

# Censors and Censure: Robert Estienne and Michel de Montaigne

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«[L]es meschans, lesquels m'ayans furieusement persecute en presence, me deschirent maintenant en mon absence par calomnies insupportables».<sup>1</sup> This is the way the great humanist printer Robert Estienne described, from his refuge in Geneva in 1552, his persecution —to use his term— at the hands of the censors of the Faculty of Theology in Paris. In his apology, published first in Latin and then in his own French translation in 1552, Estienne gave a thorough account of the development of his encounter with the Faculty's censors and the invested, conflicting interests of Church, Crown and Parlement that the episode revealed.<sup>2</sup> From a very different position, thirty years later, Montaigne noted his submission to the Roman Congregation for the Index in these terms: «Esgalement m'en sera acceptable & utile la condamnation, comme l'approbation».<sup>3</sup> Montaigne, confirming his fidelity to the «Eglise Catholique Apostolique & Romaine, en laquelle je meurs, & en laquelle je suis nay», affirms simultaneously his desire for criticism as well as praise from the institution that is capable of judging both his writings and his actions.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, I will explore the intersection between Estienne's «calomnies insupportables», Montaigne's «condemnation [et] approbation», and cen-

1. Many thanks are due here to Julian Weiss, whose conversation greatly enriched this paper, and to Fabio Raimondi, interpreter of the Roman censors' Italian. Estienne (1552a: 2<sup>v</sup>).

2. See Armstrong (1954).

3. Montaigne (2003: 155). The phrase comes from a passage Montaigne added to the 1582

edition of his *Essais*, the year after his encounter with the Roman censors.

4. The declaration of faith comes in a post-1588 addition; I quote it from the first posthumous edition of 1595, but the same formulation occurs in Montaigne's manuscript additions of the «Bordeaux Copy». Montaigne (2003: 187), (for the Bordeaux Copy, see 173).

ship, as they were practised and theorised in early modern France. This will be an investigation of the semantic and conceptual fields where the domains of censorship, slander and a more beneficial correction intersect, inspired by the semantic ambiguity and capaciousness of the French *censure*. As Emma Herdman has shown, sixteenth-century practices of censorship follow the word's double meaning: censure, or evaluation, and censorship, or suppression.<sup>5</sup> The Latin root (*censeo*) demonstrates that the preliminary judgement is not necessarily a negative one, and Robert Estienne's 1531 Latin-French dictionary illustrates the wide semantic range of the Latin term. Published before he came into conflict with the censors of the Sorbonne, the dictionary draws its first examples of censure as judgement from a source that emphasises the unreliability of that judgement: Plautus's play of illusion and disguise, *Amphitryon*. The first two quotations from this play draw attention to the fallibility of human opinion when things are not what they seem, and the third is explicit on erroneous and subjective judgement: «CENSEO [...], Iuger ou estimer en soy mesme. [...] At illa illum censet virum suum esse quæ cum mœcho est, Elle estime que cest son mari».<sup>6</sup> As Herdman has pointed out, Estienne's French translation of his Latin example is itself censored: a full translation would read, «she all the time thinking him her husband, when she is [with an adulterer]».<sup>7</sup> Here, in the Prologue to the play, Mercury reveals to the audience the extent of the delusion: Alcmena is mistaken in her judgement that she is with her husband, who in fact is Jupiter in disguise. *Censeo* is thus by no means an infallible judgement, and even the Roman censors' decisions (in a further entry) are not above criticism. For «Censoria animaduersionis», Estienne quotes a passage in Cicero's *Pro Cluentio* that seeks to mitigate the importance of the censorship's judgements in a specific case of special pleading: «Sequitur id quod illi iudicium appellant. maiores autem nostri nunquam neque iudicium nominauerunt, neque perinde vt rem iudica tam obseruauerunt, animaduersionem atque auctoritatem censoriam» («Next comes what my opponents term a judicial proceeding, though our forefathers never gave it that name, nor did they respect it as such —namely, the imposition by the censors of their official stigma»)<sup>8</sup> Cicero, excerpted by Estienne, clearly distinguishes the judgement of the censors from a more serious judicial trial; and elsewhere in his defence of Cluentius, he points out that the recommendations of the censorship were sometimes annulled, and that in this particular case the censors had disagreed with each other, listened to rumour, and courted popular-

5. Herdman, forthcoming. I owe my title and the references to unreliable censure in Estienne's dictionary to this brilliant piece; many thanks to Dr Herdman for sending me her work.

6. Estienne (1531: 95').

7. Plautus (1912: 14-15, ll. 134-135); I have

adapted Nixon's translation. Estienne's first two references to the *Amphitryon* are I. 1. 279-280, and II. 2. 693-694.

8. Estienne (1531: 96'). Cicero (1943: XLIII, 117, 344-345). On Cicero's attitude to the censorship, see Astin (1985).

ity with their animadversion (*Pro Cluentio*, 117-134). The quotation Estienne chooses is in fact a rather untypical example from Cicero, usually complimentary to an office for which he once considered putting himself forward.

