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Montaigne's English Journey

Reading the Essays in Shakespeare's Day

WILLIAM M. HAMLIN

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For Michael and Christopher

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A Note on Quotation, Citation, and Transcription

Quotations in French from Montaigne's *Essais* are drawn from the 1595 Paris edition as established in the recent Pléiade text prepared by Jean Balsamo, Michel Magnien, and Catherine Magnien-Simonin (Paris, 2007). Page numbers for these quotations are prefaced with an 'M' (e.g., 'M457'). Quotations from John Florio's English translation of Montaigne derive from the first edition (London, 1603), and their page numbers are prefaced with an 'F' (e.g., 'F564'). In the interests of clarity I use the title *Essayes* for Florio's translation, *Essais* for French editions, and *Essays* for the book more broadly. Regardless of the spelling—and in cheerful defiance of English grammatical stricture—I refer to the *Essays* in plural form throughout this monograph, as it seems strangely infelicitous to speak of them in the singular, despite their astonishing singularity.

Following the typographic practice of early French editions as well as of Florio's translation, I italicize all chapter titles (e.g., '*Sur des vers de Virgile*', '*Of the Caniballes*'). Except in the Appendices, however, I do not provide book or chapter numbers; these may be found in the Index after specific chapter listings. Shifts in typeface (between roman and italic) are also preserved in my practice of quotation, since they constitute important evidence for reception study. I have kept original spelling, punctuation, lineation, and superscription whenever I quote from manuscript material, but I have expanded the contractions signaled by macrons or tildes; such expansions are indicated by italicized letters. Words and punctuation marks within square brackets are my own additions.

Shakespearean quotations appear primarily in modern spelling, and the vast majority are drawn from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edition (New York, 2008). In the case of *Hamlet*, however, I refer occasionally to *The Three-Text Hamlet* (New York, 2003), which conveniently provides the play's earliest editions in facing-page format. Finally, abstract nouns which are often personified and capitalized (e.g., nature, fortune, grace) are consistently presented here in the lower case.

Abbreviations

Arber	Edward Arber, ed., <i>A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1640 A.D.</i> , 5 vols. (London, 1875–1894; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967)
BL	British Library, London
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Brown	Brown University, Providence, RI
Clark	Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles, CA
Colby	Colby College, Waterville, ME
Colgate	Colgate University, Hamilton, NY
Columbia	Columbia University, New York
Cornell	Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Cotgrave	Randle Cotgrave, <i>A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues</i> (London, 1611)
CUL	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
Dent (1981)	R. W. Dent, <i>Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981)
Dent (1984)	R. W. Dent, <i>Proverbial Language in English Drama Exclusive of Shakespeare, 1495–1616</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)
Desan, <i>Catalogue</i>	Philippe Desan, <i>Bibliotheca Desaniana: Catalogue Montaigne</i> (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011)
<i>Dictionnaire</i>	Philippe Desan, ed., <i>Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne</i> , 2nd ed. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007)
EEBO-TCP	Early English Books Online, Text Creation Partnership
ENS	École Normale Supérieure, Paris
<i>ESTC</i>	<i>English Short Title Catalogue</i> , British Library, London
Folger	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC
Fullerton	California State University, Fullerton
Glasgow	University of Glasgow
Harvard	Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Huguet	Edmond Huguet, <i>Dictionnaire de la Langue Française du Seizième Siècle</i> , 7 vols. (Paris, 1925–1967)
Huntington	Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
JHU	Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
LC	Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Littre	Émile Littré, <i>Dictionnaire de la Langue Française</i> , 4 vols. (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1873)
Lyme	Legh Library, Lyme Park, Cheshire
Newberry	Newberry Library, Chicago, IL

Nicot	Jean Nicot, <i>Thresor de la Langue Francoise, tant Ancienne que Moderne</i> (Paris, 1621; first ed., 1606)
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLW	National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 2nd ed., ed. John Simpson and Edmund Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
Princeton	Princeton University, Princeton, NJ
RHUL	Royal Holloway, University of London
Rosenbach	Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia
Sainte-Palaye	Jean-Baptiste de la Curne de Sainte-Palaye, <i>Dictionnaire Historique de l'Ancien Langage François</i> , 10 vols. (Paris: L. Favre, 1875–1882)
Sayce & Maskell	Richard A. Sayce and David Maskell, <i>A Descriptive Bibliography of Montaigne's Essais, 1580–1700</i> (London: Bibliographical Society, 1983)
Senate House	Senate House Library, University of London
STC	A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640</i> , 2nd ed., revised and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–1991)
t.c.	table of contents
Temple	Temple University, Philadelphia
Tilley	Morris Palmer Tilley, <i>Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries</i> (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950)
t.p.	title page
UCB	Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley
UCL	University College London
UCLA	Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles
Venn	John Venn and John Archibald Venn, <i>Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates, and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900</i> . Part One (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922–1927)
Wesleyan	Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
Worcester	Worcester College, Oxford
WSU	Washington State University, Pullman
Yale	Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT

Illustrations

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Introduction

Edified by the Margin

‘Montaign hath the Art above all men to keep his Reader from sleeping’. Thus writes Abiel Borfet, a seventeenth-century English clergyman, in his personal copy of Florio’s Montaigne—a copy bearing more than three hundred marginal annotations, all in Borfet’s hand, distinctively inscribed in a once-dark ink that now has faded almost to the colour of the paper on which it appears (Figure 1).¹ Borfet’s annotated Montaigne is an extraordinary book, one of the most copiously marked copies of the *Essayes* still in existence, yet it is entirely unremarkable in its status as an exemplar displaying abundant evidence of early readership.² Indeed, Borfet represents his contemporaries quite accurately in denying soporific properties to Montaignian prose. Alert and intrigued, English readers of the *Essayes* annotated their copies of Florio with exceptional frequency and vehemence. They offered summaries and evaluations; they alluded to poets, historians, and philosophers; and they supplied citations, indexes, and alternate translations from the French. Beyond all this, however, they registered agreement or disagreement with hundreds of specific claims, and they commented on Montaignian topics ranging from cannibals to cod-pieces, suicide to faith.

