant . . ." (ibid.). Taking the entire passage with the citation as a single metaphorical complex, we see that Montaigne progresses steadily toward a heightened concretization of his unsubstantial subject. The verse simile comes as a natural completion to his preceding exploration of the grounds of the comparison. As with the soul, the movement of the mind is experienced as the movement of water, which, in its notable recurrence, emerges almost as a symbol of the ebb and flow of the uncontainable inner life.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the soul, however, the mind, in its capacity for movement, takes on more sharply delineated contours in a 'set' of substantive metaphors:<sup>29</sup>



Nostre esprit est un util vagabond et temeraire  
(II:12, 541a).

C'est un outrageux glaive que l'esprit (541b).

La raison humaine est un glaive double et dangereux  
(II:17, 638c).

J'appelle tousjours raison cette apparence de discours  
que chacun forge en soy . . . c'est un instrument de plomb  
et de cire, alongeable, ployable et accommodable à tous  
biais et à toutes mesures (II:12, 548c).

. . . de tout ce que peut sa raison qui est un util  
souple, contournable et accommodable à toute figure  
(520-521a).

The use of the image of an instrument or tool, and more specifically, a sword, deals with the mind in its active involvement with things exterior to itself. It is only in its relationship to something upon which it can act that the mind itself is envisioned in terms of concrete objects. The action of the mind is to 'cut through' reality, to manipulate and perform operations on that which is presented to it--"Laissons à notre pensée tailler et coudre à son plaisir" (560a). Viewed in terms of its operations, the mind manifests distinct attributes shared with the instruments to which it is likened. As a sword it possesses not only sharpness, but the concomitant potential for danger and offense ("outrageux"). As an "instrument de plomb et de cire," it takes on weight and pliability. Its action is one of accommodation, a plastic stretching and winding to meet the measures and forms of its proposed objects. Of its own, the mind is "un corps vain, qui n'a par où estre saisi et assené; un corps divers et difforme" (541a). But in its application, in its performance as an instrument, the mind acquires

qualities which contrast markedly with its existence as l'esprit pur. For Montaigne, the mind must relinquish some of the properties of its spirituality in order to function in the more weighted context of concrete reality. "En l'usage de nostre esprit nous avons, pour la plus part, plus besoing de plomb que d'ailes" (III:3, 799b). In view of its operations in the context of everyday living, "il y peut avoir de l'excez en la pureté et perspicacité de nos esprits; . . . Il les faut appesantir et esmousser . . . et les espessir et obscurcir pour les proportionner à cette vie tenebreuse et terrestre" (II:20, 657b). The mind is a tool to be used in facilitating ordinary life. The effective operation of this instrument strikes a balance between extremes: its lightness is weighted down, its dangerous sharpness is blunted, its illuminating flash is shadowed. Neither cloué au corps nor envoilé aux nues, the movement of the mind, in its more usual contexts, demands the conscious restraint and measured control one employs in the use of a potentially dangerous, but equally useful tool.

The mind/tool image is given greatest amplification in the opening passage from I:50 where Montaigne describes the operation of the faculty of judgment. La Charité remarks that Montaigne thinks "in terms of a hierarchy among the faculties of the soul" and that in the scheme of this hierarchy, "judgment occupies 'un siege magistral' and it has its own private 'court' where it may judge itself" (III:13, 1052b and III:2, 785b).<sup>30</sup> Judgment holds this privileged position because it is at once the most integrated and the most personal of the faculties of the mind. Reason and memory as well as the perception

of experience submit their finds to the power of judgment for a final processing. The exercise of this power is the end toward which Montaigne directs his entire program of education. He vividly depicts the integrating process of the judgment through a comparison to the activity of bees, transforming their gleanings into something uniquely of their own making: "Les abeilles pillotent deçà delà les fleurs, mais elles en font après le miel, qui est tout leur; ce n'est plus thin ny marjolaine: ainsi les pieces empruntées d'autrui, il [l'élève] les transformera et confondra, pour en faire un ouvrage tout sien, à sçavoir son jugement" (I:26, 150-151a).<sup>31</sup> The making of judgements is an activity which is best witnessed and consequently described from within "puis que le jugement vient de l'operation de celui qui juge . . . par ses moïens et volonté, non par la contrainte d'autrui" (II:12, 571-572a). For this reason, we find the most concrete exploration of the activity in process in the passage from I:50 where Montaigne is describing his own experience of his judgment at work:

[A] Le jugement est un util à tous subjects, et se mesle par tout. [B] A cette cause, aux essais que j'en fay ici, j'y employe toute sorte d'occasion. Si c'est un subject que je n'entende point [1], à cela mesme je l'essaye, [C] sondant le gué de bien loing; et puis, le trouvant trop profond pour ma taille, je me tiens à la rive; et cette reconnaissance de ne pouvoir passer outre, c'est un traict de son effect, voire de ceux dequoy il se vante le plus. Tantost, à un subject vain et de neant [2], j'essaye voir s'il trouvera dequoy lui donner corps et dequoy l'appuyer et estançonner. Tantost je le promene à un subject noble et tracassé [3], auquel il n'a rien à trouver de soy, le chemin en estant si frayé qu'il ne peut marcher que sur la piste d'autrui. Là il fait son jeu à eslire la route qui luy semble la meilleure, et, de mille sentiers, il dict que cettuy-cy, ou celui là, a esté le mieux choisi (289a).

What begins as a simple metaphor of judgment as a tool expands into a complex network of several tenors and vehicles interacting in various directions, mutually enriching each other. The initial tool image (A) is carefully related back to the tenor (judgment) as a tool to be applied "à tous subjects." In pursuing the way in which the tool/judgment operates (B), Montaigne refers to it as something he is 'trying out'--"aux essais que j'en fay ici"--a phrase immediately alerting the reader to a further connection: to the tenor judgment interacting with the vehicle util is joined the tenor 'operation of judgment' interacting with the vehicle essais, or indeed Essais. And now a new image (C) is introduced, that of the voyage of geographical exploration. This becomes the vehicle for both the operation of the judgment and the essais. The tool judgment is henceforth employed in terms of the new metaphor: "sondant le gué," "je le promene," "il ne peut marcher," "fait son jeu à eslire la route." As the movement of judgment takes on the physicality of these gestures, the subjects on which it operates are figured spatially in images conveying depth, extension and geographical properties: "le gué," "trop profond pour ma taille," "à la rive," "le chemin estant si frayé," "la piste d'autrui," "la route," "mille sentiers." Of the three kinds of subjects on which Montaigne 'tries' his judgment (1, 2, 3), it is only the second, "un subject vain et de neant" which does not take on the geographical contours of the prolonged metaphor. Too unsubstantial to provide the judgment a 'field' of operation, this kind of subject requires that his judgment "lui donner corps . . . l'appuyer et estançonner" rather than sound its depths or

move along the lines of a well-worn path ("tracassé"). It is the very act of the judgment 'judging itself' that has taken on 'body,' been 'supported' and 'propped up' in the course of the metaphorical development of this passage. For Montaigne, "judgment does not exist in and of itself, [but] brings itself into being, creates itself."<sup>32</sup> The subjects on which it operates are secondary to the action of judgment upon them: "je voy assez ce peu que tout cecy vaut et poise, et la folie de mon dessein. C'est prou que mon jugement ne se deferre point, duquel ce sont icy les essais" (II:17, 636-637a). It is enough that his judgment not be undone, for it is through the action of this 'tool' that weight and body come into being, the weight and body of the image of its movement in a geographical landscape, and more pointedly, of the Essais with which this image connects.

Montaigne discerns a difference in the movement of judgment from that of l'esprit:<sup>33</sup> "Il semble que ce soit le plus propre de l'esprit d'avoir son operation prompte et soudaine, et le plus propre du jugement de l'avoir lente et posée" (I:10, 41a). This slower, more measured pace is necessary to the nature of judgment's operation, one of trial and error, of testing and sometimes tripping in its own steps: "mes conceptions et mon jugement ne marche qu'à tastons, chancelant et chopant" (I:26, 145a). The characteristic exploration of judgment is condensed here into three strikingly tactile movements. In its faltering and hesitant gait lies the source of its potency. If it is truly to exercise its power, judgment must assert itself against the driving impulses of passion or the fixed design of preconceived notions.

Because its movement is one of testing for itself ("ne marche qu'à tastons"), it seeks to operate freely and confidently, not afraid to reserve judgment where it does not find 'solid ground,' nor to retrace its steps where it recognizes its own error. As a tool, it affords to its user the means by which he can guide and control experience: "Nous ne conduisons jamais bien la chose de laquelle nous sommes possédez et conduicts. . . . Celuy qui n'y employe que son jugement et son adresse, il y procede plus gayement: il feinct, il ploye, il differe tout à son aise, selon le besoing des occasions; il faut d'atainte, sans tourment et sans affliction, prest et entier pour une nouvelle entreprise; il marche tousjours la bride à la main" (III:10, 985b). The verbs demonstrating how one uses judgment lend added vigor to the gestures of its trials. Its movement is not only that of travel and of exploration, but of attempts at hitting a target and bending to the needs of the occasion. The concluding image of walking with the bridle always in hand lauds the masterful control judgment exercises over its own progression.

True, judgment is vulnerable to the esbranlement of the passions and the imponderable elements of man's inner psyche. Montaigne recognizes the power of an emotion such as fear "qui emporte . . . nostre jugement hors de sa deuë assiette" (I:18, 74a) and the susceptibility of judgment to be moved by something as inconsequential as the tone of an orator's voice: "cette belle piece, qui se laisse manier et changer au branle et accidens d'un si leger vent" (III:12, 580a). But these movements to which judgment is subject impeded the operation

by which it creates itself. When the source of movement stems from outside the judgment, it is no longer truly judgment in operation. "Ou nous pouvons juger tout à fait, ou tout à fait nous ne le pouvons pas" (II:12, 545a). Keenly aware of "l'incertitude de nostre jugement" (I:47, 270a), Montaigne does not exclude judgment from the critical appraisal of man's ability to know in the "Apologie": "et le jugeant et le jugé estans en continuelle mutation et branle" (586a). But the judgment is a faculty to be trained, to be 'formed' through education and experience, and opposed to Montaigne's acknowledgment of "son imperfection et sa naturelle foiblesse" (I:26, 157a) is his confidence in the creation of "un jugement roide et hautain et qui juge sainement et seurement" (III:8, 921b). Through its exercise, through its repeated testing of "cette continuelle variation des choses humaines, nous en ayons le jugement plus esclaircy et plus ferme" (I:49, 285a). The roideur and fermeté of the well-exercised judgment contrast with the liquid flow and volubility by which Montaigne characterizes l'esprit. Judgment is the faculty which not only gives body to "un subject vain et neant," but which assumes body, weight and solidity of its own. By virtue of the tension through which it exercises its operations, judgment, "lente et posée" in its action, provides the complement Montaigne sees as necessary to the formless energy of l'esprit: "en l'usage de nostre esprit nous avons . . . plus besoing de plomb que d'ailes, plus de froideur et de repos que d'ardeur et d'agitation" (III:3, 799b).

The firmness and solidity of judgment are not to be misconstrued into an image of it as fixed and immobile. Since judgment exists only in its activity, it is the process of making judgments that creates the roideur which 'gives it body.' There can be no stopping place for the movement of judgment, for its being derives from its continual exercitation. "Far from being an adhesion of the mind to things, judgment is an integration of things within the mind by the mind."<sup>34</sup> "Nous autres qui privons nostre jugement du droict de faire des arrests" (III:8, 901b) are continually engaging the judgment in the process by which it creates itself. The flux of human opinions finds in such a judgment "le terrain mal propre à y penetrer et y pousser de hautes racines" (ibid.). There are, however, moments when Montaigne attributes a constancy, an unwavering regularity to the movement of his judgment: "mesme incliniation, mesme route, mesme force" (III:2, 790b). This image applies to the operation of the judgment with regard to the self, and the stability it implies derives from the strong sense Montaigne has of his inner being. La Charité suggests that "in time, enlightened judgment becomes one with its object; judgment becomes the innermost self."<sup>35</sup>

The activity of the mind is directed toward the attainment of truth. Were it possible to realize this aim, it would follow that movement would find its fulfillment in a state of rest, the result of having taken possession of that which does not alter. Montaigne describes the hypothetical satisfaction of the mind's esbranlement



in images of a rigid and fixed stability: "et la plus seure assiete de nostre entendement, et la plus heureuse, ce seroit celle là où il se maintiendrait rassis, droit, inflexible, sans bransle et sans agitation" (II:12, 545a). But this mode of stability, "poised, upright, inflexible"<sup>36</sup> in its hold of that which was pursued, is not accessible to the mind, given the limitations of the human condition. "Il n'est rien si souple et erratique que nostre entendement; c'est le soulier de Theramenez, bon à tous pieds. Et il est double et divers et les matieres doubles et diverses" (III:11, 1012b). The metaphor of Theramenes' supple shoe<sup>37</sup> contrasts sharply with the image of the mind in its "plus seure assiete." This facile adaptability of human intelligence to "divers effects" is supported by the various images of the "matieres doubles et diverses" to which the mind adjusts itself: "C'est un pot à deux ances, qu'on peut saisir à gauche ou à dextre" (II:12, 566a); "c'est prendre d'un sac deux mouldures et de mesme bouche souffler le chaud et le froid" (I:32, 214a). Repeatedly Montaigne stresses the multiple aspect of the truth the mind would saisir or assess. And where there is more than one approach, movement can never yield to the restful inertia of certitude.

Deprived of the "heureuse assiete" of fixed knowledge, the mind is figured throughout the Essais in images insisting upon the wanton and voluble character of its incessant activity--"[Des esprits] se jettent desreiglez, par-cy par là" (I:8, 33a); "[l'humaine raison] ne fait que fourvoyer par tout" (II:12, 500a); "tournoyant et flotant dans cette mer vaste, trouble et ondoyante des opinions humaines, sans

bride et sans but . . . elle va se divisant et dissipant en mille routes diverses" (501a); "on le [l'esprit] bride et le garrotte . . . il eschappe à toutes ces liaisons" (541a); "[nos facultez intellectuelles et sensibles] ne font que floter et vanter" (545a). Through Montaigne's forceful verb metaphors, the movement of the mind is envisioned in a spatial context--'traveling' along des routes, des sentiers, des voyes--but most often in the sense of an aimless wandering, all too frequently straying from its designated 'path.' In its dynamic and reckless impulsion, this movement demands restraint--de la bride, or "des orbieres pour tenir sa veuë subjecte et contrainte devant ses pas" (541a). Montaigne follows the rash and fruitless chasse of the mind in an extended, metamorphosing metaphor which playfully imitates the feverish pursuit of its subject:

[A] Les hommes mescognoissent la maladie naturelle de leur esprit: [B] il ne faict que fureter et quester, et va sans cesse tournoiant, bastissant et s'empestrant en sa besongne, comme nos vers de soye, et s'y estouffe. [C] "Mus in pice."<sup>38</sup> Il pense remarquer de loing je ne sçay quelle apparence de clarté et verité imaginaire; mais, pendant qu'il y court, tant de difficultez luy traversent la voye, d'empeschemens et de nouvelles questes, qu'elles l'esgarent et l'enyvrent. [D] Non guiere autrement qu'il advint aux chiens d'Esope, lesquels, descouvrant quelque apparence de corps mort floter en mer, et ne le pouvant approcher, entreprendrent de boire cette eau, d'assecher le passage, et s'y estouffarent (III:13, 1044-45b).<sup>39</sup>

In the four successive phases of the metaphorical complex, Montaigne progressively concretizes his idea. One sense that the series of vehicles interacting with l'esprit are suggested less by the tenor than by each other. The first image (A) is a simple metaphor of the mind as a physical body, subject to a maladie naturelle.<sup>40</sup> In

describing the movements of the infirm body/mind (B), he makes a comparison to the whirling, entangling and finally self-suffocating course of the silkworm. Immediately juxtaposed to this is a new image (C), the mouse in a pitch barrel, blindly chasing illusory lights and losing itself in bewilderment. Finally, the anecdote of AEsop's dogs (D) stages even more dramatically the senseless, self-destructive chase of the mind. The passage illustrates Montaigne's own manner of working out an idea--most unlike the course of a mouse in a pitch barrel. His use of "serial or consecutive imagery"<sup>41</sup> functions, in the same manner as his frequent doubling or tripling of synonymous or near-synonymous words<sup>42</sup> to pursue his thought to a satisfactory completion. Whereas his abstract subject, the mind in its compulsive meanderings, finds no certain resting place, Montaigne's own thought, in a very real sense, does. It is not in terms of a fixed, immutable truth that Montaigne seeks his repose, for that he has understood to be a certitude inaccessible to his condition. But he is able to actualize the movement of his mind, lay hold of it and possess it in the fixity of verbal expression. Through his unfolding metaphors, he gives substance and stability to what he has called "un corps vain, qui n'a par où estre saisi et assené" (II:12, 541a). Metaphor is the means by which he manages to 'weight down' the "legerté de l'esprit et la fixe" (III:13, 1094b).