Sixteenth-century French *censure* —or at least Randle Cotgrave's interpretation of it— already encompassed both senses: judgement and repression or punishment. His translation, in his 1611 French-English dictionary, is explicit: «Censure [...] *reprehension (that includes a punishment)*». Moreover, the verbal form contains within it the weight of its own legitimacy and authority: «Censurer [...] *reproue with authority*».<sup>9</sup> At the end of the seventeenth century, when the first great French dictionaries emerged, *censure* had become exclusively condemnatory and meant censorship, correction, judgement, or slander: balanced between legitimate and illegitimate judgement, and between official and unofficial criticism. Furetière's 1690 *Dictionnaire universel* defines *censure* as, firstly, a «jugement par lequel on condamne quelque action» (including «un jugement que fait un Critique de quelque livre où il trouve quelques fautes» —the example is François Ogier's criticism of the Père Garasse), then «la correction ou reprimende que fait un superieur, ou le public». The definition encompasses both a particular, directed criticism made by an individual (here, of a text) and a more generalised, public reprimand. This semantic range is exacerbated in Furetière's second definition of *censurer*: «Critiquer, reprendre. Cet Auteur ne s'occupe qu'à *censurer* les ouvrages d'autrui. cette femme est médisante, & *censure* les actions de ses voisins». Here we glimpse an unofficial censor, in the figures of the indiscriminately critical writer and the female gossip who discusses, reproves, and slanders her neighbours. The 1694 dictionary of the Académie française and Richelet's 1680 *Dictionnaire françois* both describe a similar semantic spectrum —with the Académie's dictionary remarking that, in the case of *censeur*, «sans epithete il se prend d'ordinaire en mauvaise part». These are, of course, definitions that date from 130 years after Estienne's apology; perhaps by 1694 polemical defences such as Estienne's had succeeded in yoking censorship and slander together in the collective imagination. But the illegitimate and slanderous censor was not an unfamiliar figure in the sixteenth century. Indeed, the epithets that Maurice de la Porte collects for *censeur* in his 1571 dictionary of connotations include, alongside more neutral adjectives such as «rigoureux» and «graue», the condemnatory «odieux», «rude», and «rebarbatif».<sup>10</sup>

Annabel Patterson argued more than twenty years ago that patterns of censorship in early modern England were responsible for the elaboration of the modern sense of literature: a type of creative writing that celebrates ambiguity as a means of protecting the author from prosecution.<sup>11</sup> She considers that the

9. Cotgrave (1950).

10. La Porte (1612: 70).

11. Patterson (1984).

early modern reflection on censorship was also a reflection on the relationship between author and reader which raised questions about the role of interpretation within (and, of course, outside) the literary text. An awareness of the utility of coded, indirect language is obvious in the classical rhetoricians: Quintilian, for example, advises that «If this danger [openly criticising a tyrant] can be eluded by an ambiguous remark, everybody is in favour of the trick».<sup>12</sup> Patterson's model of censorship has been criticised more recently by M. Lindsay Kaplan, who proposes that an investigation of the mechanisms of slander would provide a more nuanced and accurate grid through which to interpret the period, since it allows for a certain resistance or control of censorship by the poet or writing subject.<sup>13</sup> Estienne's text will demonstrate the rhetorical intersection of the two terms, censorship and slander, through his emphasis on the oppressive actions of the censors.

If Estienne's treatment of censorship emphasises its punitive side, a more beneficial discriminating aspect emerges from Montaigne's account of his experience of censorship. This aspect perhaps finds an echo in Furetière's entry for «censeur», a critic «sans passion» who makes a disinterested examination of a text: «j'ay prié mon ami d'examiner cette piece en severe *censeur*». Throughout what follows, the double meaning of *censure* —judgement and punishment— will provide a lens through which to read Estienne's and Montaigne's representations of censorship.

## Censorship and Slander: Estienne from Geneva

Robert Estienne, the King's printer, attracted the unwelcome attention of the Faculty of Theology for the translated and annotated Bibles, and the broadsheets and pamphlets that reproduced some annotations, that he printed and sold in his shop in the rue Saint-Jean-de-Beauvais, a stone's throw from the Sorbonne.<sup>14</sup> He describes the protracted controversy in detail in his preface to the reader, before making refutations of the individual «censures» or judgements that the Faculty of Theology eventually made against his annotations. Book censorship was a complex affair in sixteenth-century France, and reflects to a certain extent the double meaning of *censure*: while the Sorbonne passed theological judgement (*censure*) on works, it had no legal authority to act on that judgement: punitive sanctions, such as the destruction of the book or the execution of the author (censorship) were the domain of the courts (ecclesiastical or civil). Francis Higman identifies five institutions that shared the responsibility for book

12. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, IX. 2. 67.

13. Kaplan (1997).

14. See Higman (1979: 92-93), on the broadsheets and pamphlets that were censored in 1542.

censorship in the period, including the Sorbonne, the ecclesiastical courts, the Parlement, and the royal councils.<sup>15</sup> As King's printer, Estienne enjoyed royal protection, and François I in particular was keen to support his printer against the demands of the Faculty, approving his suggested solution of printing a list of the censures (if the Faculty would make one) in the Bibles themselves so that readers could beware of any suspect material. Initially, Henri II continued his father's supportive policy. Estienne finally seems to have fallen victim to a combination of the enmity of the Constable of France, the duc de Montmorency, and unfortunate political circumstance, with a south-western rebellion against taxation in August 1548 possibly discouraging leniency towards any possible subversion. While the Sorbonne, with the support of Montmorency, lobbied to bring the case to the *Chambre ardente*, the notorious special court for heresy established in October 1547 (and whose name came from the number of victims it sent to the stake), Estienne was still hopeful that his case would be heard in the King's *conseil privé*, away from the malign influence of the Faculty (and, indeed, the conservative *parlement*). Henri II finally approved the condemnation of the Estienne Bibles on 25 November 1548, with no obligation on the Faculty to produce a list of their censures; Estienne seems nevertheless to have had royal protection from any repercussions, as he remained in Paris for another two years, before applying (on 13 November 1550) for permission to live in Geneva.<sup>16</sup> His defence, then, was written while Estienne was living in Geneva as an avowed Protestant, writing both for readers who shared his faith and for his former friends and acquaintances left behind in Paris.

Estienne reiterates his demand throughout his preface that the Sorbonne produce a list of their censures, so that he can print them in his Bibles as errata. The question of reading and interpreting the Bibles thus exercises both the Faculty and the printer. In a report of the Congregation of the Sorbonne held on 19 October 1547, where the Bibles were formally condemned, and which is reproduced in full in Estienne's text, the Faculty explains that they have given details of a number of their censures «a fin que le Lecteur Chrestien sen donne diligemment garde».<sup>17</sup> Estienne does not ask for anything more: his book is written under the motto, «*Que les Lecteurs soient iuges par la veue des choses*» (66<sup>v</sup>). In the 1547 report, the Sorbonne condemn the Bibles for things «contre les bonnes meurs, contre la piete de la religion» and that «fauorisent aux Lutheriens» (65<sup>r-v</sup>). In particular, Estienne's modifications of the Vulgate text are rejected, in the name of an official, sanctioned reading that has been illicitly subverted by an individual: «plusieurs choses adioustees outre la vraye lecture qui a este iusques a present receue en l'Eglise: ce qui n'est licite de faire a

15. Higman (1979: 15-22).

16. This paragraph is indebted to Armstrong (1954: 165-207).

17. Estienne (1552a: 65<sup>r</sup>). The verbatim text in Latin is reproduced in Estienne's Latin version of his response, (1552b: 106-107).

nulle personne priuee, ne de le mettre en public, & ne doit estre aucunement permis» (65<sup>v</sup>). The Sorbonne guards its privilege of interpretation here, but also a certain institutional authority over individual initiative: the terms of the Reformation debate could not be clearer. In his response to the report, Estienne does indeed lay claim to the «vraye lecture» that he has carefully reconstructed through studying manuscripts in Greek and Hebrew as a service to the Church (67<sup>r</sup>). On one level, then, this is a quarrel over legitimate readings and who is authorised to give them, and Estienne will frequently appeal to his readers to judge his case and mark points for the defence.

From his exile in Geneva, Estienne describes his persecutors at the Sorbonne in uncompromising terms. They are bloodsuckers, leeches on the unfortunate who must rely on them for their salvation (1<sup>v</sup>); the Sorbonne is a «synagogue Pharisaique» (3<sup>r</sup>); its theologians are devilish enchanters who obscure and seduce the understanding of the faithful (4<sup>r</sup>). The transformation of Sorbonne theologians into Jewish Pharisees perhaps echoes the latter figure's metaphorical charge as a bad reader: one unable to distinguish spirit from letter, or inner meaning from outer shell.<sup>18</sup> The Sorbonne succeeds in influencing its *deputez*, or official readers, who in fear of excommunication approve its judgements: «il aduient que leurs resolutions & decrets, quelques iniustes & barbares qu'ils soyent, sont approuvez sans difficulte par toute la troupe qui ne scait que c'est: ioinct auſi que plusieurs ne font nulle doubtte de soubſcrire contre leur propre conscience, de paour qu'ils ne soyent mis hors de la synagogue» (7<sup>r</sup>). Estienne's dismissal of the Faculty's official readers centres on his perception of their inability to give a disinterested, neutral reading.

The Sorbonne's ability to persuade (or to intimidate) others is central in Estienne's apology. It is not only the *deputez*, but a more vague and general «public» that is swayed by the theologians' sermons and «murmures», and it is precisely the public nature of the correction administered by the theologians of the Sorbonne that Estienne complains most bitterly about. The rules of fraternal correction, of which censure could be seen as a branch, forbade an impetuous, public correction that would approximate malicious slander rather than the charitable correction that is the ideal. For Aquinas, and for authors of confessors' case books such as Pierre Milhard and M. B. Bertaut, a public denunciation springs from pride and hatred, not charity, and, as defamation, is a mortal sin.<sup>19</sup> Recalling a campaign against him in 1541, Estienne remarks: «aucuns d'entre eulx cryoyent en chaire bien impudemment, sans m'espargner, ne celer mon nom, que i'auoye imprime des annotations bien dangereuses» (8<sup>r</sup>).

18. On the patristic and medieval history of the Jew as a bad reader and misuser of language, see Nirenberg (2006).

19. Bertaut (1613: 202); Milhard (1610: 359). See Matthew 18: 15-17; and Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II. 2. 33.

The public denunciation of a well-known public figure from the pulpit is here portrayed as illegitimate, «impudent», because it lacks the charity of true fraternal correction. The result, as Estienne sees it, is severe damage to his reputation and professional credit: «on a seme diuers propos de moy: a grand peine sen trouuoit il de dix l'vng qui ne feist vng iugement de moy bien odieux» (2<sup>v</sup>). Estienne finds his public reputation destroyed by the contagious condemnation of the Sorbonne as it spreads from the confines of the University to the Parisian public. What Estienne returns to repeatedly in this preface is the danger to the individual of public opinion, which often seems to outweigh the danger of the stake. Though this danger was real (Etienne Dolet had been burnt alive on the place Maubert in 1546, and the *Chambre ardente* issued about 60 death sentences in the two years 1547-1549), Estienne's imagery echoes his deep suspicion of rumour: «quelle offence auoye ie faicte, pour me persecuter iusques au feu, quand les grandes flammes furent par eulx allumees, tellement que tout estoit embrase en notre ville l'An M.D.XXXII» (4<sup>v</sup>). The image of the pyre here slips to encompass a suggestion of rumour and censure spreading like wildfire.