Of what value are these annotations? How do they enrich our understanding not only of the English reception of Montaigne but of early modern readership more broadly? In what forms of intellectual activity did these readers believe they were engaged? Is there any suggestion, for instance, that they felt they were reflecting the essential project of the *Essays* by volunteering examples and anecdotes of their own? When they argued against Montaignian views or offered new perspectives and potential veins of enquiry, were they advancing the development of personal, exploratory prose in England? Did they find Montaigne’s book original and, if so, did they express appreciation of that originality through the nature or tenor of their comments? An early reader named Edward Lumsden, for example, notes that ‘[Montaigne’s] writings are but discourse not

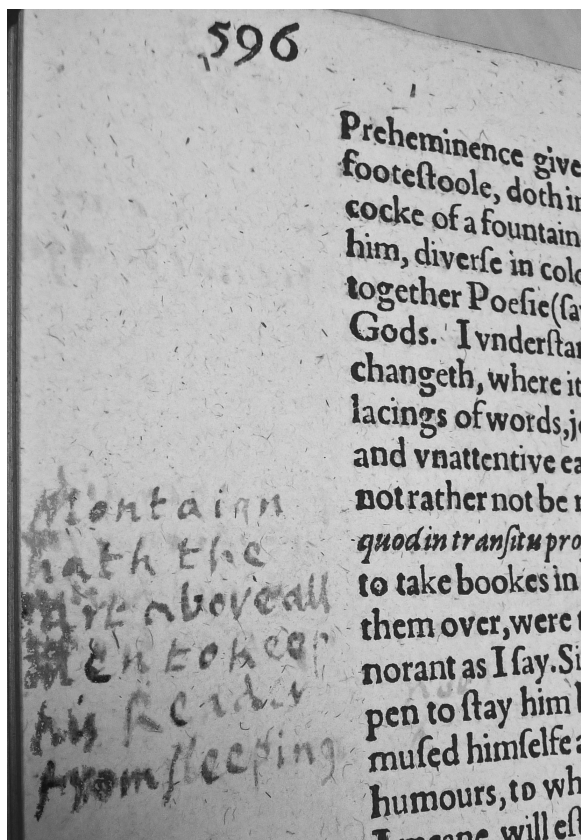


Figure 1. *Essays* (London, 1603), Colgate University, p. 596. Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries.

advise', a claim that certainly gestures toward an understanding of the book's status as a careful record of authorial perception and thought rather than a collection of arguments and precepts.³ But how many readers shared this understanding? 'A very simple booke' is the judgement of one individual who was evidently unimpressed.⁴ Another gives a terse appraisal: 'This Booke's read over [[]] 'tis good for very little'.⁵ What, indeed, are the *Essays* good for? And how do early English readers reach their respective determinations? When we come across such comments as 'Incomparable Montaigne!' or 'a notable rare Chapter everie period of him', what evaluative criteria are being tacitly invoked?⁶

In an effort to address these and similar questions, I have undertaken a large-scale case study of Florio's Montaigne during the first hundred years

of its existence. I have examined three-quarters of the surviving seventeenth-century copies of the book, and I have transcribed and photographed more than seven thousand early annotations inscribed in the margins of their pages.⁷ I have, in addition, studied contemporary diaries, letters, maxims, and commonplace books which allude to or draw upon Montaigne, and I have located a previously unknown mid-seventeenth century English translation of a significant portion of the original Montaignian text. Relying upon all these documents, but especially upon the vast cache of manuscript notation, I have developed a descriptive account of English response to Montaigne during the early decades of his presence within the national vernacular and the English readerly imagination. Such an account has obvious limitations, depending as it does upon the vagaries of book survival and reader idiosyncrasy, not to mention issues of dating, provenance, binding, washing, bleaching, page-cropping, mutilation, and the occasional illegibility of certain hands. At the same time, however, this account relies upon a sufficiently large evidentiary base to suggest that its outlines are broadly representative of early reader response. It is quite apparent, for instance, that such essays as '*Upon some verses of Virgill*' and '*An Apologie of Raymond Sebond*' rank among the most heavily annotated of all Montaigne's chapters, and this in turn tells us that English readers, by and large, were undeterred by considerations of length and unlikely to ignore Montaignian meditations embedded deep within Florio's 630-page text. It is obvious, too, that sexuality, education, medicine, conscience, religious belief, freedom of thought, and the constraints of custom are topics that particularly intrigued these readers. From Montaigne's defence of the penis to his frequent expressions of antipathy toward 'physick' and its practitioners, key passages in the *Essays* stand out for their capacity, time after time, to seize and hold these readers' attention.

More generally, however, I think a strong case may be advanced that readerly annotation is comparatively free from the contingencies of mediation and generic convention which vex the truth-status of other discursive materials that might initially be proposed as candidates for subjective authenticity in early modern England. This is not to deny, as Sir Francis Bacon long ago observed, that books may at times be 'read by deputy', with 'extracts made of them by others', and in fact I have found examples of such forms of Montaignian perusal.⁸ But when we see, for instance, that one early reader has written 'this discourse mooved Teares [in] mee' next to Montaigne's expressed hope that before his death he might be approached by men who had profited from the candour of the *Essays*, it is difficult to feel that the authenticity of this reader's comment is somehow compromised by genre or social convention (Figure 2).⁹ A relative freedom from the coercive pressures of cultural censorship thus strikes me as

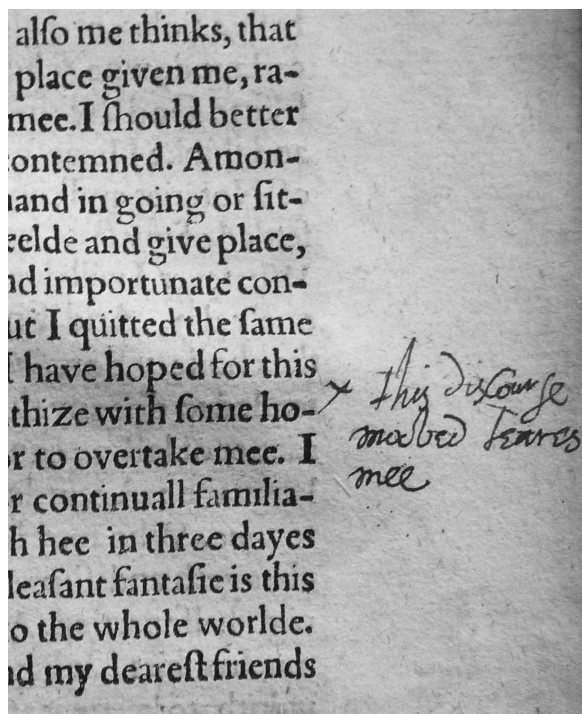


Figure 2. *Essays* (London, 1603), Bibliothèque nationale de France (Z Payen—438), p. 587. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