The images treating the mind's action upon subjects external to itself reveal two basically distinct modes of procedure, the superficial and the more penetrating. Philosophical arguments "vont à tous coups costoians et gauchissans la matiere, et à peine essuians sa

crouste" (III:4, 812c). Akin to this intellectual 'sidestepping' is the dexterous manipulation of ideas which Montaigne figures in images of a game of ball: "quoy que la varieté et discordance continuelle des evenemens les rejette de coin en coin, et d'orient en occident, ils ne lassent de poursuivre leur esteuf" (I:32, 214a); "Voyez l'horrible impudence dequoy nous pelotons les raisons divines, et combien irreligieusement nous les avons rejettées et reprinses selon que la fortune nous a changé de place . . ." (II:12, 420c). In such instances, the movement of the mind is not one of processing the phenomena on which it acts, but rather of maneuvering them according to its own designs. Montaigne casts the same idea into images of the mind operating as an artisan drawing and shaping his proposed subject as he sees fit: "et, de mesme creon, peindre le blanc et le noir" (I:32, 214a): "nous la [la justice] menons, à tirer comme de cire tant de figures contraires d'une regle si droitte et si ferme" (II:12, 420c). The image of superficial manipulation par excellence is perhaps that of money: "signe rond et substitut mobile de toute réalité humaine."<sup>43</sup> For Montaigne the circulation of coins and their arbitrary value can serve to illustrate the fluctuating and fabricated pursuits of the would-be intellectual life.<sup>44</sup> Knowledge is handled in the same manner as coins of no value: "La science passe de main en main . . . comme une vaine monnoye, inutile à tout autre usage et emploïcte qu'à compter et jeter" (I:25, 136a). And pedants bestow a false value on their own futile endeavors: "La difficulté est une monnoye (c) que les sçavens employent, comme les joueurs de passe-passe, pour ne descouvrir la

vanité de leur art" (II:12, 488b). In typical fashion, Montaigne glides from one image into another; the currency metaphor in the last example is completed by a comparison to the art of conjurors<sup>45</sup>--another vehicle for the sham manipulation of surface appearance.

These examples all show the mind "à peine essuians [la] crouste" of the subjects it handles. Opposed to this kind of action is the movement of a much more penetrating and active participation on the part of the mind: "Autre chose est un dogme serieusement digéré," (II:12, 423a). Through the metaphor of the digestive process, Montaigne explores the operation of the mind as that of an organic being, capable of transforming external matter into itself and capable of substantial growth. This is of course the integrating work of judgment which we have already seen in the image of bees<sup>46</sup> and which Montaigne clearly opposes to a superficial, detached handling of phenomena: "Ce n'est pas assez de compter les experiences, il les faut poiser et assortir et les faut avoir digérées et alambiquées, pour en tirer les raisons et conclusions qu'elles portent" (III:8, 909c). Throughout the essays on education (I:25 and 26), Montaigne develops the rich implications of this metaphor. His celebrated insistence on "plustost la teste bien faicte que bien pleine" (I:26, 149a) stems from the distinction between manger and digérer. A mere accumulation of knowledge and experience is worthless; they must be assimilated, "il les faut poiser et assortir"--"Que nous sert-il d'avoir la panse pleine de viande, si elle ne se digere? si elle ne se trans-forme en nous? si elle ne nous augmente et fortifie?" (I:25, 136a). The terms of the metaphor expand with

vivid concreteness as Montaigne works out his thoughts on the learning process. The pupil is called the tutor's "nourrisson" (I:26, 159a); his studies are "les viandes salubres" (165c) or "ce fruit" (159a); certain materials must be offered to him with "la moelle et la substance toute maschée"; but eventually, "ayant des-jà le jugement formé," he will require the challenge of subjects in which "l'ame trouve où mordre et où se paistre" (159a). The aim of the program is the training not of a savant but of a sage, and its success will be measured by the degree to which the pupil has 'incorporated' his learning into his being.

"C'est tesmoignage de crudité et indigestion que de regorger la viande comme on l'a avallé. L'estomac n'a pas faict son operation, s'il n'a faict changer la façon et la forme à ce qu'on luy avoit donné à cuire" (150c). The alimentary image concentrates on the notion of education as a process of change--change involving both the matiere crue and the 'digesting' mind. Learning is essentially the mind in movement, not the aimless branle of the mus in pice, but movement positively oriented toward a greater substantialization of self.

Montaigne employs a variety of antithetical images to contrast the mind's passive and active relationship to knowledge, embodied in the manger/digérer metaphor. "Il ne faut pas attacher le sçavoir à l'ame, il l'y faut incorporer;<sup>47</sup> il ne l'en faut pas arrouser, il l'en faut teindre" (I:25, 139a). With each pair, he opposes a surface contact to a penetrating, integrating movement. Thibaudet analyzes Montaigne's use of la teinture as being allied with "la solidité, l'acte de donner un corps, une attitude ferme et qui dure. . . .

L'image n'est par conséquent qu'une forme de celles qui expriment l'assimilation par l'intérieur, la nourriture de l'âme."<sup>48</sup> It is through a process of absorption that the human mind assumes a bodily texture, but the image is not always employed in a meliorative sense. It may equally apply to the passive receptivity of the mind, particularly in its penchant for becoming imbued with habit: "La raison humaine est une teinture infuse environ de pareil pois à toutes nos opinions et moeurs, de quelque forme qu'elles soient: infinie en matiere, infinie en diversité" (I:23, 110c). The assimilation of teindre must not be divorced from the activity of judgment, all too often put to sleep by the stultifying effect of habituation (ibid.). What is to be absorbed, incorporated, in the positive sense, must always first be processed: "Qu'il luy face tout passer par l'estamine et ne loge rien en sa teste par simple autorité et à credit" (I:26, 150a)--"the estamine or sifter being . . . the image of judgment."<sup>49</sup> Loger, indicating the mere occupation of space, is set against yet another image of a more integrally joined relationship: "il ne faut pas seulement loger [la science] chez soy, il la faut espouser" (177a). In his frequent contrasting pairs of verbs, Montaigne assesses the two directions in which the movement of the mind tends to proceed. For Thibaudet this becomes the contrast "entre deux manières d'être, recevoir passivement par le dehors ou assimiler activement du dedans."<sup>50</sup> And it is the latter which affords the possibility for growth, the movement toward the solidity which Montaigne desires.

The exercise of the mind engaged in the process of learning finds its stimulus in two activities carefully cultivated by Montaigne--la lecture and la conférence. Glauser suggests that "une des intentions sans doute inavouées de Montaigne a été de remettre dans le mouvement de la vie ce qui serait sinon inerte dans sa bibliothèque. . . . Son vrai voyage est littéraire."<sup>51</sup> Reading, Montaigne maintains, "est la meilleure munition que j'aye trouvé à cet humain voyage" (III:3, 806b); and the abundance of quotations and discussions of writings throughout the Essais demonstrates the extent to which reading 'equips' his mind in its 'travels.' The mind is subject to being frapé, chatouillé or poigné (III:9, 967-968b) by a text; in the case of poetry, the judgment may be ravi and ravagé (I:37, 227c). In addition to these very sensuous impressions of the action of a text upon the mind, there are vivid concretizations of the gesture of the mind in the act of reading. Montaigne uses an extended travel metaphor (reminiscent of his passage on the operation of judgment)<sup>52</sup> to describe an experience of reading a mediocre text in which he encounters a passage clearly not of the author's making:

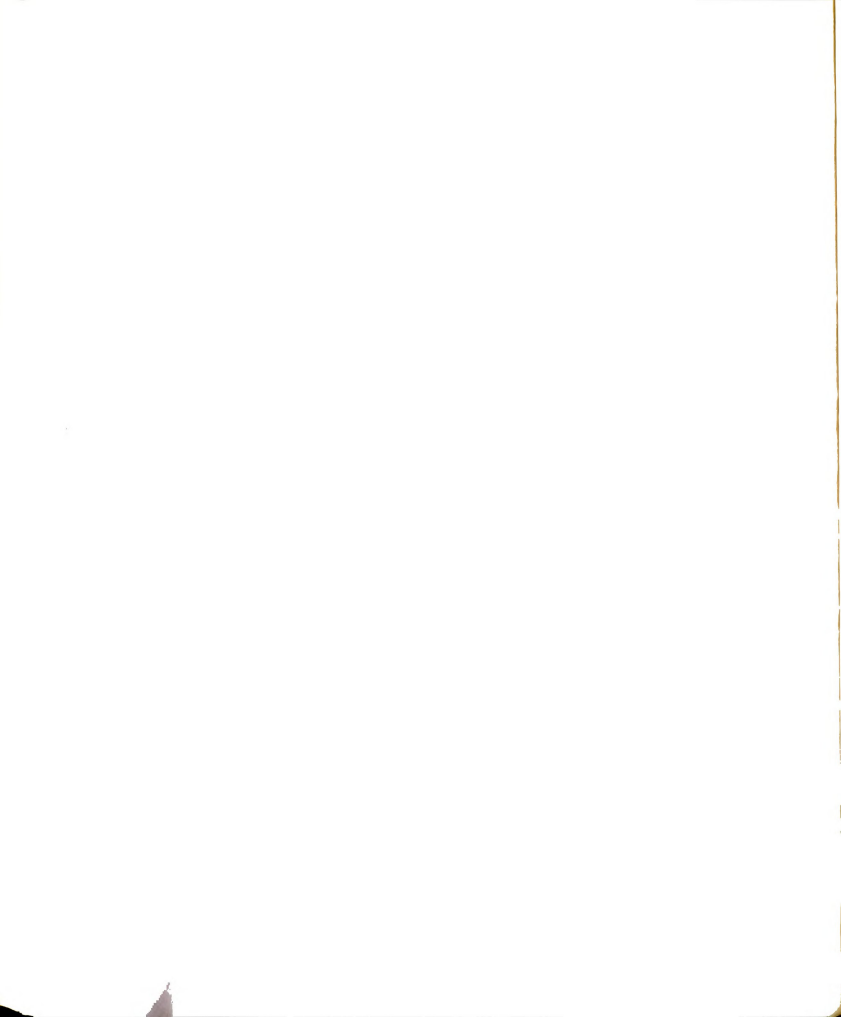
au bout d'un long et ennuyeux chemin, je vins à rencontrer une piece haute, riche et eslevée jusques aux nuës. Si j'eusse trouvé la pente douce et la montée un peu alongée, cela eust esté excusable; c'estoit un precipice si droit et si coupé que, des six premieres paroles, je conneuz que je m'envolais en l'autre monde. De là je descouvris la fondriere d'où je venois, si basse et si profonde, que je n'eus onques plus le coeur de m'y ravalier (I:26, 146a).

Envisioning the quality of the text as a spatial landscape of sharp physical contrasts, Montaigne conveys the reading process in terms of



linear and vertical movement. From the horizontal progression along "un long et ennuyeux chemin" he suddenly ascends ("je m'envolais") to "une piece haute, riche et eslevée jusques aux nuës" and then finds himself indisposed to se ravalier to the lower level of his initial reading venture. Elsewhere the activity of reading is portrayed as a movement of reaching down into and drawing forth from the depths of a text: "Je n'ay dressé commerce avec aucun livre solide, sinon Plutarque et Seneque, où je puyse comme les Danaïdes, remplissant et versant sans cesse" (144a). The mythological simile completing the verb metaphor emphasizes the physicality of the gesture and its continual renewal. Reading is not a passive, receptive relationship to a text, but a commerce that one 'erects' (dresser) with it. In the spatial context of reading material the mind meets with a concrete occasion for its own movement, and in this context, its movement takes on the solidity of well-defined concrete gestures.

Montaigne refers to his approach to the difficulties of a text as a movement of attack, une charge (II:10, 389a and b). But he is quick to point out that where the obstacles of a passage do not easily yield to his thrust, he is disinclined to pursue that particular course, for it is contrary to the way in which his mind most readily moves: "Si je m'y plantois, je m'y perdrois, et le temps: car j'ay un esprit primesautier. Ce que je ne voy de la premiere charge, je le voy moins en m'y obtenant" (389b). Reading must not weigh down and arrest (planter) the movement of the mind, but foster its continuous, fluid peregrinations, for "la contention trop ferme (b) esbloüit [son]



jugement, l'attriste et le lasse" (ibid., c). When dealing with a problematic text, Montaigne avoids the rigid tension of "l'ame trop bandée at trop tendue"<sup>53</sup> and favors the more flexible, plastic firmness characteristic of the resilient essais of the judgment. "Il faut que je le [l'esprit] retire et que je l'y [aux difficultez] remette à secousses: tout ainsi que, pour juger du lustre de l'escarlatte,<sup>54</sup> on nous ordonne de passer les yeux pardessus, en la parcourant à diverses veuës, soudaines reprinses at reiterées" (389b). The comparison to the method of assessing the redness of a cloth provides yet another physical context in which to envision the operation of the mind upon a given text. It is important that the focus not be fixed on a particular point, but be successively applied and reapplied to the extension of points comprising the texture of the whole. Reading, like the perception of color, sustains itself and accomplishes its aim through movement.

However, Montaigne regards reading as a far less invigorating mode of exercise for the mind than the esbranlement occasioned by a good discussion: "L'estude des livres, c'est un mouvement languissant et foible qui n'eschauffe point; là où la conference apprend et exerce en un coup" (III:8, 900b). Valued as "le plus fructueux et naturel exercice de nostre esprit" (ibid.), la conférence is described in metaphors insisting upon its intensely arousing impact:

Si je confere avec une ame forte et un roide jousteur, il me presse les flancs, me pique à gauche et à dextre; ses imaginations eslancent les miennes. La jalousie, la gloire, la contention me poussent et rehaussent au dessus de moy-mesmes. Et l'unisson est qualité du tout ennuyeuse en la conference (ibid.).

A lively and challenging discussion activates not only the mind but one's entire being; it is movement experienced in an acutely physical capacity. Montaigne's vigorous metaphor creates the sensation of movements inflicted and borne from without--"me presse les flancs, me pique à gauche et à droite"--and the concomitant stimulation of movements propelled from within--"ses imaginations eslancent les miennes," ". . . me poussent et rehaussent." In the clash of strong and differing opinions, the inner 'springs' of "la jalousie, la gloire, la contention" reverberate to the 'blows' of the challenger, precipitating the branle that would never be set in motion were the two discussants to find themselves in accord. Responding to the stimulus of the other, one experiences a movement of self-transcendence ("me poussent et rehaussent au dessus de moy-mesmes"), for discussion in its most engaging realization is more than a mere exchange of ideas. It is not only the mind set in motion, but the mind intimately fused with the physical components of the self--"l'esprit affréré au corps" (III:5, 821b).

The pleasure Montaigne takes in la conférence is the pleasure of movement experienced as physically tangible. Because it is a movement incited in response to another's movement, discussion does not allow for the slackening of pace and even momentary stops which the mind may incur in the "mouvement languissant et foible" of la lecture. In contrast to the inertia of a text, the mobile agility of one's partner in discussion--in the best of circumstances "une ame forte et un roide jousteur"--urgently calls for a reaction, "la conference . . . exerce en un coup." Certain qualities in the discussants foster the

ease with which the exchange is activated. Montaigne praises an open forthrightness in speech for this acts much as a physical stimulant, to release the movement of response: "Un parler ouvert ouvre un autre parler et le tire hors, comme faict le vin et l'amour" (III:1, 771c). There is also the need for a strategic concentration which Montaigne likens to the attention required to the moves of one's opponent in a game of tennis: "La parole est moitié à celui qui parle, moitié à celui qui l'escoute. Cettuy-cy se doit preparer à la recevoir selon le branle qu'elle prend. Comme entre ceux qui jouent à la paume, celui qui soustient se desmarche et s'apreste selon qu'il voit remuer celui qui luy jette le coup et selon la forme du coup" (III:13, 1066b). Implicit in the tennis image is the assumption that the 'players' possess the agility and quickness to return the volleys, to maintain the branle on which the game depends. La conférence, for Montaigne, is a virile contact, an exercise demanding a 'well-muscled' mind. In his social relationships he looks for the strength and vigor that are suited to engage in so palpably jarring an encounter: "J'ayme une société et familiarité forte et virile, une amitié qui se flatte en l'aspreté et vigueur de son commerce, comme l'amour, és morsures et esgratigneures sanglantes. (c) Elle n'est pas assez vigoureuse et genereuse, . . . si elle craint le hurt et a ses allures contreintes" (III:8, 902b). The pleasure of la conférence in its physical acuteness manifests itself in terms of pain, much as we witnessed earlier in our observations on the metaphors of desire and physical fulfillment.<sup>55</sup> Desirous of grasping the solidity of his being, Montaigne cherishes

those moments in which movement incorporates itself into a sentient experience.

Both l'âme and l'esprit are components of our being which of themselves have no substance, but are nonetheless experienced. They are perceived through their participation in the branle which is the very essence of life--"Notre vie n'est que mouvement" (III:13, 1074b). As Montaigne works out his thoughts on the operations of the mind and soul, he handles them in terms of the physical properties through which life itself is experienced. Physical gestures, impressions and perceptions, spatiality, and corporeal qualities of firmness and softness, fullness and emptiness, serve to concretize the abstract energies and movements of the soul and mind. On the level of language, this is the process of metaphor, "a transference of meaning through the substitution of one term for another."<sup>56</sup> But for Montaigne, the metaphorical process functions at the deeper level of forging "bonds that join known being to the unknown phenomena."<sup>57</sup> Metaphor, giving 'body' to his ideas, is forging the bond between the movements of the soul and mind and those of the physical body. Understanding l'âme and l'esprit in their intimate relationship to the body and expressing them in corporeal terms, Montaigne effects the harmonious integration of the dual aspects of man's nature: "le sentiment du corps se meslant à celui de l'ame. . . . Que l'esprit esveille et vivifie la pesanteur du corps, le corps arreste la legerte de l'exprit et la fixe." The unity and solidity of being which Montaigne so ardently espouses is realized in the bonds of his metaphor.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Gray, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Montaigne's own image. See above, ch. III, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>The question of the anteriority of thought to language in Montaigne is discussed by Hélène-Hedy Ehrlich, Montaigne: la critique et le langage (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1972), pp. 70-90; and by Dilys Winegrad, "Language as Theme and Image in the Essais of Montaigne," Symposium, 28, 3 (1974), 274-283. Montaigne does recognize a frequent separation between thought and language and sees language used to clothe or even mask thought, but it is important to observe with Dr. Winegrad that the ideal language for Montaigne is one that is "an extension of what he understands himself to be" (p. 279). In reply to Ehrlich's insistence that Montaigne held "que la pensee s'exerce en dehors de la parole" (p. 73), we draw attention to a passage in I:26 which she seems to overlook:

"J'en oy qui s'excusent de ne se pouvoir exprimer, et font contenance d'avoir la teste pleine de plusieurs belles choses, mais, à faute d'eloquence, ne les pouvoir mettre en evidence. C'est une baye. Sçavez-vous, à mon advis, que c'est que cela? Ce sont des ombrages qui leur viennent de quelques conceptions informes, qu'ils ne peuvent desmeler et esclaircir au dedans, ny par consequent produire au dehors . . ." (168a).

