



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Being in the Middle: Translation, Transition and the Early  
Modern

Wes Williams

Paragraph, Volume 29, Number 1, March 2006, pp. 27-39 (Article)

Published by Edinburgh University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/prg.2006.0010>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/198416>

# ‘Being in the Middle’: Translation, Transition and the ‘Early Modern’

Wes Williams

## 1. *Being First*

‘We have no communication with Being, because human nature is wholly situated for ever between living and dying, offering of itself only a dim shadowy appearance, an unstable weak opinion.’

The words of my epigraph, depending on where you first encounter them, read either as a translation of the first phrase in the last movement of Montaigne’s ‘Apologie de Raimond Sebond’, or as the beginning of a sentence found in Amyot’s French account of Plutarch’s essay explicating the mysterious word *E’i* inscribed alongside the more familiar *nostrum*, ‘Know Thyself’, on the gates at Delphi.<sup>1</sup> I’ll return to them, to what they have to say about the collocation ‘human nature’, and to their appropriation by Montaigne in conclusion. The words will, by then, have formed part of an argument about, and with, the monoglossic, monopolizing tendencies of ‘(early) modernity’, conducted by way of several further scenes of unacknowledged quotation and interrupted reading, one in Rabelais, others in Montaigne. The scenes of reading on which I shall focus are less historical examples than themselves concerned with the temporality of reading, with ways in which Renaissance texts imagine their readers, then as now, to be not at the start (early), nor at the end (post), but somewhere in the middle (always, already, modern).

More Greek, and a moment of apparent boredom: a text read not at Delphi, but at sea, midway through a mid-century journey to the Oracle of the Holy Bottle, one day, that is, some time between 1548 and 1552. The reading is found towards the end of Rabelais’s *Quart Livre*, at a strangely interrupted stage in the travellers’ quest. The wind has died down, and the narrative is at a standstill; the narrator, as bored as anyone on board, reports that ‘we were all moody, matagrabolised, doremified and stuck’ (*estions tous pensifz, matagrabolisez, sesolfiez et faszchez*).<sup>2</sup> The middle two

of the four French adjectives here — ‘sesolfiez’ a Rabelaisian *hapax*, ‘matagrabolisez’ a more durable survivor — are a brave effort to introduce an air of at least lexical mystery into a scene in which all the characters are ‘faschez’: at a loss, and cross. They remain, as the sentence concludes, ‘not speaking a single word to each other’. The situation, from a narrative point of view, is unpromising: no wind, no speech; no speech, no scene. Early modern travel narrative doesn’t really do interiority, or detailed description, at least not in fiction. So the narrator can do little but conduct a roll call, checking that all his fellow-characters are present, and listing what each is doing. Pantagruel, with whom he starts his list (he is the Prince after all), appears to have been reading, but is now asleep, a copy of Heliodorus’ novel *The Aethiopica* — in Greek — in his hand.

‘En main’; but what else do we know about this not-quite represented reading? Scholars alive to recent developments in cultural history — to what used to be called cultural materialism, when it was a little less concerned with textiles, and more with literature and ideology — might wonder at the physical situatedness of Pantagruel’s reading. Was he sitting in a chair on deck, or was he perhaps in a hammock? What of the book itself, its format, publisher, binding, cost? And did Pantagruel read himself, or was he read to; was the reading spoken, or silent; and did his lips move? Other scholars might concern themselves with the history of the words used by Rabelais’s narrator, arguing in the process a certain historicist case determining ‘legitimate’ interpretations of early modern reading: that we can say nothing about the authors, nor their characters, nor how they read their books, that they would not themselves have been able to say. An enquiry into the material conditions of Pantagruel’s interrupted reading produces, then, a series of questions, and a number of interpretative constraints, even as we follow the narrator’s invitation to picture the giant: bored by the book, or perhaps simply rocked gently to sleep as he lay reading in his early modern hammock.