a pronounced feature of most readers' comments, and as a consequence a large body of annotation such as that I have amassed provides an invaluable context against which to juxtapose and examine printed appropriations of Montaigne. This is one of my basic methodological tactics in the following pages. We have long known that William Shakespeare, John Marston, Samuel Daniel, John Webster, Robert Burton, and many other Jacobean writers routinely drew upon Florio's translation, and we therefore know that they rank among Montaigne's most important readers in early modern England. But only now can we place their printed borrowings in dialogue with a much larger body of contemporary manuscript response. At times we can identify the source of this response, as with notes by Abiel Borfet, Edward Lumsden, and such other figures as Thomas Witham, William Harrison, Lady Anne Clifford, Robert Gray, Joseph Darby, William Ley, Thomas Shipman, George Wilson, and Sir William Drake. More often, the names of Montaigne's early English readers have vanished beyond recovery. But we know a good deal about the most

influential Montaignian reader of all, and it is to this intriguing figure that I first turn.

John Florio, whose long life coincided with the literary careers of Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, and Ben Jonson, is of course best known today for his exuberant translation of the *Essays*. To his contemporaries, however, he was familiar primarily as a talented language teacher and an indefatigable compiler of dictionaries and linguistic guides. Ambitious, versatile, hugely industrious, and occasionally belligerent, Florio was a conspicuous figure in the London of his day: an English native whose first language was Italian; a dedicated scholar who inspired mockery as well as praise; a man patronized by the rich and powerful who nonetheless died in poverty.¹⁰

Florio was born in London in 1553, shortly before the death of King Edward VI and the subsequent accession of Queen Mary. His father, an Italian ex-friar and Protestant convert named Michelangelo Florio, had fled the Inquisition and come to England earlier in Edward's reign, as had other Italian reformers such as Bernardino Ochino and Pietro Martire Vermigli. Once there, he served briefly as the pastor of an Italian Protestant congregation in London, then became a language tutor for the children of aristocratic families. Among his many pupils were Lady Jane Grey and Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke. At some point during the early 1550s he married, although the name and national origin of his wife are unknown. What is known beyond doubt, however, is that in the wake of Mary's proclamation that foreign Protestants were no longer welcome in England, Florio, his wife, and their infant son Giovanni left London in March of 1554.

They travelled first to Strasbourg, then to the Swiss village of Soglio, where the elder Florio resumed his work as a pastor and where his son spent his childhood. Perched on the northern slopes of the Val Bregaglia, Soglio lay in an Italian-speaking region, and unless Giovanni's mother was an Englishwoman (which is certainly possible), he would have had little exposure to the English language during this period. In 1563, at the age of ten, he was sent to Tübingen in order to study with the Italian reformer Pier Paolo Vergerio. But Vergerio, already in his mid-sixties, died two years later, and Florio's theological training was abruptly curtailed.

Nothing is known about the following decade of Florio's life. Perhaps he returned to Soglio and stayed with his parents until his father's death around 1570; perhaps he travelled or pursued further education. In any event, he ultimately chose to reside in England, which under Queen Elizabeth was once again sympathetic to Protestant immigration. Anthony Wood claims that Florio was teaching Italian and French at Oxford by

1576—specifically to Emmanuel Barnes, son of the Bishop of Durham—and this seems quite probable, particularly since Florio wrote in 1611 that he had been working as a language instructor for thirty-five years.¹¹

But the first indisputable evidence of Florio's return to England is the London publication, in 1578, of his Italian study-guide, *Florio His firste Fruites*. Dedicated to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and accompanied by no fewer than ten tributes to Florio from friends and pupils, this book is as interesting for its paratextual materials as for its pedagogical content. In particular it draws attention to the complex social negotiations in which its author was forced to engage through the majority of his career. Leicester was only the first of many aristocrats whose patronage Florio sought and obtained: others included Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton; Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford; and Anne of Denmark, wife of King James I. Yet for all his success in securing financial support, Florio was repeatedly obliged to enlist his friends in the effort.

Among the most dependable of these friends were Samuel Daniel and Matthew Gwinne. Florio met both men at Oxford, probably in the late 1570s or early 1580s. The Welshman Gwinne was a student of music and classical languages, an Italophile, and, later on, a distinguished member of the Barber-Surgeons' Company; he often wrote Italian verses for Florio's books, signing them 'Il Candido' (e.g., *Essayes*, sig. A4^v). As for Daniel, besides being a poet, playwright, and literary theorist, he was an ardent reader of Montaigne, drawing on the *Essays* for his own compositions and contributing a lengthy dedicatory poem to Florio's translation. At some point before 1585, Florio married Daniel's sister (whose name has not survived); their daughter Joane was baptized that year. They subsequently raised at least two other children: Edward, christened in 1588, and Aurelia, who reached adulthood and married the surgeon James Molins.

Despite his ties to Oxford, Florio spent a great deal of time in London during the 1580s, and Frances Yates has established that he worked at the French Embassy from 1583 to 1585.¹² There he served Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de la Mauvissière, who employed him variously as an interpreter, secretary, and messenger. Because Mauvissière harboured Giordano Bruno during precisely these years, it is clear that Florio would have had opportunities to speak with him, and indeed Bruno alludes to Florio in his *Ash Wednesday Supper* (1584).¹³ Florio was also in occasional contact with Sir Francis Walsingham and Lord Burghley, and Yates has speculated that he was engaged by them as a spy. The French monarchy was keenly interested in the liberation of Mary, Queen of Scots, and its ambassador Mauvissière was thus committed to keeping a sharp eye on Elizabeth's dealings with her, so Yates's theory bears considerable plausibility—especially in view of Florio's strong Protestant affiliations. But Florio's efforts at

espionage, if they existed at all, existed only briefly, for in 1585 Mauvissière returned to France, and during the remainder of the decade Florio occupied himself primarily with his teaching and writing.