Thought for Montaigne is quite clearly inextricable from language, although the contrary--language inextricable from thought--is not always the case. For Montaigne's attitude toward language which is divorced from substance, see above, ch. II, pp. 63ff.

<sup>4</sup>James Olney, Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>Montaigne reviews various philosophies of the soul in II:12, 520-532.

<sup>6</sup>We have already dealt with this problem of the 'Assertive Imagination.' See above ch. II, pp. 63-66.

<sup>7</sup>See above, ch. III, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup>These images are drawn from his readings, the first from Plato, the second from Sebond, Pléiade ed., p. 1471, n. 1 to p. 165 and p. 1590, n. 1 to p. 623.

<sup>9</sup>Montaigne makes mention of both on p. 623.

<sup>10</sup> Zoe Samaras, The Comic Element of Montaigne's Style (Paris: Nizet, 1970), p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Montaigne, p. 534. According to Wm. Blake Tyrrell, Professor of Classics at Michigan State University, Thibaudet's Greek letters transliterate autochinetos, an evident misprint for the Greek word for 'auto-kinetic' or 'self-moved.'

<sup>12</sup> In Chapter III we saw how the image of the ressors translated Montaigne's conception of the passions. See above, ch. III, p. 102.

<sup>13</sup> The simile is taken from Plutarch. Pléiade ed., p. 1573, n. 1 to p. 550.

<sup>14</sup> Thibaudet provides a list of Montaigne's uses of the image of la teinture (Montaigne, pp. 515-516). He comments: "Dans presque toutes ces images la teinture s'allie avec la fermeté, la solidité, l'acte de donner un corps, une attitude ferme et qui dure."

<sup>15</sup> For examples of these verbs in context, see I:14, 38c; I:20, 89a; I:26, 152c; II:2, 328a.

<sup>16</sup> Frame translation, p. 220.

<sup>17</sup> We have already seen the soul compared to the light of the sun in the context of Montaigne's conception of the relationship of the soul and body. See above, p. 120.

<sup>18</sup> "Montaigne se souvient ici d'un passage de la Théologie naturelle de Raymond Sebond (folio 24 verso de sa traduction)," Pléiade ed., p. 1500, n. 2 to p. 231.

<sup>19</sup> This is one of the central themes of his chapter "L'Affirmation de l'homme," pp. 156-219.

<sup>20</sup> See above, pp. 124-125.

<sup>21</sup> Frame translation, p. 615.

<sup>22</sup> Samaras makes a similar observation (p. 24). We see Montaigne's easy passage from one to the other in such passages as "Il a un corps, il a une ame; les sens le poussent, l'esprit l'agite" (II:12, 486c) and again in I:4, when after a long consideration of "l'ame esbranlée et esmeüe" (25a), he concludes: "Mais nous ne dirons jamais assez d'injures au desreglement de nostre esprit" (27a).



<sup>23</sup> We are aware that Montaigne does at times make a distinction between l'esprit and le jugement in passages where l'esprit becomes synonymous with la raison: "Il semble que ce soit plus le propre de l'esprit d'avoir son operation prompte et soudaine, et plus le propre du jugement de l'avoir lente et posée" (I:10, 41a). For an analysis of this distinction, see La Charité, pp. 34-35.

<sup>24</sup> See R. A. Sayce, "The Style of Montaigne: Word-Pairs and Word-Groups," in Literary Style, ed. and (in part) trans. by Seymour Chatman (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 383-402.

<sup>25</sup> See above, ch. I, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> Frame translation, p. 818.

<sup>27</sup> Pléiade ed., p. 1669, n. 4 to p. 1045.

<sup>28</sup> Since, as we noted in ch. II, pp. 63-64, it is characteristic of Montaigne not to restrict a given image to a specific concept, but rather to demonstrate a marked mobility in his associations, we do not want to overemphasize the role of water images as a symbol of the inner life. In Thibaudet's list of water images (pp. 547-548), we see it employed in a variety of ways, functioning as a general image of "la réalité même en son essence mobile" (Montaigne, p. 547).

<sup>29</sup> Both the mind and the soul are shaped in noun metaphors in terms of their passive roles as the recipients of various forces. Memory is "le receptacle et l'estuy de la science" (II:17, 634a). Knowledge is "logée" and "empreinte" in the memory (I:9, 36a)--as in a dwelling or on a material. That faculty of mind or soul which assents to religious tenets without submitting them to the scrutiny of reason and judgment is "une carte blanche préparée à prendre du doigt de Dieu telles formes qu'il luy plaira" (II:12, 486a), and divine grace works to "loger en nous" the conviction of faith (417a).

<sup>30</sup> La Charité, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> For several possible sources of the bee image, see the Pléiade ed., p. 1467, n. 5 to p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> La Charité, p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Esprit in this context is equated with reason rather than comprising all the mental faculties of which judgment is one. La Charité remarks that "confusion of the terms esprit and jugement is unavoidable" (p. 55) and that "in the study of the concept of judgment in Montaigne, one encounters an exciting but disconcerting problem of related vocabulary" (p. 100). His last chapter (pp. 110-143) investigates the problem of the interrelationship of the various faculties of the mind.

<sup>34</sup> Poulet, p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> La Charité, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> Frame translation, p. 422.

<sup>37</sup> "Ce disciple de Prodicus est cité par Erasme, Adages, I, 1, 94. Son surnom vient de ce qu'il s'adaptait à n'importe quel parti," Pléiade ed., p. 1663, n. 4 to p. 1012.

<sup>38</sup> The image of "a mouse in a pitch barrel" is taken from Erasmus, Pléiade ed., p. 1669, n. 6 to p. 1044.

<sup>39</sup> The source of this image is Plutarch, Pléiade ed., p. 1669, n. 1 to p. 1045.

<sup>40</sup> Montaigne frequently uses the metaphor of a sick body to express the weakness and imperfections of the soul or mind. See I:39, 234a; II:12, 548a; II:17, 634a; III:4, 810b; III:5, 823c; III:9, 924b; III:13, 1034b.

<sup>41</sup> Sayce, A Critical Exploration, p. 299.

<sup>42</sup> See Sayce's "The Style of Montaigne," pp. 383-402.

<sup>43</sup> Thibaudet, p. 588. He lists here Montaigne's various uses of the vehicle "money."

<sup>44</sup> See above, ch. III, p. 90.

<sup>45</sup> Frame's translation of "les joueurs de passe-passe," p. 376.

<sup>46</sup> See above, p. 139.

<sup>47</sup> Images borrowed from Seneca, Pléiade ed., p. 1464, n. 5 to p. 139.

<sup>48</sup> Thibaudet, pp. 515-516.

<sup>49</sup> La Charité, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Thibaudet, p. 514.

<sup>51</sup> Montaigne paradoxal (Paris: Nizet, 1972), p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> See above, p. 139.

<sup>53</sup> See the discussion of the soul in movement, above, pp. 124-125.

<sup>54</sup>"Ce mot désigne ici une étoffe d'un rouge vif et non pas une couleur," Pléiade ed., p. 1536, n. 2 to p. 389.

<sup>55</sup>See above, ch. III, pp. 105-106.

<sup>56</sup>See above, ch. II, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup>See above, p. 119.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### METAPHORS OF THE SELF AND THE BOOK

Il n'est description pareille en difficulté  
à la description de soy-mesmes (II:6, 358c).

Clearly aware of the complexities inherent in his desire to portray himself, Montaigne confronts them directly in his frequent reflections on the nature of self-analysis and the self-portrait. These discussions are in part a response to the prevailing attitude of his day which regarded so deliberate an attention to oneself as a kind of social indelicacy, a disturbing violation of the code of the gentleman-courtier whose identity was to be realized in the attainment of a generally accepted ideal of behavior, not in the assertion of one's 'individuality.'<sup>1</sup> And yet, Montaigne was personally witness to the presentation of a gift to Francis II by King René of Sicily consisting of a sketch of René, which he himself had penciled. The incident affords the essayist an opportune moment to question the inconsistency of the Renaissance prejudice: "Pourquoy n'est-il loisible de mesme à un chacun de se peindre de la plume, comme il se peignoit d'un creon?" (II:17, 637a).

Much more problematic to Montaigne is the question of how to achieve both the faithful observation of himself and the faithful rendering of himself as observed. Central to this difficulty is his

awareness of his own mobility: "Je ne puis assurer mon object. Il va trouble et chancelant, d'une yvresse naturelle" and his assertion that "Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage" (III:2, 782b). What is meant by the "portrayal of passage" is intimately related to the essais taken in their dual sense of form and activity, and we shall return to the implications of this statement in the concluding sections of this chapter. For the moment, let us stop at the comparison which Montaigne himself makes of his undertaking to a painting.<sup>2</sup> When a painter sets out to capture not a fixed, but a moving subject on canvas, he employs a variety of techniques to create the sensation of movement and depth on his stationary, flat surface. Working in the medium of words, Montaigne effects the sensation of movement in the fixed text of the printed word. It is of course the reader, like the viewer of the painting, who finally actualizes the movement of the text<sup>3</sup> as he participates in the thought process of the writer. But the writer, in his handling of his material, can create a text in which the reader experiences more than the usual exercitation afforded by the act of reading. He can involve his reader in the experience of movement at a much more direct level by supplying him with metaphors evoking a concrete impression of the branle of his subject. It is through such metaphors that Montaigne effectively transmits his perception of flux in the world, the divers et ondoyant character of man, and the movements pertaining to the human soul and mind. These subjects, however, are not in themselves what Montaigne has declared to be the central focus of his portrait, though all are intimately related to it. "Je ne vise icy qu'à

decouvrir moy-mesmes" (I:26, 147a); "Je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre" ("Au lecteur," p. 9). We have yet to examine the way in which metaphor applies to the branle of the principal figure in the portrait.

P. Mansell Jones raises an important question regarding the use of figurative language by the introspective writer.<sup>4</sup> Looking at the proportion of writing directly devoted to self-analysis in Montaigne and two later writers, Amiel and Proust, he finds:

that while the amount of writing which is introspective in intention increases as one passes from the first to the later two, the tendency also increases to leave the narrow path of self-investigation . . . and to run after images, under the impulse, perhaps, to resort to intuitive language where the rational fails. . . . Lured away from the self under the microscope, they lose themselves in vague ruminations or vaporous poetisings.<sup>5</sup>

Montaigne, while devoting less space to what Jones regards as conscious self-examination,<sup>6</sup> achieves a greater degree of directness in that his observations are less inclined to "lose themselves in vague ruminations or vaporous poetisings." Too unbridled a use of metaphor, it would seem, imposes a distance between the self observed and the self as portrayed, and the faithfulness of the portrait depends on maintaining a close and direct representation of the subject.

Montaigne unabashedly lays claim to the fidelité of his portrait: "celle-là y est, la plus sincere et pure qui se trouve" (III:2, 783b). Although, as Jones indicates, his self-examination does not wander into vague images, metaphor does play a role, and a very important one, in the realization of his portrait. Here, as with

any of the subjects which Montaigne treats metaphorically, his faithfulness to his subject finds expression in the use of metaphor with awareness.<sup>7</sup> Words are not to be mistaken for the thing they represent, for "Il y a le nom et la chose; le nom, c'est une voix qui remerque et signifie la chose; le nom, ce n'est pas une partie de la chose ny de la substance, c'est une piece estrangere jointe à la chose, et hors d'elle" (II:16, 601a). And comparisons must not be construed into identities: "toutes choses se tiennent par quelque similitude, tout exemple cloche, et la relation qui se tire de l'experience est tousjours defaillante et imparfaicte" (III:13, 1047b). Nonetheless, recognizing the resemblances on which metaphors are based--"on joint toutesfois les comparaisons par quelque coin" (ibid.)--Montaigne does not hesitate to make the comparison through which his ideas take on form. His concern for a style that is one with thought<sup>8</sup>--bien dire meaning bien penser--demands that the joining in metaphor be as closely conceived as possible. Insisting on the one hand on the separation of "le nom et la chose" and the imperfection of any comparison, and on the other, on the unity of idea and expression and the fidelité he brings to his subject, Montaigne presents us with one of his celebrated contradictions.<sup>9</sup> To attempt to resolve or dispel this or any of the contradictions in Montaigne risks a dangerous simplification or even betrayal of his thought. Instead, keeping both sides of the question in mind, we can draw closer to the role of metaphor in Montaigne's language. In the distance between "le nom et la chose" and the closeness demanded between penser and dire, there is set up a tension which

is at the core of the metaphorical process. This tension energizes the interaction at work in metaphor, the operation of semantic motion giving us two ideas which "co-operate in an inclusive meaning."<sup>10</sup> The successful metaphor is one emanating from bien penser where the "inclusive meaning" is a faithful expression of the subject as observed. It is with this heightened sense of metaphor that we proceed to an examination of Montaigne's metaphors of self.

Je ne me soucie pas tant quel je sois chez autrui, comme  
je me soucie quel je sois en moy mesme. . . . Les estrangers  
ne voyent que les evenements et apparences externes. . . .  
Ils ne voyent pas mon coeur, ils ne voyent que mes  
contenances (II:16, 608-609a).

Montaigne frequently refers to the distinction between the inner and the outer man, the self as experienced by the subject and as projected into the world of others. The opposition of coeur and contenances embodies what elsewhere is specified as la nature and l'art (III:2, 785b).<sup>11</sup> His portrait, Montaigne makes clear to the reader, is primarily concerned with the inner self, focusing on the "essential qualities . . . equated with the heart" rather than on the "inconstant external elements represented . . . [by] the face or countenance."<sup>12</sup> In no way is this 'inner self' to be conceived abstractly, divorced from a corporeal reality. Consistent with his tendency to think concretely and his strong sense of the essential union of mind and body, Montaigne does not neglect to give physical contours to the self he is portraying. At one point in "De la praesumption," in the midst of his discussion of the opinion he has of himself,



Montaigne offers us a quite thorough pictorial representation of his physical person (II:17, 624a).<sup>13</sup> And throughout "De l'experience," we encounter numerous direct observations on his bodily inclinations and habits, for these constitute an important aspect of "quel [il soit] en [luy] mesme."

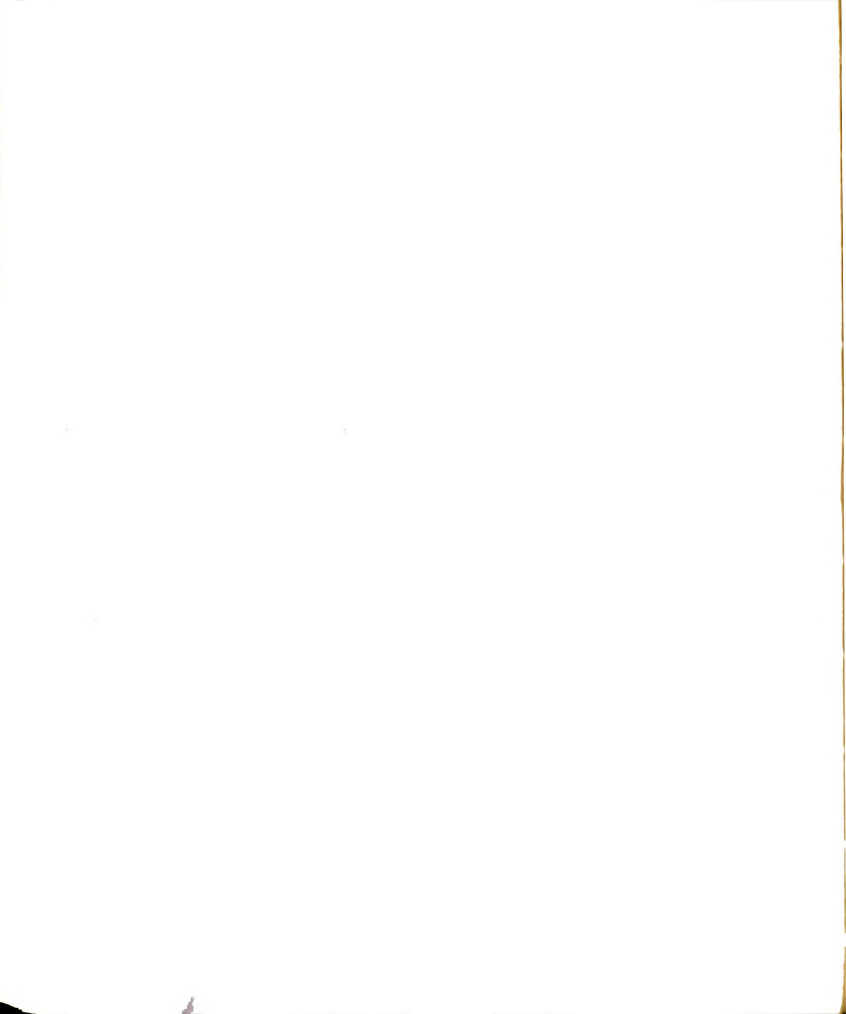
Very often the purely physical features in Montaigne's description of himself bear a strong resemblance to the qualities by which he characterizes the unphysical aspects of his being. Montaigne at times points directly to this close association: "Mon marcher est prompt et ferme; et ne sçay lequel des deux, ou l'esprit ou le corps, ay arresté plus malaisément en mesme point" (III:13, 1085b). In other instances, observations he makes separately invite a comparison in the mind of the reader. Montaigne describes his body as "capable d'une agitation ferme, mais non vehemente et soudaine" (1075b), a disposition readily allied to certain inclinations of his mind: "Quant aux facultés naturelles qui sont en moy, dequoy c'est icy l'essay, je les sens flechir sous la charge" (I:26, 145a); "Le deliberer, voire ès choses plus legieres, m'importune; et sens mon esprit plus empesché à souffrir le branle et les secousses diverses du doute et de la consultation, qu'à se rasseoir et resoudre à quelque party que ce soit, après que la chance est livrée" (II:17, 627b). While Montaigne does not examine in particular all of the 'corners' by which the

physical and nonphysical traits of his portrait may be 'joined,' he is aware of their harmonious colligeance: "Mes conditions corporelles sont en somme trèsbien accordantes a celles de l'ame" (625a). This sense of the organic unity of his being underlies many of his metaphors of self.