The Sorbonne's use of rumour and defamation recurs in other descriptions of book control. When another editor and bookseller, the militant Catholic Sébastien Nivelles, showed a pamphlet approving Catherine de Medici's foreign policy printed for Jacques Faye to a theologian in his bookshop sometime after 1570, he was warned in no uncertain terms against publicising it in any way: «la Faculté de Theologie luy iroyt fayre un scandalle en sa mayson, qui le decrieroyt tout le temps de sa vie pour Huguenot; et que ny le Roy ny ceulx du Parlement ne le garentiroyent de ce scandalle, pour ce que c'est à la Faculté de Théologie seule à censurer les livres».<sup>20</sup> Nivelles's theologian here insists on the Sorbonne's exclusive authority in book censorship, an authority that Estienne challenges in his preface in favour of the bishops and ecclesiastical courts.<sup>21</sup> And indeed, there may be a tacit recognition of the limits of the Sorbonne's authority in its weapon of choice: *scandalle*. What is threatened, for the unorthodox, the heterodox, or the heretical, is perpetual disgrace. The Sorbonne's censure appears polyvalent here: it encompasses the threat of scandal and the mustering of public opinion (readers' opinions) against a writer (or printer, or bookseller, or, indeed, reader, since all were covered by the censorship *ordonnances* in this period); the scandal itself and the concomitant, irreparable loss of fame and reputation; and the expectation of the Sorbonne that writers and printers will consequently practise self-censorship. Sébastien Nivelles is warned by his theologian that, «sur sa vie, il se gardast de fayre sortir ce livre de sa boutique et de le publier, quelque permission du Roy ou du Parlement qu'il eust»; indeed, he should be wary of

20. Faye (1880: 23), (undated letter, after 1570). Quoted in Pallier (1982: I, 328).

21. Estienne (1552a: 6<sup>v</sup>); Higman (1979: 17).

playing any role in the dissemination of the book, «mesmes qu'il se gardast bien de le distribuer à des porte paniers pour le vendre, voyre qu'ilz teussent son nom». <sup>22</sup> Nivelles's theologian warns him that wherever the book is found, it will be traced back to him («le premier homme qui se trouveroyt saysy de ce livre, on s'enquerroyt de luy où il lauroyt prins»), calling up an image of the distributing and reading public as a network of potential traitors who will inevitably reveal the printer's name. In an attempt to counter the threat of the rapid dissemination of printed matter, the theologian re-describes the distribution networks and the community of readers as a network of informers.

Robert Estienne also commends himself to a community of readers, but these are readers already endowed with a freedom of opinion and interpretation—those reformed readers «qui cherchent en verite le Sauueur Iesus Christ». <sup>23</sup> The rhetorical address of much of the apology leaves little room for disagreement: «Que le lecteur equitable & moderé, soit juge comment ces ventres yci sont pleins de vent, lesquels ne font que veſſir & souffler force heresies» (28<sup>v</sup>). This loaded appeal to the reader is recurrent in polemical and defensive writing throughout the period. <sup>24</sup> But a direct address to readers is not always so polemical and partisan. If, for Estienne, the invitation to the reader is an attempt to capture their goodwill, to invite agreement and support, in a forensic setting where he risks the sanction of the state, for Montaigne it is rather a request for correction, for the judgement (or *censure*) of peers. In no small way, Montaigne's appeals to his reader—just like Estienne's—serve to create the very reader they address.

## Censorship and Correction: Montaigne in Rome

Montaigne's experience of official censorship in Rome, at the hands of the Congregation for the Index, was a very different one. Though the story is well known, it is worth recapitulating here for what it tells us of Montaigne's brush with censorship and, more importantly perhaps, his account of it. <sup>25</sup> Montaigne describes his first encounter, on 20 March 1581, with the Roman censor Sisto Fabri and his assistant Giovanni Battista Lanci in the *Journal de voyage*:

Ce jour au soir me furent rendus mes *Essais*, chastiés selon l'opinion des docteurs moines. Le *Maestro del Sacro Palazzo* n'en avoit peu juger que par le rapport d'aucun *Frater* François, n'entendant nullement nostre langue; et se contentoit tant des excuses que je faisois sur chaque article d'animadversion que luy avoit laissé ce

**22.** Another early modern meaning of *censure* was precisely the *threat* of punishment as well as the forfeit itself, particularly excommunication: Furetière (1690).

**23.** Estienne (1552a: 2').

**24.** For an example of polemical persuasion, see the chapter on Jean-Pierre Camus in Butterworth (2006: 76-90).

**25.** See Smith (1981); and Armogathe and Carraud (2007).



François, qu'il remit à ma conscience de rhabiller ce que je verrois estre de mauvais goust. Je le suppliy, au rebours, qu'il suivist l'opinion de celuy qui l'avoit jugé...<sup>26</sup>

There follows a second interview before Montaigne leaves Rome:

Le 15 Avril, je fus prendre congé du maistre *del Sacro Palazzo* et de son compaignon, qui me prierent de ne me servir point de la censure de mon livre, en laquelle autres François les avoient avertis qu'il y avoit plusieurs sottises; qu'ils honoroient et mon intention et affection envers l'Eglise et ma suffisance, et estimoient tant de ma franchise et conscience qu'ils remettoient à moy-mesme de retrancher en mon livre, quand je le voudrois reimprimer, ce que j'y trouvois trop licencieux et, entre autres choses, les mots de *Fortune*. Il me sembla les laisser fort contens de moy. Et pour s'excuser de ce qu'ils avoient ainsi curieusement veu mon livre et condamné en quelques choses, m'alleguerent plusieurs livres de nostre temps de Cardinaux et Religieux de très-bonne reputation, censurés pour quelques telles imperfections, qui ne touchoient nullement la reputation de l'auteur ny de l'œuvre en gros; me prierent d'aider à l'Eglise par mon eloquence (ce sont leurs mots de courtoisie), et de faire demeure en cette ville paisible et hors de trouble avec eux. Ce sont personnes de grande autorité et cardinalables.<sup>27</sup>

Montaigne's account of his encounter with the Roman censors depicts a rather indulgent Sisto Fabri, somewhat embarrassed by the shortcomings of his readers (he apologises for their «sottises»), and who, unable to read the French text of the *Essais* himself, leaves any amendments up to the «franchise» of the author. In the first interview, Montaigne even has to take up his own prosecution («Je le suppliy, au rebours, qu'il suivist l'opinion de celuy qui l'avoit jugé»). At the second meeting, even the unfortunate fact of the condemnation itself is waved aside as immaterial to the reputation of the author. And yet, there is a hint of the ceremonial allure of the interviews, and the seriousness of the procedure in Montaigne's admission that «ce sont leurs mots de courtoisie».<sup>28</sup> Of course, Montaigne's experience in Rome was one of official censure: his book was subject to a judgement, not an opinion that could be debated; but the official judgement of the *maestro* fell short of censorship, if we take censorship to mean the subsequent suppression or modification of the text, since the details of that modification were left up to Montaigne.<sup>29</sup>

The censures —for there were two, from two readers, that were discussed at each interview— have recently been discovered in the archives of the Congregation for the Index and published by Peter Godman; Philippe Desan also reproduces them in a recent article.<sup>30</sup> The important discovery of these texts reveals a rather more rigorous examination than Montaigne's account would lead us to

26. Montaigne (1992: 119).

27. Montaigne (1992: 131).

28. Jean-Robert Armogathe and Vincent Carraud (2007: 83) talk of «le vêtement d'un entretien cordial» given to the censure.

29. See Legros's comments in Montaigne (2003: 56).

30. Godman (2000: 339-342) for the texts, and 45-47 for a discussion; Desan (2008: 175-200, texts 197-200).

believe: the first reader identifies eighteen points of censure in the *Essais*, revisited and modified by the second reader, who adds more of his own, including the concern over the frequency of the word *fortune*. The *Journal de voyage* does not distinguish between the two readings, suggesting that the second meeting was nothing other than a courtesy call before leaving Rome; in fact, it must have been an official reading of the second censure.<sup>31</sup> Godman, however, still sees in Montaigne's case a rather embarrassing failure for the Congregation for the Index: «If Montaigne's sarcasm at the expense of the thought-police of the Congregation for the Index is evident in the light of this episode, so too is his confidence in their incompetence».<sup>32</sup>

The discovery of the censures throws new light on the problem of reading Montaigne's *Essais* in the sixteenth century. Indeed, what the second censor worries about consistently is how certain passages of the *Essais* will be read: his report is full of concerns at how Montaigne's text might *seem* —«[il] pare laudare»; «se non si burla [...] al manco pare ch'il fa».<sup>33</sup> Specifically, and as Desan points out, the second censor wonders frequently whether Montaigne's irony will be understood or not (presumably, this was Montaigne's own defence at his first interview; manifestly, the first censor failed to grasp this aspect of the text). Two examples of undetected irony are identified by the second reader, without absolving Montaigne of responsibility. They are from the same passage of «Coustume de l'isle de Cea» (II, 3) where Montaigne discusses the enthusiasm for suicide of various cultures. The text of 1580 reads:

Pelagia et Sophronia toutes deux canonisées, celle la se precipita dans la riuiere avec sa mere et ses seurs pour euiuer la force de quelques soldats: et cete cy se tua aussi pour euiuer la force de Maxentius l'Empereur. Il nous sera a l'aduenture honorable aux siecles aduenir qu'vn bien sçauant auteur de ce temps & notamment Parisien se met en peine de persuader aux dames de nostre siecle de prendre plustost tout autre party, que d'entrer en l'horible conseil d'vn tel desespoir. Le suis marry qu'il n'a sceu pour mesler a ses contes le bon mot que i'apprins a Toulouse d'vne femme passée par les mains de quelques soldats. Dieu soit louë, disoit elle, qu'au moins vne fois en ma vie ie m'en suis soulée sans peché. A laverité ces cruauitez ne sont pas dignes de la douceur Françoisse. Aussi Dieu mercy nostre air s'en voit infiniment purgé depuis ce bon aduertissement. Suffit qu'elles dient nenny en le faisant suiuant la reigle du bon Marot.<sup>34</sup>

The first reader takes issue with the anecdote from Toulouse: «dice che basta alle donne quando sono richieste dire di non et lasciarsi violare».<sup>35</sup> The second reader acknowledges here what he calls «ironia burlandosi de Parigini», but refuses to annul the point: «per esser la cosa si brutta et la ironia si nascosta».<sup>36</sup>

31. See Desan (2008: 195).

32. Godman (2000: 47).

33. Articles 3 and 7, Godman (2000: 340).

34. Montaigne (1580: II, 31-32).

35. Article 4: Godman (2000: 339).

36. Article 4: Godman (2000: 340).

The fact that the irony is hidden («nascosta») exercises the second censor; correct reading requires too great a reliance on the uncertain perspicacity of the reader. In such a case, where the topic is distractingly unpleasant («brutto») and the authorial stance so dissembled, readers might well lose their way. The first reader also objects to the mention of Clément Marot at the end of the passage, suspecting «bon Marot» to signify approval of a heretic. Again, the second reader acknowledges the irony of the passage, but is reluctant nevertheless to endorse it: «Già dissi che luogo si puo piglare per ironia, ma non tutti il pigleranno cosi forse».<sup>37</sup> It is these unwary readers, the *indiligents lecteurs* unable to unearth Montaigne's irony in these most dangerous of places, that the second censor seeks to protect. Not all of Montaigne's readers will have the sophistication required to recognise his irony and read it in the appropriate way. Montaigne's disregard for this warning against irony perhaps surfaces in his journal entry for the second interview, and his judgement on Fabri and Lanci: «Ce sont personnes de grande autorité et cardinalables».

The fact that Montaigne patently ignores the condemnation of irony in later editions of his *Essais* is, for Desan, indicative of a change in circumstance: after 1585, Montaigne no longer had any of the political and ambassadorial ambitions evident during the 1581 sojourn in Rome.<sup>38</sup> These ambitions have an important bearing on Montaigne's attitude to Roman censorship. Warren Boutcher has described how Montaigne in Rome was, like Estienne in Geneva, careful of his political and moral credit. Just before his book received official recognition from Fabri, Montaigne himself was awarded the title of Roman citizen (conferred in a document dated 3 March, more than two weeks before his first interview with Fabri, although he only received it on 5 April).<sup>39</sup> He is at particular pains to insist in the *Journal de voyage* that he received Roman citizenship without the support of his fellow Frenchmen, denying the influence of his *familia*, or network of friends and powerful acquaintances: «J'y trouvoy de la difficulté; toutesfois je la surmontay, n'y ayant employé nulle faveur, voire ny la science seulement d'aucun François».<sup>40</sup> As Boutcher points out, Montaigne's travels throughout Germany and Italy provided plenty of opportunities for Montaigne to demonstrate his own personal credit and to gain access to the political and scholarly spaces that he encounters —his success in visiting even the private rooms of the Vatican Library perhaps his most spectacular.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, Montaigne's itinerary through Europe and his activities while in

37. Article 15: Godman (2000: 340). On these passages, see Desan (2008: 194).

38. Desan (2008: 196).

39. Boutcher (1995).

40. Montaigne (1992: 127). On the notion of the *familia* with specific reference

to Montaigne, see O'Brien and Desan (2001).

41. Montaigne (1992: 111-113), where he notes that the French Ambassador Louis Chasteigner had not enjoyed the same privilege (112). See Boutcher (1995: 185).

Rome demonstrate that the support and example of influential friends were indelible. Montaigne's routes followed those of Paul de Foix (later ambassador to Rome) and Henri II in the 1570s, and while in Rome he dined frequently with the current ambassador Louis Casteigner.<sup>42</sup> While Montaigne may well have misunderstood the seriousness of his interviews with Fabri, as Armogathe and Carraud maintain, his account of their meetings plays a major role in his self-presentation as straightforward and frank, in Boutcher's terms: the man who, as he writes later in «De la physionomie», escapes from armed gangs by virtue of his openness and *franchise*.<sup>43</sup> He uses precisely this keyword in the *Journal de voyage*, as he takes his leave of Fabri and Lanci, who trusted entirely to his «franchise et conscience».<sup>44</sup> As Montaigne depicts it in the *Journal de voyage*, his encounter with the Congregation for the Index was another success for the policy of naive openness that he will pursue to a greater extent in a later chapter in Book 3, «De l'art de conferer».

In «De l'art de conferer», Montaigne develops an idea of hermeneutic liberty and frankness with an emphasis on freedom of thought and speech. Other late-sixteenth-century writers share his (qualified) enthusiasm for the spirited and free exchange of views and criticism: Neil Kenny has explored the terms and limits of this debate in relation to the work of François Bérolalde de Verville.<sup>45</sup> For both authors, the readers that they are addressing are to a certain extent self-selecting: gentlemanly, well-informed, but not experts or professional philosophers. Montaigne describes this type sardonically as halfway between honourable ignorance and honourable learning: «Les mestis qui ont dedaigné le premier siege d'ignorance de lettres, et n'ont peu joindre l'autre (le cul entre deux selles, desquels je suis, et tant d'autres), sont dangereux, ineptes, importuns».<sup>46</sup> For this amateur type, mutual correction and criticism seem to have been crucial. Montaigne insists in «De l'art de conferer»: «Les contradictions donc des jugemens ne m'offencent ny m'alterent; elles m'esveillent seulement et m'exercent. Nous fuyons à la correction; il s'y faudroit presenter et produire».<sup>47</sup> Contradiction, opposition, correction—even insult («Tu es un sot, tu resves») — these adversarial tactics are ostensibly welcomed by the essayist in order to improve and prove himself, his opinions and his text. His discussion of scholarly dispute in «De l'art de conférer» originates in verbal discussions, which he says he prefers

42. See Boutcher (1995: 196).

43. Armogathe and Carraud (2007: 831); Boutcher (1995: 202). See 'De la physionomie', III, 12, on the aborted attempt to take the châteaueu Montaigne: «mon visage et ma franchise luy avoient arraché la trahison des poincts», Montaigne (2004: 1061b). References to the Villey-Saulnier edition of the *Essais* will indicate the first publication date of the passage: 1580

(a), 1588 (b), or additions after 1588 (c). Their edition follows the Bordeaux Copy rather than Marie de Gournay's edition of 1595.

44. Montaigne (1992: 131).

45. Kenny (1996). See also Butterworth (2007).

46. Montaigne (2004: I, 54), «Des vaines subtilitez», 313c.

47. Montaigne (2004: III, 8: 924b).

antagonistic and vigorous: «J'ayme une societé 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» (924b). In this virile, obliquely erotic atmosphere, competition serves to sharpen up a thought or polish a phrase. In a later addition, Montaigne quotes Cicero (*De finibus* I. 8) insisting that there can be no dispute without criticism: «Neque enim disputari sine reprehensione potest» (924c). From this model of conversational jousting, Montaigne draws an example for the *Essais*, his printed work.

[J]e preste l'espaule aux reprehensions que l'on fait en mes escrits; et les ay souvent changez plus par raison de civilité que par raison d'amendement: ayment à gratifier et nourrir la liberté de m'advertir par la facilité de ceder; ouy, à mes despans.<sup>48</sup>

What Montaigne claims to desire is a readerly «liberté» to respond to his text in ways that are not constrained by any fear of ridicule or propriety. This appeal for «reprehensions» (the Ciceronian term resurfaces) adds a further term to the semantic spectrum of censorship, one that also appears in Cotgrave's French dictionary. And indeed, judgement (censure) has not proved dangerous to the survival of Montaigne's text.

### Reading as censure

And yet, the Roman censors did not pass without a trace on the text of the *Essais*. The majority of the points both censors made were passed over by Montaigne in the edition of 1582, despite his direct intervention into the text regarding spelling and punctuation —if, as George Hoffmann argues, Montaigne participated directly in the proofreading of Millanges's editions.<sup>49</sup> That a young man should be prepared for all things; that God appears to give permission for suicide when he makes life seem worse than death; that animals and humanity might be closer than is generally admitted; that the Bible has been used to endorse alchemy; that Rabelais wrote good books and that Bèze and Buchanan were good poets: all these passages, identified by the Roman censors, remained unchanged.<sup>50</sup> There are, however, two major instances where Montaigne changed his text in line with the censors' judgement. The change in these passages between the editions of 1580 and 1582 has of course been noted before; what the archives of the Congregation for the Index reveal is that these changes were made in response

48. Montaigne (2004: III, 8: 924c).

49. Hoffmann (1993: 84-107).

50. For these passages in the Villy-Saulnier edition, see: I, 45: 166-167 (young man's edu-

cation); II, 3: 351 (suicide); II, 12: 460 (on animality and humanity); II, 12: 585 (the philosopher's stone); II, 10: 410 (Rabelais); II, 17: 661 (Bèze and Buchanan).

to specific points. In the 1580 version of «Des livres» (II, 10), Montaigne drew a parallel between Roman religious rites and the moment in the Catholic mass where the congregation is enjoined to lift their hearts to God: «Les Romains disoient en leur religion, *Hoc age*, ce que nous disons, *sursum corda*, a la nostre: ce sont autant de parolles perdues pour moy». <sup>51</sup> The first Roman reader objects that «si burla di quel che si dice nel prefacio della messa *sursum corda*» and the second reader endorses this: «se non si burla [...] al manco pare ch'il fa». <sup>52</sup> Montaigne's irreverence here places Christian practice too close to pagan rites and envelopes them in the same dismissal. In the edition of 1582, the reference to the *sursum corda* is cut, although it reappears in the 1595 edition and on the Bordeaux copy. <sup>53</sup>

The second clear response to the 1581 censorship occurs in «De la liberté de conscience» (II, 19), where in 1580 Montaigne threw doubt on the gratifying story that the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate, after a lifetime of persecuting Christians, died with words of surrender:

Aussi ce que plusieurs disent de luy, qu'estant blessé a mort d'un coup de traict, il s'escria, Tu as vaincu, ou comme disent les autres, Contente toy Nazarien, n'est nonplus vraysemblable. Car ceux qui estoient presens a sa mort, & qui nous en recitent toutes les particulieres circonstances, les contenance mesmes & les parolles n'en disent rien: non plus que de ie ne sçay quelz miracles que d'autres y meslent. <sup>54</sup>

The second censor identified this passage as heterodox praise of Julian, a denial of the received story of his death and the miracles which followed it. <sup>55</sup> In the 1582 edition, this passage was cut; it reappeared in 1595 and on the Bordeaux Copy but in slightly attenuated form, making clear that Montaigne was following his sources in rejecting these last words as apocryphal. <sup>56</sup>

On a more general level, the censors' readings of Montaigne's text may have encouraged further his digressive style, and an insistence on the provisional, private nature of the *Essais*. <sup>57</sup> This is indeed the tenor of this 1582 addition to «Des prieres», the third principal response to Montaigne's experience of censorship in Rome, and which expresses a general submission to the Roman censor:

Je propose icy des fantasies informes & irresolues, comme font ceux qui publient des questions douteuses a debattre aus escoles, non pour establir la verite, mais

51. Montaigne (1580: 108-109).

52. Article 7: Godman (2000: 339 and 340).

53. See Montaigne (1582: 391-392); for the Bordeaux copy, Montaigne (2004: 414c); for the 1595 edition, Montaigne (2007: 435). Legros speculates that this change might have come about in deference to the Roman censors: Montaigne (2003: 79, n. 108). In fact, it

is a response to an explicit point in the censure.

54. Montaigne (1580: II, 510 [= 481]).

55. Godman (2000: 342).

56. Montaigne (1582: 678); Montaigne (2004: 671c); Montaigne (2007: 709-710).

57. See Henry (1987: 3-35); and O'Brien, forthcoming. Many thanks to Prof. O'Brien for letting me read his fascinating piece before publication.

pour la chercher: & les soubmetz au jugement de ceux, a qui il touche de regler non seulement mes actions & mes escrits, mais encore mes pensées. Esgalement m'en sera acceptable & utile la condamnation, comme l'approbation. Et pourtant [That is why] me remettant tousjours à l'autorité de leur censure, qui peut tout sur moy, je me mesle ainsin temerairement a toute sorte de propos, comme icy...<sup>58</sup>

As Alain Legros has argued, Montaigne gains a paradoxical liberty through this submission to Roman authority; the censorship of the Index absolves Montaigne from any attempt of self-censorship, allowing a freedom of expression that relies utterly on the existence of an institution competent to judge it.<sup>59</sup> Here, it is the nature of the *Essais*, *informe et irresolue*, that is emphasised; they debate, rather than establish. And this form of debate has equally been detected in Montaigne's account of his meetings with Sisto Fabri.<sup>60</sup> Once asked to defend his book, Montaigne does so; even (so he says in his *Journal*) taking on the role of the first censor as critic of his text.

«De l'art de conferer» echoes Montaigne's Roman tactics by claiming indifference as to whether his book is condoned or reproved, as long as it is read. This takes the form of a desire to be known and judged, despite the difficulty of finding a good reader, precisely because of the reticence of most to criticise:

Toutefois il est certes malaisé d'y attirer les hommes de mon temps: ils n'ont pas le courage de corriger, par ce qu'ils n'ont pas le courage de souffrir à l'estre, et parlent tousjours avec dissimulation en presence les uns des autres. Je prens si grand plaisir d'estre jugé et cogneu, qu'il m'est comme indifferent en quelle des deux formes je le soys.<sup>61</sup>

The invitation to intervene in the text of the *Essais*, to correct, assay, reproach and respond frankly merges into the desire of the author to make himself known. The difficulty of finding a *suffisant lecteur* lies here in Montaigne's contemporaries' reluctance to criticise, an over-indulgent reading, rather than the unsophisticated and literal reading that the second Roman censor feared. At the start of 'De l'art de conferer', Montaigne speculates that, after all, negative judgement is a more likely response to his published works than indulgence, to the point that he offers himself as a kind of negative exemplum for his readers:

C'est un usage de nostre justice, d'en condamner aucuns pour l'avertissement des autres. [...] On ne corrige pas celui qu'on pend, on corrige les autres par luy. Je faicts de mesmes. Mes erreurs sont tantost naturelles et incorrigibles; mais, ce que les honnestes hommes profitent au public en se faisant imiter, je le profiteray à l'avanture à me faire eviter...<sup>62</sup>

58. Montaigne (2003: 155).

59. Montaigne (2003: 60).

60. See Smith (1981: 103-104), who calls the encounter a «dialogue» and a «debate» and also refers to «De l'art de conferer» in his analysis;

Legros qualifies the chapter I, 56 as «la poursuite d'un dialogue entamé avec les deux censeurs italiens», Montaigne (2003: 63).

61. Montaigne (2004: 924c).

62. Montaigne (2004: 921b).

The reader's judgement becomes inevitable censure through the menacing juxtaposition of a criminal's death by hanging, bringing together the double meaning of *censure*—both judgement and punitive action—and suggesting an illegitimate, almost deviant aspect to the publication and the reading of a text like the *Essais*. Like the hanging man, Montaigne's errors are displayed in public as a warning to others. Rejected, avoided, strung up as a bad example: Montaigne (the conflation between book and author is insistent here) is beyond correction himself. His ostensible aim in writing a self-portrayal in search of an ideal reader is replaced by a warning that the customs portrayed are repellent, expressed as the prospect of the author's ostracism by his public.<sup>63</sup> And indeed, he goes on, «on ne parle jamais de soy sans perte».<sup>64</sup> there is an inevitable diminishing of the self in this obsessive public production; what is more likely to be demonstrated is deficiency rather than sufficiency. In exposing himself to the public's judgement, the author risks a lynching by public opinion, if public opinion will only believe self-accusations: «Les propres condamnations sont tousjours accruës, les louanges mescruës». This sanguine view of public response resonates with Furetière's definition of *censure* one hundred years later: «tous les Auteurs sont exposez à la *censure* du public».

In both Estienne and Montaigne, real and imagined readers appear to play a crucial role in continuing the interaction with their respective censors. Readers are challenged, cajoled, criticised, but insistently addressed. While Estienne refers to his readers in a complicit tone («Regarde bien Lecteur, & tu voiras manifestement les Theologiens de Paris ne tendre a autre fin qu'a destourner les brebis de Jesus Christ», 1<sup>v</sup>), Montaigne is able to risk giving them a little more licence («Un suffisant lecteur descouvre souvant és escrits d'autruy des perfections autres que celles que l'auteur y a mises et apperceües, et y preste des sens et des visages plus riches»)<sup>65</sup> Both these rhetorical addresses to a putative reader construct a readership conducive to the text's goals, whether defensive or provocative; and a constructed readership betrays a certain anxiety of reception on the part of both Estienne and Montaigne. I have tried to show here that this anxiety of reception intersects with each writer's experience of censorship: neither see censorship as an isolated instance, but rather as a dynamic term in relation to other operations of reading and interpretation. If, in Estienne's apology, censorship is indistinguishable from malicious slander, Montaigne's account of his interviews with the Congregation for the Index pair censorship with a more salutary correction. Together, they demonstrate an understanding of censorship on a continuum between repressive coercion and potentially liberating censure.

63. For an explicit expression of this desire, see III, 5 («Sur des vers de Virgile»): «S'il y a quelque personne, quelque bonne compagnie aux champs, en la ville, en France ou ailleurs, resseante ou voyagere, à qui mes humeurs soient bonnes, de

qui les humeurs me soient bonnes, il n'est que de siffler en paume, je leur iray fournir des essais en cher et en os», Montaigne (2004: 843-844b).

64. Montaigne (2004: 922b).

65. Montaigne (2004: I, 24, 127a).



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