In 1591 he published a new version of his bilingual guide, this time entitled *Florios Second Frutes*. Besides offering numerous dialogues in parallel columns of Italian and English, this book was accompanied by a companion volume that listed six thousand Italian proverbs. Not surprisingly, such an enthusiastic endorsement of Florio's native tongue prompted a certain degree of xenophobic hostility, most notably in John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593), a primer for students of French which also satirized London's foreign tutors and manual-writers—Florio chief among them.¹⁴ But Florio, defiant and unfazed, continued his exhaustive lexicographic work, and in 1598 published the first substantial Italian-English dictionary ever prepared: *A Worlde of Wordes*. Furnishing over forty-five thousand entries and exploring multiple specialist vocabularies, this work became a landmark in the development of bilingual dictionary-making. Florio revised and expanded it for the rest of his life, and from the perspective of contemporary scholarship it formed the basis of his reputation as a serious linguist. Indeed, its hugely-augmented second edition—*Queen Anna's New World of Words* (1611)—remained the standard Italian-English lexicon for the next half-century.

A Worlde of Wordes was dedicated to three aristocratic patrons with whom Florio had extensive social interaction during the 1590s and early 1600s: the Earl of Southampton, the Countess of Bedford, and Roger Manners, fifth Earl of Rutland. Rutland was the husband of Elizabeth Sidney, Sir Philip's only child, and Southampton was Shakespeare's patron as well as Florio's. It thus seems highly probable that Florio met Shakespeare during this period, and it is beyond question that Shakespeare knew Florio's *First Fruites*, since the pedant Holofernes quotes from it in *Love's Labour's Lost*.¹⁵ Shakespeare's depictions of both Holofernes and Don Armado may in fact owe some of their detail to his observation of Florio.

But it was Florio's acquaintance with Lucy, Countess of Bedford, that ultimately proved most significant for English literary history. In the 1590s Montaigne's *Essais* had begun to attract attention in England, and one of the Countess's friends, Sir Edward Wotton, asked Florio to render a single chapter from French into English.¹⁶ Florio complied, finishing the task at the Countess's country estate and sharing the result with her. She then requested that he translate the entire work—an enormous labour, as the volume was comprised of no fewer than 107 chapters, some of them small books in themselves. But Florio undertook the job, and the eventual result was *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie*

Discourses of Lo[r]d: Michaell de Montaigne, printed in 1603 by Valentine Sims for the London publisher and bookseller Edward Blount. It appears that Florio worked on this translation for at least five years, and he acknowledges that he received valuable assistance both from Gwinne and another friend, Theodore Diodati, each of whom aided him with citations, Greek and Latin extracts, and knotty passages in the original French.¹⁷ But it was Florio alone who translated the vast majority of Montaigne's remarkable book, and this perhaps accounts for the supercilious tone he adopts in asserting that '*seven or eight [other scholars] of great wit and worth have assayed, but found these Essayes no attempt for French apprentices or Littletonians*' (sig. A6^r).¹⁸ Likening his competitors to the students of schoolmasters such as Claude Hollyband (who had written a textbook entitled *The French Littleton*), Florio implies that he is more than a tutor or a linguist: he is a crucial collaborator in the dissemination of original thought—in this case the collected ruminations of a brilliant if idiosyncratic Frenchman.¹⁹

A rather cryptic note at the end of his address 'To the curteous Reader' tells us that in translating the *Essais* Florio was obliged to depend upon a range of '*copies, editions and volumes... now those in folio, now those in octavo*'. Recognizing that some of these copies had '*more or lesse then others*', he tried to reconcile the texts but was still acutely conscious of the '*falsenesse of the French prints*' (sig. A6^r). From the vantage point of four centuries it is in fact apparent that Florio drew only occasionally upon the octavo version of the *Essais* printed in 1598; he relied primarily upon the 1595 Paris edition, a large, handsome folio.²⁰ Indeed an exemplar of 1595 now held at the National Library of Scotland bears an early annotation reading 'This book to be translated for Edward'—a tantalizing suggestion that this might be the very copy from which Florio principally worked, with 'Edward' referring either to Sir Edward Wotton or, more improbably, Edward Aggas or Edward Blount (Figure 3).²¹ Florio was also undoubtedly aware of Girolamo Naselli's partial Italian translation of the *Essais* (Ferrara, 1590), for it was from this volume that he derived his subtitle, Naselli having called the book *Discorsi Morali, Politici, et Militari*.²² But if Florio revealed entrenched scholarly habits in consulting multiple editions of Montaigne, he nonetheless felt quite comfortable making numerous alterations to the French, many of which I will discuss below. Perhaps the most conspicuous of these was the complete removal of the book's preface by Marie de Gournay, Montaigne's foster daughter and one of three compilers, along with Montaigne's widow and Pierre de Brach, of the 1595 edition.²³ A passionate defence of the *Essais* coupled with proto-feminist musings and a strong assertion of Montaigne's Roman Catholic orthodoxy, this preface was quite lengthy and had been construed

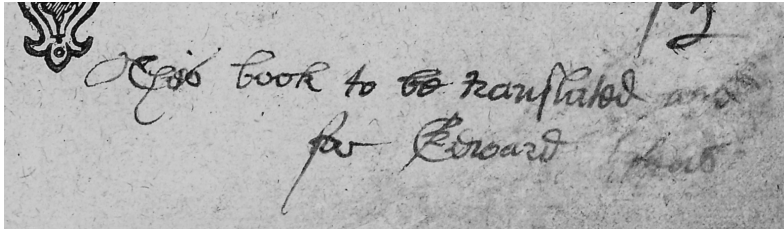


Figure 3. *Essais* (Paris, 1595), National Library of Scotland (RB.m.41), Book Three, p. 231. Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.

by some French readers as an attempt to distort the meaning and purpose of Montaigne. Its excision by Florio is thus understandable. But lest anyone think that he expunged it because he was uncomfortable with the fact that a woman had played such a crucial role in preserving a male writer's text and advancing his reputation, we should keep in mind that Florio's translation itself was both prompted by a woman and exclusively 'consecrated' to a group of distinguished female patrons (sig. A1^v).