Health and sickness for the aging Montaigne are means by which he experiences a sense of his own stability and a contrasting sense of his susceptibility to esbranlement. "Ma santé, c'est maintenir sans destourbier mon estat accoustumé" (III:13, 1057b). Sickness and its remedies intervene to 'move him away' from his habitual state, to 'dislodge him' from the seat of his stable physical self: "Je voy que la maladie m'en desloge d'un costé; si je crois les medecins, ils m'en destourneront de l'autre; et par fortune et par art, me voylà hors de ma route" (ibid.). From his mature perspective, well-acquainted with sickness, he recalls the health of his youth in terms of dynamic vigor and elation: "allegre et bouillante . . . plein[e] de verueur et de feste" (II:6, 352a). Once he is no longer party to what had been a "parfaite et entiere santé" (ibid.), but subject instead to frequent attacks of the stone, health is no longer something to be taken for granted. For having been interrupted, the "estat accoustumé" to which he returns is savored consciously: "est-il rien si doux au pris de cette soudaine mutation, quand d'une douleur extreme je viens, . . . à recouvrer comme d'un esclair la belle lumiere de la santé, si libre et si pleine" (III:13, 1071b). Through the light image, Montaigne expresses his experience of health as a positive presence, permeating

his being with a sensation of freedom and fullness. The pleasure of health is sensed in a flash, its perception made possible by the sudden absence of pain. Health and sickness, like stability and movement, are opposites perceived in contrast to each other. "De combien la santé me semble plus belle après la maladie, si voisine et si contiguë que je puis les recognoistre en presence l'une de l'autre en leur plus haut appareil, où elles se mettent à l'envy comme pour se faire teste et contrecarre!" (1071-72b). Each is sharply set off in their contiguity "when they vie with each other, as if to oppose each other squarely."<sup>14</sup> The tension arising from this association of opposites, vigorously rendered in terms of combat, is appreciated for its power as a stimulus to perception. Montaigne recognizes the importance of relating opposites, of seeing their necessary joining, as a means of achieving the fullest experience of self.<sup>15</sup>

In his direct confrontations with the pointures and pincements<sup>16</sup> of pain, Montaigne assumes an attitude of combined attentiveness and patience. He chooses not to ignore pain, any more than he would pleasure; to both he brings the firmness of concentration engaged in self-examination: "J'ordonne à mon ame de regarder et la douleur et la volupté de veuë pareillement (c) reglée . . . et pareillement (b) ferme, mais gayement l'une, l'autre severement" (1091b). His severe perusal of pain is not an obstinate resistance to it, nor is it a flaccid submission: "il ne faut obstinément s'opposer aux maux, et à l'estourdi, ny leur succomber de mollesse, mais . . . il leur faut ceder naturellement, selon leur condition et la nostre.



(b) On doit donner passage aux maladies, et je trouve qu'elles arrestent moins chez moy, qui les laisse faire" (1066c). Montaigne's studied observation of his physical condition, "d'une veuë . . . réglée . . . et . . . ferme," permits him to consider his malady at a distance, as something distinct from the observing self. Sickness is viewed in its passage, as a movement less likely to take hold in a subject "qui [le] laisse faire." The conscious assent Montaigne joins to his awareness of the branle of pain transforms the experience of illness from one of passive submission into one of active participation. Yielding "naturellement" but also consciement to the passage of a malady, Montaigne exercises a gesture of reflective tension on the movements to which he is unavoidably subject. Bringing together a mouvement-écoulement and a mouvement-geste in what Starobinski describes as "un composé mixte où les deux expériences contraires se mêlent et se confondent,"<sup>17</sup> Montaigne affirms his own sense of self in coordination with the flux of his physical conditions.

We have seen how Montaigne regards sickness as something which works to 'dislodge' him from his accustomed state, and also as a passage which he is able to view objectively. But the closer Montaigne focuses his observation on his physical self, the more he understands it as a branle in which the observing self is inextricably engaged. Simple constataions on the decline of his physical being immediately point to the sense he has of the passing of life itself. A fallen tooth is an indicator of the natural process of disintegration involving the whole man: "c'estoit le terme naturel de sa durée . . . c'est ainsi

que je fons et eschappe à moy" (III:13, 1081b). More forcefully, the passing of a kidney stone becomes a metaphor for the passing of his life: "[A] C'est quelque grosse pierre qui foule et consomme la substance de mes roignons, [B] et ma vie que je vuide peu à peu, non sans quelque naturelle douceur, [C] comme un excrement hormais superflu et empeschant" (1074c). Statements such as these are really more than the use of mere physical fact as metaphor, for as Sayce remarks, "the line between external and internal has become increasingly hard to draw."<sup>18</sup> Metaphor invokes the interaction of two separate concepts, and here, the two terms come very close to being the same. The life that Montaigne feels slipping away is comprised of the interaction of body and spirit. But in the gaze of the observing self on its own movement, a distance is imposed between what for Montaigne are inseparable elements. This distance is again closed by forging metaphors which give expression to their unity. In the last example, Montaigne's developing metaphor, progressing from a concrete physical movement (A) to the passage of life (B) and then back to the physical (C), tightens the joining of vehicle and tenor.<sup>19</sup> Their inclusive meaning gives body to Montaigne's awareness that his life is in a continual process of change, that his being is engaged in constant movement: "Ce que je seray doresnavant, ce ne sera plus qu'un demy estre, ce ne sera plus moy. Je m'eschape tous les jours et me desrobe à moy . . ." (II:17, 625a).

Montaigne's studied awareness of his physical self extends to the domain of pleasure as well as to pain and the evidences of the aging

process. Pleasure, like pain, is experienced as a sharp, pricking sensation, one which Montaigne cultivates in its very sharpness:

"j'ay voulu esguiser ce plaisir [l'amour] par la difficulté, par le desir et par quelque gloire" (III:3, 804b). But upon closer scrutiny, pleasure resists sustained apprehension. It is perceived only in movement, a branle of which we cannot take hold. Montaigne expresses the ephemeral nature of this sensation in an image of wind: "Moy qui me vante d'embrasser si curieusement les commoditez de la vie, et si particulièrement, n'y trouve, quand je regarde ainsi finement, à peu près que du vent" (III:13, 1087c). Wind emerges as a prominent image of the turbulent, fleeting inner life<sup>20</sup>--the elusive domain of passion or emotion: "Je sens à temps les petits vents qui viennent me taster et bruire au dedans, avantcoureus de la tempeste" (III:10, 994-995b).<sup>21</sup>

For Montaigne, the unleashed inner energies incorporated in the wind image and the verbs "taster" and "bruire" are a force to be opposed in the interest of preserving the inner tranquillity and stability he prizes: "J'essaie à tenir mon ame et pensées en repos" (998b). The observing self, witness to the advent of strong feelings which threaten to 'carry him off,' attempts to arrest such movements in their early stages: "Avec bien peu d'effort j'arreste ce premier branle de mes esmotions, et abandonne le subject qui me commence à poiser, et avant qu'il m'emporte" (994b). To the weight and force of passion Montaigne opposes the hardened, thickened surface of his conscious resistance: "Je suis peu en prise de ces violentes passions. J'ay l'apprehension naturellement dure; et l'encrouste et espessis tous les jours par discours" (I:2, 17-18b).

Not given to being overwhelmed by violent passion, Montaigne finds his natural (i.e., God-given) temperament generally well-adapted to dealing with the emotions he does encounter: "Dieu donne le froid selon la robe, et me donne les passions selon le moien que j'ay de les soustenir" (III:6, 878b). The comparison to a garment affording shelter from the cold portrays his emotional disposition as a protective covering, a shield preserving the security of his inner repos. Though his susceptibility to passions is "naturellement dure" and though he "l'encrouste et espessis tous les jours par discours," Montaigne nevertheless experiences the discomfort of inner turmoil. His resistant surface, well-suited to soustenir against forceful emotions, proves most vulnerable in the face of small worries and annoyances. Just as "La goutte d'eau perce la pierre,"<sup>22</sup> Montaigne asserts that "Ces ordinaires goutieres [le] mangent" (III:9, 928b). Not only does the constancy of these annoyances eat away at his protective envelope, but their very smallness renders them more apt to penetrate his composure and to prick his ire:

Vaines pointures, (c) vaines par fois, (b) mais toujours pointures. Les plus menus et graisles empeschemens sont les plus persans; et comme les petites lettres offencent et lassent plus les yeux,<sup>23</sup> aussi nous piquent plus les petits affaires. . . . A mesure que ces espines domestiques sont drues et desliées, elles nous mordent plus aigu et sans menace, nous surprenant facilement à l'impourveu (927b).

In this prolonged, developing metaphor, Montaigne insists on the sharp and pointed nature of small worries (pointures, espines) and the resultant sensation which he experiences (persans, piquant, mordent). The painful 'pricking' and 'scratching' of these 'pinpricks' and



'thorns,' taking him by surprise, are likely to precipitate Montaigne into the branle of a much more forceful emotion, quite out of keeping with the smallness of the occasion. Confronted with great concerns, he manages to stiffen his resistance to an emotional outbreak, "je me bande et prepare contre celles-cy." But caught unaware, he is quite susceptible to esbranlement: "les petites [occasions] me surprennent; et le mal'heur veut que, depuis que vous estes dans le precipice, il n'importe qui vous ayt donné le branle, vous allez tousjours jusques au fons; la cheute se presse, s'esmeut et se haste d'elle-mesme" (II:31, 698b). Once the surface of composure has been penetrated, Montaigne knows he can be emporté in the branle of such an emotion as la colere, which he expresses in terms of a falling movement, where the subject is propelled downward in a rushing momentum. Quite conscious of his inclination to be caught in such an impulsion, Montaigne takes precautions to guard against its instigation. The pointures which can so dangerously l'esbranler must not be allowed to act inwardly. Rather, Montaigne sees the benefit of giving vent to the anger prodded by small annoyances, so that the 'stab' of their pointes may be directed away from the self: "et aymerois mieux produire mes passions que de les couvrir à mes despens; elles s'alanguissent en s'esvantant et en s'exprimant; il vaut mieux que leur pointe agisse au dehors que de la plier contre nous" (697b).

From his sense that "c'est chose tendre que la vie et aysée à troubler" (III:9, 927b), Montaigne takes guard against the movements which menace life's precarious stability. His images repeatedly stress

the compelling forces of passion and his own efforts to protect himself from them. An extended metaphor describing his sense of the effects of fear exemplifies the way in which he concretizes the struggle he wages against any vehement passion:

[A] Je ne me sens pas assez fort pour soustenir le coup et l'impetuosit  de cette passion de la peur, ny d'autre vehemente. Si j'en estois un coup vaincu et atterr , je ne m'en releverois jamais bien entier. [B] Qui auroit fait perdre pied   mon ame, ne la remettroit jamais droicte en sa place; [C] elle se retaste et recherche trop vifvement et profondement, et pourtant, ne lairroit jamais ressouder et consolider la plaie qui l'auroit perc e. Il m'a bien pris qu'aucune maladie ne me l'ayt encore desmise. [D] A chaque charge qui me vient, je me presente et oppose en mon haut appareil; ainsi, la premiere qui m'emporterait me mettroit sans ressource. [E] Je n'en faicts poinct   deux; par quelque endroit que le ravage fau ast ma lev e, me voyl  ouvert et noy  sans remede (III:6, 877-878b).

Progressing through a series of mutually reinforcing vehicles, Montaigne intensifies the physical translation of his tenor: his own vulnerability and the brutal onslaught of passion. From his first image of being conquered and thrown to the ground, unable to raise himself (A), he proceeds to specify (B) that it is his soul which would lose its footing and never be set "back upright in its place."<sup>24</sup> The soul, after being given spatial situation, is then examined in its movements--"se retaste et recherche" (C)--for it is due to these movements of the soul that the effects of passion are regarded as irremediable. The impact of passion is envisioned as a wound which would pierce the soul and which could never heal--"ressoudre et consolider." All of this action is indeed hypothetical, for Montaigne allows that his soul has not yet been "laid low" by any "maladie." To state how he maintains his resistance against any menacing siege, Montaigne moves away from the malady

imagery and into the terminology of battle (D)--"in full armor" he opposes each "charge," aware that he risks being emporté, for he has "no secondary defense." A final image (E), that of a 'dike' holding back the 'torrents' of passions which threaten his 'drowning,' concludes the serial development of his idea.

The images of the firm defense Montaigne opposes to the threat of violent passions denote a rigid tension, straining against the impulsion to esbranlement. Montaigne recognizes that he functions much more readily under favorable conditions than under disagreeable ones. "La priere me gaigne, la menace me rebute, (c) la faveur me ploye, la crainte me roydit" (III:9, 924-925b). The contrast in these verb images of bending rather than stiffening to the exigencies of life indicates Montaigne's preference for a pliable, flexible movement. While a certain rigidity may be necessitated to guard against an excess of movement, such a stance is artificial, a contradiction to the very nature of life conceived as movement. And so Montaigne advocates and cultivates a fluid cooperation with movement. He desires mollement what he would attain so as to permit himself to "couler ce monde; . . . (c) le . . . glisser . . . non pas s'y enfoncer" (III:10, 982b). In this phrase, Starobinski posits the fusion of the mouvement-geste and mouvement-écoulement mentioned earlier.<sup>25</sup> "Couler le monde" proposes an alternative to the extremes of turbulent esbranlement and rigid immobility. It is an alternative not easily realized, sometimes not possible, but nonetheless desirable.<sup>26</sup>

Ambition and gloire are passions of a more subtle working for Montaigne, their movements less easily perceived than the forceful tumults of fear or anger. Ambition is figured in an image of smoke, conveying its tangible, yet elusive presence within him: "Je me sens fumer en l'ame par fois aucunes tentations vers l'ambition; mais je me bande et obstine au contraire" (III:9, 970b). If he is able to firm himself against the lures of ambition, his conscious and willful rejection of gloire is perhaps not quite so impenetrable a defense: "Je me tiens de la commune sorte. . . . S'il y a de la gloire, elle est infuse en moy superficiellement par la trahison de ma complexion, et n'a point de corps qui compareisse à la veuë de mon jugement. J'en suis arrosé, mais non pas teint"<sup>27</sup> (II:17, 618c). In the antithesis established between arrosé and teint, Montaigne distinguishes between an action of superficial application (arrosé) and one of interior assimilation (teint).<sup>28</sup> Gloire might be 'infused' in him, but it never takes on body visible to the inspection of his judgment. La teinture, as we observed in the preceding chapter,<sup>29</sup> is an image denoting solidity, "l'acte de donner un corps, une attitude ferme et qui dure."<sup>30</sup> While gloire is a passion which has not been so incorporated, Montaigne employs the teinture image in the reverse sense to admit to certain undesirable traits which have been taken into the 'fabric' of his inner life: "Quand je me confesse à moy religieusement, je trouve que la meilleure bonté que j'aye a de la teinture vicieuse" (II:20, 656b). In "Du repentir," where he points to certain faults and weaknesses which he accepts as part of himself, and therefore not to be repented,

Montaigne affirms: "Ce n'est pas macheure, c'est plustost une teinture universelle qui me tache" (III:2, 791b). Montaigne recognizes a number of fixed, abiding inclinations in himself which are unlike the passions against which he wages a struggle to prevent their taking a constant hold of him. These more firmly implanted elements of his character are worked into the portrait with images in contrast to the images of branle which for the most part predominate in his portrayal of self.