Imagine the hammock and you acknowledge Rabelais’s care in getting the discursive details right; relate it to other technical terms concerning life on board and you stress the text’s allegiance, for all its phantasmagorical and reflexive allegories, to a nascent realism, a poetics of the professional detail, even of the everyday. The hammock might then read as a sign of how Rabelais’s chronicles inaugurate the long slow birth of the French novel. But returning to the text, in translation (Rabelais’s French is difficult, and students can’t really be expected to . . . and anyway, there’s not much time, in the survey course to . . .

especially since the real focus is the later development of. . .), stops such speculation short. For the translations make no mention of hammocks: early modern English has Pantagruel 'slumbering and nodding on the quarter deck, by the cuddy'; in the modern version he is 'dozing on a mattress beside the hatchway'. 'Cuddy' and 'hatchway' sound reassuringly technical, and the prepositions, doing their *effet-de-réel* work, place these unfamiliar nouns in precise relation to things at once nautical and more familiar. A pinch of salt is added to the taste of the words, a splash of sea-talk colours the picture. Only it's not quite the picture Rabelais's original narrator paints, and it doesn't allow you the hammocks you had imagined.

The French, by contrast, does; almost. Pantagruel was snoozing 'sus un transpontin au bout des Escoutilles'. Both nouns in this phrase would have seemed as exotic to contemporaries as they do to most readers now: both—like the term 'exotique' itself—make their first published appearance in French in the *Quart Livre*. The travelling text, in other words, interrupts itself, stages such moments of incomprehension with its readers, the better then to direct us towards philology: the study of words, their histories, their futures and their middling situation. 'Escoutilles' may seem like linguistically rare birds, but they are not extinct: take that first early modern *s* away and you can already hear the call of the modern French word; translate it and you have 'cuddy' or 'hatchway'. 'Transpontin', however, the cross-bridgy word for the thing on which Pantagruel was snoozing, has long since died out, having enjoyed only a short life, somewhere between French and Italian, in the 1520s–1550s. By the end of the decade, its habitat had been taken over by another word, which, having migrated into European languages from its home in Taino (an indigenous language of Caribbean peoples, all but silenced, but not quite, not yet), took over the work of denoting an object on sale, each Spring, in every Habitat, Homebase and B&Q in Britain: 'hamaca'.

Pantagruel was, then, suspended in (what he would not have called) a hammock. But what of the book in his hand? Rabelais's narrator refers to it as 'a Greek Heliodorus' and the collocation of adjective and proper name here matters. 'Hamac', which was available to Rabelais—it appears, from the mid 1520s onwards, in editions and indeed French translations of the travel narratives of those transplanted Italians, Columbus and Peter Martyr—might legitimately have read as a marker of the Early Modern, of colonial expansion, and/or curiosity at the wonders and words of the New World. 'Grec' has no such connotations; but nor does it connote (only) Old World,

the revival of ancient learning, the Renaissance. For what ‘Heliodore Grec’ suggests most of all, in the mid-century of its original narration and vernacular publication, is that Pantagruel, the giant embodiment of learning, the Christian Humanist Renaissance Prince etc., is not up to date. The narrator seems to be taking care to tell his readers that his dozing hero has not been reading Jacques Amyot’s enormously influential French translation of Heliodorus, first published in 1547, and so had not been alerted by Amyot’s preface to just how exciting a book this actually is. He hadn’t yet been deflected from the kinds of biographical, ethnographic reading to which the untranslated Greek novel seems to have been subject throughout the Renaissance—if marginalia on surviving copies are any kind of evidence—on to one attentive, rather, to its remarkable narratological organisation. For as Amyot explains, the *Histoire aethiopique*, starting *in medias res*, engenders in its readers ‘a passionate desire to hear the beginning’, but keeps us waiting ‘through the ingenious plotting of the links in the tale’, until the end of the fifth book; once we have reached this, the middle point of the novel, we find ourselves back at the start of the story, and so ‘have even greater desire to come to the conclusion [another five books on] than we had before’. The sleeping giant seems unaware of how this eroticised encounter with narrative structure can leave its reader ‘satisfied, in the same way as are those who come into possession of something which they have desired intensely, and anticipated long.’<sup>3</sup> Having read neither Amyot’s preface, nor Terence Cave’s recent, exquisite commentaries on it in both *Recognitions* and *Pré-histoires*, Pantagruel doesn’t—yet—know that the preface to the translation of the novel he fell asleep reading will introduce the French reading public to the structure—and the word—‘suspens’.<sup>4</sup>

A longer study might profitably return to this scene of soon-to-be-suspenseful not-quite reading in the not-yet-hammock, return too to the ways in which it situates its own readers as unavoidably modern, more up to date than its dozy characters. We could return both to the text in Pantagruel’s hand, and to the myth which lies behind, or beneath it: that of Andromeda, whose parents agree to give her not to the originally intended husband, but to a passing stranger, in exchange for that stranger’s agreeing to kill the local monster. Both of these stories, which end in happy marriage, anticipate that of Pantagruel and his ‘comperegrins’, as they defer—as it turns out indefinitely—through their repeated encounters with ever more monstrous island-communities on the edges of Christendom, their return home to the princely wedding Pantagruel’s father Gargantua

has planned. A sustained study would explore the detail of the triangulation of desire, hybridised allegory, and political expediency in this myth, its obsessive recurrence in early modern culture, and its survival in our own. Pantagruel's untimely, incomplete reading could then serve as a point of origin for a story that, beginning with the early modern imagination of monsters, themselves conjoined with a line which in theory runs from the late Foucault (of *Les Anormaux*) through Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, could loop back to the Delphic Oracle, before concluding with a clearer and finer understanding of what Homi Bhabha, in pursuance of the 'right to narrate', suggests we call the 'merely human'.<sup>5</sup> But that will not — at least not quite — have been my theme here, any more than will the history of the hammock or of suspense. Rather I want, in what follows, to follow Pantagruel's example, that is, to suspend interest in anticipatory readings, in the writing of grand narratives of emergence, transmission and survival, so as to attend rather to another sense of inter-est: being in between.

## 2. *Being in the Middle*

'(..) a memory of the past that is proleptic, literally dying to be reborn; [we have to] protect ourselves from a vain and vaunting future that believes its time has irrevocably arrived, and that the present is its exclusive destiny and its isolate domain'.<sup>6</sup>

The temptation to read the scenes, images, poems, handbooks, narratives and dramas produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the light of modern concerns, issues and theories is enormous. The collocation 'early modern' serves of course to re-describe such temptation as a venial sin at worst; indeed it can serve to make of its indulgence a method. One of the determining conditions of narratability in our field is the migration of 'early modernity' from historical to literary, or more broadly cultural studies. This move, as well as consolidating the interests of History, has lent credit to a range of compelling narratives of emergence and/or foundation, on condition that they take 'early modern culture' as their point of origin. What initially functioned as a sign within historical discourse that the object of a scholar's attention was not exclusively the 'high' culture of the 'Renaissance', serves now as evidence of History's having been rescued from the bankruptcy with which it once seemed threatened. With talk of 'early modern culture' a merger of sorts with (if not a hostile take-over of) anthropology is also effected. Negotiating with cultures (rather than reading literature), the early modernist draws on

both the evidentiary and the ethical credit of anthropological labour: reading is reconfigured as field-work.

For some, this move comes as a great relief. Leaving literature and the literary to the moderns, they shift into reverse theoretical drive, and go with gusto from the text back to the work.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that the work is quite what it was. For 'early modernity' can signal not so much a method, as a redescription of the entire field, such that a period once figured as the Renaissance—an age of discovery, of renewal, of humanism, and so forth—is now more often, and often more reasonably, represented as (the onset of) an age of disenchantment and/or disillusion. Not only old-fangled historians but also—indeed especially—erstwhile theorists appear, from such a perspective, to have outlived their usefulness. For noting that much of what passes for theory these days seems to be a suspect concoction of ethico-historicist inquiry and foundationalist myth-making, the early modern cultural historian lays claim to a peculiar and privileged position in relation to Modernity: that of the not-quite outsider, explaining to the unaware moderns just how they got to be in such a sorry state. Some of us, it seems, specialise in suggesting how things might have turned out differently; others stress the inevitability of the mess.

I am not pursuing here an argument against 'the (early) modern.' A great deal of important, instructive and engaging work has been done—and as this special number suggests, is still being done—under its sign, in a range of different fields, from the history of science to the history of the book, from the relations between law and literature, to those between sex and gender, text, image and the imagination. It seems, for instance, clear that in relation to the grammar of narrative and its imbrication with discourses of colonial expansion abroad and internecine conflict at home, it makes real sense both to talk of modernity, and to isolate the 'early modern' as a specific stage in the elaboration of the 'juridical-natural concept' (Foucault) of the monster, as of its counterpart, the merely—or the barely—human. There is a need, then, to question the story which has 'folk' or 'superstitious' interpretations of monstrosity as portent, sign of God's wrath or glory, displaced by reasonable, professional institutions offering understanding, assistance, and where necessary, treatment. An alternative to this narrative of enlightened progress would tell of ways in which the conjoining of medical, legal and colonial discourse with the politicised monster marks the onset of modernity by way of the

emergence of something especially pernicious which 'early modern' culture only just began to possess: biopolitics.<sup>8</sup>

But here, too, methodological caution would be useful. For when we talk of cultures, of their history and their customs, we need to maintain a properly stereoscopic perspective: there is no safely different Modernity from which to look back on the Early Modern. And archival recovery can of course find itself furthering, in nostalgic mode, the politics of utopian imperialism. The 'Earlies' are not some now sadly lost tribe whose interest lies in their being sublimely ignorant of what was to come, their culture announcing, but itself largely uncluttered by, our present concerns. We need, and clearly, to acknowledge that the pursuit of the 'monstrous', for instance, has a history at least as long as community; that it has a future is clear not only from our own culture's obsession with children, but also—as Agamben has shown in his work on the state of exception, and Derrida explored in his study of hospitality—from the wretchedly conjoined discourses of terror, asylum and migration.<sup>9</sup> The work of un-coupling these discourses, demonstrating their historical facticity, decolonizing History and agitating against the current of barbarism in our own culture is important, necessary, vital. But none of this can really be done unless alongside all the stories of emergence, of modernity and its origins, we also attend to what it means, then as now, to be in the middle.

### 3. *Being Unhoused*

'We are never at home, we are always somewhere beyond (. . .). As we move around, we transport ourselves by anticipation wherever we please; but once out of being, we have no communication with what is.'<sup>10</sup>

Montaigne, unlike Pantagruel, had little Greek, and so relied on translators (including, as noted in the introduction, Amyot) for his voracious reading of Plato, of Plutarch and of Heliodorus. Reading, for the essayist, would seem to have been less a means to the acquisition of new knowledge, and more about unlearning subjection to sovereign authority, and to the imperiousness of either the past or the present: "'We are under no King's command; let each man act freely". Let him at least know what he does know (. . .). Truth and reason are common to all: they no more belong to the man who first put them into words, than to him who last did so.'<sup>11</sup> If we in turn read Montaigne with an ear less for his exemplary early modernity (his status as inventor



of life-writing, the vernacular self, the *honnête homme*, the poetics of revision, a certain scepticism, religious tolerance, cultural relativism, the genre of the essay. . .), and more for his own sense of timing, of being between languages, being perhaps too late to say anything that hasn't already been said. . .; if we divert ourselves, that is, from the grand narrative of modernity, origins and originality, and focus on ways in which Montaigne writes his way into the middle, a number of striking, repeated scenes of interrupted reading come into focus, and with them certain recurrent concerns. The first of these readings takes place neither, as in Plutarch, at Delphi, nor on Pantagruel's boat, at the edges of the known world; its location is not specified. We might assume it to be in Montaigne's study, at home, but we are not actually told:

Someone was leafing through my notebook the other day and found a memorandum about something that I wanted done after my death. I told him that — and this was the truth — although I'd been only a league away from my house, and in good health and spirits, I had been quick to write it down there and then, as I couldn't be certain of getting home safely.<sup>12</sup>

What Montaigne does specify about this reading is a time (*l'autre jour*), a note-book (*mes tablettes*), and some writing (*un memoire*) on one of its pages. The first interruption is a consequence of readerly surprise: looking up from the book, 'someone' interrupts his reading to ask the author for an explanation: what's this (doing here)? The explanation Montaigne offers his reader — then, and, in that parenthesis, now, to us, reading him long after his death — takes the form of another story of interruption, which, it turns out, is also one of emergence, transmission and survival. For of course the *memoire* is presented here as an emblem for the *Essais*, the soon-to-be-posthumous notes of a man with a poor memory in which this scene of reading now figures. The precise words written on the original note are not revealed; but nor are they suppressed, since the note's content is its form, and its function: a pretext for recollection, which itself doubles as performative reading, a lesson in how to die. 'We must always,' the essay continues, 'be booted, suited and ready to leave' (*Il faut estre tousjours boté et prest à partir*).

All this befits the argument of an essay in which Montaigne glosses 'being in the middle' as being just about to die. The imagined practice of death is of course a theme to which he returns again and again. The emblematic *memoire* represents the (life) writing generated by this practice as governed by a poetics less of revision than of interruption:

let (the writing of) your thoughts interrupt you, so that you in turn can cheat death before it catches you out on your way home. The argument that to be at home is to experience 'communication with what is', and that 'being in the middle' is to know yourself close to death, has a particular situatedness in Montaigne. It is one alluded to obliquely both in the epigraph to this section, and in the scene of reading discussed above: that of being in the middle of civil wars of such partisan bitterness as to make unhoused refugees of many, many people; wars of such localised brutality that to know yourself to be just a league away from home is no safety at all. But there is also a less immediately circumscribed politics — and a suspenseful poetics — to the imagined practice of death in the *Essais*, one which returns us to the lesson of the *memoire*, and to its revision of the thematics of anticipation and priority, of being (there, at home) first.

So as to rob it of its greatest 'advantage over us' Montaigne suggests 'having nothing so often in mind than death'. There follows a brief series of instances — 'at the stumbling of a horse, at the fall of a tile, at the least prick of a pin' — each of which should cause us to voice the thought: 'Supposing that had been death itself?' An early modern Woody Allen — or as he would have it, a latter-day Egyptian — Montaigne urges (here in Florio's translation) that 'in the midst of our banketts, feasting pleasures [we] ever have the restraint or object before us, that is the remembrance (*memoire*) of our condition (. . .) It is uncertaine where death looks for us; let us expect her everie where' (OC, 85). The *memoire* in this instance is the faculty of memory, not a note, but it signals nonetheless a practice of untimely meditation, articulated by way of a poetics of re-iterative interruption: so as never to be surprised, narrate each event back to yourself, as it occurs, as if it were already over, as if you were already dead. Such an injunction might seem designed to ensure precisely that exile from home, that impossibility of ever communicating with Being which Montaigne writes against. But the politics of the practice, clarified in the next sentence but one, turn out otherwise: 'The premeditation of death is the premeditation of freedom. He who has learned how to die, has unlearned how to serve' (La premeditation de la mort est premeditation de la liberte. Qui a appris à mourir, il a desappris à servir). If the end of the first sentence — the political prize for the practice of death — comes as something of a surprise, the second, an unacknowledged quotation (in translation) from Seneca reinforces the claim. A third proverb, of Montaigne's own coining, is unequivocal: 'Knowing how to die liberates us from all subjection and constraint'

(Le sçavoir mourir nous aفرانچit de toute subjection et contrainte). Reading, translating and writing teach us to know ourselves to be in transition; they teach us how to die, and so make us free, not (only) from particular authority, but fully liberated as only slaves can know. Such is the force of 'aفرانچir', as of 'desapris a servir', in which to be 'enفرانچised' is to 'unlearn' that cultural subjection which we might otherwise think essential to our condition, our human nature.

Like the 'someone' who looked up from reading Montaigne's *memoire*, we might reasonably ask him to explain: what is the shape of this 'subjection and constraint' under which we live; in what sense is our 'condition' that of slaves? By way of reply, Montaigne might direct us to the quotation from Amyot's Plutarch with which we began this essay:

We have no communication with Being, because human nature is wholly situated for ever between living and dying (Nous n'avons aucune communication à l'estre, parce que toute humaine nature est toujours au milieu entre le naistre et le mourir).

It is important to realise that the collocation 'humaine nature' is here anything but a ready-made compound noun, and the final two nouns are distinctly verbal, active. All the terms in this phrase are still in process, and Montaigne's flood of textbook examples of instability, flux, change and dissemblance (from water flowing through your hands, to Heraclitus' river-walker and beyond) turns around a further, peculiar, resonant coupling—'estre/naistre' (being/being born)—the better to argue their relational non-identity. 'What begins being born never reaches the perfection of being, since this being born never comes to an end' (ce qui commence à naistre ne parvient jamais à perfection d'estre, pourautant que ce naistre n'acheve jamais).<sup>13</sup> They sound the same in French, but for the 'n'; but it's the extra 'n' that makes the negative, but never quite conclusive, difference in our nature.

The argument—here taken not from the essay on learning how to die, but from the conclusion to the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'—has moved on from when it was about how abruptly life might end. Now concerned with what never quite begins, never quite comes into being, the argument is still, and again, about how human nature consists in being in the middle. In plain English, Montaigne is saying that Being and being born are not the same, and that if we never quite get through to Being, it's because we never quite free ourselves from the negation which attaches itself to not yet being (us). The argument of this essay will have been, then, that Montaigne might

be telling his readers (then as now) that it is our being so concerned with origins, originality, emergence, emergency, birth, (re)naissance, nation and the rest, that prevents us from ever quite being (free).

#### 4. Coda

'[T]he intellectual's provisional home is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions. But only in that precarious exilic realm can one first truly grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped and then go forth to try anyway.'<sup>14</sup>

Even as we renegotiate the terms of our allegiance to the elite cultures of the past, and/or seek to further an emancipatory representational agenda, working both for this or that hitherto voiceless group, and for imagined communities past, present and future, we also find such efforts figured as proof of particular professional expertise. We find ourselves, that is, subject to an economy of knowledge in which this expertise must itself be asserted as a form of cultural, ethical, and, of course, financial capital. There is probably more loss than profit for the soul to be gained in historicism's fetishising of interest, representation and work, at the expense of literature's sense of singular occasion, and of play. While Renaissance writing, the details of rhetorical practice, the experimentation, the suspenseful deferral and thrill of philology as of poetics can all be the object of a thoroughly modern scholar's attention, such things risk making professional 'early modern' sense only on condition that due tribute to a triumphalist and not-so-implicitly teleological myth of History (the history of the literary at very least) be paid. It would seem to have become a condition of anglophone Modernity's interest (in Rabelais, Montaigne, and Others) that the tribute paid for such interest take the form of consenting to an early, supporting, role within the grand drama of its own emergence. And it is to the current success of this drama — which is also the old, old story of the emergence, transmission and survival of Empire — that the 'early modern' owes not only its apparent status, but its very being.

This is all fine, as far as it goes; narratives of emancipation, of progressive politics, and of cultural worth all depend on anticipatory genealogies. But as writers of the Renaissance knew well, foundational myths (such as that of Perseus and Andromeda, retold by Heliodorus in his *Aethiopica*, by Rabelais in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, and by Shakespeare in *Othello*. . .) produce — not in their wake, but in their midst — shadow narratives of dispossession, of compulsory choice and

enforced disavowal. Returning, finally, to the scene of interrupted reading with which we opened, we realise that Pantagruel may not be bored, and he may not just be snoozing. He may, just, be dreaming of a different way of telling stories than the one in which he fears he may be a character. Perhaps he wants an adventure whose end is not already known, one that does not necessarily conclude with the best marriage ceremony a father ever lavished on a son, but is rather, from middle to beginning, to middle again, and to end, a necessary incomplete exploration of possible relations between politics, poetics, history, myth and romance. Perhaps he is imagining in his sleep the shape of narratives other than the inherited, aristocratic, romance of legitimate filiation which has men having to match and then exceed their fathers' prodigious exploits and expectations, and women waiting until their princes come. It may be that his apparently dozy, out-of-date hero has a dream of the present which is not structured by a version of—and does not provoke aversion to—a past whose texts, cultures, and people seem of interest only in so far as they are not quite/not yet us, here, now. We don't know; Rabelais doesn't say.

## NOTES

- 1 Michel de Montaigne, *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris, Gallimard, 1962), 586; *The Complete Essays*, translated by Michael Screech (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1993), 680. Plutarch, 'Que signifie ce mot Ei' translated by Jacques Amyot, in *Les Oeuvres morales et meslées* (Paris, 1572).
- 2 François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, edited by Gérard Defaux (Paris, Livre de poche, 1994), 591. The translation is my own. The Penguin version is, here, hopeless; Urquhart embroiders as follows: 'we were all out of sorts, moping, drooping, metagrabolised, as dull as *Dun* in the mire, in *C sol fa ut flat* out of Tune, off the hinges, and I don't-know-howish.' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, edited by Terence Cave (London, Everyman, 1994), 668.
- 3 Jacques Amyot, *L'Histoire aethiopique de Heliodorus* (Paris, Etienne Grolleau, 1547), 'Proësme du translateur', fol. A iii r.
- 4 Pantagruel was probably holding the 1534 Basle ed. princeps. For Renaissance readers' ms. notes on copies of the Greek text, see, for instance, Bodley Byw. O.1.9, and BL 1074. L. 8, dated August 15, Heidelberg 1567. For more on 'suspens', see Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), 16–21; *Pré-histoires: Textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Geneva, Droz, 1999), 130–38.
- 5 Michel Foucault, *Les Anormaux* (Paris, Seuil/Gallimard, 1999); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel

Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998); Homi K. Bhabha, 'On Writing Rights', in *Globalizing Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1999*, edited by Matthew J. Gibney (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 162–83.

- 6 Bhabha, 'On Writing Rights', 183.
- 7 For more on the contexts and the shape of this shift, see the insightful introductory essay, 'The Time of Theory', in *Distant Voices Still Heard: Contemporary Readings of French Renaissance Literature*, edited by John O'Brien and Malcolm Quainton (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2000), 1–52.
- 8 Monsters are proliferating in the 'early modern' field, and the bibliography on them is now vast. For a fine series of meditations on monsters, and on their recurrence as subjects/objects of recent theory, see *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2004).
- 9 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by Kevin Attell (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000); 'Hostipitality', translated by Barry Stocker, with Forbes Morlock, *Angelaki* 5:3 (2000), 3–18; Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- 10 Montaigne, *OC*, 18–20; *CE*, 11–13 (translation slightly altered).
- 11 Montaigne, *OC*, 150; *CE*, 170; the quotation within the quotation is from Seneca.
- 12 Montaigne, *OC*, 86; the translation here is mine; see also *CE*, 98.
- 13 Montaigne, *OC*, 586; the translation here is mine; see also *CE*, 680.
- 14 Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004), 144.