For the *Essays* were dedicated not merely to the Countess of Bedford but to five other aristocratic ladies: Lucy's mother, Anne Harington; Penelope Devereux Rich (sister of the Earl of Essex and Sidney's famous 'Stella'); Elizabeth Sidney Manners, Countess of Rutland; Mary (or Marie) Neville, daughter of Sir Thomas Sackville; and Elizabeth Grey, daughter of the seventh Earl of Shrewsbury. Florio thus managed to honour half a dozen generous and well-educated women while simultaneously asserting his ongoing connections to several of the most prominent families in England—families of longstanding Protestant conviction. This is mildly ironic, given Montaigne's ostensible Catholicism and in particular his distaste for devotional zeal, but on the whole it appears that within Florio's outlook as an intellectual and man of letters, affinities of social class routinely trumped those of religious confession. Indeed, as Warren Boutcher has recently shown, the Montaignian chapter that Wotton initially asked him to translate was almost certainly '*De l'institution des enfans*', a thoughtful and provocative commentary on the education of aristocratic boys.²⁴

Florio's Montaigne has often been faulted for its wordiness, its inaccuracy, and its excessive verbal ornamentation.²⁵ All three charges possess merit. Where Montaigne writes that '*Il se faut reserver une arriereboutique, toute nostre, toute franche, en laquelle nous establissions nostre vraye liberte et principale retraicte et solitude*' (M245), Florio offers this: 'Wee should reserve a store-house for our selves, what neede soever chaunce; altogether ours, and wholly free, wherein wee may hoarde-up, and establish

our true libertie, and principal reite and solitarines' (F120). Unnecessary synonyms and gratuitous clauses impede the flow of Montaigne's thought—a failing often aggravated by Florio's penchant for alliteration, chiasmus, hendiadys, parallelism, and other rhetorical figures. He also makes mistakes, rendering 'poisson' (M206) as 'poison' (F99) and 'Aristote' (M430) as 'Aristotle' (F237), and he sometimes distorts Montaignian claims through an insistence upon his own views, for example reducing 'des erreurs de Wiclef' (M41) to 'Wickliffs opinions' (F7).²⁶ The noun 'coqs' (M626) expands into 'Cockes or Chanticleares' (F343), the verb 'piper' (M953) becomes 'to cozen, to cunny-catch, and to circumvent' (F545), and 'Les estroits baisers de la jeunesse, savoureux, gloutons et gluians' (M334) metamorphoses into 'The close-smacking, sweetenese-moving, love-alluring, and greed-smirking kisses of youth' (F171).²⁷

But the translation has many virtues. Florio works tirelessly to make Montaigne accessible to a new audience, routinely embedding English idioms and proverbs within his prose, and often preferring cultural equivalency to strict denotative precision. In one case, for instance, 'vigne' (M683) becomes 'farme' (F374) rather than 'vineyard', and where Montaigne alludes to 'les Basques et les Troglodytes' (M474), Florio speaks of 'the cornish, the Welch, or Irish' (F260).²⁸ As we will see in Chapter 2, Florio also exhibits comparatively little inclination toward censorship: he may not always agree with Montaigne's thoughts about sex or suicide, but on the whole he represents them fairly and fully, unlike several of his successors. And while as a stylist Florio exhibits all the trademarks of Erasmian *copia* and euphuistic excess, he sometimes manages to improve upon his Montaignian original, as when, in a discussion of religious complacency, he brilliantly renders 'l'oisiveté' (M653) as 'lethall security' (F358). His love of words is everywhere apparent, and readers of his translation have long known that it makes valuable contributions to the English lexicon. Among the English words that first appeared in Florio's Montaigne are 'dogmatism', 'judicatory', 'masturbation', and 'criticism' (the last of these in Florio's preface rather than in the Montaignian text).²⁹ Florio also popularized other words that had only recently arrived: 'conscientious', 'caravan', 'Pyrrhonism', 'satellite', 'rebarbative', 'tarnish', 'verisimilitude'.³⁰ Predictably, not all of Florio's neologisms took hold, and we should perhaps be thankful that 'attediate' (to exhaust), 'ubertie' (abundance), 'fantastiquize' (to follow one's fantasies), 'lithernes' (indolence), 'netifie' (to clean), and 'codburst' (hernia) vanished almost as soon as they emerged in print.³¹ On the whole, however, Florio's Montaigne not only provided full English access to one of the most engrossing books of Renaissance Europe, but it gave the English language an energetic infusion of vocabulary and verbal expressiveness at a time when it was at its most receptive to such lexical exuberance.

In Act Two of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare famously appropriates a lengthy passage from Florio's rendition of the chapter '*Des Cannibales*', and he also recalls many individual words from the *Essayes* as he composes *King Lear*.³² Marston, Daniel, Webster, Elizabeth Cary, and Thomas Middleton rank among the other Jacobean playwrights who borrowed from Florio's Montaigne. Ben Jonson, too, was familiar with the translation, although he never mined it for material but instead alluded to its tremendous popularity: Lady Politic Would-Be refers to 'Montagnié' as the Continental author from whom English writers 'steal' more than any other.³³ Indeed, Jonson owned a first edition of the book—a volume now held at the British Library—and it seems that he and Florio were on particularly good terms, as he gave him a quarto printing of *Volpone* (1607) inscribed with the following words: 'To his loving Father, & worthy Freind Mr John Florio: The ayde of his Muses. Ben: Jonson seales this testimony of Freindship, & Love'.³⁴ Few people ever received a warmer tribute from this independent and cantankerous poet.

In 1604 Florio was appointed Groom of the Privy Chamber to Anne of Denmark, the thirty year-old wife of James I, England's new monarch. His duties in this post primarily involved serving as Italian tutor and all-purpose secretary to the Queen, and for the next fifteen years he enjoyed levels of prosperity and security that he had never previously known. The Queen was fond of him, giving him a silver chalice in 1605 at the birth of his first grandchild. Florio reciprocated accordingly, dedicating to her not only his expanded Italian-English dictionary in 1611, but also the second edition of the *Essayes* in 1613—an edition that included a handsome woodcut engraving of himself (Figure 4). During this period Florio undertook a number of new projects. Most notably, he rendered into Italian the full text of King James's political treatise *Basilikon Doron* (1599). This translation was never published, but a holograph manuscript survives in the British Library.³⁵ Florio seems also to have served as French and Italian tutor to Henry, Prince of Wales, whose death in 1612 stunned the nation. And evidence exists that he maintained his friendships with Daniel and Jonson, besides establishing new associations with the writer Nicholas Breton and the printer Thomas Thorpe.³⁶

Florio's final years, however, were marked by substantial reversals in fortune. That his wife of many years predeceased him is clear from the fact that he remarried in 1617, this time to a woman whose name we know: Rose Spicer. Florio would have been sixty-four years old. Queen Anne died two years later, and at that point Florio's royal patronage came abruptly to an end. He applied to King James for continued support, but his petitions were largely ignored; James's extravagance had left the Exchequer in poor condition. Living in Fulham and slowly descending



Figure 4. *Essays* (London, 1613), Washington State University, sig. A6^r. Courtesy of Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries.

into poverty, Florio nonetheless persisted with his scholarly projects, working in particular on a third edition of his dictionary. This edition never appeared during his lifetime, but it formed the core of Giovanni Torriano's *Vocabolario Italiano & Inglese*, published in London in 1659. Florio also rendered into English a portion of Traiano Boccalini's political satire *Ragguagli di Parnaso*; a separate portion of this book was translated by Robert Burton, the Oxford scholar whose *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) so frequently draws on Florio's Montaigne.