Most directly opposed to the image of constancy in la teinture are the images of the changing, unstable self. "Je donne à mon ame tantost un visage, tantost un autre, selon le costé où je la couche" (II:1, 319b). "J'ay le pied si instable et si mal assis, je le trouve si aysé à croler et si prest au branle . . ." (II:12, 548a). "Je me (c) desadvoue sans cesse; et me (a) sens par tout flotter et fleschir de foiblesse" (II:17, 618a). The images capture the exterior manifestations of his inconstancy--a changing 'countenance,' his unsure 'footing,' so readily given to vacillation--and the sense he has of yielding unsteadily to movement--"et me sens par tout flotter et fleschir de foiblesse." There is a sense in which the flux of inconstancy can be seen as one of the constants in the "teinture universelle qui [le] tache." Viewed as a weakness or flaw, this easy disposition to branle renders Montaigne susceptible to external forces determining the course of his life. Such a force is custom: "je ne suis propre qu'à suyvre, et me laisse aysément emporter à la foule" (II:17, 638a); or, in a more specific reference, the social pressure to marry: "je ne m'y conviay pas proprement, on m'y mena, et y fus porté par des

occasions estrangeres" (III:5, 830b). But there is also a way of viewing this same inclination as an asset, providing the flexibility to adapt to the changing circumstances of life. In terms of physical habits, Montaigne claims a capacity to adjust readily to variation: "La meilleure de mes complexions corporelles, c'est d'estre flexible et peu opiniastre; j'ay des inclinations plus propres et ordinaires et plus agreables que d'autres; mais avec bien peu d'effort je m'en destourne, et me coule aisément à la façon contraire" (III:13, 1061b)<sup>31</sup> A like pliability is to be cultivated with regard to the inner life: "Les plus belles ames sont celles qui ont plus de varieté et de souplesse . . . il n'est aucune si bonne façon où je vouleusse estre fiché pour ne m'en sçavoir desprendre" (III:3, 796b).

But these images of the self in flux in both a pejorative and a meliorative connotation must be juxtaposed to Montaigne's equally vivid assertion of his natural resistance to branle. He is somewhat sluggishly indisposed to any sort of vigorous physical routine: "Je m'esbranle difficilement, et suis tardif par tout: à me lever, à me coucher, et à mes repas" (III:13, 1074b). In much the same way, he does not easily change position on basic moral questions. He opposes those who would "r'aviser les meurs . . . de l'apparence" (III:2, 788b), leaving the essence of vice untouched, or even augmenting it, and uses the example of his own experience of resistance to essential change: "Je ne me sens guere agiter par secousses, je me trouve quasi tousjours en ma place, comme font les corps lourds et poisons" (789b). Counterbalancing the impulsion toward movement and the suppleness to adapt to

change are these images of a weighted body, slow to s'esbranler and firmly fixed in its stance. These opposing characteristics, recognized in both Montaigne's physical and inner disposition, incorporate, physically and metaphorically, the polarized tendencies of the self. Joined in the accordance of his "conditions corporelles" and "celles de l'ame,"<sup>32</sup> the polarities indicate the extremes of the extension of self in movement.

The struggle between polarities takes on its most poignant metaphorical expression in Montaigne's portrayal of the movements of his inner faculties. Among these faculties, the imagination, an aspect of the mind, plays a special role. It is introduced in terms much like those used to describe the passions: "Je suis de ceux, qui sentent très-grand effort de l'imagination. (c) Chacun en est heurté, mais aucuns en sont renversez. Son impression me perce. Et mon art est de luy eschapper, non pas de luy resister" (I:21, 95a). Imagination's powerful impact is experienced by Montaigne as a 'piercing'; the self is penetrated by impressions projected by the faculty. The sensation of piercing may have veritable physical manifestations--"Un tousseur continuel irrite mon poulmon et mon gosier" (ibid., c)--arising from the "estroite cousture de l'esprit et du corps s'entre-communiquants leurs fortunes" (103a). While Montaigne prefers to avoid the effects of the imagination, he occasionally finds himself 'wounded' by it, and then must adjust his strategy ("mon art") accordingly: "Par tels argumens . . . j'essaye d'endormir et amuser mon imagination, et gresser ses playes" (III:13, 1073b). But the imagination is not

always experienced as an overpowering force, for as a component of the conscious self it can be controlled (endormie and amusée) and even manipulated into service. Not only are external impressions imposed on the self by the imagination; the faculty can also be used to project the self outward. Speaking of the necessity of understanding others on their own terms, not on his own, Montaigne declares: "je m'insinue, par imagination, fort bien en leur place" (I:37, 225a). The kinetic force of the imagination in this instance becomes a vehicle for the volitional movements of the self.

In Montaigne's self-study, the movements of his mind prove the most difficult for him to seize, for here the 'observer' is bent on the observation of its own workings. "Je peins principalement mes cogitations, subject informe. . . . A toute peine le puis je coucher en ce corps aëré de la voix" (II:6, 359a). Nevertheless, it is through the "airy medium of words"<sup>33</sup> that Montaigne gives shape to his formless subject. Metaphors, invoking interaction with things outside the mind, give its movements the 'body' by which they become palpable. The reckless agitation of the mind left to its own impulses is memorably captured in the images "le cheval eschappé" and the enfantement of "tant de chimères et monstres fantasques les uns sur les autres, sans ordre et sans propos" (I:8, 34a). What Montaigne provides here is an image of movement which defies capture and a production which escapes comprehension. In order to follow the movements of his mind, Montaigne finds it necessary to apply it to a subject which will 'bridle' and 'constrain' it in its movements. Through his observation of the mind



operating on a "but estably" (ibid.), Montaigne can give definite contours to his mind in movement. His thinking takes on the spatiality, gesture and gait of a promenade, whether envisioned on foot or on horseback, the modes of travel Montaigne most favored: "Mes conceptions et mon jugement ne marche qu'à tastons, chancelant, bronchant et chopant; et quand je suis allé le plus avant que je puis, si ne me suis-je aucunement satisfait; je voy encore du païs au delà, mais d'une veuë trouble et en nuage . . ." (I:26, 145a); "Je bronche plus volontiers en pays plat, comme certains chevaux que je connois, qui chopent plus souvent en chemin uny" (III:13, 1044b). The question or text before him provides a "païs" for his mind to explore, thus enabling him to trace its steps, a course of testing, tripping, and faltering.<sup>34</sup> The energies of his mind, so dynamic in their impulsion when allowed to wander aimlessly, are decelerated and blunted by the slightest obstacle: "J'ay l'esprit tardif et mousse, le moindre nuage arreste sa pointe" (II:17, 635a). Operating through trials of judgment rather than the incisive thrusts of a quick and sharp esprit, Montaigne's mind is characterized by its slow and unsteady gait.

Closely allied to the mode in which his mind operates is what Montaigne labels his "cicatrice" (637a)--his irresolution--most pronounced when he is called upon to make judgments under pressure. "Quand aux facultez naturelles qui sont en moy . . . je les sens flechir sous la charge" (I:26, 145a). "Le deliberer . . . m'importune, et sens mon esprit plus empesché à souffrir le branle et les secousses diverses du doute et de la consultation, qu'à se rasseoir et resoudre à

quelque party que ce soit, après que la chance est livrée" (II:17, 627b).

His avoidance of situations calling for making decisions is explored through an image of the kind of roads he consciously eschews: "Tout ainsi que des chemins, j'en evite volontiers les costez pandans et glissans, et me jette dans le battu le plus boueux et enfondrant, d'où je ne puisse aller plus bas" (627-628b). The metaphor juxtaposes the sloping, slippery sides of a road with the well-trodden side, muddy and boggy as that might be, for there, his footing is sure--"d'où je ne puisse aller plus bas." Inextricable from his quest for surety is the abiding presence of the cicatrice. Pressed by the urgency of a situation, his mind is not able to proceed according to its characteristic gait, testing each step of the way, faltering and retracing its steps when necessary. Continuing his metaphor, Montaigne acknowledges the fear he has of taking charge in a dilemma: "L'horreur de la cheute me donne plus de fiebvre que le coup. . . . La plus basse marche est la plus ferme. C'est le siege de la constance. Vous n'y avez besoing que de vous" (628b). Montaigne gauges the movement of making choices (e.g., the assumption of a position of importance) in dimensions of verticality.<sup>35</sup> The stability he seeks--"le siege de la constance"--is most assured at the lowest levels from which there is no danger of falling.

The caution Montaigne exercises to ascertain his 'footing' and to avoid the 'heights' or 'terrains' which would menace it, results from the sense he has of his own instability, in particular, "l'incertitude de [son] jugement . . . si également balancée en la pluspart des

occurrences" (638a). He would rather rely on the decisions of someone more sure of his opinions than Montaigne is of his own, "ausquelles [il] trouve le fondement et le plant glissant" (ibid., b), for from this 'slippery ground,' he is all too susceptible to being carried off: "une bien legere inclination et circonstance m'emporte" (ibid., a). Citing himself as an example of man's inconstancy in the "Apologie," Montaigne indicates that this can be seen "en [ses] escrits mesmes": "Je ne fay qu'aller et venir: mon jugement ne tire pas tousjours avant; il flotte, il vague, 'comme un frêle navire/Que surprend sur la mer la tempête en furie.'<sup>36</sup> . . . Je m'entraîne quasi où je penche, comment que ce soit, et m'emporte de mon pois" (II:12, 549b). The irresolution of his mind, wavering in its course, becomes, through the series of verb metaphors, the floating motion of a ship, vividly reinforced in the lines quoted from Catullus. Emphasizing a movement "qui ne tire pas tousjours avant," but which fluctuates according to circumstances, Montaigne finds his mind supporting first one, then the other side of a given question, depending on which he focuses his attention. With a slight shift in the nature of the vehicle of his metaphor, Montaigne explains this inclination of his mind in terms of a weight (his own) impelling him in the direction toward which he leans. While yielding to the fluctuations and impulses of his mind in the context of the Essais, Montaigne determines the necessity for more stability in the context of his external life. Out of the sense of his own volubilité, Montaigne asserts his conservatism in political and religious matters: "puis que je ne suis pas capable de choisir, je pren le

chois d'autrui et me tien en l'assiette où Dieu m'a mis. Autrement, je ne me scauroy garder de rouler sans cesse" (553a).

It is within the stability of this outer constance that the inner mobility of Montaigne's mind can freely develop. Never really withdrawn from the affairs of the world, he purposefully maintains a distance from them, always separating his inner self from external involvements: "Si quelquefois on m'a poussé au manient d'affaires estrangieres, j'ay promis de les prendre en main, non pas au poulmon et au foye; de m'en charger ouy, non de les incorporer" (III:10, 981b). Opposing the operation of the hand to that of the vital organs and the gesture of taking on a burden to the interiorizing process of incorporation, Montaigne's images of dedans et dehors mark the boundaries of that "arriere boutique" reserved exclusively for his "vraye liberté" (I:39, 235a). There, in a spatially conceived domain all its own, where "nulle acointance ou communication estrangiere y trouve place" (ibid.), the self is free to examine its own workings. Montaigne's investigation of this innermost self--"quel je sois en moy mesme" (II:16, 608b), "dans mes entrailles et dans mes veines" (III:10, 981b)--narrows the focus of his self-study into the concentrated gesture of introspection.

Introspection, the act of looking inward, is repeatedly presented as a physical gesture assuming a spatial context: "sonder jusqu'au dedans" (II:1, 321a), "replier . . . nostre consideration" (II:8, 375a), se taster (III:3, 797c), se retaster (I:50, 291c). What distinguishes this gesture from outer-directed movements of

the self is that here the self is both the "énergie explorant" and the "espace exploré."<sup>37</sup> The following metaphor of introspection as spatial exploration provides one of the most intense descriptions of Montaigne's experience of his innermost self:

[A] Or mes opinions, je les trouve infiniment hardies et constantes à condamner mon insuffisance. [B] De vray, c'est aussi un subject auquel j'exerce mon jugement autant qu'à nul autre. [C] Le monde regarde tousjours vis à vis; moy, je replie ma veue au dedans, je la plante, je l'amuse là. Chacun regarde devant soy; moy, je regarde dedans moy: je n'ay affaire qu'à moy, je me considere sans cesse, je me contrerolle, je me gouste. Les autres vont tousjours ailleurs, s'ils y pensent bien; ils vont tousjours avant . . . moy, je me roule en moy mesme (II:17, 641a).<sup>38</sup>

Beginning with a statement of his insuffisance (A) which he paradoxically condemns with opinions "hardies et constantes," Montaigne marks out the domain of his exploration--the unstable, irresolute, voluble self of which he cannot take hold, for what is insuffisant is characterized by a "manque d'appui."<sup>39</sup> Yet, he immediately asserts that this very insuffisance is a subject on which he exercises his judgment (B), the agent of the exploration. Then, in a series of contrasts (C) with the way the world (or chacun or les autres) directs its attention outward, away from the self, Montaigne shows, through a corresponding series of concrete gestures, the way in which he turns his attention inward. With verb following upon verb, Montaigne shapes over and over the movement in question ("une activité joyeuse . . . un élan qui se reprend perpétuellement").<sup>40</sup> The initial accumulation of transitive verbs--replier, planter, amuser (sa veue)--gives way to a succession of reflexive verbs, stressing the thrust of the action directed back

on the exploring subject. The final gesture, "me roule en moy mesme," almost as if catapulted forward by the preceding accumulation, emphasizes the circular path of a movement stemming from and directed toward the self-same subject. It is the insuffisant self which provides the concentrated space in which the gesture of introspection can continually unfold. Through this gesture, through its continual renewal, the self acquires a corporeality by which it can be perceived. Starobinski points out that Montaigne never tells us what he discovers in his inner-directed explorations; the only description of the self as object is Montaigne's initial constataction of his insuffisance, a negative term denoting "un vide et un manque."<sup>41</sup> But what is given positive expression is the experience Montaigne has of his inner self as a moving force, energy taking form through the tension of gesture.

Whether directing his energies outward, toward the world, or inward, toward himself, Montaigne experiences a like impulsion to continual movement. His 'irresolution' in matters exterior to himself is 'resolved' by his option to maintain the status quo: "Autrement je ne me scauroy garder de rouler sans cesse." The inward turning of his energies, while preventing the dissipation risked in projecting them outward,<sup>42</sup> brings no halt to his incessant esbranlement. "Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied, je ne m'essaierois pas, je me resoudrois; elle est tousjours en apprentissage et en espreuve" (III:2, 782b). Unable to se resoudre, Montaigne se roule en soy mesme, concentrating his energies into an ever denser experience of self. In this introspective movement, Montaigne experiences the most vigorous exercise of his forces.

His soul, he tells us, "ne sçait . . . s'employer que bandée et entiere" (III:3, 796c), and unlike other minds which require a "matiere estrangere" to stimulate them, his is in need of the same "pour se rassoir plustost et sejourner . . . car son plus laborieux et principal estude, c'est s'estudier à soy" (796-797c).<sup>43</sup> It may at first seem that Montaigne is contradicting here the statements he makes in so many other contexts of his mind's inability to arrest itself and "se rassoir," but what becomes readily manifest is that this apparent inconsistency is offered to set off all the more vividly the strenuous nature of the mind's activity in self-examination. In contrast to the laborious action of introspection, the mind's action on things outside itself seems restful. For this reason, the straining exercise of self-study, where the soul works most "bandée et entiere," affords Montaigne the greatest "conscience musculaire du mouvement même de l'inspection."<sup>44</sup>

In the preceding chapter, we analyzed a prolonged metaphor of the operation of Montaigne's judgment (I:50, 289a)<sup>45</sup> and saw the way in which the faculty of judgment took on weight and body through the tension of the gestures by which it took or attempted to take possession of its proposed subjects. It was also seen that regarding "un subject vain et de neant" the action of the mind was to try to "luy donner corps . . . l'appuyer et estançonner." This operation is manifest in the metaphors produced by the reflective action of the mind on its own workings, as we have just witnessed. It is articulated more directly and with greater force and consciousness in a passage from III:13 where Montaigne reflects on how he pursues his experience of self.

Unlike those "prudentes gens" who let life "couler et eschapper" as they think of nothing than to "passer le temps," Montaigne renders life "prisable et commode" by actively cultivating the possession of each passing moment:

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

The development of the sentence in three successive 'waves' imitates the movement of Montaigne's mind as an "élan qui se reprend perpétuellement."<sup>46</sup> Each of the phrases formulates the opposition between the awareness of life as an escoulement in time and his effort to take hold of it in the dimension of his immediate experience. Perceiving the shortness of his life in the linear flow of time (A), he proposes to increase it, not in length, but in weight. He then explains (B) his desire to oppose the swift movement of time with the force of an equally swift movement on his part--a gesture of grasping, "la promptitude de ma sesie." Through the "vigueur" of this gesture, his consciousness takes on the muscular tension by which it acquires the weight to slow down his experience of the rush of time. The sentence concludes (C) with a more forceful restatement of his first phrase. Falloir replaces vouloir and the linear shortening of life is now opposed with an image of more developed dimensions: "plus profonde et plus pleine." Adding the qualities of depth and plenitude to the weight first indicated, Montaigne completes the impression of solidity



embodying the self's immediate experience of passing existence. He goes on, in the same passage, to examine more precisely the gestures by which he gains this sense of solidity:

[A] Je consulte d'un contentement avec moy, je ne l'escume pas; je le sonde et plie ma raison à le recueillir, devenue chagrine et desgoutée. [B] Me trouve-je en quelque assiete tranquille? y a il quelque volupté qui me chatouille? je ne la laisse pas friponer aux sens, j'y associe mon ame, non pas pour s'y engager, mais pour s'y agreer, non pas pour s'y perdre, mais pour s'y trouver; et l'employe de sa part à se mirer dans ce prospere estat, à en poiser et estimer le bon heur et amplifier (ibid.).

A moment of satisfaction invites Montaigne's active contemplation, for although "il faut courir le mauvais," one must "se rasseoir au bon" (1091b). Proceeding (A), as he so often does, by way of antithesis, Montaigne contrasts the superficial movement of 'skimming' with the more penetrating movement of 'sounding' or 'probing.' His gesture reaches not only outward, but inward, 'bending' his reason ("now grown peevish and hard to please"<sup>47</sup>) to receive the impression he is exploring. (The work of probing and exploring is the exercise of the firm, but pliable judgment, and the less flexible reason must be 'bent' into cooperation.) Awakened to some pleasant situation or sensation (B), Montaigne will not let the senses 'pilfer' it, but rather brings his inner self ("mon ame") into association with it. Again a series of contrasts is used for emphasis, this time to insist on the relationship of the inner self to the act of self-contemplation. It is "non pas pour s'y engager . . . non pas pour s'y perdre," but to find enjoyment and to find itself--to mirror itself "dans ce prospere estat"--that the soul is brought to reflect on the sensations of experience. The action

the soul takes is to poiser, estimer and amplifier the pleasurable feeling--to give it greater body and weight. In so doing, the soul amplifies its own perception of itself, for given the close association of body and soul,<sup>48</sup> the letter is reflected in what it perceives.

Through this act of self-perusal, Montaigne enjoys a momentary sense of his own 'solidity,' experiencing his soul in close association with the body to which it is joined. Wherever the act of self-inspection is directed toward Montaigne's bodily experience, the metaphors through which the self takes on corporeality present a particular problem. As noted earlier, "the line between external and internal [becomes] increasingly hard to draw."<sup>49</sup> Language imposes a separation of body and soul and then works, through metaphor, to bring together again the elements it has parted. Here, when Montaigne speaks of the soul 'reflecting' itself in a physical sensation, the verbal metaphor invokes an actual unity, and the resulting 'solidity' is one concretely experienced by the integral self.

"Mais quoy, nous sommes par tout vent" (1087c). "Nous sommes tous creux et vuides" (II:16, 601a). But man, Montaigne recognizes, unlike the wind, will always desire "la stabilité, la solidité, qualitez non siennes" (1087c). And man is capable, Montaigne has realized, of generating the sense of stabilité and solidité he desires. In the most concrete sense, he can cultivate the conscious possession of immediate experience wherein the self knows the solidity of physical sensation experienced concomitantly by body and soul. This sensation can only be maintained by continually renewing the act of taking possession,

by continually exerting the force of his judgment in self-experience. The tension of this exercise gives Montaigne another sense of solidity. The vigorous gestures of the active judgment--in whatever direction they are employed--create in the self a sense of its own 'muscularity.' Through its continual exercise, Montaigne heightens his awareness of this faculty in himself, "cette capacité de trier le vray" (II:17, 641a). Judgment comes to occupy "un siege magistral" in Montaigne's spatial conception of himself, operating to a large degree independently of other forces--his appetites, his loves, his hates--"il faict son jeu à part . . . au moins il s'en efforce soigneusement" (III:13, 1052b).

Although he has characterized his judgment by its staggering, unsteady gait and by its instability ("il flotte, il vague"), Montaigne posits his greatest experience of sureness and constancy in the workings of this same faculty. Turning his judgment to the study of its own movements, Montaigne realizes the existence of a stable, unchanging moy: his innermost self, "le siege de la constance" (II:17, 628b). Judgment employed in self-examination operates in a mode of 'felt' experience, dispelling incertitude and irresolution: "Je ne me juge que par vray sentiment, non par discours" (III:13, 1074b). Within this mode of surety, Montaigne discerns that certain of his judgments remain fixed and unchanging: "Cette capacité . . . je la dois principalement à moy: car les plus fermes imaginations que j'ay, et generalles, sont celles qui, par maniere de dire, nasquirent avec moy. Elles sont naturelles et toutes miennes" (II:17, 641a). Out of Montaigne's continual self-inspection emerges a strong sense of self-integrity.

Constantly judging himself as he lives, he comes to assert the integration of practically all his movements (diverse and contradictory as they may be) through their conformity to the conduct of his judgment:

[A] Je fay coustumierement entier ce que je fay et marche tout d'une piece; je n'ay guere de mouvement qui se cache et desrobe à ma raison, et qui ne se conduise à peu près par le consentement de toutes mes parties, sans division, sans sedition intestine; [B] mon jugement en a la coulpe ou la louange entiere; et la coulpe qu'il a une fois, il l'a tousjours, car quasi dès sa naissance il est un: mesme inclination, mesme route, mesme force. [C] Et en matiere d'opinions universelles, dès l'enfance je me logeay au point où j'avois à me tenir (III:2, 790b).

The image "marche tout d'une piece" captures Montaigne's experience of a wholeness of self in movement. After developing the implications of his initial image (A), he relates it to the controlling force of judgment (B). Judgment too is viewed in images of movement--"mesme inclination, mesme route, mesme force"--stressing its unflagging regularity, "car quasi dès sa naissance il est un." Acting in accord with judgment, which manifests a constancy of its own regarding basic questions of human conduct, Montaigne knows a fundamental stabilité within the innermost reaches of himself (C). This stability is conceived of spatially, as a 'point' at which he 'took up residence' in childhood and was henceforth to remain--the point where judgment fuses with the innermost self.<sup>50</sup>

Through the vigilance of his judgment, Montaigne maintains a closeness to the 'domain' of his essential self: "Si je ne suis chez moy, j'en suis tousjours bien près" (789b); ". . . et ne m'eslongne guiere du port" (II:17, 628a). The controlling force of judgment which

keeps him in his "estat rassis," his "naifve assiette" (III:2, 788b) functions as a judicial process in the space of an inner 'court': "J'ay mes loix et ma court pour juger de moy, et m'y adresse plus qu'ailleurs. Je restrains bien selon autrui mes actions, mais je ne les estends que selon moy" (785b). The extension of himself in movement is regulated by the jurisdiction of this central control. His actions are modeled after "un patron au dedans" (ibid.), shaping his life in accordance with the 'pattern' that has been established, what Montaigne calls his "forme essentielle" (III:3, 801b), his "forme naturelle" (II:17, 621a), his "maistresse forme" (I:50, 290c). But since "estre consiste en mouvement et en action" (III:13, 1074b), this form is to be discerned only through the intense and incessant application of Montaigne's judgment to all his movements, and most especially, to the movement of judgment itself. This is the action which he calls the essais of his judgment, the movement which takes shape in the form of his book.

Comme à faire, à dire aussi je suy tout  
 simplement ma forme naturelle (II:17, 621a).

Language, for Montaigne, functions as action:<sup>51</sup> la parole, like le geste, embodies the movements of the innermost self. "Mon stile et mon esprit vont vagabondant de mesmes" (III:9, 973c). The movement of his mind and the movement of his words join in the verbal metaphor of an irregular, directionless pursuit. Paradoxically, Montaigne fixes the verbal manifestations of his forme naturelle in

seemingly pejorative images of their shapelessness, or at best, of a very confused, haphazard shaping: "toute cette fricassée que je barbouille icy" (III:13, 1056b), "ce fagotage de tant de diverses pieces" (II:37, 736a), "une marqueterie mal jointe" (III:9, 941c),<sup>52</sup> "une fantastique bigarrure" (973c).<sup>53</sup> This 'set' of noun metaphors casts the form of the Essais as a loosely-joined, conglomerate structure. The striking variety of vehicles (a 'bundle of sticks,' a 'badly-joined piece of inlaid-work,' a 'hash,' and a 'patchwork' or 'medley') work together to reinforce their mutual tenor: Montaigne's conception of his writing as an assemblage of diversified pieces. While these images may at first appear derogatory, they are not really so, for they correspond precisely to Montaigne's conception of man as a piecemeal assembly: "rapiècement et bigarrure," "nous sommes tous des lopins."<sup>54</sup> Montaigne's understanding that the best way to judge a man is "en destail, (c) et distinctement piece à piece" (II:1, 316b) determines the method, and consequently the form of his essais.

The most familiar image of the Essais is the metaphor of the portrait. Montaigne tells us, "c'est moy que je peins" (p. 9), and that the "traits de [sa] peinture ne forvoyent pas," although they are always changing (III:2, 782b). By developing the vehicle of the painted portrait as a form taking shape on a flat, empty surface, Montaigne illustrates through comparison and contrast the formation of his tenor: the essay portrait. Having observed a painter at work on some wall paintings, Montaigne saw that "de toute sa suffisance" the painter concentrated on the central image and then filled the surrounding void

"de crotèques, qui sont peintures fantasques, n'ayant grâce qu'en la variété et estrangeté" (I:28, 181a). Montaigne compares his essays, not to the "tableau riche, poly et formé selon art" (182a), but to the whimsical and varied border: "Que sont-ce icy aussi, à la verité, que crotèques et corps monstrueux, rappez de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayants ordre, suite ny proportion que fortuite?" (181a). Again, Montaigne stresses the piecemeal nature and fortuitous shaping of the essay form. He explains that he does not undertake the polished and artfully conceived portrait of his painter, for his own "suffisance ne va pas si avant" (182a). Suffisance may be read here in two ways--as 'talent,' meaning he acknowledges his shortcomings as an artist capable of executing a skillful representation, and also, in view of the fact that he is speaking in terms of a self-portrait, as 'self-sufficiency' or soutient-intérieur. The self-portrait stems from self-knowledge, and Montaigne recognizes his insuffisance regarding the way in which he can know himself or anything else. Man has "aucune communication à l'estre" (II:12, 586a), and this has definite implications for the subject and realization of the portrait. "Je ne peints pas l'estre. Je peints le passage" (III:2, 782b). The portrayal of passage, "une continuelle agitation et mutation de [ses] pensées" (III:9, 923b) produces the strange and varying forms of "crotèques et corps monstrueux."

Unwilling to falsify his portrait "selon art," Montaigne creates a book lacking the well-defined contours of planned artistic conception. As such, it invites the question of whether it can hold

together as a unified whole. "Est-ce pas faire une muraille sans pierre, ou chose semblable, que de bastir des livres sans science et sans art?" (III:2, 782b). The ordering principle in his book defies the usual dictates of the closed art form. "Les fantasies de la musique sont conduictes par art, les miennes par sort" (ibid.). Despite his digressions, extensions, interpolated quotations and additions, Montaigne asserts: "Mon livre est tousjours un" (III:9, 941c). Its unity derives not from the principle guiding his "fantasies"; that is open to chance. Rather, it takes on form in Montaigne's conviction that 'every movement reveals us.' His sense of the wholeness of his book is rendered in a vivid image of a cadaver, where the entire human anatomy is penetrated by a kind of x-ray vision: "Je m'estalle entier: c'est un skeletos où, d'une veuë, les veines, les muscles, les tendons paroissent, chaque piece en son siege. L'effect de la toux en produisoit une partie; l'effect de la palleur ou battement de coeur, un'autre" (II:6, 359c). The book is the exposed 'anatomy' of Montaigne's forme naturelle, registering the metamorphosing effects of continual passage. "Je ne vise icy qu'à découvrir moy mesmes, qui seray par adventure autre demain, si nouveau apprentissage me change" (I:26, 147a). The Essais are a form continually open to change.

Montaigne calls his book "un registre de durée" (II:18, 648a), what Thibaudet describes as "une sorte de présent perpétuel."<sup>55</sup> It is only by rendering account of himself "continuellement et curieusement" (ibid.) that Montaigne can register duration and perpetuate the present. The activity of his mind through which he takes possession of himself



in the instant fuses with the action of language incorporating movement into the 'form' of his text. Just as Montaigne never defines what he discovers in the act of introspection, but rather how he experiences himself in the gesture of looking inward, the Essais are recommended not for their content, but for the manner in which they take shape: "Qu'on ne s'attende pas aux matieres, mais à la façon que j'y donne" (II:10, 387a).<sup>56</sup> The Essais, Montaigne affirms, are moulés sur luy-mesme (II:18, 647c). Molding the movements of his mind--"tant de menues pensées" (648c)--into the fixed medium of written language, they trace the metaphorical 'course' and 'gait' of his mind's activity: "A mesme que mes resveries se presentent, je les entasse; tantost elles se pressent en foule, tantost elles se trainent à la file. Je veux qu'on voye mon pas naturel et ordinaire, ainsin detraqué qu'il est. Je me laisse aller comme je me trouve" (II:10, 388a). Significantly, Montaigne first describes his writing as the "piling up" of ideas as they come to him, whether "pressing in a crowd" or "dragging in single file."<sup>57</sup> But since the resulting accumulation can only be perceived and expressed in linear progression, the order of a literary context, Montaigne reintroduces the metaphor of travel to accommodate his 'register of duration,' his 'portrayal of passage.' The travel metaphor, simultaneously conveying the movement of his mind and the movement of his text, is ideally suited to the open-ended form and endeavor of the essays: "Qui ne voit que j'ay pris une route par laquelle, sans cesse et sans travail, j'iray autant qu'il y aura d'ancre et de papier au monde?" (III:9, 922b).

The 'road' of the Essais is most often not readily discernible, for Montaigne consciously eschews the usual "parolles de liaison et de cousture" (III:9, 974b) which would indicate the directions of the 'route' he is taking. While acknowledging the difficulties inherent in his "embrouilleure" (ibid.), the essayist maintains that "c'est l'indiligent lecteur qui pert mon subject, non pas moy" and that there is always "en un coing quelque mot" (973c), however hidden it may be, which will suffice to point out where he is going. Numerous critics already have and will undoubtedly continue to 'chart the course' of the 'travels' of Montaigne's mind.<sup>58</sup> Their divergent opinions as to how movement is structured in the composition of the Essais<sup>59</sup> lead into the difficult and complex problem of the text's existence as communication. The movement of the Essais does not exist in isolation, "the text must be read."<sup>60</sup> Each reader will participate in the thought process of Montaigne according to his own categories of response, be they those of free association, rhetorical logic or some form of structuralism.<sup>61</sup>

Ever bent on observing himself, Montaigne describes the way in which he perceives the essays to amble. He can begin anywhere, for "tout argument [lui] est également fertile," and from almost any subject, he is likely to digress into something completely different, "car les matieres se tiennent toutes enchesnées les unes aux autres" (III:5, 854b). His varied and metamorphosing matieres connect through the exercise they afford his mind. It is this movement, the continually renewed gesture of assaying, which determines the course that could go

on 'as long as there remain ink and paper in the world.' Montaigne's itinerary is the maniere by which he manages the trials of his judgment:

[A] Je prends de la fortune le premier argument. Ils me sont également bons. Et ne desseigne jamais de les produire entiers. (c) Car je ne voy le tout de rien. Ne font pas, ceux qui promettent de nous le faire veoir. [B] De cent membres et visages qu'à chaque chose, j'en prends un tantost à lecher seulement, tantost à l'effleurer, et par fois à pincer jusqu'à l'os. J'y donne une poincte, non pas le plus largement, mais le plus profondement que je sçay. Et aime plus souvent à les saisir par quelque lustre inusité. . . . [C] Semant icy un mot, icy un autre, eschantillons despris de leur piece, escartez, sans dessein et sans promesse, [D] je ne suis pas tenu d'en faire bon, ny de m'y tenir moy mesme, sans varier quand il me plaist; et me rendre au doubte et incertitude, et à ma maistresse forme, qui est l'ignorance (I:50, 289a-290c).

This maniere relates directly to Montaigne's assessment of his own--and man's--limited capacity to know. The five terse statements at the opening of our quotation (A) make it quite clear why he does not presume to give a comprehensive treatment of anything. In marked contrast to the flat declaration of what he does not do, Montaigne explores the methodology of his essais through metaphor (B). Faced with the multiple and changing aspects of any object of knowledge ("de cents membres et visages . . ."), Montaigne's primary interest is not his subject, for that can only be handled relatively, but the movement he experiences in dealing with it: "lecher," "effleurer," "pincer jusqu'à l'os." He is interested in the variation of his gestures, and also, when the occasion presents itself, in their poignancy. When he makes a 'stab' at something, he aims his thrust "non le plus largement, mais le plus profondement." All subjects are "également bons" to his purpose, but he has a decided preference for

the way in which he takes hold of them, "par quelque lustre inusité." The approach from an unusual aspect affords Montaigne a keener awareness of his own exercise of judgment than would the well-traveled paths of "les arguments battus" (III:5, 854b). From the metaphors of physical gestures embodying the movements of his mind, Montaigne turns to the verbal context of the written essays (C). His variegated mental gestures coordinate with the piecemeal assembly of his verbal production, "samples separated from their context, dispersed, without a plan and without a promise."<sup>62</sup> No closures are imposed on the essais (D); they remain open to Montaigne's love of variety and to his "maistresse forme," his profound understanding of his own ignorance. Therein lie the freedom and mobility of his mind and of the essay form.

Montaigne insists very strongly that the identity of the movement of his mind and the movement of the essais, of the book and himself, be recognized. "Icy, nous allons conformément et tout d'un trein, mon livre et moy. Ailleurs, on peut recommander et accuser l'ouvrage à part de l'ouvrier; icy, non: qui touche l'un, touche l'autre" (III:2, 783b). The image of himself portrayed in his book is not meant to be taken as a 'public image' in the manner of an artful portrait which shows the subject as he is viewed (and usually admired) by the world (II:18, 646a). Montaigne seeks to present a much more personal image of himself, "pour en amuser un parent, un amy" (ibid.). Although by publishing his book Montaigne reveals an intention that his portrait actually have a wider reception than just "un parent, un amy,"

this does not alter his desire that the image be an intimate one, a portrait of Montaigne as he would be known by only the closest of friends. It has frequently been pointed out that Montaigne turns to composing this portrait precisely because, after the death of La Boétie and then that of his father, there was no such close friend to fulfill the desire to know oneself through the mediation of another.<sup>63</sup> The Essais can be seen to replace the absent friend.<sup>64</sup> The self-image Montaigne aspires to project and perceive in the Essais is the duplication of that total identification he had once experienced in that 'miraculous' relationship with his friend. For the perfect friend in "celuy qui n'est pas autre: c'est moy. C'est un assez grand miracle de se doubler" (I:28, 190c).