In October 1625, at the age of seventy-two, Florio died of the bubonic plague, an outbreak of which had severely afflicted London that summer. No stone bears his name in the Fulham churchyard; in all likelihood he was buried in a mass grave at Hurlingham Field. He was survived by his daughter Aurelia (and her nine children) as well as by his second wife, to whom he left the bulk of his material possessions and his English books. His French and Italian books, meanwhile, were bequeathed to one of his many former pupils, William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, whose father Henry had been a pupil of Florio's father more than seventy years before.³⁷

John Florio's contemporaries were indebted to him for significantly advancing England's humanistic turn toward the languages and cultures of Continental Europe. Subsequent generations have acknowledged his achievement in preparing one of the most influential and beloved translations in English literary history.

Initially published in 1603, Florio's Montaigne was reprinted, with corrections and newly-introduced errors, in 1613 and 1632. Florio was clearly involved with the supervision of the first two editions, but had died before the appearance of the third. Portions of his manuscript, however, seem to exert traces of influence upon his other compositions as early as 1598 or 1599, so the English reception of the *Essayes* may be said to date from the final years of the sixteenth century.³⁸ A small number of writers and scholars had previously studied Montaigne in French—Sir Francis Bacon, Gabriel Harvey, Alberico Gentili, and Sir John Davies among them—but few continued to do so after Florio's translation became available.³⁹ The book quickly made its way into the hands of private owners, with copies of the first edition bearing such dates and signatures as 'W: Walter 1603', 'Doruthee Symson—1608', 'May: 21: 1603', 'Sum Ben: Jonsonij', 'Liber Manassis et Henrici Norwoodd... Anno Domini 1604', and 'Henry Shipwith his Booke 1608'.⁴⁰ Florio gave a presentation copy to Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of England, warmly inscribing it with the words 'Il dono del suo charissimo amico [[]] il S^{re} Giouannj Florio [[]] 20° Januarij / 1603' (Figure 5).⁴¹ Separate exemplars carry the autographs of Mary Sackville Neville and King James I, and the Countess of Bedford's copy is now held at the Bodleian

Library in Oxford.⁴² Florio personally corrected this latter volume, as well as that of Egerton and at least four others whose earliest owners are no longer known (Figure 6).⁴³ Extensive, highly detailed, and penned in a careful italic hand, these corrections reveal the scrupulous care with which Florio approached his work, and most of them are reflected in a pair of errata leaves subsequently printed by Sims and present in about three-quarters of the edition's extant copies.⁴⁴ As for the size of Sims' print run, we will never have a precise figure, but we can nonetheless make a plausible estimate based on the number of surviving exemplars and on the fact that Blount was the book's publisher, as he was two decades later with Shakespeare's First Folio.⁴⁵ The best current guess as to the Folio's print run is roughly 750 copies, of which 232 are known to be extant.⁴⁶ If more than two-thirds of the copies of such an impressive book have vanished over the course of four centuries, I suspect that the vanishing ratio with Florio's Montaigne is at least as high, if not higher. And while I cannot say how many privately-owned copies of the 1603 Florio still exist, I know of 110 exemplars in institutional collections, and I very much doubt that the number in private hands is greater than half that figure. I would thus estimate that Blount asked Sims to produce a run of about five hundred copies of Florio's volume. If this is so, and if I may venture an extrapolation based upon the more than four thousand one hundred early annotations I have discovered in extant first editions, there may originally have been upwards of eighteen thousand marginal notes inscribed by seventeenth-century readers in the 1603 *Essayes*—and more than thirty-three thousand in all three editions combined.⁴⁷ This is a book that was widely and enthusiastically read.

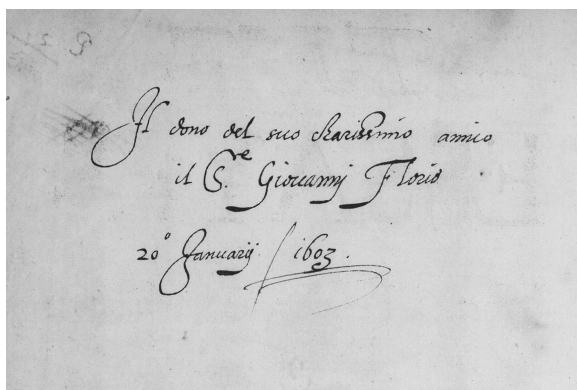


Figure 5. *Essayes* (London, 1603), Huntington Library (HL 61889), front fly-leaf. Reproduced by permission of the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