To what degree is Montaigne able to se doubler in his literary portrait? Certain of the images through which he refers to the Essais imply as much a sense of differentiation between the essayist and his creation as of identification. In a mockingly pejorative vein, Montaigne compares his endeavors to that of "un Gentilhomme qui ne communiquoit sa vie que par les operations de son ventre" (by collecting and displaying his prized excrements). Montaigne entertains the analogy to his own efforts to communicate his life through the movements and productions of his mind: "Ce sont icy, un peu plus civilement, des excremens d'un vieil esprit, dur tantost, tantost lâche, et tousjours indigeste" (III:9, 923b). The image, an obvious boutade,<sup>65</sup> preserves the continuity between the writer and his writings and is certainly a successful 'incorporation' of the process of his mental activity. But

it also imposes a certain distance between the writer and his work, if only the distance of irony.<sup>66</sup> In another metaphor, the same tenor is rendered through a decidedly meliorative vehicle. The essay "De l'affection des peres aux enfans" makes an extended analogy between one's relationship to a child ("nous les appellons autres nous mesmes") and to the productions of one's mind which are "produicts par une plus noble partie que la corporelle, et sont plus nostres" (II:8, 380a). Again the interaction of tenor and vehicle stresses the metaphorically organic relationship between the writer and his work, but the further Montaigne carries his investigation of this relationship, the more he arrives at seeing the work as having an existence quite independent of his own, as every father must eventually recognize regarding the life of his child:

A cettuy cy, tel qu'il est, ce que je donne, je le donne purement et irrevocablement, comme on donne aux enfans corporels; ce peu de bien que je luy ay faict, il n'est plus en ma disposition; il peut sçavoir assez de choses que je ne sçay plus, et tenir de moy ce que je n'ay point retenu et qu'il faudroit que, tout ainsi qu'un estranger, j'empruntasse de luy, si besoin m'en venoit. Il est plus riche que moy, si je suis plus sage que luy (383c).

A decided experience of differentiation is explicit in Montaigne's turning to his book "tout ainsi qu'un estranger." As the register of the duration of his life, the book retains "ce que [Montaigne n'a] point retenu," for he can only experience himself in the present instant. The book, "plus riche que moy," can do much more. The writer, "plus sage que luy," acknowledges a separateness from the book.

Style is another indicator of the fidelité of the portrait of the self-portraying subject. Montaigne espouses a natural, spontaneous form of expression: "Je parle au papier comme je parle au premier que je rencontre" (III:1, 767b); "Au demeurant, mon langage n'a rien de facile et poly: il est aspre (c) et desdaigneux, (a) ayant ses dispositions libres et desreglées; et me plaist ainsi" (II:17, 621a). Nevertheless, he himself allows that he is not entirely free of artful considerations: "Mais je sens bien que par fois je m'y laisse trop aller, et qu'à force de vouloir eviter l'art et l'affectation, j'y tombe d'une autre part" (ibid.). He sometimes slips into "certaines finesses verbales, dequoy [il] secoue les oreilles" (III:8, 922c). But these stylistic sallies, along with the "boutades de [son] esprit, desquelles [il] se deffie" (ibid., b) are not to be removed from the portrait. Montaigne lets them "courir à l'avanture" (ibid., b) on the chance that they too reveal a side of his mobile metamorphosing self. A faithful portrait must show him in all his postures: "Ce n'est pas à moy seul d'en juger. Je me presente debout et couché, le devant et le derriere, à droite et à gauche, et en tous mes naturels plis" (ibid., c). Paradoxically, the artful inclinations of his style are enveloped in the contours of his "naturels plis."<sup>67</sup>

How often, Montaigne ponders, "ay-je estandu mon livre à parler de soy?" (III:13, 1046b). He believes he has more reason to do so than most writers because his book cannot be separated from his aim in writing it, his quest for self-revelation, "d'autant qu'à poinct nommé j'escry de moy et de mes escrits comme de mes autres actions, que mon

theme se renverse en soy" (ibid.). The book, a portrait of Montaigne, includes in its focus a portrait of Montaigne writing the book--his theme "turns in upon itself."<sup>68</sup> Montaigne's observations on his book are another dimension of his action of introspection, another way in which Montaigne se roule en luy mesme. Looking into and at himself through the book, Montaigne the observer scrutinizes what Sayce calls "the Observer Observed."<sup>69</sup> In the regard of the observing-self on the self-observed, a distance is necessarily interposed, the distance of objectivity, to which Montaigne openly lays claim: "Je ne m'ayme pas si indiscretement et ne suis si attaché et meslé à moy que je ne me puisse distinguer et considerer à quartier, comme un voisin, comme un arbre" (III:8, 921c).

Certainly the objective distance opened by the act of self-observation throws into question Montaigne's fervent insistence on his identification with his book: "Ce ne sont pas mes gestes que j'ecris, c'est moy, c'est mon essence" (II:6, 359c). But this distance between the observing-self and the self-observed, between the essayist and his Essais, is effectively bridged by an ongoing, active relationship between Montaigne and his work:

[A] Moulant sur moy cette figure, il m'a fallu si souvent dresser et composer pour m'extraire que le patron s'en est fermé et aucunement formé soy-mesmes. [B] Me peignant pour autrui, je me suis peint en moy de couleurs plus nettes que n'estoyent les miennes premières. [C] Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict, livre consubstantiel à son auteur, d'une occupation propre, membre de ma vie; non d'une occupation et fin tierce et estrangere comme tous autres livres (II:18, 647-648c).



In order to shape the book after himself, he, the model, has become firmer and to a certain degree has taken on form (A). The 'colors' with which he 'paints' himself are more distinct than those with which he began (B), for in his role of 'painter,' he has had to bring all the nuances of his subject into sharper focus. A veritable process of interaction is at work between the book and the author (C). The exercise of judgment through which the book comes into being is the very process of self-actualization by which Montaigne fashions his life.<sup>70</sup> His book, unlike all others, does not have a third intention, a purpose removed from its relationship to the author. The life of the book and of its author are integrally related in their reciprocal action: "Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict, livre consubstantiel à son auteur."

Opinions of critics regarding the "livre consubstantiel" vary.<sup>71</sup> And surely Montaigne's affirmation of his oneness with his book does not coincide with his own sense of differentiation and separateness. A decided tension exists between Montaigne and his book, between the word and the man.<sup>72</sup> Earlier, we took into account Montaigne's sensitivity to the distance between "le nom et la chose" and his awareness that comparisons are not identities.<sup>73</sup> While asserting that "on joint toutesfois les comparaisons par quelque coin" (III:13, 1047b), Montaigne knows that these joinings do not dispel difference: "La dissimilitude s'ingere d'elle mesme en nos ouvrages; nul art peut arriver à la similitude" (1042b). The paradox of Montaigne and his book, in the words of Sayce: "They are the same, they are not the

same,"<sup>74</sup> fully activates the tension of the metaphorical process. The "livre consubstantiel à son auteur" energizes an interaction between all the complexities of the book and all the complexities of the man, fusing them into an "inclusive meaning."<sup>75</sup> Paralleling the metaphorical interaction of the word 'taking on body' and 'giving body' to the movements of Montaigne's being throughout the course of the book is the real interaction of Montaigne's two-way relationship to his work: "Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict." The joining in the metaphor "livre consubstantiel à son auteur" is that tightly conceived bond that Montaigne sets as his criteria in language--bien dire issues from bien penser.<sup>76</sup> In this single metaphor, all the movements of the self and all the movements of the book come to rest. It is the point at which Montaigne's polarities of movement and stability meet.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich discusses the objections of some of Montaigne's contemporaries and certain of Montaigne's 'answers' to this attitude, Montaigne, pp. 237-240. See also II:6, 357-358c.

<sup>2</sup>Statements of the analogy to painting are found in the "Au Lecteur," p. 9, and in the opening passage of "De l'amitié" (I:28, 181a).

<sup>3</sup>See above ch. IV, pp. 152-154, for a discussion of Montaigne's perspective on reading as movement.

<sup>4</sup>French Introspectives from Montaigne to André Gide (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937). Jones defines introspection as "the conscious examination of a mind by itself," p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>6</sup>What Jones does not consider is the way in which Montaigne's observations on things external to himself are part of the essayist's very method of introspection, his premise that "tout mouvement nous descouvre" (I:50, 290c).

<sup>7</sup>See above, ch. II, p. 63, for my discussion of Turbayne's objection to the use of metaphor without awareness in his Myth of Metaphor.

<sup>8</sup>See above, ch. II, pp. 55-59.

<sup>9</sup>We have already noted Sayce's warning regarding contradiction in Montaigne (see above, ch. I, p. 8) and Marleau-Ponty's observation that in Montaigne "la contradiction est vérité" (ch. I, p. 29).

<sup>10</sup>I. A. Richards, cited above, ch. II, p. 52.

<sup>11</sup>Thibaudet surveys the numerous images used to convey le dedans and le dehors, Montaigne, pp. 507-514, and Dilys Winegrad entertains the significance of this imagery in her article, "Language as Theme and Image," p. 277.

<sup>12</sup>Winegrad, p. 277.

<sup>13</sup>See also Donald M. Frame, Montaigne: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965), pp. 63-65.

<sup>14</sup>Frame translation, p. 838.

<sup>15</sup> A little further in the same passage he recalls the joy of Socrates "à considérer l'estroite alliance de la douleur à la volupté, comme elles sont associées d'une liaison nécessaire, si qu'à tours elles se suyvent et s'entr'engendrent" (1072b).

<sup>16</sup> II:6, 352a and III:13, 1073b.

<sup>17</sup> "Montaigne en mouvement," part II, p. 261. See also above, ch. III, pp. 87-88.

<sup>18</sup> A Critical Exploration, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> For Thibaudet, "On se rend compte . . . que lorsque Montaigne compare les opérations, les complexions, les habitudes de son âme à celles de son corps, ce ne soit pas une métaphore, à peine une image, mais une manière de penser immédiate et spontanée," Montaigne, p. 522. But by analyzing this "manière de penser" in terms of metaphorical action, we believe we approach more closely the mechanism of Montaigne's thought process.

<sup>20</sup> This quotation has been discussed at some length in ch. III, p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> The image is further concretized by the quotation from Virgil with which Montaigne completes his thought: "As when / The rising winds murmur, caught in some wooded glen, / Then roll roaring along, forecasting gales for sailors," Frame translation, p. 778.

<sup>22</sup> Montaigne quotes Lucretius, Pléiade ed., p. 1647, n. 1 to p. 928.

<sup>23</sup> An image borrowed from Plutarch. Pléiade ed., p. 1646, no. 3 to p. 927.

<sup>24</sup> Frame translation, p. 686.

<sup>25</sup> See above, p. 171 and note 18.

<sup>26</sup> Montaigne recognizes that "fortune" has enabled him to cultivate this preference and capacity for a smooth, fluid adaptation to life's rhythms: "Je suis nay d'une famille qui a coulé sans esclat et sans tumulte" (III:10, 999b).

<sup>27</sup> "L'antithèse procède de Sénèque," Pléiade ed., p. 1588, n. 2 to p. 618.

<sup>28</sup> See Thibaudet, Montaigne, p. 515.

<sup>29</sup> See above, ch. IV, pp. 150-151.

<sup>30</sup> Thibaudet, Montaigne, p. 515.

<sup>31</sup> At the same time, a little further on the same page (1061b), Montaigne admits to the strong impression which a habit of long standing makes on him, so much so that any departure from his established ways seems an excess.

<sup>32</sup> See above, p. 169.

<sup>33</sup> Frame translation, p. 274.

<sup>34</sup> An extended metaphor of geographical exploration has been examined in our discussion of judgment. See above, ch. IV, pp. 140-141.

<sup>35</sup> It has already been seen that images of verticality constitute a coherent network. See above, ch. III, pp. 110-114.

<sup>36</sup> The quotation from Catullus is translated by the Pléiade editors, p. 1573, n. 3 to p. 549.

<sup>37</sup> Starobinski, "Montaigne en mouvement," part I, p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> This is the passage on which Starobinski bases the first part of his article. My reading of the passage has been very much directed by his explication, with one significant difference, namely, that I view the expression of introspection in terms of bodily gesture as metaphor, and Starobinski treats it in terms of an actual physical experience, a "sensation proprioceptive," p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Starobinski comments: "Dirigée vers l'intérieur, son énergie ne se dissipera pas: il en gardera constamment la maîtrise," p. 18. See also Montaigne, III:12, 1022c.

<sup>43</sup> We witness here Montaigne's tendency, noted earlier, to use ame and esprit synonymously. See above, ch. IV, p. 131.

<sup>44</sup> Starobinski, p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> See above, ch. IV, pp. 140ff.

<sup>46</sup> See above, p. 187 and note 40.

<sup>47</sup> Frame translation, p. 854.

<sup>48</sup> See above, ch. IV, pp. 120-121.

<sup>49</sup> See above, p. 172.

<sup>50</sup> Here we are referring back to the statement of La Charité quoted earlier: "in time enlightened judgment becomes one with its object: judgment becomes the innermost self." See above, ch. IV, p. 144.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Regosin examines Montaigne's notions of escrire and faire in his article, "Montaigne's Essais: The Book of the Self," L'Esprit Créateur, 15, 1-2 (1975), 39-48, esp. 40-42.

<sup>52</sup> For an investigation into what this image could have constituted for Montaigne, see Barbara Bowen's article, "What does Montaigne mean by 'marqueterie'?" Studies in Philology, 67 (1970), 147-155.

<sup>53</sup> This image is used to describe a passage in Plato in which Montaigne finds a style exactly suited to his own tastes. The analogy to his own style is evident from the context. See III:9, 973.

<sup>54</sup> See above, ch. III, p. 95.

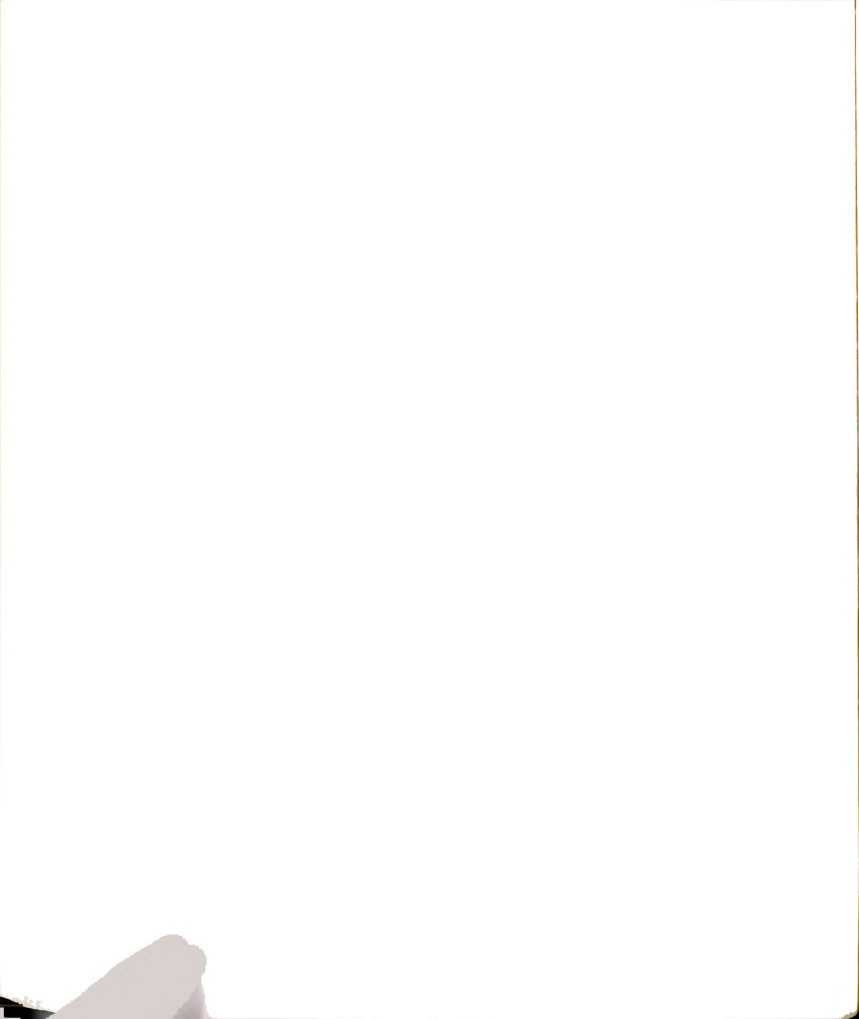
<sup>55</sup> Montaigne, p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> The emphasis placed here on maniere over matiere must not be taken as a devaluation or negation of meaning in the essays. Montaigne warns: "quand j'oy quelqu'un qui s'arreste au langage des Essais, . . . j'aymeroy mieux qu'il s'en teust. Ce n'est pas tant eslever les mots, comme c'est deprimer le sens" (I:40, 245c).

<sup>57</sup> Frame translation, p. 297.

<sup>58</sup> Studies of this type are too numerous to list here. We shall indicate some of the more significant ones; others will be found in the bibliography at the end of this work. Michaël Baraz, "Sur la structure d'un essai de Montaigne," BHR, 23 (1961), 265-281; René Etiemble, "Sens et structure dans un essai de Montaigne," CAIEF, 14 (1962), 263-274; Robert Griffin, "Title, Structure and Theme of Montaigne's 'Des Coches,'" MLN, 82 (1967), 285-290; René Jasinski, "Sur la composition chez Montaigne," in Mélanges Henri Chamard (Paris: Nizet, 1951), pp. 257-267; and R. A. Sayce, "Montaigne et la peinture du passage," pp. 11-59.

<sup>59</sup> Most notable is the opposition between Etiemble's and Jasinski's demonstrations of an inherent and conscious logic and Sayce's emphasis on a process of free association. See Etiemble, pp. 266-267 and Sayce, "Baroque Elements in Montaigne," French Studies, 8 (1954), 1-16.



<sup>60</sup> Anthony Wilden, "Montaigne's Essays in the Context of Communication," MLN, 85 (1970), 460.

<sup>61</sup> Tom Conley, "The Page's Hidden Dimension: Surface and Emblem in Montaigne's Essais," Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association, 7, 1 (1974), 13-25. See also Marcel Gutwirth, "Des Coches, ou la structuration d'une absence," L'Esprit Créateur, 15, 1-2 (1975), 8-20.

<sup>62</sup> Frame translation, p. 219.

<sup>63</sup> The importance of Montaigne's relationship with La Boétie to the composition of the Essais is treated by Donald M. Frame in his Montaigne: A Biography, pp. 73-74; by Richard Regosin in his article, "Montaigne's Essais: The Book of the Self," p. 46; and is the central focus of Michel Butor's hypothesis in his Essai sur les 'Essais' (Paris: Gallimard, 1968).

<sup>64</sup> Anthony Wilden does a complex analysis of the implications of this relationship in his probing article, "'Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin': A Reading of Montaigne," MLN, 83 (1968), 577-597. Wilden points to the importance of reading the essays as a form of discourse, embodying the existential quest for an experience of self in relationship to the Other. His dialectical reading regards Montaigne's desire for the lost image of himself (in identity with his friend) as a process of continuing metaphorical transference in the Essais--"La Boétie becomes 'La Boétie,' which is in its turn metaphorically replaced by all that it stands for in Montaigne's personal lexicon: stability, being, judgment, plenitude. At the same time, the real absence of its referent calls into the discourse all the things this absence stands for: flux, becoming, vanity, void. The goal of the Essays is both metonymically and metaphorically expressed in the words by which Montaigne characterizes La Boétie: 'un'ame pleine,'" (p. 588).

<sup>65</sup> "Je hasarde souvent des boutades de mon esprit, desquelles je me deffie" (III:8, 922b).

<sup>66</sup> The "tousjours indigeste," recalling Montaigne's criticisms of the all too often misguided procedures in education, hardly seems appropriate in connection with the essays, which are the activity of his judgment, his 'digestive' faculty. It is necessary to see this passage in its proper context of the opening of the essay "De la vanité" where Montaigne is denouncing the "escrivainerie . . . d'un siecle desbordé" (923b).

<sup>67</sup> Sayce states that this quotation ("Je me presente debout et couché . . .") "is to be taken in part physically, but above all psychologically," A Critical Exploration, p. 53. Given the context in which the statement occurs, it must also include Montaigne's style.



<sup>68</sup> Frame translation, p. 818.

<sup>69</sup> Sayce, A Critical Exploration, ch. 4, esp. p. 73.

<sup>70</sup> "J'ay mis tous mes efforts à former ma vie. Voylà mon mestier et mon ouvrage. Je suis moins faiseur de livres que de nulle autre besogne" (II:37, 764a).

<sup>71</sup> Barbara Bowen easily dismisses it as another use of Montaigne's boutades, The Age of Bluff, p. 117, but one must keep in mind that she reads almost the entire book in the vein of boutades: "Montaigne's whole attitude to himself, his book, and his reader is tongue in cheek" (p. 127)! Sayce takes the statement more seriously: "The book and the man are indeed consubstantial. Still, consubstantiality in its original and best known sense implies difference as well as unity, and so it is here. . . . As so often for Montaigne, we are forced to an antithetical conclusion: they are the same, they are not the same," A Critical Exploration, p. 70. The question is left in abeyance.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Regosin recognizes this tension in Montaigne's relationship to his writing as residing in his "sense of written language as the repository of reality" and his opposing view of language as the "'corps aéré de la voix.'" Regosin relates this tension to the generation of the Essais: "The Essais reside at the very heart of the paradox, at that point of tension where the word takes on body," "Montaigne's Essais: The Book of the Self," p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> See above, p. 166.

<sup>74</sup> See above, note 71.

<sup>75</sup> See above, pp. 166-167 and note 10.

<sup>76</sup> See above, pp. 166-167.

## CONCLUSION

Nostre vie est composée, comme l'harmonie  
du monde, de choses contraires (III:13,  
1068b).

The unity of Montaigne grows out of his active pursuit of the integration of contraries. His vision of the world, of man and of himself attests to the flux and diversity of all things. No two things are alike and nothing remains stable and unchanging. But there are ways of making connections between things that are dissimilar, of perceiving relationships which, though they do not dispel difference, do enable us to integrate the diverses and ondoyantes pieces of existence into a harmonious whole: "Toutes choses se tiennent par quelque similitude" (III:13, 1047b). Although the relationships which can be drawn from experience are faulty and imperfect, Montaigne holds that there are always 'corners' by which things can be 'joined.' Endowed with what Aristotle called 'an eye for resemblances,' Montaigne is constantly engaged in the activity of making associations. From his perspective of all things being in perpetual branle, the vision he creates must be continually reshaped. The harmonious integration of dissimilarities and even contraries into a unified whole cannot be immobilized into a static representation, for that would deny the basic premise that "il n'y a aucune constante existence, ny de nostre estre, ny de celuy des objects. Et nous, et nostre jugement, et toutes choses mortelles, vont coulant et roulant sans cesse" (II:12, 586a).

Movement and stability are polar opposites marking the continuing spectrum of Montaigne's thought. Throughout the Essais there is a dynamic interplay of the forceful impulsion to movement and the contrasting urge to create and experience a sense of repos. Neither pole can be divorced from the other and taken as the exclusive characteristic or ultimate aspiration of Montaigne, for the two exist in relationship to each other. In the formulation of his thought, Montaigne operates, to a large degree, through a progression of antitheses. The mobile aspect of things is always juxtaposed to their contrasting aspect of stability. In the metamorphosing course of nature, Montaigne posits the systematized order of a "machine," one that functions on the principle of universal diversity and change, a system "veiled" to the eyes of man, yet constituting a unified whole. Human institutions and customs are seen as variable and unstable, as forces sweeping individual lives into their current, and, at the same time, as possessing their own ability to endure. Though unstable in themselves, they provide the structures through which men can resist the upheavals of change and even fix themselves in unnatural postures of rigid adherence. Life is "un mouvement inegal, irregulier et multi-forme" (III:3, 796c), but its movements can be harmoniously integrated into a unified whole, provided we have defined the end toward which these irregular and multiform movements are directed. Caught up in the impulsion of movements propelled away from themselves, men project their lives outward along paths of horizontal lines that have no end and hence afford them no sense of repos. Montaigne cultivates movement

with a very conscious design: all movements are gauged in relationship to a fixed center, "le siege de constance" (II:17, 628b) of his innermost self. Stability is experienced in the movements issuing from and reaching back to this central self--the 'seat' of judgment, which is and endures only in the action out of which it creates itself.

Metaphor is a radical component of Montaigne's conceptions of movement and stability, for it is almost impossible to think in terms of movement and its opposite without associating them to substantial properties, without giving them corporeal quantity. "C'est tousjours à l'homme que nous avons affaire, duquel la condition est merveilleusement corporelle" (III:8, 909b). Abstract concepts in Montaigne are constantly associated to concrete bodily experience through the action of metaphor. The metaphorical process bridges the separation of body and mind to fuse them into an integral experience. "Que l'esprit esveille et vivifie la pesanteur du corps, le corps arreste la legeté de l'esprit et la fixe" (III:13, 1094-95b). In the movement of metaphor, interacting between tenor and vehicle, the movement of Montaigne's mind forges its own stability. His well-toned judgment is continually making connections based on "quelque similitude" through the action of language. By means of language, and more specifically metaphorical language, Montaigne's judgment is able to take possession of its subjects and "lui donner corps . . . l'appuyer et estançonner" (I:50, 289a). The polarities of movement and stability are joined in their common relationship to the creative process of metaphor: Montaigne's dynamic opposition of movement and stability concurs with the perpetually

renewed interaction of the weight and density of the body and the lightness and fluidity of the mind or soul.

Embodied in metaphor, movement takes shape in a figurative context of spatial quantity. Montaigne traces the usual course of life along lines of horizontal extension and proposes the alternative of a circumscribed motion, a self-oriented circularity. He ponders man's extension of himself in vertical dimensions, viewing the movements of the soul in terms of high and low and admiring the flexibility of "un'ame à divers estages" (III:3, 799b). Various reflections on the action of the mind--the operation of judgment, the experience of reading and the movement of the Essais themselves--are incorporated into travel metaphors where movement is situated in a paysage of richly developed contours. Man's subjective sense of identity is explored as an 'inner self,' the spatial domain of the "arriere boutique" (I:39, 235a). This is the setting for the tumultuous branle of the passions, for the inward-turning movement of self study, and, at its innermost point, the "siege magistral" of judgment (III:13, 1052b).

Montaigne concretizes movement itself with a vigorous exercise of verbal gestures. The travel metaphor assumes many aspects, from the straightforward statements of aller, marcher, promener, to the more sculptured motions of chanceler, choper, fourvoyer or glisser. Gestures of a vividly active nature such as saisir, ployer, digerer or bander contrast with the passive motions of couler, rouler, être emporté or percé. The circular movement of actions directed back toward the self finds expression in a diversity of reflexive verbs: se taster, se

paistre, se rouller and se mirer. And a very particular kind of movement, the paradoxical active possession of passive motion, is created through a transitive handling of intransitive verbs: couler ce monde; se laisser aller, glisser, couler. Through his abundant and diversified use of verb metaphors, Montaigne wields the movement of abstract conceptions in emphatically plastic gestures. In the strength and immediacy of the link between subject and verb and the verb's direct focus on the movement in question, the action of his mobile conceptions takes on the forceful sensations of corporeal experience.

Accompanying the shaping of movement into bodily gestures is the qualification of that which moves or resists movement in substantial properties. What is easily subject to movement is characterized by weightlessness, emptiness and mollesse and is likened to the flow of water or the aimless blowing of wind. The opposite qualities--the weight and volume of solid mass and a tactile rigidity--resist movement, work to slow it down or oppose it with fixity. But there is an active integration of these contrasting properties in the effort to take possession of what is passively in flux: "Il faut bien bander l'ame pour luy faire sentir comme elle s'escoule" (III:13, 1085c). In order to perform such a gesture, Montaigne cultivates the intermediary property of pliability, coupling the firmness to take hold of movement with the suppleness not to arrest its branle.

As Sainte-Beuve has noted, "pensée, image, chez [Montaigne], c'est tout un." One cannot work with the ideas of Montaigne without having recourse to his metaphors, for in the development of his

metaphors, one follows the working out of his ideas. Frequently, it is through his progressive amplification of a vehicle or through his metamorphosis from one vehicle to another, that the corresponding tenor evolves. Montaigne's characteristic rephrasing and reshaping of ideas in a succession of changing images is the active process of a mind 'giving body' to its conceptions. The movement of his metaphors is consubstantial to the movements of his mind.

"Estirant et ployant" language into "plus vigoureux et divers services" (III:5, 851b), Montaigne searches out a closeness between word and thought. His awareness of the separation between "le nom et la chose" (II:16, 601a) posits an underlying tension in his use of metaphor, a tension which energizes the interaction of the metaphorical process. As he forges corporeal expression for abstract ideas, Montaigne bridges the separation between word and conception and between mind and body. Never losing touch with the organic relationship of "l'esprit . . . si estroittement affreré au corps" (III:5, 821b), he engenders thought in a language "non plus de vent, ains de chair et d'os" (851b).

The Essais are a portrait of Montaigne in language, a portrait of himself conceived in interaction with the multiple aspects of his experience, a portrait of a consciousness as it is reflected through the mediation of its objects. Reflecting himself in the 'mirror' of the world, in the opacity of physical sensation and in the 'inward folds' of "une ame contournable en soy mesme" (I:39, 235a), Montaigne 'registers' the multifarious images of these separate moments of

consciousness into the 'duration' of the book. The book, too, serves as an object of consciousness, a reflector of the self, and it, too, is made 'to turn in on itself.' As the portrait of his passage, it is to the book that Montaigne turns for the image of himself in movement: "mon theme se renverse en soy" (III:13, 1046b). It is the book which functions as the ultimate metaphor of self.



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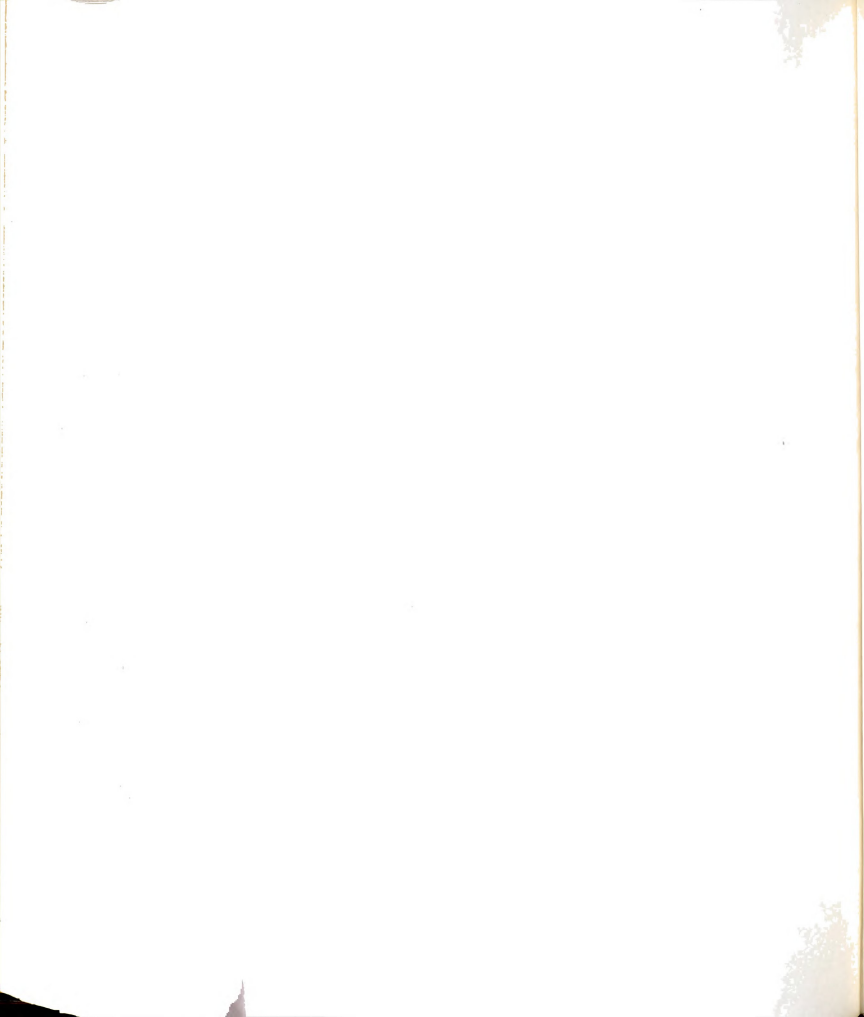
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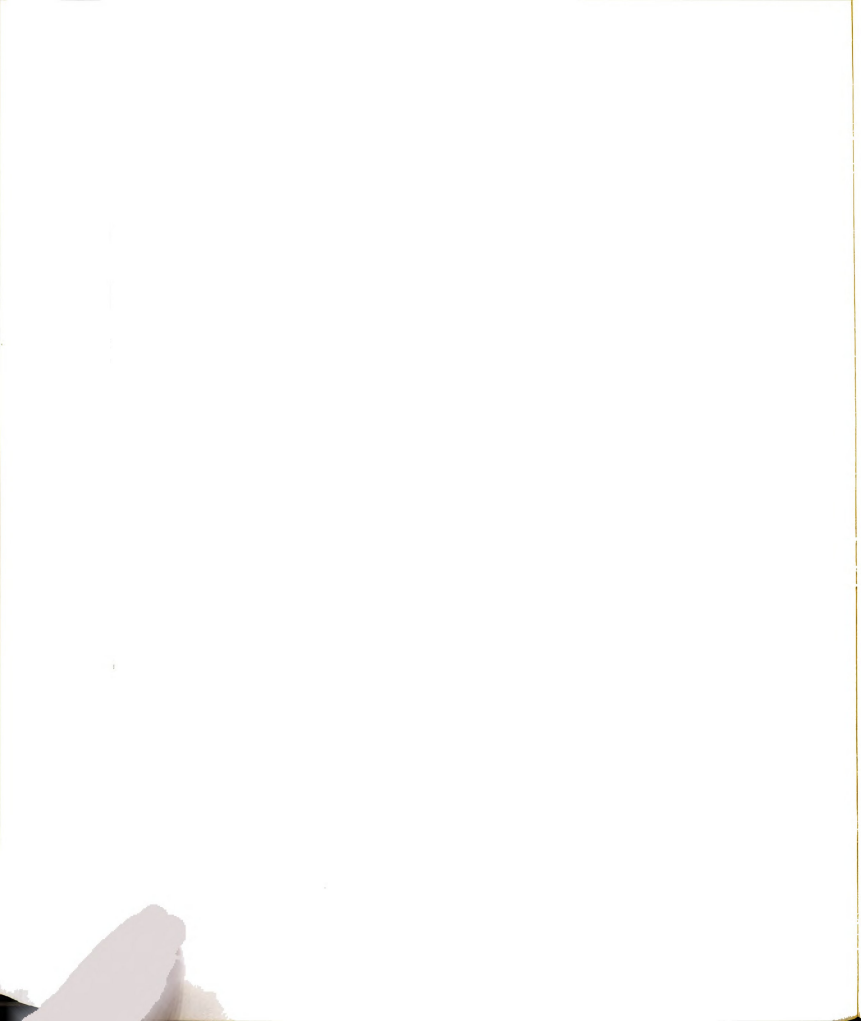
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