at all, have neverthelesse mutuall commerce, and enterchangeable communication, whereof if we be not partakers, it is onely our fault; and therefore doe we fondly to censure it, Many holde opinion, that in the last and famous sea-fight, which *Antonie* lost against *Augustus*, his Admirall-gallie was in her course staied by that little fish, the Latines call *Remora*, and the English a Sucke-stone, whose propertie is, to stay any ship he can fasten himselfe vnto. And the Emperour *Caligula*, sailing with a great flecte along the coast of *Romania*, his owne gally was sodainly staied by such a fish, which he caused to be taken sticking fast to the keele, moodily raging, that so little a creature had the power to force both sea and windes, and the violence of all his oares, onely with her bill sticking to his gallie (for it is a kind of shel-fish) and was much more amazed when he perceived the fish, being brought aboard his ship, to have no longer that powerfull vertue, which it had, being in the Sea. A certaine citizen of *Cyzique*, whilom purchased vnto himselfe the reputation to be an excellent Mathematician, because he had learn't the qualitie of the hedge-hogge, whose propertie is to build his hole or denne, open diverse wayes, and toward severall windes, and fore-seeing rising storms, he presently stoppeth the holes that way; which thing the foresaide citizen heedfully observing, would in the Cittie foretell any future storme, and what winde should blowe. The Cameleon taketh the colour of the place wherein hee is. The fish called a Pourcontrell, or Many-seete, changeth himselfe into what colour he list, as occasion offereth it selfe; that so he may hide himselfe from what he feareth, and catch what he seeketh-for. In the Cameleon it is a change proceeding of passion, but in the Pourcontrell a change in action; we our selves do often change our colour, & alter our countenance, through sodaine feare, choler, shame and such like violent passions, which are wont to alter the hew of our faces; but it is by the effect of sufferance, as in the Cameleon. The jandise hath power to make vs yellow, but it is not in the disposition of our willes. The effects we perceive in other creatures, greater than ours, witnesse some more excellent facultie in them, which is concealed from vs; as it is to be supposed, diverse others of their conditions and forces are, whereof no apparence or knowledge commeth to vs. Of all former praedictions, the ancientest and most certaine were such as were drawne from the flight of birds: we have nothing equall vnto it, nor so admirable. The rule of fluttering, and order of shaking their wings, by which they conjecture the consequences of things to ensue, must necessarily be directed to so noble an operation by some excellent and supernaturall meane: For, it is a wrestling of the letter, to attribute so wondrous effects, to any naturall decree, without the knowlege, consent, or discourse of him, that causeth & produceth them, & is a most false opinion: Which to prove, the Torpedo or Cramp-fish hath the property to benumme & astonish, not only the limbs of those that touch it, but also theirs, that with any long pole or fishing line touch any part thereof, she doth transmit and convey a kind of heave-numming into the handes of those that sturre or handle the same: Moreover, it is averred, that if any matter be cast vpon them, the astonish-
 30 Now they also produce other effects that greaetly exceede our capacitie, which we are so farr from reaching unto by imitation, that we can not so much as conceive them by imagination.

Figure 6. *Essays* (London, 1603), Huntington Library (HL 61889), p. 270. Reproduced by permission of the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

I have mentioned that large-scale assessments of Montaigne's basic endeavour appear with some regularity among these annotations. Evaluative summaries are also common. Some of these are sharply focused and circumscribed, as with claims that Montaigne has provided 'an excellent description of university pedants', 'strange stories of fishes', 'A pleasant story of the Emmets', or 'a remarkable passage of a Juglers dog'.⁴⁸ Some are more expansive, resonating with topics of contemporary political or

military interest. The chapter '*Of Coaches*', for instance, is described by one reader as offering 'An excellent exampl[e] against innovation' in its discussion of the Hungarians' use of war chariots.⁴⁹ A separate reader, Robert Gray, finds that 'the actions of princes [are] enqyred into a litle severelie' when Montaigne endorses the custom that deceased rulers' lives be carefully scrutinized.⁵⁰ George Wilson goes to the extent of offering a systematic, point-by-point analysis of hundreds of Montaignian claims, and Abiel Borfet summarizes almost every chapter in the book, his comments betraying shifting attitudes toward the opinions and prose style of Montaigne.⁵¹ Here is his synopsis of the lengthy chapter '*Of Vanitie*':

The great scribling in the Authors time, tho' a time of troubles. . . Prosperity, not adversity made him better. His Love of change and travailes, were it only to get out of his wicked country, which is next discribed. Then he rambles into a good discourse of Policy and forms of gov. and against innovation therein. . . And how his house escaped the civill warrs. His aversness to come under the obligation of kindness. And the ease he finds in being disoblighd by injury. Then to his love of Travailing, again. And how desirable to dy at distance from friends. Of choice in the forms of dying.⁵²

Borfet's verb 'rambles' conveys his good-natured tolerance of the unpredictable movement of Montaignian thought, but his close attention to the essayist's discomfort with interpersonal obligation quite possibly suggests unfavourable judgement thereof. If so, Borfet is not alone in his occasional displeasure. The chapter '*Upon some verses of Virgill*' unsurprisingly draws a good deal of hostile (if prurient) commentary, one reader alleging that Montaigne is 'A nasty raschal to write such things in a book'.⁵³ But a much larger number of English readers consistently volunteer positive evaluations of specific passages within the *Essayes*, often focusing on extracts that have drawn the attention of later students as well. If we turn again to '*Of Coaches*', we find a sombre précis of the essay's final pages in one heavily-annotated copy of the book: 'divers memorable passages of the courage constancy pompe and magnificence of the Kings of Peru & Mexico. And the unheard of cruelty of the Spaniard towards them & their subject in their conquest of India'.⁵⁴

One topic that never fails to strike early readers is Montaigne's endless willingness to write about the person he knows best. Some show scant patience for this tendency, construing it as a sign of intolerable vanity:

If the Author hath found vaine-glory in Cicero or Plinie, hee hath bene so excellent a proficient in it, that, if Cicero or Plinie were again alive they might learne it of him, who therein hath out-strip them both as much as a mountaine is bigger then a mole-hill.⁵⁵

Still, most annotators take little or no offense. "The Authors defence of his speaking so much of himself" stands out as a representative instance of objective and unruffled summary, and when coupled with such observations as 'his own imbecilityes' and 'disesteeme of him selfe' tends to mitigate any sense that Montaigne comes across primarily as narcissistic and self-absorbed.⁵⁶ His habit, rather, of scrutinizing his own active consciousness impresses many readers as fundamental to the character of his book. Pondering Montaigne's famous account of being violently thrown from his horse (in '*Of exercise or practise*'), one such individual claims that this is 'a discourse of the authoure prouinge by his owne experience, that there is but litle payne in death'.⁵⁷ No doubt 'prouinge' is somewhat tendentious with respect to Montaigne's reflective commentary, but this reader nonetheless recognizes that perception and experience are integral to the essayist's compositional practice—and thus to the *Essays* as the printed manifestation of a new discursive form. Another reader writes 'triall' in the margin next to 'Essay' in the main text, perhaps merely offering a more literal rendition of the original French, or perhaps reinforcing for himself the provisional nature of Montaignian prose.⁵⁸ In any case, a substantial portion of early readers find Montaigne's meandering, non-dogmatic style largely endearing as an authorial trait—and no one more so than Borfet, who marvels that the essayist is 'so extravagant in his notions' and responds in the following fashion to Montaigne's comment that 'all matters are linked one to another' (F526; M919): 'It seems so: for when the Author began this (and many another) chapter, who could have imagined what he would come to before the end of it?'⁵⁹

Bemused or qualified praise is thus a prevalent attitude among Montaigne's English readers. In one of many cases, for example, where Florio's table of contents is enlarged through annotation, we find that the title '*Of Coaches*' is augmented with the words '& other fine digressions'.⁶⁰ A sense of the valuably digressive nature of Montaignian rumination indeed attracts frequent comment, although this can be accompanied, at times, by traces of irritation. Borfet grumbles that 'The title of any chapter shews not what is contained in it, which the Author confesseth and accounteth for, pag. 595'; elsewhere he adds that 'this is all I can find in this whole chapter agreeing to the title of it, which was this inscribed, viz. Of vanity'.⁶¹ By and large, however, readers express regular admiration for unfamiliar views yielded by the unexpected directions that essays often take. When Montaigne speculates in the '*Apologie of Raymond Sebond*' that the faculties of hearing and speaking are 'fastned together' by 'a naturall kinde of ligament or seame' (F264; M481), one reader writes as follows: 'why men borne deafe cannot speake—new opinion'.⁶² And comments such as 'woorthe y^e noate', 'Excellent', 'mark this', 'Choise', 'no doubt',

'Amen', 'note well', 'Sublime', 'how fine!', and 'heare heare ye' are entirely routine.⁶³ Sometimes such sentiments are couched in broader terms: the chapter '*Of Vanitie*' is described by a reader named William Harrison as 'woorth the y^e readinge'; '*Of Experience*' contains 'Good advise for youth'; and '*Of the Arte of conferring*' is 'a praeexcellēt chapter'.⁶⁴ At all events it is clear that the negative innuendo embedded in a remark such as 'This chapter doth but argue sundrie propositions pro et con' tends ultimately to be dispelled by the sense that Montaigne moves beyond rhetorical patterns of *disputatio in utramque partem*, passing instead to scattered observations of striking insight and originality.⁶⁵

Like Borfet, most readers of the *Essayes* note that chapter titles often bear little relation to chapter content—and indeed this is scarcely surprising, given the digressive quality of Montaignian prose and the explicit claim that all subjects are 'linked' (F526; M919). But in certain extreme instances of this tendency—and notoriously within '*Of the resemblance between children & fathers*' and '*Upon some verses of Virgill*'—early readers take it upon themselves to clarify the central topics under discussion. Thus, in the former case, we encounter repeated notes alerting us to the fact that this chapter treats 'Physick & Physicians o^{ur} author's contemptible opinion of 'em', that it is 'a discourse against the use of physicke', and that it is a treatise 'contra medicum' wherein we see 'Phisick condemnd' and 'phisikes fet[ters]' exposed.⁶⁶ At times these readers re-title the chapter altogether, as in a copy of 1632 where we find the inscription 'or Railing against Physicians'.⁶⁷ The same habit is evident with '*Of Experience*' ('against Lawiers & their profession'), '*A Custome of the Ile of Cea*' ('of a voluntary death', 'in murdering yourselves'), '*Of the Arte of conferring*' ('or disputing') and, above all, '*Upon some verses of Virgill*', which is variously rechristened as 'His Chapter for the Ladies', 'of love & women', and, with brutal economy, 'copulation'.⁶⁸ Re-titling, in fact, amounts to one of several key tactics by which early readers nudge this book toward richer completion and greater utility. Other such tactics—several of which I discuss below—include the preparation of indexes, the glossing of unfamiliar words, the development of alternate translations, and the provision of citations, corrections, identifications, scraps of relevant poetry, internal cross-references, and allusions to miscellaneous books and writers.⁶⁹ Of course the majority of these annotative forms are hardly unique to Florio's Montaigne: like manicules, asterisks, crosses, checks, ticks, and trefoils, they constitute part of the standard vocabulary of book-marking in early modern England. But there is nonetheless a sense within the *Essayes*—perhaps a slightly heightened sense by comparison with other contemporary publications—that readerly annotation is undertaken not only for the benefit of particular individuals but as part of a larger project in which

a worthy but flawed book is subjected to a process of painstaking, incremental perfection.

Consider, for instance, the tendency among many readers to find fault with Florio's translation and to offer corrections or new renditions of French and Latin passages. Marginal comments such as 'Ill translated', 'not in the Original', and 'the syntaxe is fallacious' appear with great regularity in copies of the *Essayes*, and some readers respond with surprising vehemence to what they perceive as egregious errors on the part of either Florio or Sims.⁷⁰ An outburst by Borfet is representative: 'This is not the first piece, from the beginning of the Book, of incorrigible non-sense. Thank the printer, or translator.'⁷¹ Florio's euphuistic doubling also gets him into trouble, for example when he renders Montaigne's 'badins excellens' (M433) as 'excellent Lourdans, or Clownes' (F238), a choice which elicits the following reprimand: 'The Author is wronge interpreted in this worde, it beinge a scorne cast uppon the insultinge Danes, callinge them Lorde Danes after they were expelled'.⁷² Predictably, only a small number of English readers are sufficiently fluent in French (and simultaneously possessed of French editions of the *Essais*) that they feel inclined to make extensive comparisons between Florio and the Montaignian texts upon which he relies, but when this occurs we are granted a glimpse of early modern philological practice. Where Florio, for instance, writes that women '*love to be where they are most wronged*' (F230; M417), one rather scholarly reader underlines '*wronged*' and then supplies the French text accompanied by a much improved translation: 'Fr. elles s'aiment le mieux ou elles ont plus de tort. They like y^mselves best wⁿ most blameable'.⁷³ Borfet attempts to do the same thing, but with less impressive results. Montaigne famously asserts that 'Je me cultive et en courage, qui est le plus fort: et encores en fortune' (M1013); Florio translates this as 'I manure my selfe, both in courage (which is the stronger) and also in fortune' (F579). But Borfet changes 'manure' to 'manner', furnishing clear evidence that he has misunderstood Florio's rather literal version of the Montaignian original.⁷⁴ Still, blunders of this sort are far less common than well-intentioned, accurate corrections, and some readers even volunteer new translations of poetic extracts included by Montaigne. A Latin couplet from Lucretius, for example, which appears in Florio as 'What ever from it's bounds doth changed passe, | That strait is death of that, which erst it was' (F46; M110), undergoes modest renovation when one reader re-translates it as follows: 'Whatever from its bounds hath wanderd ore | That straight is death of that which was before'.⁷⁵ And Martial's epigram on the suicide of the Roman matron Arria (F428; M784) is transformed from loose hexameter lines to a tight pentameter quatrain. Here is its rendition in Florio: