

PIERRE BOAISTUAU (c. 1517-1566) AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF
HUMANISM IN MID SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the manifestations of French humanism in sixteenth-century intellectual culture, through an analysis, for the first time, of the entirety of the works of Pierre Boaistuau. An eminent French humanist writer, on whose life little information exists, Boaistuau emerges far more prolific than any previous study has hitherto recognised. Thus, on a first level, his case offers the opportunity for an exploration of the developments of French print culture at the time. In addition, careful examination of the contents of his widely circulated works sheds new light on the ways humanist themes and values were incorporated into contemporary literary production, and were used for different purposes which surpassed the mere celebration of ancient learning. Boaistuau employed seven genres in order to compile seven books of different natures, all of them however grafted onto a humanist framework. Associated with narrative fiction, Renaissance philosophy, political theory, the study of history, and natural philosophy, his works demonstrate how the classical past and the humanist values of virtue, erudition, and self-discipline were used in a variety of ways in mid sixteenth-century France: for promotion of a moralising message, praise of the French monarchy, bolstering the Catholic faith, and enhancing the understanding of the natural world.

To Dr Costas Gaganakis who introduced me to the world of sixteenth-century France.

Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis

– Cicero (106-43)

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The original idea for my thesis was conceived due to a footnote on Pierre Boaistuau in Alexandra Walsham's excellent *Providence in Early Modern England*. For this, I would like to extend a special thanks to her. My debts to other scholarly works I hope are attested in my footnotes. In addition, I am thankful to a number of scholars for their helpful comments and encouragement which made me to rethink my arguments and improve the quality of my work. In particular, Prof. Natalie Zemon Davis, Prof. Andrew Pettegree, Dr Malcolm Walsby, Dr Alexander Wilkinson, Dr Luc Racaut, Dr Elizabeth Tingle, Dr Margaret Small, Dr Penny Roberts, Dr John Hinks, Dr Graeme Murdock, Dr Hervé-Thomas Campagne, Dr Jenny Spinks, and Dr Justyna Kiliarczyk-Zieba. I also want to express my gratitude to Christos Efstathiou and Varvara Mastrogianni, Dr Napoleon Katsos and Dr Nafsika Smith, Vasileios Asimakopoulos, Antigoni Chrysanthou, and Yoshihiko Iwasaki, for their help and accommodation during the course of my research. Other thanks to Daniel Bamford, Márton Zászkaliczky, and Patrick Brugh for their interest in my work and their stimulating feedback, as well as to Shelagh Rothero for her proof-reading of the text. Any remaining errors are entirely my responsibility. Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents, Androula Tritaiou and Dimitri Douka, who have patiently endured my labours all this time. My project would not have been possible without their support, and for this I am forever grateful.

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EDITORIAL CONVENTIONS

In order to preserve the authenticity of early modern French language, any quotations from primary sources will follow the spelling and punctuation of the original. I have tried to stay faithful to original orthography; however to facilitate reading, sixteenth-century usage of ‘f’ for ‘s’ and ‘j’ for ‘i’ has been modernized. In addition, usage of ‘&’ has been replaced by ‘et’, and the German Eszett (ß) by ‘ss’.

In the multitude of editions of Pierre Boaistuau’s works, his name appeared in alternate spellings, a selection of which are indicated in the relevant footnote. From these variations, only the most commonly employed has been used. Also, personal and place names will be anglicised unless otherwise stated. Besides work titles, only Greek and Latin words are italicised.

Primary and secondary works cited in the footnotes will follow the writer name-work title-place and year of publication format. In the case of Boaistuau’s works, the name of publisher(s) has also been included. For reasons of space, these works will be cited by their short title. Complete tables of the known editions of Boaistuau’s published works have been included in the Appendices.

The forty-one chapters of *Histoires prodigieuses* are numbered erroneously as forty in the first edition by Vincent Sertenas in 1560. To avoid confusion, this erroneous numbering has been used throughout the main text.

Lastly, all Biblical quotations have been taken from King James Version (1611).

INTRODUCTION

Pierre Boaistuau was a sixteenth-century French humanist writer and no doubt one of the Renaissance's most overlooked figures in historical research.¹ He was born in 1517, later left his home town of Nantes, studied in three different French universities, and spent most of his life in Paris.² There, his rise as a prolific writer was swift. In a short period of four years, from 1556 to 1560, Boaistuau produced and published six of his seven works, most of which became instant successes in France and were very soon circulated across Europe. His most successful books in terms of publications were *Le Théâtre du monde* (1558), *Histoires tragiques* (1559), and *Histoires prodigieuses* (1560), three titles which have a rightful place amongst the best-sellers at the time.³ His other works include *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (1556), *Histoires des amans fortunez* (1558), *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* (1558) and *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* (1572), which was published posthumously. Certain of these works were translated into major European languages. For instance, *Le Théâtre du monde* was translated into no less than eight languages (including Latin, English, German, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Czech, and Welsh) whilst copies of the Spanish translation were even sent to South America. The total number of 164 different editions of Boaistuau's works between 1556 and 1751 proves beyond question their immense success, but at the

¹ There is no surviving correspondence to prove how Boaistuau spelt his surname, and thus its orthography remains a mystery. Alternate spellings of the writer's name appear in the multitude of editions of his works; some examples include Boistuau, Boiastuau, Boisteau, Boisteau, Bouaistuau, Bouistau, Bouesteau, Boaystuau, Boysteau, Boystuau, Bouaystuau, Bosteau, Baistuau, Boiestuau, Boiestuaux, Boiaistuaux, and Boistuaux. 'Boaistuau', which seems to be the best authenticated spelling and was used by the majority of secondary works from the nineteenth century onwards, will be used by the present study.

² Boaistuau's exact age when he left Nantes is unknown, although it can be assumed that he left before his twentieth year to study at university. For Boaistuau's full biographical details see Chapter One.

³ The contents of these three titles and their impact on French Renaissance literature will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

same time causes wonder as to how such a prominent writer remains largely unknown amongst contemporary scholars.⁴

Beside his attributes as a writer, Boaistuau was also an editor, translator and compiler.⁵ He was the first to edit Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* under the title *Histoires des amans fortunez* (1558), and is also credited with the import and popularization of two different literary genres in sixteenth-century France, the 'histoire tragique' and the 'histoire prodigieuse'. His titles *Histoires tragiques* (a French translation of six cautionary tales taken from Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*) and *Histoires prodigieuses* (a collection of extraordinary stories which drew material heavily from classical and early modern works) had a definite impact on French literature at the time, and proved to be extremely influential for the compilation of later works in and out of France.⁶ This short profile of Boaistuau as a literary figure clearly reveals a complex role which encompasses more than merely writing. It is for this reason that Ian Dalrymple MacFarlane in his 1974 literary history of Renaissance France reserved a special place for Boaistuau who, along with his friend François de Belleforest, was considered as 'an important link in literary developments during the middle of the century'.⁷

Boaistuau's remarkably short but immensely successful career as a writer was ideally combined with his varied interests as a humanist. This is evident from the main themes of his works: political theory, history, philosophy, literary fiction, theology,

⁴ All of Boaistuau's works were first printed in Paris in French. For more detail see Chapter Two.

⁵ A definition of these terms and their meaning in the sixteenth century will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁶ For Boaistuau's edited version of *Heptameron* see Chapter Three. For the variety of literary genres he employed and his influences on later works see Chapter Two, and *passim*.

⁷ McFarlane, I. D., *A Literary History of France: Renaissance France, 1470-1589* (London, 1974), p. 252.

natural philosophy and the occult, are only some of the principal topics of Boaistuau's books and his points of interest.⁸ As a humanist, he not only spent time at his writing desk and library but also traveled across Europe. As part of his work as secretary of the French ambassador to the East around 1550, Boaistuau traveled to Italy, Germany and possibly Hungary. Later, he also visited Scotland and England on his own. It was through such travels that Boaistuau acquired material for the compilation of certain chapters of his works, such as the story of a 'monstrous dog' he saw while in England.⁹ Most importantly though, this was how he became exposed to the new trends and ideas circulating at the time amongst the cosmopolitan capitals and literary circles of Europe. These trends and ideas found their way into his books, giving his text an uncommonly varied, but at the same time attractive, character. This was also made possible because of Boaistuau's ability to switch between different literary genres seemingly at will. He was a humanist who assimilated the qualities of a writer and editor, a translator and compiler, a story-teller and moralist. Both an adapter and rejuvenator, he can be seen as a true representative of the Renaissance creative spirit – much celebrated by Jacob Burckhardt and Paul Oskar Kristeller.¹⁰ As Yves Florenne has very aptly noted, Boaistuau was 'un homme de son temps'.¹¹

It is quite surprising that despite the great popularity of Boaistuau and his works during his own time, he is little known to today's scholars. The fact that there is a great lack of evidence concerning his biographical details (the principal sources being a handful of articles from the late nineteenth century and Michel Simonin's 1976

⁸ The themes discussed in Boaistuau's works will be examined in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

⁹ For more details see Chapter Five.

¹⁰ Burckhardt, J., *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, repr., 1990); Kristeller, P. O., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago, 1950).

¹¹ Boaistuau, P. (ed. Y. Florenne), *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1961), Introduction.

article ‘Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau’) does not prove helpful in this respect.¹² However, his oeuvre has attracted only limited attention from scholars in the past century. The majority of studies mentioning Boaistuau’s name have only devoted a few hasty lines to him, and have failed significantly to explore important aspects of his works and ideas.¹³ The richness of the themes contained in his books and their various links to the intellectual culture of Renaissance France remain hitherto unexplored. This small degree of attention given to Boaistuau seems even smaller when the full impact of his legacy – and the great number of editions – is considered. There has been, though, some allusions to the Breton writer’s significance for sixteenth-century history. As early as 1935, Edmond Durtelle de Saint-Sauver praised him as follows: ‘Tous ces noms de lettrés ou de juristes qui honorent la Bretagne du XVIe siècle, d’autres encore que l’on pourrait citer à côté d’eux, tels celui du Nantais Boaistuau’.¹⁴ Thirty-four years later, Jean Delumeau wrote about Boaistuau:

Boaistuau représente le type même de l’homme qui imbrique constamment, en un savoureux mélange, le réalisme de la vie quotidienne – vue par un esprit sans illusions comme sans pessimisme – avec ce merveilleux, non moins quotidien, que le lecteur du XXe siècle ne trouve qu’insolite, mais qui témoigne de l’atmosphère mentale dans laquelle vivait l’homme cultivé de la Renaissance.¹⁵

However, by the time Delumeau wrote this in 1969, Boaistuau appeared rarely (if not at all) in historiography and only a critical edition of one of his seven works had been published.¹⁶ The Breton writer continued to be largely overlooked by scholars.

¹² Simonin, M., ‘Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau’, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1976), pp. 323-333. For a discussion of the main sources on Boaistuau’s life see Chapter One.

¹³ The main exceptions are the studies by Michel Simonin and Richard Carr described later on, although they also overlook important features of Boaistuau’s work.

¹⁴ Durtelle de Saint-Sauver, E., *Histoire de Bretagne des origines à nos jours*, t. 2 (Rennes, 1935), p. 45.

¹⁵ Delumeau, J., *Histoire de la Bretagne* (Toulouse, 1969), p. 273.

¹⁶ Boaistuau, P. (ed. Y. Florenne), *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1961).

1976 and 1977 marked a period of renewed interest in Boaistuau, with the publication of two studies by Michel Simonin and Richard Carr respectively.¹⁷ Their study was the first attempt to construct a more complete profile of Boaistuau and his work. Simonin's article presented the latest findings on Boaistuau's life and career, whereas Carr's critical edition of *Histoires tragiques* shed new light on certain aspects of his work in relation to French Renaissance literature. However, of the two, only Simonin would continue his research on this fascinating sixteenth-century figure, publishing a handful of articles and two more critical editions of Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* in the early eighties.¹⁸ More recent literature has attempted to reassess Boaistuau's literary place in early modern France but in reality, little progress has been made. In the 1997 *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne*, for instance, he was presented as a promoter of sixteenth-century humanism, but there was no real reference to his work and ideas, or to his significance:

Ainsi discerne-t-on mieux **la place non négligeable tenue par le Nantais [Boaistuau]** dans le tumultueux bouillonnement d'idées et l'entassement des connaissances qui caractérisent son époque. A l'échelle de la France et même de l'Europe, il a été un utile et bon ouvrier de l'humanisme du XVI^e siècle.¹⁹

¹⁷ Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 38, no. 2 (1976), pp. 323-333; Boaistuau, P. (ed. R. Carr), *Histoires tragiques* (Paris, 1977). Their arguments will be presented in more detail in a later section.

¹⁸ Simonin, M., 'Traduction et pédagogie des langues au XVI^e siècle: sur un ouvrage de Pierre Boaistuau mis en latin par Bénigne Poissenot', *Studi francesi*, vol. 21, no. 1, (1977), pp. 177-79; 'Boaistuau et Bruscombille: note sur le texte des 'Imaginations'', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance*, vol. 5, no. 9 (1979), pp. 14-19; *Le Théâtre du monde (1558)* (Geneva, 1981); *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme (1558)* (Geneva, 1982); 'Michel de Nostredame, Pierre Boaistuau, Chavigny et la peste aixoise de 1546', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1983), pp. 127-130.

¹⁹ Balcou, J., Le Gallo, Y. (eds), *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne* (Paris, 1997), p. 283. Bold font is mine.

This was also the case in the 2002 *History of French Literature*, where Boaistuau was fleetingly mentioned as ‘an enthusiastic compiler and translator’.²⁰

Such quotations reflect a certain treatment of Boaistuau’s work which was established by earlier studies, and has now resulted only in fleeting references to the writer’s name in collections of Renaissance texts and with no proper exploration of the variety of themes contained in his books. This kind of treatment can be divided into two general categories: the first consists of works which have devoted only a short comment on Boaistuau as a literary figure or on his role / association to a related topic of research, such as Floyd Gray’s *Gender, Rhetoric and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing*.²¹ To the second category belong the studies focusing on certain aspects of Boaistuau’s work, all of which, however, are linked in one way or another to the study of Renaissance literature. Recent examples of this latter category (which also represents the majority of academic approaches to Boaistuau) are Pollie Bromilow’s *Models of Women in Sixteenth-century French Literature* and Claire Jane Cordell’s dissertation which both focused on aspects of *Histoires tragiques*.²² As a result of these two categories, Boaistuau is most commonly remembered either as the writer who imported and popularised the literary genres of *histoire tragique* and *histoire prodigieuse* into Renaissance France, or as a compiler who published works about monstrous births and natural disasters.²³ No real analysis of his complete set of ideas has emerged, because no study has ever examined in depth all aspects of his career, or has ever fully contextualised the correlations of his books within the context

²⁰ Coward, D., *A History of French Literature* (Oxford, 2002), p. 73.

²¹ Gray, F., *Gender, Rhetoric and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 48.

²² Bromilow, P., *Models of Women in Sixteenth-century French Literature: female exemplarity in the Histoires tragiques (1559) and the Heptaméron (1559)* (New York, 2007); Cordell, C. J., ‘La transgression dans l’histoire tragique du XVIe siècle’ (PhD dissert., University of Johannesburg, 2005).

²³ A recent example is Jennifer Spinks’s *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (London, 2009), p. 85.

of Renaissance intellectual history. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that the existing place of Boaistuau remains indistinct and obscure.

In the past fifty years, scholars who have noted Boaistuau's significance have shown interest mainly in four of his works: *Le Théâtre du monde* with its complementary treatise *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, the *Histoires prodigieuses* and the *Histoires tragiques*. No doubt, this was because these particular works were the most popular in terms of publications and diffusion, and had a lasting impact. These titles have been identified within the varied sixteenth-century literary culture, which remains a fertile ground for research and continues to attract scholarly attention.²⁴ Among the themes which come up are the ways Boaistuau's works are related to literary trends and Shakespeare, gender history, Renaissance philosophy and humanism, and the study of portents and wonders. Such perspectives reveal a diverse field of study, which needs to be categorised in order to present the different directions with which Boaistuau's works have been associated. Therefore, the following overview of studies on *Le Théâtre du monde* (including the *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*), *Histoires prodigieuses* and *Histoires tragiques* has been divided accordingly, with separate sections corresponding to each one of the books. This overview will show the various ways Boaistuau's work has been hitherto examined, and also demonstrate the limitations of these approaches in constructing a complete picture of the French writer's importance in the study of sixteenth-century humanist literature.

²⁴ Modern research has focused on a variety of themes related to sixteenth-century literary culture. A few examples of the continuing interest in the field are: Sorsby, K. R., *Representations of the Body in French Renaissance Poetry* (New York, 1999); Bernstein, J., *Print Culture and Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Oxford, 2001); Stephenson, B., *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre* (Aldershot, 2004); LaGuardia, D. P., *Intertextual Masculinity in French Renaissance Literature* (Aldershot, 2008).

Histoires tragiques has attracted a great degree of attention from scholars over the past years. Although a critical edition was published in 1977 by Richard Carr, the work had already appeared in much earlier studies because of its close association with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It has been argued that the English translation of the third story from Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques* by William Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure* (1567) served as the model for the writing of Shakespeare's famous play.²⁵ This connection of the French writer to English literature was mentioned as early as 1906 by Harold de Wolf Fuller and 1921 by Henri Hauvette.²⁶ It was touched upon by many subsequent studies, such as Rene Pruvost's *Matteo Bandello and Elizabethan Fiction*, Henry Carlton's 'France as Chaperone of Romeo and Juliet', Olin Moore's *The Legend of Romeo and Juliet*, and Kenneth Muir's *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*.²⁷ In fact, Boaistuau and Shakespeare remain a popular topic, as proved by the publication of recent studies such as Nicole Prustner's *Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare*, which provided an overview of the relationships between the different versions of the story and reassessed the role of Boaistuau in the shaping of Shakespeare's play;²⁸ or Stephen Sohmer's *Shakespeare for the Wiser Sort* which linked Boaistuau with the issue of time-riddles in *Romeo and*

²⁵ Others give Arthur Burke's *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) as Shakespeare's direct source. See for more details Bullough, G., *Narrative and dramatic sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London, 1966).

²⁶ Wolf Fuller, H. de, 'Romeo and Juliette', *Modern Philology*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1906), pp. 75-120; Hauvette, H., 'Une variante française de la légende de Romeo et Juliette', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, I, 3 (1921), pp. 329-37. For more details on *Histoires tragiques* see Chapter Three.

²⁷ Pruvost, R., *Matteo Bandello and Elizabethan Fiction* (Paris, 1937); Carlton, H. B., 'France as Chaperone of Romeo and Juliet' in *Studies in French Language and Medieval Literature presented to Mildred K. Pope* (Manchester, 1939), pp. 43-59; Moore, O. H., *The Legend of Romeo and Juliet* (Columbus, OH, 1950), Chapter X: Pierre Boaistuau; Muir, K., *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (London, 1977).

²⁸ Prunster, N. (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare: Four Tales of Star-Crossed Love by Salernitano, Da Porto, Bandello and Boaistuau* (Toronto, 2000).

Juliet.²⁹ A different, but closely related direction of study, examined the translation of *Histoires tragiques* from Italian into French, such as Frank S. Hook's *The French Bandello* and Rene Sturel's *Bandello en France au XVIe siècle*.³⁰ Lionel Sozzi's *La nouvelle française à la Renaissance* identified Boaistuau's work within the context of the nouvelle genre in France, and paved the way for later studies which examined the expansion of *Histoires tragiques* by François de Belleforest and other *literati* from different perspectives.³¹

One of these was the close relationship between literature and law, and in particular the critical position of *literati* regarding the contemporary legal system and practices. Probably the first scholars who investigated this notion in relation to Boaistuau (and Belleforest) were Thierry Pech and Ullrich Langer in their respective articles 'Foy et secret: le mariage clandestin entre droit et littérature dans les *Histoires tragiques* de Boaistuau à Camus' and 'The Renaissance Novella as Justice'.³² Similarly, Claire J. Cordell in her recent PhD dissertation examined works that show the sequence and modification of the law-transgression-punishment model through their crime stories, and at the same time the evolution of the *histoire tragique* genre in France.³³ Boaistuau's work is a frequent point of reference throughout her analysis. Indirectly linked to this notion of crime and punishment is the understanding of *Histoires*

²⁹ Sohmer, S. T., *Shakespeare for the Wiser Sort* (Manchester, 2007).

³⁰ Hook, F. S., *The French Bandello* (Columbia, 1948); Sturel, R., *Bandello en France au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 1970).

³¹ Sozzi, L., *La nouvelle française à la Renaissance, vol. 2: L'Histoire tragique dans la deuxième moitié du seizième siècle* (Torino, 1977). Also see Simonin, M., 'François de Belleforest et l'histoire tragique en France au XVIe siècle' (thèse, Paris XII, 1984). I would like to thank Dr. Hervé Thomas Campagne for bringing this study to my attention.

³² Pech, T., 'Foy et secret: le mariage clandestin entre droit et littérature dans les *Histoires tragiques* de Boaistuau à Camus', *Dix-Septième Siècle*, vol. 48, no. 4, (1996), pp. 891-909; Langer, U., 'The Renaissance Novella as Justice', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 52, no. 2 (1999), pp. 311-341. See also Pech, T., *Contre le crime: droit et littérature sous la Contre-Réforme: les histoires tragiques (1559-1664)* (Paris, 2000).

³³ Cordell, C. J., 'La transgression dans l'histoire tragique du XVIe siècle' (PhD dissert., University of Johannesburg, 2005).

tragiques as part of a literary genre with a didactic and moralising purpose. One example of this approach is Richard Carr's seminal study *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires tragiques: a study of narrative form and tragic vision*, which analyses the book in the light of the short story and the *miseria humanis* genre; at the same time, Carr stressed Boaistuau's emphasis on human psychology and edification that was absent from Bandello's original edition.³⁴ Adelin C. Fiorato's 'Les *Histoires tragiques* de Boaistuau et Belleforest, ou la moralization d'un conteur de la Renaissance Italienne en France' also focused on Boaistuau's didactic aim as a moralist, while reflecting the atmosphere of instability in sixteenth-century French political, social and cultural history.³⁵

A different scholarly approach examined features of *Histoires tragiques* associated with gender history, and in particular the role of women in the literary culture of early modern France. Nancy E. Virtue for instance, in her 'Translation as violation: a reading of Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques*', claimed that Boaistuau's work can be read as a response to the suppression of his *Histoires des amans fortunez* by Jeanne d'Albret the year before, and an attempt to restore his esteem as a writer in the book market.³⁶ Furthermore, Virtue raised the interesting case that *Histoires tragiques* can also be seen as a declaration of male superiority over the model of female empowerment which was manifested in Marguerite of Navarre's nouvelles. Devan Baty's recent dissertation 'The production of fear: women and passion in the *Histoires*

³⁴ Carr, R., *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires tragiques: a study of narrative form and tragic vision* (Chapel Hill, 1979) – also published in the series *North Carolina studies in the Romance languages and literatures*, no. 210 (1979), pp. 1-258.

³⁵ Fiorato, A. C., 'Les *Histoires tragiques* de Boaistuau et Belleforest, ou la moralization d'un conteur de la Renaissance Italienne en France', *Studi Francesi*, 2003 (Supplement), pp. 135-144.

³⁶ Virtue, N. E., 'Translation as violation: a reading of Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques*', *Renaissance and Reformation* (Canada), vol. 22, no. 3 (1998), pp. 35-58. For more details on the affair of *Amans fortunez* see later on in this chapter, and Chapter One.

tragiques' made use of Boaistuau's work to analyse the production of misogynistic fear in the genre of *histoire tragique*.³⁷ In her analysis, which included successors to the genre, Baty also studied the targeting of female sexuality as a scapegoat for the moral disorder at the time. As it will be shown, Boaistuau in his work argued that women should not challenge male authority or interfere in the public sphere. Following a similar direction, Pollie Bromilow touched upon the topic of female inferiority, tracing features of 'the misogynist belief that the natural state of woman is a sinful combination of adultery and dishonesty'.³⁸ Her *Models of women in sixteenth-century French literature* examined Boaistuau's representation of women in the French *nouvelle* through a comparative approach of two collections of short stories, Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* and Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques*.³⁹ In a feminist reading of these titles, Bromilow used Boaistuau to analyse the concept of female exemplarity and to add to the debate over women's writing in Renaissance France.

As well as *Histoires tragiques*, scholarship on Boaistuau also focused on *Le Théâtre du monde*. Scholars have examined the philosophical concept of the work and its place within the wider frame of Renaissance humanist and intellectual culture. Michel Simonin published a critical edition in 1981, identifying Boaistuau's work along the lines of the *miseria humanis* genre, and reserving a special place for it among the French literary endeavours at the time.⁴⁰ Simonin was the first to examine Boaistuau's possible sources, to create a table listing the editions of *Le Théâtre du monde*, and to

³⁷ Baty, D., 'The production of fear: women and passion in the *Histoires tragiques*' (PhD dissert., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005).

³⁸ Bromilow, P., 'The Case of Lucretia: female exemplarity in Boaistuau and Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*', in Britnell, J., Moss, A. (eds), *Female Saints and Sinners* (Durham, 2002), p. 166.

³⁹ Bromilow, P., *Models of women in sixteenth-century French literature*, o.c.

⁴⁰ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Le Théâtre du monde (1558)* (Geneva, 1981).

contextualise its concept and character. For this purpose, he also published in 1982 a critical edition of *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, a title published not only separately but also as a complement to *Le Théâtre*.⁴¹ Boaistuau had written this treatise according to the *dignitas hominis* genre, and contrary to the human miseries narrated in *Le Théâtre*, he celebrated Man and his dignity. Lionel Sozzi had focused on this issue in his article 'La "dignitas hominis" dans la littérature Française de la Renaissance' which examined Boaistuau's part in the integration and continuation of this philosophical notion in French Renaissance literature, and stressed the distinctive character of *Bref discours*.⁴² By examining these two treatises, different in form and content, but complementary in context, Simonin and Sozzi presented a picture of Boaistuau's philosophical views on Man, and shed light on a central aspect of his agenda: his moralising message. On the other hand, Tom Conley examined Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre* (and to a lesser extent *Histoires tragiques*) as tools for an analysis of areas where cartography, narrative and theatre seemed to overlap during the Renaissance.⁴³

Another field of study has concentrated on the ways other works influenced Boaistuau in the writing of *Le Théâtre du monde*, and how this was linked to themes of French Renaissance literature.⁴⁴ Armand L. de Gaetano in his article 'Gelli's *Circe* and Boaistuau's *Theatrum mundi*' examined the similarities between Boaistuau's work

⁴¹ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme (1558)* (Geneva, 1982).

⁴² Sozzi, L., 'La "dignitas hominis" dans la littérature Française de la Renaissance' in Levi, A. H. T., (ed.), *Humanism in France at the end of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance* (Manchester, 1970), pp. 176-198.

⁴³ Conley, T., 'Pierre Boaistuau's Cosmographic Stage: Theater, Text and Map', *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 33, no. 2 (1992), pp. 59-86.

⁴⁴ The same direction was followed in Henry Tudor's article 'L'institution des princes Chrestiens: a note on Boaistuau and Clichtove', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* [Switzerland], vol. 45, no. 1 (1983), pp. 103-106, which is also the only article on *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tugurinus*. Tudor demonstrated that Boaistuau borrowed several elements from Clichtove for the compilation of his work. For more detail see Chapter Four.

and an earlier example, Giambattista Gelli's *Circe*.⁴⁵ De Gaetano compared the two titles in terms of sources and scope, and proved that Boaistuau's creation was similar in many respects to Gelli's work. Similarly, Michel Simonin examined the use of Michel de Nostredame's text by Boaistuau, and in particular for the description of a plague epidemic in *Le Théâtre du monde*.⁴⁶ Thus, De Gaetano and Simonin shed new light on the variety of original sources used by Boaistuau, and raised interesting points concerning the practices of compilation and cross-reference in French sixteenth-century literature.

However, scholars were not only interested in the influences of *Le Théâtre du monde*, but also in the ways it influenced the creation of other works. For instance, Simonin's article 'Boaistuau et Bruscabille: note sur le texte des *Imaginations*' argued that Boaistuau's *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* can be considered as one of the sources the French dramatist Jean Gracieux (widely known as Bruscabille) used for his facetious work *Imaginations*.⁴⁷ Simonin demonstrated how certain passages were either copied or adapted by Gracieux, thus proving the lasting influence of Boaistuau's text in the seventeenth century. The same point was also evident in Hana Bockova's critical edition which examined a 1605 Czech edition of

⁴⁵ De Gaetano, A. L., 'Gelli's *Circe* and Boaistuau's *Theatrum mundi*', *Forum Italicum*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1973), pp. 441-454. Giambattista Gelli (1498 - 1563) was a Florentine humanist. Beside *Circe*, he also wrote other philosophical and historical works such as the *Capricci del bottaio*.

⁴⁶ Simonin, M., 'Michel de Nostredame, Pierre Boaistuau, Chavigny et la peste aixoise de 1546', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1983), pp. 127-130.

⁴⁷ Simonin, M., 'Boaistuau et Bruscabille: note sur le texte des *Imaginations*', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance*, vol. 5, no. 9 (1979), pp. 14-19. Jean Gracieux (1575-1634), also known as Deslauriers or Bruscabille, was a French dramatist and a comedian who worked at the Hôtel de Bourgogne (the first public theatre in France) and wrote several works of farce; his *Nouvelles et plaisantes imaginations* was first published in 1613. For more detail see Howe, A., 'Bruscabille, qui était-il?', *XVII^e siècle*, vol. 153 (1986), pp. 390-396; Roberts, H., *Dog's Tales: Representations of Ancient Cynicism in French Renaissance Texts* (Amsterdam, 2006), pp. 225-235.

Le Théâtre du monde translated by Nathanaél Vodňanský.⁴⁸ Bockova showed how Vodňanský's Latin translation *Theatrum mundi minoris*, with a few additions and adjustments which placed emphasis on the book's moralising character, was associated with the turbulent events in early seventeenth-century Moravia.⁴⁹ In fact, this translation was quite representative of the movement of many contemporary Czech works toward pessimism, raising the interesting issue of how far Boaistuau's book could penetrate foreign literary cultures.

On a different level, David H. Thomas in 'Vives, Boaistuau and John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593): some borrowings of a "witty grammarian"', focused on another aspect of *Le Théâtre du monde* associated with early modern translation and education.⁵⁰ Thomas investigated the role of Boaistuau's book in the writing of a sixteenth-century-language manual by English writer John Eliot, and the various ways *Le Théâtre*'s text was used for edifying and didactic purposes. Michel Simonin had hinted at this largely neglected subject as early as 1977.⁵¹ In his article 'Traduction et pédagogie des langues au XVI siècle: sur un ouvrage de Pierre Boaistuau mis en latin par Bénigne Poissenot', he stressed the importance of a bilingual edition of *Le Théâtre du monde* in French and Latin, and its use for the education of French youth in Latin and the instruction of foreign readers of the French language. As will be shown in Chapter Three, this role of *Le Théâtre* is further proved by several editions

⁴⁸ Nathanaél Vodňanský (1563-1621) was mayor of Prague, and one of the twenty-seven Bohemian nobles who were executed in the town square in 1621 after the battle of White Mountain (1620) and the defeat of the Protestant Czechs.

⁴⁹ Bockova, H., *Nathanaél Vodňanský z Uračova: Theatrum mundi minoris* (Brno, 2001).

⁵⁰ Thomas, D. H., 'Vives, Boaistuau and John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593): some borrowings of a "witty grammarian"', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 70 (2008), pp. 545-565.

⁵¹ Simonin, M., 'Traduction et pédagogie des langues au XVI siècle: sur un ouvrage de Pierre Boaistuau mis en latin par Bénigne Poissenot', *Studi Francesci*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1977), pp. 177-79.

(particularly in German) which clearly stated the same educational purposes in their front pages.

Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses* has been examined primarily in relation to the study of early modern wonders and the occult in general. Ernest Martin, as early as 1880, identified *Histoires prodigieuses* within the wider context of the history of monsters, and monstrous births in particular – which remains the dominant viewpoint of scholarship focusing on this work.⁵² The first critical edition was published in 1961 by Yves Florenne, who associated the book's contents to fields of study such as French humanism and portent lore.⁵³ Gisele Mathieu-Castellani's second critical edition in 1996 retained a similar perspective of *Histoires prodigieuses*, also stating its links to the study of natural philosophy.⁵⁴ In 2000 appeared a third critical edition by Stephen Bamforth (of a special copy of the work prepared for Elizabeth I), who maintained the interest in monsters but also introduced new perspectives such as the work's relation to print culture.⁵⁵ In the intermediate period of almost forty years between Florenne's and Bamforth's studies, several works have turned their attention to certain aspects of monsters in Boaistuau's book, or have fleetingly mentioned its contents in one way or another. An example is Suzanne Magnanini's article which employed the Hydra monster as described by Boaistuau in *Histoires prodigieuses* in order to reconstruct a genealogy of the Hydra accounts in early modern prodigy books

⁵² Martin, E., *Histoire des monstres depuis l'antiquité jusqu' a nos jours* (Paris, 1880), p. 270.

⁵³ Boaistuau (ed. Y. Florenne), *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1961). Also see Florenne, Y., 'Un quêteur de prodiges', *Mercure de France*, vol. 342 (1961), pp. 657-668.

⁵⁴ Boaistuau, P. (ed. G. M.-Castellani), *Histoires prodigieuses* (Geneva, 1996).

⁵⁵ Boaistuau, P. (ed. S. Bamforth), *Histoires prodigieuses, MS 136 Wellcome library* (Milan, 2000). The examination of the new critical edition – Boaistuau, P. (eds. J. Céard and S. Bamforth), *Histoires prodigieuses (édition de 1561)* (Geneva, 2010) – was not possible.

and natural histories, and to stress its role in the Italian dragon-slayer tale ‘*Lo Mercante*’.⁵⁶

However, the major work which gave *Histoires prodigieuses* a significant place in the study of marvels and prodigies was Jean Céard’s magisterial study *La nature et les prodiges*.⁵⁷ Céard included Boaistuau’s book in his examination of portents and the occult from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and attributed to it a very special role in the developments of sixteenth-century French literature as the beginning of an influential literary genre, the *histoire prodigieuse*. He also examined Boaistuau’s concept of monster and its symbolisms in relation to theology. At about the same time, Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston’s article ‘Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century France and England’ investigated the blurred lines between wonder and prodigy literature at the time, mentioning *Histoires prodigieuses* as an example belonging to both genres.⁵⁸ Park and Daston also gave a short overview of some of the monsters described in Boaistuau’s text, and of the various ways in which they were interpreted in the early modern period.

Amongst these was their connection to a strong theological context and their use for religious ends, as described, for instance, in Alexandra Walsham’s *Providence in Early Modern England*.⁵⁹ Walsham stressed the widespread appearance of portents

⁵⁶ Magnanini, S., ‘Foils and Fakes: The Hydra in Giambattista Basile’s Dragon-Slayer Tale, ‘*Lo Mercante*’’, *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2005), pp. 167–196.

⁵⁷ Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges: l’insolite au XVIIe siècle* (Geneva, 1977).

⁵⁸ Park, K., Daston, L. J., ‘Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England’, *Past and Present*, vol. 92 (1981), pp. 20-54. Also see their monumental study *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York, 1998), referred to in Chapter Five.

⁵⁹ Walsham, A., *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

and prodigies and their symbolisms, as seen against the backdrop of a religious, often apocalyptic, framework. The same point of view was used when examining Boaistuau's monsters, whose work was presented as an influence on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century books on the same subject. Following a similar perspective, Anne Jacobson Schutte's article made use of *Histoires prodigieuses* to shed light on an aspect of a theological dispute in seventeenth-century New England, known as the Antinomian Controversy.⁶⁰ Boaistuau's book was one of the sources used by New English Protestants to explain two monstrous births at the time of the controversy, thus revealing a continuity of European literature on monsters across the Atlantic Ocean. Similarly, Jennifer Spinks's recent study *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* identified Boaistuau's monsters within the same theological background.⁶¹ Although only fleetingly mentioned, *Histoires prodigieuses* was examined as part of a branch of works with a religious and symbolic context, amidst the publication of various wonder-books associated with Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemics.

Closely related was another approach of scholarship on *Histoires prodigieuses* dealing with the study of monstrous births in a variety of contexts. Studies such as Herman Roodenburg's 'The maternal imagination. The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland', and Marie-Hélène Huet's *Monstrous Imagination*, reveal a common interest on the ways in which Boaistuau's book and monstrous

⁶⁰ Schutte, A. J., "Such Monstrous Births': A Neglected Aspect of the Antinomian Controversy', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 38 (1985), pp. 85-106. For more on the Antinomian Controversy of 1636-1638 see Battis, E., *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Chapel Hill, 1962).

⁶¹ Spinks, J., *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (London, 2009).

births are linked to the issues of early modern medicine and maternal imagination.⁶² Roodenburg included *Histoires prodigieuses* in her narrative of contemporary theories about pregnancy, and the development of the fear of giving birth to a monstrous child. Similarly, Huet focused on the variety of ways teratology and literature intersected in the Renaissance, and used Boaistuau's example to show the power of images and imagination in this respect. The integral part occupied by monstrous births in Renaissance popular culture was discussed by Norman R. Smith's 'Portentous Births and the Monstrous Imagination in Renaissance Culture'.⁶³ Smith considered Boaistuau's work as a representative example of the influence of such treatises on early modern societies, creating blurred lines between reality and imagination. Alan W. Bates in his *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* attempted an overview of the ways monstrous births were understood and of the popular attitudes toward them.⁶⁴ The cases of malformed human bodies taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* were examined from a perspective which combined an analysis of their symbolism as well as a more natural philosophical approach to their nature. Similarly, Peter Platt's collection of essays *Wonders, Marvels and Monsters in Early Modern Culture* contains several references to Boaistuau's work in relation to early modern monstrous births and their meanings, and how these were associated primarily to attitudes on human body and sex.⁶⁵

⁶² Roodenburg, H. W., 'The Maternal Imagination. The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 21 (1988), pp. 701-716; Huet, M.-H., *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 1993). Also see her 'Monstrous Imagination: Progeny as Art in French Classicism', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17 (1991), pp. 718-737.

⁶³ Smith, N. R., 'Portentous Births and the Monstrous Imagination in Renaissance Culture', in Jones, T. S., Sprunger, D. A. (eds), *Marvels, Monsters and Miracles* (Kalamazoo, 2002), pp. 267-283.

⁶⁴ Bates, A. W., *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam, 2005). See also Wilson, D., *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London, 1993).

⁶⁵ Platt, P. G. (ed.), *Wonders, Marvels and Monsters in Early Modern Culture* (Newark, 1999). See also his *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvelous* (Lincoln, 1997).

This overview of the main studies on Boaistuau shows that scholars have created an incomplete picture of the French writer and his work. Only four of his books have been examined, while his other three titles remain largely neglected. In addition to this, historiography has focused on themes of *Histoires tragiques*, *Le Théâtre du monde*, *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, and *Histoires prodigieuses* primarily associated with literature. As a result, other aspects of these works remain in the shadow and only a part of the Breton writer's wide variety of topics characteristic of his oeuvre have been covered. Similarly, important aspects of his agenda as a French Renaissance intellectual remain neglected and, most importantly, his profile as a sixteenth-century humanist writer continues to be indistinct. Consideration of this latter attribute, which characterizes a century of transition and intellectual fermentation, will enable a deeper understanding of his ideas and works and will allow a careful examination of his legacy. Thus, the aim of the present study is a new, fuller reconstruction of Boaistuau's profile and an analysis, for the first time, of the entirety of his works. A study of Boaistuau, however, is not only a first reconstruction of the entire career and philosophy of an eminent writer, who emerges as far more prolific than any previous study has hitherto recognised; it is also an analysis of his multi-dimensional role in the context of sixteenth-century intellectual culture, and of the ways his varied work can contribute to different fields of existing scholarship – primarily print and literary culture, humanism and philosophy, political and historical writing, and the study of Nature. Why then, does Pierre Boaistuau deserve more attention today? And how can a fuller analysis of his works, both of those already examined and of the lesser known ones, prove beneficial to scholarship?

Firstly, Boaistuau's career as a sixteenth-century writer should be identified within the wider context of Renaissance literature. As such, his case is an essential link to the expanding chain of continuing interest on the belles-lettres and literary works at the time, and follows the line of numerous publications on various themes of Renaissance culture in general.⁶⁶ From a literary perspective, the study of Boaistuau's books allows a closer look at the ongoing transformations during the middle of the sixteenth century by following the career of a very successful writer whose works circulated in France and Europe but have not been fully investigated. This can add to examination of questions such as 'was there a profession of author at the time?' and to exploration of issues such as the relationship between writer and readers, as well as the practices of editing, translating and anthologizing. As a humanist, Boaistuau raises interesting questions about the nature of French humanism of his time, and the ways it was linked to the greater picture of French Renaissance. In one way, he represents the contemporary spirit of transition and metamorphosis which saw the resurgence of classical knowledge blended with new trains of thought; this is why Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani has aptly named Boaistuau 'fils de Saint Augustin ou père de Montaigne'.⁶⁷ Examination of his varied set of humanist interests, some of which have never been presented before, will shed new light on his career and on his ability to accommodate different attributes and trends in the writing of his works. This will also allow the creation of Boaistuau's complete profile as a humanist scholar and will add a further level of understanding of his role and importance in the wider Renaissance culture.

⁶⁶ A few recent examples of the continuing interest on various aspects of the Renaissance are: Price, D. H., *Albrecht Durer's Renaissance: Humanism, Reformation and the Art of Faith* (Ann Arbor, 2003); Celezna, C. S., *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004); Wolfe, J., *Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 2004); Shapiro, N., *Lyrics of the French Renaissance: Marot, Du Bellay, Ronsard* (Chicago, 2006); Walsby, M., *The Counts of Laval: Culture, Patronage and Religion in Fifteenth-and Sixteenth-Century France* (Aldershot, 2007).

⁶⁷ Boaistuau, P. (ed. G. M. Castellani), *Histoires prodigieuses* (Geneva, 1996), p. 23.

Furthermore, the fact that a great number of Boaistuau's editions have survived without ever having been examined demands a much closer look, as it reveals not only the great success of the books but also the writer's importance in the study of various aspects of sixteenth-century print culture. The present research has revealed several new editions of Boaistuau's works published in different formats and by different publishers, which has allowed the creation of a complete inventory, for the first time, of all known editions of Boaistuau's works.⁶⁸ Examination of their publishing history raises interesting questions regarding the nature of the French and European book trade at the time of their publication, especially concerning the bonds between France, Switzerland, Germany and the Low Countries. The fact that a considerable number of Boaistuau's editions were printed abroad not only proves their international character but also testifies to the existence of a wide dissemination network which supported their circulation. Consequently, this can contribute to the study of printers and booksellers, and their local and national networks which made Boaistuau's titles accessible even to readers in South America. In addition, a contextualisation of the Breton's work will shed new light on interrelated issues such as the changing nature of the printing industry, the rise of the vernacular, the re-emergence and popularity of certain literary genres at that time, the centralised character of book production in France, the factors necessary for a best-seller, and the readership's preferences.

⁶⁸ For this inventory, lists of Boaistuau's editions contained in the following works were also taken into consideration: Boaistuau, P. (ed. R. Carr), *Histoires tragiques* (Paris, 1977); Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Le Théâtre du monde (1558)* (Droz, 1981); Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme (1558)* (Droz, 1982); Pettegree, A., Walsby, M., Wilkinson, A., *French Vernacular Books* (Brill, 2007); Wilkinson, A. S., *Iberian Books* (Brill, 2010); Pettegree, A., Walsby, M., *Netherlandish Books* (Brill, 2011). See Appendix A.

Besides Boaistuau's importance for the study of sixteenth-century print culture, the significance of fully examining the contents of his books also lies in the fact that they can add greatly to different areas of scholarship. As mentioned earlier, Boaistuau is usually remembered either as an importer of two literary genres to France or as a writer of monstrous births, although this is only half the case. His oeuvre is far more diverse and complex, touching issues of narrative fiction, philosophy, political theory, historical writing, theology and natural philosophy. By looking at Boaistuau, we look at the rise of certain disciplines and at the new orientations of study in France at that time. The transformation and popularisation of the nouvelle is only one field of study, while the examination of related fields such as translation and patronage, and the associations between history, law and literature can also benefit. The transitions and fusions of different features and trends experienced in sixteenth-century literature are evident throughout the career of Boaistuau, who followed different literary genres and different styles of writing. Such trends, which have been hitherto neglected but are clearly manifested in his work, are the use of history for the praise of French monarchy; the shaping of a religious rhetoric aimed at bolstering the Catholic faith; the knowledge explosion and classification; and the early stages of encyclopaedism. Addressing such issues adds new material to the investigation of Boaistuau in relation to the history of mentalités; as Jean Delumeau rightly wrote, Boaistuau cannot be described as just an ordinary advocate of sixteenth-century French literature but as a representative of the history of mentalities: 'Boaistuau, on l'a dit, appartient plus à l'histoire des mentalités qu'à celle de la littérature'.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Delumeau, J., *Histoire de la Bretagne* (Toulouse, 1969), p. 297.

Study of Boaistuau's work can also add to different research questions, such as the relationship between early modern natural philosophy and theology, an area of study which has attracted considerable attention from scholars in the past decade.⁷⁰ As it will be shown in Chapter Five, Boaistuau's examination and interpretation of Nature (in particular as manifested in his immensely popular *Histoires prodigieuses*) was blended with Christian doctrines and the tradition of Church Fathers such as St. Augustine, thus shaping a very important aspect of his philosophy which has never been studied before. This can add valuable material to the exploration of the natural world during the mid sixteenth century and its various associations with theology, while at the same time offering a fresh view to the common elements between similar treatises and to the practice of compilation. What is more, it reveals interesting points for the study of closely related issues, such as early modern medicine and anatomy, magic, wonders and the occult, and for the understanding of the world as seen through the eyes of sixteenth-century people. Examination of such issues unfolds further aspects of Boaistuau's multi-dimensional work, enhances his profile as a polymath writer, and promotes a fuller comprehension of his legacy.

Therefore, this study does not only aim to offer a new reconstruction of the profile and career of a Renaissance writer but also a more efficient and full contextualisation, for the first time, of the entirety of his work and the ways it adds to different fields of existing scholarship. In addition, the examination of Boaistuau's oeuvre reveals a dominant feature which underlies all his works: the employment of humanist research and values for different purposes. This is the unifying agent which brings all aspects

⁷⁰ See for instance Howell, K. J., *God's Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (Indiana, 2002); Brooke, J., Maclean, I. (eds), *Heterodoxy in Early Modern Science and Religion* (Oxford, 2005); Killeen, K., Forshaw, P. J. (eds), *The Word and the World: Biblical Exegesis and Early Modern Science* (Basingstoke, 2007). It is interesting to note that none of these recent studies mentions the case of Boaistuau in any way.

of his varied work together, and undergirds the internal coherence of his thought. Humanism provided Boaistuau with ideas and inspiration, frameworks and models in imitation of which he compiled his own works and a vast amount of material in support of his arguments. The Breton writer used these not only for scholarly purposes and the celebration of ancient learning, but in order to promote his moralising message, praise the grandeur of French monarchy, strengthen the Catholic faith, and explore the natural world. Therefore, this study argues that the exploration of the various ways in which Boaistuau employed humanism casts new light on the agenda of French humanists during the middle of the sixteenth century. Their shared cultural values, such as virtue, self-control, and erudition, were applied as much in literary culture as in statesmanship, religion, and natural philosophy – three areas identified with Boaistuau’s work.

For the purposes of this study, a variety of editions of Boaistuau’s works have been used, spanning a period from 1556 to 1751. These include copies housed in libraries in the United Kingdom and abroad, as well as copies available via electronic resources, such as EEBO and Gallica.⁷¹ The majority of them are in French. They vary in format, year and place of publication, in an effort to cover a broad spectrum of the different editions of Boaistuau’s works.

The main text is divided into five chapters, each composed around a central theme which corresponds to an aspect of Boaistuau’s work and thus adds to the overall argument of the thesis.

⁷¹ Early English Books Online (EEBO) contains English editions of a few titles by Boaistuau; Gallica (the electronic library of BnF) makes possible the online examination of a variety of editions of Boaistuau’s works, as well as secondary sources about the writer’s life and work. For more detail see the relevant section in Bibliography.

Chapter One focuses on Boaistuau's life, correlating all known information about the major events of his life: his birth in Nantes, his university years and education, his service for the French crown as the secretary of Ambassador Jean-Jacques of Cambrai and the possibility that he was Marguerite of Navarre's valet du chambre, his travels across Europe, the meeting with Elizabeth I, and his broad social circle. As well as passages from Boaistuau's works which contain biographical information, articles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be used (such as René Kerviller's entry in the *Bio-Bibliographie Bretonne*), and all previous accounts made by Yves Florenne, Michel Simonin, Richard Carr, Jean Céard, Gisele Mathieu-Castellani and Stephen Bamforth will also be taken into consideration. The aim will not be simply a collection of all scattered data on the writer's life but rather a new understanding against the backdrop of contemporary events. In an effort to create a comprehensive picture of Boaistuau as a sixteenth-century historical figure and a first introduction to his work, Chapter One is divided into four sections: his birth, the decades 1540-1550 and 1550-1560 (the only periods about which we actually have significant information about his life), and a retrospective of his literary profile. This reconstruction of Boaistuau will include references to possible influences for the creation of his works, and will set the scene for their detailed examination in the following chapters.

Chapter Two examines Boaistuau's association with sixteenth-century print culture, and his works' representative character of the French book industry. The total number of more than 164 different editions of his works (including newly found ones during personal visits to several libraries) is staggering, and sets Boaistuau's eminent role on

a whole new level, much more significant than that ascribed to him in previous studies. Their detailed publishing history will reveal much about book dissemination networks at the time, and will shed light on interesting cases regarding Boaistuau's readers. In addition, attention will be given to a greatly overlooked aspect of his writing career, the diffusion and lasting influence of his work outside France and Europe. Studying the many editions of his work will also offer the possibility of examining the manifestations of the print culture at the time, through the advent and consolidation of the printing art in France, and from a particular set of features which characterized the French book industry in the middle of the sixteenth century. These will serve as the background for proving the representative character of Boaistuau's works by focusing on four key areas: their centralised production, their physical nature, their use of vernacular language, and their popular topics.

Chapter Three is structured around two main themes, Renaissance humanism and philosophy, analysing within these contexts four of Boaistuau's titles. *Histoires des amans fortunez* and *Histoires tragiques* will comprise the first part of the chapter, which will focus on their associations with French narrative fiction. By identifying their humanist influences it will be shown how Boaistuau contributed to the rise of the nouvelle and popularised the genre of *histoire tragique*, while at the same time shedding light on the practices of editing and translating of the time. Part two will examine two further works, *Le Théâtre du monde* and its complementary treatise *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*. Their concepts, originally conceived as a joint project, will be given an up-to-date analysis for the first time since the critical editions by Simonin in 1981 and 1982. As in the first section, these titles will be examined in their corresponding humanist contexts – but in relation to Renaissance

philosophy. Short overviews of the genres of *miseria humanis* and *dignitas hominis* will serve as introductions before identifying the principal themes of the work, and the ways Boaistuau blended classical philosophy and Christian theology to promote his moralising message.

Chapter Four focuses on two works by Boaistuau completely ignored by modern scholarship, *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* and the *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, examining their contents for the first time. The first part of the chapter will analyse the ways in which humanist research was used for political purposes, through a close examination of *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* which reflected Boaistuau's political theory and was written in support of the Crown. The notion of divine monarchy in France will be discussed, and also the genre of mirror for princes which focused on the qualities and morals of the ideal ruler. Boaistuau's work continued this tradition, describing in length the portrait of a just and wise Christian king, and emphasising on his responsibilities as guardian of peace and defender of the faith. Part two will examine the *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, a narration of the persecutions and heresies inflicted upon the early Church. It belonged to the tradition of works of ecclesiastical history; thus, this genre will also be addressed in short, and will be shown to have been used to serve religious ends. The analysis of Boaistuau's work will shed new light on the writer's preoccupation with the study of history, as well as on the shaping of his anti-Protestant rhetoric aiming to bolster the Catholic faith.

The immensely successful *Histoires prodigieuses* and its various associations with sixteenth-century natural philosophy will be the topic of the fifth and final chapter,

which will add to the picture of Boaistuau's multi-dimensional oeuvre. Although taking into account the direction of modern scholarship, which identified *Histoires prodigieuses* with the genre of wonder books and the study of monstrous births, this chapter will adopt a much wider perspective. It will correlate the contents of the work with the knowledge explosion experienced at the time which, boosted by humanism, resulted in new directions of examining Man and the natural world, and of classifying knowledge. Related trends will be discussed, such as an early form of encyclopaedism, and also the ways Boaistuau's work can prove beneficial for the investigation of the genre of books of the secrets of Nature, early modern medicine and the occult, and the study of natural disasters both as natural phenomena and as divinely sent signs. The topics examined in this chapter will reveal a side of *Histoires prodigieuses* never discussed before, and will demonstrate how natural philosophy was used to understand the order of a cosmos but also how Boaistuau combined it with theology to promote his ever-present moralising message.

CHAPTER 1

Une vie presque inconnue: the life of Pierre Boaistuau

The greatest obstacle facing anyone interested in studying Pierre Boaistuau and his work is the lack of evidence about his life, which is covered in vagueness and obscurity, since most biographical information is fragmentary and drawn primarily from his own writings. There is no agreement among scholars for his birth in Nantes around 1517 and almost no information about his early years or family. Moreover, little can be deduced about his student years and his service for the French Crown, and there is no evidence at all concerning his whereabouts from 1560 until his death in Paris in 1566. In addition, there is no surviving correspondence which could shed further light on particular aspects of his life, no matriculation records, no engraved portrait, and no inventory after his death. Like an unfinished puzzle full of missing pieces which can be partially assembled, an account of Boaistuau's life is pieced together by fragments of different events taken from different time periods.

It is surprising so little is known about Boaistuau's life given his great success as a literary figure and the impressive number of editions available. Mainly known as the writer who imported and popularised two influential genres in Renaissance France, the *histoire tragique* and the *histoire prodigieuse*, Boaistuau's books total 164 different editions in all between 1556 and 1751, including many translations into major European languages. His works had an influence that extended across the French borders and even reached the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean and South America.⁷² The Breton also enjoyed a considerable degree of fame, proved by his broad social circle and the dedicatory sonnets written by illustrious French *literati*

⁷² A full discussion of the editions of Boaistuau's works can be found in Chapter Two.

such as Joseph Scaliger, François de Belleforest, and Jean-Antoine de Baïf found among the pages of his books.⁷³ Pierre Tredehan, secretary of the Cardinal of Meudon, saluted him as a new Orpheus.⁷⁴ However, the greatest proof of Boaistuau's recognition during his lifetime was his meeting with Elizabeth I around 1560. This event testifies to the wide social network of a writer who enjoyed a considerable degree of fame, but most importantly reveals his ambitious character in search of an influential patron.⁷⁵ This constant need for patronage was a feature which marked Boaistuau's career.

The fact that there is so little information on the life of a writer who was both successful and well-known during his own time constitutes one of these paradoxes, common enough to scholars working on issues of sixteenth-century history. This paradox has resulted in speculation in all of Boaistuau's biographical descriptions. From Yves Florenne's article 'Un quêteur de prodiges' in 1961 to the most recent example of Stephen Bamforth's introduction in his critical edition of *Histoires prodigieuses* in 2000, there is no conclusion about certain events and dates of the writer's life.⁷⁶ Among these biographical descriptions, Michel Simonin's 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau' remains to this day a very important source of information and is always cited by studies devoting a few lines to the times and works of Boaistuau.⁷⁷ Nigel Howard Wheale's account confirmed the fragmentary character of the writer's life and raised interesting points about his career alone among Boaistuau's

⁷³ For a selection of sonnets dedicated to Boaistuau see Appendix B.

⁷⁴ Boaistuau, P. (ed. R. Carr), *Histoires tragiques* (Champion, 1977), p. lxx.

⁷⁵ For Boaistuau's meeting with Elizabeth I see later section of this chapter. Also see Chapter Two.

⁷⁶ Florenne, Y., 'Un quêteur de prodiges', *Mercur de France*, vol. 342 (1961), pp. 657-668; Boaistuau (ed. S. Bamforth), *Histoires prodigieuses. MS 136 Wellcome library* (Milan, 2000), pp. 13-43.

⁷⁷ Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', *o.c.*

biographers.⁷⁸ Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, although she did not offer any new ideas, linked Boaistuau's life to the observation of Nature and natural philosophy.⁷⁹ However, the most complete biographical portrait of the Breton writer – at least in terms of covering all major episodes – was probably that by Richard Carr in 1977.⁸⁰ Carr contextualised all scattered information of Boaistuau's life and raised some interesting questions about his works and ideas, and his association with other fields of study such as sixteenth-century print culture. Although Carr's study mostly retains its validity, it is outdated and incomplete. Stephen Bamforth's account, on the other hand, may be more up-to-date but has a much more fragmentary character making it unfit for the purposes of the present study.

For this reason, if Boaistuau's entire works are to be discussed a new approach is necessary. This discussion will take into account all previous descriptions of the writer's life, and will correlate all available information from primary and secondary sources into a fresh point of view.⁸¹ This will be the first time that all existing evidence on Boaistuau is brought together, within the framework of a complete contextualisation of his life and intellectual interests. However, the purpose of a new discussion of Boaistuau's life has an additional role, more important than merely adding new points to the profile of a little-known French humanist writer. It will enable the creation of a background for Boaistuau's era, and the examination of his life against the backdrop of certain events which had an impact on his literary

⁷⁸ Wheale, N. H., 'Dignitas Hominis: the vulgarization of a Renaissance theme' (PhD dissert., University of Cambridge, 1978), Chapter 2. Among other points, Wheale suggested that Boaistuau was used as a French diplomatic envoy to the English court, although he provided no proof for this claim.

⁷⁹ Boaistuau, P. (ed. G. M. Castellani), *Histoires prodigieuses* (Geneva, 1996), pp. 7-27.

⁸⁰ Boaistuau, P. (ed. R. Carr), *Histoires tragiques* (Paris, 1977), pp. ix-lxxxv.

⁸¹ No new documents will be used for this new discussion of Boaistuau's life. A visit to the Nantes Archives might have proved useful in this respect but that is something beyond the scope of this study, which is a full contextualisation of Boaistuau's work and not the compilation of a monograph.

endeavors but which have been hitherto neglected. It will also shed new light on his motivation as a writer, his need for patronage and the writing of his books, and will facilitate a new analysis of their contents. In addition, a fuller contextualisation of Boaistuau's life will set the scene for demonstrating how the study of his work is firmly linked to sixteenth-century print culture, French humanism and natural philosophy. Such areas of study can contribute to different fields of historiography in a variety of ways, as will be explained in the following chapters.

As mentioned earlier, the available data on Boaistuau's life is scattered and does not suffice for the creation of a complete biographical portrait. For that reason and in order to compile as comprehensive a picture of Boaistuau as possible, the discussion of his life will be divided into three main parts: his birth in the early sixteenth century followed by the decades 1540-1550 and 1550-1560 respectively. These represent three different time periods, and have been drafted in accordance with the years containing evidence about the writer's whereabouts. The first part will focus on Michel Simonin's theory that 1517 was Boaistuau's year of birth, which seems the most plausible of all the suggestions.⁸² In addition, there will be a brief outline of Boaistuau's hometown, Nantes, during the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and some conjectures concerning his family will be proposed. These will set the scene for the writer's childhood, since there is no other relevant information. The second part will explore the decade 1540-1550 and Boaistuau's education in three different French universities: Poitiers, Valence, and Avignon. The possible influence of these institutions (and of Professors Emilio Ferretti and Jean de Coras) on Boaistuau's mindset and intellectual interests will form another area of interest, and there will also

⁸² For more details see section 1.1 in this chapter.

be reference to the writer's service to the French Crown as valet de chambre of Marguerite of Navarre, and as secretary of the French ambassador to the East, Jean-Jacques de Cambrai.⁸³ After this, examination of the decade 1550-1560 will shed light on Boaistuau's travels across Europe and the writing of his works. Amongst the important episodes of his life during this period, the affair of *Amans fortunez* and his meeting with Elizabeth I are events which stand out – and in fact signal respectively the rise and high point of his writing career. This was the time when Boaistuau published six of his seven books. Ample attention will be given to the circumstances of their creation and to Boaistuau's attempts to secure patronage. Finally, there will be an additional examination of three aspects of Boaistuau's literary profile, never previously mentioned: his constant attempts to ensure patronage, his broad social circle, and his religious beliefs. These will further add to the reconstruction of his status as a successful sixteenth-century writer, representative of his time but at the same time unique in his own right.

1.1. 'Pierre Bouaistuau, natif de Bretagne des parties de Nantes'⁸⁴

Pierre Boaistuau, also known as Launai, Launay or Seigneur de Launay, lived a short life of approximately forty-nine years. Although the cause of his death remains unknown, it has been suggested that the writer suffered from a chronic illness which could have resulted in his end – something not unusual in sixteenth-century Europe.⁸⁵

⁸³ For more information on Jean-Jacques de Cambrai see later section of this chapter.

⁸⁴ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1556), Title-page.

⁸⁵ Stephen Bamforth, based on a note from *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* suggested a chronic disease as a possible cause for Boaistuau's death. See Boaistuau (ed. S. Bamforth), *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 20. On chronic diseases during the early modern period see Park, K., 'Medicine and society in medieval Europe, 500-1500', in Wear, A., *Medicine in Society* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 59-

The place (Paris) and date (1566) of his death can be safely confirmed by two different documents. The first is the summary of a certificate found in Paris which also made clear the existence of a testament left by Boaistuau and which has not survived. Part of the certificate reads: ‘Ladite rente avait été léguée à M. de Rieux par feu noble homme **Pierre Boaystuaau**, escuyer, **sieur de Launay**, en son vivant demeurant es faubourgs de **Paris**, hors la porte S. Victor, par **son testament** en date du 4 juillet **1556**’ (30 août 1566).⁸⁶ The second document which refers to Boaistuau’s death, is not a contemporary source but a passage from La Croix du Maine’s *Bibliothèque française* which also reveals the place of burial: ‘Il [Boaistuau] mourut à **Paris** l’an **1566**. Il est enterré au **cimetiere des Ecoliers à Paris, près l’Eglise de S. Estienne du Mont**’.⁸⁷ Based on these two documents, all subsequent references to the writer’s place and date of death confirm that Boaistuau died in Paris in 1566. For example, there is a short entry in the 1683 edition of the *Grand dictionnaire historique* where it was noted that ‘Pierre Boistuaau mourut à Paris l’an 1566’.⁸⁸

The information on Boaistuau’s end might be clear enough, but this is not the case when attempting to discover more about his birth and early years. The only surviving sources containing any evidence of the writer’s life are three pieces published by A. de La Borderie in *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée*, the passage by La Croix du Maine

90; Harrison, M., *Disease and the Modern World: 1500 to the present day* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 27-50; Lindemann, M., *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2010), esp. p. 273.

⁸⁶ Mss Picot, B.N., Nouv. Acq. Fr. 23202, taken from *Recueil manuscrit du baron Pichon*, quoted in Simonin, M., ‘Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau’, p. 332. Full text is as follows: ‘Messire René de Rieux, chev., seigneur de La Feillée, du Goret et de La Prevostaye, gentilhomme ordinaire de la chambre du Roy et Marguerite de Conan sa femme, vendent à Jehanne de Paris, veuve d’Antoine Bourderel, marchand et bourgeois de Paris, 50 l. de rente annuelle. Ladite rente avait été léguée à M. de Rieux par feu noble homme **Pierre Boaystuaau**, escuyer, **sieur de Launay**, en son vivant demeurant es faubourgs de **Paris**, hors la porte S. Victor, par **son testament** en date du 4 juillet **1556**’ (30 août 1566). Bold font is mine.

⁸⁷ La Croix du Maine, F. G., *Les Bibliothèques françaises de La Croix-du-Maine et de Du Verdier* (Paris, 1772), Tome 2, p. 256. This is a revised edition of the 1584 original. Bold font is mine.

⁸⁸ Moreri, L., *Le Grand dictionnaire historique, ou Le mélange curieux de l’histoire sacrée et profane* (Lyon, 1683), Tome 1, Partie 1, p. 621.

mentioned earlier, and an article in the *Bio-Bibliographie Bretonne* by René Kerviler. Unfortunately, none of these documents is able to solve the mystery shrouding Boaistuau's exact year of birth. A native of Nantes in north-west France, as often noted on the title pages of many of his works ('natif de Bretagne des parties de Nantes', 'P. Boaistuau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne'), he was born sometime around 1520.⁸⁹ This hypothesis, originally suggested by De la Borderie ('Boaistuau naquit à Nantes, probablement vers l'an 1520') and Kerviler ('né à Nantes vers 1520'), was based on approximate calculations and was supported by information taken from the writer's own books, particularly the *Histoires prodigieuses*. However, Michel Simonin put forth a convincing case for the year 1517 as Boaistuau's year of birth, based on a document from the Sainte-Croix parish at the Nantes Municipal Archives. A passage from this document mentions the baptism of a child under the name of 'Pierre, son of Gilles Bouexcau and Jeanne' in October 1517:

Le IXe jo[u]r dud[it] moys fut baptize **P[ier]res filz de Gilles Bouexcau et Jehanne** sa fe[m]me p[arr]ains dom P[ier]res Aubert p[re]s b[at]re Estienne Baronnet mar[rai]ne Th [abréviation barrée] Connecte fe[m]me de P[ier]res Pineau notaire.

[signé] Ju. Aubry.⁹⁰

Simonin constructed his case around an orthographical examination of the surname 'Bouexcau' which bears resemblance to 'Boaistuau', in order to prove that Pierre Bouexcau and Pierre Boaistuau is actually the same person (a theory further supported by the different spellings of the writer's name throughout the many editions of his

⁸⁹ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1556), Title-page; Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), Title-page.

⁹⁰ Archives Municipales de Nantes, Paroisse de Sainte-Croix, Fol. 56 v^o, registre GG 414, cited in Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 324. Bold font is mine.

work).⁹¹ If Simonin's theory is correct, and October 1517 is indeed the month and year of baptism, then it is possible to believe that the Breton writer was born sometime in early 1517, since most Roman Catholics tended to baptize their children when they were still infants – a Christian tradition still observed today.

What about Boaistuau's name, and in particular the title 'Launay'? As De la Borderie first noted, the use of this title is indisputable and is proved not only by the title-pages of his books but also by several sonnets and short poems dedicated to him, where the writer is mentioned as 'Pierre Launay', 'Seigneur de Launay', or 'Sieur de Launay'. De la Borderie believed that this title did not stand for the family's noble origin but was an additional title chosen by Boaistuau to accompany their surname which indicates common birth – something not unusual at the time.⁹² Since there is no more information on the writer's early years or his family background, no satisfactory explanation can be given to the question 'Was Pierre Boaistuau from a noble family?' However, it is interesting to note that there is a surviving castle in the Loire valley, not far from Nantes, named Château de Launay and dating back to the fifteenth century. Perhaps this belonged to noble families who bore the title Launay, either as a single word or combined with other names, such as the family Launay-Morel, which has a striking resemblance to the title 'Sieur de Launay' used by Boaistuau. However, there is no reference whatsoever linking Boaistuau or his father to the castle or the line of the Launay seigneurie. It is more likely that the writer used 'Launay' as a title of regional denotation, since it is also a denomination found in Renaissance France in

⁹¹ Simonin made use of Nina Catach's work on the orthography of French during the Renaissance; according to Catach, in the sixteenth century the spelling of 'c' could not easily be distinguished from 't', so it is thus possible to assume that 'Bouexcau' could also have been typed as 'Bouextau'. See Catach, N., *L'Orthographe française à l'époque de la Renaissance (Auteurs, Imprimeurs, Ateliers d'imprimerie)* (Geneva, 1968), p. 478 *passim*.

⁹² Borderie, A. de La, *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée* (Nantes, Aout 1870), p. 116.

other cases. For instance, Robert Knecht mentions a ‘Jean le Maçon, seigneur de Launay’, who founded the Protestant church in Paris in 1555.⁹³ This explanation is further supported by contemporary sources such as the *Dictionnaire de la noblesse* and the *Armorial général de la France*, where there are numerous references to the Seigneur de Launay title.⁹⁴

Simonin’s document from the Nantes Archives provides the only information concerning Boaistuau’s family. The names of the parents, Gilles and Jehanne, speak of a big well-to-do family (‘la famille est de bourgeoisie médiocre’) living at the Sainte-Croix parish, a waterside district which was located in the most populated zone of the city and was inhabited by people of different economic and social standing.⁹⁵ The family had many children; Pierre Boaistuau, therefore, had siblings. Simonin noted that from 1515 to 1526 nine children were born to the family, one of whom became a priest; another was employed at a municipal office, a third was a lawyer, two of the other brothers worked as court clerks, and one sister married a merchant. Although Simonin did not discover the father’s profession, he was inclined to believe that he probably worked in a state office or at the judicature (‘petit office ou petite charge de judicature’).⁹⁶ If the latter were true, and considering the professions associated with law of three of Boaistuau’s brothers, then there is no doubt as to his inclination – and his parents’ choice to send him – to study civil and canon law. Moreover, the fact that Boaistuau’s family belonged to a rising class (later to be

⁹³ Knecht, R. J., *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610* (Oxford, 2001), p. 240.

⁹⁴ De la Chesnaye Des Bois, F.-A. A., *Dictionnaire de la noblesse, contenant les Généalogies, l’Histoire & la Chronologie des Familles Nobles de France, l’explication de leurs armes, et l’état des grandes Terres du Royaume...* (Paris, 1771); D’ Hozier, L.-P., *Armorial général, ou registres de la noblesse de France, Registre sixième* (Paris, 1768).

⁹⁵ For a historical portrait of sixteenth-century Nantes see Tingle, E. C., *Authority and Society in Nantes during the French Wars of Religion, 1559-98* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 24-52.

⁹⁶ Simonin, M., ‘Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau’, p. 324.

known in France as the ‘tiers état’ – third estate) largely explains their financial standing which enabled Pierre to be given a good education and to attend three different universities away from home. This could also have been linked to the general economic prosperity of the region at the time which enabled many families to rise in status, since in the mid-sixteenth century, Nantes was a major fishing port and also handled the profitable wine and salt trades.⁹⁷ Of course, this is only a conjecture since there is no proof that Boaistuau’s family was involved in trade of any sort.



Fig. 1: *French Atlantic fishing ports*. In the opening decades of the sixteenth century, Nantes and its environs were amongst the French areas involved in fishery on an international scale. This was obviously a further boost to the region’s rising economy, and could have proved profitable for many families.⁹⁸

The favourable conditions of commerce were certainly one of the main reasons for the population increase in the region between 1500 and 1570.⁹⁹ According to Paul Bois, by the middle of the century, Nantes had a population of about 20000.¹⁰⁰ Various

⁹⁷ See Ladurie, E. le Roy, *The French Peasantry, 1450-1660* (Berkeley, 1987), p. 96 and esp. chapter 2.

⁹⁸ Map by Tina Riche, taken from Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage, ‘The International Fishery of the Sixteenth Century’: <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/exploration/16fishery.html> (10/07/2011).

⁹⁹ Grigg, D. B., *Population Growth and Agrarian Change: An Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 109.

¹⁰⁰ Bois, P. (ed.), *Histoire de Nantes* (Toulouse, 1977), p. 173. J. Meyer in J. Delumeau’s *Histoire de la Bretagne* (Toulouse, 1969) estimated that Nantes had less than 15000 people by the end of the fifteenth century but by the end of the sixteenth this number had risen between 24 and 27000 people. For a more

forms of immigration and the arrival of a considerable number of foreigners (of Italian, Portuguese but mainly Spanish origin) helped to maintain and augment this number. Being a trading hub and a rapidly growing civic centre, the urban and social landscape of Nantes gradually began to evolve. These conditions probably worked advantageously for the development of arts and letters and the creation of a popular literature which had regional character.¹⁰¹ In particular, the literature of the marvellous and strange was quite popular in Brittany as it was in the rest of France at the time, as it will be shown in Chapter Five: ‘le fait divers grossi et déformé, écouté aux portes du merveilleux, en reste, avec les phénomènes météorologiques et climatiques, l’élément dominant’.¹⁰² Boaistuau himself mentioned the renowned mastiffs of Saint-Malo which guarded the city.¹⁰³ This literary production would have provided an atmosphere full of stimulation for the nascent mind of a future writer such as Boaistuau. Could this then be the reason why he was so interested in monsters and prodigies? It does not seem unreasonable to believe so. After all, the strange and the occult were amongst the most popular reading material throughout France, which would have provided the writer with the opportunity to combine his personal taste with a clever commercial choice.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, although Boaistuau left Brittany at an early stage in his life and wrote all his works at a mature age (his first book was published in 1556 when he was thirty-nine years old), there is definitely a certain

detailed approach of the region’s demographics the best study is Croix, A., *Nantes et le pays Nantais au XVI siècle: étude démographique* (Paris, 1974).

¹⁰¹ See Balcou, J., Le Gallo, Y. (eds), *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne* (Paris, 1997), esp. p. 283ff.

¹⁰² Delumeau, J., *Histoire de la Bretagne*, p. 273. Delumeau also devoted a short paragraph to Boaistuau.

¹⁰³ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), p. 131v: ‘ce qui est encores pour le iourd’huy practiqué en une ville de Bretagne, close de mer, appelée Saint Malo, en laquelle un grand nombre de Dogues d’Angleterre et autres chiens, sont le guet et la sentinelle si dextrement qu’ilz se confient et commettent la garde et protection de leur ville en la fidelité de ces animaux...’. The pagination of this edition is misleading, as page 131 is numbered as 127.

¹⁰⁴ The readership’s preferences and Boaistuau’s possible motivations for the writing of his works will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

degree of inspiration which can be traced back to his early days, when searching for the roots of his intellectual interests.

1.2. 1540-1550: the education of a sixteenth-century humanist

On the period between the writer's birth and his years as a university student there is absolutely no information, which renders any effort to construct a portrait of Boaistuau's early years futile. In fact, even Boaistuau's time at university cannot be determined with accuracy, since there has been no relevant research of the student records at the universities of Poitiers, Valence or Avignon where he studied.¹⁰⁵ Once again, passages from Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses* are the only sources of information. These were used by his first biographers to estimate his student years as accurately as possible. De la Borderie wrote that Boaistuau 'fit ses études dans le Midi de la France de 1540 à 1550, tantôt à Avignon où il eut pour professeur Emilio Feretti (1540-1552), tantôt à Valence où il étudia sous Coras (1544)';¹⁰⁶ Kerviler noted that Boaistuau 'étudia le droit à Avignon vers 1540, sous Emilio Feretti, et à Valence en 1544, sous Jean de Coras'.¹⁰⁷ Both De la Borderie and Kerviler failed to mention that Boaistuau also spent some time as a student at Poitiers, something which was indicated decades later by Michel Simonin.¹⁰⁸ The relevant passage from the chapter on precious stones in *Histoires prodigieuses* reads: 'Cest Aymant [diamond] a donné occasion de decevoir beaucoup de peuples, et d'entretenir beaucoup de personnes en erreur, comme **i'ay veu par experience depuis quinze ou seize ans que**

¹⁰⁵ No study on Boaistuau mentions any research on the matriculation records held at these three universities, a task beyond the scope of the present study.

¹⁰⁶ Borderie, A. de La, *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée* (Nantes, Aout 1870), p. 114.

¹⁰⁷ Kerviller, R., *Répertoire général de bio-bibliographie bretonne*, t. 4 (Rennes, 1890), pp. 38-39.

¹⁰⁸ Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 325.

i'estois à Poitiers aux estudes'.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, according to the estimations supplied by De la Borderie, Kerviler and Simonin, two issues need to be further addressed in order to draw a more complete picture of Boaistuau's student years. The first is the fluidity of chronology, a better understanding of which will help to link important episodes of the writer's life in this period. The second issue, fleetingly mentioned in past studies but never examined, is the impact of the universities of Poitiers, Valence and Avignon, and of two of Boaistuau's professors, which will reveal a possible influence in the shaping of his political theory.

There may be vagueness about the exact period when Boaistuau was following his studies, but it is certain that he was occupied in this way for periods between 1540 and 1550. Poitiers was the first university he attended, which according to Michel Simonin, was sometime between 1544 and 1545.¹¹⁰ Boaistuau then went to Valence, where he was a student of Jean de Coras, and finally he attended the University of Avignon, where he studied under the guidance of another renowned professor of law at the time, Emilio Ferretti. This indicates that he attended university some time after Ferretti returned to France from Italy to accept the chair of law offered at the University of Avignon.¹¹¹ Although the exact date remains unknown, Simonin has

¹⁰⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 50v. Bold font is mine.

¹¹⁰ Richard Carr has suggested 1543 – see his *Histoires tragiques*, p. xi. There is also the case of a 'Pierre Boizateau' printing at Poitiers in the second half of the century. Although this printer's surname has a striking resemblance to Boaistuau it could not have been the same person, as Boizateau was active from 1560 until 1583, well after Pierre Boaistuau's death in 1566. See Wheale, N. H., 'Dignitas Hominis: the vulgarization of a Renaissance theme' (PhD dissert., University of Cambridge, 1978), p. 26. Wheale set Boaistuau's stay in Poitiers during 1542-1543.

¹¹¹ Emilio Ferretti (1489-1552), also known as Emilio Ferrettus, was an Italian jurist who also worked as a secretary for Leo X. He came to France at the time of Francis I and worked as a counselor at the Parliament of Paris. He was in Nice in 1538 during the peace negotiations between Francis I, Charles V and Pope Paul III, then remained in Lyon for a while before going back to Italy and Florence. He returned to France when he was offered the chair of law at the University of Avignon, where he remained until his death. See Bayle, P., *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Paris, 1820-24) t. VI, pp. 443-445.

suggested the period between 1547 and 1552 as more probable.¹¹² On the contrary, Boaistuau's time at Valence was noted by both De la Borderie and Kerviler as the year 1544, and in fact there is a certain passage in *Histoires prodigieuses* which helps to clarify their estimation. In Chapter Twenty Two, Boaistuau describes a deformed man:

Et cest homme estoit agé de quarante ans, lors qu'il fut veu en la France, l'an mil cinq cent trente. Et portoit ainsi ce corps entre ses bras avec si grand merveille que tout le monde s'assembloit à grandes troupes pour le voir [...] **Je me recorde de l'avoir veu à Valence, ainsi que ie te l'ay fait pourtraire icy, du temps que monsieur de Coras y enseignoit les Loix Civiles.**¹¹³

The name of Boaistuau's professor, Jean de Coras, is the key for verifying the date suggested.¹¹⁴ Boaistuau wrote that he saw this deformed man while he was studying at Valence, during the time when Jean de Coras was teaching civil law; therefore it must have been sometime between 1544, as suggested by De la Borderie and Kerviler (or 1545 as noted by Natalie Zemon Davis), the year when Jean de Coras began teaching at Valence, until 1547.¹¹⁵ However, both dates clash with the period Boaistuau spent at Poitiers, which, according to Michel Simonin, was sometime between 1544 and 1545. This discrepancy, however did not seem to puzzle him, as he clearly wrote that Boaistuau first studied at Poitiers, then at Valence (when he was supposed to have been at Poitiers!) and finally at Avignon. Could the writer have stayed at Poitiers for only one year (or even for a few months) before moving southward to Valence? Or could this have been time spent on some form of preparatory study before he went to

¹¹² Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 325.

¹¹³ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 83r.

¹¹⁴ Jean de Coras (1515-1572) was a French jurist, famous for his involvement at the trial of Martin Guerre and his book on the case published in 1560. He obtained his doctorate in civil law at Sienna, taught law at the universities of Toulouse, Valence and Ferrara, and published many commentaries. He is considered as one of the key scholars who helped the establishment of jurisprudence in Renaissance France. For more details on his association to French law see Chapter Four.

¹¹⁵ Davis, N. Z., *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), p. 97. However, according to Michel Bideaux, Jean de Coras accepted the offer of Valence University in 1544 – see his *Les échanges entre les universités européennes à la Renaissance* (Geneva, 2003), p. 228.

university? These are questions which of course cannot be answered, but which clearly demonstrate the fragmentary and confusing information about Boaistuau's life.

Furthermore, the dates mentioned give rise to a further set of questions. If Boaistuau was indeed born in 1517, by the time he was studying at Poitiers and Valence around 1544/1545 he must have been twenty-eight years old. Did the Breton receive a university education at such an age, or was Simonin wrong and Boaistuau was, in fact, born later than 1517? If not, what had he been doing before going to university and what kind of education/training had he received? The answer to such questions can be partly supplied by his employment by the French Crown. While he was still a student, he entered the service of the French ambassador to the East, Jean-Jacques de Cambrai, and interrupted his law studies for two years: '[Boaistuau a] fait interruption de ses etudes juridiques par l'espace de deux ans, estant au service de Monseigneur de Cambrai tant à la Cour qu'au voyage qu'il feist en Italie et Alemaigne'.¹¹⁶ While in the ambassador's service, he held the post of secretary, as a dedicatory sonnet by Jean de La Lande in *Chelidonium Tigurinus* reveals: '**P. Bouaistuau, Secretaire de monsieur de Cambray**, Ambassadeur pour le Roy aux parties de Levant'.¹¹⁷ Jean-Jacques de Cambrai had an illustrious career, in the course of which he spent time in Constantinople from 1546 to 1556 as a vice-ambassador.¹¹⁸ Therefore, it is certain

¹¹⁶ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1556), Prologue. Carr has proposed a date around 1554 – see his *Histoires tragiques*, pp. xiv-xv – although this date is much later than the period of study stated in the Prologue. Boaistuau mentioned a trip to Italy during his service to the ambassador and another visit to Rome during the time of Pope Julius III (between 1550 and 1555 – see later section). This means that there is a possibility of two different visits to Italy, since these two events did not coincide chronologically.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* Bold font is mine.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Jacques de Cambrai (d. 1586) was vice-ambassador in Turkey in 1554 (Simonin noted that he stayed at Constantinople from 1546 to 1556), and became chancellor at the University of Bourges in 1557, 'Ambassadeur ordinaire' at the Swiss canton of Grisons in 1558, chaplain to the French King, 'maître des requêtes' and later 'cons. d'Etat'. For more, see the works quoted by Simonin in 'Notes sur

that during his two years of service, Boaistuau had the chance to meet many high-esteemed state officials and members of the French nobility, and to broaden his social circle. Furthermore, he had the opportunity to travel to Italy and Germany and, according to Richard Carr, possibly Hungary.¹¹⁹

Another explanation of Boaistuau's late education and the duration of his studies is provided by Simonin's hypothesis that the writer had worked for some time as valet de chambre of Marguerite of Navarre.¹²⁰ This idea was probably based on the fact that Boaistuau was the first editor of Marguerite's collection of nouvelles, *Heptameron*, which he published under the title of *Histoires des amans fortunez*,¹²¹ supposing that the original manuscripts were in his possession, this implies a personal relationship. If his service to the Queen of Navarre is true, then it would surely have been sometime before 1549 and her death. As a generous patron of arts, Marguerite of Navarre protected many artists and writers, among them Bonaventure de Périers, François Rabelais, Clément Marot, and Pierre de Ronsard. Therefore, if there is a possibility that Boaistuau had ever been one of her protégés, it is certain that by living in the intoxicating atmosphere of her court, alongside poets, philosophers and artists, his mindset as an aspiring writer was certainly influenced.¹²² Such patronage would have given Boaistuau a very encouraging boost at the beginning of his writing career,

Pierre Boaistuau', p. 325, cit. 10. For an introduction to sixteenth-century French diplomacy see De Lamar, J., 'French Diplomacy and the Wars of Religion', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1974), pp. 23-46; 'The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 16 (1985), pp. 451-470.

¹¹⁹ Carr based this assumption on a passage from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Chapter Forty-six) where the author described a meteorite which fell in Sugolie – Boaistuau, P. (ed. R. Carr), *Histoires tragiques*, p. xv. However, this description does not prove that Boaistuau was an eye-witness as he could have easily read of the incident in a pamphlet or a broadsheet.

¹²⁰ Simonin probably repeated Ernest Courbet's assertion in 'Jean d'Albret et l'Heptaméron', *Bulletin du Bibliophile et Bibliothécaire* (1904), pp. 277-290, which, however, cannot be substantiated.

¹²¹ For more details on the affair of *Amans fortunez* see the following section of this chapter.

¹²² The issue of patronage, as well as the effects the Renaissance spirit and thinking had on Boaistuau, will be discussed in more detail in a following chapter.

introducing him to the literary circles of sixteenth-century France and perhaps supplying him with ideas for the compilation of his works.

Regarding Boaistuau's years as a student, another important issue apart from chronology which needs to be addressed, is that of the universities he attended, and the two professors mentioned who surely influenced the shaping of his values and ideas. All three universities Boaistuau attended had a reputation of being amongst the leading institutions for the study of law.



Fig. 2: *French Medieval Universities*. The universities of Poitiers, Valence and Avignon were amongst the best-known universities in the French kingdom and Europe at the time.¹²³

The universities of Avignon and Valence in particular, belonged to a group of institutions in the south of France where, due to the influence of Bologna, there was the same demand for law as in Italy at the time.¹²⁴ Since an education in Roman and

¹²³ This is a small part taken from the original map 'Medieval Universities', found in the *Historical Atlas* by William R. Shepherd, 1923. Accessed via the online Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/mediaeval_universities.jpg (10/07/2011).

¹²⁴ On the significance of the University of Bologna for the revival of Roman law and its influence on law studies in general see Cobban, A. B., *The Medieval Universities: Their Development and Organization* (London, 1975), Chapter III.

canon law – which had become essential preparation for a career in law or politics in most of Europe – was gradually integrated into the French system (but first manifested itself in the south), it is hardly surprising that the universities of Poitiers, Valence and Avignon gained in prominence. In fact, along with the legal faculties of Angers, Orleans and Montpellier, they were amongst the few institutions which could rival the primacy of Paris in that field.¹²⁵

The University of Poitiers was founded in 1431 and had a long tradition of excellence.¹²⁶ By the sixteenth century it was already established as the second best institution for studying law in France after Paris; Sebastian Münster noted in his *Cosmographia Universalis*: ‘On ne sçauroit vous deduire les hommes excellents qui y ont leu en toutes Facultez, et principalement en la Iurispudence estant n’a pas long temps Poitiers un **second Asyle de tous les plus doctes Iurisconsultes de ce royaume**’.¹²⁷ Its famous alumni include François Rabelais, Joachim du Bellay, Antoine de Baïf and Guillaume Bouchet. An even longer tradition in jurisprudence was evident at Avignon, where the school of law had been in operation since the thirteenth century, even before its official establishment by Pope Boniface VIII in 1303.¹²⁸ Because of ecclesiastical influence, the university became very prosperous and secured its continued existence through patronage even after the removal of the

¹²⁵ For a first insight on French universities at the time see De Pommerol, M.-H., J., *Sources de l’histoire des universités françaises au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1978); Paquet, J., Ijsewijn, J. (eds), *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages* (Leuven, 1978); Verger, J., *Histoire des universités en France* (Toulouse, 1986). On legal studies see Kelley, D. R., *The Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, 1970), chapters 5-8.

¹²⁶ See the article by R. Favreau ‘L’Université de Poitiers et la société poitevine à la fin du moyen âge’ in *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, pp. 549-583.

¹²⁷ Münster, S., *La cosmographie universelle*, t. 1 (Paris, M. Sonnius, 1575), Book II, p. 158. Bold font is mine.

¹²⁸ Rashdall, H., *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, vol. II, pt. 1 (Oxford, 1895), pp. 173-174. Also see Caillet, R., *L’Université d’Avignon et sa Faculté des Droits (1303-1503)* (Paris, 1907).

papal court from the city.¹²⁹ It was renowned for its studies on law and the humanities: ‘La cite d’Avignon est encor illustree, à cause de l’université que les Papes y ont instituee, non seulement en droit canon, et loix civiles, ains encore en humanité’.¹³⁰ The University of Valence was officially founded in 1459 but its charter was already issued in 1452. Although it embraced all faculties, the university was mainly a law school and this was the principal reason for its considerable fame in the sixteenth century. For example, Münster wrote of the ‘université fameuse de Valence’.¹³¹ Many eminent professors of civil law who taught there contributed to this status, amongst whom were Jean de Coras and Jacques Cujas. Therefore, the fact that Boaistuau attended three of the kingdom’s most prominent legal institutions is definitely not a coincidence and proves beyond doubt that he was originally destined for a conspicuous career in law or as an official. However, in spite of his lengthy education, he eventually followed his instinct and adopted the writer’s quill.

During his stay at the universities of Avignon and Valence, Boaistuau had the good fortune to be taught by two prominent professors of law, Emilio Ferretti and the aforementioned Coras, whom he held in high esteem. For example, in the chapter on prodigious banquets in *Histoires prodigieuses*, he wrote: ‘Mais sans nous amuser si curieusement à chercher la magnificence des anciens banquetz, ie veulx décrire ce qui est auenu **de nostre temps en Avignon, lors q i’estudiois en droict, souz feu de bonne memoire Aemilius Ferretus, Iurisconsulte excellent**’.¹³² Emilio Ferretti, who was named as *regens extraordinarius*, had worked at the Parlement de Paris for some time and was renowned as a doctor of law. Similarly, Jean de Coras had a wide

¹²⁹ After the removal of the papal court from Avignon in 1377, the University gradually declined, although by the sixteenth century experienced a revival of its former glory.

¹³⁰ Münster, S. *La cosmographie universelle*, p. 346.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 326.

¹³² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 100v.

reputation and was among the key figures for the establishment of jurisprudence in sixteenth-century France. At the time, the study of law underwent many changes (such as its association with humanism, and the *mos gallicus*, a new interpretation of Roman law) and was also used to serve political ends. As it will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, there is a strong possibility that Boaistuau was influenced by these changes as well as by his professors – and in particular Jean de Coras, remembered for his theory of sovereignty – into shaping a political theory structured around a powerful French monarch.¹³³ His theory was clearly expressed in his 1556 work *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* to be examined later on.

1.3. 1550-1560: the travels and works of a humanist writer

After the completion of his studies, and in order to satisfy his curiosity and passion for the mysteries of Nature (or perhaps to seek an opportunity to work abroad for a wealthy patron), Boaistuau traveled to Italy, where he spent some time in Rome.¹³⁴ A phrase from *Histoires prodigieuses* sets the date safely between 1550 and 1555: ‘L’adiousteray une histoire conforme à ce propos, laquelle ie n’ay leuë ny entendue, mais i’en ay veu l’experience deuant moy, **du temps du pape Iules dernier mort**’.¹³⁵

The meeting with Mathieu du Mauny (to whom Boaistuau later dedicated the *Histoires tragiques* and who accompanied Cardinal du Bellay at the time) suggests

¹³³ For more details see Chapter Four.

¹³⁴ Boaistuau’s travel to Italy was noted by La Borderie and Kerviler alike; the latter noted that Boaistuau ‘voyagea en Italie afin de satisfaire sa passion pour les singularités, les curiosités, les monstres et les merveilles’ – see Kerviller, R., *Répertoire général de bio-bibliographie bretonne*, t. 4 (Rennes, 1890), p. 39. There is also a possibility that he visited Italy while in the service of the ambassador Jean-Jacques de Cambrai – see footnote 46 *supra*.

¹³⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 146r. Bold font is mine. Boaistuau wrote that he was an eye-witness of this story at the time of the deceased Pope Julius. This could not mean anyone else but Julius III, who was Pope from 1550 until 1555.

that Boaistuau's visit took place in 1553.¹³⁶ During the mid-sixteenth century, Rome was a cosmopolitan city with a large foreign population and a cultural capital of international lustre. The centre of the Papal States and the seat of the Holy See, Rome was also one of the major centres of the Italian Renaissance and as such, attracted men of arts and letters from all over Europe.¹³⁷ Boaistuau certainly met with many erudite men including two doctors, Crispus and Paludanus. This is what he wrote when describing the fish 'arondelle': 'l'en ay quelquefois veu deux à Rome dessechez, en la maison d'**un medecin, nommé Crispus**, mais ilz estoient tous deux dissemblables';¹³⁸ elsewhere, he referred to his meeting with Paludanus, to whom he devoted more details and seemed to hold in high regard:

Monsieur Paludanus medecin celebre, s'il y en a aucun en Italie, et duquel nous attendons tous les iours ses escritz, m'a racompté et attesté par serment une histoire semblable à la precedente, à laquelle i'adiouste foy, comme si i'y avois esté present, pour la fidelité de celuy qui m'en a faict le recit, qui en a veu l'experience, et qui est homme ayant le sens si bon, qu'il n'est pas aysé à decevoir, mesmes aux choses qui concernent son art.¹³⁹

This extract comes from a lengthy chapter devoted to serpents and snakes, according to which Paludanus was an expert in the field and probably also dissected animals.¹⁴⁰ Since this was not uncommon at the time, it is not unlikely that Boaistuau was present (and perhaps participated) in such events and thus became familiar with anatomy. In fact, his interest is proved by two passages taken from his most famous works. In *Histoires prodigieuses* he noted down his eye-witness experience from his time in

¹³⁶ Simonin, M., *Vivre de sa plume au XVIe siècle, ou La carrière de François de Belleforest* (Geneva, 1992), p. 56.

¹³⁷ See Partner, P., *Renaissance Rome, 1500-1559: A Portrait of a Society* (Berkeley, 1979); Stinger, C. L., *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, 1988).

¹³⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 56v. Bold font is mine.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 146v. Bold font is mine.

¹⁴⁰ Not to be confused with Peter Paludanus, the French theologian and archbishop who lived during the fourteenth century, or Bernard van den Broecke (1550-1633), also known as Bernardus Paludanus, a Dutch physician, university professor and famous collector. The 'Paludanus' mentioned by Boaistuau was probably an Italian doctor who latinised his name.

Paris, of the dissection of a human body: ‘I’ay veu anatomiser un corps mort en ceste ville de Paris, qui estoit mort de la maladie de pierre, qui en avoit une en la versie aussi grosse que un oeuf de Pigeon’.¹⁴¹ In *Le Théâtre du monde* he described in great detail the interior of the human body:

Quant à mon regard j’en ay veu faire anatomie de quelques uns qui estoient mors de ceste maladie [love], qui avoient leurs entrailles [bowels] toutes retirées, leur pauvre cueur [heart] tout bruslé, leur foye [liver] tout enfumé, leurs poulmons [lungs] rostis, les ventricules de leur cerveau [brain] tous endommagez.¹⁴²

As it will be shown in Chapter Five, this great interest in the human body does not derive simply from the writer’s desire for knowledge. Boaistuau wanted to celebrate man both in spirit and body, and his interest in anatomy can be seen as a further attempt to understand the secrets of God’s most perfect creation.

In 1555 Boaistuau was in Paris, to add the finishing touch to his studies and improve his knowledge of ancient Greek. He wrote: ‘ie me retiray à Paris... pour recevoir quelque instruction au lettres Grecques, esquelles en mes ieunes ans i’estois assez froidement verse’.¹⁴³ He also continued his quest for marvels and studied the qualities of precious stones, writing a relevant book which did not survive.¹⁴⁴ However, his plans for further education could not be fulfilled due to an unknown illness (which afflicted him from then on) and which rendered any new enterprises impossible: ‘fraudé de ceste premiere deliberation par l’accident de **certaine maladie** (qui m’a

¹⁴¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 49r.

¹⁴² Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 159.

¹⁴³ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Anvers, J. Monnotz, 1570), Epistre. Boaistuau’s knowledge of Latin and Greek was refuted by Monsieur de la Monnoye in the revised edition of *Les bibliothèques françoises de La Croix-du-Maine et de Du Verdier*. See t. 2, p. 256. Wheale in his ‘Dignitas Hominis: the vulgarization of a Renaissance theme’, p. 25, noted that Boaistuau almost never quoted lines of Latin or Greek as illustration and ornament to his text, which ‘might indicate his lack of competence in the languages’. However, this view is contradicted by a dedicatory piece Boaistuau wrote in Latin, see footnote 146 below.

¹⁴⁴ Borderie, A. de La, *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée* (Nantes, Aout 1870), p. 114.

presque tousjours affligé depuis toutes mes conceptions et enterprinses) furent renversees et ensteinctes au grand interest et prejudice de mes estudes'.¹⁴⁵ Was this period a turning point in his career? Could it be that because of this 'certain illness' Boaistuau decided to follow the career of a writer? Nothing is certain. In 1556, he wrote a dedicatory piece in Latin for the publication of Jean de La Lande's *Histoires de Dictys Cretensien*;¹⁴⁶ the same year, his first work *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* appeared in print. As Boaistuau noted, this project came into being after the visit of a certain 'Seigneur du Parc', écuyer of François de Cleves, who presented him with a book in Latin, entitled *L'institution des Princes Chrestiens*, and asked him to translate it into French.¹⁴⁷ The work, which will be addressed in detail in Chapter Four, was a guide to princes and a political tract in support of monarchy, to which Boaistuau added a treatise on peace and war, a praise of marriage and an account of the religion of Islam. It also signaled the beginning of his literary career, since six of his seven known works were published in a very short period over four years (1556-1560). Boaistuau continued to read a range of material and became familiar not only with the Classics, but also with the works of contemporary writers as numerous passages from his works reveal. A true man of the Renaissance and a polymath, he tried to obtain a broad and varied knowledge which spanned a range of subjects from literature, philosophy, history and political theory to natural philosophy and theology.

By the end of 1557 / early 1558, the writer met James Beaton II, Archbishop of Glasgow and later ambassador of Mary Stuart at the French court, with whom he

¹⁴⁵ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, Epistre. Bold font is mine.

¹⁴⁶ See Simonin, M., 'Peut-on parler de politique éditoriale au XVIe siècle? Le cas de Vincent Sertenas, libraire du palais', in *L'encre et la lumière* (Geneva, 2004), pp. 770-771. This dedicatory piece proves beyond any doubt that Boaistuau had a good knowledge of Latin.

¹⁴⁷ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, Epistre.

maintained a close relationship.¹⁴⁸ Beaton was a well-known and influential figure at the time and one of the most prominent members of the community of Scottish exiles in Paris, where Boaistuau most probably met him.¹⁴⁹ It is possible that Beaton offered him financial or some other kind of support (or maybe even became his patron for some time) to help him finish his *Le Théâtre du monde*. This is also substantiated by the fact that the writer dedicated this work to the archbishop: ‘A tres excellent et reverendissime seigneur et Prelat, Monseigneur **Iaques de Betoun, Archeuesque de Glasco, et Ambassadeur d’Escosse**, Pierre Boaystuaue salut et perpetuelle obeissance’.¹⁵⁰ Boaistuau also befriended Beaton’s nephews Jacques and Alexandre, and dedicated his *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme* to them: ‘Dedie à mersieurs **Iacques et Alexandre de Betoun**, Gentilz hommes Escossois freres’.¹⁵¹ These dedications were certainly tokens of the writer’s gratitude but they could also represent attempts to win the favour of a wealthy patron and reputed protector of letters such as Beaton, a strategy which, as will be shown later, Boaistuau also employed in other cases.

1558 signaled a period of intense research and writing for the Breton writer which culminated in the publishing of three different works over a very short period of time (the summer of 1558). His first work, *Le Théâtre du monde*, was published in July. This would be his best-seller and most popular work, and was shortly followed by

¹⁴⁸ James Beaton II (1517-1603), Archbishop of Glasgow from 1551 until 1560, was educated at the University of Paris. He left Scotland after the siege of Leith and lived in Paris for four decades, where he served Mary Stuart and later James VI as ambassador at the French court during the reign of five different French kings.

¹⁴⁹ Beaton was among the honorary guests who took part in the ceremonies for Mary Stuart’s marriage to the Dauphin, son of Henry II, in Paris, April 1558. See Muhlstein, A., *Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart: The Perils of Marriage* (London, 2007), pp. 114-116. This suggests that Boaistuau could have met Beaton while the latter was in Paris.

¹⁵⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 3. Bold font is mine.

¹⁵¹ Boaistuau, P., *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1558), Title-page. Bold font is mine.

Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme. On first sight, these books might appear to be completely different but in fact they complement one another. The misery of Man as described in *Le Théâtre* contrasted with the celebration of Man as manifested in *Bref discours*, thus leading to praise of Renaissance ideals and a moralising message.¹⁵² Soon after the publication of these two works a third one, the *Histoires des amans fortunez*, appeared. This collection of nouvelles, now known to be the first edited version of Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron*, caused a scandal which resulted in much vilification of Boaistuau's name and possibly earned him the disapproval of many of his contemporaries.

The background to this affair is not particularly clear. Boaistuau had probably worked in the past as valet de chambre of Marguerite of Navarre, which explains how her manuscripts came into his hands. Was he presented by the French Court with the task of being the first editor of the work, or did he act on his own? Whatever the reason, the edition which came out in August 1558 (nine years after Marguerite's death) resulted in an unpleasant situation for the Breton writer. Boaistuau had given the book a title of his own (*Histoires des amans fortunez*) and had not mentioned that the Queen of Navarre had been the author. Most importantly, he had made major changes to the contents by excluding certain stories, changing their original sequence, and suppressing other passages which he considered provocative. This incurred the wrath of Jeanne d'Albret, Marguerite's daughter, who had Boaistuau's edition blocked and commissioned a new editor, Claude Gruget, to rewrite the offending publication. As well as the obvious embarrassment and denunciation which suppression of the book

¹⁵² These two titles will be examined in detail in Chapter Three.

must have caused Boaistuau, it also probably cost him his position as secretary to François de Clèves, Duke of Nevers – and made him obscure to later scholars.¹⁵³

At the beginning of the following year Boaistuau published *Histoires tragiques*, a French translation of six stories taken from Matteo Bandello's Italian anthology *Novelle*, dedicated to Matthieu de Mauny, Abbot of Noyers.¹⁵⁴ The work, which introduced the literary genre of *histoire tragique* to France, was very well received by the public. Was this Boaistuau's attempt to leave the past behind and clear his name of the affair of *Amans fortunez*, while making a dynamic come-back into the book market? There is no doubt that this book further established his reputation as a successful writer.¹⁵⁵ At about the same period Boaistuau travelled to Scotland and England. La Borderie placed this journey in 1559 or early 1560 (Kerviler also mentioned it but provided no date): 'En 1559 ou au commencement de 1560, il voyagea en Ecosse et en Angleterre, toujours courant avec une ardeur infatigable à la recherche des curiosités et des prodiges'.¹⁵⁶ Simonin though, being more precise, suggested that Boaistuau made this journey during the first months of 1560, based on the privileges' dates from *Chelidonium Tigurinus* and *Histoires prodigieuses*.¹⁵⁷ The reason for his journey to Scotland and England remains unknown, although all indications once more show Boaistuau's insatiable interest in marvels and monsters.

¹⁵³ Boaistuau's edition will be further examined in Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁴ Matteo Bandello (c. 1480-1562) was an Italian writer. He received a good education, lived for many years in Mantua and later became Bishop of Agen. His *Novelle*, first published in 1554, was extremely popular and was also translated into other European languages. See Griffith, T. G., 'Matteo Bandello and the Italian language: linguistic attitudes, choice of genre, and dates of composition', in Hainsworth, P. (ed.), *The Languages of Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 133-151.

¹⁵⁵ Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques* and the genre of *histoire tragique* would be presented in detail in Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁶ Borderie, A. de La, *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée* (Nantes, Aout 1870), p. 115.

¹⁵⁷ The privilege of the 1559 edition of *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* was issued in November 1559, whereas that of *Histoires prodigieuses* in June 1560 – see Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 330. Stephen Bamforth noted that based on a sonnet from the *Institution du royaume chestien* the journey can be set at the beginning of 1560 – see Boaistuau (ed. S. Bamforth), *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 31-32.

After all, this is confirmed by the story of a dog born of a bear and a mastiff, described in *Histoires prodigieuses*. The material for this story was collected whilst the writer was in London, and indicates that he probably visited the London bear pits: ‘Par-ce (lecteur) que ce fut **en Angleterre, en la fameuse cité de Londres**, que i’obseruay premier le naturel et la figure de cest animal’.¹⁵⁸

However, the most significant event during Boaistuau’s stay in England was his meeting with Elizabeth I, the exact date of which remains unknown.¹⁵⁹ Boaistuau had brought along as gifts, specially prepared editions of two of his works which he had dedicated to the Queen: a slightly altered version of his *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (this particular copy entitled *Institution du royaume chrestien*), and an early version of a new work entitled *Histoires prodigieuses*, which was only published in 1560 after his return to France.¹⁶⁰ Boaistuau described his meeting with Elizabeth I as follows:

Au premier rang desquelz ie doy à iuste droict mettre la magesté de la **Royne Elizabeth**, laquelle, combien qu’elle fust mal disposée, lors que i’arriuay, et qu’elle eust occasion de ne se rendre communicable à personnes de si petite qualité comme ie suis, si est-ce qu’elle me fist tant d’honneur de me faire appeller deuant sa magesté, ou en presence de plusieurs grandz seigneurs et dames, elle commença à discourir de plusieurs choses haultes et ardues. Et non contente de tant de faueurs et tesmoignages d’humanité, pour ne laisser rien en arriere de ce qui appartenoit à sa generosité, et grandeur.¹⁶¹

Despite the Queen being ‘mal disposée’ on Boaistuau’s arrival, she granted him an official audience in the presence of many state officials and nobles. Meeting one of

¹⁵⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 126v. Bold font is mine. For more on early modern bear pits, a good place to start is Erica Fudge’s *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Chicago, 2002).

¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth I’s reign began in November 1558, but there is no surviving testimony of her meeting with Boaistuau in the state papers of 1559-1560.

¹⁶⁰ There is a strong case that a copy of *Histoires tragiques* was also sent to the Queen before Boaistuau’s visit, as part of his campaign to win her favour – see following section.

¹⁶¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 126v-127r. Bold font is mine.

the most powerful monarchs in the sixteenth century was a privilege not reserved for lay people such as Boaistuau, and therefore this audience best testifies his great reputation as a writer, and maybe his broad network of social connections which made it possible. But this is not all. Elizabeth made him a present: ‘Encores **me fist elle un present** si honourable, q’un grand seigneur eust eu bonne occasion de s’en contenter’.¹⁶² Maybe this present was one of two dogs born to a bear and a mastiff which Boaistuau took back to France, as he noted in a later section of his narration.

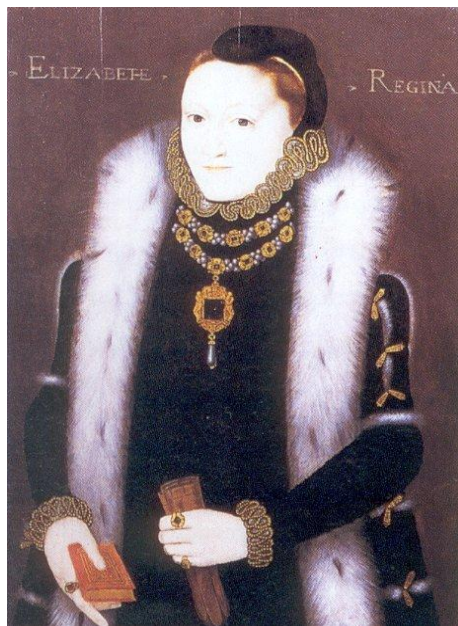


Fig. 3: *Elizabeth I: The Clopton Portrait* (c. 1560). This is a rare image of the Queen dating from the same period as her meeting with Boaistuau¹⁶³

Moreover, the Breton writer had the opportunity to meet with the highly-esteemed officials of the English crown whilst in England, such as William Cecil, first secretary of the Queen, and the Count of Hertford, who presented him with certain favours and gifts.¹⁶⁴ He spoke of them with gratitude:

¹⁶² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 127r. Bold font is mine.

¹⁶³ Taken from ‘Elizabethan images’: <http://www.marileecody.com/eliz1-images.html> (10/07/2011).

¹⁶⁴ On Sir William Cecil (1521-1598), Lord Burghley, see Alford, S., *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven, 2008).

Je ne puis semblablement passer soubz silence, les courtoisies et honnestetez que i'ay receuës de monsieur **l'Admiral d'Angleterre, Monsieur Scicile premier Secretaire de la Royne**: et entre autres de monsieur **le Conte d'Arfort**, lequel outre le gracieux acueil et autres faueurs particuliers que ie receuz de luy, encores me fist il un present si honeste, qu'il merite bien d'estre publié en ce lieu.¹⁶⁵

Boaistuau also met the French nobles living in London as hostages, as a result of one of the terms of the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis between France and England in 1559.¹⁶⁶ Frederic de Foy, count of Candalle, Gaston de Foix, Marquis of Trans, and Louis de Sainte-Maure, Marquis of Nesle, presented him with gifts and received him at their houses:

Je meriterois d'estre mis au premier rang de tous les plus extremes ingratz du monde, si ie taisois semblablement la liberalité de monseigneur **le Conte de Candalle**, de **monseigneur le Marquis de Trans**, et de **monseigneur le Marquis de Nelle**, qui estoient pour lors en ostage en Angleterre, lesquelz non contens de m'avoir receu à leurs maisons comme leurs propres personnes, encores n'y eut il celuy d'entre eux, lequel à mon departement ne me fist present digne de n'estre iamais supprimé.¹⁶⁷

Of the writer's visit to Scotland there is only a short mention of a 'marvellous tree' in Scotland and a meeting with a certain Jacques Roy: 'De laquelle chose nous estans en Escoce, nous enquerans vers Iaques Roy, homme bien quarré et chargé de gresse'.¹⁶⁸

After returning to France, Boaistuau published in 1560 his *Histoires prodigieuses*, a compilation of deformed births, strange animals, natural phenomena and other

¹⁶⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 127r. Bold font is mine.

¹⁶⁶ The signing of Cateau-Cambrésis allowed that four French nobles should remain as hostages for the fulfillment of the treaty on the part of France. Boaistuau mentioned that he encountered only three of the four hostages; the fourth not mentioned was Antoine du Prat, prévôt of Paris.

¹⁶⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 127r.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 154r-v. The story of that tree had already appeared in earlier works such as Sebastian Münster's *La cosmographie universelle* (1556), from which Boaistuau probably borrowed it.

marvels which became a great success and one of his best-sellers.¹⁶⁹ This was the last work he published and the last known episode of his life. There is a total lack of information from 1560 until his death in 1566. Could it be that during this period Boaistuau devoted himself to research and the writing of new works? After all, he had in the past promised a translation of St. Augustine's *The City of God* into French, an ambitious project which never materialised.¹⁷⁰ Other titles he had announced but which were not published included *Traité des pierres précieuses*, a treatise entitled *De l'origine de la noblesse*, and *Traité de la paix et de la guerre* (a similarly titled chapter in *Chelidonius Tigurinus* probably served as an introduction to this work). The epilogue came in 1572 with Boaistuau's posthumous publication of *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chretienne et catholique*, a historical narration of the persecutions of the early Christian Church edited by one of the writer's friends, Pierre de Cistiers.¹⁷¹

1.4. Pierre Boaistuau's literary profile: a retrospective

By now, an overview of Boaistuau's literary profile and career can be drawn. The Breton writer may have lived a short life but it was a life full of studies, travels, the

¹⁶⁹ The contents of this work and its association to natural philosophy and encyclopaedic trends will be addressed in Chapter Five.

¹⁷⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), Salutation à lecteur; *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), Advertissement au Lecteur. For further information see Chapter Two.

¹⁷¹ Pierre De Cistiers noted that the *Histoire des persecutions* remained unfinished due to the sudden death of Boaistuau: 'Et entre autres me fut par luy recommandé un sien posthume, qu'il vouloit nommer les persecutions de l'Eglise militante, lequel par **la trop soudaine mort de son pere** estoit demeuré manque et imparfait d'une partie de ses membres'. De Cistiers also wrote of 'la promesse que je luy feis lors de son decez, de cherir, garder et avoir soing de **ses enfans, nompas enfans corporels, ains spirituels**'. This metaphor is the only hint as to whether Boaistuau had children or not. See Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chretienne et catholique* (Paris, Robert le Magnier, 1576), Epistre. Bold font is mine.

publication of six popular works and interesting acquaintances with many well-known figures of the period. Having attended three renowned French universities to study law, one would think that Boaistuau was destined for an illustrious career in law or as a high-ranked official – and perhaps he really was.¹⁷² This could be the reason for interrupting his studies and entering the service of the French ambassador Jean-Jacques de Cambrai, and for publishing his very first book *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, a political treatise in favour of monarchy, in the hope of serving a powerful patron. The fragmentary account of Boaistuau's life may leave room for such speculations but also reveals the strong inclination towards research and writing which eventually marked his career. Under the unifying framework of sixteenth-century humanist, Boaistuau incorporated his erudition, personal experiences, travels and contemporary trends into his works which reveal a remarkable variety of themes and topics: political theory and the education of Christian princes, translation, editing and compilation of cautionary tales and nouvelles, Renaissance philosophy and moralising tracts on the misery and dignity of man, historical and theological writing, and natural philosophy and the occult.

Boaistuau's career as a writer was not only marked by diversity but also by a constant need for patronage, which is clearly evident in the dedications of his works. *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* was addressed to the noble François de Clèves, Duke of Nevers, for whom Boaistuau worked as a secretary for a short period.¹⁷³

James Beaton II, Scottish ambassador in Paris, was the dedicatee of his best-seller *Le*

¹⁷² According to La Croix du Maine, Boaistuau was a gifted orator and the way he spoke was 'sweet and pleasant': 'homme très docte et des plus éloquens Orateurs de son siècle, et lequel avoit un façon de parler autant douce, coulante et agréable qu'autre duquel j'aye leu les écrits' – see La Croix du Maine, F. G., *Les Bibliothèques françaises de La Croix-du-Maine et de Du Verdier* (Paris, 1772), Tome 2, p. 254. Such a quality could have proved valuable for pursuing a career in law.

¹⁷³ The 1559 revised edition of *Chelidonius* was dedicated to the secretary of Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine. For more detail see Chapter Four.

Théâtre du monde. Histoires des amans fortunez was dedicated to Marguerite de Bourbon, the wife of François de Clèves. *Histoires tragiques* was offered to Matthieu de Mauny, Benedictine Abbot of Noyers and nephew of the Archbishop of Bordeaux François de Mauny, and *Histoires prodigieuses* was dedicated to Jean de Rieux, a Breton nobleman. Jean de Rieux, Baron d' Asserac, and his brother Rene de Rieux, Seigneur du Gue de l'Isle, were men of letters and in fact devoted two sonnets to Boaistuau, celebrating the reputation and success of their compatriot as a writer, and also proudly noting his Breton origin:

Tu sais assez combien tu es loué par France,
Et combien ton païs, ou tu n'as guiere esté
A d'honneur, de plaisir, et de felicité
De t'avoir donné nom, vie, laict et naissance.¹⁷⁴

All the dedicatees mentioned above were people of considerable influence and Boaistuau anticipated their financial or other kind of help in order to advance his career. In some cases he succeeded in becoming a protégé of a wealthy patron, as in the case of François de Clèves. However, out of all the examples which prove Boaistuau's quest to find a powerful patron and his high aspirations as a writer seeking wide recognition, the one which stands out is his consistent campaign to win the favour of Elizabeth I – albeit unsuccessfully. He had sent her a copy of *Histoires tragiques*, followed by the *Institution du royaume chretien* and *Histoires prodigieuses* (the latter titles were probably prepared as a set).¹⁷⁵ All three works were specially prepared copies dedicated to Elizabeth. *Histoires prodigieuses* in particular was an illuminated manuscript, perhaps handwritten by Boaistuau himself, which he offered to the Queen in person when he visited London in 1560. This meeting was surely

¹⁷⁴ For the sonnets see Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), opening pages. Bold font is mine. Also see Appendix B.

¹⁷⁵ This hypothesis was originally noted by Richard Carr, but was asserted in its complete form by Stephen Bamforth in *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 24-30.

made possible not only due to Boaistuau's reputation as a writer, but also because of his wide network of acquaintances - another characteristic of his literary profile.

As noted earlier, it is safe to assume that during the writer's service for the French Ambassador and his possible service for Marguerite of Navarre, he had the opportunity to meet many statesmen, high-ranked officials and others who worked at the French Court and abroad. This, combined with the fact that he had acquired a certain degree of fame due to the success of his books, probably earned him an audience with the Queen of England. However, this was not all. Boaistuau's *familia* – a term used by Michel Simonin to designate a writer's network of friends and contacts – is much wider and includes many well-known French *litterati*, a fact supported by several sonnets dedicated to him found amongst the pages of his works. First is François de Belleforest, a close friend of Boaistuau who also had a professional relationship with him.¹⁷⁶ As for the rest, the names which stand out include Joseph Scaliger, Bernard de Girard, Nicolas Denisot, Jean-Antoine de Baïf, Claude Roillet, Jacques Grévin, and Jean Broë.¹⁷⁷ These names confirm the standard practice of dedicatory pieces widely used in contemporary works, but at the same time reveal Boaistuau's network of acquaintances which included some of the most important

¹⁷⁶ On the relation between Boaistuau and Belleforest see Simonin, M., *Vivre de sa plume au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 1992), especially Chapitre II. Although the circumstances of their meeting remain unknown, the role of Boaistuau was as a catalyst for the young Belleforest in pursuing his own writing career. Wishing to express his gratitude, Belleforest wrote in his *Cosmographie universelle*: 'Ja ne plaise a Dieu qu'en cest endroit j'oublie un des citoyens de Nantes, au moins né en la juridiction et terroir de celle cité, a sçavoir **Pierre Boaistuau surnommé de Launay**, tant pour avoir eu familiere habitude avec luy, que pour son grand sçavoir, et oeuvres qu'il a mises en lumiere, joint aussi que ça esté un des premiers qui jamais m'esguillonnerent à escrire, et a faire preuve de mes estudes, et du talent qu'il a pleu a Dieu me departir, dequoy remerciant humblement sa toutepouissance, ne veux demourer ingrat aux ombres de ce sçavant homme, qui m'exhorta a pousser ma fortune, ayant quelque esperance du prouffit que je pourroys faire a la postérité [...] cecy est hors de propos, et où la sollicitation du **sieur de Launay** m'a poussé pour la simpathie, et mesme advis de deux hommes si renommez, que cestuy en Bretagne, et ce grand Veronoys Scaliger en Gascoigne' (quoted in Simonin, 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 333). Bold font is mine.

¹⁷⁷ For more information on some of these *litterati* see Coward, D., *A History of French Literature* (Oxford, 2002).

literary figures in sixteenth-century France. It is plausible that as well as being on friendly terms with them he also maintained correspondence with some of them.

Furthermore, Boaistuau's social circle extended beyond Paris to the provinces. An example is provided by his close ties with the city of Lyon, where a significant number of his editions were published. Both Lyonnais Olivier de Beaugard and Guillaume Paradin dedicated sonnets to him in *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*; the latter also wrote an epigram to Boaistuau published after his death:

De **Petro Launaio** viro eruditissimo
Armoricam insigni exornat Launaei ortu:
Quem (raræ instar avis) Britonis ora colit.
Foetibus ingenii virtutem ebuccinat orbi,
Et vitii, et scelerum pestibus, hostis atrox.
Inducitque docens ipsa ad proscenia reges,
Principis et sacris cotibus arma polit.
Quod si quando hujus pateant sermonibus aures:
Regibus ô vire regna beata sophis?¹⁷⁸

Similarly, the same assumption made about Boaistuau and Lyon can be said about his contacts with Tournon (nowadays Tournon-sur-Rhône), especially considering Jean Broë's sonnet in *Chelidonium Tigurinus*.¹⁷⁹ Could Boaistuau have also been in friendly terms with the College of Tournon, which enjoyed a wide reputation after 1552 and attracted students from across Europe, or even with the founder of the College Cardinal François de Tournon?¹⁸⁰ Such unanswered questions once more demonstrate the fragmentary picture of his life and enhance his profile as a humanist writer.

¹⁷⁸ Paradin, G., *Epigrammata* (1581), quoted in Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 333. Bold font is mine.

¹⁷⁹ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1559), opening pages.

¹⁸⁰ On the College of Tournon which was founded in 1536 and passed under the direction of the Jesuits in 1560 see Compere, M.-M., Dominique, J., *Les colleges français, 16e-18e siècles. Répertoire I: France du Midi* (Paris, 1984), pp. 696-712.

A final note should be made about Boaistuau's religious beliefs and the ways they were embodied into his work. The only relevant information is extracted from his books, and although there is no conclusive evidence it seems most likely that Boaistuau was a Catholic. He was born and raised in Brittany, a predominantly Catholic area, and had served under the French Crown as secretary to the Ambassador to the East.¹⁸¹ Although he settled in Paris after the completion of his studies, he had no direct connection with the Reformed Religion which attracted many adherents and acquired a dynamic around the 1550s with the conversion of many nobles, although some of his associates and friends (such as Jean de La Lande and Jacques Grévin) were Protestants.¹⁸² As far as his works are concerned, the *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chretienne et catholique* (which was published posthumously during the French Wars of Religion) and the fact that he intended to make a translation of St. Augustine's *City of God*, reveal an attempt to bolster the Catholic faith and an apologetic aspect of his writings in defense of the Christian religion. Indeed on two occasions, this apologetic character gave an aggressive exposition of the flaws of other religions. In *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, a whole chapter was devoted to 'eresies avec plusieurs exemples de leur sectes' and to 'la faulce doctrine de Mahomet... et par quel moyen il suborna tant de peuples'.¹⁸³ Boaistuau particularly focused on the consolidation and spread of Islam with a narration of its history, and compared the Quran to the Bible in order to refute its contents as false.¹⁸⁴ The second example is a chapter from *Histoires prodigieuses* where he depicted Jews as members

¹⁸¹ On Nantes see Carlier, J.-Y., *Protestants et Bretons. La mémoire des hommes et des lieux* (Paris, 1996); Tingle, E. C., *Authority and Society in Nantes during the French Wars of Religion, 1558-98* (Manchester, 2006).

¹⁸² Paris was one of the cities greatly affected by the advancement of the Protestant Reformation. Incidents such as the affair of the Placards in 1534 were representative of the strength and continuity of new religious ideas circulating in the capital and gradually shaped a kind of 'religious pluralism' in the kingdom. On this term see Cameron, K., Greengrass, M., Roberts, P. (eds), *The Adventure of Religious Pluralism in Early Modern France* (Bern, 2000).

¹⁸³ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1556), chapitre VII.

¹⁸⁴ This chapter will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Four.

of a wicked sect ('ceste malheureuse vermine de Iuifs'). He used various examples to support his anti-Semitic rhetoric, including the image of a Jew crucifying a child whilst poisoning a well.¹⁸⁵

However, a reading of Boaistuau's work does not reveal a polemic Catholic writer as regards the issue of Reformations. He was certainly aware of the ongoing Protestant Reformation in Europe (the Peace of Augsburg was signed in 1555) and of the diffusion of Reformed ideas in the French kingdom (the French Confession of Faith was drafted in 1559), but there was no clear mention of these anywhere in his books. He noted 'les incursions d'une infinite de sectes qui pullulent et glissent aujourdhuy par le monde' but did not provide any further clarifications as to which 'sectes' he was referring.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, the theological topics mentioned in his text were not really addressed since he did not give much detail, and the phraseology used does not help to determine his personal beliefs. For example, he spoke of 'la lumiere Euangelique', of 'Messe', 'predestination' and 'liberal arbitre', terms used by Catholic, Protestant and Reformed writers alike. Thus, it can be assumed that Boaistuau was a writer who decided not to become involved in the religious struggles of his time, maintaining a neutral position, or middle way.¹⁸⁷

Two arguments support this assumption, the first being a possible influence by Marguerite of Navarre during Boaistuau's service as her valet de chambre. The Queen

¹⁸⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 29r-31v. Among the topics examined were Jewish usury, Jewish blame for the plague and the contamination of water fountains, and the purported killing of Christian children.

¹⁸⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), Salutation à lecteur.

¹⁸⁷ The *via media* has attracted the attention of scholarship in the past years; see for instance Spijker, W. van't, *The Ecclesiastical Offices in the Thought of Martin Bucer* (Leiden, 1996), Chapter 4; Louthan, H., *The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna* (Cambridge, 1997); David, Z. V., *Finding the middle way: the Utraquists' liberal challenge to Rome and Luther* (Baltimore, 2003); Racaut, L., Ryrie, A. (eds), *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation* (Aldershot, 2005).

of Navarre was not only a generous patron of the arts but also a mediator between religious divisions. Her court was a hospitable hub for sympathisers of the Reformed religion, the most celebrated example being the poet Clément Marot.¹⁸⁸ She was also involved in the circle of the Reformers of Meaux, a group of humanists who emphasized the study of the Bible.¹⁸⁹ In other words, Marguerite's court was characterised by a sense of tolerance. Her ideal was a type of pacifism which brings to mind that of Erasmus and could have influenced Boaistuau. The second argument for the Breton writer's neutrality could have been a clever commercial strategy. By not making a clear stand, he created more possibilities for selling his books to readers of different Christian denominations and for securing a patronage. This was further proved by the dedicatees of his works which included both Catholic and Protestant figures. For example, *Histoires tragiques* was dedicated to Matthieu de Mauny, Abbot of Noyers; *Le Théâtre du monde* to James Beaton II, ex-Archbishop of Glasgow; and the manuscript edition of *Histoires prodigieuses* to Elizabeth I, responsible for the 1559 Act of Supremacy which re-established the independence of the Church of England from Rome. These examples indicate that Boaistuau probably maintained a neutral position in order to secure funding and finance his writing projects.

To conclude, the account of Boaistuau's life discussed in this chapter has served as a new reconstruction of his literary profile, and as a framework for the detailed examination of his works in subsequent chapters. The writer's education, travels, and acquaintances have been correlated and, for the first time, examined against the backdrop of the contemporary events which affected his ideas and the production of

¹⁸⁸ See Screech, M. A., *Clément Marot: a Renaissance Poet discovers the Gospel* (Leiden, 1994).

¹⁸⁹ Heller, H., 'Marguerite of Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 33 (1971), pp. 271-310. For more detail see Reid, J. A., *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navare (1492-1549) and her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2009).

his books. The aim was to present as fresh and complete – as far as this is possible – image of his life and works, to shed light upon possible motivations which gave birth to his books, and to reveal unknown aspects of his career. Based on these ideas, later chapters will examine the entirety of Boaistuau's work, reaffirming his significance in the study of Renaissance literature and philosophy, political theory and historical writing, and natural philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

Pierre Boaistuau and sixteenth-century French print culture

Entre tous les trophées de generosité des noz maieurs et ancestres, **ie ne trouve rien qui se puisse esgaler à l'admirable invention, utilité et dignité de l'imprimerie**, laquelle surmonte tout ce que l'antiquité à peu concevoir et imaginer d'excellent, attendu qu'elle conserve et garde toutes les conceptions de noz ames.¹⁹⁰

This is how Pierre Boaistuau began his praise of the arrival of print. He saw it as the most wonderful and useful man-made invention. Being a writer himself, he was able to experience at first hand the effect that the art of printing had on the circulation of his works, as well as on the sixteenth-century literary world in general. This is why he described them in the most laudatory terms: 'C'est la tresoriere qui immortalize les monumens de nos espritz, et eternize de siecle en siecle; et quasi enfante, et produit en lumiere les fruitz de noz labeurs'.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, he praised the more accurate and rapid reproduction of texts noting the advantages over the time-consuming hand copying of texts: 'Ses effectz sont si miraculeux et executez avec telle celerité et diligence, qu'un homme seul en un jour naturel formera plus des caracteres, que le plus prompt escrivain ne pourra escrire de la plume en l'espace de deux ans'.¹⁹² Boaistuau was also conscious that technological advances were essential for the development of printing, such as the widespread use of paper (introduced into Europe during the thirteenth century) and the various stages through which the reproduction of writing had passed:

Mais qui ne s'estonnera de la barbarie et misere des anciens? lequelz (ainsi que Strabo *De situ orbis* escrit) premierement escrivoyent en cendre, puis apres enescorces d'arbres, puis apres en pierres, puis apres en feuilles de

¹⁹⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 200. Bold font is mine.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201. Bold font is mine.

laurier, puis en lames de plomb, suivamment en parchemin, finalement en papier.¹⁹³

He further stressed its importance by comparing it to older materials and writing techniques.¹⁹⁴

More interesting, however, is that at the end of his encomium, Boaistuau cited 1453 as the year of the invention of printing by a German: ‘cest Allemant, duquel fait mention Polydore, lequel l’an mil quatre cens cinquante et trois inventa la façon d’imprimer’.¹⁹⁵ This German, whose name was not mentioned, is probably Johannes Gutenberg who is credited with the invention of movable type printing.¹⁹⁶ Boaistuau appeared to accept that 1453, the date proposed by Polydore Virgil, was the birth-year of printing, although in his *Histoires prodigieuses* which was published later, he wrote that 1446 ‘fut l’an que l’Imprimerie fut trouvée’.¹⁹⁷ This latter date seems to substantiate the findings of modern scholarship since Gutenberg had made typefaces from lead since 1440 while in Strasbourg, and had more or less perfected his

¹⁹³ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 201. Strabo (63 BC- 24 AD), a Greek geographer and historian, is remembered for his multi-volume work *De Situ Orbis* which described people and places from different areas of the world, and set the foundations for the development of descriptive geography. This work was published several times in Latin and Greek during the fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, indicating that Boaistuau had the opportunity to consult it first hand during the writing of *Le Théâtre du monde*.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: ‘Et ainsi qu’ilz estoient variables en leurs maniers d’escrire, ainsi usoyent ilz de divers instrumens: car sur les pierres ilz escrivoient avec le fer, sur les feuilles avec pinceaux, sur la cendre avec le doigt; sur les escorces avec couteaux: sur les parchemin, avec cannes sur le papier, avec plume. Et leur encre premierement estoit liqueur de poisson que nous apellons Seiche, apres on la feist de ius de meures, apres de suye de cheminée, apres du vermillon, apres de galles, gonme et coupperose. Ce que t’ay voulu descrire un peu prolixement, afin de faire cognoistre de quel labour et barbarie nous a relevez’.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Boaistuau’s source was the writer Polydore Vergil (Vergilus Polydorus) and his *De Inventoribus Rerum*, first published in 1499. This work is an encyclopaedic discussion of the ‘origin of all things’ from the arts, politics, science and religion, including an early history of medicine and a history of printing.

¹⁹⁶ Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1397-1468) is credited with the invention of mechanical movable type printing in Europe, which combined the process of mass-produced types, the use of the wooden printing press, and oil-based ink. The most celebrated book he printed, the 42-line or Mazarine Bible, came out in 1455. For more on Gutenberg the best place to start is Kapr, A., Martin, D., *Johann Gutenberg: The Man and his Invention* (Aldershot, 1996).

¹⁹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), p. 32v.

invention by 1450, when he began the printing of *Ars grammatica*.¹⁹⁸ No matter how accurate the date proposed by Boaistuau, the fact remains that the passage mentioned above is representative of the enthusiasm caused by the spread of printing and its ground-breaking effects which revolutionised both text and image. This enthusiasm was shared all over Europe.¹⁹⁹ The new art quickly became popular and gained support in France too. For example, the poet Jacques Peletier celebrated the invention of the printing press in his writing: ‘Ah... one can print in one day, What it would take thirty days to say, And a hundred times longer to write by hand’.²⁰⁰

The rapid diffusion and development of printing and its interaction with society, along with other factors such as the creation of many new libraries and universities, the literary boost derived from Renaissance humanism, and the rise of vernaculars, led to the growth of a ‘print culture’ which encompassed all forms of printed text (including images) and related cultural products.²⁰¹ The purpose of this chapter is to examine the manifestations of this culture in sixteenth-century France and the place of Boaistuau and his work within it. In some respects France is representative of the wider European print culture of the time, and Boaistuau’s work represents the features of French print culture, the more distinctive of which can be seen in his books and which give his work its individuality. Looking at the success of Boaistuau gives an insight

¹⁹⁸ *Ars grammatica* was a Latin grammar text by Aelius Donatus (4 AD), a Roman teacher of rhetoric.

¹⁹⁹ Printing did not gain only friends but also enemies, as many people viewed it with distrust. A notable example occurred when John Fust, financier of Gutenberg and Schoeffer, attempted to sell copies of the first Bible in Paris only to be accused that he had the Devil’s help. Quoted in Eisenstein, E., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 19.

²⁰⁰ Cited in Davis, N. Z., ‘Printing and the people’ in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), p. 220. Jacques Peletier (1517-1582), a contemporary of Boaistuau, was a French humanist poet who frequented the circle of Marguerite of Navarre and was a member of La Pléiade. Peletier published the first French translation of Horace’s *Ars poetica*, as well as other treatises in various topics like medicine and mathematics.

²⁰¹ On the creation of new universities during that period see De Ridder-Symoens, H. (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 2: *Universities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1996). Also see Chapter One, footnote 125.

into the nature of French print culture at the time. This chapter will therefore focus on those issues which make possible the contextualisation of Boaistuau's books, and will not produce a new history of the advancement of printing. This task has already been attempted, and although many gaps still exist due to lack of a systematic and definite examination of the effects of printing and associated interactions, scholars have managed to cover a remarkable breadth of material, with Andrew Pettegree's *The Book in the Renaissance* being the most recent example.²⁰²

In order to investigate the success of Pierre Boaistuau and the extent to which his work is representative of sixteenth-century French print culture, this chapter will be divided into three sections. The first will cover the publishing history of each of Boaistuau's books in detail. It will bring together all hitherto known editions, including versions discovered during the period of this research as well as translations into other European languages, which make the popularity of Boaistuau's books an undeniable fact. In addition, examples of his work from private libraries or which had been shipped to South America will be given. These form a very important but overlooked aspect of his work.

²⁰² Scholarship on the history of printing and book is vast and varied. Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an agent of change*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1979) and Lucian Febvre and Henri Jean Martin's *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800* (London, 1976) are the two classic studies which served as the basis for all other works in the field. Some relevant studies which cover various themes are: Parent, A., *Les Métiers du livre à Paris au XVIe siècle, 1535-1560* (Geneva, 1974); Chrisman, M. U., *Lay Culture and Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480-1599* (New Haven, 1982); Chartier, R., *The Culture of Print. Power and the uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 1989); Watt, T., *Cheap print and popular piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991); Johns, A., *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 1998); Armstrong, E., *Before Copyright: The French Book-Privilege System: 1498-1526* (Cambridge, 2000); Halasz, A., *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2006); Walsby, M., *Books and Book Culture in the First Age of Print: Brittany, 1484-1600* (Leiden, 2009); Pettegree, A., *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 2010).

Part two will contextualise Boaistuau's oeuvre by examining certain manifestations of the French print culture. A short overview of the arrival of printing and its major changes, as well as the impact it had on the French printing industry and book trade, will serve as a general introduction. Amongst the topics examined will be the textual and pictorial transformation of books, literacy rates, the readership dynamic of the time, and Boaistuau's role as a writer.

The aim of the third part will be to prove how representative of French print culture Boaistuau's work truly was. To do so, four key features of his work will be addressed corresponding to four related areas: the centralised character of production, with the majority of books being printed in Paris and Lyon; the physical nature of the book, their elegance and small size being their most distinctive characteristics; the rise of the vernaculars, with more than half of the total number of books printed in French; and the popular literature at the time, which represents some of the readers' favourite topics.

The representative character of Boaistuau's work and career constitutes an interesting case for tracking the publishing endeavours of a well-known sixteenth-century writer, and for adding to the scholarship on print culture. Researching editions of his works will shed new light on the changing French printing industry at the time and its features, the book dissemination networks, the impact of humanism on the book market, the contemporary writing trends, the readers' preferences, and the relationship between the public and the writer.

2.1. The publishing history of Pierre Boaistuau's works

The number of editions of Boaistuau's books reveals to a great extent his enormous publishing success and the lasting impact of his work. From 1556 and the publication of his first title in Paris, to 1751, the year the last known edition of *Histoires prodigieuses* was published in London, 164 different editions of Boaistuau's works were published in total across Europe – including translations, a few pirated editions and a considerable number of newly discovered versions which first came to light during my research.²⁰³ This staggering number gives the Breton writer a very special place among other sixteenth-century writers in terms of work circulation and reception. In particular, the editions of his magnum opus *Le Théâtre du monde* surpassed the numbers of editions of some of the biggest-selling contemporary works. For example, sixty-nine editions of Sebastian Brant's *The Ship of Fools* were published between 1494 and 1600.²⁰⁴ Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia Universalis* appeared in thirty-five editions between 1544 and 1628.²⁰⁵ There were fifty-seven editions of François Rabelais's five books of *Pantagruel and Gargantua* between 1532 and 1555, before the publication of the collected *Oeuvres*.²⁰⁶ In comparison with these titles, Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre* proved far more commercial. Its eighty-nine editions spread over 121 years were surpassed only by the greatest Renaissance best-sellers such as Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ For a complete list of all editions of Boaistuau's works see Appendix A.

²⁰⁴ Wellbery, D. E. (ed.), *A New History of German Literature* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), p. 200.

²⁰⁵ McLean, M., *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster: Describing the World in the Reformation* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 1.

²⁰⁶ Rawles, S., Screech, M. A., *A New Rabelais Bibliography: Editions of Rabelais before 1626* (Geneva, 1987). This number rises to ninety-three including the editions of Rabelais's *Oeuvres*.

²⁰⁷ Of course, there were even more popular works such as Desiderius Erasmus's *Colloquies* and Juan Luis Vives's *Exercises in the Latin Language* which numbered several hundreds of editions.

The total number of Boaistuau's editions is irrefutable evidence of the success and wide distribution of his work. However, in order to have a better understanding of its magnitude, it is essential to define book edition. The use of the word is confirmed in the French language from the sixteenth century, meaning 'to establish a text in order to be published and reproduced'.²⁰⁸ For the purposes of this study, Philip Gaskell's definition of the term will be used. An edition 'is all the copies of a book printed at any time (or times) from substantially the same setting of type, and includes all the various impressions, issues and states which may have derived from that setting'.²⁰⁹ Although exact statistics are almost impossible to obtain, each edition in the mid sixteenth century consisted of anything up to fifteen hundred copies, or even more in the case of popular titles (such as *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Histoires prodigieuses*).²¹⁰ These figures depended not only on the financial investment of the printer (materials such as paper and ink attracted considerable cost), but also on an estimation of public demand. Too few copies of a work which proved popular meant that a new edition had to be printed. Too many copies meant that the unsold ones had to be put in store.

In general, around one thousand copies per edition seem to be the norm for a writer in Boaistuau's time. Based on this number, it is safe to assume that the 164 editions of his works amount to *a minimum* of 164000 copies of books which were distributed in the French market and elsewhere.²¹¹ This success becomes even greater when

²⁰⁸ Le Robert (direction A. Rey), *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, t. I (Paris, 1992), p. 662. According to Le Robert (direction A. Rey), *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française* (Paris, 2005), the word 'edicion' appeared in 1530.

²⁰⁹ Gaskell, P., *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Winchester, 1995), p. 313.

²¹⁰ See Febvre, L., Martin, H.-J., *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800* (London, 1997), pp. 218-219.

²¹¹ This figure was obtained by multiplying the number of editions by a thousand copies per edition. Of course, it is only a minimum estimate since Boaistuau's works could easily have 1500 or 2000 copies

considering that the majority of these editions were printed posthumously, and that Boaistuau's most successful titles were also translated into major European languages including Latin, English, German, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian. These are further proofs of the popularity and long-lasting reputation of Boaistuau's text, which appealed to both French and foreign readers. All his works were first written in Latin but then translated into French, as noted at their front pages: 'composé en Latin par P. Boaystuaue... puis traduit par luymesme en François';²¹² 'faict en latin par Pierre Bouaystuaue... puis traduit par luy-mesme en françois';²¹³ 'traduit du latin en françois par P. Bouaisteau'.²¹⁴ This demonstrates the writer's awareness of the rising importance of publishing in the vernacular, which will be addressed in a later section.

Therefore, this first part will focus on a detailed presentation, for the first time, of all known editions (excluding undated ones) of Boaistuau's books. In the cases of *Histoires tragiques* and *Histoires prodigieuses*, 'collaborative editions' (expanded versions of the works in multiple volumes) will be included only if they contain Boaistuau's original text. The presentation will start with the most successful titles and end with the the least— based on their total number of editions. The international character of Boaistuau's books and their use by other writers will be another aspect of his work to be examined. As it will be shown, copies were shipped to South America via the Spanish book trade, were found in inventories and private libraries across Europe, and were cited in works published as late as the eighteenth century. Such practices were not uncommon at the time and in this respect, do not make Boaistuau's

per edition; moreover, they could have been pirated in much greater numbers than the editions already known.

²¹² Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1558), Title-page.

²¹³ Boaistuau, P., *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1558), Title-page.

²¹⁴ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1559), Title-page.

career distinctive compared to that of contemporary writers, although they separate him from the mass of mediocrity. However, the fact that these aspects have been almost totally neglected by scholarship conceals a significant dimension of his work which will enhance his profile as an eminent writer.

2.1.1. *Le Théâtre du monde*

Full title: *Le Théâtre du monde, ou il est faict vn ample discours des miseres humaines, composé en Latin par Pierre Boaystuaue, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne: puis traduict par luy mesme en François. Dedié à Reverendissime Prelat, Iaques de Betoun, Archeuesque de Glasco.*

Le Théâtre du monde, a philosophical-moralising treatise, was Boaistuau's most successful title. It followed the literary genre of *miseria humanis*, focusing on every aspect of human misery, on the corruption and depravity of societies, on maladies of the spirit, and natural and man-made disasters. It was complemented by a discourse on the dignity of Man at the end of the book, which was also published as a separate title.²¹⁵ *Le Théâtre* was first published in Paris in 1558 by Vincent Sertenas and immediately became a best-seller. During the first eight years of its publication there were fourteen new editions. Its enormous success is evident as can be seen by its impressive publishing history. With eighty-nine known publications and translations into eight European languages including Latin, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Czech, Dutch, and Welsh, it is hardly a surprise that *Le Théâtre* became Boaistuau's

²¹⁵ *Le Théâtre du monde*, its moralising context and association to Renaissance philosophy will be examined in detail in Chapter Three. For the *Bref discours* see later section.

most famous work.²¹⁶ Most of the French editions were printed in Paris, with a smaller number printed in Lyon and Rouen (see tables 2.5 and 2.10 later). The editions produced between 1558 and 1562 were published by Sertenas, Gilles Robinot, Jean Longis and Robert le Magnier (who had obtained a cooperative privilege), before the work was distributed outside France after 1564.

The significant number of fourteen editions were published in Antwerp in 1565, 1570, 1573, 1575, 1576, 1578, 1580, 1589, 1593 (two editions), 1594, 1596, 1599 and 1607. Most of these were printed by Christophe Plantin and Lucas Bellerus, who also published the first Latin translation of the work in 1576. *Le Théâtre*'s first Spanish translation appeared in 1564 in Alcalá, and nine more followed before the turn of the century in 1566, 1569, 1574, 1575 (all in Alcalá), 1585 (in Valladolid), 1593 (in Antwerp, in two different formats), 1594 and 1599 (both in Antwerp). The work was first translated into English in 1566. New editions published in London came out in 1574, 1581, 1587, 1595, 1663 and 1679. The first German edition was published in Cologne in 1574, and again in 1587 (in Würzburg), 1588 (in Würzburg and in Dresden), 1606 (in St. Gallen), 1607 (in Basel), 1609 (in Lindau), 1612 (in Mainz), 1619 (in Cologne, in three different formats, and one in Geneva, all by Jean de Tournes), 1659 (in Leipzig) and 1671 (in Basel).²¹⁷ In the first years of the seventeenth century the Czech, Dutch and Welsh translations appeared: 1605 (in Prague), 1608 (in Amsterdam) and 1615-16 (in Paris) respectively. This astonishing publishing history proves the lasting impact of *Le Théâtre du monde*, which continued to be popular long after Boaistuau's death, and its success on an international scale.

²¹⁶ For a complete table of *Le Théâtre*'s editions, including newly discovered versions, see Appendix A.

²¹⁷ The Jean de Tournes edition was quarto-lingual, presenting the text on each page in parallel columns of French, German, Italian and Latin. This was probably for educational purposes, and in order to attract a multi-lingual audience. For more see Chapter Three.

2.1.2. *Histoires prodigieuses*

Full title: *Histoires prodigieuses les plus memorables qui ayent esté observées depuis la Nativité de Iesus Christ, iusques à nostre siecle: Extraictes de plusieurs fameux auteurs, Grecz, et Latins, sacrez et prophanes: mises en nostre langue Par P. Boaistuau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne, avec les pourtraictz et figures. Dediées à treshault, et tres puissant Seigneur, Iehan de Rieux, Seigneur Dasserac*

Histoires prodigieuses may have been the last book published by Boaistuau, but its great success made it his second most-published title after *Le Théâtre du monde*. It was the first work of its kind in sixteenth-century France, importing the genre of *histoire prodigieuse*. It followed the structure of ‘wonder-books’, containing among others accounts of natural disasters, strange animals, monstrous births and deformed bodies, and was Boaistuau’s sole illustrated book with all stories accompanied by woodcuts.²¹⁸ Spanning a period from 1560 to 1751, there were at least thirty-one different editions and it was translated into English, Spanish and Dutch. Similarly to *Le Théâtre*, the majority of *Histoires*’s French editions were printed in Paris (eighteen editions, representing 58%); there were also four French editions printed in Antwerp in the 1590s (in 1594, 1595, 1596, and 1597) by Guislaine Janssens. In 1569, the book was translated into English and published in London by Henry Bynneman, whereas the first Spanish translation appeared in 1586 in Medina del Campo. One more Spanish edition followed in 1603 in Madrid by Luis Sanchez. In 1592 the first Dutch translation appeared in Dordrecht, published in two different issues by P. Verhaghen

²¹⁸ *Histoires prodigieuses*, the genre of *histoire prodigieuse* and its links to natural philosophy and the knowledge explosion experienced in the sixteenth century will be examined in Chapter Five.

and J. Froyen respectively, while three more editions were issued in Amsterdam in 1596, 1608 and 1657.²¹⁹

Histoires prodigieuses was a project started by Boaistuau but expanded by others.²²⁰ As with *Histoires tragiques*, to be examined later, the great success of the work and the demand for stories led to the publication of new tomes, originally by François de Belleforest and later by *literati* such as Claude Tesserant and Jean de Marconville (who appeared as ‘I.D.M’).²²¹ These tomes were published separately or in multi-volume editions; in the latter case, they always contained Boaistuau’s stories as the first volume. For example, the 1575 Paris edition by Jean de Marnef et Guillaume Cavellat was published in three separate volumes, each one containing one tome. Similarly, the 1597-1598 Paris edition by Cavellat comprising six tomes (the work’s most complete version) was published in three different volumes: the first volume had tomes one and two (dated 1598 and 1597 respectively) and contained Boaistuau’s original stories and new ones by Claude Tesserant; the second volume contained tome three (dated 1597) with stories by Belleforest; and the third volume had tomes four, five and six (the first two dated 1597 and the third 1598) with stories by Rod Hoyer, Belleforest and Jean de Marconville. Such editions are a testimony to the enduring success of *Histoires prodigieuses*, but most importantly to the great potential of Boaistuau’s original project, which continued to appeal to different groups of readers long after his death.

²¹⁹ For a complete list of editions see Appendix A.

²²⁰ The expansion of a work depended largely on its publishing success, as proved by examples such as Jean Crespin’s *Histoire des martyrs*. See Gilmont, J.-F., *Jean Crespin, un éditeur réformé du XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 1981). For more on the continuation of Boaistuau’s work by Belleforest see Chapter Three.

²²¹ See Kerviller, R., *Répertoire général de bio-bibliographie bretonne*, t. 4 (Rennes, 1890), p. 44.

2.1.3. *Histoires tragiques*

Full title: *Histoires tragiques extraictes des oeuvres italiennes de Bandel, et mises en nostre langue Françoise, par Pierre Boaistuau surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne. Dediées à Monseigneur Matthieu de Mauny, Abbé des Noyers*

Another work by Boaistuau which proved to be particularly successful was *Histoires tragiques*, a translation of six cautionary tales of love and revenge taken from the Italian anthology *Novelle* by Matteo Bandello. The blending of tragic features throughout the narration and the underlying moralising message made the book an immediate success. With this translation, Boaistuau popularised the literary genre of *histoire tragique* in France (in the same way he popularised *histoire prodigieuse* by publishing *Histoires prodigieuses*).²²² *Histoires tragiques* was first published in Paris in 1559 by Vincent Sertenas. The same year François de Belleforest added twelve more stories to Boaistuau's original six, which were published as the *Continuation des histoires tragiques*. In 1560, the eighteen stories were brought together for the first time into a single volume, and were published under the title *XVIII Histoires tragiques*. Since Boaistuau had abandoned the project whilst he pursued different literary paths, Belleforest took up the task of continuing it. New volumes were published with newly-translated stories in order to satisfy the need of a rapidly expanding readership, thus making *Histoires tragiques* a multi-volume work.²²³ These volumes were published separately or as parts of 'collective' publications by various publishers.

²²² The contents and themes of *Histoires tragiques*, their association to humanism and the French narrative fiction at the time will be discussed in Chapter Three.

²²³ For a detailed list of the editions of Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* see Simonin, M., *Vivre de sa plume au XVIe siècle*, pp. 233-312.

For instance, there is a seven-volume publication spanning the years 1568 to 1616. It contains tomes published in Lyon (t. I, II), Paris (t. III, IV, V) and Rouen (t. VI, VII). Another consisted of tomes published between 1579 and 1604 in Rouen (t. I, V, VII), Lyon (t. II, III, VI), and Paris (t. IV). The 1603-1604 Rouen edition (the work's most complete version) had a total of 125 stories divided into seven volumes.²²⁴ Such examples reveal contemporary publishing strategies, where printers would collaborate in order to maximise their profits. They also show the continuing success of *Histoires tragiques* into the seventeenth century and further testify to the popularity of anthologies at the time in France.

However, the run of editions of *Histoires tragiques* used for the purposes of this study does not include the expanded versions but deals only with the publishing history of the first tome by Boaistuau. Published exclusively in French, it had twenty editions from 1559 until 1616.²²⁵ Ten of them were printed in Paris (1559 – two editions, 1560, 1561, 1563, 1564, 1567, 1568, 1571, and 1580); these represent 50% of the total number of editions, and as will be shown later, are representative of the centralised character of Boaistuau's work. In addition to the Parisian editions, seven more were printed in France: five in Lyon (1564, 1575, 1578, 1596, and 1616) and two in Rouen (1601 and 1603). There were also two editions published in Turin (1570, 1582) and one in Antwerp (1567), which prove that the book, similarly to *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Histoires prodigieuses*, had an international character and a vogue outside France.

²²⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires tragiques* (Rouen, 1603-04). Volumes 1 to 6 were printed by Adrian de Launay, and volume 7 by Pierre l'Oyselet.

²²⁵ For a table of editions see Appendix A.

2.1.4. *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*

Full title: *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus, svr l'institution des princes Chrestiens, & origine des Royaumes, traduyt de latin en François, par Pierre Bouaistuau, natif de Bretagne des parties de Nantes, avec un traité de paix & de guerre, & un autre de l'excellence et dignité de mariage. Ensemble vne autre hystoire de la faulse religion de Mahomet, & par quel moyen il a seduyt tant de peuple, lesquelz sont de l'invention du translateur.*

L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus was printed in 1556 in Paris, although it might not have been Boaistuau's creation.²²⁶ Whether a self-written work or a translation, the fact remains that the book proved to be quite popular, with sixteen editions between 1556 and 1585.²²⁷ The overwhelming majority of these editions were printed in France: eight in Paris (1556, 1557, 1559, 1560, 1564, 1567, 1572, and 1578), two in Rouen by Thomas Mallard (1576) and by an unknown publisher (1579), and three in Lyon (1576, 1577, 1585) by Benoit Rigaud. Another French edition was also published in Antwerp (1570) by Jacques Monnotz. The work was also translated into English by James Chillester and published in London in 1571 by Henry Bynneman. It was preceded by an earlier London edition published in 1560 in French which was dedicated to Elizabeth I as part of Boaistuau's attempts to win her favour. As far as its content is concerned, *Chelidonius Tigurinus* belonged to the *de regimine principum* genre and focused on the education and preparation of the ideal Christian prince, discussing the values expected of a new ruler. It was divided into thirteen chapters

²²⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Boaistuau noted that a certain 'Seigneur du Parc' gave him a Latin book entitled *L'institution des Princes Chrestiens* and asked him to translate it into French – which means that Boaistuau probably did not write this work but only translated it. For more detail on this issue see Chapter Four.

²²⁷ For a table of editions see Appendix A.

containing, *inter alia*, numerous examples of political history from the classical period, as well as a polemic against heresies and Islam, a treatise on war and peace, and a tract on the institution of marriage.²²⁸

2.1.5. *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*

Full title: *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme. Faict en Latin par P. Bouaystuaue surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne, puis traduit par luy mesme en François. Dedie à mersieurs Iacques et Alexandre de Betoun, Gentilz hommes Escossois freres*

As mentioned earlier, *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* was a complementary treatise in *Le Théâtre du monde* and was also published as a separate work in 1558. In terms of content, it followed the literary genre of *dignitas hominis*, being an exposition of man's virtues and abilities, praising both human body and mind. This celebration of Man's excellence contrasted the context of human miseries described in *Le Théâtre*, and allowed Boaistuau to stress his moralising message.²²⁹

Bref discours was never printed outside France or translated into any other language. As part of *Le Théâtre* though, it circulated widely across Europe and was translated into Latin, English, German, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish. The publishing history of the French version was limited only inside France, numbering four editions, all of which were printed in Paris – all by Vincent Sertenas, Gilles Robinot, Jean Longis and Robert le Magnier. The first edition of the work was published in 1558, to be

²²⁸ This work that was written according to the *de regimine principum* genre will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four.

²²⁹ *Bref discours*, the genre of *dignitas humanis* and the association to Renaissance philosophy will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

followed by another three in 1559, 1560, and 1562. What is more, there are four undated editions published on the periphery; two in Troyes by Edme Briden and Nicole Durol, one in Rouen by Guillaume Mulot and another in Lyon by Jean Didier. Why is the publishing history of *Bref discours* cut short in 1562, when most of Boaistuau's titles had a continuous presence at the printing presses for considerably longer? The reason was no doubt the incorporation of the treatise in the editions of *Le Théâtre du monde*, which made the publication of *Bref discours* as a separate work unnecessary.

2.1.6. *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*

Full title: *Histoire des persécutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique, faisant un ample discours des merueilleux combatz qu'elle a soustenuz, estant oppressée et affligée soubz la tyrannie de plusieurs empereurs romains, commençant à Nostre Sauveur Jesus Christ et à ses apostres et quelle a été la constanae de leurs successeurs en icelle. Par feu Pierre Boistuau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne*

Appearing in 1572 during the French Wars of Religion, this was Boaistuau's sole work to be published posthumously. Its editor Pierre de Cistieres noted that its compilation had begun much earlier but was interrupted because of the death of Boaistuau's father.²³⁰ The *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* had three different editions over a period of fourteen years (1572 to 1586),

²³⁰ See Chapter One, footnote 171. Pierre de Cistieres had given Boaistuau the promise to continue his unfinished work: '... la promesse que je luy feis lors de son decez, de cherir, garder et avoir soing de ses enfans, nompas enfans corporels, ains spirituels'. See Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* (Paris, R. le Magnier, 1576), Epistre.

all of which were published in Paris in French.²³¹ The first edition appeared in 1572 in different issues by Robert le Magnier, Vincent Normant and Guillaume de La Nouë. In 1576, another edition by the same publishers saw the light, and further version appeared in 1586 by La Nouë. The book was a historical narration of the various threats faced by the early Christian Church at the time of the Roman Empire. Divided into three parts and borrowing from similar works, it narrated all the major afflictions, heresies and schisms which jeopardised the very existence of Christianity. The exposition of such themes on the backdrop of the political and religious turbulence in France at the time was certainly an important reason for the book's successful reception. After all, the first edition appeared in the same year as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which no doubt was a clever commercial move by the publishers. However, the fact that Boaistuau probably wished to publish this work much earlier reflects his effort to bolster the Catholic faith at a time of uncertainty. The *Histoire des persecutions* was a title addressed not only to those interested in the study of Roman history or the history of Christianity, but to an anxious readership witnessing the continuous tensions between Catholics and Protestants which would tear the kingdom apart in subsequent years.²³²

2.1.7. *Histoires des amans fortunez*

Full title: *Histoires des amans fortunez, dédiées à très illustre princesse madame Marguerite de Bourbon, duchesse de Nivernois*

²³¹ See Appendix A for a complete table of editions.

²³² Not to be confused with Heinrich Bullinger's *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise*, a title published in Geneva in 1577. For more details on the tradition of ecclesiastical history, and for an examination of Boaistuau's title, which has never been discussed before, see Chapter Four.

Although *Histoires des amans fortunez* was not written by Boaistuau, it is often attributed to him because of his role as an editor.²³³ As mentioned in the first chapter, this work was in fact the first printed version of Marguerite of Navarre's anthology of nouvelles, now known as *Heptameron*. As an editor Boaistuau picked a title of his own, significantly altered and re-arranged the contents and did not mention Marguerite's name as the real author, which was the reason why his edition was blocked by Marguerite's daughter.²³⁴ There is only one edition under Boaistuau's original title, published in Paris in 1558 in-4°. The authorisation of print was accorded to Vincent Sertenas, and the book was issued by three different book-sellers: Gilles Robinot, Gilles Gilles, and Jean Caveiler.²³⁵ In terms of content, the sixty-seven nouvelles contained in Boaistuau's *Histoires des amans fortunez* had a cautionary character, dealing with themes of adultery, rape, betrayal, and flattery, and their narrating style brings to mind Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. They serve as an ideal case for studying aspects of narrative fiction in sixteenth-century French literature, as well as the idea and nature of editing.²³⁶

2.1.8. The translation of St. Augustine's *The City of God* and other unpublished works

Beside his seven published titles, Boaistuau also noted his intention of writing other works which, however, never found their way to the printing press. In *Le Théâtre du monde* he made reference to *Traité de la paix et de la guerre*, which would probably have been based on a similarly titled chapter from his *L'Histoire de Chelidonius*

²³³ For instance, the BnF Online catalogue classifies this work under Boaistuau's name.

²³⁴ For the affair of the *Amans fortunez* see also Chapter One.

²³⁵ See Simonin, M., 'De la prime fortune éditoriale des nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre (XVI^e siècle et début du XVII^e siècle)', in *L'encre et la lumière* (Geneva, 2004), p. 711.

²³⁶ For more details on the work, its links to sixteenth-century narrative fiction and the role of Boaistuau as an editor see Chapter Three.

Tigurinus.²³⁷ He also mentioned *Traité des pierres précieuses* in his *Histoires prodigieuses* (pp. 47v-48r), which actually contains a chapter on precious stones and their qualities. Another work noted in *Chelidonium Tigurinus* was a discourse on the origins of nobility (*De l'origine de noblesse*), which he intended to dedicate to François de Clèves.²³⁸ La Croix du Maine attributed to Boaistuau a *Traité de l'Eglise militante* and noted him as translator of a part of Nicephore Calliste's *Histoire ecclésiastique*, something also noted by René Kerviler.²³⁹ In reality, however, both works are alternate titles for Boaistuau's *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* which was published posthumously in 1572 (see previous section 2.1.6).

However, the most important of Boaistuau's unpublished projects was the French translation of St. Augustine's *The City of God*, which was announced twice; firstly, in *Le Théâtre du monde* where Boaistuau wrote: 'i'ay bien osé commettre ce present fardeau [The City of God] à mes foibles espauls, esperant avec la grace du Seigneur le produire et quasi enfanter en lumiere en nostre vulgaire'.²⁴⁰ On the second occasion it was mentioned in the 'Advertissement au Lecteur' of *Histoires prodigieuses* (published two years after *Le Théâtre*): 'Et i'espere, avec la grace de Dieu, te [lecteur] faire veoir en brief en nostre langue, la Cité de Dieu de saint Augustin, laquelle ie traicteray d'un stille plus serieux, grave, solide, et mieux élaboré, que ce traicté d'Histoires'.²⁴¹ These passages reveal that Boaistuau had already begun working on

²³⁷ See Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1559), Chapter 12.

²³⁸ *Ibid* (1556 edition), Epistre: 'esperant vous offrir en bref l'origine de noblesse, qui est de mon invention'.

²³⁹ La Croix du Maine, F. G., *Les Bibliothèques françoises de La Croix-du-Maine et de Du Verdier* (Paris, 1772), Tome 2, p. 255; Kerviller, R., *Répertoire général de bio-bibliographie bretonne*, t. 4 (Rennes, 1890), p. 44.

²⁴⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), Salutation à lecteur.

²⁴¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), Advertissement au Lecteur.

the translation of *The City of God*; in fact, he even described its style as more serious and more elaborate compared to that used in *Histoires prodigieuses*. He also appeared to be conscious of the Protestant ideas which spread throughout Europe at the time ('une infinite de sectes qui pullulent et glissent aujourdhuy par le monde'), which he presented as the reason for translating St. Augustine's title. *The City of God* was a work already known in sixteenth-century France, praised for its commemoration of Christian philosophy and doctrines.²⁴² This is the reason why Boaistuau wrote that his translation would act as a shield against heresies, revealing his ambition to create his own version of one of the most celebrated treatises in defense of Christianity. But was religiosity Boaistuau's only motivation? Considering the steadily growing vernacular public occupying a large share of the book market in France, and the fact that Boaistuau's translation would have been in French, it is not difficult to assume that a commercial motive was hidden behind the writer's decision. The fact that St. Augustine's treatise had already been translated into French would not have been a problem for the ambitious Boaistuau, who probably hoped that his translation would have the same publishing success as his previous works.

No evidence exists as to whether the translation was finished or not, or was published in an unknown date or under a pseudonym. La Croix du Maine suggests a scenario similar to the publication of *Histoire des persécutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, which was brought to light after Boaistuau's death by one of his friends:

Il [Boaistuau] a davantage traduit fort doctement et avec beaucoup d'heur, les Livres de la Cité de Dieu, écrits par S. Augustin, lesquels ne sont encore en lumière: ceux qui les ont retirés par devers eux après la mort de l'Auteur, ne

²⁴² St. Augustine's *The City of God* was printed several times in the early modern period. It was first translated into French under the title *La Cité de Dieu* in 1486 by Raoul de Pruelles, and then published again in 1570 by Gentian Hervet.

les devraient pas retenir si long-temps à les faire imprimer, tant pour l'amour du défunt, que pour l'utilité et profit de tous amateurs des Lettres.²⁴³

2.1.9. The reception of Boaistuau's editions in Europe and the Americas

After presenting in detail the numerous editions of all Boaistuau's works, it is pertinent to examine another side of their publishing history by means of a selection of examples found in inventories and personal libraries. This will further prove their wide diffusion, and will shed light on Boaistuau's readership, reconstructing some interesting cases of those who bought and read his books. These few but important examples vividly demonstrate the power and lasting success of this writer's text which appealed to a wide and varied group of readers over a long period of time.

The library catalogue of Jaspas Scliek from late sixteenth-century French Flanders contained fifty-nine titles belonging to him and his father. Among them, is Boaistuau's *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* and *Le Théâtre du monde*, both editions printed in Anvers in 1570 and 1573 respectively.²⁴⁴ Another case is the 1576 inventory of the Dutch noble Jan Van Renesse, Lord of Elderen and Ostmalle in present-day Belgium, which had 230 book titles and contained *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Histoires des amans fortunez* – although the latter title is catalogued under the name 'Margaret of Angoulême'.²⁴⁵ In addition, the inventory of John Hatcher, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1579-1580, contained a copy of the 1589

²⁴³ La Croix du Maine, F. G., *Les Bibliothèques françoises de La Croix-du-Maine et de Du Verdier*, p. 256.

²⁴⁴ Barroux, R., 'Catalogue d'une bibliothèque à la fin du XVIe siècle', *Revue du seizième siècle*, vol. 15 (1928), pp. 324-336, cited in Pettegree, A., Nelles, P. N., Conner, P. (eds), *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 262.

²⁴⁵ Coppens, C., *Printers and Readers in the Sixteenth Century* (Brussel, 2005), pp. 321-500. On the Van Renesse family see Marshall, S., *The Dutch Gentry, 1500-1650: Family, Faith and Fortune* (New York, 1987), *passim*.

Latin edition of *Le Théâtre* (*Theatrum mundi minoris*).²⁴⁶ Scriek's, Van Renesse's and Hatcher's examples prove that Boaistuau's books appealed to people of different social levels, economic standing and reading taste. Their topics and writing style made them so popular that they were found in Europe's most prestigious book exhibition at the time, the Frankfurt Book Fair.²⁴⁷ For instance, the Fair's 1592 book list included two copies of Boaistuau's best-seller *Le Théâtre du monde*: one published in Lyon in 1588 offered for sale during the autumn Frankfurt Fair, and a second folio copy of an unknown edition which was offered during the spring Fair.²⁴⁸ This further proves the popularity of Boaistuau and the favourable reception of his works, since many books sold at the Frankfurt Fair were requested by letter in advance by potential buyers.²⁴⁹

However, Boaistuau's works also appealed to *literati* and monarchs just as they appealed to the wider population. An example was *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, which figured amongst the titles of Michel de Montaigne's private library.²⁵⁰ A man of unparalleled erudition and literary creativity and one of the most significant figures of Renaissance France, the writer of the *Essais* probably found interest in Boaistuau's philosophical exposition of the dignity of Man and his capabilities, which was a concept he also celebrated in his works.²⁵¹ Mary Queen of

²⁴⁶ Leedham-Green, E. S., *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1986), p. 380.

²⁴⁷ On the Frankfurt Book Fair in the early modern period see Gossage, C. M., Wright, W. A. (eds), *A History of the Frankfurt Book Fair* (Toronto, 2007), Part 1; Flood, J. L., "Omnium totius orbis emporiorum compendium": the Frankfurt fair in the early modern period', in Myers, R., Harris, M., Mandelbrote, G. (eds), *Fairs, Markets and the Itinerant Book Trade* (London, 2007), pp. 1-42.

²⁴⁸ Pettegree, A., *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden, 2007), Chapter 7: French Books at the Frankfurt Fair.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 133.

²⁵⁰ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* (Geneva, 1982), p. 62.

²⁵¹ The examination of Boaistuau's influences on Montaigne's ideas and work would surely serve as a very interesting topic for a future study. For more on Montaigne (1533-1592) and his contribution see Hartle, A., *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher* (Cambridge, 2003).

Scots also had a copy of *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, found in an inventory of the Holyrood Library made in 1569.²⁵² The Queen had also composed a book of verses in French, entitled *Institution of a Prince* (perhaps influenced by the topic of Boaistuau's treatise?), for her son James I, who also enjoyed reading Boaistuau's works. This is proved by the fact that when he became king, James I had a copy of *Histoires prodigieuses* which in fact he made use of when he wrote *Daemonologie*: '[...] or else, to discover unto them, the will of the defunct, or what was the way of his slaughter, as is written in the booke of the **histories Prodigious**'.²⁵³ Two more editions of *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris 1566, Paris 1575) found later on the shelves of the Abbotsford Library, further demonstrate that Boaistuau's works were quite popular across the Channel, particularly in Scotland, probably because of its historical bonds with France.²⁵⁴

Such examples taken from libraries of France, the Low Countries, Germany and Scotland give an interesting insight of the wide and varied readership of Boaistuau's works, which figured among the personal favourites of both lay and erudite people. In addition, they prove the wide dissemination of his works across Europe, and his lasting reputation as a writer. The longevity of Boaistuau's name and his high standing in the French book world can be further proved by the quotation of his books used by others long after his death. One of the most well-known examples was *Des monstres et prodiges* (first published in 1573) by the French royal surgeon Amboise

²⁵² Noted by Nigel Wheale in his 'Dignitas Hominis: the vulgarization of a Renaissance theme' (PhD dissert., University of Cambridge, 1978), p. 47. As mentioned earlier, Boaistuau dedicated his *Le Théâtre du monde* to Mary's ambassador in France, James Beaton II, with whom he had a close relationship as it is shown by the dedication of his *Bref discours* to Beaton's nephews.

²⁵³ Rhodes, N., Richards, J., Marshall, J. (eds), *King James VI and I: Selected writings* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 185.

²⁵⁴ Lockhart, J. G., *Catalogue of the library at Abbotsford* (Edinburgh, 1838), pp. 137 and 141.

Paré, who made extensive use of Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses*.²⁵⁵ Almost two centuries later, the reputation and importance of this particular title continued to be widespread. For instance, the polymath Lenglet du Fresnoy used many examples from it for the writing of his 1752 anthology entitled *Recueil de dissertations, anciennes et nouvelles, sur les apparitions, les visions & les songes*.²⁵⁶ A year later, Aimé-Ambroise-Joseph Feutry published his own version of Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques* under the title *Choix d'histoires tirées de Bandel, italien; de Belleforest, Commingeois; de Boistuau, dit Launai; et de quelques autres auteurs*, in four volumes.²⁵⁷

Another very important dimension of the publishing history of Boaistuau's work which has been totally overlooked by scholars is its international character.²⁵⁸ The Spanish translations of two of his most successful (in terms of publication) books, *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Histoires prodigieuses*, were shipped to South America during the sixteenth-century Spanish expansion. There, a growing educated and leisured class offered the possibility of the creation of a new and lucrative market for European books, supported by an international network of commerce and an expanded book trade. As Irving Leonard has noted, this is:

a fact of special interest since the international character of the book trade at this time is revealed. Even more significant, these indications demonstrate that

²⁵⁵ See Paré, A. (ed. J. Céard), *Des monstres et prodiges* (Geneva, 1971), Introduction, where Jean Céard clearly cites Boaistuau among Paré's principal sources.

²⁵⁶ Du Fresnoy, L., *Recueil de dissertations, anciennes et nouvelles, sur les apparitions, les visions & les songes*, 2 vols (Avignon-Paris, 1752). Nicolas Lenglet Du Fresnoy (1674-1755) was a French polymath, who studied theology and later worked in diplomacy and politics. He also contributed some articles to the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D'Alembert, although he is mostly remembered for his works on literary criticism, history and geography.

²⁵⁷ Feutry, A.-A.-J., *Choix d'histoires tirées de Bandel, italien; de Belleforest, Commingeois; de Boistuau, dit Launai; et de quelques autres auteurs* (London, 1753). Aimé-Ambroise-Joseph Feutry (1720-1789) was a French poet, translator and inventor.

²⁵⁸ The only exception is Irving A. Leonard's *Books of the Brave*, first published by Harvard University Press in 1949.

[...] sixteenth-century Spanish America was able to acquire the finest products of European as well as Spanish book manufacturers.²⁵⁹

Indeed, the lists of the books sent abroad contained items printed not only in Spain but also in the presses of celebrated printing centres such as Paris, Lyon, Antwerp and Rome. Although these lists were, to a great extent, composed of ecclesiastical literature, works of different character such as romances and philosophical treatises were also represented by several copies, being amongst the readership's favourite topics.²⁶⁰ Thus, Boaistuau's titles were included in the lists prepared by Spanish book dealers to be sent across the Atlantic Ocean.

The 1576 catalogue of the Mexican book trade contained seven copies of the Spanish translation of *Le Théâtre du monde*;²⁶¹ similarly, the 1583 list of best-sellers of Lima in Peru had ten more copies of the same title which were also bound in parchment ('en pergamino').²⁶² Four copies of *Histoires prodigieuses* in Spanish appeared at the Lima book catalogue of 1591.²⁶³ Two more can be seen in a document from the registry of one 'Francisco Dávalos' dated 1606.²⁶⁴ In the same registry, there is a different document which lists a single copy of *Histoires tragiques*, although it cannot be confirmed whether it was based on an edition by Boaistuau.²⁶⁵ In addition, a document from the Archivo General de Indias in Seville contains a note of 102 copies

²⁵⁹ Leonard, I. A., *Books of the Brave, Being an Account of Books and of Men in the Spanish Conquest and Settlement of the Sixteenth-Century New World* (Berkeley, repr.1992), p. 205.

²⁶⁰ See for instance Eisenberg, D., *Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age* (Newark, 1982).

²⁶¹ Leonard, I. A., 'On the Mexican Book Trade, 1576', *Hispanic Review*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1949), pp. 18-34.

²⁶² Leonard, I. A., 'Best Sellers of the Lima Book Trade, 1583', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1942), pp. 5-33.

²⁶³ Leonard, I. A., 'On the Lima Book Trade, 1591', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1953), pp. 511-525.

²⁶⁴ Leonard, I. A., *Books of the Brave*, Appendix, p. 394.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

of *Histoires prodigieuses* which were sent to South America.²⁶⁶ These lists are probably the best proof of Boaistuau's popularity as a writer and of his work's international character. No doubt, his titles proved to be a successful commercial enterprise for book dealers outside Europe, since they were favourite topics amongst the American readership. As late as the end of the seventeenth century, their popularity had not diminished; a Latin translation of *Le Théâtre du monde* was amongst the titles of Reverend Thomas Teackle's library, in the Accomack County of Virginia in 1697.²⁶⁷

2.2. Manifestations of French print culture

After having presented in detail the publishing history of Boaistuau's works, it is now possible to put them into their contemporary cultural context. By the mid-sixteenth century, the progression of printing and its various interactions with society had given birth to what has been named by scholars as 'print culture'.²⁶⁸ However, the large number of changes caused by printing and its cultural products cannot be put into a single formula which is why there is no consensus as to what print culture really is. For instance, Walter Ong separated oral from print culture but considered scribal culture as part of the latter;²⁶⁹ Elizabeth Eisenstein on the other hand, argued that print culture was born in Europe only after the coming of the printing press, thus separating

²⁶⁶ Leonard, I. A., *Books of the Brave*, p. 373.

²⁶⁷ This Latin translation was printed in Antwerp in 1589. See Butler, J., 'Thomas Teackle's 333 Books: A Great Library on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1697', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., vol. 49, no. 3 (1992), pp. 449-491. A future study on editions of Boaistuau's works found in North America could shed light on the degree to which these were circulated across the continent.

²⁶⁸ This term was popularised by Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, although it can be traced earlier in McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. For a first insight on the discussion on print culture see Johns, A., *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 1998), Chapter 1.

²⁶⁹ Ong, W. J., *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York, 1982).

print from scribal culture.²⁷⁰ In addition, it should be noted that the experiences associated with print were different for the majority of readers at the time. This is why the question of defining a culture shaped by the advent of print in sixteenth-century France is a perplexing one, since several features need to be taken into consideration. Although this question *per se* is beyond the scope of the present study, some of the key characteristics of French print culture and its various means of expression will be examined in order to contextualise Boaistuau's work.

The once dominant manuscript culture of Europe gradually gave its place to a rapidly developing new culture. This culture was created by the interaction of printing with people, and as a result, new ways of interchange developed between the new medium and readers. As Natalie Zemon Davis has shown in her article 'Printing and the people', the manifestations of this culture were experienced beyond the confines of the printing industry.²⁷¹ From the wide range of types of texts printed, the different impact they had on rural and civic societies, and the rise and standardization of the vernaculars, to the various levels of literacy, the birth of a wide and varied readership, and the new interaction between printing and oral culture, it is clear that the culture of print can not be studied in isolation. It was inextricably linked with society and had an impact on almost every aspect of human activity, transforming economy, technology, literature, arts, politics and religion; it enfolded all types of interaction between printed texts, their cultural products and the people. It is important to remember that Boaistuau wrote and published his books within this same context, an aspect of which

²⁷⁰ Eisenstein, E. L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, o.c.

²⁷¹ Davis, N. Z., 'Printing and the people', in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), pp. 189-226.

can be identified with – but is not limited to – the *histoire du livre*.²⁷² Analysis of this idea of the printed book as medium and messenger of interchanges and new relationships brought by print culture will not be limited in the following section, but will run throughout this chapter.

By the time Boaistuau published his first work in 1556, the French printing business was very different to that of a century earlier. The experimental phase of the first publishing enterprises had given way to a certain degree of standardisation in many fields. The book trade, boosted by a slow but steadily rising interest in books had expanded greatly compared to the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was even developed on an international scale. Printers and publishers were more conscious of the market's needs and pursued projects which would earn them guaranteed profits. Technological innovations were used to produce copies of much better quality than in previous copies. The nature of books had changed in many respects. New types of font had been introduced, while woodcuts and copperplates had, to a great extent, replaced hand decorations. The rise of the vernaculars had given birth to a new, varied readership, and at the same time gave opportunity for many writers to take their chances and try to win a place in the market. Literacy levels, although still very low, continued to increase. These are only a few of the major changes arising from the advent and development of print in France, which resulted in a set of distinct characteristics which need to be addressed. By looking at the assimilation and interaction of printing across various fields, it is possible to trace the manifestations and interactions of print culture in sixteenth-century France, and most importantly, the place of Pierre Boaistuau and his work within it.

²⁷² This topic of print culture, first associated with the school of *Annales*, had many adherents. Maybe the most well-known example can be seen in Febvre, L., Martin, H.-J., *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*.

2.2.1. The advent of print in France

France's first contact with the new art took place as early as 1458, when the French King, Charles VII, sent the Parisian bookseller Nicolas Jensen to Germany to collect information on the methods of printing.²⁷³ Although Jensen's attempts were not successful, printing in the French kingdom became closely intertwined with neighbouring Germany. As a result, three German workmen, Martin Crantz, Ulrich Gering, and Michael Friburger, established the first active press in Paris in 1470 and thus introduced printing in France.²⁷⁴ As the early industry was characterized by fluidity, many exchanges were possible between the two countries. For example, during the late years of the fifteenth century German printers were working in Paris, just as many French printers were trained in Germany. Most of the craftsmen involved were drawn from areas where the art had first been practiced, especially the Rhine valley between Basle and Cologne. Apart from being indebted to Germany, the French print culture also owed much to Italy. Printing had spread very rapidly through Italy (the pioneers in many cases again being German) and by the end of the fifteenth century, presses had been at work in more than seventy different locations south of the Alps. The French invasions of 1494 had a definite impact on French printing, since it came into direct contact with the Italian system and allowed crossovers between the two cultures. Italian techniques were adopted by French printers, and

²⁷³ Hellinga, L., 'Printing Types and the Printed Word. Considerations around New Insights into the beginning of Printing', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, vol. 57 (2003), cols. 249-265, cited in Pettegree, A., 'Centre and periphery in the European book world', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XVIII (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 101-128. I would like to thank Dr Elaine Fulton who provided me her personal copy of this item.

²⁷⁴ For a first insight on the first press in Paris see Steinberg, S. H., *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (London, 1959), p. 62. Outdated but still useful is also A. Claudin's *The First Paris Press – an account of the books printed for G. Fichet and J. Heynlin in the Sorbonne, 1470-1472* (London, 1898).

Italian humanism and the Italian Renaissance had an unquestionable effect on book production and decoration in France. This was most notable in Lyon which was geographically closer to Italy than Paris. Many features were imported into France by the first publishing firm in Europe, the Aldine press, and survived throughout this period.²⁷⁵

This combination of German and Italian influences together with the fact that foreigners were working in France, must surely have contributed to the development of the French printing business. It even added an international flavour to what was fast becoming a French-dominated industry. Most printers who contributed to this were educated men, interested in the new learning and the new ways of production: ‘In those days, the most distinguished printers and publishers were not only skilled craftsmen but unusually learned men, with a deep knowledge of the classical culture’.²⁷⁶ The names of Robert Estienne, Henri’s son, Geoffrey Tory, Claude Garamond, Sebastian Gryphius, Guillaume Rouillet and Jean de Tournes are among the names needing special mention, since they revolutionised printing in France and transformed the French book by introducing attractive typography and new layouts.²⁷⁷

It is because of the work of such men, capable not only of absorbing foreign elements but also of adapting them and creating something new, that the first sixty years of the sixteenth century – and in particular Francis I’s reign – has been named the ‘âge d’or’ of French typography. And as will be shown in a later section, Boaistuau’s editions were representative of the textual and physical transformations of the French book.

²⁷⁵ On Aldus Manutius (c. 1450-1515) and the Aldine Press see Lowry, M, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 1979); Davies, M., *Aldus Manutius: Printer and Publisher of Renaissance Venice* (London, 1995).

²⁷⁶ Armstrong, A., Quainton, M. (eds), *Book and Text in France, 1400-1600: Poetry on the Page* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 165.

²⁷⁷ The appearance of the French book will be examined at a later section.

Soon after its establishment, printing spread throughout France. Even before the turn of the century, presses had been established in more than thirty locations in and out of the country.²⁷⁸ The region of Brittany (which became part of the French kingdom in 1532), Boaiustau's birthplace, was among them. The new art had grown, so that by the end of the fifteenth century there had been at least five different printing establishments: in Rennes in 1484, in Loudéac in 1485, in Nantes in 1488, in Dol-de-Bretagne in 1490, and in Treguier in 1499.²⁷⁹ However, the French book industry grew mainly because of the production of two great print centres, Paris and Lyon, while cities located in the provinces such as Troyes and Rouen remained on the periphery. Indeed, many of them did not survive the crisis which followed the initial boom.²⁸⁰

Paris had already established a name for itself as a well-organised production and distribution centre long before the advent of print, which enabled a more placid transition from the reproduction of manuscripts by hand to the new reality of processing and publishing texts, using a printing press. Additional helpful factors were the fact that the city was the capital of a large kingdom and permanent home of Parliament and a renowned university. Although not as populous or commercially

²⁷⁸ Pettegree, A., 'Centre and periphery in the European book world', p. 109.

²⁷⁹ Werdet, E., *Histoire du livre en France* (Paris, new ed. 1971), Part 4, pp. 231-234. Also see La Société des bibliophiles Bretons, *L'imprimerie en Bretagne au XVe siècle* (Genève, repr., 1973), which noted *Les Lunettes des princes* as the first book ever printed in Nantes in 1493 by Etienne Larcher. For a more complete and up-to-day survey see Walsby, M., *Books and Book Culture in the First Age of Print: Brittany, 1484-1600* (Leiden, 2009).

²⁸⁰ This situation would change after the rise of Protestantism in France. The ban on the publication of vernacular Bibles in Paris resulted in the flourishing of important centres outside France, like Antwerp, Neuchâtel and later Geneva, where many French editions were printed. After 1559 and the death of Henry II, additional centres were also established in Normandy, Orleans, Lyon, and later La Rochelle. This provincial print culture was often sponsored by local figures. For more see Pettegree, A., Nelles, P. N., Conner, P. (eds), *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book* (Aldershot, 2001); Racaut, L., *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion* (Aldershot, 2002).

important as the major cities of Northern Italy or the Netherlands, it attracted foreign merchants and craftsmen from across Europe and fast became a busy centre for the book trade.²⁸¹ Initially, printing was closely linked to the University but the printed book trade was too wide and varied to be controlled by the Sorbonne, and soon Paris printers pursued different policies by publishing books on various topics; the most well-known example is the Estienne family (Henri I, Robert I, Henri II), famous for scholarly editions of classical and biblical texts, and for their works on lexicography.²⁸² Many novelties also made their first appearance in the capital, such as Garamond's Roman types, while famous printers set up their businesses and created networks which set safe foundations for the proliferation and expansion of French print: 'By 1535-1560 about a quarter of the printing workforce was recruited from the Paris region itself, the rest from places further afield generally in northern France'.²⁸³

Aside from Paris, the city of Lyon constituted the second significant centre of French printing. The first printer was not of German origin as in the case of Paris but a Frenchman, Guillaume le Roy, who had trained in Venice.²⁸⁴ In fact, Lyon owes much to the merchant families that migrated from Italy, bringing with them the capital necessary for the flourishing of the printing industry. In addition to these Italian influences, Switzerland and particularly Basle had a lasting impact on Lyon which

²⁸¹ For more details on the Parisian print business, the best studies to start with are Parent, A., *Les métiers du livre à Paris au XVIe siècle, 1535-1560* (Geneva, 1974) and Chartier, R., Martin, H.-J., *Histoire de l'édition française, tome 1: le livre conquérant* (Paris, 1989).

²⁸² On the Estiennes see Armstrong, E., *Robert Estienne, Royal Printer* (Cambridge, 1954); Clément, L., *Henri Estienne et son oeuvre française* (Geneva, repr., 1967); Schreiber, F., *The Estiennes: an annotated catalogue of 300 highlights of their various presses* (New York, 1982).

²⁸³ Parent, A., *Les métiers du livre à Paris au XVIe siècle, 1535-1560*, p. 175. For more on the Garamond types see later section.

²⁸⁴ Guillaume le Roy (c. 1450-c. 1529) was active from 1473 until 1529, and is considered the first printer in early modern Europe to specialise in vernacular publications. His work was marked by a strong provincialism, and he published on a wide variety of topics including popular legends, romances and histories.

continued until the middle of the sixteenth century.²⁸⁵ For example, the case of Lyonnais printer Sebastian Gryphius who obtained most of his material from Basle is quite representative of the relations between the two cities.²⁸⁶ Lyon was also more receptive than Paris to the new Reformed ideas which, as Natalie Zemon Davis has shown, had an impact on the printing industry of the city and in particular on the printers' journeymen.²⁸⁷ The unique geographical and commercial position, the famous fairs which attracted merchants from all over Europe, the cosmopolitanism, as well as the fact that it remained far from the censorship of the Sorbonne, allowed the development of a flourishing printing industry.²⁸⁸ Lyon established a distinguished reputation for its editions of texts of Roman law and the production of humanist works. Although Lyon never acquired the dynamism of Paris, it became the second largest city in the production of books in France, and was able to sustain an active and competitive role in this trade for most of the sixteenth century. Many editions of Pierre Boaistuau's works were printed by some of the most renowned of the city's printers, such as Benoit Rigaud who had made a name publishing popular classics.²⁸⁹

2.2.2. The changing face of an industry

²⁸⁵ Bietenholz, P. G., *Basle and France in the sixteenth century: the Basle humanists and printers in their contacts with francophone culture* (Geneva, 1971).

²⁸⁶ On Sebastian Gryphius (c. 1492-1556), the German-born 'prince of Lyonnais printer-publishers', see 'Competitors or collaborators? Sebastian Gryphius and colleagues, 1528-1556', in Mclean, I., *Learning and the Market Place: Essays in the History of the Early Modern Book* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 273-289.

²⁸⁷ Davis, N. Z., 'Strikes and Salvation at Lyon', in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), pp. 1-16.

²⁸⁸ For the rise of printing in Lyon see Geisendorf, P. F., 'Lyons and Geneva in the Sixteenth Century: The Fairs and Printing' in Gundersheimer, W. L. (ed.), *French Humanism, 1470-1600* (London, 1969), pp. 146-159; *idem*, see Romier, L., 'Lyons and Cosmopolitanism at the Beginning of the French Renaissance', pp. 90-109; Wadsworth, J. B., *Lyons, 1473-1503: the Beginnings of Cosmopolitanism* (Cambridge, MA, 1962). Also see Ford, P., Jondorf, G. (eds), *Intellectual Life in Renaissance Lyon* (Cambridge, 1993).

²⁸⁹ On Benoit Rigaud see Scheler, L., 'Une supercherie de Benoit Rigaud: l'impression anversoise du Discours de miseres de ce temps', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 16 (1954), pp. 331-335; Davis, N. Z., 'On the Protestantism of Benoit Rigaud', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 17 (1955), pp. 246-251.

During the second half of the fifteenth century, presses were established in numerous urban centres across Western Europe, enabled by the free state of the business and a remarkable movement of labour. For example, Paris attracted many craftsmen from the Rhineland. In addition to capital, minimum knowledge and skills were necessary for setting up a printing business at the time. It would be much later (more than half way through the sixteenth century) that regulations, licenses and skills' tests began to set some limitations to this practice. The rapid multiplication of presses gradually resulted in the expansion of trade networks and the creation of a book market, which at first, used the same channels as the manuscript market, at the same time continuing to expand, with the opening of new distribution stores across Europe. The book market growth caused the rise of other commercial enterprises closely-related to printing.²⁹⁰ For example, new occupational groups such as type founders and designers appeared, and new techniques and equipment were employed. The preparation of a book and its illustrative material led to a change in the methods of production and to a rearrangement of book-making arts. New skills led to occupational changeovers; skills and professions traditionally diverse, such as technicians, illustrators, writers, translators, editors and others, were gathered together in one place, the printer's workshop, which resulted in new forms of cross-cultural interchanges and professional mergers.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ The advent of print and the expansion of book markets set up a chain reaction in the developing European economy which should not be overlooked. For more information see McLuhan, M., *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto, 1962); Febvre, L, Martin, H. J, *The Coming of the Book*; Halasz, A., *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, esp. Chapters 2 and 4.

²⁹¹ For a description of the printer's workshop see Eisenstein, E. L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, esp. Part I, 2. For a depiction of the printer's workshop see the *Book of Trades (Das Ständebuch)* by the German woodcutter Jost Amman, first published in 1568. It was a common phenomenon at the time for one to enter the business after getting married to a printer's daughter or widow; a known example is Robert Estienne (1503-1559) who married one of Josse Bade's daughters and merged the presses of Bade and Estienne. Also, many printing firms had a strong family character, as was the case for the Marnef brothers.

Elizabeth Eisenstein has vividly described the transitional period after the establishment of the first printing presses in Europe, ‘in the late fifteenth century, the reproduction of written materials began to move from the copyist’s desk to the printer’s workshop’.²⁹² This period, which began around the 1460s, also known as the period of *incunabula*, made possible the merging of older methods of reproduction of texts with the new art of printing, which was steadily gaining ground.²⁹³ The shift from manuscript to book did not mean that suddenly the latter suddenly took the former’s place. It was, in fact, a fairly long period of coexistence and gradual change. Many early printed books were reproduced as faithfully as possible from manuscripts and vice versa. For example, Boaistuau’s special prepared copy of *Histoires prodigieuses* dedicated to Elizabeth I in 1560 was a manuscript on paper. It was decorated with forty-two coloured miniatures and thirty-three illuminated initials (see figures 4 and 5 below) and presents a strong case for the survival and adaptation of manuscript art well into the sixteenth century.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Eisenstein, E. L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, p. 3.

²⁹³ The term *incunabula* refers to books produced in the earliest stages of printing, generally before 1500-1501. For an introduction see Jensen, K., *Incunabula and their Readers: Printing, Selling and Using Books in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 2003).

²⁹⁴ For this particular edition see Boaistuau (ed. S. Bamforth), *Histoires prodigieuses, MS 136 Wellcome library* (Milan, 2000). This edition will also be discussed in a later chapter. On the survival of manuscript art after 1500 see Saunders, J. W., ‘From Manuscript to Print: A Note on the Circulation of Poetic Manuscripts in the Sixteenth Century’, *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* 6 (1951), pp. 507-528; Kendrick, L., *Animating the letter: the figurative embodiment of writing from late antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus, OH, 1999); Richardson, B., *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2009).

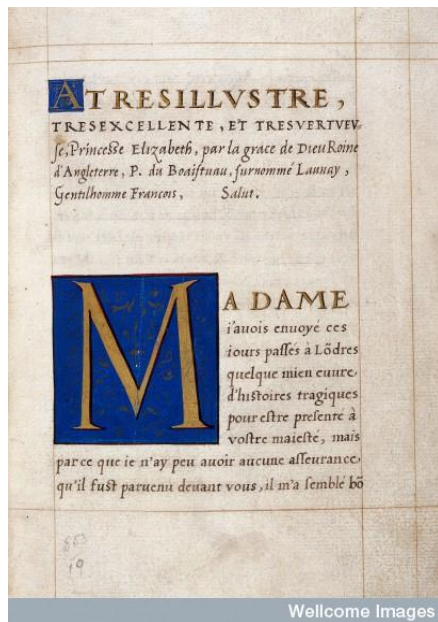


Fig. 4: The first page of Boaistuau's dedication to Elizabeth I. The illuminated letters 'A' and 'M' and the neat structure of the page are apparent.



Fig. 5: A monstrous child with four arms and four legs. This example is typical of the elaborate decoration of all the miniatures in this edition²⁹⁵

In addition, new text features, such as book-binding and new fonts, were introduced even before the end of the fifteenth century. The use of Arabic numbers for pagination led to more accurate indexing and cross-referencing, which was also enabled by the faster and much wider dissemination of printed texts. The *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* was Boaistuau's sole work which contained an index. Another new field of study was text correction. The fact that books were not hand-copied as were manuscripts, did not mean the disappearance of errors. University professors and educated clerics served as the first proofreaders, followed by a higher level of correcting which was carried out by specialist editors. Printed texts were also corrected by the writers themselves, who spotted typographical errors or made last minute alterations. In the first edition of *Histoires prodigieuses*, Boaistuau apologised in advance to his readers because he had not been given the

²⁹⁵ Images taken from the online collection of the Wellcome Library: <http://images.wellcome.ac.uk/> (8/8/2011)

opportunity to proofread his work: ‘Ce traicté d’Histoires... a esté tant précipité par les imprimeurs, qu’ilz le m’ont presque arraché des mains; mesmes ne m’ont permis en reveoir une seule épreuve, jusques à ce que tout le corps du livre eust esté tire de la presse’.²⁹⁶ In some editions of his works there were also lists of *errata* containing text errors, a feature used frequently at the time, thus proving the consistent attention to detail.²⁹⁷

The transformation of text inevitably led to the transformation of image. The wearisome hand-drawn illustrations used previously were gradually replaced by more easily replicated woodcuts and engravings. These arts continued to improve and reached a level of perfection during the age of Ugo da Capri, Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach and Hans Baldung Grien.²⁹⁸ Aiming for the optimum result, the use of xylography became intertwined with that of typography to such an extent that George Sarton has written of a ‘double invention’, that of typography for the text and that of engraving for the images.²⁹⁹ The power and impression of these monochrome (and more rarely coloured) images on sixteenth-century readers is undisputable. In fact, they were used in early modern Europe as additional media for the formation of knowledge, or the communication of certain messages.³⁰⁰ Their role in the

²⁹⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), *Advertissement au Lecteur*.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*: ‘Partant sit u trouves quelques faultes advenues a l’impression, ie te prie avoir refuge à la table des Errata’.

²⁹⁸ Ugo da Capri (c. 1455 - c. 1523) was an Italian woodcutter and printmaker, credited for coining the term *chiaroscuro*; Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) was a German painter and printmaker, considered by many as the greatest artist of the Renaissance in Northern Europe; Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) was a German painter and engraver, known for his portraits and his friendship with Martin Luther; Hans Baldung Grien (c. 1484-1545) was a German painter and woodcutter, the most famous student of Dürer and a supporter of the Protestant Reformation. For more on the arts of woodcut and engraving see Hind, A. M., *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut*, 2 vols (New York, repr., 1963); Landau, D., Parshall, P. W., *The Renaissance Print: 1470-1550* (New Haven, 1996); Riggs, T., Silver, L., *Graven Images: The Rise of Professional Printmakers in Antwerp and Haarlem 1540-1640* (Evanston, 1993).

²⁹⁹ Sarton, G., *The Appreciation of Ancient and Medieval Science during the Renaissance, 1450-1600* (Philadelphia, 1955); *Six Wings: Men of Science and the Renaissance* (Bloomington, 1957).

³⁰⁰ Chatelsin, J.-M., Pignon, L., ‘L’intervention de l’image et ses rapports avec le texte à la Renaissance’ in Martin, H.-J. (ed.), *La Naissance du livre moderne* (Paris, 2000), pp. 236-71;

proliferation of natural philosophy was equally important.³⁰¹ Boaistuau's sole illustrated work, *Histoires prodigieuses*, contained many woodcuts in almost every chapter (see figure 6). In fact, due to its success, the book was further expanded by François de Belleforest, Claude de Tesserant and others with the addition of new stories and more detailed woodcuts (see figure 7).



Fig. 6: Two maidens joined together at the forehead. Taken from the first edition of *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560), Ch. 6



Fig. 7: The 1570 earthquake in Ferrara, Italy. Taken from an expanded edition of *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1575), Ch.43

But what of those people involved in the printing of a book? First and foremost, was the printer, who had to invest money to buy paper, ink, and type fonts, and assemble a group of specialised artisans who would operate the printing press and carry out all

Kusukawa, S., McLean, I. (eds), *Transmitting Knowledge: Words, Images and Instruments in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2006).

³⁰¹ See Lefèvre, W., Renn, J., Schoepflin, U. (eds), *The Power of Images in Early Modern Science* (Basel, 2003). Also useful is Hall, B. S., 'The Didactic and the Elegant: Some Thoughts on Scientific and Technological Illustrations in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance', in Baigrie, B. S. (ed.), *Picturing Knowledge: Historical and Philosophical Problems Concerning the Use of Art in Science* (Toronto, 1996), pp. 3-39.

stages of production.³⁰² Many printers were learned men with humanist interests, such as Aldus Manutius and the Estiennes. The role of the printer was often merged with that of the publisher. For example, in the second half of the sixteenth century, most of the big firms operating in Paris were owned by printer-publishers, such as the Marnef brothers.³⁰³ Publishing at the time was not an independent enterprise, but was often associated with the business of selling books. For this purpose, book lists, handbills and sales catalogues were printed in an attempt to advertise new products and expand clientele. Publishers even followed strategies in pursuit of bigger profits. For example, Michel Simonin's study of the well-known Parisian publisher Vincent Sertenas reveals a proper commercial interest in publishing a wide range of books (including Boaistuau's) which would satisfy the readers' taste and thus guarantee the printing of subsequent editions.³⁰⁴ In addition to publishers, editors are another category which needs to be mentioned in its own right. They were usually employed by publishers and printers, but less frequently by writers, for a variety of reasons.³⁰⁵ They were asked to proofread a text, add a supplement, a new commentary or a glossary, and generally to improve the readability of a text. According to their skills, they could edit Latin or vernacular texts, or both, and employed a variety of techniques.³⁰⁶ As will be

³⁰² For an insight in the workshop of one of the most celebrated printers see Clair, C., *Christopher Plantin* (Cassell, 1960); Voet, L., *The Golden Compasses: A History and Evaluation of the Printing and Publishing Activities of the Officina Plantiniana at Antwerp*, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1969-72).

³⁰³ Pettegree, A., Walsby, M., Wilkinson, A. S. (eds), *French Vernacular Books* (Leiden, 2007), p. xi: 'The relationship between the printer and publisher/bookseller is often easier to discern in the first half of the century, when it was usual to include further publishing details at the end of the text (the colophon)'.

³⁰⁴ Simonin, M., 'Peut-on parler de politique éditoriale au XVI^e siècle? Le cas de Vincent Sertenas, libraire du palais', in *L'encre et la lumière* (Geneva, 2004), pp. 761-782. Sertenas, a royal publisher active between 1534 and 1562, had obtained a privilege for the publication of all of Boaistuau's books. Among them, *Histoires tragiques* and *Le Théâtre du monde* were contained in Sertenas' catalogues as two of his most successful titles.

³⁰⁵ As shown earlier, in some cases writers actively corrected their own texts – as did Boaistuau. Printers also paid *literati* to work for them as editors; for instance, the Parisian Josse Bade had employed Lefèvre d'Étaples and Guillaume Budé; similarly, Sebastian Gryphius in Lyon used the services of François Rabelais, Clement Marot and Etienne Dolet.

³⁰⁶ For a first insight in Renaissance editing see Richardson, B., *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: the Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470-1600* (Cambridge, 1994).

shown in Chapter Three, Boaistuau did not only edit his own works but was also the first editor of Marguerite of Navarre's collection of nouvelles.

2.2.3. The readers and the writer

During the first Age of Print, the idea of owning a book was alien to the majority of the population. Not only was it expensive, but to the eyes of most people it had no use whatsoever.³⁰⁷ The rise and common use of vernacular languages somewhat changed things in this respect, making books more appealing to a wider audience, but with limited results.³⁰⁸ The ability to buy or read a book did not mean that it suddenly became a part of everyday life. As Natalie Zemon Davis wrote, 'just because one can afford books does not mean that one can have ready access to them or need them or want them'.³⁰⁹ The dynamic of the readership at the time was very limited, since throughout the sixteenth century the majority of the population in France could not read or write. The fact that books gradually became cheaper, more widely distributed and published in French did not significantly alter the very low literacy rates. Jack Goody and Ian Watt ask: 'What proportion of the society has to write and read before the culture as a whole can be described as literate?'³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Only estimates can be made about the exact prices of books at the time. These prices were variable, depending on the number of copies printed and the costs for paper and ink. Many books cost more than half a day's wages for a skilled artisan (10-15 sous); in the 1560s, the cheapest hand-size New Testament in French was not much less. The cheapest books were probably unbound editions of Books of Hours, at a price of one or two sous – see later section of this chapter.

³⁰⁸ Divisions between the Latin-reading and vernacular-reading public are difficult to associate with social status, since many works appealed to both lower classes and the elite.

³⁰⁹ Davis, N. Z., 'Printing and the people', p. 197.

³¹⁰ Goody, J., Watt, I., 'The Consequences of Literacy', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1963), p. 304. Also see Goody, J. (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1986).

Contrary to the commonplace notion that the arrival of the printed book resulted in a direct spread of literacy, this was a much more complex process which took several decades and a greater accessibility to reading material to alter a predominantly oral tradition.³¹¹ This same principle can be applied to a direction of scholarship which attempted to associate the rise of literacy to religion. Robert Kingdon, for example, argued that a rise in literacy, mass education and a highly organised economy derived from ‘certain peculiarities in the Christian religion that have dominated the Western ethos’.³¹² Such claims bring to mind the discussion on the links between Protestantism and literacy, advocated by many Reformation historians. However, as Richard Gawthrop and Gerald Strauss have shown, a chain of direct causation between Protestantism, Bible reading and literacy can not be sustained.³¹³ Similarly in the case of France, the view that the spread of the Reformed movement was based on efforts of promoting literacy by the distribution of elementary textbooks or alphabet manuals bears a degree of truth but only presents half the case. For instance, there were many examples of clerics who relied more on memory skills rather than on their printed versions of the Mass.

Although the unreliability of available evidence in sixteenth-century France makes it difficult to measure literacy rates with accuracy, it is safe to claim that the number of literate people continued to be very low throughout the century.³¹⁴ It is also certain that differences existed between rural and urban areas. In villages and small towns,

³¹¹ Cultural transmissions remained to a great extent oral, at least until the coming of the eighteenth century and the rise of mass literacy. See Vincent, D., *The Rise of Mass Literacy: Reading and Writing in Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2000).

³¹² Kingdon, R., ‘Patronage, Piety, and Printing in Sixteenth-Century Europe’, in Pinkney, D. H., Ropp, T. (eds), *A Festschrift for F. B. Artz* (Durham, NC, 1964), p. 26.

³¹³ Gawthrop, R., Strauss, G., ‘Protestantism and Literacy in Early Modern Germany’, *Past and Present*, vol. 104 (1984), pp. 31-55.

³¹⁴ See Houston, R. A., *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800* (London, 1989), Chapter 6.

where books were rarer, literacy had a much smaller impact than has been suggested. The habits of group reading, lending each other books, and passing on books as gifts were dominant, while many were taken into taverns for shared reading or selling on to others.³¹⁵ The situation was slightly better in urban areas, where books were more widely distributed and people were in closer contact with printed texts. Scholars have evaluated literacy by the ability of people to sign their own names, although this method has its limitations; according to François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, limiting literacy to reading was the norm at the time.³¹⁶ Thus, the high signature rates from the Narbonne area in southern France for example, where 90% of the middle class and 65% of the artisans were capable of signing their names, did not necessarily mean high literacy rates.³¹⁷ Similarly, the fact that 60% of men in Beauvais could sign their marriage acts but less than 10% were able to do so in Brittany, presents the varied picture of the phenomenon but cannot be used to draw reliable conclusions.³¹⁸ The majority of people who could ‘read’ do not seem to have been in direct contact with a book!

Therefore, a distinction should be made between literacy and actual reading. The owner of a book in sixteenth century France was not always capable of reading it. This was also aggravated by the various dialects used across the country which widened the gap between the spoken and the printed word. However, low literacy levels did not stop the widening of circles of readers, as is shown by the steady

³¹⁵ There was also the ‘veillée’, evening gatherings which included socializing, singing and reading aloud, although their role should not be overstated. On the idea of books as gifts see Davis, N. Z., *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 2000).

³¹⁶ Furet, F., Ozouf, J. (eds), *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge, 1982). Reading in the sixteenth century gradually became a personal experience. As Terence Cave has noted, ‘reading becomes in various senses, a much more prominent activity’ – see Cave, T., ‘The Mimesis of Reading in the Renaissance’ in Lyons, J. D., Nichols, S. G. (eds), *Mimesis: from Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* (Hanover, NH, 1982), p. 149.

³¹⁷ Ladurie, E. le Roy, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (Paris, 1969), pp. 183-185.

³¹⁸ Kamen, H., *Early Modern European Society* (New York, 2000), p. 214.

growth in numbers of books published and the expansion of the book market which had two peaks during the sixteenth century.³¹⁹ Who, then, were the people reading Boaistuau's books? As shown earlier, copies of the writer's works have been found in inventories of a variety of readers, from monarchs and nobles to people of lower social status.³²⁰ The topics of Boaistuau's books appealed to a wide category of people, including readers who belonged to 'the three robes' of the French society (the black robe of clergy, the short robe of nobility, and the long robe of office holders, doctors and lawyers), to use Roger Chartier's expression, as well as the 'popular' readers who formed the greater proportion of the buying public.³²¹ This category consisted mainly of peasants, journeymen, craftsmen, artisans and merchants.

Along with the widening of the circle of readers came a widening of the circle of writers. Examples such as the printer-writer Robert Estienne, the self-educated humanist-writer Guillaume Budé, the surgeon-writer Amboise Paré, the theologian-writer Theodore Beza, and the explorer/cosmographer-writer André Thévet, manifest in the best way the wide context of the term at the time. This is also the time when female writers such as Louise Labé had their literary works printed and distributed widely throughout the market.³²² Although books were written with the purpose of making money, there would not have been the profession of writer in modern-day use of the term (Erasmus was probably the first – and one of the few cases at the time – to make a living from writing). This is why the term writer / 'écrivain' is more appropriate than author / 'auteur' when referring to sixteenth-century France, as it has

³¹⁹ According to Pettegree, the book market in France reached a peak the years before and during the first War of Religion (1562-63), and a second time during the period of the Catholic League (1588-90).

³²⁰ See section 2.1.9 in this chapter.

³²¹ Chartier, R., *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton, 1987).

³²² On women and French print culture the best place to start is Broomhall, S., *Women and the Book Trade in Sixteenth-Century France* (Aldershot, 2002) which examines the participation of women not just as writers but as patrons, copyists, illuminators, publishers, editors and readers.

a much broader meaning.³²³ Although the term ‘auteur/auteur’ appeared in France in the 1530s, it was mainly used to designate the ancient writers whose works were granted special recognition.³²⁴ For instance, Boaistuau’s *Histoires prodigieuses* were ‘extraictes de plusieurs fameux **auteurs**, Grecz, et Latins’.³²⁵ According to Chartier, however, by the end of the sixteenth century the word already had the basic characteristics which were to become more evident in the eighteenth century, and ultimately the terms author and writer would become distinguishable.³²⁶

A sixteenth-century writer, as opposed to his medieval predecessor, could combine various attitudes and a multitude of new interests and topics derived from the explosion of knowledge experienced at the time (see Chapter Five).³²⁷ The advent of print and the rise of the vernaculars also changed the writer’s consciousness of his craft, by the creation of new ways of interaction between the writer, the printer/publisher, and the reader. As shown by Cynthia Brown, these ways of interaction were expressed in important textual modifications throughout the century, such as the increasing presence of the writer within the text.³²⁸ What is more, the writer could combine different features. Boaistuau was a humanist writer, but at the same time he was also an editor (he edited *Histoires des amans fortunez* and

³²³ The French term ‘écrivain’ originally meant someone who earned a living by writing or copying documents (letters, wills, manuscripts, etc) on behalf of other people, but after the late thirteenth century the word also acquired the meaning of ‘celui qui compose un ouvrage’ – see Le Robert (direction A. Rey), *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française* (Paris, 2005), t. II, p. 308.

³²⁴ The term ‘author’ acquired its modern-day use only in the eighteenth century after the arrival of the novel. Michel Foucault was probably the first to examine the author as a means of classification and analysis of texts and of their inherent links within society. See Foucault, M., ‘What is an author?’ in Harari, J. V., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca, 1979). For an introduction to the discussion of the term in literary criticism see Burke, S., *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh, repr., 2008).

³²⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), Title-page.

³²⁶ Chartier, R., *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, 1994), p. 41ff.

³²⁷ The knowledge explosion, and the degree it affected Boaistuau’s work, will be examined in detail in Chapter Five.

³²⁸ Brown, C. J., *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1995).

proofread his own works), a translator (*Histoires tragiques* was a French translation from the Italian *Novelle*) and a compiler (*Histoires prodigieuses* was an anthology from various texts). In fact, Boaistuau's profile as a writer is a representative example of what the French referred to as polygraphs, a term first recorded in 1536 but usually associated with the eighteenth century. Polygraphs were writers who benefited from the growing demand of writings in the vernaculars and wrote on a variety of topics, also serving as translators, anthologizers and editors. As will be shown in the following chapters, the definitions and boundaries of the terms 'editor', 'translator', and 'compiler' were not strictly defined at the time, which gave writers the liberty to move between conceptual spaces and different literary forms.

The decision of what to write was probably the most important a writer had to take. The choices of language, topic and literary genre had to be carefully made. These choices would determine whether the writer's struggle to achieve recognition would prove a success.³²⁹ Not only talent but more importantly, the capability to discern the needs of the book market and readers' tastes, were two factors of great importance which guaranteed a successful writing career. An aspiring writer needed the ability to combine his personal scholarly or literary interests with the dictates of the marketplace. Nowhere this was more evident than in the case of Pierre Boaistuau, as proved by the wide reception of his works. The chameleon-like Breton wrote seven works that differed completely in style and content, in seven distinctive genres. It is for this reason that Ian McFarlane has described him, rather dismissively, as 'a hack polymath, a jack-of-all-trades who did a vast amount of translation, adaptation and

³²⁹ It was a common phenomenon for writers to provide some financial contribution, at least for the first edition of their work at the beginning of their career. The multitude of examples of sixteenth-century writers who did the same makes possible the notion that Boaistuau provided money for this purpose.

vulgarization'.³³⁰ In fact, what Boaistuau did was to follow the trends of his time, doing what he knew best: writing.

2.3. Pierre Boaistuau's work as representative of French print culture

The first two parts of this chapter have presented the publishing history of Boaistuau's books, and the various manifestations and interactions of printing in sixteenth-century France which had given birth to a distinct print culture with its own features. This third part will examine the degree to which, and the ways in which, Boaistuau's work was representative of this culture, by addressing four key areas: the centralization of the printing industry; the quality and elegance of books; the rise of the vernaculars; and the popular literature at the time. In this way, the typical character of Boaistuau's books in terms of production, physical nature, language and content will be revealed.

2.3.1. The centralized character of production

According to Sigfrid Steinberg writing in 1959, the fast-growing printing industry of France was characterized by two distinctive features, centralization and elegance: 'the history of the printed book in France is from the very beginning marked by two features which one is inclined to ascribe to the French national character: centralization of the trade and elegance of the production'.³³¹ More than fifty years later, his assertion still holds validity among contemporary scholarship. This centralization was probably supported by the fact that printing had arrived in France

³³⁰ McFarlane, I. D., *A Literary History of France: Renaissance France*, p. 252.

³³¹ Steinberg, S. H., *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, p. 61.

under the official responsibility of the Sorbonne, the intellectual centre of the kingdom. In addition, Royalty realized the power of the new art and actively promoted it, as was shown by the example of Charles VII who established printing in France, with Francis I and Henry II, who supported its development. This policy worked favourably for the development of printing and book production, primarily in the capital where there was a concentration of expertise and funds.

Even around 1400, long before the introduction of printing in France, Paris already exercised a certain monopoly in the making of books.³³² During the sixteenth century the primacy of Paris as the dominant power of a centralized book industry was undisputed. Printing and its allied trades were amongst the main industries in the capital, which soon became one of the major print centres in Europe.³³³ The monopoly of a number of Parisian printers-booksellers had grown spectacularly in the first half of the century and continued after the mid-century crisis which hit the industry and left only a few printing firms in control. Parisian production absorbed the larger part of overall book production in France throughout the century. Lyon came second.³³⁴ Peripheral cities such as Rouen, Toulouse and Orleans which competed against one another, also produced a considerable number of books. However, their production was too small to be compared to that of Paris or Lyon.³³⁵

³³² Croenen, G., Ainsworth, P. (eds), *Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris around 1400* (Louvain, 2006), Introduction.

³³³ See Heller, H., *Labour, Science and Technology in France, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1996), Ch. 1.

³³⁴ It has been estimated that a total of 25000 books were printed in Paris from 1500 to 1599, and 15000 in Lyon during the same period of time. See Febvre, L., Martin, H.-J., *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*, p. 189.

³³⁵ It should be noted that printing activities in these regional centres had a definite impact on cultural and economic life. For example, see 'The Growth of a Provincial Press in Sixteenth-Century Europe', in Andrew Pettegree's *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 251-274.

The centralized character of French book production was clearly evident in the case of Pierre Boaistuau. All his works were first printed in Paris and a large number of their editions continued to be published there during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see table 1 below). Out of a total of 164 editions, sixty-four were printed in the capital, which represents more than 1/3 of the overall production of his works (39%). In addition, twenty-seven editions were printed in Lyon, a figure which constitutes a considerable number of editions (16.5%) and proves the popularity of Boaistuau's titles as a profitable project in France's second biggest book-printing centre. Eleven editions were also printed in Rouen (6.7%), and twenty more in Antwerp (12.2%), one of the major book trade hubs at the time which maintained close ties with France throughout the period.³³⁶ The remaining forty-two editions of Boaistuau's works (25.6%) were mostly printed elsewhere in Europe.

Title of work	Total editions	Printed in Paris	Printed in Lyon	Printed in Rouen	Printed in Antwerp
<i>Histoires des amans fortunez</i>	1	1	0	0	0
<i>Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique</i>	3	3	0	0	0
<i>Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme</i>	4	4	0	0	0
<i>L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus</i>	16	8	3	2	1
<i>Histoires tragiques</i>	20	10	5	2	1
<i>Histoires prodigieuses</i>	31	18	1	0	4
<i>Le Théâtre du monde</i>	89	20	18	7	14
Totals	164	64	27	11	20

Table 1: Table of editions of Pierre Boaistuau's works published in Paris, Lyon, Rouen and Antwerp

³³⁶ On the Antwerp book trade see Waterschoot, W., 'Antwerp: books, publishing and cultural production before 1585', in O'Brien, P. (ed.), *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 233-248; Bowen, K. L., Imhof, D., *Christopher Plantin and Engraved Book Illustrations in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2008), Chapter 2.

The fact that most of Boaistuau's editions were printed in Paris makes his work representative of the centralized character of French print industry at the time. Furthermore, it reveals his conscious decision to live and work in the capital, thus pursuing a writing career in a city that offered him the greatest possibilities of success. Paris, along with Antwerp in the north and Venice in the south, was one of the most suitable environments for an active writer in the mid-sixteenth century. It had a vibrant book trade with international links, and some of the biggest publishing firms in Europe, such as Vincent Sertenas, Jean Longis and Gilles Robinot who published many editions of Boaistuau's works. The city's centralized production and wide circulation network, combined with the Breton's talent, ensured his successful writing career.

2.3.2. The physical nature of books

Elegance was another feature of the French book production at the time, greatly derived by the centralized character of the industry. As Andrew Pettegree has noted, 'The concentration of capital and expertise in Paris, and to a lesser extent, Lyon, facilitated the production of books of ever greater quality and sophistication'.³³⁷ It is not a coincidence that these favourable conditions led to the appearance of many print novelties for the first time in Paris and Lyon, where the necessary capital allowed the great number of specialised artisans to experiment with new forms and techniques. The elegance and refinement of French books was also the result of attention to detail by printers, typographers, illustrators and book-binders, and of the assimilation of

³³⁷ Pettegree, A., 'Centre and periphery in the European book world', p. 110.

foreign elements into their art. Initially, the French worked with Italian models such as *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.³³⁸ Such works influenced the illustration and type fonts of the French book, and were studied by woodcutters and type-cutters alike. There had also been a tendency amongst printers, especially in Paris, to adopt features from the work of the Basle press. Book-makers gradually developed a more personalized character, which can be seen clearly in the editions of Boaistuau's works. This change was a combination of various elements, the most important of which derived from typography and illustration.

Jean Dupré and Antoine Vérard were the pioneers who shifted the style of the French book from gothic to renaissance, introducing new forms of book ornamentation.³³⁹ Their contribution was of great significance, as it was followed by a multitude of scholars-printers-publishers, and had a lasting impact throughout the sixteenth century.³⁴⁰ However, the most important step in the revolutionization of French book design was probably the cutting of new roman types and the establishment of italics. The Parisian publisher Claude Garamond is no doubt the most well-known figure when referring to the French typography at the time.³⁴¹ A disciple of Simon de Colines and later an assistant of Geofroy Tory, Garamond was most famous as an

³³⁸ A literary and artistic work first published in 1499 by Aldus Manutius, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* was most probably written by Francesco Colonna. It contains 172 woodcuts and is today considered by bibliophiles as one of the most beautiful books ever printed. See: Kretzulesco-Quaranta, E., *Les jardins du songe: "Poliphile" et la mystique de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1986); Godwin, J., *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream* (London, 1999).

³³⁹ When printing was first introduced in France in the 1470s, the first books printed were Latin textbooks which used the traditional roman fonts and followed the gothic style. The change to renaissance style took place gradually, as the gothic style did not die out. Examples of this style survived as late as the 1530s.

³⁴⁰ For more see Winn, M. B., *Antoine Vérard, Parisian Publisher, 1485-1512* (Geneva, 1997).

³⁴¹ Claude Garamond (c. 1480-1561) came into prominence in 1541, when he worked with Robert Estienne for a series of books ordered by royalty. His printed characters were in fact an evolution of a character originally designed in 1531 by Simon de Colines, which is generally considered the ancestor of all Garamond types. For more on Garamond see O'Day, E. F., *Claude Garamond and his place in the Renaissance* (Oregon, 1940); Lawson, S. A., *Anatomy of a Typeface* (London, 1990), especially Chapter 10.

engraver of types. His roman fonts were created shortly after 1541, and probably had as a model those of Aldus Manutius. After being adopted by Robert Estienne, Garamond fonts spread throughout France as well as to other countries.³⁴² The French type-cutting school proved to be so successful that ‘in the second half of the century their fonts were being used or copied all over Europe’.³⁴³ Beside roman types, the use of italics became very widespread in sixteenth-century France. They were first introduced in Lyon and then diffused throughout the kingdom. Simon de Colines (who had also cut types of Greek) was the first who cut new fonts of italics, and popularised their use.³⁴⁴ During the second half of the century, however, the name which stands out is that of Robert Granjon, whose influence was almost as great as that of Garamond as a type designer, and similarly achieved recognition abroad.³⁴⁵ In relation to book illustration, Geofroy Tory was the first who wrote on the subject in France. He worked on book decoration and the theoretical study of the Roman alphabet and designed his own letters, improving and popularizing the use of the roman letter.³⁴⁶ Lyon served as a source of inspiration in general, supplying many illustrations and arabesque influences. In this respect, the work of Jean de Tournes

³⁴² After Garamond’s death, his stock was sold and divided between Cristophe Plantin (who took his part to Antwerp), André Wechel (who moved to Frankfurt), and Le Bé. In this way, Garamond’s types circulated across Europe and continued to influence roman typography for nearly two centuries.

³⁴³ Johnson, A. F., *French Sixteenth Century Printing* (London, 1926), p. 5.

³⁴⁴ See Vervliet, H. D. L., *The Palaeotypography of the French Renaissance: Selected Papers on Sixteenth-Century Typefaces* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 63-97.

³⁴⁵ Although Robert Granjon (c. 1523-1588) began working in Paris, he was much more associated with Lyon, where he moved around 1556. He worked with the greatest of the Lyonnais printers, Jean de Tournes, to whom he provided a set of italics. Granjon, who also published books using his own print and later worked closely with Christophe Plantin, introduced a type based on contemporary French hand-writing, his ‘caractères de civilité’. See *The Palaeotypography of the French Renaissance*, pp. 321-364.

³⁴⁶ Geofrey Tory (1480-1533) was an editor of Henri Estienne’s Latin editions and the first to be made royal printer in 1531. For more see Bernard, A., *Geofrey Tory, peintre et graveur, premier imprimeur royal, réformateur de l’orthographe et de la typographie sous François Ier* (New York, repr., 1969).

was another catalyst in the transformation of the physical nature of the French book.³⁴⁷

These changes in font types and illustration gave a set of distinct features to the appearance of the sixteenth-century book, which can be summed up as a ‘harmonious blend of neat lettering, elegant borders and delicate illustrations’.³⁴⁸ This new form of print, which reached a certain degree of standardization during the middle of the century, was integrated into all Boaistuau’s works published during the same period.

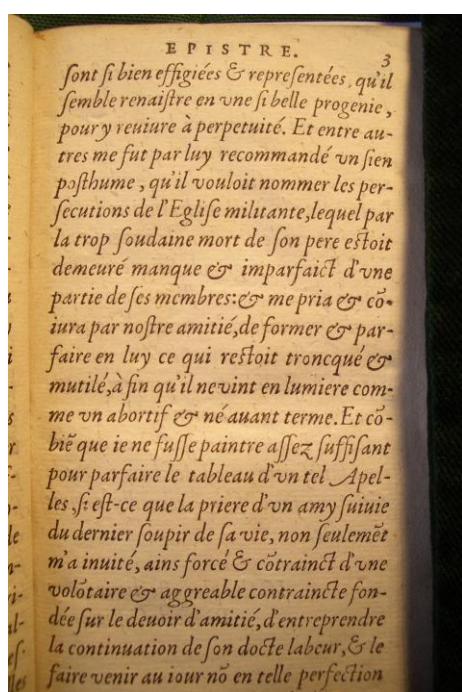


Fig. 8: Extract from the introduction of *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* (Paris, 1576).³⁵⁰

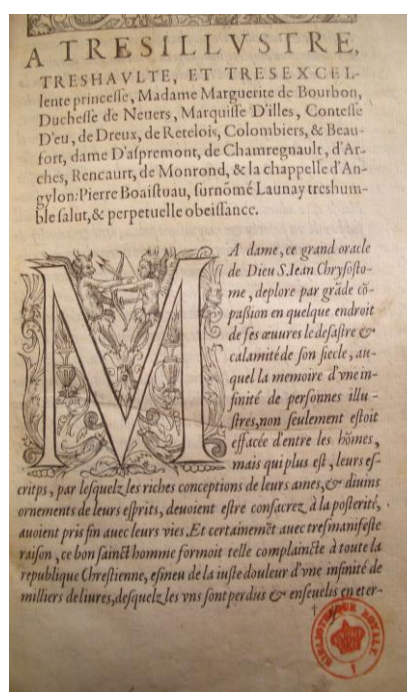


Fig. 9: The first page of the Salutation of the *Histoires des amans fortunez* (Paris, 1558).³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Jean de Tournes (1504-1564) and his son Jean II (1539-1615) belonged to a family of royal publishers who gained great recognition for their beautiful editions. Among the major works which came out of Jean de Tournes’s press was also Marguerite of Navarre’s *Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses* (1547). For more details see Perry, J. P., *Jean de Tournes: a French Printer of Illustrated Books, 1504-1564* (Harvard, 1968).

³⁴⁸ Steinberg, S. H., *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, p. 63.

³⁴⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez* (Paris, G. Gilles, 1558), Salutation. Photograph my own.

³⁵⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* (Paris, R. le Magnier, 1576), Epistre. Photograph my own.

For example, figure 8 (see previous page) clearly displays the use of italics, the neat lettering, the clear spacing between lines, the justified text, and the page numbering. Similarly, figure 9 includes these features, and in addition, a combination of roman and italic fonts. Roman fonts were used for the title, thus creating a contrast to the main body of text which was written in italics. There are also two examples of sixteenth-century French decorative ornaments: a detailed illustrated capital letter ‘M’, and a decoration on top of the page (although not fully visible).

Apart from being representative in terms of font types, Boaistuau’s editions were also typical examples of sixteenth-century book-formatting. They contained all the distinctive features of a contemporary French printed book, including borders, contents pages, text divided into chapters or sections and Arabic numbers for pagination. Most editions had catchwords, linking the text at the bottom of one page with the start of the next. Also, title-pages followed the mid sixteenth-century format (see figures 10 and 11 below): the title of the book was followed by the writer’s dedication, the device and name of the printer or publisher, the place and year of publication, and an inscription concerning the existence of a privilege (‘avec privilege’).³⁵¹ A separate page to display the privilege granted full or in part was often used.

³⁵¹ All first editions of Boaistuau’s works had royal privileges obtained by Vincent Sertenas. The privilege was a common practice used to secure a fair return for the publisher’s expenditure of time and money. It was usually granted by the royal chancery or the sovereign courts and was valid for a certain number of years. For example, the privilege for Boaistuau’s *Histoires prodigieuses* had a validity of six years. However, the book privilege system did not stop pirated editions. For more see Armstrong, E., *Before Copyright: The French Book-Privilege System: 1498-1526* (Cambridge, 2000). Also see Mellot, J.-D., ‘Counterfeit Printing as an Agent of Diffusion and Change: The French Book-Privilege System and Its Contradictions (1489-1790)’, in Baron, S. A., Lindquist, E. N., Shevlin, E. F. (eds), *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst, MA, 2007), pp. 42-66.

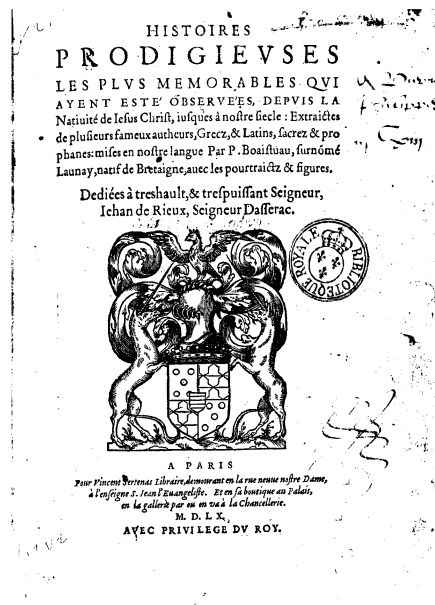


Fig. 10: Title page of *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560). The insignia of Vincent Sertenas supported by two unicorns, is displayed at the centre of the page



Fig. 11: Title page of *Le Théâtre du monde* (Paris, 1559) by Jean Longis and Robert le Magnier, which displays a very elaborate device with a Latin inscription

The appearance of Boaistuau's works followed the Renaissance style, but some past features of print were still visible in some cases. For instance, even after the introduction of title-pages, a colophon at the end of the book (containing the name of printer, place of publication, and sometimes the title and the writer's name) was quite common. Other editions used both foliation (numbering by leaves), a remnant from the late medieval manuscript era, and pagination (numbering by page). There are also examples of foreign editions of Boaistuau's works which still made use of the Gothic lettering, such as the German 1609 Lindau edition of *Le Théâtre du monde*.

Moreover, another important feature that made the physical nature of Boaistuau's books representative of the French printed book was their common small size. French books at the time were known for their 'portability', often smaller than a modern paperback. There was a particular demand in the French book market for small books

which were popular and fast-selling. In fact, France was among the first in Europe to popularise livres de poche. The majority of Boaistuau's works were printed in octavo (in-8°), duodecimo (in-12°), and sextodecimo (in-16°), which were also the standard book formats at the time. As opposed to texts of great theoretical significance printed in larger formats, books with topics similar to Boaistuau's used smaller sizes, so they could be printed faster and more cheaply since they appealed to a variety of readers.³⁵² However, this demand for small books did not necessarily mean a diminution of their printing quality. As has been demonstrated, the majority of Boaistuau's editions were of a high quality according to sixteenth-century standards.

2.3.3. The rise of the vernaculars

The role of France in the early modern European print world has recently been reasserted by Andrew Pettegree, who stressed its importance as one of the levelers of the industry.³⁵³ The French case can be seen as part of a wider 'core group' (including Italy, Germany, the Low Countries and the Swiss Confederation) representing a staggering 90% of the overall European book production. In fact, in terms of production, France comes third after Germany and Italy, being one of the leading printing powers at the time. What is particularly interesting, in relation to Boaistuau, is that the majority of French books published at the time were written in the vernacular.³⁵⁴ This increasing use of the vernaculars constitutes another representative aspect of Boaistuau's work, since all his books were published in French.

³⁵² Not all of Boaistuau's books were printed in small sizes; some editions were printed in alternative formats, such as quarto (in-4°), a shift to alternative formats which surely represented the publishers' pursuit of a changing reading public.

³⁵³ Pettegree, A., 'Centre and periphery in the European book world', pp. 101-128.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 127. According to Pettegree, 79344 books in total had been published in France before 1601, 34000 of them in Latin and 45344 in the vernacular.

The rise of the vernacular in France, as in the rest of Europe, was a gradual process which began during the medieval era.³⁵⁵ In sixteenth-century France this rise was affected not only by cultural processes but also by political motives, such as the rivalry between France and Italy, and a national concern for the French language. Examples such as Claude de Seyssel who stressed the need to enrich and ‘*magnifier la langue française*’ for political reasons, and Jean Lemaire’s polemics against the Pope written in French, reveal the extent to which literature was affected by the use of the vernacular for propaganda purposes.³⁵⁶ It has also been argued that the rise of French was directly linked to an awareness of national character, as a means of strengthening a proto-French identity and distinguishing it from other rival groups outside the kingdom.³⁵⁷ As Charlotte Catherine Wells has shown, national citizenship did not yet exist but ‘a legal structure of national identity did indeed exist in France by the end of the fifteenth century. It was defined and elaborated in the sixteenth century and remained in effect until the time of the French Revolution’.³⁵⁸ This relationship between language, politics and identity in early modern France, however volatile, continues to attract the attention of scholars.³⁵⁹ However, the examination of vernacular consciousness in relation to sixteenth-century French print culture, and in

³⁵⁵ See for instance Spiegel, G. M., *Romancing the Past: the Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993).

³⁵⁶ Brown, C. J., *The Shaping of History and Poetry in Late Medieval France: Propaganda and Artistic Expression in the Works of the Rhétoriciens* (Birmingham, AL, 1985). Claude de Seyssel (d. 1520) was a jurist and a humanist, known for his political writings and particularly for his *La Grande Monarchie de France* which was first published in 1515. Jean Lemaire de Belges (c. 1473- c.1525) was a Wallon historian and poet. He lived mainly in France, entering the service of Anne of Brittany and supporting the creation of an independent French Church. See for more Chapter Four.

³⁵⁷ See for example Chaytor, H. J., *From Script to Print* (Cambridge, 1950), Chapter III: Language and Nationality; Schiffman, H. F., *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (London, 1996), part 4; Hampton, T., *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century: Inventing Renaissance France* (Ithaca, 2001).

³⁵⁸ Wells, C. C., *Law and Citizenship in Early Modern France* (Baltimore, 1995), p. ix.

³⁵⁹ See for instance Delogu, D., *Theorizing the Ideal Sovereign: The Rise of the French Vernacular Royal Biography* (Toronto, 2008).

particular the bonds between the writer's literary consciousness and his readers, is a field which remains largely unexplored, but lies beyond the purpose of this study.

The use of French did not defenestrate Latin; on the contrary, it was still widely used, still considered as the international language at the time and as indispensable for book trade purposes.³⁶⁰ Neo-Latin and the vernacular in Renaissance France interacted both linguistically and culturally.³⁶¹ Many well-known works of the sixteenth century such as Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* and More's *Utopia* were written in Latin. Even works first printed in the vernacular, such as Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* and Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre du monde*, were later translated into Latin in order to attract an international readership. It should also be noted that in the case of France, a significant income of the printing industry derived from Latin editions: 'the profits to be made in Latin printing played a large part in underpinning the economics of the industry'.³⁶² Latin was also part of the essential equipment of any printer who had ambitions to succeed in the business, and its importance (along with ancient Greek) should not be neglected, especially when it came to the printing of humanist editions.

However, works in Latin did not appeal to the majority of people mainly for two reasons: they were unable to read them and disliked the specialised topics they contained. This is the reason why the vernaculars were so rapidly and widely spread. Printing and typography further enriched and standardized their use, so that more

³⁶⁰ On the first steps of the vernacular book trade see Carlson, D. R., *English Humanist Books: Writers and Patrons, Manuscripts and Print, 1475-1525* (Toronto, 1993), esp. pp. 102-141.

³⁶¹ Castor, G., Cave, T. (eds), *Neo-Latin and the vernacular in Renaissance France* (Oxford, 1984), p. xii: 'This is nowhere more true than in France, where neo-Latin humanists and advocates of the vernacular are often united by a common desire to challenge the authority and the style of the deeply entrenched scholastic establishment at the Sorbonne. The Gallican cause... enlists the support of both professional humanists and vernacular writers, in prose and in poetry'.

³⁶² Pettegree, A., Walsby, M., Wilkinson, A. S. (eds), *French Vernacular Books*, p. xiv.

writers began to write and publish works in French.³⁶³ The first book printed in French was probably Pasquier Bonhomme's *Grandes chroniques de France* (in 3 volumes) in 1476;³⁶⁴ and by the second half of the sixteenth century, a large number of Paris and Lyon printers were printing almost exclusively in French. An additional factor which helped this multiplication of French-written works was the Villers-Cotterêts edict of 1539, which made 'Francien' the sole official language of the kingdom.³⁶⁵ This edict was of great literary importance, since French became the only accepted language in the courts (as opposed to Latin, and other French dialects) and in all judicial texts, legislation acts, contracts and official documents in general. No doubt, it gave an extra motive to writers such as Jean Bouchet and Guillaume Budé who also decided to publish works in French. In 1550 Joachim du Bellay published his *Defense et illustration de la langue française*, advocating the use of French as a medium of high culture.³⁶⁶ Soon, literary works published in French had become not an exception but rather a standard, gaining a big share of the market.³⁶⁷ The momentum could not have been better for a writer such as Boaistuau, who was introduced to French readers in 1556 but by 1560 his recognition had reached a readership far beyond the borders of France.

³⁶³ As will be shown in the next chapter, the rise of the vernacular was also linked to French humanism and the translation of many classical works – a trend which had a definite impact on Boaistuau's work.

³⁶⁴ For a first insight on the *Grandes chroniques de France* see Winn, M. B., *Anthoine Vérard, Parisian Publisher, 1485-1512*, chapter V.

³⁶⁵ However, there were exceptions. For example, Gascon continued to be used in Navarre, and Latin continued to be used in church registers in some regions of France. For more information on the edict see Lodge, R. A., *French, from dialect to standard* (London, 1993), especially pp. 126-127.

³⁶⁶ Willet, L., *Poetry and Language in 16th century France: Du Bellay, Ronsard, Sebillet* (Toronto, 2004).

³⁶⁷ See Pettegree, A., Walsby, M., Wilkinson, A. (eds), *French Vernacular Books* for a complete list of the books published partially or wholly in French before 1601. This monumental work also contains a list of French editions of Boaistuau's works which was used for the purposes of this study.

Title of work	Editions in French	Editions in Latin	Editions in other language ³⁶⁸
<i>Histoires des amans fortunez</i>	1	0	0
<i>Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique</i>	3	0	0
<i>Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme</i>	4	0	0
<i>L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus</i>	15	0	1
<i>Histoires tragiques</i>	20	0	0
<i>Histoires prodigieuses</i>	22	0	9
<i>Le Théâtre du monde</i>	62	4	29
Totals	127	4	39

Table 2: Table of editions of Pierre Boaistuau's works printed in French, Latin, and other languages

According to table 2, it is clear that the Breton writer – and his publishers – were aware of the rising importance of French. Apart from the fact that all his works were first printed in the vernacular, the overwhelming majority of their editions (127 out of 164, which represent 77.4% of the overall production) were in the French language. In fact, his only work translated into Latin (with 4 editions) was his best-seller *Le Théâtre du monde*, which was also translated into six languages other than French and had twenty-nine foreign editions. *Histoires prodigieuses* came second, with twenty-two French editions and nine in other languages. Of the remaining works, only *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* had a foreign edition, translated into English. These numbers reveal that Boaistuau, like many contemporary writers, was sensible enough to write and publish his works in the vernacular, thus increasing the chances of attracting the attention of a steadily growing French-reading market. As mentioned earlier, he could discern the needs of the book market and the readership's tastes.

³⁶⁸ For this table, each language of the multi-lingual editions of *Le Théâtre du monde* was numbered separately. This is the reason why the totals of this table do not correspond to the total number of editions in table 1.

Considering the number of editions, this was something he achieved with great success.

2.3.4. The popular literature

What was the most popular subject matter in the books of Boaistuau's time? Printing was at the service of both humanist scholarship and vernacular literature, and there was a significant rise in the numbers of active printers and books printed.³⁶⁹ It is true that the development of the printing art and the expansion of the market led to a wider range of books than ever before, some of which appealed to readers more than others, but is it possible to speak of a popular literature in mid-sixteenth century France? And if so, how representative of this literature was Boaistuau's work? In her examination of print culture in early modern England, Tessa Watt argued that a popular literature did exist, but the term 'popular' at the time needs to be looked at from a different perspective.³⁷⁰ If 'popular' is defined as something addressed exclusively to a specific social group as opposed to the elite group, then the two-pole model created fails to grasp the multi-level early modern societies. The idea of popular literature actually lies in the understanding that a 'popular' book could be read by people of different social status or economic standing. As Peter Burke has argued, this notion can be applied to the societies of early modern Europe.³⁷¹ The existence of two overlapping traditions, one of educated people and the other, open to everyone else, including

³⁶⁹ The writing and publication of Boaistuau's works coincided with a period of great prosperity which lasted from approximately the 1550s until 1570 and which proved particularly beneficial for the Parisian book trade. This productive period was preceded by a continuous crisis that hit the printing business from 1529, and resulted to a sharp depression from 1544 until 1556. See Chrisman, M. U., *Lay Culture and Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg*, p. 3.

³⁷⁰ Watt, T., *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991).

³⁷¹ Burke, P., *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978). Also see Muchembled, R., *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1985).

people from the first tradition, gives a wide and fluid character to popular literature in the sixteenth century. Similarly, Bob Scribner further developed this idea suggesting that popular culture has to be examined as a whole, including shared values and mentalités.³⁷² Its analysis as a unified culture should not consider popular literature as homogenous, but should give credit to all existing sub-cultures.

Therefore, the argument for the existence of a popular literature in early modern France can be supported by a variety of works which appealed to various social groups, from well-educated nobles and state officials to artisans' apprentices and simple folk. Although some had a more dominant presence in rural areas and others were more popular in an urban environment, most of these works were read in big cities and small villages alike, since they were amongst the best-sellers at the time. The most common form of popular literature were the ephemeral pamphlets, placards and canards.³⁷³ Of course, in France there was no equivalent to the massive quantities printed in Germany (mainly due to the higher number of printing presses and the spread of Protestantism) but such texts were still circulated in great numbers throughout the century and boosted the French printing industry in a period of crisis. Pamphlets encouraged a double reading of image and text, and relied heavily on the principle of reutilization which allowed a fast and broad diffusion of their contents, something also guaranteed by their very low price and the variety of topics which

³⁷² Scribner, B., 'Is a history of popular culture possible?', *History of European Ideas*, vol. 10 (1989), pp. 181-182.

³⁷³ Pamphlets consisted either of a single sheet of paper printed on both sides and then folded, or of a few pages folded in order, to resemble an unbound booklet. Typical topics included public events, battles, and treaties of all types. The majority of canards were printed lengthwise on a sheet of paper, with a woodcut and a small text of a few lines. They were mostly printed in Paris and Lyon, but their production grew as the sixteenth century progressed. In general, placards were less popular than pamphlets and canards because they only contained written text.

ensured a wide readership.³⁷⁴ These usually featured prodigies of different kinds, natural disasters, celestial phenomena, crimes, witches, and monstrous births. Apart from their entertaining and informative roles, they were also used for purposes of propaganda as shown by the Flugschriften of the Lutheran Reformation, and the affair of placards in 1534.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, they created a new category of readers who had no particular interest in specialised / academic topics but were very fond of the captivating topics presented on pamphlets and canards.

Such ephemeral printed texts were often used for the compilation of a certain category of works known as wonder-books, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Wonder-books resembled emblem books in a way, because of their use of woodcut illustrations which complemented the text.³⁷⁶ Amidst their pages, sixteenth-century readers could find all sorts of wonders of Nature, from comets, earthquakes and floods, to occult arts, malformed bodies, strange animals and prodigies, and a multitude of other topics that were appealing to both erudite and lay people. A representative example of the genre was Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses*, which immediately became a best-seller.³⁷⁷ Enabled by the advancements of print, such collections of wonders signaled the emergence of a wide readership (not only in France but across Europe) interested in the accommodation of various features associated to the study of natural philosophy, such as the contemporary trend of encyclopedism. Wonder-books, similarly to religious emblem books, usually had a

³⁷⁴ See Seguin, J. P., *L'information en France avant le périodique. 517 canards imprimés entre 1529 et 1631* (Paris, 1964).

³⁷⁵ For a first insight see Berthoud, G., *Antoine Marcourt, réformateur et pamphlétaire, du "Livre des marchans" aux placards de 1534* (Geneva, 1973).

³⁷⁶ On French emblem books, which constituted another widely circulated category of books with many practical applications, see Landwehr, J., *French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese Books of Devices and Emblems, 1534-1872: A Bibliography* (Utrecht, 1976); Mathieu-Castellani, G., *Emblèmes de la mort: le dialogue de l'image et du texte* (Paris, 1988); Adams, A., Rawles, S., Saunders, A., *A Bibliography of French Emblem Books* (Geneva, 1999).

³⁷⁷ See pp. 77-78.

theological-moralising context which made them capable of being read on more than one level. The fact that many were printed in the vernacular, such as Boaistuau's aforementioned title and Amboise Paré's *Des monstres et prodiges*, further confirms their appeal to a broader audience.

The 'calendrier des bergers' (shepherd's calendar) was another common read in sixteenth-century France. It was an almanac appearing in many forms: from a simple calendar accompanied by pictures, to a book which included astrological prophecies, songs, poems, religious or political discourses, and even discussions of medical practices in more sophisticated versions.³⁷⁸ Besides the shepherd's calendar, there were also different kinds of almanacs containing agricultural and other information, together with dates of historical events. It has been asserted that such ill-bred works reflected lower-class tastes. However, this was not true as these books were not bought and read solely by 'petites gens': 'it is not to be assumed that small, cheap books appealed only to a less educated audience. Many of the more ephemeral books were eagerly read by members of the political elite'.³⁷⁹ For example, Francis I had a copy of the 'Grand Calendrier' in the royal collection, probably acquired not only for its collectible value but also as light reading. After all, popular literature was characterized by variety, addressing general subjects which the majority of readers found interesting regardless of their social status. As noted by Elizabeth Eisenstein, 'before the advent of mass literacy, the most popular works were those which

³⁷⁸ For more see Kaiser-Guyot, M.-T., *Le Berger en France aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris, 1974). Although circulated in numerous copies, the role of the shepherd's calendar should not be overstated.

³⁷⁹ Pettegree, A., Walsby, M., Wilkinson, A. S. (eds), *French Vernacular Books*, p. xv.

appealed to diverse groups of readers and not just to the plebes'.³⁸⁰ This will be better manifested in the following century with the coming of the Bibliothèque bleue.³⁸¹

Another equally popular work was the livre d'heures (Book of Hours), which usually contained texts, psalms and prayers.³⁸² Books of Hours were the most popular and cheapest book during the mediaeval period, and continued to be so in the sixteenth century.³⁸³ A well-known example was *Les Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne*, made by Jean Bourdichon between 1503 and 1508. Natalie Zemon Davis wrote of the significance of the Book of Hours, particularly in the Paris publishing industry: 'if an artisan or small shopkeeper in Paris owns a book at all, it is likely to be a manuscript 'Book of Hours'. By 1520 printed books appear'.³⁸⁴ Their price depended on how elaborate the edition was. A cheap, unbound edition usually cost about one sous, whereas a bound edition cost anything between eighteen sous and twenty livres. Bibles, New Testaments, hagiographies such as *La Legende dorée* (the *Golden Legend*), breviaries and other religious books constituted another popular category of works, which were published in alternative formats aimed at buyers of different economic standing.³⁸⁵ Also popular were manuals and books used in the practice of a

³⁸⁰ Eisenstein, E. L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, p. 31.

³⁸¹ Originated in 1602 in Troyes, the 'Blue library' (whose name derived from the colour of the binding) was involved with the publication of mass-produced and inexpensive books on a huge variety of subjects sold at a low price. See Mandrou, R., *De la culture populaire aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. La Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes* (Paris, 1964); Andries, L., Bolleme, G., *La Bibliothèque bleue: littérature de colportage* (Paris, 2003).

³⁸² For more see Harthan, J. *The Book of Hours: With a Historical Survey and Commentary* (Crowell, 1977). Also see Reinbourg, V., 'Books of Hours', in Pettegree, A., *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 68-82.

³⁸³ The most famous example of a mediaeval Book of Hours is *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry* by the Limburg brothers. See Longnon, J., Cazelles, R., *Les Très Riches Heures de Duc de Berry* (London, 1969); Wieck, R. S., *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York, 1988).

³⁸⁴ Davis, N. Z., 'Printing and the people', p. 211.

³⁸⁵ Originally written in Latin in the thirteenth century by Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* was a collection of lives of the saints. After its translation into French by Jean Belet de Vigny in the fourteenth century, it became one of the most popular religious works in early modern France. See De

profession. They appeared as the first livres de poches in Venice and were imitated in France, where they circulated in large numbers.³⁸⁶ A case study of Amiens between 1503 and 1576 reveals that only a small part of the city's population (11.6%) actually owned a book. This mainly consisted of merchants and artisans, most of whose books were of religious and professional nature.³⁸⁷

Romances and other prose or fiction works formed a distinct category of popular literature, being amongst the undisputed best-sellers at the time. Probably the most representative example was the *Amadis de Gaule* which was first translated from Spanish into French in 1540 by Nicolas de Herberay, and was rapidly expanded in other volumes.³⁸⁸ Other titles widely circulated included Arioste's *Roland Furieux*, Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Brant's *Ship of Fools*, and poems such as *Le Roman de la Rose* and Meschinot's *Lunettes des Princes*.³⁸⁹ Their small size and varied, appealing topics which included stories of chivalry, accounts of crimes, star-crossed lovers, cautionary stories, and tales of fantasy, were the main reasons for their great success. Such works were read by people of all social levels, since besides their features of amusement and salon reading, they also had an additional didactic / moralising context. Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques* and his edited version of *Les histoires des amans fortunez* belonged to this category, combining popular topics with a philosophical twist. They

Voragine, J. (trans. by W. G. Ryan), *The Golden Legend: readings on the saints*, 2 vols (Princeton, 1993).

³⁸⁶ Johannot, Y., *Quand le livre devient poche* (Grenoble, 1978), pp. 53-56. Manuals were usually handbooks giving information or instructions, or used in the exercise of a trade.

³⁸⁷ Chartier, R., *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, pp. 146-148.

³⁸⁸ After its translation, the *Amadis* soon became a best-seller. See Simonin, M., 'La disgrâce d'Amadis', *Studi Francesi*, vol. 28 (1984), pp. 1-35; Rothstein, M., *Reading in the Renaissance: Amadis de Gaule and the Lessons of Memory* (Newark, 1999).

³⁸⁹ There are also the works by Erasmus and other humanists. For a first overview see Martin, H.-J., 'Ce qu'on lisait à Paris au XVI^e siècle', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 21 (1959), pp. 222-230.

were not only collections of easy-to-read nouvelles but studies on the wicked ways of human minds and immorality, communicating the messages of virtue and chastity. A related type of books were philosophical-edifying treatises, such as *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, which combined features of Renaissance philosophy and often theology through a humanist framework. Among their common topics were the study of the human condition, the immorality of the soul, and Man's salvation. Such examples clearly prove how the representative character of Boaistuau's books appealed to a wide readership, not only because of his writing talent but also for their variety of subjects, which incorporated different themes and trends of popular literature.

This chapter has focused on the ways in which Boaistuau's work can be associated with French print culture. It has presented, for the first time, a complete publishing history of the entirety of his works and has examined their reception as far as is possible, thus re-establishing the Breton writer's status as a highly eminent sixteenth-century literary figure. At the same time, it has shed fresh light on manifestations of the contemporary book industry and culture, and has proved the representative character of Boaistuau's oeuvre in terms of centralised production, physical nature, vernacular language and popular themes. The examination of these themes in the following chapters will reveal three main directions that characterised his multi-dimensional career: Renaissance narrative fiction and philosophy, historical and political writing, and the study of Nature.

CHAPTER 3

Humanism, narrative fiction and philosophy in Pierre Boaistuau's work

This is how François Rabelais described his enthusiasm for the recovery of ancient learning in his time, through the words of Gargantua's letter to his son Pantagruel:

Now all disciplines have been brought back; languages have been restored: Greek – without which it is a disgrace that any man should call himself a scholar – Hebrew, Chaldaean, Latin; elegant and accurate books are now in use, printing having been invented in my lifetime through divine inspiration [...] The whole world is now full of erudite persons, full of very learned teachers and of the most ample libraries, such indeed that I hold that it was not as easy to study in the days of Plato, Cicero nor Papinian as it is now.³⁹⁰

The study of classical languages, the availability of more accurate texts than before because of the invention of printing, the birth of new libraries and a general tendency toward learning, were some of the features that characterised the learning fervour and intellectual transformations of the sixteenth century. Scholarship has identified them within the wide context of Renaissance humanism. But what does this term mean? How did it manifest itself in France? And in what ways was it embodied in Pierre Boaistuau's work? These are some of the main questions addressed in this chapter.

As with all formulations of ideas and movements in historical research, the Renaissance cannot be explained in its entirety since it is an abstract form. It should not be understood as a homogenous cultural expression but rather as an expression of different features and thought processes within a varied context of cultural exchange:

Rather than a period with definitive beginnings and endings and consistent content in between, the Renaissance can be (and occasionally has been) seen as a movement of practices and ideas to which specific groups and identifiable

³⁹⁰ Rabelais, F. (tr. M. A. Screech), *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (London, 2006), p. 47.

persons variously responded in different times and places. It would be in this sense a network of diverse, sometimes converging, sometimes conflicting cultures, not a single, time-bound culture.³⁹¹

As Jean Delumeau has shown in his unsurpassable *La Civilisation de la Renaissance*, the Renaissance was an extremely rich and diverse movement which enclosed a wide range of ideas and mentalities.³⁹² Peter Burke has argued that this cultural movement, which he placed between the fourteenth and early seventeenth century, manifested itself in different centres across Europe, one of which was in Northern Europe, notably France and the Netherlands.³⁹³ Scholars have analysed the French Renaissance as an intersection of two principal strands. As Donald Kelley has noted,

The French Renaissance represents the intersection between two complex traditions which are also at least partly mythical constructs. One is French nationality, which can be perceived over some nine or ten centuries, but which has been vastly exaggerated by historians [...] The second notion is that of the 'Renaissance', an even more problematical abstraction which some medievalists refuse even to recognise.³⁹⁴

The origins of the Renaissance in France are now seen not only as a result of a rich indigenous culture that continued to develop throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but also as a culture shaped by the external influences of

³⁹¹ Starn, R., 'Renaissance Redux', *The American Historical Review*, vol.103 (1998), p. 124. On the same notion see also Sorelius, G., Srigley, M. (eds), *Cultural Exchange between European Nations during the Renaissance* (Uppsala, 1994).

³⁹² Delumeau, J., *La Civilisation de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1984). On the issue of mentalités see also Mandrou, R., *Introduction to Modern France 1500–1640: An Essay in Historical Psychology* (London, 1975). For an up-to-date overview of historiography on the Renaissance see King, M. L., *The Renaissance in Europe* (New York, 2003); Ruggiero, G., *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2007). Of interest is also Caffero, W., *Contesting the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2010).

³⁹³ Burke, P., *The European Renaissance: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1998). See also his rich work on the Italian Renaissance culture.

³⁹⁴ Kelley, D. R., 'France', in Porter, R., Teich, M. (eds), *The Renaissance in national context* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 123. Jules Michelet, hailed as the first scholar who ever used the term 'Renaissance', was also the first who sought to claim Renaissance as a French phenomenon in his *History of France in the Sixteenth Century – the Renaissance* (Paris, 1855).

neighbouring countries, such as Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.³⁹⁵ This blending of diverse features can be seen in all aspects of life at the time: religious turbulence, economic and social transformations, and political upheaval.³⁹⁶ However, in no area were these mutations more evident than in the intellectual and cultural achievements of the sixteenth century.

The agent of these achievements was humanism, whose manifestations can be examined in the way it has affected two areas of intellectual culture. The first is the study of *disciplinae humanae*, which has been associated mainly with education and literature. This understanding of humanism owes much to Paul Oskar Kristeller, who described it as an educational or literary movement which promoted a more liberal education focusing on grammatical and rhetorical studies (also known as *studia humanitatis*).³⁹⁷ This gradually challenged the primacy held for centuries by scholasticism, a system which devoted more attention to theology and logic.³⁹⁸ There was also a shift in the methods of learning. Whereas previously, students had read commentaries of works, in the sixteenth century there was a return to the primary

³⁹⁵ See for instance Daussy, H., Gilli, P., Nassiet, M., *La Renaissance (vers 1470-vers 1560)* (Paris, 2003). The classic study on the issue remains Franco Simone's *The French Renaissance: Medieval Tradition and Italian Influence in Shaping the Renaissance in France* (London, 1969).

³⁹⁶ For a first insight on France during this period see Jouanna, A., *La France du XVI^e siècle, 1483-1598* (Paris, 1997); Knecht, R. J., *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France: 1483-1610* (Oxford, 2001).

³⁹⁷ Kristeller, P. O., 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance' in his *Renaissance Thought and its Sources* (New York, 1979), pp. 85-105; also see his *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: collected essays* (Princeton, 1990) for a different aspect of the term in relation to arts. The usual disciplines taught were grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and ethics. For more see Burke, P., 'Humanists, Reformers, and French Culture', in Cruickshank, J., *French Literature and its Background, 1: The Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 32-46; Grafton, A., Jardine, L., *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1986).

³⁹⁸ Scholastics devoted themselves to a long-term fight against enthusiasts of the new humanist approach. There is an abundance of studies on the subject, see for instance Kristeller, P. O., *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York, 1961); Nauert, C. G., 'The Clash of Humanists and Scholastics: An Approach to Pre-Reformation Controversies', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 4 (1973), pp. 1-18; Rummel, E., *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

sources and classical languages through the study of ancient Greek and Latin works. Many titles considered lost were recovered and translated, thus resulting in a fermentation of ideas and patterns which affected not only education but almost every field of intellectual life in France. The revival of classical learning and the new methods of research have been aptly described by Niccolò Machiavelli in *Il Principe*.³⁹⁹ Similarly, Louis Le Roy in his *De la vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers* displayed the enthusiasm shared by many erudite men.⁴⁰⁰ In addition to classical learning, the classification and assimilation of contemporary knowledge (for more details see Chapter Five) played a part in the creation of a humanist literary culture. Long before Boaistuau entered university lecture halls, literary pursuits had been at the centre of innovation and the creative imitation of classical and medieval models. As Lucille Kekewich has aptly noted, it was 'a curious hybrid of the old and the new, and of tradition and innovation'.⁴⁰¹

Another scheme for examining the manifestations of Renaissance humanism is a more anthropocentric definition of the term which places Man at the centre. It is characterised by the study of Renaissance values, virtues and ideals leading to a better life. This scheme is closely associated with philosophy, and in particular, moral philosophy, which figured amongst the *studia humanitatis* and which was favoured owing to its application to everyday problems. Although humanism did not develop a

³⁹⁹ Machiavelli, N. (tr. G. Bull), *The Prince* (London, 2003), p. xxi: 'When evening comes, I return to my home, and I go into my study; and on the threshold, I take off my everyday clothes... and I put on regal and curial robes; and dressed in a more appropriate manner I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men and am welcomed by them kindly, and there I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born; and there I am not ashamed to speak to them, to ask them the reasons for their actions; and they, in their humanity, answer me'. Still useful on this notion is Bolgar, R. R., *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge, 1954).

⁴⁰⁰ See Gundersheimer, W. L., *The Life and Works of Louis Le Roy* (Geneva, 1966), Part IV.

⁴⁰¹ Kekewich, L. (ed.), *The Renaissance in Europe: the Impact of Humanism* (New Haven, 2000), p. 11. Also see Gundersheimer, W. L. (ed.), *French Humanism, 1470-1600* (London, 1969) and Levi, A. H. T. (ed.), *Humanism in France at the end of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance* (Manchester, 1970) on the effects of humanism in the literature of Renaissance France.

distinct philosophy, it nevertheless awakened an interest in the study of philosophical schools such as Platonism and Stoicism which influenced the works of many French writers such as Boaistuau.⁴⁰² Instead of the medieval notion that God was at the centre of the universe, Man now occupied the central place and was considered to be the measure of all things. This brings to mind Jacob Burckhardt, who was one of the first scholars to celebrate the multi-talented individual (*homo universalis*) and who referred to Renaissance humanism not only as the restoration of antiquity but as the discovery of Man and the world.⁴⁰³ Boaistuau, like many of his contemporaries, shared the same trust in human qualities and dignity, believing that Man had the power to surpass the ancients. For instance, he noted Leonardo da Vinci's invention of flight as proof of the remarkable progress made by Mankind: 'Encore se trouve il un Leonard Vinci, lequel a cherché l'art de voler, et a presque sorty heureusement son effect, sans mettre en compte ces histrions que nous avons veu de nostre temps voler sur la corde en l'air...'.⁴⁰⁴

This dual understanding of humanism corresponds to the structure of this chapter, which is in two parts. The first will focus on French sixteenth-century literature, in particular narrative fiction, a trend ideally represented by Boaistuau's *Histoires des amans fortunez* and *Histoires tragiques*. The long tradition of story-telling embodied many humanist features in terms of language, style, topics and form. Different frameworks were employed for writing short stories, a genre which at the time was

⁴⁰² For the continuing debates on the existence of a common humanist philosophy see Schmit, C. B. et al, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988); Copenhaver, B. P., Schmitt, C. B., *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford, 1992). Outdated but still useful is Corliss, L., *Humanism as a philosophy* (New York, 1949).

⁴⁰³ Burckhardt, J., *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, repr. 1990), part 2: 'The development of the individual'. This approach was later echoed in works like Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1984) which put forward the notion of subjectivity as one of the main results of Renaissance humanism.

⁴⁰⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 203.

not clearly defined but which proved extremely popular in the sixteenth century. Both Boaistuau's titles incorporated many aspects of this fiction literature into their humanist frameworks. Classical themes and ideas were used, blended with contemporary narration techniques, in order to entertain and communicate a moralising message to readers. The second part of this chapter will examine Renaissance philosophy, in particular two seemingly conflicting concepts: the *miseria humanis* and the *dignitatis hominis*, with an analysis of Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*. Although these works belong to two different literary traditions, they echo the revival of classical learning and philosophy making heavy use not only of ancient Greek and Latin sources, but also of contemporary views on Man and Life. Their humanist focus on ethics and their moralising context co-exists with Boaistuau's Christian rhetoric, which gives them a syncretic character, at the same time revealing the fluid situation of intellectual fermentation at the time which made the accommodation of different features possible.

3.1. Narrative fiction, *Histoires des amans fortunez* and *Histoires tragiques*

Natalie Zemon Davis wrote that sixteenth century was 'the time of storytelling' and in this she was fully correct.⁴⁰⁵ The notion of reading or narrating stories was widespread among different social groups in Renaissance Europe. For instance, there are examples of royal secretaries and lawyers whose personal libraries contained, along

⁴⁰⁵ This phrase was taken from Davis, N. Z., *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987).

with legal texts, collections of stories such as Boccaccio's *Decameron*.⁴⁰⁶ In Charles d'Angoulême's inventory there was a copy of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*.⁴⁰⁷ And there is also the example of Carlo Ginzburg's miller, Menocchio, who owned both *Decameron* and *The travels of Sir John Mandeville*.⁴⁰⁸ The short story genre proved extremely popular throughout the century, incorporating humanist elements and assimilating contemporary trends. Boaistuau's *Histoires des amans fortunez* (1558) and *Histoires tragiques* (1559), published in the middle of the century, were two representative examples of these literary transformations. However, to what extent did they integrate humanist influences in their texts? And what was Boaistuau's purpose for using them in his work?

3.1.1. *Histoires des amans fortunez*

The *Histoires des amans fortunez*, first published in Paris in 1558, was Boaistuau's fourth work although it was not his original creation. As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, this book was the first printed version of Marguerite of Navarre's collection of nouvelles now known as *Heptameron*.⁴⁰⁹ As an editor, Boaistuau made changes at will and did not mention Marguerite as the true author. Subsequently, his edition was blocked and a new one published in 1559 by a new editor Claude Gruget, with the title *Heptameron*, a name used ever since.⁴¹⁰ There is no evidence suggesting any

⁴⁰⁶ Davis, N. Z., *Fiction in the Archives*, pp. 15-18.

⁴⁰⁷ Winn, M. B., *Anthoine Vérard, Parisian Publisher, 1485-1512* (Geneva, 1997), pp. 166-167.

⁴⁰⁸ Ginzburg, C., *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (London, 1980), pp. 28-32.

⁴⁰⁹ For more see Courbet, E., 'Jeanne d'Albret et l'Heptaméron', *Bulletin du Bibliophile* (1904), pp. 277-90; De Lincy, R., Montaiglon, A. (eds), *L'Heptameron des Nouvelles, by Marguerite de Navarre*, 2 vols (Geneva, 1969); Simonin, M., 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', esp. pp. 327-329.

⁴¹⁰ The title-page of Gruget's 1559 edition reads: L'Heptaméron des Nouvelles de très illustre et très excellente Princesse Marguerite de Valois, Royne de Navarre, **remis en son vray ordre, confus auparavant en sa première impression**, et dédié à très illustre et très vertueuse Princesse Jeanne de Foix, Royne de Navarre, par Claude Gruget Parisien. Bold font is mine.

penalisation of Boaistuau, but this affair cost him his position as secretary to François de Clèves, Duke of Nevers, and earned him an obvious embarrassment amongst his contemporaries, and a reproach from later scholars.⁴¹¹ However, it did not put a halt to his writing career, since he published two very successful works shortly afterwards, the *Histoires tragiques* (1559) and *Histoires prodigieuses* (1560). Although research has tended to focus on various aspects of *Heptameron*, it has overlooked Boaistuau's version.⁴¹² Its examination in this section will shed fresh light on the editing practices, add to the study of the French nouvelle, and prove how humanist values were embedded into Boaistuau's narrative.

Histoires des amans fortunez was a collection of short stories following a style similar to *One Thousand and One Nights* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The stories were narrated by a group of French nobles (five women and five men: Oisille, Hircan, Parlamente, Longarine, Dogoucin, Saffredant, Nomerfide, Ennarsuite, Guebron and Simontault) who had visited the Cauterets baths at the Pyrenees but were hampered by floods on their way back to France.⁴¹³ They found refuge at the abbey of St. Savin, where they decided to stay for a few days, and began to narrate stories 'pour passer le temps le plus ioyusement'. Compared to the definitive version of *Heptameron* which

⁴¹¹ See for instance Courbet, E., 'Jeanne d'Albret et l'*Heptaméron*', where Boaistuau was presented as a opportunist.

⁴¹² Historiography on *Heptameron* is vast. For a first insight see Cazauran, N., *L'Heptameron de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris, 1976), Mathieu-Castellani, G., *La conversation conteuse: les nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre* (Paris, 1992), and Lyons, J. D., McKinley, M. B. (eds), *Critical Tales: New Studies of the Heptameron and Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia, 1993). Some of the critical editions include De Navarre, M. (ed. S. de Reyff), *L'Heptaméron* (Paris, 1982); De Navarre, M. (ed. R. Salminen), *Heptaméron* (Geneva, 1999); De Navarre, M. (ed. N. Cazauran), *L'Heptaméron* (Paris, 2000). However, the only recent article on Boaistuau's version is Stone, D., 'Observations on the text of the *Histoires des amans fortunez*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 2 (1980), pp. 201-213.

⁴¹³ Although Marguerite used fake names for her story-tellers, they can be identified with noblemen and noblewomen from her entourage who probably contributed to the compilation of the work. In fact, Parlamente has been identified with the Queen of Navarre herself. For more see Davis, B. J., *The Storytellers in Marguerite de Navarre's Heptaméron* (Lexington, 1978).

has seventy-two nouvelles, the *Amans fortunez* numbered sixty-seven.⁴¹⁴ There is no clear mention as to why Boaistuau chose certain nouvelles over others; he simply wrote that he had made a selection for the purposes of his edition, and reserved the rest of the stories for ‘en autre saison plus opportune’ and in order to perfect them.⁴¹⁵ At the time, it was not uncommon for editors to also play the role of compilers, a role often assigned to them by publishers. As Boaistuau noted, he was requested to withdraw around twenty notable stories (to which, of course, he added many more), and was repeatedly advised to pursue his enterprise: ‘ie fus seulement requis de retirer et mettre au net dixhuict ou vingt histoires des plus notables... ie fus sollicité avec tres instantes requestes de poursuiure ma pointe’.⁴¹⁶ It is reasonable to believe that these requests came from Vincent Sertenas, who ‘a recouré vn liure non encores imprimé, intitulé les histoires des amans fortunez, lesquelles... il feroit volontiers imprimer et exposer en vente’.⁴¹⁷

However, the exclusion of five stories was only one of Boaistuau’s editorial changes. In terms of structure, the work originally had a lengthy prologue and was divided into days. Each day had a prologue and contained ten nouvelles. At the end of each nouvelle, a dialogue between storytellers led smoothly into the next story. However, this division was omitted by Boaistuau, stripping the book of its homogenous appearance. His *Amans fortunez* retained the general prologue but did not divide the nouvelles into days. Similarly, the daily prologues were omitted, leaving only the dialogues at the end of each nouvelle, whose function was to draw out moral lessons.

⁴¹⁴ The number of *Heptameron*’s stories (as well as their order and contents) varies, as there are seventeen existing manuscripts and printed editions with considerable differences. The edition used for this study is De Navarre, M. (ed. P. A. Chilton), *The Heptameron* (London, repr. 2004).

⁴¹⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez* (Paris, G. Gilles, 1558), Au Lecteur.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Privilège dv Roy.

This retained a well-defined structure but deprived the work of its initial intention to imitate the model of the *Decameron* (*Heptameron* was originally a royal project coordinated by Marguerite of Navarre and Catherine of Medici aiming to produce its French equivalent).⁴¹⁸ Boaistuau also altered the original sequence of the stories. For example, nouvelle ten and fourteen in *Heptameron* became nouvelle eighteen and six respectively in *Amans fortunez*. In terms of content, several passages were suppressed or altered, and others were added.⁴¹⁹ For instance, part of a conversation between Amadour and Florinda in nouvelle ten was replaced by one of Boaistuau's own invention.⁴²⁰ Two more lines were added to the prologue.⁴²¹ Certain protagonists were renamed, such as the seigneur of Ryant in nouvelle twelve who became 'un gentilhomme de la maison du Roy François premier'.⁴²² Such examples prove not only the liberty taken by Boaistuau with Marguerite's text, but the freedom enjoyed by contemporary editors.

Boaistuau's textual interventions in *Amans fortunez* may look excessive to a modern reader but were common enough in sixteenth century writings. Editors were allowed to apply their own interpretation and aesthetic to the work, to such an extent that they could act almost arbitrarily. Boaistuau wrote that his purpose in editing was 'la nécessité et decoration des histoires'.⁴²³ In the name of 'decoration', he changed

⁴¹⁸ On the similarities between *Heptameron* and *Decameron* see Cazauran, N., 'L'*Heptaméron* face au *Décameron*', in Bessière, J., Daros, P. (eds), *La Nouvelle: Boccace, Marguerite de Navarre, Cervantès* (Paris, 1996), pp. 69-108. Also see Delege, Y., 'Autour de deux prologues: L'*Heptaméron* est-il un anti-Boccace?', *Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature*, vol. 4 (1966), pp. 23-37.

⁴¹⁹ For more on these changes and how Boaistuau's text relates to the manuscript tradition of the *Heptameron* see Stone, D. Jr, 'Observations on the text of the *Histoires des amans fortunez*', *o.c.*

⁴²⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, p. 75v: 'Et si vous vous en cuidez deffendre par la conscience, ne doutez point que ceux qui ont esproué les forces d'amour ne reietent le blasma sus vous... ou entre les mains de mes plus cruelz ennemis'. Juxtapose this passage to Chilton, pp. 141-142.

⁴²¹ *Ibid*, Prologue: 'mais i'ay bien desir que Parleme commence, s'il luy plaist faire cest honneur à la compagnie: laquelle pour luy obeir commença ainsi qu'il s'ensuyt'.

⁴²² *Ibid*, p. 41r.

⁴²³ *Ibid*, Au Lecteur.

everything he disliked and suppressed material he deemed provocative or suspected of having evangelical ideas (such as Amadour's passage above). He noted in the preface to the reader that he worked as if he were a sponge, 'cleaning' the mistakes he found on a hand-written copy of the work: 'que lors que cest oeuvre me fut présenté pour luy servir d'**esponge**, et le nettoyer d'une infinité de fautes manifestes, qui se retrouuoient en vne copie escrite de main'.⁴²⁴ For Boaistuau, this was not an infringement of Marguerite's work but rather an application of the notion of correctness which Renaissance editors shared.⁴²⁵ As Nicole Cazauran noted, 'c'est bien son travail de 'correcteur' que Boaistuau lui-même vante dans l'adresse aux lecteurs'.⁴²⁶ Proud of the final result, he wrote that it would have been easier to recreate the whole work rather than editing the text: 'je te puis assurer qu'il m'auroit esté moins penible de bastir l'oeuvre tout de neuf, que de l'avoir tronqué en plusieurs endroits, changé, innové, adjousté, et supprimé en d'autres, ayant esté quasi contraint luy donner nouvelle forme'.⁴²⁷ As will be shown later, his role as editor-corrector was influenced by his humanist ideal of edification.

Boaistuau did not dedicate his collection to Marguerite of Navarre, as one might have expected. Instead, he chose Marguerite of Bourbon, Duchess of Nevers and niece by marriage to the Queen of Navarre: 'Histoires des amans fortunez, dédiées à très

⁴²⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*. Bold font is mine. This copy was most probably Adrien de Thou's manuscript of 1553, prepared for an edition which was never published.

⁴²⁵ See Richardson, B., *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: the Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470-1600* (Cambridge, 1994), esp. pp. 185-186. Also see Slights, W. W. E., *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books* (Ann Arbor, 2001) on a general level.

⁴²⁶ Cazauran, N., 'Boaistuau et Gruget éditeurs de *L'Heptaméron*: à chacun sa part', in Bessire, F. (ed.), *L'Écrivain éditeur, vol. 1: Du Moyen Âge à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Geneva, 2001), p. 153.

⁴²⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, Au lecteur. The intention of this phrase was to prove the difficulty of the editor's task (as will be shown in Chapter Four, a similar phrase was used in *Chelidonium Tigurinus*'s Epistre) but also to praise Boaistuau's scholarly capabilities.

illustre princesse madame **Marguerite de Bourbon, duchesse de Nivernois**'.⁴²⁸ Why did he not pay tribute to the real writer by dedicating the work to her? Could it be that he wished to protect Marguerite from any possible criticism of the *Amans fortunez*? Is this why he concealed her name, referring to her as 'prodige et miracle de nature' while praising her erudition?⁴²⁹ This hypothesis does not seem reasonable, especially considering the popularity of the short story genre at the time. It is more likely that Boaistuau chose to dedicate his work to Marguerite of Bourbon in the hope of promoting his own writing career. It is for this reason that he addressed her with such a long title, asking her to take the book under her protection 'attendant quelque sacrifice plus grand... pour l'aduenir'. His offer was a testimony to his obedience and devotion, in the hope that he would win her favour.⁴³⁰ Therefore, although Boaistuau did not claim *Amans fortunez* as his own creation – he did not actually name the original author either – he nevertheless used it for his own ends. By recreating Marguerite's collection of stories, he hoped for a publishing success similar to that of his earlier titles in order to further advance his career. And before undertaking this project he had assumed that the nouvelle genre would become even more successful.

The sixteenth century saw a significant production of short stories in France, with the publication of titles such as Jeanne Flore's *Comptes amoureux* (1537), Noël du Fail's *Propos rustiques* (1547), *Baliverneries d'Eutrapel* (1548), and Claude de

⁴²⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, Title-page. Bold font is mine. Marguerite of Bourbon was daughter of Charles, Duke of Vendôme. She got married in 1538 to Francis of Cleves, Duke of Nevers, and via this marriage became niece to Marguerite of Navarre.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*, Salutation. Marguerite of Navarre was described in the same terms in her obituary – see Simonin, 'Notes sur Pierre Boaistuau', p. 329.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid*: 'Vous prendrez doncq'en gré, madame, s'il vous plaist, ceste petite offerte pour **eternal tesmoignage de mon obeissance et treshumble devotion envers vostre grandeur**'. Bold font is mine. The use of similar phrases was not uncommon at the time when dedicating literary works.

Taillemont's *Discours des champs faez* (1553).⁴³¹ Such works drew their material and inspiration from a bank of literary fermentations originating back to the previous century. The interaction between indigenous literary productions (such as the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*) and the foreign works which were widely circulating in the French market (such as the Spanish *Amadis de Gaule* and the Italian *Decameron*) gave birth to a variety of features adopted by the nouvelle.⁴³² An additional factor in its development was the humanist culture which had become dominant in the courts of sixteenth-century Popes, Kings, princes and nobles.⁴³³ The courts of Francis I and Henry II were not exceptions in maintaining a circle of scholars, poets and artists who adapted foreign models to the French context and also produced novelties. The presence of Catherine of Medici, Henry II's wife, was almost certainly the source of Italian influence on French court culture, which became more sympathetic to poetry and narrative fiction. In addition, generous patrons of letters, such as Marguerite of Navarre, Francis I's sister, facilitated the evolution of story-writing by providing writers with the safety of a stimulating atmosphere which could feed their creativity.⁴³⁴ Two interesting examples of the court's active promotion of the nouvelle

⁴³¹ On Jeanne Flore's *Comptes amoureux* see Pérouse, G.-A., *Contes Amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore* (Lyon, 1980). On Noël du Fail's *Propos rustiques* see Magnien-Simonin, C., *Noël du Fail écrivain* (Paris, 1991); Du Fail, N. (eds G.-A. Pérouse, R. Dubuis), *Propos rustiques* (Geneva, 1994). On Claude de Taillemont's work see De Taillemont, C. (ed. J.-C. Arnould), *Discours des champs faez: à l'honneur et l'exaltation de l'Amour et des Dames* (Geneva, 1991).

⁴³² The *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* is attributed to Antoine de la Sale. It was first presented to the Duke of Burgundy around 1460 and published before the end of the century. For more see Dubuis, R., *Les Cent nouvelles nouvelles et la tradition de la nouvelle en France au Moyen Age* (Grenoble, 1973). See also Zehnder, R., *Les modèles latins des Cent nouvelles nouvelles* (Bern, 2004) for an analysis of the adaptation of Latin models into the work. On *Amadis de Gaule* see Chapter Two, p. 132.

⁴³³ Courts operated not only as centres of literary developments but also of intellectual and cultural fermentation – see Knecht, R. J., *The French Renaissance Court* (New Haven, 2008). On a more general level also see Elias, N., *The Civilizing Process, vol. 3: The Court Society* (New York, 1983). Such literary gatherings would eventually become the well-known seventeenth-century French salons. For more see Beasley, F. E., *Salons, History and the Creation of 17th-century France: Mastering Memory* (Aldershot, 2006).

⁴³⁴ It was not a coincidence that many of Marguerite's protégés later became successful story-tellers. On her patronage see Barbara Stephenson's *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre* (Aldershot, 2004). On a more general context, see Kettering, S., 'Patronage in early modern France', *French Historical Studies*, vol. 17 (1992), pp. 839-862.

were Bonaventure des Périers and Boaistuau, both of whom were involved in the *Heptameron* project: Des Périers transcribed the work, whereas Boaistuau edited its first printed version.⁴³⁵

Probably the first work of French literary prose written in the vernacular, the *nouvelle* was a short story which usually focused on a central event or episode (whereas the *conte* went beyond that) whose protagonists ranged from ordinary men and women to monks, state officers, nobles and princes. It made use of medieval narrative models such as the *fabliaux*, and incorporated various frameworks and tools of expression. One such was dialogue, which saw a rise in sixteenth-century French literature with the publication of Des Périers's *Cymbalum mundi* (1537), followed by works such as Etienne Pasquier's *Le Monophile* (1554), Luis Le Caron's *Les Dialogues* (1556), Pontus de Tyard's *L'Univers* and Guy de Bruès's *Dialogues* (both in 1557).⁴³⁶ These works, often borrowing from classical models and contemporary titles, such as Castiglione's *The Courtier*, transplanted many features to the *nouvelle* in terms of form, style and content.⁴³⁷ Their common topic was love, also a central motif in *Amans fortunez*. *Nouvelles* used rhetoric, revealing their writers' preoccupation with the persuasive use of language. The work of Petrus Ramus and titles such as Audomarus Taleus's *Institutiones Oratoriae* (1544) played an important role in the

⁴³⁵ See Sozzi, L., *Les Contes de Bonaventure des Périers* (Turin, 1965), and Krailsheimer, A. J. (ed.), *Three Sixteenth-Century Conteurs: Marguerite de Navarre, Bonaventure des Périers, Noël du Fail* (Oxford, 1966). Des Périers's *Nouvelles récréations et joyeux devis* was published in Lyon in 1558, the same year that Boaistuau's *Histoires des amans fortunez* was published in Paris.

⁴³⁶ On *Cymbalum mundi* see Des Périers, B. (ed. Y. Delègue), *Le Cymbalum mundi* (Paris, 1995). On *Monophile* see Pasquier, E. (ed. E. H. Balmas), *Le Monophile* (Milan, 1957). On *L'Univers* see Hall, K., *Pontus de Tyard and his Discours philosophiques* (Oxford, 1963). On De Bruès see Morphos, P. P., *The Dialogues of Guy de Brués* (Baltimore, 1953).

⁴³⁷ On Castiglione's influence see Reynolds, R., 'L'Heptameron de Marguerite de Navarre. Influence de Castiglione', *Studi di letteratura francese*, vol. 5 (1979), pp. 25-39.

transmission of rhetoric elements to the text of the nouvelle.⁴³⁸ This rhetoric was not usually subject to rigid models such as those of Cicero imitated in other Renaissance works, but revealed a more informal use of language which was a combination of the satirical and the cautionary, and was not presented in a scholarly style. The combination of such features made the nouvelle a very successful and appealing genre in sixteenth-century France.⁴³⁹

The *Histoires des amans fortunez*, published in a vernacular, which contained remnants of French regional dialects, was typical of the genre.⁴⁴⁰ Despite Boaistuau's many editorial changes, Marguerite's original text retained its basic form and main themes. The principal framework was humanistic, which was evident from the introductory pages of the book. In an effort to further promote his enterprise, Boaistuau commented on the loss of manuscripts and books resulting from the burning of the Alexandria library at the time of the Roman Empire, and the palace library at Constantinople at the time of Zenon. He also referred to the destruction of the Corvina library after the Turks entered Buda in 1526.⁴⁴¹ Mentioning a great number of sources which had been lost, Boaistuau was fully aware of the importance of the 'rediscovery of antiquity' as expressed through the copious work of humanists, and of the preservation of both older and contemporary material for future

⁴³⁸ On Renaissance rhetoric see Fumaroli, M., *L'âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980); Monfasani, J., 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in Rabil Jr, A. (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988), vol. III, pp. 171-235. On Ramus, the best study to start with is Ong, W., *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Chicago, repr., 2005). Audomarus Taleus (c. 1510-1562) was Ramus's friend and his most enthusiastic follower.

⁴³⁹ On the evolution of the nouvelle see Sozzi, L., Saulnier, V. L. (eds), *La nouvelle française à la Renaissance* (Geneva, 1981); Picone, M., Di Stefano, G., Stewart, P. D. (eds), *Genèse, codification et rayonnement d'un genre médiéval: la nouvelle* (Montreal, 1983), esp. part 5.

⁴⁴⁰ For more detail on the language used in *Heptameron* see Tetel, M., *Marguerite de Navarre 'Heptaméron': Themes, Language, Structure* (Durham, NC, 1973).

⁴⁴¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, Salutation: 'les Turcs assiegerent Bude, ville capitale de Hongrie, ou la tant celebrée bibliotheque du bon Roy Mathias fut pillée, dissipée, et gastée'. On Matthias Corvinus's library see Tanner, M., *The Raven King: Matthias Corvinus and the Fate of his Lost Library* (New Haven, 2008).

generations. For this reason he urged those who owned works by contemporary or classical writers ‘à les publier et produire en lumiere’ so ‘qu’ilz ne privent leurs successeurs du fruit, et contentement qu’ilz pourroient recevoir des labours d’autruy’.⁴⁴² Another proof of the humanist fabric of *Amans fortunez* is the fact that their stories and storytellers were rooted in a historical context. Narrated not by fictional characters but by members of Marguerite’s court, the stories referred to particular individuals, sometimes mentioning their names and/or titles but more often framing the events chronologically or geographically. For example, nouvelle three told the tale of ‘Roy Alfonse’ of Naples and nouvelle nine that of ‘le Roy François premier’; the main character in nouvelle twenty-one was ‘un president de Grenoble’ and that of nouvelle thirty-six ‘vn muletier seruiteur de la Royne de Nauare’; nouvelle fifty-three took place ‘en la ville de Paris’ and nouvelle fifty-five ‘en la cité de Vallence’. Such information provided the text with a sense of historical authenticity and fulfilled the requirement of the project that all stories had to be true. As Boaistuau wrote in the Prologue, ‘c’est de n’escire nouvelle, qui ne fust veritable histoire’.⁴⁴³

However, the influence of humanism on *Amans fortunez* was more evident in its main theme, that of love, which clearly followed the precepts of Neoplatonism, blending Plato and the Bible.⁴⁴⁴ This love was manifested through various concepts, two of which were prudence and loyalty, as presented in nouvelle forty-four. A chamberlain in Amboise had as a guest in his house a friend who was a secretary, who needed to spend a few days in the city. The secretary, with complete lack of respect for his host,

⁴⁴² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, Au lecteur.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid*, Prologue. Chilton noted that ‘about twenty tales have been verified by modern research’ – see his critical edition, p. 11.

⁴⁴⁴ See Bernard, R. W., ‘Platonism – Myth or Reality in the *Heptameron*’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 5 (1974), pp. 3-14; Martineau-Genieys, C., ‘Le platonisme de Marguerite de Navarre?’, *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance*, vol. 4 (1976), pp. 12-35.

made advances to the chamberlain's wife who had the reputation of a respectable and prudent woman. Realising his improper intentions, she tricked him into climbing up to the attic of the house and began to call for her husband. When the chamberlain found out what had happened, he was so pleased with the loyalty and cunning shown by his wife that he allowed the secretary to go unpunished: 'Et luy pleut tant **la vertu** de sa femme, qu'il ne tint compte du vice de son compagnon'.⁴⁴⁵ The woman in this story held honour in higher esteem than pleasure and had found a means of resisting the secretary's advances. Her prudence and self-control made her a model of morality in the eyes of the reader. Praising this idea of virtuous love, the story served its purpose, which was to portray a moral life in the hope that readers would follow its example.⁴⁴⁶

A different aspect of love, however, was presented in the fifty-seventh nouvelle, which narrated the story of an apothecary's wife in Pau who tried to win back her husband's attention in a somewhat unorthodox manner. The wife overheard her husband recommending a 'love-powder' to a female customer. Secretly, she took a large dose and sprinkled it over her husband's meal. However, the result was not what she expected since her husband began to suffer from a most uncomfortable stomach-ache which was eventually cured by the Queen of Navarre's apothecary. With her plan revealed, the wife was forgiven and the husband reprimanded for his negligence by the royal apothecary. Behind the wife's naivety and the comic nature of the story, is the theme of desperate love. This was the driving force behind the woman's action: 'Mais il fault excuser l'ignorance. Celle la est excusable, car **la passion plus**

⁴⁴⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, p. 137r. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁴⁶ On female prudence and loyalty see Freccerco, C., 'Unwriting Lucretia: 'Heroic Virtue' in the Heptaméron', in Polachek, D. (ed.), *Heroic Virtue, Comic Infidelity: Reassessing Marguerite de Navarre's Heptaméron* (Amherst, 1993), pp. 77-89; Bromilow, P., 'The Case of Lucretia: female exemplarity in Boaistuau and Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*', in Britnell, J., Moss, A. (eds), *Female Saints and Sinners* (Durham, 2002), pp. 163-178.

aeuglante c'est l'amour, et la personne plus aueglée c'est la femme, qui n'a pas la force de conduire sagement vn si grand fais'.⁴⁴⁷ It was an example of the 'malheurs d'amour', a burden endured by so many unfortunate lovers.⁴⁴⁸

Another manifestation of love was associated with revenge, as shown in the third nouvelle. During carnival festivities, Alfonso II of Naples fell in love with a beautiful married lady. By constant courtship and engineering the frequent absences of her husband, he persuaded her to become his mistress. The cuckolded husband, fearful of the king's power, revealed his concerns to the Queen and also expressed his feelings for her. The Queen, wishing to take revenge on Alfonso and at the same time flattered by the cheated husband's confession, took him as her lover: 'Et se trouuans tous deux d'vn consentement iouèrent **la vengeance**, dont la passion auoit esté importable'.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, a love quartet was formed of which the errant king and the unfaithful wife were completely unaware. Erotic desire, adultery and betrayal were amongst the topics of this story.⁴⁵⁰ The reciprocal infidelity shown by all the main characters created the framework for the manifestation of an undesirable side to love. This was not virtuous love but a corruption, which put aside all moral restraints in its search for revenge. Such stories portrayed not only the problematic relationships at the time, but also the infringements of marriage codes in aristocratic Europe.

⁴⁴⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, p. 159v. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁴⁸ See Baker, M. J., 'Aspects of the Psychology of Love in the *Heptameron*', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 19 (1988), pp. 81-87.

⁴⁴⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, p. 14v. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁵⁰ See Febvre, L., *Amour sacré, amour profane: autour de l'Heptaméron* (Paris, repr., 1971).

A fourth aspect of ‘love’ examined in *Amans fortunez* was closely related to rape or the attempt to rape.⁴⁵¹ In this respect, it was monks who usually played the part of the seducers. For instance, in the fiftieth nouvelle, two Franciscans spent the night at an inn in Périgord where a wedding feast was held. They planned to take the groom’s place in the bridal bed while he was still dancing. One of them succeeded in spending most of the night with the unsuspecting bride. When the groom eventually went to bed and discovered the truth, he found the monks at a nearby vineyard (to which they had fled) and cruelly punished them: ‘Car apres les auoir battuz, leur coupperent les bras et les iambes, et les laisserent dedans les vignes en la garde du dieu Bacchus et de Venus, don’t ilz estoient meilleurs disciples, que de saint François’.⁴⁵² Such portrayal of the religious orders as sexually dangerous was not unusual, since criticism of the lustfulness of clerics and friars was a common theme in many contemporary literary works, such as Poggio’s *Facetiae*.⁴⁵³ This story went one better than the amusing medieval stories concerning gluttonous monks and adopted the critique of Renaissance humanism, which was directed against the moral degeneration of a corrupt Church.

As the nature of these examples suggest, Boaistuau’s editorial changes did not alter the moralising intention of the work, which was explicitly stated right from the start: to ‘servir au temps et à l’infelicité de nostre siecle’.⁴⁵⁴ The collection of nouvelles was

⁴⁵¹ Cholakian, P., *Rape and Writing in the ‘Heptaméron’ of Marguerite de Navarre* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); Baker, M., ‘Rape, Attempted Rape and Seduction in the *Heptaméron*’, *Romance Quarterly*, vol. 39 (1992), pp. 271-81.

⁴⁵² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, p. 148v.

⁴⁵³ *Facetiae* was a collection of humorous and indecent tales chiefly remarkable for their satires on monastic orders. For more on Poggio see later section of this chapter. On sexuality and the monastic orders see Wiesner-Hanks, M. E., *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London, 2000); Laven, M., *Virgins of Venice: Broken Vows and Cloistered Lives in the Renaissance Convent* (New York, 2003). On a more general level see Crawford, K., *European Sexualities, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁴⁵⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires des amans fortunez*, Au lecteur.

certainly written with entertainment in mind, but at the same time had an underlying humanist-didactic context. By exposing malice, wickedness, lust and hypocrisy, *Histoires des amans fortunez* condemned the immorality of French society, and called for a return to Christian morality. It was a warning and also a call for repentance, which suited the profile of Boaistuau as a moraliser. This admonition to the reader to lead a virtuous life would become more evident in his later collection of nouvelles.

3.1.2. *Histoires tragiques*

Apart from *Amans fortunez*, another work of narrative fiction by Boaistuau was *Histoires tragiques*, first published in Paris in 1559.⁴⁵⁵ It was an anthology of six short stories dedicated to ‘Monseigneur Matthieu de Mauny, Abbé des Noyers’, a Benedictine abbot and nephew of the Archbishop of Bordeaux François de Mauny.⁴⁵⁶ Each story was preceded by a summary of didactic context (sommaire). The story of Edward III and Aelips (identified with the Countess of Salisbury) told of the English king’s unchaste love for her, which ended with his regret and their marriage. The second story dealt with Mohamet II’s lust for a Greek woman named Hyrenne, who was executed after she rejected the Ottoman sultan. The unfortunate love of Romeo and Juliet was the topic of the third story, the outcome of which was Romeo’s death by poison and Juliet’s suicide. The fourth story focused on the Seigneur of Piedmont,

⁴⁵⁵ This edition was soon complemented by the *Continuation des histoires tragiques* (published again in 1559 by Sertenas) which contained twelve more stories translated by François de Belleforest. The eighteen stories were published together the same year as a single volume entitled *XVIII Histoires tragiques* by Gilles Robinot, and again in 1560 by an unknown publisher. This latter edition will be used for the purposes of this chapter.

⁴⁵⁶ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques* (Paris, unknown publisher, 1560), ‘A Monseigneur Mathieu de Mauny, Abbé des Noiers, Pierre Boisteau treshumble salut’. For more on Matthieu de Mauny, whose relation to Boaistuau is unknown, see Carr’s *Histoires tragiques*, p. 3, cit. 1. This dedication was Boaistuau’s gift in exchange for a certain ‘courtoisie’ he received from the abbot. There is also another edition of *Histoires tragiques* published the same year which was dedicated to Elizabeth I and reflected the writer’s campaign to win the Queen’s favour – see Chapter One, section 1.4.

who married a woman from Milan but had to cruelly punish her after her adultery. Next was the story of Didaco, and his Violente who brutally assassinated him when he betrayed their clandestine marriage in order to marry a woman of higher social standing. The sixth and final story narrated the adulterous desire of the Duchess of Savoy for Lord Mandozze, which ended with her repentance and their marriage. The contents, style and major themes of these stories have already been examined by Richard Carr, who has published two indispensable studies for anyone wishing to study *Histoires tragiques* in more detail.⁴⁵⁷ Although not all stories had a tragic ending, they not only incorporated an ambience of tragedy but were also cautionary, and in this sense transcended the traditional boundaries of the nouvelle and popularised the genre of histoire tragique in sixteenth century France. The formation of this tragic element throughout narration will be the main focus of the following section. It derived from humanist trends widely used in contemporary literature which, as will be shown, were evident in several motifs of the work.

Similarly to *Amans fortunez*, examined earlier (an edited version of Marguerite of Navarre's collection of nouvelles), *Histoires tragiques* was not originally written by Boaistuau. It was a French translation of six stories taken from Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*, an Italian anthology of stories.⁴⁵⁸ As such, the book raises the issue of translation – closely associated to the rise of the vernaculars.⁴⁵⁹ There was a movement of translated texts particularly between Spain, France and Italy. As

⁴⁵⁷ Boaistuau, P. (ed. R. Carr), *Histoires tragiques* (Paris, 1977); Carr, R., *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques: A Study of Narrative Form and Tragic Vision* (Chapel Hill, 1979). For the main direction of scholarship in relation to Boaistuau's work see Introduction, pp. 8-11.

⁴⁵⁸ Bandello's *Novelle* was first published in 1554. On its reception see Sturel, R., *Bandello en France au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 1970); still useful is Hook, F. S., *The French Bandello* (Columbia, 1948).

⁴⁵⁹ As G. Nauert noted, for those who lacked Latin or could not read it with ease, sixteenth-century translators 'unlocked the treasures of ancient Greece and Rome with a flood of vernacular editions'. See Nauert, C. G., *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 198. Also see Botley, P., *Latin Translation in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2004).

Andrew Pettegree has noted, this flow of translations of foreign works into French included fiction titles from southern Europe: ‘The public interest in Amadis seems in fact to have stimulated a wave of translation projects from Italian, as for instance the *Orlando Furioso* and the *Decameron* of Boccaccio’.⁴⁶⁰ Therefore, Boaistuau’s decision to translate an Italian work was not random but rather representative of a contemporary trend, and reflected a well-calculated commercial decision. He had already published four works in different literary styles and, considering their publishing success, he was able to perceive the readers’ preferences.⁴⁶¹ This talent of his was one of the reasons why *Histoires tragiques* became a best-seller in France.

The translation of *Histoires tragiques* was a joint project made possible by the help of Boaistuau’s friend François de Belleforest, royal historiographer and humanist writer: ‘Bening Lecteur... je t’ay bien voulou averter, que le Seigneur de Belleforest, gentilhomme Commingeois, **m’a tant soulagé en cette traduction, qu’à peine fust-elle sortie en lumiere, sans son secours**’.⁴⁶² Together, these two men hold an important place in the development of mid-sixteenth-century French literature. In fact, it was Belleforest who continued the project of *Histoires tragiques*, expanding it, with the addition of more stories, into multi-volume editions between 1559 and 1582. Belleforest and Boaistuau shared a rather creative notion of translation which allowed them to take great liberties with their work, such as additions and harangues.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ Pettegree, A., ‘Translation and the migration of texts’, in his *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden, 2007), p. 208.

⁴⁶¹ *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (1556) was an example of the genre which dealt with the education of a prince; *Histoires des amans fortunez* (1558) was a collection of nouvelles; *Le Théâtre du monde* (1558) was a philosophical treatise following the *miseria humanis* genre; the *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme* (1558) belonged to the *dignitas hominis* literary tradition.

⁴⁶² Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, Advertissement au Lecteur. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁶³ For some of the differences between versions by Bandello and Boaistuau see Bullough, G., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London, 1957-75), vol. 1, pp. 272-274.

However, they each adopted a different style. Boaistuau's translations were superior to those of Belleforest, and had a certain narrative style:

Les histoires de Boaistuau se distinguent non seulement par leur style, dont l'auteur s'est vanté et que bien d'autres allaient louer, mais aussi par **sa conception de l'art narratif** qui marque une étape importante dans le développement de la nouvelle au XVIe siècle.⁴⁶⁴

This creative notion of translation was surely influenced by contemporary works such as Etienne Dolet's *La Maniere de bien traduire d'une Langue en Aultre* (1540) which influenced the trend towards narrative conventions.⁴⁶⁵

As Glyn Norton has shown, the boundaries between translation proper and original creation were almost indistinguishable at the time. Translators, like editors, enjoyed a status of liberty and flexibility in Renaissance France.⁴⁶⁶ This explains why Boaistuau made several changes to Bandello's original text, either to adapt it into French or to create something new, closer to his liking. For example, it was for this reason that he adopted a more elegant style, since he disliked that of Bandello: 'sa phrase m'a semblé tant rude, ses termes impropres, ses propos tant mal liez, et ses sentences tant maigres'.⁴⁶⁷ The rhetorical aspect of his writing was incorporated into the moralising tone of his stories, which 'apparaissent objectivement comme une entreprise

⁴⁶⁴ Cited in Carr, R., *Histoires tragiques*, Introduction, p. xlix. Bold font is mine. For more on Belleforest's translations see Stabler, A. P., 'The 'histoires tragiques' of François de Belleforest' (PhD dissert., University of Virginia, 1958); Stone, D., 'Belleforest's Bandello', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 34 (1972), pp. 489-99.

⁴⁶⁵ On Dolet and translation see Worth, V., *Practising Translation in Renaissance France: The Example of Etienne Dolet* (Oxford, 1999). Other treatises on translation from the sixteenth century include Joachim du Bellay's *La défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549) and Jacques Peletier's *Art poétique* (1555).

⁴⁶⁶ Norton, G. P., *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents* (Geneva, 1984). Also see Vialon, M. (ed.), *La traduction à la Renaissance et à l'âge classique* (Saint-Etienne, 2001).

⁴⁶⁷ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, *Advertissement au Lecteur*. Boaistuau went as far as to suggest that he gave the stories a new form ('la refondre tout de neuf, et la remettre en nouvelle forme'). Also see Simonin, M., 'François de Belleforest, traducteur de Bandel dans la premier volume des *Histoires tragiques*', in *L'encre et la lumière* (Geneva, 2004), p. 34.

d'illustration rhétorique et de remise en ordre morale'.⁴⁶⁸ Boaistuau went so far as to note that he only borrowed from Bandello 'le sujet de l'histoire'. Such textual modifications, which fall within the poetic license of vernacular translation at the time, reveal the representative character of Boaistuau's text. As Richard Carr has noted, 'Boaistuau affirme ici **le droit de tout écrivain de son temps de prendre la création d'autrui et de la recréer à son goût**'.⁴⁶⁹ This freedom and creativity provide further reasons for the examination of Boaistuau's translating choices and why they should be appreciated on their own terms by contemporary research.

Besides translation, *Histoires tragiques* raises the issue of anthology in the sixteenth century, a term which appeared in France in 1574 but whose meaning has changed over the centuries.⁴⁷⁰ Deriving from the ancient Greek *ανθολογία* (literally a collection of flowers) and appearing in various forms, the 'anthologie' could have been associated to the study of law and the compilation of legal texts.⁴⁷¹ The term is used here to denote a collection of stories or other pieces of writing chosen by a compiler, and thus can be applied to Boaistuau's work. Since the six stories contained in *Histoires tragiques* were only a small part of Bandello's *Novelle*, they surely reflected the anthologist's choice and taste. Boaistuau chose to translate specific stories which did not follow a set order. It is hard to believe that this selection was random. It

⁴⁶⁸ Fiorato, A. C., 'Les *Histoires Tragiques* de Boaistuau et Belleforest, ou la moralization d'un conteur de la Renaissance Italienne en France', *Studi Francesi*, 2003 (Supplement), p. 137. Many students of law at Poitiers in the 1540s who had been trained in rhetoric (such as Jacques Yver, Guillaume Bouchet and Noël du Fail), later made a name for themselves as tellers of tales. Boaistuau belongs in the same category.

⁴⁶⁹ Carr, R. A., *Histoires tragiques*, Introduction, p. xxxviii. Bold font is mine. For more see Carr, R. A., *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires tragiques: a study of narrative form and tragic vision*, Part 1, Chapter I: The Problem of Translation: Liberty or Servitude.

⁴⁷⁰ Le Robert (direction A. Rey), *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française* (Paris, 2005), t. I, p. 358.

⁴⁷¹ It is not a coincidence that many sixteenth-century French anthologists such as Boaistuau had studied canon and civil law. After all, legal texts used by Renaissance scholars were themselves anthologies. This idea was brought to my attention during the study day 'Reading Anthologies in Sixteenth-Century France' held at the University of Liverpool in 2009, organised by Dr. Sara Barker and Dr. Pollie Bromilow.

probably had a certain purpose which derived from the writer's critical approach, and followed a unifying moral theme which could fit into the dramatic framework within the book. Boaistuau's decision was probably influenced by the adaptability of the stories, and their theatrical features which he wanted to attach to his anthology. As to why he decided to translate only six of Bandello's stories, the answer perhaps lies in his preoccupation with other works (in 1559 he prepared the revised edition of *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* and also wrote the first drafts of his *Histoires prodigieuses*), or the fact that he entrusted the continuation of the project to Belleforest.

Therefore, can Boaistuau be credited with the import of the *histoire tragique* genre to France from his translation and completion of the *Histoires tragiques*? Gabriel Pérouse has argued that Claude de Taillemont 'a découvert et pratiqué le genre de l'histoire tragique' in his *Discours des champs faez*, published in 1553, six years earlier than Boaistuau's version.⁴⁷² Although there is some truth in this view, De Taillemont did not employ *histoire tragique* in the same way as Boaistuau. The features of the genre were apparent in France in an unclear form well before the sixteenth century. They can be seen in late medieval romances, theatre works, and anthologies such as *Les Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, as early as the mid fifteenth century.⁴⁷³ However, it was only after *Histoires tragiques* was published that this sub-genre of narrative fiction took shape and gained popularity.⁴⁷⁴ The Breton constructed

⁴⁷² Pérouse, G.-A., *Nouvelles françaises du XVIe siècle: Images de la vie du temps* (Geneva, 1977), p. 135.

⁴⁷³ For more on *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* see Dubuis, R., *o.c.* According to Natalie Zemon Davis, tragical elements can also be found in judicial archives and letters of remission. See her *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*, *o.c.*

⁴⁷⁴ During the second half of the sixteenth century, many representative examples of the *histoire tragique* genre saw the light, such as Jacques Yver's *Printemps* (1572), Etienne Tabourot's *Bigarrures* (1583), Verité Habanc's *Les Nouvelles histoires tant tragiques que comiques* (1585), and Béninge Poissenot's *Nouvelles histoires tragiques* (1586). On the development and evolution of the genre,

a model which combined, for the first time, violent scenes and moralising messages in such a way that certain stories can be seen as a psychological study of the main characters. This feature, of great importance not only for the plot and context, but for its ability to convey a sense of tragedy, was absent from anthologies of ‘tragic stories’ – for example, that of De Taillemont – published before *Histoires tragiques*. Indeed, Michel Simonin named Boaistuau as the originator of the *histoire tragique* in France for this reason, an opinion further confirmed by the choice and context of the term ‘histoire’ in the book.⁴⁷⁵

Boaistuau was the first to link the words ‘histoire’ and ‘tragique’ in the title of a work. He did not borrow Bandello’s original title *Novelle* and did not give his translation a title such as ‘*Nouvelles tragiques*’. In the Preface he wrote:

Au reste i’ay intitulé ce Liure **de tiltre Tragique**, encores que (peut estre) il se puisse trouuer quelque histoire, laquelle ne respondra en tout, à ce qui est requis en **la Tragedie**: neantmoins, ainsi que i’ay esté libre en tout le suiet, ainsi ay-ie voulu donner l’inscription au Liure telle, qu’il m’a pleu.⁴⁷⁶

The use of ‘histoire’ emphasizes the fact that, for him, this term conveyed a different meaning of the word ‘nouvelle’, even though the two words were quite similar. The writing of historical works was fashionable at the time, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the Italian *nouvelle* had been imported into the historical genre.⁴⁷⁷ The notion of history and historical writing was vague and, as will be shown in the following chapter, applied to a variety of literary forms – one of which considered

which maintained its appeal in France well into the seventeenth century, the best studies to begin with are Pérouse, G.-A., *o.c.*; Sozzi, L., *La Nouvelle française à la Renaissance, vol. 2: L’Histoire tragique dans la deuxième moitié du seizième siècle* (Torino, 1977).

⁴⁷⁵ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Le Théâtre du monde* (Geneva, 1981), p. 10.

⁴⁷⁶ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, Advertissement au Lecteur. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁷⁷ See Ferrari, S., ‘Histoire tragique et grande histoire: Rencontre de deux genres’, *Dalhousie French Studies*, vol. 65 (2003), pp. 18-35; Postert, K., *Tragédie historique ou Histoire en Tragédie? Les sujets d’histoire moderne dans la tragédie française (1550-1715)* (Tübingen, 2010).

‘histoire’ to be an account or narrative which served as example and had didactic purposes. Jacques Amyot, for instance, noted that ‘l’Histoire est une narration ordonnee des choses notables, dictes, faites, ou advenues par le passé, pour conserver la souvenance à perpetuité, et en servir d’**instruction** à la postérité’.⁴⁷⁸ This idea served as a mirror of the Human Condition, a moral lesson which could teach Man how to improve himself.⁴⁷⁹ The use of the adjective ‘tragic’ added a dramatic context aiming to portray the Sinful Human Condition and its consequences, in order to act as a warning to the readers. Thus, the combination of the terms ‘histoire’ and ‘tragique’ added a theatrical dimension to the work, similar to that experienced in ancient Greek and Roman tragedies which created the emotions of fear, pity and relief.⁴⁸⁰ This notion of tragedy echoed the humanist trends evident in French literature.

One such trend was the preoccupation with the study of history and its instructive role, which Boaistuau successfully accommodated in the short story. Like many humanists, he shared the belief that the past could be used to interpret the present and to avoid new mistakes, a theory popular among Renaissance thinkers at the time. This idea that history provided information about events as well as morally useful knowledge was evident in *Histoires tragiques*, in which an attempt was made to present all the stories through the lens of historical authenticity to make them appear as *exempla*. In three stories this authenticity was given by the names of notable historical figures – which in two cases were also the main characters. ‘Histoire premiere’ was set during the reign of Edward III, and Boaistuau also noted a

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in Simonin, M., ‘François de Belleforest, traducteur de Bandel dans la premier volume des *Histoires Tragiques*’, in *L’encre et la lumière*, p. 38. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁷⁹ Jouanna, A. et al., *Histoire et dictionnaire des guerres de religion* (Paris, 1998), p. 975. Similarly to *Amans fortunez*, the idea of virtue was also one of the main structural themes in *Histoires tragiques*.

⁴⁸⁰ See Stanford, W. B., *Greek Tragedy and the Emotions: An Introductory Study* (London, 1983), and Lesky, A., *Greek Tragedy* (London, 1978).

contemporary historian as proof;⁴⁸¹ ‘Histoire second’ took place when Mohamet II was in power;⁴⁸² similarly, ‘Histoire quatrieme’ occurred at the time of Marguerite of Austria, daughter of Maximilian I.⁴⁸³ For stories three, five and six, the writer supplied contemporary evidence to prove their authenticity. ‘Histoire troisieme’ was still remembered in the city of Verona, where the most famous monument was that of Romeo and Juliet.⁴⁸⁴ ‘Histoire cinqieme’ mentioned the Duke of Calabria who was present at the time of Violente’s execution, and a certain Spanish historian called Paludanus who recorded the story.⁴⁸⁵ Likewise, the source of ‘Histoire sixieme’ came from the Spanish writer Valentinus Barruchius who was alive at the time of the incident.⁴⁸⁶ By this process of authentication, Boaistuau followed the humanist tendency of citing sources and providing testimonies for a work, whilst at the same time giving his stories an exemplary character so that they became historical examples of moral transgression whose aim was to instruct.

Associated with this, another humanist trend evident in *Histoires tragiques* was the idea of the misery of human life and the fragility of existence, which took shape in the

⁴⁸¹ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, p. 6r: ‘Polidore Vergile faisant mention en ses histoires Latines des Roys d’Angleterre, escrit que Edouard second espousa Ysabelle fille de Philippes le Bel Roy de France, de laquelle il eut **Edouard troisieme**, qui est celuy duquel est fait mention en nostre histoire’. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁸² *Ibid*, p. 30v: ‘Celuy duquel ie veulx descrire l’histoire, est **Mahomet**, (non le faulx prophete) mais le bisaieul de Soliman Otoman, empereur des Turcs, qui regne de ce temps. C’est luy qui... print Constantinople, et ravit l’empire d’Orient des mains de Constantin, Empereur Chrestien, l’an de grace mil quatre cent cinquante et trois’. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 78v: ‘Au temps, que madame **Marguerite de Austriche**, fille de Maximilian l’Empereur, fut menee en Sauoie vers son mary, il y auoit un grand seigneur... duquel ie tiray le nom, tant pour la reuerence de ses plus proches parents qui viuent encor’ pour le iourd’huy’. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 38v: ‘l’Histoire tres veritable que ie veulx deduire cy apres en depend et en est **encores pour le iourd’huy la memoire si recente à Veronne**’. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 106r-v: ‘Ainsi fina sa vie l’infortunee Violente... Et fut executee en la presence du **Duc de Calabre filz du Roy Federic d’Aragon**, qui estoit en ce temps la Viceroy, et mourut depuis à Torcy en France: lequel incontinent apres feist enregistrer l’histoire, avec les autres choses memorables aduenues de son temps à Valence. [...] **Paludanus** Espaignol de nation, qui regnoit en ce temps, lequel a escrit l’histoire en Latin fort elegant acertene nommeement... ce que i’ay ensuiuy comme le plus probable’. Bold font is mine.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 107r: ‘**Valentinus Barruchius** natif de Tollette en Espagne a fait un gros Tome Latin escrit purement, et en bons termes, de nostre presente histoire, duquel i’ay voulu faire mention, par ce que ie l’ay ensuyvi plus volontiers que les auteurs Italiens qui l’ont semblablement escrite’. Bold font is mine.

formation of the dramatic feel of the text.⁴⁸⁷ To incorporate this philosophical notion, Boaistuau surpassed the boundaries of the nouvelle and adopted features of horror and cruelty, reminiscent of tragedy, a genre well received in France which affected the development of theatre and other literary forms.⁴⁸⁸ Living in the middle of the sixteenth century, amidst a climate of social, political and religious instability which challenged the ideals of the Renaissance, the writer was able to find many examples to support his tragic viewpoint. As a moralist, he used this concept to reveal aspects of Man's corruption and depravity. The protagonists served as examples: Edouard III, Mohamet II and Didaco represented lasciviousness and lust; adulterous desire was personified by the Duchess of Savoy. On the other hand, Aelips and Hyrenne were symbols of chastity and continence. Romeo and Juliet became tragic examples of the games of Fortune but retained their virtuous characters until the end. Developing his edifying message through these tales, Boaistuau transformed *Histoires tragiques* into a study of human emotions and morals, which was particularly evident in the first, third and sixth stories. As a portrayal of tragedy, his book presented the complexity of human psyche (*ψυχή*) and the power of passion (*πάθος*) which holds Man as a captive of his own weaknesses. According to Richard Carr, 'the writer tries to suggest not only a moral lesson, but the very complexity of Man himself'.⁴⁸⁹

However, Boaistuau was not only a moralist. He was also a storyteller, and as such he was concerned with the dramatic context which could keep alive the reader's interest.

⁴⁸⁷ Among Boaistuau's works *Le Théâtre du monde*, published in 1558, was the most representative example of this philosophical notion. This paragraph serves only as an introduction to this notion, which will be examined in more detail in a following section of this chapter.

⁴⁸⁸ Via humanist translations of ancient Greek and Roman plays, dramatists such as Sophocles and Seneca proved to be really popular in Renaissance France and influenced the writing of French tragedies. For more see Stone, D., *French Humanist Tragedy* (Manchester, 1974); Jondorf, G., *French Renaissance Tragedy: The Dramatic Word* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁴⁸⁹ Carr, R., *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques: A Study of Narrative Form and Tragic Vision*, p. 75.

Consequently, he used the same tragic idea to provide a dramatic ambience throughout his narration. Although not every story had a catastrophic ending (stories I and VI did not end in death), all employed tragic features to lesser or greater extent which were magnified by techniques such as constrasting propositions (antithesis) and the use of dialogue. The dramatic feel was heightened by the detailed description of horror scenes, which almost certainly strongly affected his readers. Amongst the most notable were the decapitation of Hyrenee by a Turk who cut off her head with one strike of his sword,⁴⁹⁰ the cruel punishment of the Seigneur of Piedmont's adulterous wife, who was put into a sealed room for life with the corpse of her lover,⁴⁹¹ and Violente's frenzy of hatred when she took revenge on Didaco by murdering him and mutilating his body.⁴⁹² The description of the latter scene in particular lasted for three pages and painted a gruesome picture which might almost have been inspired by a slasher movie.⁴⁹³ As Boaistuau later informed the reader, Violente was not decapitated only 'par ce que ce n'estoit à elle de punir la faute du cheualier, **mais pour la trop excessiue cruauté de laquelle elle auoit vsé enuers le corps mort**'.⁴⁹⁴

Such scenes not only depicted, in the most horrifying manner, consequences which

⁴⁹⁰ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, p. 37r: 'Ces propos finis print incontinent d'une main la Grecque par les cheueux, et de l'autre tira le cymeterre que il auoit au costé, et aiant les mains lacees, à la blonde trace de son chef d'un seul coup luy trancha la teste avec une espouventable treneur d'un chacun'.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 85v: 'Et deslors il feist murailier toutes les fenestres et la porte mesme, tellement qu'il estoit impossible d'en sortir: et faist seulement laisser un petit pertuis ouvert, par lequel on leur donnoit du pain et de l'eau... n'ayant autre compaignie que celle d'un corps mort'.

⁴⁹² *Ibid*, pp. 102v, 103r-v: 'et ne tarda gueres Violente, qu'elle ne se saisist de l'un de ces grands couteaux, et s'estant doucement esleuee, elle tastoit avecques la main le lieu le pluspropre pour luy faire un fourreau de la chair de son enemy. Et toute saisie d'ire, de rage, et de furie, enflamnee comme une Medee, luy darda la poincte de telle force contre la gorge, qu'elle la psa de part en part [...] apres auoir receu dix ou douze coups mortels l'un apres l'autre, sa poure ame [Didaco's] martyre [...] elle luy tira les yeux avec la poincte du couteau hors de la teste [...] Puis... elle s'attaqua à la langue, et l'ayant avec ses mains sanglantes tiree hors de sa bouche [...] elle feit avec le couteau une violente ouverture en l'estomach... et luy aiant donné plusieurs coups [...] il ny eut presque partie à laquelle elle ne donnast quelque atteincte. Et l'ayant ainsi dechiré par tout avec une infinité de coups'.

⁴⁹³ A slasher movie is defined by scenes of crude violence which always include bloodshed and killings, thus forming a distinct cinema genre. For more see Rockoff, A., *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986* (Jefferson, NC, 2002).

⁴⁹⁴ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, p. 106r. Bold font is mine.

might follow any transgression of moral and divine law, but also exemplified Boaistuau's sense of drama and his ability as a fiction writer able to build up tension and suspense in his stories.

Love, a favourite subject amongst many humanists at the time, was another recurring theme in *Histoires tragiques*.⁴⁹⁵ In this respect, Boaistuau must have been influenced by the ideas of Plato and Petrarch. However, he did not follow the Platonic tradition faithfully but borrowed from contemporary theories concerning the origin and manifestation of love in order to create a dual scheme which could examine its virtuous and wicked sides. On one hand, there was pure, honourable love, inseparable from chastity and God, a noble power which elevated the human soul. Such examples can be seen in Aelips's response to Edouard III's improper advances, or in the story of Romeo and Juliet, which personified the essence of virtuous love. On the other hand, love could also be a perverse passion, a *maladie* of the soul which torments and destroys.⁴⁹⁶ This was an immoral, violent love which not only transgressed law and ethical boundaries but also had tragic consequences. It was for this reason that the Duchesse of Savoy was consumed by blind passion for Lord Mandozze, why Mahomet II surrendered his logic to Hyrenee's beauty, and why Violente avenged Didaco in the cruelest manner. This double meaning of a chaste – corrupt love was an important tool in the hands of a moralist writer such as Boaistuau. By stressing 'les malheurs d'amour' throughout the narration, he also stressed the significance of virtue and promoted his edifying message. Concerned with the creation of a didactic work,

⁴⁹⁵ See for instance Braden, G., *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (New Haven, 1999).

⁴⁹⁶ This image of love as a sickness had already appeared at length in *Le Théâtre du monde* as another human misery. See Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), pp. 158-167.

‘Boaistuau tire d’un drame de l’amour contrarié et dérangeant une leçon qui conforte la société et le pouvoir’.⁴⁹⁷

Within this context, another theme identified in Boaistuau’s work was crime and punishment, a topic which has attracted considerable attention amongst scholars.⁴⁹⁸

Closely related to this was the subject of clandestine marriage which appeared twice in the book. The first occasion was in the tale of Romeo and Juliet, in which the writer sets a love scene in Juliet’s bedroom (as opposed to Bandello’s original love scene in a convent) for the consummation of their clandestine marriage, then, after the couple’s tragic end, informs the reader that Juliet’s lady-in-waiting has been banished for concealing it.⁴⁹⁹ The second instance occurs in the story of Didaco and Violente, in which the deceived Violente assassinates Didaco after he has betrayed their secret marriage and abandoned her, and she then has to pay with her life.⁵⁰⁰ As Thierry Pech has shown, the issue of clandestine marriage had been the cause of an ongoing debate between jurists, and the involvement of *literati* such as Boaistuau, revealed the close relationship between literature and law at the time.⁵⁰¹ Considering clandestine marriage as an illegal practice, the writer maintained the theme of crime and punishment and thus justified the tragic endings of his tales as a penance. The deaths of Romeo, Juliet and her lady-in-waiting, Didaco, and Violente had a common

⁴⁹⁷ Fiorato, A. C., ‘Les *Histoires Tragiques* de Boaistuau et Belleforest, ou la moralization d’un conteur de la Renaissance italienne en France’, p. 140.

⁴⁹⁸ Claire J. Cordell’s 2005 PhD dissertation ‘La transgression dans l’histoire tragique du XVI^e siècle’ is the most recent study in this respect. For more on relevant scholarship see Introduction.

⁴⁹⁹ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, p. 76v: ‘Et lors le seigneur Barthelemy de l’Escale, (qui commandoit de ce temps là à Veronne) apres avoir le tout communiqué aux magistrates, fut d’avis que la dame de chambre de Iuliette fust bannie, pour avoir celé au pere de Rhomeo ce mariage clandestine, lequel, s’il eust esté manifesté en sa saison, eust esté cause d’un tres grand bien’. It is interesting to note that Natalie Zemon Davis used this story to present a remission case in her *Fiction in the Archives*, pp. 70-72.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 92v: ‘Didaco respondit [...] ie vous prie tenir nostre mariage secret’. Also, p. 105r: ‘Et lors Violente... leur compta... comme (vaincu d’amour) il l’auoit espousee clandestinement à sa maison’.

⁵⁰¹ Pech, T., ‘Foy et secret: le mariage clandestin entre droit et littérature dans les *Histoires Tragiques* de Boaistuau a Camus’, *Dix-Septième Siècle*, vol. 48 (1996), pp. 891-909; also see his *Conter le crime: droit et littérature sous la Contre-Rèforme: les histoires tragiques (1559-1664)* (Paris, 2000).

purpose, to restore the social and moral order which had been violated. Boaistuau's heroes were condemned 'pour s'être complaisamment livrés à des amours nocives', and thus the writer's social and moral code was upheld.⁵⁰²

The world of *Histoires tragiques* was ruled by the ideals of virtue and justice. By establishing the moral responsibilities of the protagonists in the stories, Boaistuau established a social code which did not allow any ethical or legal transgressions to go unpunished. His preoccupation with the values and ethics of human life will become more evident in two other works in which he fully develops his moral philosophy.

3.2. Philosophy, *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*

The first part of this chapter focused on Boaistuau's *Histoires des amans fortunez* and *Histoires tragiques*, two anthologies of nouvelles which assimilated features of narrative fiction within a humanist framework. This second part will examine *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, two works of different character which nevertheless reflect the revival of classical philosophy at the time and the influence of contemporary attitudes to Man. *Le Théâtre* followed the genre of *miseria humanis* and focused on the various misfortunes and uncertainties of the human predicament. On the contrary, *Bref discours* was an example of the *dignitas hominis* genre and celebrated human excellence and dignity. Although belonging to different literary traditions, these works form together a study of the

⁵⁰² Pech, T., 'Foy et secret', p. 895.

human condition which makes them complementary to each other. Boaistuau borrowed from Neoplatonism, Neostoicism, and the Church Fathers, blending philosophy and theology with a humanist outlook which enabled him to communicate his moralising message more efficiently. In fact, he did so in such a way that the success of his titles exceeded all other examples in the sixteenth century.

3.2.1. *Le Théâtre du monde*

Le Théâtre du monde was by far Boaistuau's most successful work, and became an immediate success with five new editions in the first five years after its first publication in Paris in 1558.⁵⁰³ The total number of eighty-nine editions (including translations) not only reveals the acknowledgement this particular book received but also explains why it has attracted scholarly attention.⁵⁰⁴ Its widespread popularity becomes more impressive when considering the fact that 1558 was a period of intense writing for Boaistuau. Besides *Le Théâtre*, he had published the *Amans fortunez* earlier the same year, and had probably started on the translation of *Histoires tragiques* which appeared in print early in 1559.⁵⁰⁵ The success of *Le Théâtre* to a great degree derived from Boaistuau's idea of publishing a vernacular book which incorporated moralising philosophy and theology in an easy-to-read style, which holds the reader's interest and does not require great erudition in order to be appreciated. Although it had educational and learned characteristics, it was not a

⁵⁰³ All editions from 1558 to 1562 were published in Paris in some of the most prestigious print workshops, including those of Vincent Sertenas, Gilles Robinot and Robert le Mangnier. For the purposes of this section the 1580 Antwerp edition published by Christophe Plantin will be used.

⁵⁰⁴ The name of Michel Simonin stands out, as he has published a very readable critical edition and has also focused on different aspects of the work in the context of Renaissance literature. For more on the ways scholarship has examined *Le Théâtre du monde* see Introduction.

⁵⁰⁵ The *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, although a part of *Le Théâtre du monde*, was also published as a separate work in 1558.

scholarly work and thus appealed to a variety of readers who undoubtedly found its ideas extremely fascinating.⁵⁰⁶

The idea of the world as an imaginary theatre served as the structural layout of *Le Théâtre du monde*.⁵⁰⁷ Based on a metaphor originating from ancient Greek theatre which brings to mind Democritus's 'The world is a stage, life an entrance: you came, you saw, you went away' and Shakespeare's 'All the world's a stage', the idea was quite popular at the time. It had a wide meaning and was used in various literary forms, such as Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570) and Jean-Jacques Boissard's *Theatrum Vitae Humanae* (1596) to note but two examples.⁵⁰⁸ Boaistuau employed it to portray the world as a stage on which people were the actors and their lives, with their passions and misfortunes, were their roles: 'qu'est-ce autre chose que ce monde, sinon **un Theatre**, où les uns jouent l'estat des mechaniques, et de basse condition? Les autres representent les Roys, Ducz, Comtes, Marquis, Barons, et autres constituez en dignitez?'⁵⁰⁹ This idea was also used as a presentation tool. The word 'théâtre' derives from the ancient Greek *θέατρον*, meaning 'a seeing place'. By using it, Boaistuau transformed his treatise to the theatrical and his readers to spectators, inviting them to 'regarder', to *look at* his work. As seen before, an analogous convention was used in *Histoires tragiques* which borrowed features from the tragedy genre. Similarly, in the case of *Le Théâtre* the writer presented a theatre of

⁵⁰⁶ An example can be seen in Nathanaél Vodňanský's Czech translation of *Le Théâtre du monde* (Prague, G. Nigrini, 1605) which linked Boaistuau's pessimist context to the turbulent events of early seventeenth-century Moravia. See Introduction.

⁵⁰⁷ On this motif see Jacquot, J., 'Le théâtre du monde' de Shakespeare à Calderon', *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, vol. 31 (1957), pp. 341-372. Also useful is Van Delft, L., 'Theatrum Mundi Revisited' in Carlin, C. L., Wine, K. (eds), *Theatrum Mundi: Studies in Honor of Ronald W. Tobin* (Charlottesville, VA, 2003), pp. 35-44, where Boaistuau's work is also fleetingly mentioned.

⁵⁰⁸ Van den Broecke, M., Van der Krogt, P., Meurer, P. (eds), *Abraham Ortelius and the First Atlas* (Houten, 1998); On Boissard see Adams, A., *Webs of Allusion: French Protestant Emblem Books of the Sixteenth Century* (Geneva, 2003), pp. 156-185.

⁵⁰⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 4. Bold font is mine.

pain and suffering. As the title reveals, it was ‘un ample discours des misères humaines’.

The book’s main topic dealt with the adversities and misfortunes of human life.⁵¹⁰ This notion of human misery was fully developed in such a way that made *Le Théâtre* a philosophical-moralising treatise which analysed the fragility of human existence. This idea appeared in St. Augustine’s *City of God*, a work which Boaistuau aspired to translate and which had a great influence on his work in terms of content and ideas. It should be remembered that *Le Théâtre du monde* was probably written as a preparatory work for the translation of *City of God*, a grander project explicitly mentioned by Boaistuau which, however, was never published.⁵¹¹ Man’s detachment from God and his inability to build a virtuous society was reflected in an environment filled with every misfortune, from crop failures, floods and diseases to wars, monstrous births and demons. The world had become a place of pain and endless misery which Man had to endure, a sea of tears, as Johan Huizinga has aptly described in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.⁵¹² Writers such as St. Bernard and

⁵¹⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 4: ‘A raison dequoy (Monseigneur) je luy ay dressé ce Theatre, auquel il peust contempler et aduiser, sans estre tiré hors de soy, son infirmité et misere, afin que faisant anatomie et reueue de toutes les parties de sa vie, il foit esmeu à detester sa vilité’. In this respect, it might have influenced the compilation of *Histoires tragiques* which was published one year later and underlined Man’s misfortunes by its narration of tragic stories.

⁵¹¹ Augustine (ed. D. Knowles), *The City of God Against the Pagans* (London, 1972), Book XXII, Chapter 22, pp. 1065-1066: ‘As for that first origin of mankind, this present life of ours (if a state full of so much grievous misery can be called a life) is evidence that all the mortal descendants of the first man came under condemnation. Such is the clear evidence of that terrifying abyss of ignorance, as it may be called, which is the source of all error, in whose gloomy depths all the sons of Adam are engulfed, so that man cannot be rescued from it without toil, sorrow and fear. What else is the message of all the evils of humanity? [...] How many of those there are, and how oppressive, which are not directed to the punishment of the wickedness and lawlessness of evil man, but are part of our common condition of wretchedness! Who can discuss them all in a discourse? Who can grasp them all in his thought?’. On Boaistuau’s project of translating *The City of God* see pp. 86-88.

⁵¹² Huizinga, J., *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York, new ed., 1998). For more on this notion see Tuchman, B., *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York, 1978); Le Goff, J., *Medieval Civilization* (Oxford, 1990), Chapter 9.

Lothar explained these adversities as a divine and rightful punishment for Man's decadent condition. Boaistuau described the depravity of his age as:

Main quelle occasion auroyent les docteurs philosophes, Prophetes, et Apostres anciens de s'escarmoucher, s'ils aroyent rencontré un tel siecle que le nostre: qui est si corrompu, depravé, et confit en toutes especes des vices et abominations, qu'il semble proprement que soit le retraits et l'esgoust, où toutes les immunditez des autres siecles et aages se soyent venues espurer et vuyder.⁵¹³

The endless miseries inflicted on Man gave rise to a pessimistic outlook on life. The difficulties which most people had to endure on a daily basis in order to make their living, the spread of diseases and poverty, were some of the factors which gave birth to a feeling of uncertainty. This was aggravated by continuous warfare, since the first half of the sixteenth century was a time of many conflicts, amongst which were the Peasants' War (1524-1525), the battle of Mohacs (1526), the Schmalkaldic War (1546-1547), and the Anglo-French Wars (1542-1546 and 1549-1550). Such incidents were understood as proof of God's wrath: 'Nous avons esté tourmentez de la guerre, qui est un des avant-coureurs de l'ire de Dieu'.⁵¹⁴ Similarly, the advance of the Ottoman forces and the siege of Vienna in 1529 were perceived as signs that the end of the world (and Christianity) was near. Millenarian theories and prophecies were very popular. Boaistuau echoed this trend when he wrote: 'C'est l'heure, le moment et le point, où Sathan fait son effort de batailler contre Dieu, pour empescher le salut des hommes, et est plus animé **en ce dernier temps, d'autant qu'il cognoist la fin de son regne approcher**'.⁵¹⁵ Such views regulated the everyday behaviour of individuals

⁵¹³ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, Salutation au lecteur, p. 9.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 118.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 170. Bold font is mine. Many studies have been published on this subject. See for instance Barnes, R. B., *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, 1988); Niccoli, O., *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton, 1990); McGinn, B., *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1998); Cunningham, A.,

between the extremes of sin and salvation. Natural disasters and celestial signs were also seen under the same providential scheme as notions of divine intervention.⁵¹⁶ Such was the main intellectual context of *Le Théâtre du monde*, which continued the older literary tradition of the *miseria humanis* genre.

One of the earliest and most notable of the examples of this genre is Lothar of Segni's (later Innocent III) influential *De miseria humanae conditionis* (1195).⁵¹⁷ It reaffirmed Original Sin as being the source of all human misery through bodily corruption and the Seven Deadly Sins.⁵¹⁸ This same notion of Man's sinfulness was later expressed by the Florentine statesman Poggio Bracciolini in his similarly titled *De miseria conditionis humanae* (1455) which stressed the antagonism of Nature towards human life. Echoing the work of Church Fathers such as St. Augustine and Lactantius, the notion of the constant hardship of human affairs was projected onto an individual at a collective level as the fruitlessness of Man's endeavours and as the common fortune of Mankind respectively.⁵¹⁹ Gradually, the theme of *contemptus mundi* was integrated into moral philosophy owing to its handling of everyday life problems. The sixteenth-century examples of the *miseria humanis* genre accommodated their philosophical perspective within a Christian context deriving from the patristic literature which

Grell, O. P., *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁵¹⁶ For more on this notion see Walsham, A., *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

⁵¹⁷ For a critical edition see Lotario dei Segni (ed. R. E. Lewis), *De Miseria conditionis humanae* (Georgia, 1978). Lothar of Segni (c. 1161-1216) was Pope Innocent III from 1198 until his death, and is mostly known for his involvement in the Fourth Crusade and for calling the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 to reassert the papal authority.

⁵¹⁸ On the Seven Deadly Sins see Newhauser, R. (ed.), *In the Garden of Evil: the Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Toronto, 2005); *idem*, *The Seven Deadly Sins: From Communities to Individuals* (Leiden, 2007). The popularity of this theme is proved by its influence on art – see for example Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* (1485).

⁵¹⁹ Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) spent most of his career serving in the papal curia at Rome. He was secretary and advisor to Pope Martin V, and later was appointed Chancellor of Florence. His *On the misery of the human condition* expressed the feeling of uncertainty generated by Constantinople's fall two years earlier. For a first insight see Krayer, J. (ed.), *Cambridge Translations of Renaissance Philosophical Texts, Volume 1: Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 17-28.

allowed them to borrow and combine features. For instance, Erasmus's *De contemptu mundi* (1521) followed similar pattern to Lothar's *De miseria humanae conditionis* and Bernard of Clairvaux's *Meditatio de humana conditione*.⁵²⁰ Petrus Haedus's *De miseria humana* (1558) blended ideas and themes already discussed in earlier works but also retained a distinct philosophical character.⁵²¹ Similarly, *Le Théâtre du monde* had an anthological characteristic which drew together features such as apophthegmata and *rhapsodia historiarum* with older and contemporary treatises.

This raises once more the issue of compilation. It should now be evident that the combination and assimilation of different pieces was one of Boaistuau's favourite practices.⁵²² He often quoted passages from the works of others or borrowed material to support his arguments. This was probably why Michel Simonin refuted the idea of personal creation, although the Breton's anthologizing choices are a significant feature which must be examined in their own right.⁵²³ Boaistuau presented *Le Théâtre* as a collection of various authorities: 'De sorte que si tu luy veulx imposer le nom de **Rapsodie** ou **Recueil de diuerses auctoritez**, tu ne luy feras point d'iniure' – however, some of these 'auctoritez' were not clearly named.⁵²⁴ Amongst his sources were the names of classical writers, including Aristotle, Plato, Seneca, and Cicero. The Church fathers, St. Jerome, St. Bernard and St. John Chrysostom were also used, whilst excerpts from the Bible (in particular Prophet Isaiah, St. Matthew and the Psalms) were heavily employed. Medieval writers such as the French poet Eustache

⁵²⁰ On Erasmus's treatise see O'Malley, J. W. (ed.), *Selected works of Erasmus, vol. 66, Spiritualia: Enchiridion, De Contemptu Mundi, De Vidua Christiana* (Toronto, 1988).

⁵²¹ Petrus Haedus (1427-1504), also known as Pietro Cavretto, was an Italian priest remembered for his work *Anterotica* (1492).

⁵²² The issue of compilation has already been mentioned when examining *Amans fortunez* and *Histoires tragiques*, and will also be mentioned regarding the rest of the titles in the next chapters.

⁵²³ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Le Théâtre du monde (1558)* (Geneva, 1981), p. 14: 'l'exercice de la compilation paraît bien être pour lui l'une des formes d'un refus constant de la création personnelle, d'un doute – sinon d'une haine – du moi, caractérisés par sa timidité à l'endroit de l'inventio, marque de toute sa production'.

⁵²⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, Salutation au lecteur, p. 8. Bold font is mine.

Deschamps also appeared in the text although Boaistuau devoted most of his attention to contemporaries such as Polydore Virgil, Girolamo Cardano, Josse Clichtove, Nicole de Haupas and Guillaume Paradin. The use of such a diverse range of material demonstrates the representative character of *Le Théâtre*, which incorporated classical models by means of the philosophical outlook of a sixteenth-century work.

Amongst contemporary treatises, Erasmus's *De contemptu mundi* and Antonio De Guevara's *Relox de Príncipes* (1529) had a great influence on Boaistuau's book in terms of content and ideas.⁵²⁵ The first was a moralising tract warning against the dangers of material wealth while Guevara's work, designed after Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, narrated the life of Marcus Aurelius and embodied the humanist preoccupation with antiquity. There are numerous examples throughout Boaistuau's text which reveal the influence of these works. For example, when he describes the universal state of corruption and immorality, and when he contrasts the way in which infants are fed by nurses or step-mothers as compared to animals that always raise their own offspring themselves.⁵²⁶ A third contemporary work from which Boaistuau borrowed was the Florentine Giambattista Gelli's *Circe* (1549) which was translated into French in 1550.⁵²⁷ It had a similar scope and theme to *Le Théâtre* (it created a picture of human misery) and was written in the form of a dialogue, with a clear rhetorical character. Armand de Gaetano has demonstrated the similarities between the two works, and how Boaistuau's work partially imitated certain passages,

⁵²⁵ Antonio de Guevara (c. 1480-1545) was a Spanish writer at the court of Ferdinand II and Isabella. He was later appointed royal historiographer by Charles V, and then became Bishop of Guadix and Mondonedo. His works were quite popular in the sixteenth century and were translated into many languages. Beside the *Relox de Príncipes*, Boaistuau also used his *Aviso de privados y doctrina de cortesanos* (1539) which focused on the life at court – see *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 88.

⁵²⁶ Taken from Erasmus and De Guevara respectively – see Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 243, note 49, and p. 260, notes 148-149.

⁵²⁷ For more information on *Circe*, dedicated to Cosimo de Medici, see Gelli, G. (intro R. Adams), *Circe* (Ithaca, 1963).

expressions and examples found in *Circe*.⁵²⁸ However, the common feature of the three titles mentioned lies primarily on their humanist and philosophical context, which inspired the fusion of humanism and moralising philosophy in *Le Théâtre*.

Humanist trends were evident in many ways, especially in Boaistuau's revival and re-vamping of ancient Greek and Latin writers. As a true humanist citing his original sources he noted: 'je n'ay pardonné à autheur quelconque, sacré ou prophane, Grec, Latin, ou vulgaire, duquel ie n'aye tiré cuisse ou aile, pour plus entier ornement et decoration de mon oeuvre'.⁵²⁹ The recovery of classical learning (mainly from 1470 to 1530, according to Peter Burke) worked as a preparatory stage for the proliferation of French literature in the sixteenth century.⁵³⁰ Classical texts of all types made their appearance in print, with authorities such as Thucydides, Xenophon, Ovid and Virgil being amongst the first to be translated into French. Thus, Boaistuau and other writers of the time had access to a great deal of material which influenced them in terms of content and form, just as classical models were imitated by many contemporary works of the time. The names of well-known writers such as Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch featured in the pages of *Le Théâtre*, as well as the lesser known Athenaeus, Epimenides and Herophilus. Passages from Galen, Aelian, Plato's *On the Immortality of the Soul* and Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* also made their appearance. Although several of these sources were not consulted directly but through the works of others (for instance, an extract by Euripides was taken from Theodoret's *De la nature de l'homme*), the fact remains that Boaistuau was familiar with a wide range of classical texts which he used to suit his requirements.

⁵²⁸ See De Gaetano, A. L., 'Gelli's *Circe* and Boaistuau's *Theatrum Mundi*', *Forum Italicum*, vol. 7 (1973), pp. 441-454. *Circe*, like *Le Théâtre*, included a treatise on the excellence and dignity of Man.

⁵²⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 8.

⁵³⁰ Burke, P., 'Humanists, Reformers, and French Culture', in Cruickshank, J., *French Literature and its Background, 1: The Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 32-46.

Another feature indicative of *Le Théâtre*'s humanist background was its educational role. This was manifested by its use in schools (for example, the book appeared in the library of a Jesuit school in Toulouse in late sixteenth century) and by the inclusion of themes common in contemporary pedagogical literature.⁵³¹ The edification of children was an important topic discussed by first-rate *literati* such as Erasmus, who wrote treatises on the instruction and nourishment of youth.⁵³² Boaistuau wrote about the harm caused by ignorant and vicious tutors, and chastised the improper behaviour of parents, who served as poor examples for their children:

ils les corrompent et depravent eux mesmes par leur mauuais exemple? car le premier precepte et formulaire qu'ilz leur donnent de bien vivre, c'est de blasphemer, crier, execrer, gourmander, yurongner, dissiper la substance de leurs petits innocens, paillarder, adulterer.⁵³³

Le Théâtre's instructive character was explicitly stated in many multi-lingual editions. The title-page of the 1585 French-Latin edition reads: 'Le tout fait premierement en françois par Pierre Boysteau, et maintenant translaté en Latin, et mis le latin et françois correspondent l'un à l'autre, tant **pour la ieunesse**, que pour ceux qui desirent apprendre nostre langue'.⁵³⁴ In the 1588 French-German edition the work was described as a 'nouuellement traduit en Aleman, tres utile pour apprendre tant Aleman que François'.⁵³⁵ Similarly, the 1619 quatro-lingual edition by Jean de Tournes which aligned the text in columns of French, German, Latin and Italian, shared the same

⁵³¹ Cited in Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 24.

⁵³² See Erasmus's *De pueris instituendis*, and his colloquy *Puerpera* (New mother). On the education and attitudes toward children in early modern France see Hunt, D., *Parents and Children in History: the Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France* (New York, 1972), and Aries, F., *Centuries of Childhood* (New York, 1962).

⁵³³ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 65.

⁵³⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Paris, C. Micard, 1585), Title-page. Bold font is mine.

⁵³⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Wirtzeburgi, H. Aquensis, 1588), Title-page.

language-learning intention.⁵³⁶ Such translations retained their entertaining character at the same time serving as instruction tools for those who could read. The edification of the French youth in Latin and the instruction of foreign readers in French was also the aim of a bilingual edition translated by Bénigne Poissenot.⁵³⁷ This was evident from the way in which the book was used in the writing of language manuals. As David Thomas has shown, the English writer John Eliot used Boaistuau's text in a handbook for didactic purposes.⁵³⁸

The attack on the corruption of the Church, and in particular the ecclesiastical offices, was another idea proving the influence of humanism on *Le Théâtre*. Echoing the attitudes found in Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* (1494) and François Rabelais's *Pantagruel* (1532), Boaistuau vividly described the depravity of the Popes, whom he referred to as 'wolves'. Instead of devoting their lives to the spiritual guidance of their flock as 'gardiens, tuteurs, protecteurs, et chefs de toutes Eglises Chrestiennes', they sought riches and glory and indulged in lives of vice and immorality.⁵³⁹ Avarice was equally widespread in other ecclesiastical circles. Priests spent Church money, not to help the poor, but rather for their own enjoyment. Compared to the so-called 'heathen' clerics from Egypt, Persia, India, and Druids, who were learned in spite of having no knowledge of the Bible, sixteenth-century priests were totally ignorant.⁵⁴⁰

They were unable to read Mass or comment on Christian doctrines:

⁵³⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Cologne, I. de Tournes, 1619).

⁵³⁷ Simonin, M., 'Traduction et pédagogie des langues au XVI siècle: sur un ouvrage de Pierre Boaistuau mis en latin par Bénigne Poissenot', *Studi Francesi*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1977), pp. 177-179.

⁵³⁸ Thomas, D. H., 'Vives, Boaistuau and John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593): some borrowings of a "witty grammarian"', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 70 (2008), pp. 545-565.

⁵³⁹ Boaistuau noted that the Pope's great responsibilities made the Pontificate a very difficult office. He quoted Pope Adrian IV who compared the Pope's cloth to a cloak full of sharp pointed needles and heavy to bear – see *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 96: 'le precieux manteau duquel ilz sont couverts, estoit tout cousu de trespoignans aiguillons, et mesmes si pensant à porter'.

⁵⁴⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 99: 'Voyla l'estat, voyla la vie, voyla les moeurs et occupations des prestres, qui estoyent sans Dieu, sans loy, sans foy'. The idea that God through faith –

[Ils] sont confitz en telle **ignorance**, qu'à peine peuvent ils lire leur Messe, et la murmurent tout bas entre les dens, de peur que leurs fautes soyent descouvertes! [...] Tant il y a aujourd'huy de pasteurs par le monde qui sçavent mieux courtoisanner, ou s'employer à quelque autre vanité, qu'ils ne sont à dissoudre les doubtes de la **predestination**, du **liberal arbitre** et autres qui se trouvent en l'escriture sainte.⁵⁴¹

Such anti-clerical rhetoric, evident since the medieval period, was not surprising to the mid sixteenth-century reader. With the ongoing Reformation across Europe came numerous tracts castigating the ineptitude and dissolute behaviour of the Church.⁵⁴² In addition, the circulation of humanist works such as Erasmus's *In praise of Folly* and *Julius Exclusus* attacked the lifestyle and dereliction of duty of the members of clergy and thus further acquainted the people with the grievances against the Church. Was Boaistuau a genuine supporter of this idea, or was his choice to write about such a popular topic another way of attracting readers? The accommodation of both objectives seems possible, although the latter better suits the nature of his book.

Apart from relying on a humanist context, Boaistuau constructed *Le Théâtre du monde* on a philosophical framework to convey his moralising message more efficiently. In order to do so, he borrowed from Neoplatonism which, in France, was influenced by Italian scholars such as Marsilio Ficino, Nicolas of Cusa and Giovanni

the principal difference between Christians and heathen – illuminated the human spirit and made it capable of reaching a high intellectual level was a concept which had survived into the early modern period. Also known as 'divine illumination', this doctrine is usually associated with Saint Augustine and Bonaventure. For more see Augustine (tr. R. Pine-Coffin), *Confessions* (London, 1961) and Bonaventure (ed. G. Marcil), *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ* (St. Bonaventure, NY, 1992).

⁵⁴¹ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 100. Bold font is mine. It should be noted that the writer reminded his readers that he was attacking vices rather than people. This is why he separated virtuous from wicked priests: 'Je sçay un grand nombre de bons pasteurs et doctes en plusieurs provinces Chrestiennes, qui sont vigilans et curieux de leur troupeau'.

⁵⁴² See for instance Scribner, R. W., *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London, 1987), pp. 243-256; Dykema, P. A., Oberman, H. A. (eds), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 1993).

Pico della Mirandola.⁵⁴³ Its rather syncretic character brings to mind the conciliatory spirit of Thomas Aquinas and Ramon Lull who attempted to accommodate ‘faith and reason’.⁵⁴⁴ Around the 1520s, Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples expressed the need to claim Plato for Christianity, which became more prominent between the 1540s and the Wars of Religion and was often spread by means of dialogues, as in Louis Le Caron’s *Les Dialogues* (1556). The Gospel was deemed as a supplement to Renaissance learning, and classical philosophy as compatible to Christian doctrines. Episodes such as the circle of Meaux and translations made by the entourage of Marguerite of Navarre have associated Neoplatonism to evangelical humanism.⁵⁴⁵ However, Neoplatonic themes were used in a much wider framework in contemporary literature by many writers who concentrated particularly on aspects relating to ethical issues.⁵⁴⁶ Boaistuau referred to Plato’s ideas several times, as, for example, when he noted the miseries and wickedness of kings and princes whose immoral behaviour conveyed the wrong moral example: ‘Car ils ne pechent pas seulement (**ainsi qu’escrit Plato**) par la faulte qu’ils commettent: mais par le mauvais exemple qu’ilz donnent’.⁵⁴⁷ Elsewhere, Boaistuau alluded to Plato when he wrote of love as a malady of the spirit with real symptoms: ‘Paule Aeginata... ordonne à tous ceux qui sont persecutez de ceste fureur de mal [amour], semblables pharmaques, et reigle de viure, qu’il faict aux fols, demoniacles et forcenez; ce qu’Empiricles (suyuant le conseil de Platon)

⁵⁴³ For a first look of the Italian influence on the study of philosophy in sixteenth-century France see Garin, E., *History of Italian Philosophy*, volume I (Amsterdam, 2008), esp. Part Three: The Renaissance. Also see Margolin, J.-C. (ed.), *XVIIe colloque international de Tours: Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1976).

⁵⁴⁴ For more details see Hillgarth, J. N., *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1972); Bonner, A. (ed.), *Doctor Illuminatus. A Ramon Lull Reader* (Princeton, 1993).

⁵⁴⁵ Heller, H., ‘Marguerite of Navarre and the Reformers of Meaux’, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 33 (1971), pp. 271-310.

⁵⁴⁶ See Levi, A. H. T., ‘The Neoplatonist calculus: The exploitation of Neoplatonist themes in French Renaissance literature’, in his *Humanism in France at the end of the Middle Ages and in the early Renaissance* (Manchester, 1970), pp. 229-248.

⁵⁴⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 93.

ordonnoit aussi'.⁵⁴⁸ The Breton did not use Neoplatonist themes merely to support his arguments but harmonically integrated them into his Christian perspective.

Another element of Renaissance philosophy relied on by *Le Théâtre du monde* was Neostoicism. Although usually recognised for its influence on early modern politics, Neostoicism also influenced humanist literature.⁵⁴⁹ Works such as Seneca's *De Clementia* and Petrarch's *De Remediis* were circulated in sixteenth-century France, and along with Amyot's translations of Plutarch, made Stoic values available to contemporary writers. Similar to Plato's proximity to Christian doctrines, Stoics such as Epictetus were generally deemed to have had compatibility with Christianity since the patristic period. Stoic principles had similarities to Christian values such as righteousness, continence and constancy, and were infused in humanist literature: 'What attracted mid-century humanists was predominantly the Stoic morality, with its stress on virtue based on reason and consisting of four main elements: courage, justice, wisdom, and sobriety'.⁵⁵⁰ Boaistuau in *Le Théâtre* clearly displayed this, using, amongst other ideas, the notion of *contemptus mundi* and Marcus Aurelius's views on the vanity of human life:

escoutons vn peu les querimonies de ce grand Empereur Romain **Marc Aurelle**... lequel considerant profondement la fragilité et misere de laquelle nostre pauvre vie est continuellement assiegée, disoit: La bataille de ce monde est si perilleuse, l'issue si terrible et espouventable...⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 159.

⁵⁴⁹ See Oestreich, G., *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge, 1982). The development of Neostoicism in France was affected by the Wars of Religion and the impact they had on the population. Although its influence can be seen in Michel de l'Hôpital and Montaigne, its full development was manifested in Pierre Charron (1541-1603) and Guillaume Du Vair (1556-1621). However, the key exponent of the movement was Justus Lipsius (1547-1606). See Morford, M. P. O., *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, 1991).

⁵⁵⁰ McFarlane, I. D., *A Literary History of France: Renaissance France*, p. 205.

⁵⁵¹ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 18. Bold font is mine. See also p. 63.

Boaistuau was attracted by Stoic morality which preserved human dignity in times of difficulty or despair, and by the indifference to material pleasures. Most importantly however, he was drawn by its supreme good - Virtue. If Man could free himself from his mortal passions, he would be able to focus on his spiritual perfection and attain happiness.⁵⁵² This notion of virtue linked the Stoic philosophy to the aspirations of a Christian way of being, a *virtuous* life. In this way, Boaistuau managed to combine the two ethical systems and used them to make a unified philosophical framework which would support his moralising message.

Le Théâtre du monde was a work which described a wide range of human misery. Birth was the beginning of the 'piteuse tragedie de la vie de l'homme'. His first song was 'larmes, pleurs et gemissemens, qui sont comme sagiers et augures de ses calamitez futures'. This is how Boaistuau described the birth of Man:

contemplons un peu quel il est, estant sur terre, qu'est-ce autre chose qu'**un simulachre d'un pauvre ver qui sort de terre?** de quel manteau est il couvert, faisandra magnifique entrée au palais de ce monde, sinon de sang, duquel il est tout baigné et couvert? [...] O griefue necessité! ò cruelle et miserable condition! que avant que ceste creature ait peché, **elle est liée et serue de peché.**⁵⁵³

Boaistuau drew material from classical writers such as Aristotle and Pliny, making a lengthy comparison between Man and animals in order to show his unprotected and vulnerable state. He outlined the miseries of each of Man's ages, heavily echoing Lothar and Poggio. Born in sin, the occurrence of malformed births was proof of Man's miserable condition: 'aucuns enfans naissent si prodigieux, et difformes, qu'ils

⁵⁵² See Kraye, J., 'Moral philosophy' in Schmitt, C. B., Skinner, Q., Kessler, E. (eds), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), esp. pp. 360-374.

⁵⁵³ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 53.

ne semblent pas hommes, mais monsters, ou abominations'.⁵⁵⁴ During his lifetime he had to suffer war, disease, famine and natural disasters of all kinds, and had to fight the vices which constantly besieged his weak and imperfect nature, such as carnal lust.⁵⁵⁵ Even marriage was presented as part of his sufferings. What followed was the misery of old age, which combined both physical pain and maladies of the spirit, and led to the predestined end. After death, Man became a 'monstrous' spectacle to behold:

Mais regardons l'homme caché en son sepulchre: qui veit oncques un monstre plus hideux? qu'y a il plus horrible et vil que la creature morte? Voyla la sainteté, l'excellence, maiesté et dignité couverte d'un morceau de terre... Voicy l'acte le plus redouté et perilleux de toute la tragedie humaine.⁵⁵⁶

However, *Le Théâtre* was not only a description of human miseries but also an anatomy of the vile deeds of Man and his corrupt inner self. Merchants, courtiers, clerics, judges and other social groups were presented as examples of depravity. Kings and princes were no exceptions since they indulged in pleasure and neglected their duties. Idleness and injustice were the prevalent practices at the time, while envy, covetousness, ambition and other 'maladies de l'esprit' disguised themselves as virtues. This condition of immorality and decadence centred around Man's malice: 'car tous ces maulx, et ceste mer de misere, desquelles l'homme est chargé, ne vient

⁵⁵⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 52. Boaistuau used contemporary examples of malformed births, such as a boy with two heads and four legs, and two girls joined together by the shoulders. The idea of monster as a divine sign or punishment will be more evident in his *Histoires prodigieuses*, and will be examined in more detail at Chapter Five.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 62-63: 'le sang luy commence à bouillir, la chair l'appelle et semond à faire son plaisir, la sensualité le meine, le monde maling l'espie, le diable le tente, la jeunesse le conuie... car au corps où jeunesse, liberté, richesses et delices abondent'. Boaistuau regarded the human body as a place where malice and sin resided and therefore had to be kept under control; as carnal lust was seen as one of Man's weaknesses, the only way to combat it was the practice of continence. Sexuality caused heated debate among Roman Catholic, Protestant and Reformed communities across Europe. For a first insight to this vast topic see Roper, L., *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion, 1500-1700* (London, 1994); Wiesner-Hanks, M., *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London, 1999).

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 171-172. For a good introduction to attitudes towards death see Ariès, P., *L'homme devant la morte* (Paris, 1977).

point de la haine de Dieu, mais de **la malice et corruption de l'homme lequel est le propre auteur de toutes les afflictions et calamitez**'.⁵⁵⁷ Associated with this idea, and central to Boaistuau's 'estrange philosophie de la misere de l'homme', was the notion of original sin as the root of all evil. As largely defined by Anselm of Canterbury and St. Thomas Aquinas, Man's fall from grace was the result of his pride and persistent desire to have more. The ensuing sufferings were a malediction which all generations had to endure: 'car sans **l'ambition et desir d'estre grand** de ce premier homme, nous fussions demeurez comme les anges, et telz que nous serons en la resurrection, et courronez d'honneur et de gloire'.⁵⁵⁸

The examination of this notion might have been superficial but Boaistuau was neither philosopher nor theologian. As a writer who knew how to make his book appealing, he wrote on a widely employed theme in early modern literary culture which expressed the anxiety and fear of life and the afterlife:

Il n'est pas exagéré d'affirmer que le débat sur le péché originel avec ses divers sous-produits – problèmes de la grâce, du serf ou du libre arbitre, de la prédestination devint alors une des préoccupations principales de la civilisation occidentale et qu'il concerna tout le monde, des théologiens aux plus modestes paysans.⁵⁵⁹

Boaistuau created a philosophical-theological context which allowed him to refer to such concepts without having to go into much detail. His aim was not to analyse them but to use them as the basis for a call to reform. The uncertainty of human affairs mirrored Man's estrangement from God, and the universal corruption served as reminder of this estrangement:

⁵⁵⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 148. Bold font is mine.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 149. Bold font is mine.

⁵⁵⁹ Delumeau, J., *Le péché et la peur: la culpabilisation en Occident, XIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1983), p. 277. Also see Wajeman, L., *La parole d'Adam, le corps d'Eve: le péché originel au XVIe siècle* (Geneva, 2007).

celuy qui estoit hier riche, est au iourd'huy pauvre: celui qui estoit hier sain, aujourd'huy je l'ay veu malade: celui qui rioit hier, aujourd'huy je l'ay veu plorer: celui qui estoit hier en prosperité, aujourd'huy je l'ay veu mal-fortuné: celui qui estoit hier vif, je le voy maintenant en la sepulture.⁵⁶⁰

What better example than the diversity of religious denominations? Heresies were so widespread at the time that 'la lumiere et splendeur de son [God's] Evangile... ne luist qu'en un petit coing et angle de l'Europe'.⁵⁶¹ Misfortunes, natural disasters such as floods, fires, thunders and earthquakes, and contagions were 'tesmoings et ministres de la vengeance, et de l'ire de Dieu' and had the same purpose: 'que nous qui sommes Chrestiens, apprenons par les grandes miseres et afflictions que Dieu nous envoie, à recognoistre la grande fragilité et misere de nostre condition humaine'.⁵⁶² This motif of a Nature hostile to Man corresponded to Boaistuau's scheme of a divinely ordained cosmos, and was a recurrent theme in his *Histoires prodigieuses*. Instead of defying the order of Nature, Man should follow the example of the animal kingdom which was ruled by 'une harmonie de philosophie tant morale que naturelle' to improve his life.⁵⁶³ Earth seemingly appeared to be under Man's dominion but in reality was controlled by an omnipotent God who punished all transgressions.

⁵⁶⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 69.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 116. And later: 'car ce que l'un dict estre blanc, l'autre le dict noir: ce que l'un appelle jour, l'autre l'appelle nuit... Ce qui est Iesu Christ, verité, et Paradis à l'un, est Antechrist, messonge et enfer à l'autre'. This passage alluded to the multiple Scripture interpretations and can be read as an attack on Protestants and the Reformed ideas which circulated in many areas of France. One year after *Le Théâtre*'s first publication in 1558, the French Confession of Faith was secretly drafted in Paris and then presented to Francis II in 1560. For more see Cochrane, A. (ed.), *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, new ed. 2003), p. 137ff.

⁵⁶² *Ibid*, p. 120. Among the examples of contagions were the plague that hit the French camp at Naples in 1528, the plague which afflicted the English at Bullen, a contagion in Germany in 1531, another contagion in England, and an outbreak of the plague in Aix en Provence in 1546. For the latter Boaistuau borrowed heavily from Nostradamus's *Excellent & moult utile Opusculé à tous nécessaire* (1556) – see Simonin, M., 'Michel de Nostredame, Pierre Boaistuau, Chavigny et la peste aixoise de 1546', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1983), pp. 127-130. He also used passages from Guillaume Paradin's *Histoire de notre temps* (1550).

⁵⁶³ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 45.

Le Théâtre du monde was a call to ‘reformer et conduire l’estat de... vie’.⁵⁶⁴ As God’s creation, Man cannot live in isolation from Him. He needs to escape the limitations of his sinful condition and concentrate on the amendment of his spiritual state rather than pursuing temporal pleasures. A moral life would help him endure the miseries of this lifetime.⁵⁶⁵ Instead, a life of immorality would condemn him to the fate of the cursed - Hell. In Boaistuau’s world, no one can escape God’s infallible judgment.⁵⁶⁶ However, this was not the last word of his moral philosophy. The *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme* which followed, showed his belief in human reasoning and his trust in divine grace. Seen next to *Le Théâtre*, the two works form a dual scheme of misery versus dignity, ultimately leading to Man’s salvation.

3.2.2. *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme*

The *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme* was published in 1558, the same year as *Le Théâtre du monde*.⁵⁶⁷ It was released to complement *Le Théâtre* and also as a separate work, which makes plausible the clever marketing strategy of the publisher Vincent Sertenas who took advantage of the two titles’ common privilege.⁵⁶⁸ Contrarily to *Le Théâtre*, which focused on human misery, *Bref discours*

⁵⁶⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 10.

⁵⁶⁵ This brings to mind the notion of *imitatio Christi*, that man has to follow the example of Christ, focus on inner life and withdraw from the world. For more see Von Habsburg, M., ‘The devotional life: Catholic and Protestant translations of Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitatio Christi*, c. 1420-1620’ (PhD dissert., University of St. Andrews, 2002).

⁵⁶⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 178: ‘Tenons nous doncques sur noz gardes (Chestiens) et mettons peine de n’estre point comprins soubz l’arrest et sentence de la plus grande misere de toutes les miseris du monde, et au regard de laquelle toutes les calamitez humaines par nous descrites, ne seront que voluptez et delices... Allez maudits au feu d’enfer... où ilz seront tourmentez par tous les siecles des siecles’. See relatedly Camporesi, P., *Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1990).

⁵⁶⁷ For the work’s critical edition see Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme (1558)* (Geneva, 1982). *Bref discours* has not attracted the same degree of attention from scholars as *Le Théâtre* – for more detail see Introduction.

⁵⁶⁸ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Bref discours de l’excellence et dignité de l’homme*, p. 139. For the publishing history of this title see Chapter Two.

was a work set in a different context which belonged to the distinct literary tradition of the *dignitas hominis*. This included works praising the qualities of the human mind and body, and formed a distinct genre.⁵⁶⁹ For its part, *Bref discours* can be read as an answer to *Le Théâtre*'s pessimistic style – as Boaistuau wrote, 'Il nous reste maintenant en peu de parolles à respondre aux allegations, que nous avons faictes en noz livres des miseres humaines'.⁵⁷⁰ Whatever the similarities between these two works in terms of sources, method of compilation and themes examined, their common syncretic nature and moralising message makes them indispensable to each other. The concept of *Bref discours* is not complete unless *Le Théâtre* is taken into consideration and vice versa, a notion which reflects the writer's intention to adopt a dual scheme in order to examine the Renaissance view of the philosophy of Man. Therefore, *Bref discours* was not only a treatise celebrating Man and his dignity but essentially a counterpart to Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre* and his wider perspective of human life and condition which shaped his moralising philosophy.

Boaistuau's concept of accommodating two different literary traditions might at first seem contradictory, but as Charles Trinkaus has shown, it was not uncommon to write on the themes of the misery and dignity of Man.⁵⁷¹ This brings to mind Plato and the dual schemes of the ancient Greek philosophy of Matter and Idea, of Being and Becoming, of Mortal and Immortal. Following a similar pattern, the notion of the

⁵⁶⁹ On the genre of *dignitas hominis* see Sozzi, L., 'La dignitas hominis' dans la littérature française de la Renaissance', in Levi, A. H. T. (ed.), *Humanism in France at the end of the Middle Ages and in the early Renaissance* (Manchester, 1970), pp. 176-198; Trinkaus, C., *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols (Chicago, 1970); Sozzi, L., 'La dignitas hominis' chez les auteurs lyonnais du XVI^e siècle', in *Actes du colloque sur l'humanisme lyonnais au XVI^e siècle* (Grenoble, 1974), pp. 295-338; Morrison, I. R., 'The Dignity of Man and the followers of Epicurus. The view of the Huguenot François de La Noue', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 37 (1975), pp. 421-429.

⁵⁷⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 217. See also p. 183. This edition, used earlier, contains the text of *Bref discours* and will be used also in this section.

⁵⁷¹ Trinkaus, C., *In Our Image and Likeness*, vol. I, esp. p. 173ff.

misery and dignity of Man proved to be a favourite topic amongst Christian thinkers. For instance, St. Augustine presented the depravity of Man's sinful nature in detail, at the same time stressing his supremacy over all species and the significance of his intellect and spirituality.⁵⁷² Such ideas were later infused by sixteenth-century writers such as Boaisuau. The earthly nature of Man, represented by a sinful and weak body, was juxtaposed to the infinite capabilities of human reason and the spiritual dignity of his psyche. Mind and soul combined to create a portrait of Man's true excellence. Therefore, the motifs of man's misery and dignity were harmoniously incorporated into Boaisuau's treatise to support his moralising agenda. The following section will show how, in order to do this, the writer assembled different features of philosophy and theology into a humanist framework. Although based on previous models and reusing most of their material, he wove together a secular and a spiritual view of Man's excellence which made his book the most representative example of the genre in sixteenth-century France: 'mais l'exemple le plus typique est représenté, à notre avis, par un texte plus connu, le traité de Boaystuaue faisant suite à son 'Théâtre du Monde', et ayant pour titre De l'Excellence et dignité de l'homme' de 1558'.⁵⁷³

An epitome of the idea of Man's excellence as a being distinguished by reason which was common in ancient thought, the *dignitas hominis* took its definite form around the mid fifteenth century: 'works specifically dedicated to the condition of Man began to be written by humanist authors in the 1440s'.⁵⁷⁴ Probably the earliest example was Petrarch's *De Remediis Utrisque Fortunae* (c. 1350) which was written in response to

⁵⁷² See for instance Sullivan, J. E., *The Image of God. The Doctrine of St. Augustine and its Influence* (Dubuque, IN, 1963); Teske, R. J., *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of St. Augustine* (Washington, DC, 2008).

⁵⁷³ Sozzi, L., 'La dignitas hominis' dans la littérature française de la Renaissance', p. 178.

⁵⁷⁴ Trinkaus, C., *In Our Image and Likeness*, p. 173. However, the first usage of linking human and dignity was by Cicero, who referred to *dignitas hominis* in his *De Officiis*.

Innocent III's *De miseria humanae conditionis*. It contained some of the central arguments for the notion of Man's dignity which were adopted by later treatises, including Man's rule over other creatures, the beauty of human body, the inventiveness of the human mind, Man as the image of God and dignity as a key to salvation.⁵⁷⁵ The same ideas were found in Antonio da Barga's *De dignitate hominis et excellentia humane vita* and Bartolomeo Facio's *De excellentia ac praestantia hominis* (1447).⁵⁷⁶ Based on these models, Giannozzo Manetti's *De Dignitate et excellentia hominis* (1452) provided one of humanism's greatest statements against the notion of human misery as presented in Innocent III's work. Manetti combined the Bible with Aristotle and Hermetic writings, lauding the pre-eminence of Man and linking the Christian context of his book to Stoic philosophy.⁵⁷⁷ However, the best known work to celebrate human dignity and Man as the greatest miracle in the world (*magnum miraculum*) was Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (1486). The syncretic nature of Pico's oration derived from a combination of Christian, Hebrew and Hermetic writings, and associated its Neoplatonic perspective with a belief in Man's powers of self-determination.⁵⁷⁸ Although its impact on *Bref discours* remains questionable, it is certain that the transmission of Pico's encomium to

⁵⁷⁵ Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) was an Italian poet and scholar, and one of the most well-known figures of Renaissance humanism. Beside poetry (notably his work *Canzoniere*), he wrote books on a variety of subjects. For a first insight on his works and ideas see Mazzotta, G., *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, NC, 1999). On the impact of his *De Remediis* in France see Mann, N., 'La fortune de Pétrarque en France: recherches sur le *De Remediis*', *Studi Francesi*, vol. 37 (1969), pp. 1-15.

⁵⁷⁶ Bartolomeo Facio (c. 1400-1457) was an Italian humanist and historian who had also been in the service of King Alfonso V of Aragon in Naples. He is also remembered for his *De vitae felicitate*.

⁵⁷⁷ Giannozzo Manetti (1396-1459) was an Italian diplomat and humanist scholar remembered mainly for his work *On the dignity and excellence of man*. See Manetti, G. (ed. E. R. Leonard), *De dignitate et excellentia hominis* (Padua, 1975).

⁵⁷⁸ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) was an Italian philosopher known for his 900 theses on various subjects, some of which were condemned as heretical and resulted to his imprisonment. For more on his ideas see Craven, W. G., *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, symbol of his age: modern interpretations of a Renaissance philosopher* (Geneva, 1981); Dougherty, M. V. (ed.), *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays* (Cambridge, 2008); for a critical edition of his most famous work see Della Mirandola, P. (intro P. J. W. Miller), *On the Dignity of Man* (Indianapolis, 1998).

Mankind found fertile ground in Renaissance Europe.⁵⁷⁹ Its combination of different features gave the notion of *dignitas* a wider context not limited to philosophical discourse. For instance, in *Des merveilles de ce monde et de la dignité de l'homme* (1530), Jean Parmentier combined his views on human dignity with his experiences of travel in the New World, and in 1559 Ronsard wrote his poem *De l'excellence de l'esprit de l'homme* linking dignity with a tribute to history.⁵⁸⁰

Similarly to *Le Théâtre*, Boaistuau's *Bref discours* was a work of humanist character based on a variety of sources from antiquity and the early modern period: 'j'ay voulu monstrier son [l'homme] excellence et dignite au traicte qui s'ensuyt, lequel j'ay plus enrichy d'exemples memorables et faitz heroiques de plusieurs personnes illustres, que d'autres discours philosophiques'.⁵⁸¹ In doing so, Boaistuau borrowed the language of other writers on several occasions in an effort to broaden and diversify his material. Many of his sources, such as Poggio, had already been used for the compilation of *Le Théâtre*. Besides classical authorities such as Homer, Plato, Plutarch, and Pliny, there were also Biblical passages and ecclesiastical writers such as St. Augustine, Lactantius, St. Gregory of Nyssa and Theodoret of Cyrus.⁵⁸² The syncretism of Boaistuau allowed him to accommodate Christian sources in the Platonic views of Marsilio Ficino and the Hermetic literature.⁵⁸³ In fact, Hermes

⁵⁷⁹ Boaistuau, P. (ed. M. Simonin), *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, p. 18.

⁵⁸⁰ Jean Parmentier (1494-1529) was a French poet and navigator. He and his brother Raul made many trips to Brazil, North America and Sumatra. See Lapp, J. C., 'An explorer-poet: Jean Parmentier', *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 6 (1945), pp. 83-89. For more on explorations see Chapter Five.

⁵⁸¹ Boaistuau, P., *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1558), A Jaques et Alexandre de Betoun, Gentilzhommes Escossois, Pierre Bouaystuaui salut.

⁵⁸² Theodoret of Cyrus was a 5th century Christian Bishop from Syria involved in the Nestorian controversy. As he did with many of his sources, Boaistuau consulted Theodoret's *On the nature of man* through the French translation of Roland Piètre in 1555 – see Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 183: 'Theodorite Evesque de Syrie en ses livres De la nature de l'homme, translatez doctement de Grec en François, et illustrez par Rolant Pierre'.

⁵⁸³ Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) was an Italian humanist and philosopher and the first translator of Plato's works into Latin. For his Florentine Academy, which revived Neoplatonism, see Field, A., *The*

Trismegistus, probably taken from Du Préau's French translation, was noted by name in the text as 'ce grand philosophe Trimegiste'. Among the sources used included fifteenth-century writers such as Giannozzo Manetti ('Janotius') and Bartolomeo Facio ('Facijs') mentioned earlier, and others not associated directly with the *dignitas hominis* tradition, such as Leon Battista Alberti ('Baptiste Leon').⁵⁸⁴ Contemporaries of Boaistuau such as Girolamo Cardano and Guy de Bruès were also employed, proving once more Boaistuau's ability to blend a wide range of material taken from diverse sources to suit his needs.

The main philosophical notion of *Bref discours* was the celebration of Man's excellence and dignity as the 'chef d'oeuvres de Dieu en la creation de l'univers... la plus noble de toutes ses creatures'.⁵⁸⁵ In order to prove his superiority, Boaistuau compared Man to animals, a practice commonly employed by writers of the genre which had its roots in patristic literature and Petrarch. Boaistuau employed this comparison as a measure of Man's corruption and arrogance, and as a means of making him realise that his sinful behaviour was not consonant with his divine attributes. Although Man is born defenceless without the provision enjoyed by animals (such as claws or wings), he is endowed with reason that differentiates him from the animal kingdom. This makes him unique and is a reminder of his special place as the most perfect of God's creations: 'il est pour son grand profit et avantage

Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence (Princeton, 1988). Ficino also translated the Corpus Hermeticum, a collection of texts on occultism and theology attributed to the reputed writer Hermes Trismegistus. For more detail see Merkel, I., Debus, A. G. (eds), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (Washington DC, 1988), and Chapter Five.

⁵⁸⁴ Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472) was an Italian humanist polymath and one of the main figures of the Italian Renaissance. He is remembered particularly for his architectural works and his books *De pictura* and *De re aedificatoria*. See Grafton, A., *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

⁵⁸⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 219.

armé d'**entendement**, et vestu de **raison**'.⁵⁸⁶ Man's power is his intellect, which allows him to dominate over all species and to excel in various fields such as painting, architecture, sculpture, music, and medicine. His infinite capacities can be seen as an affirmation of the high status granted to him on earth, and in a way, as a demonstration of his divine derivation:

Dans la prespective d'un Dolet, donc, ou d'un Scève, ou même d'un Boaystuaau, la notion de dignitas hominis tend graduellement à coïncider avec une notion d'effort, d'ardeur et d'enthousiasme, de même qu'elle se transfère du plan des données accordées à l'homme ab aeterno.⁵⁸⁷

Beside inventive and artistic capacity, Boaystuaau used two more arguments to prove Man's excellence: his anatomical structure, and his virtues and qualities. He described in detail the parts of the human body, a reaffirmation of the anthropological approach followed by most of the sources used in *Bref discours*. This description of 'la structure et composition du corps humain' included the parts of the head (eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, tongue, teeth, chin and beard, ears) and the beauty of the exterior appearance – borrowed to a great extent from Lactantius. Boaystuaau occasionally adopted a rather poetic writing style which added elegance to his argument, as, for example, when he praised the nose: 'Mais quel spectacle digne d'admiration trouverons nous en la fabrique du nez? N'est-ce pas un petit mur eslevé pour la defense des yeux? et combien qu'il soit petit, il luy a estably trois offices...'.⁵⁸⁸ However, Man was celebrated in both physical and spiritual terms. Apart from the exaltation of his body, his qualities were also praised. Boaystuaau used examples from ancient history such as Alexander the Great and Julius Cesar to praise Man's ability in war, magnanimity, generosity, and memory. This is how he described the latter: 'Mais

⁵⁸⁶ Boaystuaau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, pp. 215-216.

⁵⁸⁷ Sozzi, L., 'La dignitas hominis' dans la littérature française de la Renaissance', p. 184.

⁵⁸⁸ Boaystuaau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 190.

qui n'esmerueillera de la memoire? Laquelle... garde et retient les choses qui passent soudainemet: l'office de laquelle est de conserver en ses thresors et recevoir choses innumerables, voire differentes, sans toutesfois les confondre'.⁵⁸⁹

However, the greatest justification of Man's dignity is not found in his high intellect or his inborn qualities but in his divine derivation. The notion that Man was created in God's image, originally found in the Bible and much celebrated during the Renaissance, was central to *Bref discours*: 'Et lors il dist: Faisons l'homme à nostre image et semblance...'.⁵⁹⁰ For Boaistuau, the limitations of mortal existence were contrasted by the contemplation of Mankind's divine origin. This is why he stressed the human and divine aspects of Man as complementary to Earth and Heaven, respectively. His treatise was not only an answer to the question of Man's nature and place on earth but a reference to his destiny. Only Man had the knowledge of God which could gain him immortality. Only he had the potential to escape the misery and sufferings of this life and attain salvation. He might have been created out of clay but at the same time he embodied the divine breath: 'nostre Dieu nous a voulu creer de deux substances, l'une terrestre, et l'autre celeste'.⁵⁹¹ As noted by St. Augustine who wrote on the human soul and Man's divine nature, God is inherent in Man, in that he embodies and is, Man's exemplar.⁵⁹² Thus, Man's mortal nature was also a reminder of his celestial destination: 'lequel combien qu'il soit composé d'une nature mortelle, l'autre toutesfois est celeste, et rememorant les dons de grace de divinité, il mesprise

⁵⁸⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 189.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 180. Compare to Genesis, 1:26-7: 'And God said, **Let us make man in our image, after our likeness**: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. **So God created man in his own image**, in the image of God created he him'. Bold font is mine.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 182. Genesis, 2:7 reads: 'And the Lord God formed Man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul'.

⁵⁹² See Augustine, *The City of God*, Book 22.

celle qui est terrestre, souspire apres le ciel'.⁵⁹³ This idea did not echo only patristic literature but also the classical philosophers such as Aristotle, who argued on the immortality of soul, a popular theme linked by many humanists to redemption.

Man may surpass all other species but nevertheless remains imperfect. He has self-awareness of his divine derivation and of his capabilities. He is God's only creature whose life is not ruled by Nature but by his own decisions. But Man's free will and capacity to choose also makes him capable of worst and best choices. He can either descend to lower or ascend to higher forms of existence – a notion associated with the ethical choice between good and evil, a life of earthly pleasures versus a life of virtue and contemplation. Man was the maker of his own fortune, his power manifested in great achievements as images of his heavenly destination and divine fulfilment.⁵⁹⁴ However, this same dignity and excellence was the cause of his sin, since it gave birth to his arrogance. Pride, an idea already examined in Boaistuau's *Le Théâtre*, was the root of all human miseries: 'mais il [man] l'a voulu creer de terre, pour abattre son **orgueil et arrogance**, qui a esté la cause de ruine de toute sa posterité'.⁵⁹⁵ Man's afflictions were not presented as punishments derived from God's hatred ('ce n'est point pour haine qu'il luy portast') because according to Boaistuau, Man was the sole creator of his misery. Instead, they were interpreted as divine signs which would act as a warning to Man for the sin of pride: 'le voulant admonester par ce moyen de son peché, et arracher du coeur d'iceluy ceste pestilente racine d'orgueil'.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, pp. 204-205.

⁵⁹⁴ On this notion see Smith, C., O'Connor, J. F., *Building the Kingdom: Giannozzo Manetti on the Material and Spiritual Edifice* (Temple, AZ, 2007).

⁵⁹⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 217. Bold font is mine.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 218.

Here lies the essence of the moralising philosophy in *Bref discours*, which at this point ideally complements that of *Le Théâtre* (and, to a lesser extent, that of *Histoires tragiques*). Man needs to return to God, in order to give a greater sense of spirituality to his life. His excellence and dignity is not enough on its own to withstand life's miseries and to perfect human nature. Man's fulfillment and deliverance can only be achieved through grace: '**la grace de Dieu** plus abondamment s'est espandue et derivee pour le secourir, le faisant nouvelle creature'.⁵⁹⁷ Boaistuau's acceptance that divine force alone was capable of leading Mankind towards higher ethical and religious goals gave a Christo-centric character to his scheme of salvation. However, this scheme retained a humanistic framework which testified to the writer's classical influences, revealing also a syncretism which blended Christian theology and views on the human condition with Platonism and Stoicism. The idea that Man must not yield to his passions and should demonstrate perseverance in the face of adversity was placed next to the Christian virtues such as courage, temperance and hope. This reconciliation of different features, of a philosophical and a theological approach, enabled Boaistuau to construct a moral philosophy which was representative of the syncretism of the sixteenth century.

For Boaistuau, moral philosophy was the solution to questions on human nature and condition. Similarly, Pico della Mirandola had noted: 'if we will strive for that peace which so lifts us up to the heights that we are made to stand among the exalted of the Lord, moral philosophy alone will still those wars in us, will bring calm successfully'.⁵⁹⁸ However, Boaistuau's model was not a sterile repetition of classical or patristic views but a blending of the two through a humanist framework. For

⁵⁹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 219. Bold font is mine.

⁵⁹⁸ Della Mirandola, P. (intro P. J. W. Miller), *On the Dignity of Man*, pp. 10-11.

example, this was evident when he wrote ‘mettons peine de nous preparer d’aller en la sainte cité de Hierusalem’ where ‘nous jouyrons de nostre premier degré de dignite’.⁵⁹⁹ This ‘first degree of dignity’ brings to mind Plato’s notion regarding first principles, which Boaistuau mingled with Christian theology.

The moralising context of *Bref discours* contained a clear spiritual message: ‘et qu’il ne fault pas seulement qu’il s’amuse à la terre... mais il est requis, qu’il lieve les yeux en hault, qu’il entende que là est son pere, sa maison et habitation, sa demourance, son heritage, et beatitude eternelle’.⁶⁰⁰ One year later, he wrote in *Histoires tragiques* that ‘**la philosophie estoit la vraie medicine de toutes les plus cruelles passions de l’ame**: et à laquelle les anciens, entre leurs plus aspres tribulations, ont tousiours eu leur refuge’.⁶⁰¹ Could it be that, similarly to Pico della Mirandola, Boaistuau considered that philosophy was perfected through religion?⁶⁰² Whatever the answer may be, *Bref discours* remains a vivid demonstration of how certain humanists found theological support for their arguments, and how they reconciled this material to a more secular point of view. By uniting the truths of philosophy and religion, Boaistuau lauded human creativity and achievements whilst declaring his own Christian convictions.

⁵⁹⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde*, p. 220. It is interesting to note that Jerusalem was mentioned in a similar context in both Manetti’s and Pico’s treatises on the dignity of Man.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 217.

⁶⁰¹ Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques*, A Monseigneur Mathieu de Mauny, Abbé des Noiers, Pierre Boisteau treshumble salut. Bold font is mine.

⁶⁰² Sudduth, M., ‘Pico della Mirandola’s Philosophy of Religion’, in Dougherty, M. V. (ed.), *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 61-80. It is interesting to note that Sudduth believes that Pico’s main theme in the *Oratio* was not Man’s dignity and freedom but a celebration and defense of philosophy.

CHAPTER 4

Religion, political theory and history in Pierre Boaistuau's work

This chapter examines two less known works of Boaistuau which remain hitherto completely unexplored by modern scholarship, *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* and the *Histoire de persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*. They were the writer's first and last work respectively, representing the beginning and the end of his very eminent writing career. *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* was the result of Boaistuau's combination of humanism and political theory. As such, it belonged to a particular genre of works praising a divinely ordained French monarchy, also employing for their purposes contemporary developments in law and the study of history. On the other hand, the *Histoire de persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* was a work of ecclesiastical history, which revealed Boaistuau's preoccupation with historical writing and the ways it could be blended with theology. It used similar tools to *Chelidonius Tigurinus* but had a different purpose: the bolstering of the Catholic faith. Careful examination of these two works reveals a new aspect of Boaistuau which re-defines his current picture as a writer, and in addition sheds new light on the uses of humanism in sixteenth-century France. In order to investigate these, this chapter will be divided into two parts.

The first will focus on *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* and Boaistuau's political ideas. It will examine the nature of the political system in France, and the use of humanist research in support of a 'consultive' absolute monarchy, which appeared early in the sixteenth century. As David O. McNeil has noted, 'the involvement of humanism with affairs of the Crown, along with humanistic apologies for royal power, was an aspect of Francis' move toward greater centralization and

absolutism'.⁶⁰³ It will be shown how Boaistuau employed a wide variety of classical sources to justify his thesis of a divinely appointed monarch, and how he described in length his qualities, morals and responsibilities, and his role as guardian of peace and defender of the Christian faith in the kingdom. The aim is to show that *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* can be viewed as a study of the ways humanism was enlisted for political ends in the middle of the century, and also that Boaistuau, as an exponent of royal propaganda, was situated between its early manifestation by Guillaume Budé and its later consolidation by Jean Bodin.

Part two will examine the *Histoire de persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, both as a historical work and as a religious polemic. It will discuss the notion of history and the impact of humanism upon its study, and its different uses for scholarly, political and religious purposes. The latter was closely associated to the writing of works of ecclesiastical history, therefore a brief analysis will be made of this particular literary genre. Boaistuau's narration of the persecutions of the first Church by the Roman Emperors and the spread of heresies, were the main topics addressed in his *Histoire de persecutions*. It will be shown how these topics were juxtaposed to the period of religious instability and uncertainty, typical of his time, and how historical examples from the early Christian period were used for the shaping of his anti-Protestant and anti-Anabaptist rhetoric. His aim was to show the power and resilience of a Catholic Church protected by God, thus bolstering the Catholic faith. This employment of the historical past for religious ends is a further example of the various ways humanism was associated with the ongoing Reformations in early modern Europe.

⁶⁰³ McNeil, D. O., *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I* (Geneva, 1975), p. 44.

4.1. Political theory and *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*

First appearing in 1556, *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* was Pierre Boaistuau's first published book, and his only work of a political nature. The first edition was dedicated to François de Clèves, Duke of Nevers, for whom Boaistuau worked as a secretary. However, after the affair of *Histoires des amans fortunez* in 1558 which cost him his position (see Chapter One), the revised edition of the work which appeared in 1559 was dedicated to Nicolas le Breton, secretary to Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine.⁶⁰⁴ Boaistuau's book has attracted almost no attention from modern scholarship, the only exception being a fleeting examination of its sources by Henry Tudor in an article written in 1983.⁶⁰⁵ Since then, no study has discussed the ideological framework for the writing of *Chelidonius Tigurinus*, or has ever contextualised its contents and associations with Renaissance humanism and contemporary French political thought. These aspects, which reveal a significant but unknown side of Boaistuau's humanist agenda as supporter of the Crown and celebrator of the theory of absolute monarchy, will be the main points of this section.

The reason scholarship has neglected *Chelidonius Tigurinus* perhaps lies in the mystery surrounding the identity of its writer. Although attributed to Boaistuau, it might not, in fact, have been his own work. As the writer himself noted, this project

⁶⁰⁴ The differences in terms of content between the first and the revised edition will not be examined. The 1556 edition was published during the reign of Henry II; the revised edition appeared in November 1559 during the reign of Francis II, as Henry died earlier in July 1559. For the purposes of this chapter, the revised 1559 Paris edition has been used unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁰⁵ Tudor, H., 'L'institution des princes Chrestiens: a note on Boaistuau and Clichtove', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* (Switzerland), vol. 45, no. 1 (1983), pp. 103-106.

came into being after the visit of a certain ‘Seigneur du Parc’, écuyer of François de Clèves for whom Boaistuau worked as a secretary at the time. Seigneur du Parc presented him with a book in Latin entitled *L’institution des Princes Chrestiens*, and asked him to translate it into French.⁶⁰⁶ In fact, the title of the first edition reads: ‘L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus, svr l’institution des princes Chrestiens et origine des Royaumes, **traduyt de latin en François, par Pierre Bouaistuau...**’⁶⁰⁷ According to this, Boaistuau did not write the work but only translated it, as he did in the case of *Histoires tragiques* in 1559 (see Chapter Three). Who, then, was the real author, mentioned by Boaistuau under the pseudonym ‘Chelidonius Tigurinus’? The latter name was beyond any doubt a geographical denomination of the region of Switzerland in Latin, and particularly of Zurich.⁶⁰⁸ For instance, it was used in the same context in John Calvin’s *Consensus Tigurinus* which was published in 1549.⁶⁰⁹ The name ‘Chelidonius’ though (which derives from ancient Greek *χελιδών* meaning ‘swallow’ (the bird)) cannot be identified with any known writer of the classical or early modern periods.

Perhaps Boaistuau referred to Benedikt Schwalbe, who used the Graecized family name Chelidonius?⁶¹⁰ Schwalbe composed an epic of political character, but never wrote a work related to political theory. In addition, he was not associated with Switzerland in any way, which would justify the characterisation of ‘Tigurinus’ which

⁶⁰⁶ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1556), Epistre: ‘il me fit present d’un liure latin intitulé, l’institution des Princes Chrestiens: avec charge expresse de le traduire en nostre langue’.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid*, Title-page.

⁶⁰⁸ The same name was given to one of the four divisions of the Helvetii in Caesar’s *Gallic War*.

⁶⁰⁹ The *Consensus Tigurinus* was a document which aimed to end the disputes between Lutherans and the Reformed churches on issues of sacramental theology, and particularly the Lord’s Supper. For more details see Rorem, P. *Calvin and Luther on the Lord’s Supper* (Nottingham, 1989).

⁶¹⁰ Also known as Musophilus, Benedikt Schwalbe (c. 1460-1521) was a German Benedictine monk and a humanist. He wrote poems and verses for Albrecht Dürer’s gravures, and later became abbot of the monastery of Notre-Dame in Vienna. See Posset, F., *Renaissance Monks: Monastic Humanism in Six Biographical Sketches* (Leiden, 2005), Chapter Two.

Boaistuau noted in the title. Henry Tudor on the other hand, stressing the extent to which Boaistuau borrowed from the Flemish theologian Josse Clichtove, suggested that *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* could have been one of Clichtove's works.⁶¹¹ However, apart from the similarities in certain passages, there exists no relevant work written by Clichtove. A different possibility could be that Boaistuau simply invented a pseudonym to add gravity to his first printed book, a practice not uncommon at the time. As early as 1890, René Kerviller wrote that 'le soi-disant auteur latin Chelidonius est un nom supposé et Boaistuau est l'unique auteur de cet ouvrage'.⁶¹² Was this an attempt to protect himself from any possible criticism at the beginning of his career? Or was it simply a marketing technique to attract the attention of the public? Nicole Cazauran has argued that even the notion of the 'translation' of the work from Latin into French was a commercial trick: 'Dès 1556, il [Boaistuau] avait donné une *Institution des Princes Chrestiens* en la faisant passer pour une traduction du Latin'.⁶¹³

This explanation is supported by Boaistuau's own promotion of the book ('il ne s'en est offert aucun à mon jugement plus digne d'une Republique Chrestienne, que celui duquel je vous envoie la traduction'), and is a better match to the profile of the Breton writer, and the nature of his work.⁶¹⁴ Divided into thirteen chapters, *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* was primarily a treatise of princely advice and political discourse in support of the monarchy as the most profitable political system. To this,

⁶¹¹ Tudor, H., 'L'institution des princes Chrestiens: a note on Boaistuau and Clichtove', *o.c.* Clichtove (1472-1543) was educated in Leuven and Paris, became doctor in the Paris Faculty of Theology, and later Bishop of Tournai. He is known for his theological works and his rivalry with Martin Luther. See Massaut, J. B., *Josse Clichtove, l'humanisme et la réforme du clergé*, 2 vols (Paris, 1969).

⁶¹² Kerviller, R., *Répertoire général de bio-bibliographie bretonne*, t. 4 (Rennes, 1890), p. 39.

⁶¹³ Cazauran, N., 'Boaistuau et Gruget éditeurs de *L'Heptaméron*: à chacun sa part', in Bessire, F. (ed.), *L'Écrivain éditeur, vol. 1: Du Moyen Âge à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Geneva, 2001), p. 149.

⁶¹⁴ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, Epistre.

Boaistuau added three more treatises of his own invention: a praise of marriage, an account of the religion of Islam, and a discourse on peace and war. His aim was to – in his own words – ‘perfect the work’: ‘d’adiouster les trois dessus ditz traitez de mon inuention pour plus entiere et parfaite decoration de l’oeuvre’.⁶¹⁵ Additions were a favourite practice of his, as demonstrated in previous chapters which focused on the rest of his projects. Similarly, the humanist background which characterised his other works was also clearly evident in *Chelidonium Tigurinus*. Very much historically orientated, this work was inspired by models of classical antiquity and was abundant in examples from different historical periods, particularly those of Ancient Greece and Rome. It resembled a selection of a wide range of commonplaces collected from various authorities, such as ‘herodote, Pindare, Sophocle, Lucian, Isocrate, Demosthene, et Platon’.⁶¹⁶ Thus, the writing of a work for the edification of the French king equally served Boaistuau’s purpose to prove his political credentials (and win the favour of a patron), and his intention as a humanist to celebrate the revival of classical learning in France. At a further level, *Chelidonium Tigurinus* skillfully blended humanist and Christian values into a moralising message emphasised by frequent Biblical passages and metaphors (the king ‘comme une lampe qui eclaire à tout le monde’), which the writer employed with ease, thanks to his studies in canon law.⁶¹⁷ This syncretism of the pagan past and Christian theology commemorated the power of the French monarch.

4.1.1. The notion of monarchy in France

⁶¹⁵ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (1556), Salutation au lecteur.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid*, Epistre.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 18v. This Biblical metaphor comes from Psalms 119:105: ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path’. On Boaistuau’s education see Chapter One, particularly section 1.2.

For Boaistuau, monarchy was the ideal form of government. It was defined as ‘d’estre regis et gouvernez par la prudence et autorité d’un Prince [...] que le Grecz ont appellé **Monarchie**’.⁶¹⁸ Princes and kings were an ancient institution, introduced ‘peu apres la creation du monde’, and were supported by many Biblical and historical examples. Monarchy as a political system was based on the notion that one man could rule more effectively, avoiding the disputes deriving from the rule of many, which eventually leads to mistakes. To support this theory, Boaistuau noted examples of renowned kings of antiquity such as Saul, Solomon, and Mithridates, and cited Homer who wrote that ‘rien n’est bien fait, quand plusieurs commandent’.⁶¹⁹ This perspective was not shared by all intellectuals. For instance, the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vivès advocated a more communal political institution, promoting the model of a community of citizens responsible for each other’s welfare.⁶²⁰ For Boaistuau, however, there were four reasons which made the institution of princes and kings imperative: their prudence, organisation and emphasis on order (‘une prudence admirable en l’ordonnance, et dispensation des choses’); their ability to discern what is best for their people (‘une liberalle, et louable affection qu’ilz [les roys] avoyent de recognoistre les biens qu’on avoit faitz à leur Republique’);⁶²¹ their magnanimity and military excellence which allowed them to protect the kingdom from enemies (‘une magnanimité et excellence aux armes qu’ilz voyoyent reluire en quelqu’un qui les delivroit de leurs enemis’); and the need for the community to punish injustice and

⁶¹⁸ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, p. 14v. Bold font is mine.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 17v.

⁶²⁰ Juan Luis Vives or Ioannes Lodovicus Vives in Latin (1493-1540) was a Spanish humanist. He was a professor at the University of Leuven and a friend of Erasmus. He wrote many works on a variety of topics, including *On assistance to the poor* (1526) which focused on poor relief. On his political thought see Skelton, F., ‘The Content, Context and Influence of the Work of Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540)’ (PhD dissert., University of Glasgow, 1996); Curtis, C., ‘The Social and Political Thought of Juan Luis Vives: Concord and Counsel in the Christian Commonwealth’, in Fantazzi, C. (ed.), *A Companion to Juan Luis Vives* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 113-176.

⁶²¹ The use of the word ‘republic’ in *Chelidonium* did not refer to a form of government which involved the participation of the people, but had the more general meaning of ‘public affairs’, closer to that of *res publica*.

malice ('une nécessité qui forsa la commune de chercher un moyen par lequel il peust corriger la furie, oppression, et violence des meschans').⁶²²

In order to further strengthen the superiority of monarchy, Boaistuau not only cited classical authorities (amongst whom were 'Platon, Aristote, Apolonius, saint Hierosme, saint Cyprian, et plusieurs autres') but proceeded to compare different political systems. Even divine right theorists, who lauded monarchy and its benefits, conceded that God also upheld other forms of government. A commonly employed example was that Old Testament Israel was not always ruled by kings but sometimes by judges. Therefore, republics such as the one instituted by the Dutch or the Italian city-states were also considered to be legitimate.⁶²³ Boaistuau used many historical examples, such as Lycurgus's mixed political system in Sparta (oligarchy with two kings), Sicilian tyrants, and Athenian and Roman democracies, to demonstrate the various forms of government which had been practiced since the beginning of time. However, for the Breton writer, human societies needed a king since men were more naturally inclined to follow one individual: 'Car tous hommes naturellement sont tenus d'aymer celuy qui les regist et gouverne, puissance si grande de nature, qu'elle estend sa vigueur'. And later: 'il n'est beste au monde plus ingrate à son Recteur que l'homme'.⁶²⁴ This view was supported with examples from the animal kingdom and the natural world. For example, the king was compared to the sun - 'king of all celestial stars', to the fire - 'queen of the four elements', and to Asia - 'queen of all continents'. This idea of the people's obedience to the ruler as respect to natural law was an additional step in the evolution of a more authoritative monarchy, and thus reveals the changing picture of French political thought at the time.

⁶²² Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, pp. 8v-11v.

⁶²³ See Israel, J. I., *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1998).

⁶²⁴ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, pp. 6r-v.

The question whether the tenet of absolute monarchy existed in France in the course of the sixteenth century has long attracted the attention of scholars.⁶²⁵ Some still take the view that the period of absolute monarchy began only with Louis XIV, although it is now generally accepted that its manifestations had already appeared as early as the reigns of Louis XII and Francis I, and became even more evident towards the end of the century. However, it was a form of limited (or ‘consultive’, according to J. Russell Major) absolutism, which should be distinguished as a political system which was different from the authoritarian exercise of power of the seventeenth century and despotism.⁶²⁶ Although in theory the ruler could not be limited by any kind of check when exercising his authority to its full extent, in practice there were several factors which restricted this. He had to respect the ‘fundamental laws’ of the kingdom (the Salic law, the upkeep of the Catholic faith, and the non-alienation of the royal property).⁶²⁷ He had to enforce his will not only in the centre but also on the periphery, veneration of the different privileges of each different province. Institutional checks from bodies such as the Parliament of Paris, which often opposed royal policies, acted as another rein to authority. Most importantly, the French king had to respect the freedom and general interest of his subjects, and maintain peace and justice in his realm, and therefore his actions had to conform to this principle. Such

⁶²⁵ See for instance Pagès, G., *La Monarchie d’ancien régime en France* (Paris, 1946); Lublinskaya, A. D., *French Absolutism: The Crucial Phase, 1620-1629* (Cambridge, 1968); Pujol, J., ‘Cadre idéologique du développement de l’absolutisme en France à l’avènement de François Ier’, in *Théorie et pratique politiques à la Renaissance. Colloque internationale de Tours, 1974* (Paris, 1977), pp. 259-272; Parker, D., *The Making of French Absolutism* (London, 1983); Russell Major, J., *From Renaissance Monarchy to Absolute Monarchy: French Kings, Nobles and Estates* (Baltimore, 1994); Beik, W., *Louis XIV and Absolutism: A Brief Study with Documents* (Basingstoke, 2000).

⁶²⁶ The term absolutism denotes a regime in which the king holds all power and can act without any legal limitations, based on the theory that rulers were chosen by God. Despotism, which is often confused with absolutism, is the concentration of sovereign authority in a single entity (a person or a group of people) which can rule arbitrarily, often seeking to direct and control the lives of the subjects.

⁶²⁷ For more detail see Giesey, R., ‘The juristic basis of dynastic right to the French throne’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 51 (1961), pp. 3-47; Höpfl, H., ‘Fundamental Law and the Constitution of Early Modern France’, in Schnur, R. (ed.), *Die Rolle der Juristen bei der Entstehung des modernen Staates* (Berlin, 1986), pp. 327-356.

restrictions were integral parts of the theory of absolutism at the time, as manifested in works such as Claude de Seyssel's *La Grande Monarchie de France* (1515) which is probably the best portrayal of French political constitution at the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁶²⁸

The principal concept of absolute monarchy in France was that the ruler was ordained by God, a concept which relied on a rich medieval tradition. It was mainly based on the notion of the two bodies of the king: the physical and the sacred.⁶²⁹ The latter embodied his royal dignity which allowed him to govern, and was often associated with occult powers. One well-known example was the French king's ability to heal by touch.⁶³⁰ This mystical power believed to reside in the sovereign's body was the clearest proof that he was divinely ordained, an emissary chosen from God. Biblical passages were often used in support of this notion. For instance, Boaistuau cited Deuteronomy, when God instructed Israelites how to select their king: 'Quand tu viendras en la terre que le Seigneur ton Dieu te donne [...] tu diras: Je mettray un roy sur moy, comme toute la gent qui est autour de moy, lors tu constitueras sur toy le Roy que le Seigneur ton Dieu elira du milieu de tes freres'.⁶³¹ The belief that kings were the image of God on earth (Boaistuau named them 'images vives de Dieu' and 'lieutenans de Dieu en terre') sustained the notion of absolute monarchy throughout the sixteenth century. It also found its way into art and poetry, as indicated by the

⁶²⁸ Claude de Seyssel (c. 1450-1520) was a French jurist, historian and churchman. He was amongst the first French writers to use the term 'état' in the sense of a governing institution. For more details see Boone, R. A., *War, Dominion and the Monarchy of France: Claude de Seyssel and the Language of Politics in the Renaissance* (Leiden, 2007). For De Seyssel, there were three bridles of absolute power: religion, justice, and polity (ordinances).

⁶²⁹ See Kantorowicz, E. H., *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957). On the medieval tradition see Kern, F., *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages: I. The Divine Right of Kings and the Right of Resistance in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1956).

⁶³⁰ Bloch, M., *The Royal Touch* (London, 1973) remains the classic study on the subject.

⁶³¹ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, p. 12r. See also Proverbs 8:15-16: 'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth'.

example of Clément Marot and his glorification of Francis I.⁶³² As aptly described in works such as Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la Republique* (1576), the ruler's authority derived from God alone – not from a political body or the people – and thus he answered only to God for his actions. His power could not be limited by human laws and actions.⁶³³ In the same spirit, any resistance to the monarch's power by representative assemblies, courts or other constituted bodies was regarded as resistance to God. To disobey the monarch's will was to commit the sin of disobeying the will of God.⁶³⁴

The king's power was underlined by his military command, feudal law (which continued to be an essential tool for the display of superiority throughout the sixteenth century), and his legislative power, which added the feature of lawgiver to his profile as defender of the realm.⁶³⁵ This was made possible by a new approach towards the study of law in France, of which Boaiustau was certainly aware due to his law studies. Scholars shifted from the medieval tradition, rejecting the conclusions of previous interpreters and treating texts as normative. The work of jurists such as Jacques Cujas and Andrea Alciati was of paramount importance for their new interpretations and the harmonisation with French jurisprudence.⁶³⁶ Their aim was the restoration of Roman

⁶³² See Eshan, A., *Clément Marot: The Mirror of the Prince* (Charlottesville, VA, 2005).

⁶³³ On Bodin and absolutism see foremost Franklin, J., *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge, 1973), and King, P., *The Ideology of Order: A Comparative Analysis of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes* (London, 1974) for a comparative approach.

⁶³⁴ However, the divine right of kings was not accepted by all. Calvinist and Reformed Church writers put forth monarchomachist theories which advocated defiance of oppressive rule and even tyrannicide. The most well-known examples include François Hotman's *Francogallia* mentioned later, and Philippe Duplessis-Mornay's *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*. See for more details Salmon, J. H. M., 'Bodin and the monarchomachs', in his *Renaissance and Revolt* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 119-136, and Skinner, Q., *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978), vol. 2, part 3.

⁶³⁵ Such features constituted the so-called theory of the 'marks of sovereignty', which was to receive a new treatment by Jean Bodin in the second half of the century. For more details see Barbey, J., *Etre roi. Le roi et son gouvernement de Clovis à Louis XVI* (Paris, 1992), especially pp. 165-208.

⁶³⁶ Andrea Alciati (1492-1550), also known as Alciato, was an Italian jurist who taught law in Avignon and Bourges. He published annotations on Tacitus and many legal works, and is also known for his

law in terms of form and context, which was the reason why the new approach abandoned the 'Italian method' (*mos italicus*) for a new interpretation of Roman law known as 'French method' (*mos gallicus*).⁶³⁷ Associated with this was another school of thought, which employed the new study of law to defend and justify the claims of royal authority. By drawing rights and privileges from past centuries, jurists proved that neither civil nor canon law had any force in France above the king, who was the only source of law. One of its exponents was Jean de Coras, Boaistuau's Professor of Law in Valence, who was known for his theory of sovereignty as described in works such as his *Question politique: s'il est licite aux sujets de capituler avec leur prince* (1570).⁶³⁸ Based on the belief of his divine derivation, the dualities God-king and faith-law became commonplace at the time. As shown by contemporary works such as Louis le Caron's *Pandects of French Law* (1587) and Estienne Pasquier's *Interpretation of the Institutes of Justinian* (c. 1607), the tools for such arguments were drawn from the Roman and Byzantine periods.

This preoccupation with the historical past also provided the material for the rhetoric of legitimacy of the French king, an issue which became more urgent after the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII and the growing propaganda regarding the ecumenical pretensions of a powerful French kingdom. Since the Middle Ages, French rulers had taken an interest in the historical legitimacy of their power. Chroniclers discoursed on the transfer of power from the Merovingians to the

Emblemata (1531). See Daly, P. (ed.), *Andrea Alciato and the Emblem Tradition: Essays in Honor of Virginia Woods Callahan* (New York, 1989), and Chapter Two, p. 129.

⁶³⁷ See Kelley, D. R., 'Civil science in the Renaissance: jurisprudence in the French manner', in his *History, Law and the Human Sciences: Medieval and Renaissance Perspectives* (London, 1984), pp. 261-276.

⁶³⁸ On Jean de Coras see Chapter One, p. 42. On his contribution to the theory of sovereignty see Fell, A. L., *Origins of Legislative Sovereignty and the Legislative State, vol. 4: Medieval or Renaissance Origins?* (Westport, CT, 1991). For Coras's *Question politique* see Coras (ed. R. Kingdon), *Question politique: s'il est licite aux sujets de capituler avec leur prince* (Geneva, 1989).

Carolingians and thence to the Capetians, in order to create an uninterrupted dynasty line. The view that French kings were descendants of Charlemagne was still popular in the sixteenth century.⁶³⁹ For example, Symphorien Champier in his *De monarchia ac triplici imperio* (1537) used the title 'king of the French' (*Rex Gallorum*) to lay claim to this particular inheritance.⁶⁴⁰ In addition, the legitimate power of French rulers was reinforced by a wide range of rituals, collections of royal regalia and symbols in art and culture, such as the crown and Francis I's device of the salamander. However, this 'visual propaganda' was exemplified nowhere better than in the coronations and royal entries to cities (often incorporating classical or Biblical themes), which cultivated the image of a powerful yet accessible king. For example, Henry II's coronation in 1547 was designed to focus on his grandeur and glory, a point further stressed by a new crown made especially for the new king.⁶⁴¹ Similarly, his entry in Rouen in 1550 included the reproduction of a complete Brazilian village, the intention being to symbolise the French king's power as conqueror not only of the Old World, but also of the New.⁶⁴²

The notion of royal supremacy was also evident in the question of head of the Church in France. As the authority of the French monarch was deemed comparable to that of the Pope, the king was able to question the power of the Catholic Church regarding the regulation of Gallican Church affairs. He claimed the protection and

⁶³⁹ Morissey, R. J., *Charlemagne and France: A Thousand Years of Mythology* (Notre Dame, IN, 2003).

⁶⁴⁰ The employment of history for political ends was also used in a different context, such as in the case of François Hotman's *Francogallia* (1573) which proposed a political theory rooted in historical evidence which opposed absolute monarchy. See Kelley, D. R., *François Hotman: A Revolutionary's Ordeal* (Princeton, 1973).

⁶⁴¹ Giesey, R., *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva, 1960); Gaborit-Chopin, D., *Regalia: les instruments du sacre des rois de France* (Paris, 1987); Bryant, L. M., *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual and Art in the Renaissance* (Geneva, 1986).

⁶⁴² On Henry's entry see Wintroub, M., 'Civilizing the Savage and Making a King: The Royal Entry Festival of Henri II (Rouen, 1550)', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 29 (1998), pp. 465-494.

administration of the Church in France, and acquired the right to appoint the clergy members in the high ecclesiastical posts.⁶⁴³ According to Charles Dumoulin, one of the protagonists of the movement of Gallicanism during the sixteenth century, it was the French king's role as successor to Charlemagne which gave him the right to govern and reform the Church.⁶⁴⁴ This right was enhanced by the title of 'the most Christian king' (*Rex Christianissimus*) which emphasized his imperial status and authority over the Gallican Church. The Church in France had long claimed a certain autonomy from Rome, and the French kings supported its cause accordingly in order to serve their own political ends. This 'alliance between church and state', which Alison Forrestal has named 'political gallicanism', was the monarchy's response to the Pope's external source of authority, and worked to the king's advantage.⁶⁴⁵ Therefore, related events such as the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438) and the Concordat of Bologna (1516) can be seen not only as attempts to limit the influence of Rome in France and allow the Gallican Church to manage its own affairs, but also as stages towards the promotion of an absolutist theory.

4.1.2. Mirrors for princes and the qualities of the ideal Christian ruler

The qualities and virtues of Renaissance monarchs were an issue of paramount significance, as proved by the flood of related contemporary treatises. In a Europe of

⁶⁴³ On Gallicanism see Salmon, J. H. M., 'Clovis and Constantine: The Uses of History in Sixteenth-Century Gallicanism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 41 (1990), pp. 584-665; Parsons, J., *The Church in the Republic: Gallicanism and Political Ideology in Renaissance France* (Washington, DC, 2004); Forrestal, A., *Fathers, Pastors and Kings: Visions of Episcopacy in Seventeenth-Century France* (Manchester, 2004).

⁶⁴⁴ Charles Dumoulin (1500-1566) was a jurist who left France to escape persecution owing to his religious beliefs. His works turned both Catholics and Calvinists against him, and he was later imprisoned by order of the Parliament. For more details see Kelley, D. R., 'Fides historia: Charles Dumoulin and the Gallican View of History', *Traditio*, vol. 22 (1966), pp. 347-402.

⁶⁴⁵ 'Political Gallicanism' describes 'the alliance between church and state to limit papal authority, while ecclesiastical gallicanism is characterised by the belief that the French church should be independent of both king and pope' – see Forrestal, A., *Fathers, Pastors and Kings*, p. 111.

war, revolt, political and social upheaval, the upkeep of order and the protection and well-being of the realm could not be guaranteed by a weak or unqualified monarch. Statecraft was portrayed as an art, and the king needed to be instructed in how it should be best practised. Accordingly, humanist writers discussed the education and the necessary virtues of a good and skilled ruler, who had to combine several different characteristics. As will be shown later, Boaistuau devoted ample space to the subject in his *Chelidonius Tigurinus*. Such works of advice to princes formed a distinct literary genre known as *de regimine principum* (on the rule of princes), and as Charles F. Briggs has shown, they also had other uses, serving educational, military and ecclesiastical purposes.⁶⁴⁶ They were not just works of theory but useful manuals of practice, containing many examples and suggestions to help rulers to prepare for the difficulties they would encounter. This is why they also had the title *specula principum*, meaning ‘mirrors for princes’. This genre appeared in the classical period, with two of the earliest examples being Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* and Seneca’s *De clementia*.⁶⁴⁷ Such models of ancient political philosophy had a great impact and were used for the compilation of similar treatises during the Middle Ages. Hincmar of Reims’s *De ordine palatii*, Jonas of Orléans’s *De institutione laicali*, Constantine Porphyrogenetos’s *Πρός τόν ἴδιον υἱόν Ρωμανόν*, Gerald of Wales’s *De instructione principis*, and Thomas Aquinas’s *De regimine principum*, were amongst the titles examining the institution of the ideal ruler, capable of governing with power and dexterity.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Briggs, C. F., *Giles of Rome’s De regimine principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275 - c. 1525* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁶⁴⁷ Xenophon (tr. W. Ambler), *The Education of Cyrus* (Ithaca, 2001); Seneca (tr. S. Braund), *De clementia* (Oxford, 2009). The longevity, influence and use of Seneca’s treatise are examined in Stacey, P., *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁶⁴⁸ For a first insight to these works see Vauchez, A., Dobson, R. B., Lapidge, M. (eds), *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2000).

In the early modern period, however, such works were not only for the edification of princes. Appearing during periods of political instability, high dynastic and territorial ambitions, or at the accession of a new king (such as Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) which was published as advice to the young King Charles of Spain, later Charles V), they were also written in the hope of securing a position in politics or a public office. John Skelton's *Speculum principis* (1501) was originally written for young Prince Henry, but after his accession to the throne as Henry VIII, a copy of the work was sent in 1511 as a birthday gift to promote Skelton's role as a good counsellor and intellectual. Probably the most celebrated work of the genre, Machiavelli's *Il Principe* (1513), was written for the same reasons.⁶⁴⁹ Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Boaistuau's motive for undertaking the project of *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* was the hope of securing a job and climbing the social ladder. This is confirmed by both first and second revised editions of the book, dedicated respectively to Duke François de Clèves and the secretary of Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine.⁶⁵⁰ The Cardinal was a member of the powerful House of Guise, and a known Maecenas in sixteenth-century France, being the protector of Rabelais and Ronsard.⁶⁵¹

In terms of content, the main idea of sixteenth-century works of the *de regimine principum* genre was ideally summarised in its most representative example published

⁶⁴⁹ See Butters, H., 'Machiavelli and the Medici', in Najemi, J. M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 69-70. On Erasmus's work see Erasmus (ed. L. Jardine), *The Education of a Christian Prince* (Cambridge, 1997). On Skelton's work see Salter, F. M., 'Skelton's *Speculum Principis*', *Speculum*, vol. 9 (1934), pp. 25-37.

⁶⁵⁰ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (1556), Salutation: A tres illvstre, tres hault, et tres pvissant Prince, et Seigneur, Francoys de Cleues, Duc de Niuernois...; Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (1559), Title-page: Dediée à Monsieur de S. Sidroine, M. Nicolas Breton, Secretaire de Monseigneur l'Illustrissime Cardinal de Loraine.

⁶⁵¹ Boaistuau did not dedicate the work to the Cardinal but to his secretary, Nicolas le Breton, who was also saluted as a patron of letters in the Preface: 'tel tesmoignage de benevolence que vous avez accoustumé de favoriser ceux qui sont profession des lettres'. Perhaps Boaistuau hoped that Le Breton (who maybe belonged to the writer's wide circle of friends) could intervene on his behalf.

in France, Guillaume Budé's *Institution du prince* (1547). Imbued with the principles of humanism and the values of classical antiquity, Budé stressed the notion that the monarch was the 'father' of the people, and thus responsible for the happiness of his subjects. His actions should be driven by virtue and steered towards the well-being of his realm.⁶⁵² Boaistuau noted that he was 'l'oeil de la republique'.⁶⁵³ Just as the eye directed the movement of all members of the human body, the monarch supervised and administered the kingdom, ensuring the welfare of his people. For this, he should receive a humanist education and lead a moral life. This humanist ideal of a philosopher-ruler, as endorsed by Budé, had an effect upon Renaissance thought on the subject of princely government, and was shared by Boaistuau and other writers. Soon after the publication of *Chelidonium Tigurinus*, Etienne Pasquier's *Pourparler du prince* (1560) and Pierre de Ronsard's *Institution pour l'adolescence du Roy treschrestien Charles IX de ce nom* (1562) which were written for Charles IX, communicated similar values such as the cultivation of bonnes lettres.

The discussion of the desirable qualities of a good ruler occupied a very large part of Boaistuau's work, as five separate chapters (Chapters Four, Five, Six, Nine and Ten) were devoted to the subject.⁶⁵⁴ Drawing material from the Bible but mostly history

⁶⁵² Budé presented his work to Francis I in 1519, but it was not published until 1547. For more detail see Eshan, A., 'Wisdom and Absolute Power in Guillaume Budé's *Institution du Prince*', *The Romanic Review*, vol. 96 (2005), pp. 173-185; McNeil, D. O., *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I*, particularly Chapter IV.

⁶⁵³ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, p. 34r.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Chapter III: Comme ceux qui commandent aux autres se doivent premier maistriser eux mesmes, et si bien moderer leurs desirs, et passions que par leur bonne vie ilz induisent leurs sujetz à vertu; Chapter V: Si le prince desire, que sa republique soit bien regie, il lui est requis obeit aux loix, et que par son exemple il incite le vulgaire à bien vivre; Chapter VI: Pour la perfection de nostre Prince, les sciences et disciplines sont requises, comme aussi la continuelle frequentation des sages qui sont comme les nersz et esprits par lesquels son Royaume est maintenu, on il est aussi fait plusieurs discours de l' honneur et reverence que les Roys et Princes portoyent anciennement aux letters; Chapter IX: Il traicte comme la clemence et mansuetude est necessaire au Prince, avec plusieurs exemples qu'il deduict pour confirmer ce qu'il a propose; Chapter X: Pource que justice et clemence sont deux vertus conjointes, il sera traicté en ce present chapitre quel profit apporte justice à la principauté, et comme

and particularly the classical period, he described a princely profile which combined spiritual and physical attributes. As he noted in the Prologue, a good monarch should have ‘les forces Hercules, l’audace d’Hector, la generosité d’Alexandre, l’esprit de Pyrrhus, la diligence de Scipion: et sagesse de Nestor’. He should be well-educated and energetic, as shown by the examples of the Spartan kings Leonidas and Agesilaus, and Alexander the Great, amongst others. He had to be a skilled fighter to lead his army and protect his kingdom in time of conflict.⁶⁵⁵ In terms of learning, he had to be well-educated in a variety of fields in order to assess problems and find solutions accordingly. This acquisition of a range of knowledge was necessary for the development of his ability to express personal opinion. However, it was of equal importance that he maintained a council of experienced and learned men who could advise and assist him with the numerous issues which arose in the administration of a kingdom. It is obvious that Boaistuau shared the belief of many humanists on the importance of learning but also the need for rulers to cultivate and use university men, poets and writers. This image of a philosopher-king surrounded with men of letters once again echoed Plato. Perhaps Boaistuau’s inspiration was Budé, who expressed the same idea in his own work on princely advice.⁶⁵⁶ Citing Aristotle, Boaistuau described counselors as ‘friends of the realm’ for their help towards its good administration. However, they had to be carefully chosen since they had enormous influence on the king. A circle of flatterers and immoral advisors could have the opposite result, leading to the corruption of the king.

sans l’usage d’icelle les Royaumes ne peuvent estre dictz Royaumes, mais cavernes et receptacles de larrons.

⁶⁵⁵ For more details on this see the following section.

⁶⁵⁶ McNeil, D. O., *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I*, pp. 42-43.

A capable monarch should also be a good law-giver. Echoing Plato's *Republic* which endorsed the combination of a good prince and good laws, Boaistuau used many examples from antiquity (such as the Egyptians, the Persians, the Athenians, the Carthaginians, and the Romans) to emphasize the significance of a law-giving monarch.⁶⁵⁷ In addition, the ruler had to respect the law, serving as an example and not as an oppressor. He was bound to conform to his rules and regulations, since he was responsible for maintaining the justice which was essential for the peace and well-being of his realm. Chancellor Duprat in the 1517 Assembly noted that 'the police and good administration of the public weal consists in ensuring the tranquility, peace and wealth of the subjects'.⁶⁵⁸ The administration of justice was a very important feature as, according to royal theorists, it separated the king from the tyrant who violated the law according to his will: 'le Tyran suyvant l'impetuosité de son vouloir, infringe et violle la loy'.⁶⁵⁹ Justice retained the moral character of kingdoms, and prevented them from evolving into 'cavernes de larrons', as Boaistuau characteristically noted.⁶⁶⁰ The story of the Persian King Cambyses and King Salomon's exhortation to judges were also cited as examples for the safeguarding of order.⁶⁶¹ A just king should also be characterised by clemency, in order not to be feared but rather esteemed and respected by his subjects. Charity was another quality highlighted by Boaistuau, who cited many examples of charitable rulers from the classical and the early modern period, such as Alexander the Great, Roman Emperors Antonius and Claudius, and Pope Sixtus IV. In fact, he advised rulers to make regular

⁶⁵⁷ Plato (ed. G. R. F. Ferrari), *The Republic* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁶⁵⁸ Cited in Potter, D., *A History of France, 1460-1560: The Emergence of a Nation State* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 35.

⁶⁵⁹ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, p. 30v.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 98v. Boaistuau here cited Augustine's *City of God*, where is also stated that mercy exults over justice. See Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XXI, Chapter 27.

⁶⁶¹ The story of Cambyses can be found in Herodotus (ed. J. Marincola), *The Histories* (London, 2004), Book Three.

visits to the poor to encourage their feelings of generosity and benevolence. Since they were in the image of God on earth, they should imitate God's mercy and forgiveness.⁶⁶²

Ample space was also devoted to the personal qualities of the monarch, and notably, his morals. Magnanimity, self-discipline and prudence were all essential virtues. The good king was required to control his passions and lead a virtuous life, following the morality of Emperor Marcus Aurelius and serving as an example to his subjects. In *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, virtue was the founding stone of a king's reign, and the principal characteristic which separated him from the simple folk. His honour lay not only in his ability to reign but in the ability to improve himself and control his weaknesses: 'sont ceux là desquelz parle le Prophete Michée, quand il dit: les ennemys d'un chacun sont ses domestiques [the vices] sont ceux icy que nous devons entierement destruyre'.⁶⁶³ His personal as well as his social life must be characterised by integrity and moderation. He should set an example of morality for his people: 'les Princes doivent... nous donner instruction par leur bonne vie'.⁶⁶⁴ For Boaistuau, the real enemies of the king were the vices such as immorality, which has always been the cause of the destruction of empires and kingdoms and the ruin of civilisations in the past, as demonstrated by many examples, such as Achaz and Manasses from the Book of Kings.⁶⁶⁵ Ambition and avarice were also two of the ruler's enemies: 'il est seul entre les animaux subject à peine, passions, plaisirs, à l'ambition, à l'avarice'.⁶⁶⁶ He

⁶⁶² Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, pp. 88v, 89r.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 23v. Apart from prophet Micah, Boaistuau also cited Horace, Plutarch, and the Roman poet Claudian. It is interesting to note again how Boaistuau borrowed from different kind of sources with ease in order to support his argument.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 31v. Boaistuau at this point echoed Aristotle, who considered moral virtue as the principal aim of politics.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 32r-v.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 72r.

must contain his arrogance, and not be carried away by ephemeral pleasures and vain ambition.

Apart from the immorality which was a recurrent theme of the book and deemed as one of the principal vices of society, Boaistuau also mentioned lack of control and the burden of the flesh. It was another cause for the downfall of principalities, as demonstrated by many Biblical examples. In order to combat this moral weakness, the writer advised rulers to marry: ‘comme il est conseillé aux Princes et autres qui se sentent trop infirmes, de se marier, tant pour la procreation de lignée, que pour le soulagement de l’infirmité de nature’.⁶⁶⁷ In fact, he devoted a separate chapter on marriage, which he described as a blessed and God-given ordinance.⁶⁶⁸ Perhaps the motivation for writing an encomium to marriage was once again St. Augustine, who had written a treatise *On Marriage and Concupiscence* and also referred to marriage in *The City of God*.⁶⁶⁹ For Boaistuau, marriage was the first miracle on earth (‘le premier miracle... en terre’), and its dignity and importance was supported by many examples from the animal kingdom and history. It offered companionship (‘amitié conjugale’) and should be honoured by both spouses with purity and sincerity. The writer did not only focus on the advantages of marital life but also on cases of ‘mariages corrompuz’.⁶⁷⁰ This corruption reflected the immorality of French society at the time (a theme also apparent in *Histoires tragiques* examined in Chapter Three),

⁶⁶⁷ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, p. 130r.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid*, Chapter XIII: Combien l’incontinence est dommageable aux Princes, et comme elle est cause de la ruine de plusieurs royaumes et principautez, avec un traicté de la dignité et excellence de mariage. Boaistuau also examined marriage in *Le Théâtre du monde*, see Chapter Three.

⁶⁶⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XV, Chapter 16. For more details see Clark, E. A. (ed.), *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality* (Washington DC, 1996).

⁶⁷⁰ Among the reasons that cause an unhappy marriage Boaistuau mentioned ‘l’impatience des femmes se plaignent à toutes heures’ – see Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, pp. 141r, v. This anti-feminism approach culminated in his opinion that Man is by Nature superior to woman, and she should obey him – see p. 130r: ‘L’homme [...] d’avantage a une préeminence et auctorité sur la femme, creature noble (apres luy) entre toutes les autres, à laquelle le Seigneur Dieu a estroitement commandé d’obeira à son mary...’. Nevertheless, he added that Woman should be honoured by Man.

and can be seen not only as an exhortation to rulers but as a general call to people to refrain from immoral activities and to reform their lives: ‘à descrire leur malheureuses vies [...] et reformer l’estat de leur vie’.⁶⁷¹

This message regarding the moral edification of rulers was built upon the notion of the misery of Man, which Boaistuau developed in its full form in *Le Théâtre du monde*, as it has been demonstrated in Chapter Three.⁶⁷² By the employment of examples from Ancient Greek authorities (such as Diogenes Laertius, Democritus and Theognis) as well as the Scriptures (of, among others, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. John Chrysostom), he stressed the numerous calamities and hardships which Man has to endure during his lifetime. Boaistuau’s purpose was to reveal the fragility and ephemeral character of the human condition and thus warn princes not be overtaken by vain, ephemeral ambitions: ‘Ceste philosophie sur la misere de la vie humaine ainsi deduyte par nous, n’est point inutile: car c’est un miroer, ou exemplaire pour abaisser les princes, et autres grans Seigneurs, lors qu’ilz se sentiront chatouillez de vaine gloire’.⁶⁷³ Nobles and princes were affected by disasters and changes of fortune as were their subjects. Everything in life was deemed to be affected by twists and contingency, as part of God’s greater plan.⁶⁷⁴ Therefore, rulers had to adopt a stoic attitude, avoiding vanities and leading a life of moral virtue. This level of Christian morality associated the ruler of *Chelidonius* with the pious figures of princes endorsed

⁶⁷¹ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, Prologue du Translateur.

⁶⁷² *Ibid*, Chapter VIII: Comme les Princes doivent fuyr orgueil, et qu’ilz ne se doivent par trop confier en leur dignité et grandeur, avec une declaration de la misere humaine, et à combien de calamitez nostre vie est subjecte, et aucuns exemples de plusieurs issus de lieu infime qui ont esté esleuz Roys, et Empereurs, comme au contraire plusieurs ayans prins leur origine de noblesse, et estans au comble de toute prosperité ont esté par la permission divine honteusement rabaissez.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 77v.

⁶⁷⁴ On this philosophical approach of random changes as part of God’s secret plan see Quainton, M., *Ronsard’s Ordered Chaos: Visions of Flux and Stability in the Poetry of Pierre de Ronsard* (Manchester, 1980). Such ideas had their antecedents, the most well-known examples being Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* and Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum illustrium*.

by Erasmus and Budé, keeping a distance from the controversial and morally unrestrained princely model of Machiavelli's Cesare Borgia.

To further emphasise the importance of a just and moral monarch, Boaistuau devoted Chapter Eleven in *Chelidonium* to the differences between the good king and the tyrant.⁶⁷⁵ Among his examples of cruel rulers, he noted the Emperors Nero, Heliogabalus, Caligula and Maximilian. Tyrants always impose immoderate taxes on their subjects, whereas good princes only ask for what is necessary ('Le Tyran vexé son peuple de subsides et exactions immoderées... Le bon Prince n'est exige des ses sujetz sinon es choses contraintes et necessaires'). The tyrant indulges in pleasure and spends money on futile excesses, as opposed to the good prince whose actions and expenditure are dedicated to the maintenance and strengthening of his kingdom ('Le Tyran convertit toutes ses actions en pompes, delices et magnificences inutiles... Le bon prince au contraire employe tout pour la tuition, defence et conservation des siens, pour la fortification de son Royaume'). Tyrants are always hated by the people, but good princes are loved with a sincere fatherly love ('Le Tiran veut estre craint et redouté de ses sujetz... Le bon Prince veut estre aymé d'une vraye et sincere amitié paternelle'). The tyrant governs the people by fraud and avarice, rather than by prudence and integrity as a good prince would ('Le Tyran administre sa Republique par fraude et avarice. Le bon Prince par prudence, integrité et beneficence'), and instead of maintaining a council of learned men, he is surrounded by flatterers and adulators ('Le Tyran se gouverne par flateurs, satrapes et autres telles especes de vermines... Le bon Prince n'entreprend ny execute aucune chose que par l'avis et

⁶⁷⁵ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, Chapter XI: L'auteur poursuit l'ordre qu'il a commence: car apres avoir descrit comme justice est necessaire, non seulement au Princes, mais en toute humaine police, il conjoint promptement un traicté de cruauté et tyrannie, qui sont capitales ennemyes de justice: puis il enseigne en quoy differe le bon Prince, du Tyran, avec plusieurs exemples tant des Grecz que des Latins qui peuvent apporter grand profit et contetement au lecteur.

conseil des sages'). The tyrant fears the unanimity and peace of the people, whereas a good prince desires peace and tranquility for his subjects ('Le Tyran n'a autre crainte sinon que le peuple soit unanime et concors... Le Prince ne desire autre chose que nourrir, et maintenir paix entre les siens'). Rather than caring for them as a father would care for his children, the tyrant resembles the blood-thirsty wolf ('Le Tyran est comme un loupe ravissant prest à respandre le sang... Mais au contraire le bon Prince a ses subjectz en telle observation qu'un bon pere de famille a ses enfants').⁶⁷⁶

Poor kingdom administration was a topic also discussed in *Histoires prodigieuses*, which was published later than *Chelidonium*.⁶⁷⁷ The just and wise king will always be remembered, but the cruel king who indulged in pleasure and used his power to serve his own ends ('un roy monstrueux', as Boaistuau described him) will quickly be forgotten.

4.1.3. The monarch as guardian of peace and defender of the faith

As mentioned earlier, one of the basic responsibilities of a king was the protection of the realm and his subjects. For this, he was commander of the army and needed to be a skilled fighter. Although the image of the warrior-king was medieval in its origin, it was also greatly celebrated in Renaissance Europe, as demonstrated by the examples of the German emperor Charles V and the French king Francis I.⁶⁷⁸ This notion was supported not only by a systematic program of royal imagery but also by literary

⁶⁷⁶ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, pp. 102v-103r.

⁶⁷⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), pp. 11r-13r.

⁶⁷⁸ Knecht, R. J., *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: the Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge, 1994).

works which exalted the military virtues of sovereigns.⁶⁷⁹ Boaistuau detested warfare, although he recognised the fact that it was a necessity and a good ruler had to be prepared to go to war. Instead, the Breton writer was an advocate of peace, which he deemed as the ‘source et fontaine de toute felicité humaine’. For him, the ideal ruler was not a warrior-king, but one who could safeguard peace. This is why he devoted a chapter in *Chelidonium Tigurinus* particularly to the discussion of peace and war (‘de paix et de guerre’).⁶⁸⁰ The main point was that peace elevated the prestige of rulers, and made them more attractive to the people: ‘il n’y a aucune chose qui mieux entretienne et conserue la dignité du Prince, que de maintenir ses subjectz en paix’.⁶⁸¹ War, on the contrary, resulted in hatred and thus instability during the reign of the king: ‘Le Monarque est enuié, et le vulgaire estant vexé de subsidies conçoit haine contre luy, tout est plein de murmures et imprecations’.⁶⁸²

To further emphasise his point, that monarchs should strive for peace and not for war, Boaistuau proceeded to make a comparison between them. This was a common topic at the time but also a literary exercise, offering the opportunity to writers and poets to cultivate their talent.⁶⁸³ Peace assured the well-being of human societies and their progress in all aspects of life:

⁶⁷⁹ On royal imagery see Jordan, A., *Visualizing Kingship in the Windows of the Sainte-Chapelle* (Turnhout, 2002). For an example of contemporary treatise on military virtues see Machiavelli’s *The Art of War* (1521).

⁶⁸⁰ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, Chapter XII:
Argument du traité qui s’ensuit.

AV LECTEUR.

Lecteur, suyuant la promesse que je t’avois faite, ayant mis fin au traite precedent, je t’offre et presente icy le traité de paix et de guerre: pensant par ce moyen avoir satisfait à ce qui appartient, tant à l’entiere formation qu’ à l’ornement et decoration d’une principauté bien accomplie.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108v.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 120v. Boaistuau in *Le Théâtre du monde* described war as one of the sufferings Man had to endure during his lifetime. See Chapter Three.

⁶⁸³ See for instance Ronsard’s poetry on the subject. Also see Lowe, B., *Imagining Peace: A History of Early English Pacifist Ideas, 1340-1560* (University Park, PA, 1997), particularly Chapter 5.

les Citez sont edifiées... les loix sont en vigueur, les Republicques florissent, la religion est maintenue, l'équité est gardé, l'humanité entretenué, les mecaniques s'exercent... les riches prosperent, les disciplines et sciences sont enseignées avec liberté... les citez peuplées, le monde multiplié.⁶⁸⁴

The significance of peace was demonstrated by laudatory pieces which celebrated the end of war and often praised the monarch for ensuring that all was well within the kingdom. For example, the French poet Jacques Grevin (who dedicated a poem to Boaistuau) wrote his *Chant de joie de la Paix* (1559) to commemorate the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis. On the other hand, war for Boaistuau was not a celebration of Life but quite the opposite. It required the hard labour of unhappy citizens, exhausted the financial provisions and human resources of the kingdom, and resulted in destruction:

Les villes et villages brulez... Les ars sont refroidis... Les vierges sont violées... l'humanité est esteincte, l'équité est supprimé, la religion contemnée, les lieux sacrez sont prophanez, le peuple pillé, les pauvres vieillardz sont captifz... les ieunes se desbordent à toute espece de mal.⁶⁸⁵

War was rooted in the ambition and avarice of monarchs who wished to gain more wealth and extend their rule, vices which were incompatible with the princely model Boaistuau envisioned, as has been mentioned above.

However, it was not Nature's intention that Man should be warlike. As a proof of this, the writer compared him to animals – as in *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*.⁶⁸⁶ As opposed to animals who were born with equipment provided by Nature, useful for fighting and defending themselves (such as wings, claws, and sharp

⁶⁸⁴ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, p. 109r.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 120r-120v. Many contemporary writers published related treatises expressing their reaction to, and condemnation of, their warlike times. An example was Erasmus's *The Complaint of Peace* (1517), which was an oration by Lady Peace, addressing the reader in the first person. In the early seventeenth-century, Thomas Middleton's *The Peace-Maker, or Great Brittaines Blessing* (1619) combined a call to universal peace with a condemnation of the practice of duelling.

⁶⁸⁶ See p. 189.

teeth), Man was born weak and defenceless. However, animals were much better at maintaining peace than Man: ‘la paix est mieux receué et autorisée des autres animaux que des hommes’.⁶⁸⁷ They seemed to respect the universal order of Nature, sustaining the harmony which could be seen in various examples (the four elements, the unity of body and soul, the trees and plants, the minerals). On the contrary, Man, to whom peace was more important than all other creatures, despised it. He was gifted with a beautiful body and the abilities to speak and think, but was incapable of controlling his passions and of maintaining any kind of concord. Instead of living in peace and harmony, he could be overtaken by ambition and desire, waging war against his own kind: ‘nature nous conuie et esguillonne par tant de moyens, et avec tant d’instrumens de son infinie prouidence à nous entr’aimer, que nous deussions rougir de honte d’espandre ainsi le sang les vns des autres’.⁶⁸⁸ This bellicose side of Man’s character was evident in all aspects of society, even in intellectual life and the study of Philosophy.⁶⁸⁹ But it acquired its fuller form on the battlefield, and Boaistuau provided detailed descriptions of battle scenes:

les yeux tous ardans et estincelans d’ire, avecques vne tempeste d’armes, vn horrible tonnerre de canons: puis vn assault furieux tout plein de rage, vne boucherie de morz, les vns desmembrez, les autres à demy mortz tumbez sur les autres. Les campagnes couuertes de charongnes, les fleuues tous teinctz de sang humain.⁶⁹⁰

Boaistuau examined the horror and desolation of war in order to contrast it to peace. However, he did not limit his rhetoric to this but appealed explicitly to monarchs to

⁶⁸⁷ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, pp. 109r-v.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 113r.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 114r: ‘Car l’vne Academie combat contre l’autre: les Ultramontains, avec les Citramontains, le Rhetoricien, avec le Dialecticien: Le Peripateticien, avec le Platonicien’.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 119v. Such descriptions found their way into contemporary image-making and art. See for instance Peter Bruegel’s *The Triumph of Death* (c. 1562), which contains several scenes of war atrocities. For more details on the subject see Hale, J. R., *Artists and Warfare in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 1990); Cuneo, P. F. (ed.), *Artful Armies, Beautiful Battles: Art and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2002).

keep the peace: ‘Maintenant ie conuertiz mes parolles à vous Monarques, Empeeurs Roys, Princes et autres de l’authorité desquelz le pauure peuple despend’.⁶⁹¹ Boaistuau’s pacific theory was based on a theological argument. Christ did not come to Earth to reconcile Man with God as a triumphant warlord but as a Prince of Peace: ‘nous annonçans la venue de Jesus Christ en terre, ne nous promettent pas un Satrape, un expugateur de Republics, un bellateur ou triomphateur, mais un Prince de paix’.⁶⁹² Imitating His example, Christian rulers should not only lead a life of peace themselves but also encourage it for their subjects. Man was destined to live in peace as he was promised in Scripture, and the goal of a good ruler was to safeguard this objective. For support, Boaistuau cited the Biblical authorities of St. Paul and St. John, as well as Church writers who exhorted monarchs to choose peace and unity rather than war. His pacific calling communicated a moralising message addressed not only to kings but to humanity:

Mais ie vous prie, Chrestiens, quel tesmoignage d’amitié, quand il [Jesus christ] nous exhorte de laisser l’oblation que nous voulons laisser à son temple, si nous nous recordons d’auoir quelque haine ou rancune contre nostre prochain, et cherchions les moyens de nous reconcilier à luy deuant que l’offrir!⁶⁹³

Boaistuau’s appeal for peace, however, was not only affected by Christian morality, but also by the values of sixteenth-century humanism. Neoplatonic philosophy endorsed the idea of peace and stability as means of attaining true harmony, and influenced the work of many Renaissance writers. Similarly, Boaistuau successfully

⁶⁹¹ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, p. 127r.

⁶⁹² *Ibid*, p. 114v. No doubt Boaistuau refers to Isaiah 9:6: ‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**’. Bold font is mine.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 117v.

blended the classical and Christian traditions to convey his message.⁶⁹⁴ Thus, it is reasonable to view his exhortation to avoid warfare and secure peace as a humanist's appeal to Henry II to put a stop to the incessant Italian Wars, and bring an end to a series of disastrous conflicts which had been continuously engaged since 1494.⁶⁹⁵ However, the pacifist vision of humanists such as Boaistuau never came to pass. After the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis was signed in 1559, the French kingdom was ravaged from within by the Wars of Religion.

Beside their attribute as guardians of peace, Christian monarchs cultivated the image of the champion of militant orthodoxy. During a period which saw ongoing religious transformations taking place over most of Europe, and Ottoman expansion reaching the walls of Vienna, the protection of true faith was seen not only as another responsibility of the king toward his subjects, but as something higher. It was a summons from God to defend Christianity, and a challenge to the ruler to prove his own Christian convictions. In the case of the Ottoman threat in particular, Christian rulers had to put aside the confessional politics of their lands and unite against the common enemy. A good example which embodied this view was Emperor Maximilian II. However, there had been times when political or financial advantages caused Christian powers to take a different stand, as in the case of the business partnerships between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, or Francis I's alliance with Suleiman the Magnificent against Charles V.⁶⁹⁶ The continuous threat posed by the Ottomans throughout the sixteenth century also impacted on contemporary literature,

⁶⁹⁴ See Zambaglione, G., *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity* (Notre Dame, IN, 1973), which examined how the ideal of peace in antiquity was transplanted into the Christian idea of peace.

⁶⁹⁵ The most complete study on the Italian Wars is Mallett, M., *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2004). The conflicts ended only in 1559 when Henry II signed the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis.

⁶⁹⁶ For background on French relationships with the Ottoman Empire see Rouillard, C. D., *The Turk in French History, Thought and Literature (1520-1660)* (Paris, 1940).

with many works focusing on the malice and immorality of ‘infidels’ and their ‘false’ religion.⁶⁹⁷ For instance, Guillaume Postel in his *Alcorani seu legis Mahometi et evangelistarum concordiae liber* (1543) examined Islam as a Christian heresy. Boaistuau followed the same tradition in *Chelidonium Tigurinus*, writing a relevant chapter in defence of Christianity and against ‘la fauce doctrine de Mahomet’.⁶⁹⁸ The main point was that rulers should protect their subjects against the spread of heresies, and maintain the true faith.

The idea of war against the enemies of Christianity might appear contradictory when considering Boaistuau’s appeal for peace examined earlier, but it was legitimised by the higher cause of protecting Christian kingdoms and Christian religion. The doctrine of just-war was a combination of ethical and political thinking, and was based on the notion that violence was sometimes necessary in order to protect the innocent. Nearly all works related to this notion were written by Christian theologians, with one of the earliest and most notable examples being St. Augustine’s *City of God*. The just-war doctrine was also expressed in the idea of Holy War during the Crusades. It was the Pope who religiously and politically sanctioned the military campaigns visited on the Holy Land, the Balkans and elsewhere.⁶⁹⁹ The Catholic Church retained this role,

⁶⁹⁷ See Dimmock, M., *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2005); *idem*, *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions, 1400-1600* (London, 2008), Chapters 3 and 5. As described in Chapter Three, the expansion of the Ottomans was also associated with millenarian theories.

⁶⁹⁸ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, Chapter VII: Les Princes sur toutes choses doyent avoir l’estat de la religion Chrestienne pour recommandé, et se monstrent zelateur d’icelle, et doyent estre curieux de seurement chastier les blasphemés, et de purger leurs royaumes d’heresies, avec plusieurs exemples de leurs sects, ensemble de la fauce doctrine de Mahomet, et de sa vie et mort, et par quel moyen il suborna tant de peuples. Et comme plusieurs Empereurs apres avoir persecute les fidelles de l’Eglise de Dieu, n’ont peu eschaper la juste vengeance de son ire, mais sont morts à la fin honteusement.

⁶⁹⁹ The best study on the subject remains Russell, F. H., *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1975).

actively endorsing the doctrine during the early modern period.⁷⁰⁰ Martin Luther recast its basic features in the sixteenth century, and although there were differences between the Catholic, Protestant and Reformed versions, the principal context remained the same.⁷⁰¹ As Christian religion was the essence of a well-ordained kingdom, rulers had to defend it at all costs.

It was for this reason that Boaistuau exhorted them to punish heretics and blasphemers severely: ‘Les Princes ayans pourueu aux choses qui concernent la religion, ilz doiuent donner ordre et police de chastier et corriger vne infinité de pariuremens, et blaphemes qui regnent entre le peuple, avec telle seuerité, qu’ilz se recentent de leur iustice’.⁷⁰² Later, he added: ‘ilz doiuent employer leur principal estude, et s’euertuer à toute extremité de **nettoyer leurs Royaumes de loups rauissans, faux prophetes, seducteurs, faulx docteurs, hypocrites, heretiques**’.⁷⁰³

To further stress this point, Boaistuau referred to the persecutions and hardships meted out to the first Christian Church by Roman Emperors such as ‘Neron, Domitian, Traian, Adrian, les Antonis, Seure, et Diocletian’, and to the various heresies (‘Ariens, Pelagiens, Manichées, Euuoniens, Macedoniens, Nestoriens, Entichiens’) which endangered its very existence.⁷⁰⁴ Such examples provided additional material to justify the protection of the true faith, and at the same time praised the ability and power of Christianity to survive. However, no threat had ever posed greater danger for the Church’s survival, according to the writer, than the

⁷⁰⁰ See Chambers, D. S., *Popes, Cardinals and War: The Military Church in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe* (London, 2006).

⁷⁰¹ See Francisco, A., *Martin Luther and Islam: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics* (Leiden, 2007).

⁷⁰² Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, p. 54r.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 55r. Bold font is mine.

⁷⁰⁴ The persecutions inflicted on the first Christian Church were the subject of Boaistuau’s *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, which will be examined in the following section.

spread of Islam, the history and consolidation of which was discussed at length.⁷⁰⁵ Faithful to humanist practices, Boaistuau listed several historical works he had used, including a translation of the Quran by a certain ‘Alcinandius son interprete’.⁷⁰⁶ Among his sources, he also cited travel accounts of contemporaries, such as Pierre Belon who had visited Turkey.⁷⁰⁷

For his account of Islam, Boaistuau followed a timeline starting with Mohammed’s birth and early years, his divine call by the revelation of Archangel Gabriel and the writing of the Quran, to the spread of the Islamic religion through the means of continuous wars. He explained its success as a divine punishment for the sins of Christians: ‘Ce n’est point chose nouvelle, que le Seigneur execute sa iustice contre les siens par le tirans, et mechans, comme estoit Mahomet’.⁷⁰⁸ He also briefly examined the structure and contents of the Quran, focusing primarily on its imitation of Biblical passages. No doubt, the intention was to demonstrate the falseness of the Islamic religion, a view supported by a multitude of ancient writers. For Boaistuau, the Quran was a work of heretical ideas, with no more truth in it than in an Aesop’s fable: ‘je croy qu’il n’y en a aucun, ou les jugemens de Dieu soyent mieux manifestez contre ceux qui ne tiennent compte de la vraye lumiere que l’Alcoram: attendu que le

⁷⁰⁵ Boaistuau noted that although the origin of Islam ‘est raconté diuersement par plusieurs auteurs’, his own account was the fulfillment of a promise he had given to ‘vn gentil homme domestique de la maison de monseigneur le Duc de Neuers’ to write on the subject. There is no information regarding this man and who he might be.

⁷⁰⁶ Latin translations of the Quran had appeared in manuscript form since the Crusades, and the first printed version was published in Basel in 1543, edited by Thomas Bibliander. A very interesting study exploring the Latin translations and the attitudes of the translators is Burman, T. E., *Reading the Qur’ān in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia, 2009). The first French translation, by André du Ryer, was printed in 1647.

⁷⁰⁷ On Pierre Belon see Chapter Five. On the relationships between France and Asia, and the impact of these cross-cultural contacts on sixteenth-century France see McCabe, I. B., *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade Exoticism and the Ancien Regime* (Oxford, 2008).

⁷⁰⁸ Boaistuau, P., *L’Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*, p. 65r.

lisant tu y trouves moins d'approche de verité, que tu ne ferois en une fable d'Esope'.⁷⁰⁹

This polemic emphasised the role of the ruler as defender of the faith and protector of the Church. It can be understood not only as a general warning against the Ottoman threat and Islam, 'le plus grand enemy de l'Eglise de Dieu qui fut jamais', but as a warning, particularly to the French king, to safeguard Christian religion and creed.⁷¹⁰ As all good rulers must abide according to the law of God, they must be ready to protect it by protecting the Church, which embodied the divine law on earth: 'Les bons Princes, et vrais seruiteurs de Dieu, à lexemple de ce bon Empereur Constantin seront protecteurs, deffenseurs, tuteurs, et conseruateurs et membres de l'Eglise'.⁷¹¹ In this respect, the French king who bore the title of 'the most Christian king' and had sworn an oath to defend the Catholic faith and eradicate heresy from the kingdom, had a special role to play. Henry II set up a special court around 1547 devoted to the prosecution of heresy (the infamous *Chambre ardente*), promoted a more legalistic ban on Protestant and Reformed ideas with the edict of Châteaubriant in 1551, and tightened his policy with the edict of Compiègne in 1557, which applied the death penalty without exception to all heretics.⁷¹² Viewed in the light of such measures, Boaistuau's appeals echoed the turbulent religious climate of his time and revealed his alignment to the royal policies and his support to the Crown.

⁷⁰⁹ Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, p. 57r.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 65v.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 69r.

⁷¹² For a first insight to the heresy policies of Henry II see Knecht, R. J., *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 211-213, and 239-244.

4.2. Historical writing and the *Histoire de persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*

The *Histoire de persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* was Boaistuau's sole work to be published posthumously in 1572. The unfinished text was finally completed and edited by Pierre de Cistiers, one of Boaistuau's friends.⁷¹³ The dedicatee of the work, 'Monsieur de Cotte Blanche receveur des aydes et tailles', belonged also to the Breton writer's wide social circle, as De Cistiers explicitly noted in his salutation: 'Seigneur de Launay nostre commun amy'.⁷¹⁴ The editor also commented on the quality of his work, which he did not deem equal to that of Boaistuau: 'le faire venir au iour non en telle perfection que si le Seigneur de Launay y eust mis la derniere main'.⁷¹⁵ Nevertheless, the book proved to be a successful commercial venture, with three editions over a period of fourteen years since its first publication.⁷¹⁶ The first reason for this success was the eminence of Boaistuau's name, since his status as a writer was preserved for many years after his death. As the printer Robert le Magnier noted in the opening pages of the book, 'i'estime que le nom du feu Sieur de Launay, par ses doctes oeuvres qui t'ont esté souuente fois presentées, t'est si bien cogneu, et non seulement à toy et à nostre France, ains à tout l'vniuers'.⁷¹⁷ The second reason was due to the nature of the work, and the period of its publication. Boaistuau compiled a historical account of the persecutions and heresies of the early Church at the time of the Roman Empire. Seen against the backdrop of the escalation of political and religious turbulence in mid sixteenth-

⁷¹³ See Chapter One, footnote 171.

⁷¹⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* (Paris, R. le Magnier, 1576), p. 2r.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3v-4r.

⁷¹⁶ On the publishing history of this title see Chapter Two, section 2.1.6.

⁷¹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 5r.

century France, the exposition of such themes surely appealed to an anxious Catholic readership. Although drafted before the writer's death in 1566 (which suggests it was probably influenced by the First War of Religion in 1562-1563), the book was first printed in the same year as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which no doubt was a clever commercial move by the publishers – and an additional reason for its successful reception. Therefore, *Histoire de persecutions* can be seen as a work aiming to bolster the Catholic faith. Thus, in the opening pages Le Magnier saluted Boaistuau as 'vn Chrestien et ferme zelateur de l'Eglise'.⁷¹⁸

However, as well as its religious content and polemical style, the book was also an example of historical writing, addressed to a growing public interested in the study of history. It was Boaistuau's sole work of an exclusively historical nature, and was based on a great number of sources and authorities of ecclesiastical history, such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, St. Basil the Great, Nicephorus Callistus, Cornelius Tacitus, Tertullian, and Peter Abelard. The main text was divided into three parts, and each part was subdivided into chapters. Whilst narrating the persecutions of the first Church, it also examined the works and days of Roman Emperors and aspects of Roman history. This preoccupation with and admiration of the past was shared by many *literati*. For example, Montaigne in his *Essays* exclaimed his wish to have lived in the 'glorious' times of the Roman republic.⁷¹⁹ Such topics were part of a wide variety of historical themes, created by the separation of the medieval chronicle (the definitive form of history book before the sixteenth century) into different historical genres. Their diffusion in a rapidly changing book market revealed the existence of a demand for

⁷¹⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 4r.

⁷¹⁹ Montaigne (ed. M. A. Screech), *The Complete Essays* (London, 1993), III, 9.

historical works of various kinds used in various ways, as Daniel R. Woolf has shown.⁷²⁰ This interest of both readers and writers in books about history may not have been as wide as in the following century, when history had taken a more prominent share of the market, but it permitted the publication and circulation of a wide variety of historical titles, and thus enabled the birth of new approaches and methods for the study and uses of history.⁷²¹

As the following section will show, Boaistuau successfully combined his genuine interest in historical writing and his aim of strengthening the Catholic faith, by compiling a book of historical content into a theological framework. His account of the afflictions of the first Church, an idea which had already appeared in *Le Théâtre du monde* ('Du temps que l'Eglise estoit pauvre, chetive, persecutée et fourragée par les tyrans et par les infideles') was a work of historical scholarship and at the same time a religious treatise of polemical nature.⁷²²

4.2.1. The notion of history and the writing of ecclesiastical history

The sixteenth century was a time of great historical research and reconstruction in France, with roots in humanism and the recovery of a multitude of historical texts by Ancient Greek and Roman writers, which combined a sense of continuity with the past as well as new concepts of understanding and writing about history. As Robert J. W. Evans wrote

⁷²⁰ Woolf, D. R., *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000). See also Chapter Two.

⁷²¹ For a general introduction on early modern historical writing and the multiple senses of the term 'history' at the time see Grafton, A., 'The Identities of History in Early Modern Europe: Prelude to a Study of the *Artes Historicae*', in Pomata, G., Siraisi, N. G. (eds), *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), pp. 41-74. See also his *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁷²² Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 152.

The sixteenth century was in a sense the first fully historical age; where the Renaissance had revived antique types because they possessed eternal validity, the years that followed introduced a historical dimension and a message of history, whether in Vasari, or Baronius, or Sarpi. The ‘ancients’ and ‘moderns’ were not yet in dispute, but guide-lines were being laid down within which their debate could have meaning.⁷²³

The view which considered history as a moral lesson was still widely held at the time. Accounts of past events and people did not only provide information but served as examples with didactic purposes, leading not only to an understanding of the present and an avoidance of mistakes but also to the improvement of human nature. In addition to this understanding, humanists formulated a new perspective of history. Adopting the models of historians such as Polybius and Cicero, they regarded the course of historical events as a series of recurring cycles. This was evident in works such as Louis le Roy’s *La vicissitude ou varieté des choses en l’univers* (1575). The belief that knowledge of the past could be used to interpret the ever-changing cycle of events was rooted in the idea that everything which has passed would return again, in one form or another. After all, it was the same vision of rebirth which characterised the Renaissance as a cultural and historical movement. This new perspective of history was evident in works such as François Baudouin’s *De institutione historia universa* (1561) and Jean Bodin’s *Méthode de l’histoire* (1566), which represented a turn from the oratorical character to a more methodical approach of historical research and writing.⁷²⁴ Similarly, La Popelinière’s *Histoire des Histoires* (1599), the first

⁷²³ Evans, R. J. W., *Rudolph II and his World* (Oxford, 1973), p. 272.

⁷²⁴ François Baudouin (1520-1573) was a French jurist and historian. He also engaged in contemporary confessional politics. See Kelley, D. R., ‘The Alliance of Law and History: François Baudouin Defines the Art of History’ in his *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law and History in the French Renaissance* (New York, 1970), Chapter V. On Bodin’s work see Couzinet, M-D., *Histoire et méthode à la Renaissance: une lecture de la methodus de Jean Bodin* (Paris, 1996).

comprehensive history of historiography, was another step in the same direction and in the search for a historical method.⁷²⁵

Historical writing had many different forms since the notion of history at the time was vague and varied, and still associated with other disciplines. The study of history was not yet an autonomous science, at least in the modern meaning of the word. As Claude-Gilbert Dubois wrote, ‘Au début de siècle, l’histoire ne donne pas lieu à un enseignement autonome. Son étude est subordonnée à celle d’autres disciplines, comme la rhétorique dans le *trivium*, la cosmologie et l’astronomie dans le *quadrivium*’.⁷²⁶ As a result, along with chronicles and ecclesiastical and legal records, works such as Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia Universalis* appeared, which combined history and geography. Joseph Scaliger’s *De emendatione temporum* (1583) used classical historical texts alongside astronomy, in an attempt to create a chronology of the ancient world.⁷²⁷ A different but closely-related direction to historical research was the collection and editing of documents, such as Pierre Pithou’s *Adversaria* (1564), a book with a local historical character.⁷²⁸ Such works made available classical sources never previously examined, resulting in the exposition of a rich historical culture. These advancements had an impact on literary creations, providing writers with inspiration, research frameworks and material.

⁷²⁵ On this work see Huppert, G., *L’idée d’histoire parfaite* (Paris, 1972), pp. 141-156. Lancelot Voisin de La Popelinière (1541-1608) was a Protestant historian who took part in the Wars of Religion. His other known work, *Les trois mondes* (1582), examined the history of the exploration of the globe.

⁷²⁶ Dubois, C.-G., ‘Regards sur la conception de l’histoire en France au XVIe siècle’, in Jones-Davies, M. T. (ed.), *L’histoire au temps de la Renaissance* (Klincksieck, 1995), p. 112. Also see his *La Conception de l’histoire au XVIe siècle (1560-1610)* (Paris 1977).

⁷²⁷ Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) was a French scholar who worked on archaic Latin and historical criticism. He is remembered for expanding the notion of ancient history to include not only Ancient Greeks and Romans but also Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians and Jews. See Grafton, A., *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1983, 1993).

⁷²⁸ Pierre Pithou (1539-1596) was a French lawyer and scholar. Beside his *Adversaria*, he also published editions of classical authors and was a great compiler of documentary sources for French history, a trend which proved extremely fashionable in the seventeenth century.

History was a frequently appearing theme in Boaistuau's work. For example, in his *L'histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* and *Le Théâtre du monde* he examined topics such as the rise and fall of ancient kingdoms, and commented on the reign of past rulers such as Alexander the Great. All his books contained numerous citations from historical works of antiquity, and authorities such as Herodotus and Plutarch were often used in support of his arguments.

However, history did not only serve as a basis for scholarly research but was used for political purposes, and particularly the praise of the French kingdom and monarchy, through the writing of an archive-based history of France's past (see first section of this chapter). This concept predated the sixteenth century, as proved by the royally-commissioned project of *Grandes chroniques de France* (1477), and Robert Gaguin's *Compendium de origine et gestis Francorum* (1495).⁷²⁹ However, the principal model imitated by later works of the kind was Paolo Emilio's *De rerum gestis francorum* (1516). Another example was Etienne Pasquier's *Les Recherches de la France* (1560), a compendium of customs, historical facts and legends, which investigated the origins of France focusing particularly on the Gallo-Franco past.⁷³⁰ Such titles, published in the vernacular, were not only works of historical scholarship assembling monumental material, but celebrations of a glorious past and declarations of a proud present.⁷³¹ Scholars have identified contemporary works of history with a growing

⁷²⁹ On the *Grandes croniques de France* see Chapter Two, footnote 363. Robert Gaguin (1423-1501) was a monk who worked for the French Crown. He also published French translations of Caesar and Livy, and encouraged the first literary endeavours of Erasmus when he was in Paris.

⁷³⁰ See Kelley, D. R., 'The Rise of Medievalism: Etienne Pasquier Searches for a National Past', in his *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*, Chapter X. Also see Dahlinger, J. H., *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History* (New York, 2007).

⁷³¹ The jurist and poet Louis le Caron wrote: 'Frenchmen, you have enough examples in your own histories without searching those of the Greeks and the Romans'. Cited in Kelley, D. R., 'Louis Le Caron Philosophe', in his *History, Law and the Human Sciences: Medieval and Renaissance Perspectives* (London, 1984). On the relationship between literary culture and the formation of a

sentiment of ‘national’ pride. As Donald R. Kelley has noted, ‘historical reconstruction went beyond the old genre of political narrative in the style of Livy and Leonardo Bruni, for it depended on exploitation of documentary sources and the formation of a national – in most cases royalist – canon’.⁷³² The medieval chronicles and their universal perspective of history were replaced by historical works of a national character: ‘L’histoire nationale au XVIe siècle remplace l’histoire universelle du Moyen Age’.⁷³³ Titles such as Bernard de Girard’s *L’histoire de France* (1576), François de Belleforest’s *Grandes annales et Histoire général de France* (1579), and Jean de Serres’s *Véritable inventaire de l’histoire de France* (1598) were attempts to define the idea of France and eulogize the grandeur of French monarchy. However, their publication during the Wars of Religion had an additional propagandistic role in that they endorsed the idea of a common past, which supported not only the image and ambitions of a powerful king but also the political harmony of the kingdom.

Besides serving politics, history was also used for religious ends. As shown by the example of *Commentariorum de statu religionis et reipublicae* (1555) by Johann Sleidan, history was used by Protestants to create a common identity which could support their confession and its legitimacy.⁷³⁴ Although it was commissioned by Protestant intellectuals, Sleidan’s work was also referenced by Catholics, becoming the standard account of the Reformation. Similarly, Pierre de la Place’s *Histoire de notre temps* (1566) was an additional example of a view of history serving the

national identity in Renaissance France see Hampton, T., *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century: Inventing Renaissance France* (Ithaca, 2001).

⁷³² Kelley, D. R., ‘France’, in Porter, R., Teich, M. (eds), *The Renaissance in National Context* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 134.

⁷³³ Postert, K., *Tragédie historique ou Histoire en Tragédie? Les sujets d’histoire moderne dans la tragédie française (1550-1715)* (Tübingen, 2010), p. 25.

⁷³⁴ Johan Sleidan (1506-1556) was a German historian. On his work see Kess, A., *Johann Sleidan and the Protestant Vision of History* (Aldershot, 2008).

Protestant cause.⁷³⁵ As Alexandra Kess noted, ‘his work was commissioned by a political authority to set forth the history of a religious group in a process of self-definition and justification’.⁷³⁶ The association of history with Christianity was also promoted by humanists. For instance, Guillaume Budé’s *De Transitu hellenismi ad christianismum* (1535) united ancient learning and Christian faith, examining how the study of Ancient Greek history and philosophy could be used for the interpretation of the history of Christianity. This particular work also revealed Budé’s defence of royal policies of persecution. At a time of religious transformation, history was used by Catholics and Protestants alike in support of their respective arguments. The notion of a community of the elect who had suffered but eventually emerged victorious, found its application in historical works through the integration of the history of the first Church. Being an account of Christian persecutions and the spread of heresies, this topic communicated evocative messages to sixteenth-century readers. The linear scheme of persecuted Church – militant Church – triumphant Church served as confirmation for Boaistuau’s *Histoire de persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique* which was structured around this same concept, following the long tradition of ecclesiastical history.

Works of this kind narrated the history of the Church from the time of the Apostles. The first example was deemed to be St. Luke’s *Acts of the Apostles*, which examined the history of the Apostolic Age and the spread of Christianity. The first work which set the model of an analytical framework of research to be followed by other writers was Eusebius’s *Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία* (*Historia Ecclesiastica* in Latin), which was

⁷³⁵ Pierre de la Place (c. 1520-1572) was a French Huguenot jurist and historian.

⁷³⁶ Kess, A., *Johann Sleidan and the Protestant Vision of History*, p. 161.

also the first work titled as an ecclesiastical history.⁷³⁷ Eusebius attempted to assemble into a corpus of histories everything written before his time up to the first third of the fourth century, and in this respect his work had similarities to the medieval chronicle. Amongst other examples which stand out were Socrates Scholasticus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which continued from where Eusebius's account had ended and covered the next century, Theodoret of Cyrus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which began from the rise and expansion of Arianism until 429, and Nicephorus Callistus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which took the narrative to 610 and the death of Byzantine Emperor Phocas.⁷³⁸ Besides Byzantium, such works were also written in Western Europe. They did not focus exclusively on ecclesiastical affairs but also contained political and social events. For instance, Orderic Vitalis wrote a thirteen-book *Historia Ecclesiastica*, describing events up to 1142, and focusing on the history of Christianity as well as on contemporary happenings. Similarly, Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* examined the clash between Roman and Celtic Christianity through an exposition of the history of England from the Roman conquest to mid-eighth century.⁷³⁹ Others had more regional perspectives. Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* covered the period between 788 and 1072, exploring the history of the diocese of Hamburg-Bremen and providing information on Northern Germany and Scandinavian history. Flodoard's

⁷³⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263-339) was a historian and Bishop of Caesarea. Apart from his history of the Church, he wrote a chronicle and works of theological nature. For an introduction to his life and work see Kofsky, A., *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Leiden, 2000).

⁷³⁸ Socrates Scholasticus (c. 380-450), a native of Constantinople, was a Byzantine historian and lawyer. His *Historia Ecclesiastica* was first edited by Robert Estienne in Greek in 1544. See for more detail Urbainczyk, T., *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, 1997). On Theodoret of Cyrillus see Chapter Three, footnote 581. Nicephorus Callistus was a fourteenth-century historian and a poet from Constantinople, and the last of the Greek ecclesiastical historians. He also wrote a synopsis of the Scriptures and a list of Constantinople Emperors and Patriarchs.

⁷³⁹ Orderic Vitalis (1075- c. 1142) was an English chronicler and Abbot in Normandy. See for more detail Chibnall, M., *The World of Orderic Vitalis: Norman Monks and Norman Knights* (Woodbridge, 1996). Venerable Bede (672-735) was an English monk and scholar. For an introduction see Blair, P. H., *The World of Bede* (Cambridge, 1970).

Historia Remensis ecclesiae on the other hand, discussed the history of the Church of France in the tenth century through an examination of the Episcopal archives of the Diocese of Reims.⁷⁴⁰

An example of a work on ecclesiastical history written in the early modern period was Albert Crantz's *Metropolis, sive Historia de ecclesiis sub Carolo Magno in Saxonia* (1548), which narrated the ecclesiastical history of Northern Germany.⁷⁴¹ Although works of this kind kept the basic features of their medieval predecessors, they were influenced by humanist research and thus became more critical towards their historical sources. Another factor which had an impact on their compilation was the rise of Protestantism and the religious transformations of the time. This served as an additional incentive to historical research, as writers recovered and popularised sources of Church history, in an effort to provide authenticity to their works and serve their respective religious ends. This can be seen in Flacius Illyricus's *Ecclesiastica Historia* (1559), also known as the *Magdeburg Centuries*, which was probably the best known example from the middle of the century.⁷⁴² Illyricus, with the help of other Lutherans, published a work which served not only as an exposition of the history of the Church up to 1574, but also as a treatise in defence of the Lutheran doctrine. Similarly, Theodore Beza's *Histoire ecclésiastique des Eglises réformées au royaume de France* (1580) recounted the first five decades of the Reformation in France until 1576, while affirming the beliefs of the Reformed Church. Beza composed his book using material from contemporary works and various sources, and

⁷⁴⁰ Adam of Bremen was an eleventh-century German chronicler. Flodard (894-966) was a French chronicler.

⁷⁴¹ Albert Krantz (1450-1517) was a German historian and Professor of Theology at the University of Rostock. He also wrote historical works, including a history of the Saxons and Vandals.

⁷⁴² Matthias Flacius, also known as Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575), was a Lutheran reformer born in Istria. He began his career in Wittenberg but travelled to many places across Europe. See Olson, O. K., *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* (Wolfenbüttel, 2000).

his purpose was to record the events of the first generation of Reformers to preserve them for posterity and for the edification of the faithful.⁷⁴³

4.2.2. The persecution of Christians and the afflicted Church

The narration of the history of the Church was closely associated with the retelling, often in a chronological order, of the various dangers which jeopardised its very existence. These mainly included the measures taken by Roman Emperors against the first Christians, punishing thousands of them by death and declaring the Christian religion illegal, and the spread of various heresies and schisms which endangered the Church's unity. The main purpose behind such accounts was to convey a polemical character to the text, juxtaposing the afflictions of the first Church to the contemporary climate of religious crisis. Thus, works of ecclesiastical history did not only serve as narrations of historical events but as expositions of the Christian doctrine. Intertwined with the narration of Roman history, were the teachings of the Church Fathers, Biblical passages, and analyses of the Scriptures, which communicated the message of endurance and even sacrifice to the true believers who followed Christ. Such ideas were incorporated in the works of Protestant writers, such as Heinrich Bullinger's *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise* (1577).⁷⁴⁴ Similarly, Antoine de Chandieu's *Histoire des persecutions et martyrs de l'eglise de Paris*

⁷⁴³ See Carbonnier-Burkard, M., 'L'Histoire ecclésiastique des églises réformées...: La construction Béziennaise d'un 'corps d'histoire'', in Backus, I. et al (eds), *Théodore de Bèze (1519-1605)* (Geneva, 2007), pp. 145-161. Theodore Beza (1519-1605) was a French theologian and scholar who lived most of his life in Switzerland, and became head of the Reformed Church in Geneva after Calvin's death. He wrote many works of theological and humanist nature. See also Manetsch, S. M., *Theodore Beza and the Quest for Peace in France, 1572-1598* (Leiden, 2000).

⁷⁴⁴ Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) was a Swiss reformer and successor of Zwingli's work in Zurich after 1531. He contributed to Calvin's *Consensus Tigurinus* and to the drafting of the *Second Helvetic Confession* in 1566, and also maintained an extended correspondence with notable men of his day. For an insight to his life and work see Gordon, B., Campi, E. (eds), *Architect of the Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504-1575* (Grand Rapids, 2004).

(1563) was a martyrology in memory of the victims of Catholic persecution.⁷⁴⁵ Since the work was a combination of Chandieu's personal experiences and historical evidence covering the period from 1557 up to the reign of Charles IX, it emphasised the hardships and risks of Protestant worship which had to be endured by the elect of a true Church. This same context was incorporated in the notion of martyrdom as the ultimate commitment to, and sacrifice for, the Protestant faith, as exemplified in Jean Crespin's widely circulated *Histoire des martyrs*.⁷⁴⁶

The Protestant rhetoric explaining the persecutions inflicted by the Catholics as works of the Antichrist against the righteous, was not left unanswered by Catholics. Works of a polemical nature appeared, employing the same arguments as had been used by Protestants to refute them. As Luc Racaut has demonstrated, Catholics were equally concerned with the impact of propaganda in print and the encouragement of public opinion in favour of their cause – that of defending the unity of the Church. Many pamphlets were printed, particularly after the Amboise conspiracy in 1560, which identified Protestants as heretics and warned of their plans to usurp the power and abolish monarchy.⁷⁴⁷ Other works, such as Caesar Baronius's *Annales Ecclesiastici* published between 1588 and 1607, attempted to re-write the history of the Church from a Catholic perspective.⁷⁴⁸ Baronius narrated the history of the Church from the birth of Christ up to the end of the twelfth century, based on previously unused material from the Vatican archives. Therefore, this work can also be viewed as part of

⁷⁴⁵ Antoine de Chandieu (c. 1534-1591) was a French theologian and poet. He became pastor of the Reformed congregation in Paris, but later fled to Switzerland. See Barker, S., *Protestantism, Poetry and Protest: The Vernacular Writings of Antoine de Chandieu (c. 1534-1591)* (Aldershot, 2009).

⁷⁴⁶ Jean Crespin (c. 1520-1572) was a French Protestant lawyer and printer who settled in Geneva.

⁷⁴⁷ Racaut, L., 'Persecution or Pluralism? Propaganda and Opinion-Forming during the French Wars of Religion', in Bonney, R., Trim, D. J. B. (eds), *Persecution and Pluralism: Calvinists and Religious Minorities Early Modern Europe, 1550-1700* (Bern, 2006), pp. 65-88. See also his *Hatred in Print, o.c.*

⁷⁴⁸ Caesar Baronius (1538-1607) was an Italian Cardinal. His *Annales* were written at the request of Philip Neri, as an answer to Flacius Illyricus's *Magdeburg Centuries* – see p. 237.

the effort of the Catholic Church to re-establish the historical basis of its authority. As Baronius noted in his preface, ‘nothing in the Church seems so far to have been so much neglected, as a true, certain, exact and diligently researched narration of Ecclesiastical history’.⁷⁴⁹ Boaistuau’s *Histoire de persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique* should be examined in the same light. It was not only a work of humanist research based upon a long historical tradition, but an attempt to bolster the Catholic faith, written against the backdrop of the consolidation of the Reformed ideas and the religious tensions which led to the Wars of Religion. Boaistuau was surely alarmed by events such as the Amboise conspiracy in 1560, and by episodes of iconoclasm and civic tumult which occurred in the major French cities.⁷⁵⁰ For him, such incidents were understood as proofs of the Huguenot danger which could overturn the stability of the kingdom and threaten the unity of Catholic faith. Therefore, Boaistuau’s narrative of the persecutions of the first Church can be interpreted as an attempt to show ‘l’ardeur et le zele de l’Eglise ancienne’, and thus re-assure Catholics of the resilience and endurance of the present Church.⁷⁵¹

The account of the persecutions of Christians during the time of the Roman Empire occupied the first part of *Histoire de persecutions*. Boaistuau began by describing the conversion and work of Paul the Apostle, and then the works and sufferings of the Twelve Apostles, with particular reference to Peter, John, James (son of Zebedee), Thomas, Matthew, Andrew, James (son of Alphaeus), and Bartholomew. They were praised as ‘heraux et ambassadeurs’ for the teachings and will of Christ on earth, due

⁷⁴⁹ Cited in Cameron, E., *Interpreting Christian History: The Challenge of the Churches’ Past* (Oxford, 2005), p. 141.

⁷⁵⁰ The Amboise conspiracy was a failed attempt by a group of Huguenots to abduct the young king Francis II. See Barker, S., *Protestantism, Poetry and Protest*, Chapter 3: The Conspiracy of Amboise and the French Reformed Church.

⁷⁵¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 9v.

to their apostolic work of spreading the Gospel. According to Boaistuau, their sacrifices for the greater glory of God preserved the Christian truth forever: ‘par l’effusion de leur sang la semence de l’Euangile demeurast perpetuellement seelée et grauée en noz cueurs’.⁷⁵² By describing the deeds of the Apostles, Boaistuau was able to convey a message of divine intervention and human endurance to his readers. This became clearer in the following chapters, which focused exclusively on the multitude of persecutions of the first Christians by some Roman Emperors. These persecutions were regarded as the work of Satan who, after the death of the Twelve Apostles, corrupted and affected the decisions of the Emperors in order to torment the Christians. Boaistuau noted that besides the examples discussed, there were also other emperors who persecuted Christianity, but he chose to write only about ‘**les dix plus memorables persecuteurs** qu’aye souffert l’Eglise depuis l’aduenement de Iesus Christ’.⁷⁵³ Each account of Christian suffering was accompanied by a short narrative on the life and work of the relevant emperor, which no doubt revealed the author’s interest in history.

The first noted examples of Roman Emperors who persecuted Christians were Nero, Domitian, and Trajan (whose military campaigns were also described). Boaistuau devoted ample space to their various acts and laws against Christianity, such as Trajan’s edict to punish Christians by death if they refused to worship idols: ‘vn Edict vniuersel, lequel contenoit que les Chrestiens qui refuseroyent d’adorer les idoles

⁷⁵² Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 17r. The Catholic Church largely used this idea for its missionary work. Jesuits in particular exploited this metaphor, stressing the point that their vocation was similar to the vocation and training of the Apostles. The best introduction is O’Malley, J. W., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

⁷⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 68v. Bold font is mine. Boaistuau explained ‘memorables’ as the most cruel and violent.

fussent punnis de peine de mort'.⁷⁵⁴ As a result, many Christians were killed, and many churches were deprived of their pastors. It was in the description of Trajan's activities that Boaistuau first inserted the notion of divine punishment of Roman Emperors for their treatment of the Christians. He described diseases and natural disasters (including 'la peste d'Affrique, et la famine d'Espagne' and 'vn treblement de terre') which had occurred during the reign of Trajan as signs of God's wrath for the persecution of His flock.⁷⁵⁵ This understanding of the powers of Nature as a result of divine will (which will be more evident in *Histoires prodigieuses* examined below), proved to be very useful for Boaistuau's polemical message. Although used mainly for moralising purposes, it was used in this case as a warning to Protestants, and as a reassurance to Catholics that their opponents would eventually be defeated because they had distanced themselves from God's word. As he noted in a following chapter on the persecutions under Emperors Valerian and Aurelian, 'le Seigneur qui n'oublie iamais les siens (quoy que sa iustice soit pour vn temps differée)'.⁷⁵⁶

Although for Boaistuau the main cause of the sufferings of Christianity was Satan, who corrupted the Roman Emperors, he occasionally examined persecutions in the light of a ruler's moral degeneration. For instance, in the case of Aurelian he wrote that 'Il vsoit de clemence au commencement, mais il degenera, et persecuta les Chrestiens'.⁷⁵⁷ As seen in the examination of *Chelidonium Tigurinus* earlier, morality was considered an essential virtue for the ideal monarch. Lack of restraint and self-

⁷⁵⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 30v. On Trajan's edict and persecutions see Novak, R. M., *Christianity and the Roman Empire: Background Texts* (Harrisburg, PA, 2001), pp. 46-54, and 120-123.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 32v-33r. Much later, in p. 112v he added to the divine punishment of persecutors: 'Il a renuersé leurs Royaumes, et abbattu par tant et diuerses calamitez leurs peuples florissants'.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 62v.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 64r.

discipline could lead the kingdom towards unhappiness.⁷⁵⁸ This was the reason Boaistuau maintained a more diplomatic stand when it came to Marcus Aurelius's persecution of Christians, since he considered him a moral example and used his works in other books. Thus, he spent more time on Aurelius's life, and examined the measures he had taken both against and in favour of Christians. This preoccupation with the morals of Roman Emperors will be seen as a message of amendment to the reader, as will be shown in the following section. Another feature commonly used by Boaistuau was to list the notable Christian figures that had been killed. For example, the father of Origen died as a result of persecutions instigated by Emperor Severus:

Eusebe liure sixiesme chapite premier et second, descriuant la tyrannie de cest Empereur Seure, fait mention de la constance d'aucuns martirs dignes de memoire, qui souffrirent soubz l'Empereur Seure en Alexandrie, entre lesquels estoit Leonide pere d'Origene.⁷⁵⁹

Similarly, three more notable Christians were killed under Emperor Decius: 'En ceste persecution trois notables personnages eurent beaucoup à souffrir, Denis Euesque d'Alexandrie, S. Cyprian, et Origene'.⁷⁶⁰

However, Christian deaths multiplied greatly under Emperor Diocletian, named by Boaistuau as an 'organe du diable'. Commenting on the cruelty of his persecutions he wrote: 'luy seul fist presque autant mourir de Chrestiens que les neuf autres Empereurs qui l'auoient precedé', and later added: 'Ceste persecution de Diocletian fut la derniere et la plus sanglante et cruelle de toutes, et en laquelle il y eut plus de

⁷⁵⁸ See section 4.1.2 in this chapter.

⁷⁵⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 53r. Origen (c. 184-254) was a Christian theologian and scholar, and one of the early Church Fathers. He wrote many theological works, mainly of apologetic and exegetical nature. See Heine, R. E., *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford, 2010).

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 57v.

sang Chrestien respandu'.⁷⁶¹ Diocletian issued four edicts against Christians and their bishops, and the impact of his persecutions was tremendous: 'What made Diocletian's persecution so terrible was its magnitude. It was not a local or brief event, as were the earlier persecutions of Nero, Antoninus, or even Decius; rather it was empire-wide and lasted as long as a decade in some places'.⁷⁶² The multitude of tortures inflicted on Christians was described at length by Boaistuau starting at the opening pages of *Histoire des persecutions*:

Car si tost que quelq'vn estoit si hardy d'ouuir la bouche pour se dire Chrestien, il estoit soudain accusé de crime de laise maiesté, on s'efforçoit de le faire sacrifier aux Idoles, on l'exposoit aux bestes pour estre deuoré, on le faisoit trainer par les rues aux queües des cheuaux, et ainsi rompus et brisez on ordonnoit qu'ils fussent mis en prison dessus des lits faicts de pots cassez, afin que leur repos leur fust plus cruel que le martyre. Quelquefois on les faisoit fouir les metaux, on leur mettoir du plomb fondu sur les parties honteuses... On couppoit à aucuns les oreilles, les mains, et les leures et ortoils des pieds, leur laissant seulement les yeux pour leur faire endurer plus de peine: Aux autres on faisoit mettre des esclies de bois entre le cuir et la chair, aux autres on faisoit ardre leurs corps toute la nuict, afin de les faire seruir de torches et flambeaux aux citoyens de Rome. On faisoit aux autres enueloper leurs corps tous vifs et tous nuds en des peaux de bestes sauuages, afin que le chiens deceuz par la similitude des bestes les deuorassent et meissent en pieces.⁷⁶³

Similar scenes of torture appeared throughout the main text, conveying notions of martyrdom and endurance to Boaistuau's Catholic readers. The sacrifices of the first Christians were not in vain, as true faith was preserved through them: 'la foy estoit si viuement enracinée à leurs coeurs, qu'il ne se respandoit pas une seule goutte de sang en vain'.⁷⁶⁴ This message was intended more as a boost to the morale of Christians and to strengthen the inner-Christian community than to gain converts. The martyrs of

⁷⁶¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 64v.

⁷⁶² Ematinger, J. W., *Daily Life of Christians in Ancient Rome* (Westport, CT, 2007), p. 140. See also De Ste. Croix, G. E. M., 'Aspects of the 'Great' Persecution', *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 47 (1954), pp. 75-113.

⁷⁶³ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, pp. 8r-v.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10r. On the idea and uses of martyrdom at the time of the early Church see Castelli, E. A., *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York, 2004).

the early centuries of Christianity were largely used in the rhetoric of Protestant works, such as Antoine de Chandieu's *Histoire des persecutions et martyrs de l'église de Paris* and Crespin's *Histoire des martyrs* mentioned earlier.⁷⁶⁵ However, they were equally employed by Catholic writers who exalted martyrdom, calling the faithful to submit to the divine will for the restoration of the Church and the greater glory of God.⁷⁶⁶ Competing martyrologies between Catholics and Protestants often used the same ideological weapons. As Susannah Brietz Monta has convincingly shown, 'the generic separation Protestant and Catholic martyrologists attempted to effect was difficult, imprecise and incomplete'. Their works 'often overlap uncomfortably with their polemical opposites in their rhetoric, conventions and assumptions'.⁷⁶⁷ The idea of celebrating those Catholics (mainly nobles and priests) who had been killed in religious warfare as martyrs was more evident in France during the late sixteenth century. However, there were incidents of notable Catholics killed in Boaistuau's time which could have influenced the compilation of his work, such as the assassination of Francis, Duke of Guise, at the 1563 siege of Orleans, which took place during the First War of Religion.⁷⁶⁸

Evocative of the first Christians, early modern martyrdom was 'a revivification of an ancient form of sanctity', as Brad Gregory has aptly described it.⁷⁶⁹ This religious motivation was the reason Protestant, Anabaptist and Catholic martyrs alike were

⁷⁶⁵ See Shepardson, N., *Burning Zeal: The Rhetoric of Martyrdom and the Protestant Community in Reformation France, 1520-1570* (Bethlehem, 2007).

⁷⁶⁶ For an overview of Catholic martyrs in the early modern period see Po-chia Hsia, R., *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (Cambridge, 1998), Chapter 5: The Martyred Church.

⁷⁶⁷ Brietz Monta, S., *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 2.

⁷⁶⁸ On the First War of Religion see Holt, M. P., *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge, 1995), Chapter 2. On martyrs in the context of the Wars of Religion see Nicholls, D., 'The Theatre of Martyrdom in the French Reformation', *Past and Present*, vol. 121 (1988), pp. 49-73.

⁷⁶⁹ Gregory, B., 'Saints and Martyrs in Tyndale and More', in Freeman, T. S., Mayer, T. F. (eds), *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England, c. 1400-1700* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 116. See also his *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

willing to die for their beliefs. Boaistuau noted when examining Diocletian persecutions: ‘Les tyrans estoient si animez, et les Chrestiens **si affectionnez à souffrir** que pour tel iour on en faisoit mourir deux cens, trois cens, quatre cens de varieté de tourmens’.⁷⁷⁰ This view was also associated with the notion of Christ as the first martyr, a common theme in martyrologies. Boaistuau wrote that His sufferings surpassed these of other martyrs, since he sacrificed Himself to save Man: ‘Car qui voudra considerer ce que le fils de Dieu a souffert pendant qu’il a conuersé avec les hommes en la terre, on trouuera que luy seul a excedé tous les autres martyrs du monde’.⁷⁷¹ Therefore, in imitation of His example, Catholics should be ready to accept persecution, torture and death, surrendering their lives to the cause. Martyrs for Boaistuau were a means of strengthening the Church: ‘la mort et le sang des martyrs est la semence de l’Eglise’.⁷⁷² His preoccupation with issues of religious change and conflict, and his anxiety concerning the unity of the Church was also apparent in another central topic of *Histoire des persecutions*: heresies.

4.2.3. The danger of heresies and the bolstering of faith

As examined in the first part of this chapter, the topic of heresies was mentioned in *L’Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus*, where the persecution of heretics was deemed as one of the duties of a perfect prince for safeguarding Christian faith.⁷⁷³ In the case of *Histoire de persecutions*, however, the account of ‘scismes et heresies horribles et pernicieuses en l’Eglise’ had a more central place, since it occupied the entire second

⁷⁷⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, pp. 67r-67v. Bold font is mine.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 13v.

⁷⁷² *Ibid*, p. 72r.

⁷⁷³ See section 4.1.3 in this chapter.

part of the work.⁷⁷⁴ Boaistuau was aware of the threat against the unity of Christianity by the spread of heresies. As in the case of persecutions, he considered them to be works of Satan who was using them to destroy the Church, ‘de la polluer et contaminer d’erreurs, d’heresies, de scismes, diuisions, et opinions scandaleuses et pleines d’impieté’.⁷⁷⁵ His corrupted ideas were spread through ‘faux docteurs’, who were blinded by arrogance: ‘s’ils despouilloient l’amour excessif qu’il portent à eux mesmes, duquel ils sont mortellement enforcelez, ils ne tomberoient en telle frenaisie, pour forger des sectes à part, et inuenter de faulses doctrines’.⁷⁷⁶ They disguised their false teachings with words and phrases from the Scriptures in order to deceive and entice believers. As an example, Boaistuau mentioned Arius, ‘lequel estoit armé de quarante passages de l’escriture sainte, par lesquels il maintenoit le fils de Dieu n’estre de mesme nature avec le Pere’.⁷⁷⁷ The passages used were often taken ‘par ceux de Moyse, par les liures des Roys, par les Pseaulmes, par les Apostres, par les Euangelistes et Prophetes’.⁷⁷⁸ Drawing his reference from the ideological arsenal used by heretics, Boaistuau also noted the first clashes with them by the Church Fathers: St. Jerome against the ‘Luciferiens’, Athanasius against the Arians, and St. Augustine against the Donatists.

Heresies personified an enormous threat against the unity of Christianity, and remained a pressing issue for the Church throughout the ancient and medieval periods.⁷⁷⁹ They were condemned as anathema by the Catholic Church, in an effort to

⁷⁷⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 72v.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 5r. Heresies were characterised by a variety of beliefs and doctrines: ‘vne confusion de toutes religions et doctrines, où toutes meschancetez et impietez abondent’.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 119r. Boaistuau cited Augustine, who considered arrogance as the source of all heresies.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 75r.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 74r.

⁷⁷⁹ For an introduction see Peters, E. (ed.), *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia, 1980); Hunter, I., Laursen, J. C., Nederman, C. J. (eds), *Heresy in Transition: Transforming Ideas of Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005).

constrain their proliferation. For example, the Third Lateran Council (1179) condemned the Waldesians and Cathars, a condemnation later confirmed by Pope Innocent III in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).⁷⁸⁰ Similarly, there was an abundance of trials and executions in the name of heresy in Reformation Europe, a subject analysed by William Monter.⁷⁸¹ Besides ecclesiastical and civic authorities, Christian writers were not slow in addressing the issue. St. Augustine devoted his *Concerning heresies* on the subject, examining eighty-eight different sects and heresies, and the ways they devised many myths into their teachings. In his *City of God* he also noted that Catholic faith was in fact strengthened by the heretics.⁷⁸² Similarly, Isidore of Seville devoted Book VIII in *Etymologies* on heresies, schisms and sects. He defined the terms, and described their birth and ideas.⁷⁸³ In the same spirit, Boaistuau examined the principal heresies which had afflicted the early Church in a series of chapters. He began with Simon Magus, whom he named as the first heretic, chosen by the Devil to bring dissent amongst Christians.⁷⁸⁴ He then discussed heretical views against the Trinity. Firstly, he analysed the teachings of groups of religious dissidents ‘qui ont osé blasphemer contre la personne de Pere’, such as Marcion, the ‘Antropomorphites, qui disoient que Dieu le pere estoit corporel’, and the ‘Patripassiens, par ce qu’ils disoient que Dieu le pere auoit souffert’.⁷⁸⁵ Boaistuau

⁷⁸⁰ On Waldesians see Audisio, G., *The Waldensian Dissent: Persecution and Survival, c.1170 – c.1570* (Cambridge, 1999). On Cathars see Lambert, M. D., *The Cathars* (Oxford, 1998), and Ladurie, E. le Roy, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294-1324* (London, 1990).

⁷⁸¹ Monter, W., ‘Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe, 1520-1565’, in Grell, O. P., Scribner, B. (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 48-64.

⁷⁸² Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVIII, Chapter 51, pp. 833-834: ‘In fact, all the enemies of the Church, however blinded by error or deprived by wickedness, train the Church in patient endurance... Moreover, they train her in benevolence’.

⁷⁸³ Barney, S. A., et al (tr.), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 173ff. The immense success of Isidore’s work played an important role in later approaches to heresy.

⁷⁸⁴ Simon Magus was a Samaritan converted to Christianity, who later had a confrontation with Peter. The sin of simony is named after him. Boaistuau at this point followed the direction of previous writers, such as Irenaeus and Epiphanius, who regarded Simon as the instigator of all heresies. For more detail see Ferreiro, A., *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions* (Leiden, 2005).

⁷⁸⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 84v.

employed many Biblical passages to counter their ideas and dilated on the infinite nature and power of God.

He then turned against the teachings of those heretics who questioned the nature of Christ, and divided them into two groups: those who refused the divine nature of Christ ('ce qui ont touché à sa diuinité'), such as the Ebionites, and those who denied His human nature ('vne autre secte d'heretiques qui... luy attribuoient seulement vne nature diuine') and the fact that He was born of the Virgin Mary, such as Cerdon, Apelles, and the Manicheans. In addition, he referred to a contemporary example, the Anabaptists, who questioned the nature of Christ's body, stating that it was formed from the substances of the elements, thus reviving Apelles's theory: 'Pais par ce que ces ans passez les **Anabaptistes** ont voulu reueiller cest erreur qui estoit reiecté et anathematizé de toute l'Eglise'.⁷⁸⁶ Boaistuau also demonstrated how they misused the Bible to support their false teachings. The Anabaptist minorities were condemned equally by civic and religious authorities of both Catholics and Protestants, as a danger to their own authority and security. Boaistuau was surely aware of the Münster rebellion, in which the Anabaptists took control of the city in 1534 and attempted to establish a theocratic communal regime which lasted only one and a half years.⁷⁸⁷ It was the most categorical example of the danger that heretical groups posed for the well-being and stability of communities, and for the preservation of true Catholic faith. This is why Boaistuau exhorted readers not to follow their example, in attempting to understand and interpret differently the secrets of religion, as this could

⁷⁸⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 90v. Bold font is mine. On Anabaptists see Estep, W. R., *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Grand Rapids, 1996), and Williams, G. H., *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1962), which remains indispensable. Also see Roth, J. D., Stayer, J. M., (eds), *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden, 2007).

⁷⁸⁷ See for more detail Arthur, A., *The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster* (New York, 1999).

promote the spreading of new heresies. The exploration of divine truth was beyond human comprehension: ‘comment est ce que l’homme qui n’est que vn ver de terre de cinq piedz ose rechercher les secretz et l’essence de la diuinité du filz de Dieu...?’⁷⁸⁸ The Peace of Augsburg signed in 1555 reflected the need of Catholics and Protestants alike to safeguard their authorities, since it established a legal basis for the persecution of the Anabaptists.

Continuing his account of the heresies which afflicted the first Church, Boaistuau focused on views against the Holy Spirit (De ceux qui ont blasphemé contre le Saint Esprit). He referred particularly to the Bishop of Constantinople Macedonius, who did not believe in the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In the words of Boaistuau, Macedonius claimed that ‘le saint Esprit estoit moindre que le pere et le fils, et qu’il n’estoit pas de mesme substance avec le pere, mais qu’il estoit vraye creature’.⁷⁸⁹ After refuting this view, the Breton writer lauded the role and magnificence of ‘le saint Esprit’: ‘il est present à tous les sacrements de l’Eglise, ausquels luy mesme donne efficace et les parfaict: il nettoye les ordures et pechez... il nous esleue au ciel, nous retire des vanitez de ce monde’.⁷⁹⁰ This practice of denying false doctrine by argument was common in *Histoire des persecutions*, and reflected Boaistuau’s intention to produce a work of polemical nature which could also serve the purpose of indoctrination. After all, part of the history of heresy was the history of responses made to heretics. The same strategy was employed when refuting attacks on Virgin Mary and the Apostles. Boaistuau noted ‘Eluidius’ (Elpidius?), who questioned the virginity of Mary

⁷⁸⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 87v.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 94r. Boaistuau added that the views of Macedonius were condemned at the Council of Constantinople held during the time of Emperor Theodosius, meaning the Second Ecumenical Council called by Theodosius I in 381. See Davis, L. D., *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Wilmington, 1983), Chapter 3.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 93v.

claiming that she had children with Joseph, and then rejected this view. Perhaps this example was an indirect answer to the Protestant attacks on the Marian devotional practices, which were particularly venerated in medieval and early modern France.⁷⁹¹

Concerning heretics who denied prophets and Apostles, Boaistuau mentioned Apelles, who claimed that ‘tous les Prophetes se contradisoient et qu’il y auoit vne repugnance aperte en leurs propheties’.⁷⁹² Heretic views against Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel were also mentioned, but were passionately disputed: ‘De quelle bouche prononçoient ils tels oracles, si l’esprit de Dieu n’y eust besoigné?’⁷⁹³

For Boaistuau, heresy spread like an infectious disease.⁷⁹⁴ The only way for a Christian to protect himself from the false teachings of heretics was to find refuge in God through penitence and prayer. Boaistuau noted whilst addressing God: ‘Nous te prions d’espandre ta misericorde et bonté paternelle sur ta pauvre Eglise laquelle tu vois de toutes partz affligée d’vne infinité d’heretiques, qui se bandent iournellement contre toy’.⁷⁹⁵ More importantly, protection against heresies came through faith: ‘pour ne tomber en telz inconuenients, et euter si dangereuses pestes, auant toute chose il nous faut prendre bonne et viue racine en Iesus Christ’.⁷⁹⁶ Following the same idea of all previous works of ecclesiastical history, Boaistuau placed Christ at the centre of his theological discourse. The Son of God was the principal feature not only of the

⁷⁹¹ See Warner, M., *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York, 1983), and Heal, B., *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Early Modern Germany: Protestant and Catholic Piety, 1500-1648* (Cambridge, 2007). On the formation and rise of the Marian doctrine see Gambero, L., *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco, 1999).

⁷⁹² Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, pp. 96v-97r.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 98v.

⁷⁹⁴ On this notion see Sandberg, B., ‘The Infection of Heresy: Religious Conquest and Confessional Violence in Early Modern France’, in Jackson, R. (ed.), *(Re) constructing Cultures of Violence and Peace* (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 17-30; Davis, N. Z., ‘The Rites of Violence’, in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, o.c.

⁷⁹⁵ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l’Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 126v.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121r.

history of the Christian Church, but of the salvation of Mankind.⁷⁹⁷ Therefore, a true Christian should have faith in the divine truth incorporated in the Gospel, and close his ears to heretic ideas. The idea that those secrets of Christian doctrine which were incomprehensible to Man should be firmly fixed in his faith in God, was aligned with the writer's omnipresent moralising message which was present in all his works. Heresies could be spread by God as a punishment for human immorality and vices: 'les hommes sont si malheureux, que par leurs assiduelles fautes et reuoltes ils irritent sa longue patience. Ainsi Dieu prenant vengeance rigoureuse, de ceux qui oublient et reiettent ses graces'.⁷⁹⁸ As such, they were understood as a divinely sent sign aiming to instruct humanity, in order to 'plus ardemment chercher la verité'.⁷⁹⁹ It was a message to Man to amend his life: 'il faut qu'avec repentence nous amendions nostre mauuaise vie'.⁸⁰⁰

However, Boaistuau's God was not only vengeful but also loving. He had proven His love and care for Man since the beginning of the world. For example, He protected Seth's family from Cain, the people of Israel, and Jerusalem from many enemies. He had always safeguarded His Church in the time of need: 'l'ordre admirable de la puissance de Dieu, qu'il a gardé dés le commencement du monde iusques à nostre temps pour **soulager tousiours les miseres et extremes calamitez de son Eglise**'.⁸⁰¹ He had protected it in the past against heresies, and would follow the same course in times of distress and despair: 'Dieu pour nous monstrier clairement que aux grandes extremitez il sauue son Eglise, et qu'il a mille moyens pour exterminer les meschantz

⁷⁹⁷ Boaistuau echoed St. Augustine, who wrote that Man needed a mediator to attain 'blessed immortality' – see *The City of God*, Book IX, Chapter 15.

⁷⁹⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 109r.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 114v.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 123r.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid*, pp. 100r-100v. Bold font is mine.

qui le persecutent'.⁸⁰² By stressing this point, Boaistuau revealed his twofold purpose for writing the *Histoire des persecutions*. Firstly, as a moral support to the inflicted Christians to endure all sufferings for the righteous cause of the preservation of true faith: 'cela doit asseurer les gens de bien, et leur donner vn immortel couraige, que l'Eglise de Dieu durera eternellement avec son fils nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ';⁸⁰³ and secondly, as a herald of the eventual victory of the Catholic Church. Its resilience to heresies and afflictions was compared to that of a rock located in the middle of the sea which withstood the wind and waves: 'comme vn rocher qui battu et assailly des vents et des ondes, demeure ferme et immobile au milieu de la mer: ainsi l'Eglise Chrestienne parmy tant d'ennemis, de glaiues, de feux, de persecutions... n'a peu estre esbranlée, et subuertie'.⁸⁰⁴ Through his narration of 'orages terribles que Sathan a suscit  en l'Eglise primitiue et continu  iusques   nostre siecle', Boaistuau compared the 'Protestant heresy' of his time to the sufferings and heresies of the early Christian period, lauding the Church's survival power and invincible virtue, and bolstering the Catholic faith. Thus, his work can be seen as another example which illustrates the close connections between humanism and early modern Catholicism.

⁸⁰² Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique*, p. 102v.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 106v-107r.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4v.

CHAPTER 5

Natural philosophy and the order of nature in Pierre Boaistuau's work

An aspect of Pierre Boaistuau's work which has attracted little if no attention by modern research is his philosophy of Nature as this was put forth in *Histoires prodigieuses*, his second best-selling work after *Le Théâtre du monde*.⁸⁰⁵ This philosophy, which blended Christian theology and a methodical study of phenomena in order to interpret the world of the sixteenth century, will be the main focus of this chapter. This will shed new light on the relationship between early modern religion and natural philosophy, thus reviving one of the most vigorous scholarly debates which has lasted for several decades.⁸⁰⁶ In addition, it will enhance the study of closely related topics such as the knowledge explosion at the time, the revival of classical natural philosophy and the development of medicine, the literary genre of wonder-books, and the investigation of trends such as curiosity and an early form of encyclopedism. It will thus be possible to construct a picture of the stimulating environment in which Boaistuau lived and worked. It will also reveal how these areas of study were integrated into *Histoires prodigieuses* making it a representative example of sixteenth-century attitudes toward the study of Man and Nature. However, the aim of this chapter is not only to prove Boaistuau's significance in the investigation of natural philosophy at the time, but more importantly, to show the ways that knowledge was understood, classified and assimilated in early modern Europe.

⁸⁰⁵ On the publishing success of the work see Chapter Two. On scholarship see Introduction, pp. 15-18.

⁸⁰⁶ For a first insight to this debate, which brings to mind analogous debates concerning the acceptance of terms such as 'Reformation' or 'Renaissance', see Hooykaas, R., *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Edinburgh, 1972); Lindberg, D. C., Numbers, R. L. (eds), *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the encounter between Christianity and science* (Berkeley, 1986); Brooke, J. H., *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. pp. 192-225; Ferngren, G. B. (ed.), *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore, 2002).

In order to better understand the term natural philosophy and its context in *Histoires prodigieuses*, a comment on the relationship between religion and ‘science’ at the time is first necessary. The initial thesis – expressed by titles such as John Draper’s *History of the conflict between religion and science* (1874) – which claimed theology to be an inhibiting force for scientific research in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is nowadays refuted. Although Rudolf Wittkower’s point of view may still retain a certain degree of validity, the fact remains that the once popular idea of persistent dissention between ‘science’ and religion is no longer accepted by the majority of scholars.⁸⁰⁷ Recent studies by Kenneth James Howell, John Brooke and Ian Maclean, and Kevin Killeen and Peter Forshaw, have established a new approach for examining the concept of dichotomy between theology and natural philosophy, proving their inextricable connection long before the time of Boaiustau.⁸⁰⁸ The founding stone of this connection was laid by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, who put a Christian cloak on Aristotle’s natural philosophical theories. Augustine first set down the basic procedures for the application of natural philosophy to the interpretation of the book of Genesis, and Thomas Aquinas, whilst he gave theology principal status amongst all human sciences, did not disregard natural philosophy for the assistance it could provide to biblical exegesis.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁷ Wittkower, R., ‘Marvels of the East: a study in the history of monsters’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 5 (1942), p. 190: ‘The growing sense for causation in nature and the desire to discover its functions were weakened, however, under the weight of literary authority and time-honoured tradition’.

⁸⁰⁸ Howell, K. J., *God’s Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (Indiana, 2002); Brooke, J. Maclean, I. (eds), *Heterodoxy in Early Modern Science and Religion* (Oxford, 2005); Killeen, K., Forshaw, P. J. (eds), *The Word and the World: Biblical Exegesis and Early Modern Science* (Basingstoke, 2007).

⁸⁰⁹ Augustine (ed. J. H. Taylor), *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2 vols (New York, 1982). On Thomas Aquinas and natural philosophy a good place to start is Funkenstein, A., *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1986), esp. pp. 3-9, 299-326, and Hood, J. Y. B. (ed.), *The Essential Aquinas: Writings on Philosophy, Religion and Society* (Westport, CT, 2002), Chapter II.

This incorporation of natural philosophy within the Christian tradition was a long and continuing process. According to Christoph Lüthy, ‘After its Christianization in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, then, Aristotelian natural philosophy underwent a process of confessionalization in the sixteenth and seventeenth’.⁸¹⁰ For many erudite men, natural philosophy was not in opposition to the Bible and did not have to compete with Christian doctrines, since it was regarded as a supplementary force for the interpretation of a divinely ordained Nature. This opinion was widely held in the sixteenth century. As Kenneth Howell noted, ‘Copernicans like Rheticus, Kepler and Lansbergen... argued, of course, that the Bible did not contain scientific content like an astronomical or physical text but, at the same time, they all believed that the truths taught in the Bible were related to and embodied in the universe’.⁸¹¹ Similarly, the examination of the ideas of a contemporary of Boaistuau, Cornelius Valerius, whose work combined biblical passages with scientific elements to prove the immobility of the earth, further proves the symbiosis of religion and natural philosophy at the time.⁸¹² This symbiosis had different contexts in different areas in Europe, but retained common features which were shared by churchmen and natural philosophers throughout the early modern period. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated later on, these features (whether ‘scientific’ or theological) were used on equal terms in *Histoires prodigieuses* when explaining the operation of Nature.

⁸¹⁰ Lüthy, C., ‘The confessionalization of Physics: Heresies, facts and the travails of the Republic of Letters’, in Brooke, J., Maclean, I. (eds), *Heterodoxy in Early Modern Science and Religion*, p. 100.

⁸¹¹ Howell, K. J., *God’s Two Books*, p. 223.

⁸¹² Kelter, I. A., ‘Reading the Book of God as the Book of Nature: the case of the Louvain Humanist Cornelius Valerius (1512-1578)’, in Killeen, K., Forshaw, P. J. (eds), *The Word and the World*, pp. 174-187.

In addition to the non-existence of a distinction between religion and natural philosophy, the term ‘natural philosophy’ also needs to be addressed. This will explain the nature of the term during Boaistuau’s time, and the similarities and differences as compared with the modern meaning of the word ‘science’. In other words, can a sixteenth-century natural philosopher be regarded as the equivalent of a twenty-first-century scientist? To begin with, it should be remembered that the term ‘scientist’ goes back only as far as the first half of the nineteenth century, reasonably raising the question of the meaning of the word before that time.⁸¹³ Science has changed so much in nature and context over the course of history that no definition can cover all the different time periods. Raymond Williams argued that ‘science’ was used in very general terms during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to connote knowledge (the Latin word *scientia* means knowledge) and soon ‘became more generally used... to describe a particular body of knowledge or skill’.⁸¹⁴ A differentiation came only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the word was used to express a distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge, but did not occur decisively until the nineteenth century. Therefore, to use the term ‘science’ in its modern context is misleading when referring to the sixteenth century, although there are scholars who use it in a broader sense which usually contains a more methodical approach to the subject under examination.⁸¹⁵ For instance, Marshall Clagget wrote that ‘science comprises, first, the orderly and systematic comprehension, description, and/or explanation of natural phenomena, and secondly,

⁸¹³ See Ross, S., ‘Scientist: The story of a word’, *Annals of Science*, vol. 18 (1962), pp. 65-85.

⁸¹⁴ Williams, R., *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976), p. 232.

⁸¹⁵ See for instance the use of the term in relation to a confessional context in Harris, S. J., ‘Confession-Building, Long-Distance Networks, and the Organization of Jesuit Science’, *Early Science and Medicine*, vol. 1 (1996), pp. 287-318. I would like to thank Dr. Elaine Fulton for bringing this article to my attention.

the tools necessary for that undertaking', whereas David Goodman and Colin Russell describe science as 'a body of experimental practice and theoretical reasoning'.⁸¹⁶

At first sight, such use of the term might seem acceptable since it attempts to define the limits of 'early modern science' on a broader level. According to this perspective, 'science' can either refer to a new set of ideas and theories, or to the improvement of a research method. After all, it was more usual for learned men such as Boaistuau to have a wider range of scholarly interests than are perhaps found amongst present-day modern scientists. In addition, sciences were vaguely associated with the study of various subjects. In the field of medicine for example, the classification of monsters and mythological creatures was regarded as analogous to that of animals and plants.⁸¹⁷ However, the attribution of modern scientific features to sixteenth-century natural philosophy is only partially correct. In the first place, the use of 'science' rather than 'natural philosophy' is anachronistic, since the latter was the term used in books written in Boaistuau's time, and in the second place, the word 'science' lacks an essential element: the link to God and the natural world. This element was contained in natural philosophy. As Andrew Cunningham has aptly shown, the projects of early modern natural philosophers focused on God and the interpretation of His universe, simply because that was the focus of natural philosophy as a discipline.⁸¹⁸ This confirms the assertion that there was no distinction between early modern natural philosophy and theology, and proves that the term 'natural philosophy' is more

⁸¹⁶ Clagget, M., *Greek Science in Antiquity* (New York, repr., 2001), p. 4; Goodman, D., Russell, C. A. (eds), *The Rise of Scientific Europe, 1500-1800* (London, 1991), p. ix.

⁸¹⁷ Bates, A. W., *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam, 2005), p. 84.

⁸¹⁸ Cunningham, A., 'How the Principia got its name; or, taking natural philosophy seriously', *History of Science*, vol. 29 (1991), pp. 377-392. Also see Cunningham, A., Williams, P., 'De-centring the Big Picture', *British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 26 (1993), pp. 407-432, and the 'open forum' discussion between A. Cunningham and E. Grant in *Early Science and Medicine*, vol. 5 (2000), pp. 258-300.

appropriate than the term ‘science’, for describing scientific pursuits in sixteenth-century France. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, Boaistuau’s *Histoires prodigieuses* concentrated on an understanding of Nature and its wonders through an omnipresent theological framework.

5.1. The knowledge explosion of the sixteenth century

The history of natural philosophy in Europe has a blurred image since there is no consensus as to when and in what form it began. Reijer Hooykaas has proved that any attempts to put it into context can be quite problematical.⁸¹⁹ It is now widely accepted that the birth of natural philosophy was largely affected by forerunners such as the Ancient Greek, the Byzantine and the Arabic traditions. Although this discussion is outside the aims of this chapter, suffice it to note that the legacy of such traditions bequeathed a different comprehension of the world and had a beneficial influence in a variety of ways, including the use of logic, the emphasis on the empirical investigation of Nature and the idea of proof, the notions of academy and collaborative research. These are only a few of the elements which made possible the revival of natural philosophy and its development in the early modern period.⁸²⁰ Closely associated with this was the constantly developing interest in old and new theories and ideas and research frameworks that appeared during the Renaissance and which, undoubtedly had an influence on erudite men such as Pierre Boaistuau. Marie

⁸¹⁹ Hooykaas, R., ‘The Rise of Modern Science: When and Why?’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 20 (1987), pp. 453-473. See also his *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Edinburgh, 1972).

⁸²⁰ Scholarship on this topic is vast. For an introduction see Lindberg, D. C., *The Beginnings of Western Science: European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious and Institutional Context, 600BC to AD1450* (Chicago, 1992), and Huff, T. E., *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China and the West* (Cambridge, 2003).

Boas went as far as to speak of a ‘scientific Renaissance’, a thesis attracting many supporters which was recently re-examined by Peter Dear.⁸²¹ This section will investigate aspects of this vast topic on a different level, and will focus not only on natural philosophy but also on a broader understanding of the assimilation of knowledge. This term is less confining than natural philosophy and wide enough to describe the intellectual ferment of the sixteenth century. By examining this ‘knowledge explosion’, a hitherto neglected part of Boas’s mindset will be revealed which will enable an analysis of *Histoires prodigieuses* on a new level.

When Alfred Rupert Hall named one of the chapters in his book ‘The scientific revival of the sixteenth century’, he could not have been nearer the truth.⁸²² The now widespread view that a new approach to Nature and Man was apparent in the sixteenth century – signified by the publication of two ground-breaking works in 1543, Vesalius’s *De humani corporis fabrica* and Copernicus’s *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* – has long been celebrated as a new phase in European thought. Whatever conditions prevailed across Europe making any generalisations precarious (‘Whatever truth there may be in the view that the scientific beliefs of a society are conditioned by the context of that society itself’), the case of France can be seen as part of this new phase.⁸²³ Of course, this ‘knowledge explosion’ did not appear out of nowhere in the sixteenth century. As modern research has convincingly shown, a self-conscious literary interest in the past and the prospects of the time had started since the fifteenth century. This gave birth to a multitude of works on a variety of subjects,

⁸²¹ Boas, M., *The Scientific Renaissance, 1450-1630* (New York, 1962) – for a re-assessment of her thesis see Dear, P., *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500-1700* (Princeton, 2001). Also see the classic studies by Wightman, W. P. D., *Science and the Renaissance*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1962), and Debus, A. G., *Man and Nature in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1978), who followed a similar pattern to Boas.

⁸²² Hall, A. R., *The Revolution in Science, 1500-1750* (Longman, 1983).

⁸²³ *Ibid*, p. 3.

characterised by the belief in revived and innovative knowledge.⁸²⁴ However, the existence of additional factors and a wider diffusion of information at the time resulted in an upsurge of knowledge never before seen in Europe.

Among these factors, humanism deserves first mention. As already stated in Chapter Three, the main contribution of humanism was the recovery and translation of classical texts. Although focusing mainly on works of classical literature, in the process, humanists recovered texts of great significance for the study of Man and the natural world.⁸²⁵ One of the best known examples was the translation of the entire works of Plato into Latin by Marsilio Ficino. Plato might not initially seem as relevant to natural philosophy as Aristotle, but ‘his philosophy... emphasized the fundamental importance of thinking about the world in a mathematical way, and that message did inspire Renaissance natural philosophers’.⁸²⁶ In fact, if the Stagirite philosopher was considered to be the central authority of wisdom during the Middle Ages, his teacher was similarly seen as the dominant figure of study in the early modern period. This does not mean that Aristotle’s influence was not evident in the sixteenth century. On the contrary, many works (including *Histoires prodigieuses*) contain numerous references to his books, proving the longevity of Aristotelianism in early modern natural philosophy.⁸²⁷ Such examples prove the importance of humanism for the proliferation of knowledge. By making possible the co-existence of older and new

⁸²⁴ For more detail on the symbiosis of older and new theories and the literary production of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries see Park, K., Daston, L. (eds), *The Cambridge History of Science, vol. 3: Early Modern Science* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁸²⁵ On the topic see Mandrou, R., *From Humanism to Science, 1480-1700* (London, 1978), and McLean, A., *Humanism and the Rise of Science in Tudor England* (London, 1972) which follows a relevant context.

⁸²⁶ Goodman, D., Russell, C. A. (eds), *The Rise of Scientific Europe, 1500-1800*, p. 28.

⁸²⁷ Although Aristotelian thought was met with opposition, it retained its powerful hold over universities. See Grant, E., ‘Aristotelianism and the longevity of the medieval world view’, *History of Science*, vol. 16 (1978), pp. 93-106; Schmitt, C. B., *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 1983). On the attack on Aristotelian natural philosophy see Nauert, C. G., *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 211-215.

ideas, it revealed the degree of mismatch between established and Renaissance learning and helped the assimilation of new theories. *Histoires prodigieuses* followed this line, containing classical authorities such as Galen and Hippocrates but also contemporaries from France and beyond, such as Guillaume Rondelet and Conrad Lycosthenes. Humanism made evident the inception of a new learning culture and gradually put traditional beliefs under scrutiny, which in turn led aspiring writers such as Boaistuau to take a different approach to knowledge in order to make their books more credible, and thus more popular, with readers.

A closely associated factor which enabled this synthesis of knowledge was the development of printing. During the sixteenth century and in particular after the middle of the century, books were printed and distributed widely across Europe in greater numbers than ever before, as a result of a rising demand and advances in technology.⁸²⁸ This proved quite beneficial for the awakening of interest in a variety of fields – including natural philosophy.⁸²⁹ Easier access to books meant that a writer such as Boaistuau who had lived most of his life in Paris (one of the main printing and book distribution hubs at the time) had more opportunity to expand his learning more effectively. This easier access to books also gave more chances for cross-referencing, and for consulting and comparing different texts. This in turn made the analysis and categorisation of knowledge a far simpler task.⁸³⁰ Moreover, printing may in some instances have speeded up the downfall of past authorities, but in general it prolonged

⁸²⁸ See for example Armstrong, A., *Technique and Technology: Script, Print and Poetics in France, 1470-1550* (Oxford, 2000).

⁸²⁹ Stillwell, M. B., *The Awakening Interest in Science during the First Century of Printing, 1450-1550* (New York, 1970). For the intellectual culture in sixteenth-century Brittany see Walsby, M., *Books and Book Culture in the First Age of Print: Brittany, 1484-1600* (Leiden, 2009). Also see an interesting case study focusing on the printing of medical works in Frank, H., 'Physicians and publishers: the translation of medical works in sixteenth century Basle', in Flood, J. L., Kelly, W. A., *The German Book, 1450-1750* (London, 1995), pp. 95-109.

⁸³⁰ This is regarded as the beginning of the 'era of cross-referencing' – see Eisenstein, E. L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 42.

the life of well-established theories. For example, for many years, Galen's anatomy and Ptolemy's astronomy went through a symbiotic stage along with Vesalius and Copernicus, providing the necessary time for the fermentation of new schemes and notions. Of equal importance was the growing trend of writing and publishing in the vernacular, popularised by the advance of printing (see Chapter Two). This shift was employed by different writers, including natural philosophers such as Boaistuau and Amboise Paré, and made works of new learning and natural philosophy available to a wide and diverse readership outside universities who had little or no knowledge of Latin.

Another pillar of the knowledge explosion of the sixteenth century was the voyages of exploration. Initiated in the fifteenth century, numerous expeditions to newly found lands by the Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch and English continued throughout the sixteenth century and marked a decisive turning point in the rise of knowledge and new ideas in Europe.⁸³¹ However, this was a slow and gradual process which made possible the symbiosis of old and new features. Together with information on new lands, people, plants and animals, there was a need for the classification of new species and a growing desire to understand everything unusual. This created new trends in many fields, such as the study of plants and the animal kingdom, and new thoughts on cosmography, with the publication of works such as Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia Universalis* (1544).⁸³² As will be demonstrated, such views had a profound effect on the vibrant discussions generated by the questioning and the

⁸³¹ On France and explorations see: Trudel, M., *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663* (Toronto, 1973); Braudel, F., *Le monde de Jacques Cartier. L'aventure au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1984); Lestringant, F., *André Thevet, cosmographe de derniers Valois* (Geneva, 1991).

⁸³² McLean, M., *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster* (Aldershot, 2007). The *Cosmographia*, which was translated into five languages, was quoted several times by Boaistuau in *Histoires prodigieuses*.

displacement of traditional notions of the world beyond Europe, which took place through texts and books.⁸³³ As Goodman and Russell have noted, ‘the discovery of the New World with its remarkable flora and fauna shook the confidence of intellectuals who had put their trust in the ancients’.⁸³⁴ Furthermore, voyages of exploration opened up new wonders and marvels to sixteenth-century Europeans and boosted the already existing tradition of writing on wonders of Nature with the publication of many new titles. Although for Boaistuau, as for most Europeans, overseas conquests were not a direct experience (he had been to Italy, England, Scotland, Germany and perhaps Hungary but had never travelled outside Europe), he was nevertheless well-informed (and certainly had read accounts) of the new wonders seen abroad and brought back to Europe, and was surely struck by the diversity of Nature. As will be shown, this diversity was identified in *Histoires prodigieuses* with both God and human curiosity.

Curiosity in the early modern period did not have the negative connotation that it held in the Middle Ages, when the term was associated with pride and presented as Man’s attempt to be more than he really was. Two of the usual examples cited by medieval writers which prove this were Pandora from Ancient Greek mythology and Eve from the Bible: both sought forbidden knowledge that attempted to usurp the limitations set by Zeus and God, and both were eventually punished.⁸³⁵ St. Augustine in his *Confessions* described curiosity as a vice and a disease, and deemed it to be the driving force for Man’s efforts to discover the secrets of Nature which lie beyond his

⁸³³ See Albanese, D., *New Science, New World* (Durham, NC, 1996); Grafton, A., *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

⁸³⁴ Goodman, D., Russell, C. A. (eds), *The Rise of Scientific Europe, 1500-1800*, p. 417.

⁸³⁵ These examples also explain why curiosity was usually represented in art and literature as a female figure, a concept which probably followed the widespread idea of Woman as a weak and imperfect creation, responsible for original sin. For an interesting contrast of Pandora and Eve, see Phipps, W. E., ‘Eve and Pandora Contrasted’, *Theology Today*, vol. 45 (1988), pp. 34-48.

understanding – and therefore should not be pursued.⁸³⁶ Ironically enough, this same analysis of Augustine which linked curiosity to the examination of natural secrets became the central connotation of the word in the sixteenth century. As Daston and Park have noted, ‘In the High Middle Ages wonder existed apart from curiosity; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, wonder and curiosity interlocked. Estrangement and alliance shaped the distinctive objects and the subjective coloring of both passions’.⁸³⁷ Although the concept of curiosity remained elusive, used in a variety of ways (including the desire to exceed one’s status or role, roughly linked with the Ancient Greek *περιέργεια* of which the Latin *curiositas* was considered to be a translation), early modern texts deemed it as a desire for knowledge which altered the natural conventions – and was thus seen as a feature of transgression. But now it was largely employed to explain the wondrous and marvellous, associated to natural philosophy and an attempt to regulate knowledge.⁸³⁸ Boaistuau noted:

ie n’ay pas esté content de fueilleter plusieurs auteurs, pour rechercher si i’y pourrois trouver quelque chose de rare, estrange, admirable et conforme à mon subject: mais d’abondant i’ay voulu lire par **grande curiosité** tous les auteurs qui avoyent escrit quelques traictez particuliers des prodiges.⁸³⁹

Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to regard curiosity as an additional factor in the knowledge explosion experienced in the sixteenth century, and as one of Boaistuau’s

⁸³⁶ Augustine (tr. R. S. Pine-Coffin), *Confessions* (London, 1961), 10.30, 10.35. Augustine’s view of curiosity had a lasting impact. For example, Erasmus in his *Praise of Folly* wrote of ‘an impious curiosity to dive into the secrets of nature, the dimension of stars, the motions, effects, and hidden causes of things; as believing it a crime for any man to attempt to be wise beyond his condition’. See Erasmus, D. (ed. R. M. Adams), *In Praise of Folly* (New York, 2003), p. 26.

⁸³⁷ Daston, L., Park, K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York, 1998), p. 15. Also see Evans, R. J. W., Marr, A. (eds), *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot, 2006) for the use of the term on a wider context.

⁸³⁸ There is an abundant historiography on the subject. See for instance Céard, J. (ed.), *La curiosité à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1986); Benedict, B. M., *Curiosity. A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago, 2001); Kenny, N., *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany* (Oxford, 2004); Evans, R. J. W., Marr, A. (eds), *Curiosity and Wonder, o.c.*

⁸³⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560), *Advertissement au Lecteur*. Bold font is mine.

driving forces for the study of natural phenomena and abnormalities when writing *Histoires prodigieuses*.

As noted earlier, the sixteenth century saw the emergence of new attitudes in the study of Man and the natural world. At the same time as the discovery of a multitude of new species and people exceeded medieval imaginings and brought Europe face to face with a new cosmos, a deeper examination of the human body was stimulated. Its anatomical parts were investigated and portrayed more accurately than ever before. Works such as Andreas Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), Pierre Belon's *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez trouvées en Grece et autres pays* (1553) and André Thevet's *Cosmographie universelle* (1575) may have had different topics but were characterised by a similar desire to explore Man and the world, and to understand and classify knowledge.⁸⁴⁰ The recovery and study of both ancient texts and new findings led to new outlooks in natural philosophy and natural history. The latter was an activity which aroused great enthusiasm and enriched Man's knowledge by means of careful field-study and description.⁸⁴¹ Renaissance Man, unlike his medieval predecessor, did not write about the unknown but based his study on experience.⁸⁴² Conrad Gesner revolutionised the study of animal kingdom with his *Bibliotheca universalis* (1545) and the *Historiae Animalium* (1551-1621), which

⁸⁴⁰ Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) was probably the most famous anatomist of the sixteenth century. After the publication of his *De humani corporis fabrica*, he left Italy and worked as an Imperial physician to Charles V. Pierre Belon (1517-1564) was a naturalist, highly favoured by Henry II. His most important work was *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez trouvées en Grece et autres pays* (1553). He also wrote *Portraits* (1557) where he described people, animals, herbs, and trees. André Thevet (1516-1590) was a cosmographer who visited many places, including Brazil, and was later appointed royal cosmographer. Besides his *Cosmographie Universelle*, his other famous work was the *Singularitez de la France Antarctique* (1557).

⁸⁴¹ On the importance of description as an innovative approach to natural knowledge see the excellent study by B. W. Ogilvie *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago, 2008).

⁸⁴² Yves Florenne wrote: 'Mais notre Boaistuaun n'est pas un quêteur médiéval d'aventures inconnues. C'est un homme de la Renaissance qui sait ce qu'il cherche'. See his critical edition of *Histoires prodigieuses*, Introduction.

contained animals mentioned by classical authorities (mainly Pliny's *Natural History*) but also described by his contemporaries. Guillaume Rondelet focused on the Mediterranean sea-life. He was inspired by his desire to confirm Aristotle's observations. His *Libri de Piscibus Marinis* (1554) pictured not only fish but also monsters of the water such as the monk-fish, which would be found in many later works.⁸⁴³ Otto Brunfel's *Herbarum vivae eicones* (1530-1536) proved to be so influential that it is listed amongst the most significant books on the development of modern botany.⁸⁴⁴ Georgius Agricola's *De re metallica* (1556) offered new perspectives on mining and metallurgy and helped the development of geology as a separate field. His work might be seen as the motivation behind Boaistuau's theory of the creation of volcanoes and the writing of his unpublished treatise on precious stones.⁸⁴⁵ This 'naturalism' expressed in printed form was also vividly impressed in contemporary art. For example, the woodcut of Dürer's rhinoceros (see figure 12 in the next page) makes clear that many shared an increasing sense that they were part of a larger and richer world than they had been previously, with new forms of life. With this attitude grew an awareness of the human body, as depicted in Vesalius's detailed *tabulae*, or in the perfect proportions of Michelangelo's sketch of Adam for the Sistine Chapel (see figure 13).

⁸⁴³ Guillaume Rondelet (1507-1566) was a naturalist and Professor of Medicine at the University of Montpellier. Both Gesner and Rondelet were noted by name in *Histoires prodigieuses*. Rondelet's monk-fish was first used by Gesner and later by Boaistuau, raising the issue of material-borrowing between works at the time, which will be addressed in a later section.

⁸⁴⁴ It is not a coincidence that Boaistuau included in *Histoires prodigieuses* a lengthy chapter (Chapter Twenty-three) on the qualities of plants (quoting examples from both ancient and contemporary writers) and various remedies made out of them, as he was clearly affected by the naturalistic inquiries of the time. For more detail see section 5.3.

⁸⁴⁵ Georgius Agricola (1494-1555) was a German scholar, physician, and geologist, now considered as the father of mineralogy. He was also appointed historiographer of Prince Maurice of Saxony. On Boaistuau and volcanoes see pp. 317-19 in this chapter. On precious stones see pp. 289-90. Boaistuau also noted in *Histoires prodigieuses* his intention to publish a separate work related to precious stones, which however never appeared in print. For more details see Chapter Two, section 2.1.8.

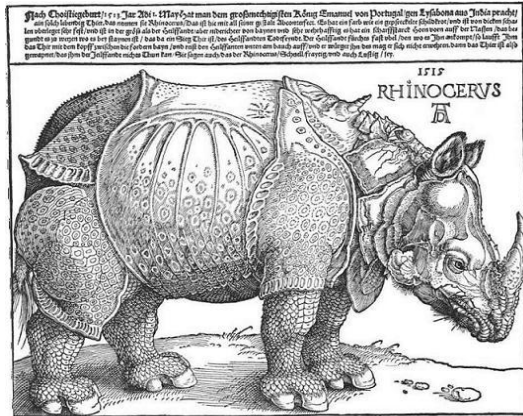


Fig. 12: Dürer's *rhinocervs* (1515)

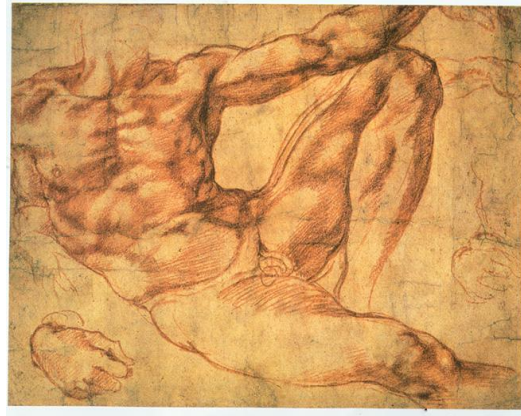


Fig. 13: Michelangelo's Adam (c. 1511)

How, then, were these new trends towards the study of Nature and Man reflected in *Histoires prodigieuses*? In what ways did the sixteenth-century knowledge explosion influence the birth of Boaistuau's natural philosophy? And how typical of the literary genre of wonder-books was his work? The answers to these questions will be given in the next section, along with an examination of early modern encyclopedism further proving the blurred limits of natural philosophy at the time.

5.2. Encyclopedism, wonder-books and the *Histoires prodigieuses*

As has been demonstrated, diverse conceptions of knowledge were representative of the wide context of natural philosophy in the sixteenth century. This varied study of the world derived from the fact that sciences at the time were not clearly defined as they are today, and from the close relationship between Nature and Man which had always been held as one of the best reasons for examining the natural world.⁸⁴⁶ The

⁸⁴⁶ This idea, which can be traced back to Ancient Greece and Rome, continued to be widespread throughout the medieval and early modern period. On the perceived place of Man in the natural world see Thomas, K., *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (London,

development of natural philosophy either in contrast to the revived classical knowledge or in connection to contemporary ideas or disciplines such as theology, proved beneficial to this direction of thought. In the sixteenth century, the production and availability of more information than had ever been previously available resulted in a gradual widening of intellectual horizons. This enabled many natural philosophers to contrast newly recorded data against long-held beliefs and theories, which in turn led to the gradual accumulation of new knowledge and the creation of new trains of thought: 'Not only was confidence in old theories weakened, but an enriched reading matter also encouraged the development of new intellectual combinations and permutations'.⁸⁴⁷ Dominant among these permutations in early modern France was an early form of encyclopedism, which can be seen as one of the symptoms of the changing world-picture of the Renaissance.

Encyclopedism treated knowledge as an ordered and unified circle of learning with logical inter-connections in between. As a concept, it followed an old tradition dating back to classical Greece and Rome and the 'circular' education which should be pursued. In the Middle Ages, medieval compilations of information further coined the term in relation to the organisation of knowledge.⁸⁴⁸ Later, encyclopedism would encompass various schemes aiming at the collection and classification of an intellectual field or an aspect of learning.⁸⁴⁹ This organisation of knowledge was under growing pressure long before the seventeenth century and the shift to new

1983); Goldin, O., Kilroe, P. (eds), *Human Life and the Natural World: Readings in the History of Western Philosophy* (Peterborough, ON, 1997).

⁸⁴⁷ Eisenstein, E. L., *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, p. 43.

⁸⁴⁸ See Gandillac, M. de, et al (eds), *La Pensée encyclopédique au Moyen âge* (Neuchâtel, 1966).

⁸⁴⁹ On early modern encyclopedism see Grafton, A., 'The World of the Polyhistor: Humanism and Encyclopedism', *Central European History*, vol. 18 (1985), pp. 31-47; Blair, A. M., *The Theater of Nature: Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science* (Princeton, 1997). The term will eventually acquire the meaning of summarising knowledge from a wide range of subjects in a certain literary genre, usually called compendium or encyclopedia. See Yeo, R. R., *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge, 2001).

means of cataloguing and indexing which would ultimately lead to the establishment of the first museums.⁸⁵⁰ An idea which proved helpful to this organization of knowledge was the analogy of macrocosm and microcosm which had survived since the Middle Ages. For example, the human body was seen by anatomists and natural philosophers as a smaller-scale cosmos, a microcosm, whose internal organs and operation mechanisms had to be analysed and classified in the same way as the wonders of Nature. Similarly, the wide range of sixteenth century knowledge needed to be assessed and catalogued to become part of the whole. Paula Findlen wrote of ‘an attempt to manage the empirical explosion of materials that wider dissemination of ancient texts, increased travel, voyages of discovery, and more systematic forms of communication and exchange had produced’.⁸⁵¹ Michel Foucault in his *Order of Things* wrote that two of the main characteristics of the period were classification and exchange, which aptly describe the encyclopedic interest in Renaissance France.⁸⁵² This is proved, for instance, by Pierre de la Primaudaye, who wrote an encyclopedia of morals and a four-part quasi-encyclopedia work which included ‘monsters’.⁸⁵³ Anne Prescott noted that Primaudaye’s work represented a study of both macrocosm and microcosm, of parts and wholes. It resembled ‘a circle of learning, a model of those circles and circulations found also in ourselves, in our education, in the cosmos itself’.⁸⁵⁴ Neil Kenny examined another example, the polymath novelist François Béroalde de Verville, whose works reveal a preoccupation with encyclopedic learning

⁸⁵⁰ See Findlen, P., ‘The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy’, *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 1 (1989), pp. 59-78, and her *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, 1994).

⁸⁵¹ Findlen, P., *Possessing Nature*, p. 3.

⁸⁵² Foucault, M., *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1970), esp. Part I, Chapters 5 and 6.

⁸⁵³ Pierre de la Primaudaye (1546-1619) was a Huguenot writer. He is remembered mainly for his work *L'Academie Française*.

⁸⁵⁴ Prescott, A. L., ‘Pierre de la Primaudaye’s French Academy: growing encyclopedic’, in Rhodes, N., Sawday, J. (eds), *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London, 2000), p. 158.

and knowledge organisation. However, Béroalde de Verville gradually abandoned encyclopedism for a different perception of knowledge closer to Michel de Montaigne and polymathy.⁸⁵⁵

Although Montaigne was much younger than Boaistuau (Montaigne was thirty-three years old when Boaistuau died in 1566), his spirit of independent research and new sense of individualism proves useful for an analogy with Boaistuau. Montaigne in his *Essais* used the essay as a literary device to analyse almost everything and distanced himself from the encyclopedism of his time, as he regarded knowledge as an unsystematic flux. However, his continuous desire for learning and the concept of variety in his work brings to mind the humanist ideal of polymathy (literally translated from the Greek *πολυμάθεια*, meaning the learning of many things), a characteristic also evident in the case of Boaistuau.⁸⁵⁶ This notion co-existed with the idea that Man could do anything if he willed it, and the widespread belief in a limitless development of human capacities and the human mind – ideas surely affected by the same aspiration for knowledge which characterised encyclopedism. Boaistuau had received a university education in Roman and canon law but was also self-taught. He was an autodidact. Throughout his life, he acquired knowledge on a variety of subjects (including natural philosophy, anatomy, history, political theory, theology, philosophy and literature) which were reflected in his books. *Histoires prodigieuses* in particular proves Boaistuau's polymathy as it combined diverse

⁸⁵⁵ Kenny, N., *The Palace of Secrets: Béroalde de Verville and Renaissance Conceptions of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1991), p. 80ff. Montaigne's view of knowledge as an unsystematic and subjective state of continuous change contrasted to the systematisation and classification of the time.

⁸⁵⁶ 'According to the *De polymathia tractatio* (1603) by Johann von Wower... the polymath is defined by the sheer diversity of his philosophical interests, whereas the encyclopaedist is concerned with the more limited field of the liberal arts' – cited in Kenny, N., *The Palace of Secrets*, p. 81. On polymathy see Grafton, A., 'The World of the Polyhistor: Humanism and Encyclopedism', *o.c.* Also juxtapose to the idea of 'pansophism' in Rossi, P., 'The Legacy of Ramon Lull in Sixteenth-Century Thought', *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 5 (1961), pp. 182-213.

information and different views on a broad range of topics, including natural phenomena, monstrous births, and rare animals amongst others. At the same time, his efforts to organise this knowledge reveal his encyclopaedic interests. Such trends testify to Boaistuau's scholarly research, broad learning and innovative spirit. Of course, he cannot be regarded as an encyclopedist in the eighteenth-century meaning of the term (such as Denis Diderot, the man responsible for the *Encyclopédie*), but he is a true representative of an early type of encyclopaedism in sixteenth-century France.

Another related trend deriving from the inquiring spirit, curiosity and classification of knowledge was collecting, which had an impact on literature and the compilation of books such as *Histoires prodigieuses*. Such works shared the same close connections to natural philosophy as sixteenth-century private collections, cabinets of curiosity and Wunderkammern, which continued to spread across Europe.⁸⁵⁷ Boaistuau informed his readers about the private collection of his protector, Jean de Rieux: 'Seigneur d'Asserac [...] est-il fort curieux de recouvrer plusieurs choses antiques et estranges, desquelles il a peuplé **son cabinet**, qui apportent un merveilleux contentement à ceux qui les contemplent'.⁸⁵⁸ Most collections from this period contained natural objects (for example, animal parts and specimens such as seeds) as well as man-made models of animals and body parts, and were regarded as a microcosm of Nature and a theatre of memory. There was also an underlying religious context regulating cabinets of curiosity, as they were seen as a reproduction of God's creations on a smaller scale. These same ideas characterised collections such as that of

⁸⁵⁷ A very good introduction on the birth and growth of cabinets of curiosity is Impey, O., MacGregor, A. (eds), *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1985). See also Pomian, K., *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁸⁵⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 56v. Bold font is mine.

the Fugger family and seventeenth-century cabinets of wonders such as that of the renowned intellectual and polymath Athanasius Kircher.⁸⁵⁹ At an alternate level, princely collections existing since the middle of the sixteenth century such as the collection of August II, Elector of Saxony, revealed a different aspect of cabinets of curiosity associated with court culture and the display of power. The same aspirations characterised the royal collections of the Habsburgs, including the unrivalled collection of Rudolph II in Prague.⁸⁶⁰ No matter if they were secular, princely or royal, such collections had a common aim: the display of cultivation and learning.

When trying to assess collecting in the early modern period, modern research has stressed the important aspects of replicating Nature's creations, the attempt to assert human control over the natural world, and the idea of Nature as the source of productive knowledge.⁸⁶¹ This latter idea can be seen in the work *Theatrum Sapientiae* (1565) by Flemish Samuel Quiccheberg, who regarded collecting as metaphysics which would lead to the production of knowledge and thus unlock the doors of wisdom in all fields of learning.⁸⁶² It was probably this same aspect of collecting knowledge which had an impact on contemporary literature and on the idea of popular works such as Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses*, whose views resembled cabinets of curiosity on paper. The central ideas behind them can be summarized by

⁸⁵⁹ For an introduction to this multi-talented German thinker see Findlen, P. (ed.), *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* (New York, 2004).

⁸⁶⁰ See Evans, R. J. W., *Rudolph II and his World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576-1612* (Oxford, 1973). Also see Marshall, P. H., *The Theatre of the World: Alchemy, Astrology and Magic in Renaissance Prague* (London, 2006).

⁸⁶¹ Smith, P. H., 'Collecting Nature and Art', in Daston, L., Vidal, F. (eds), *The Moral Authority of Nature* (Chicago, 2004), pp. 115-135; Meadow, M. A., 'Merchants and Marvels: Hans Jacob Fugger and the Origins of the Wunderkammer', in Smith, P. H., Findlen, P. (eds), *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 2002), pp. 182-200; McGregor, M., *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 2008).

⁸⁶² Samuel Quiccheberg (1529-1567) was a physician, librarian and counselor of the German prince Albrecht V, and is considered to have been the founder of museum education in Germany.

an examination of the natural world, assimilating old and new learning, and a pursuit of knowledge. Thus, they reveal the undisputed influences which Wunderkammern and trends such as encyclopedism had on sixteenth-century literary production.⁸⁶³ These features were embodied in many works which took their names from the same idea of wonder that characterised collections and cabinets of curiosity: they were named wonder-books or works of wonder (Wunderwerck).

The wonder-book is a term characterising a literary genre shaped mainly by sixteenth-century writers such as Conrad Lycosthenes, Jacob Rueff and Job Finckel. It is a term used in a broad context, as it also describes works across the geographical areas of Germany, France and Switzerland.⁸⁶⁴ Similar publications appeared in England and Italy, particularly towards and after the end of the century. These works arrived during a period of knowledge explosion and their diffusion was facilitated by the publication of natural philosophical books which familiarised the public with the ‘wonders of Nature’. This proved to be an enormous impetus for the increase of interest in wonder-books amongst readers and publishers, since their success guaranteed profitable publishing projects. Since the writing of many works on natural philosophy at the time was largely dependent upon patronage and court networks (therefore often suiting their patrons’ expectations), it is likely that wonder-books followed a similar strategy.⁸⁶⁵ Such works would have been anthologies of natural phenomena, monstrous births and other marvels of interest for their infrequent

⁸⁶³ See for instance Elsner, J., Cardinal, R. (eds), *The Cultures of Collecting* (London, 1994), and Swann, M., *Curiosities and Texts: The Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, 2001).

⁸⁶⁴ On wonder-books see Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges* (Geneva, 1977), esp. Part Three ff. Also see Barnes, R., *Prophecy and Gnosis* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 87-92, and the forthcoming study by Jenny Spinks *Prodigious Histories: Wonder-books in sixteenth century Germany, France and Switzerland*.

⁸⁶⁵ On patronage see Trevor-Roper, H. R., *Princes and Artists: Patronage and Ideology at four Habsburg courts, 1517-1633* (London, 1976); McLean, P. D., *The Art of the Network. Strategic interaction and patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham, NC, 2007).

occurrence and symbolisms. Personal research and a variety of classical and contemporary sources (such as chronicles and broadsheets) were used for the compilation of their diverse material, and their contents were usually accompanied by illustrations. These books emphasised divine intervention and usually had a moralising context. Although often associated with Protestant print culture, they were equally used as polemics by Catholics such as Johann Nas.⁸⁶⁶

One of the best-known and representative examples of wonder-books was Conrad Lycosthenes's *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (1557).⁸⁶⁷ It was published three years before the publication of *Histoires prodigieuses* and was one of its main sources. Lycosthenes's work is remarkable for its breadth of material and range of sources. It was a compilation of various phenomena (including meteorites, mythological creatures and monstrous births) drawn from different writers such as Julius Obsequens, Martin Luther and Sebastian Brant. The *Chronicon* was also one of the best-illustrated books at the time thanks to its astounding number of over 1500 woodcuts, proving the great power of images and their significant role in the publishing success of similar titles. Despite the mass of information provided, Lycosthenes did not make any distinction between fable, anecdote and reality, focusing more on the symbolisms and meanings of the histories than on the process of their creation, thus stressing their apocalyptic and moralising context. There are many similarities between wonder-books such as *Chronicon* and *Histoires prodigieuses*, not

⁸⁶⁶ Spinks, J., 'Monstrous Births and Counter-Reformation Visual Polemics: Johann Nas and the 1569 Ecclesia Militans', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 40 (2009), pp. 335-363. Although wonder-books are usually associated with Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemics, they could also combine their moralising context with encyclopaedic ends.

⁸⁶⁷ Conrad Wolffhart (1518-1561), also known as Lycosthenes, was an Alsatian humanist and an encyclopedist. His *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (Basle, 1557) proved very popular, and was translated into German as *Wunderwerck*. An expanded version appeared in England in 1581, translated by Stephen Batman as *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgement*, giving birth to a new series of English works of moralising and millenarian context.

least in terms of general structure.⁸⁶⁸ As was usual for such works, they contained a writer's preface, a salutation to the reader, and a table of contents.⁸⁶⁹ Boaistuau dedicated his work to Jean de Rieux ('Iehan de Rieux'), the Breton nobleman who probably was his patron.⁸⁷⁰ Each story was presented as a separate chapter (although in many cases related issues were also narrated) and was accompanied by a woodcut. In terms of content, *Histoires prodigieuses* follow the usual themes of wonder-books covering a broad range of topics, from natural phenomena (such as earthquakes, floods and comet appearances), Biblical stories and short treatises on precious stones or the birth of demons, to exotic plants and animals, hybrid creatures (such as the monster of Ravenna) and monstrous births of every description. This wide material was taken from classical, medieval and early modern writers, which constitutes another common feature between *Histoires prodigieuses* and similar works, and raises the issue of compilation.

As shown in earlier chapters, the collection of selected writings by other writers on the same subject was one of Boaistuau's favourite practices and can be seen in many of his titles. *Histoires prodigieuses* was not an exception. For its compilation, Boaistuau used a multitude of philosophers (such as Aristotle, Plato, Galen and Pliny) and ecclesiastical writers (such as St. Paul, Eusebius, Isidore of Seville and St. Augustine), as well as sixteenth-century authorities. Among the names which stand out are Jacob Rueff, Conrad Gessner, Guillaume Rondelet, Joachim Camerarius and Sebastian Münster. A special place was reserved for 'Conradus Lycostenes' and his

⁸⁶⁸ Jean Céard named Boaistuau 'the French Lycostenes' – see *La nature et les prodiges*, p. 253.

⁸⁶⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, Table des Matieres contenues au traicté des Histoires Prodigieuses.

⁸⁷⁰ Jean de Rieux VI (1508-1563) was the son of Jean de Rieux IV (1447-1518), marshal of Brittany and counsellor of Duchess Anne of Brittany. The text reads 'ce grand mareschal de Rieux vostre ayeul'. Jean de Rieux, baron d'Asserac, and his brother Rene de Rieux, seigneur du Gue de l'Isle, were both men of letters and devoted poems to Boaistuau – see Appendix B.

work, which Boaistuau deemed to be superior to others: ‘lequel outre la doctrine qui luy est commune avec les autres, encores a il surpassé tous ceux qui l’ont precedé, en labeur, et diligence’.⁸⁷¹ He also briefly described his great desire and curiosity to learn more about prodigies, which led him to read all known treatises as well as rare works (‘quelques auteurs rares que ie cite en mon oeuvre’)⁸⁷² on the subject.⁸⁷² However, a significant amount of the material used in the compilation of *Histoires prodigieuses* was taken from other wonder-books, which proves the existence of a ‘data bank’ which allowed writers to borrow from each other – sometimes heavily. This practice can be seen for example in the story of a Roman knight who cast himself into a chasm, which Boaistuau had borrowed from Julius Obsequens’s *Des prodiges*.⁸⁷³ Such examples reveal that Boaistuau’s title, like many works of its kind, was the result of a synthesis of material from many sources. However, does the examination of these common features do justice to *Histoires prodigieuses*? Is it enough to regard it simply as another typical work of the genre of wonder-books? Or was it the debut of something new in the literary affairs of sixteenth-century France which requires closer attention?

Yves Florenne, who gave Boaistuau the title of ‘le quêteur de prodiges’, was probably the first who saw in this work a different character which other books on prodigies lacked: ‘chez lui surtout, visions, enfers, tentations, mythes et fables, s’entremêlent à l’étude de la nature. Boaistuau est à la charnière de l’invention fabuleuse et d’**une**

⁸⁷¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, Aduertissement au Lecteur.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*

⁸⁷³ Julius Obsequens (4th century AD) was a Roman writer. His only work *Liber de prodigiis* was an account of the portents which occurred in Rome, translated from Latin into French in 1555. On the story of the Roman knight see Obsequent, J., *Des prodiges* (Lyon, I. de Tournes, 1555), Chapter XX.

observation déjà scientifique'.⁸⁷⁴ Indeed, *Histoires prodigieuses* reflected this mingling of different elements, lying between a quest for the strange and bizarre and a study of Nature. First published in 1560, a period of new approaches to natural philosophy and a time of wide circulation of news about monstrous births, natural disasters and everything 'marvellous' in France, Boaistuau's book perfectly combined these features and earned a special place in the literary developments of the sixteenth century.⁸⁷⁵ The writer was surely aware of the novelty of his project which he proudly specified as follows:

lesquelz [les auteurs] ont tous doctement traicté en Latin ceste mesme matiere [...] i'ay traicté beaucoup d'histoires, desquelles ilz n'avoyent faict aucune mention en leur escritz: mesmes ay rendu la raison des Prodiges, ce que ie n'ay encores observé auoir esté faict d'aucun auant moy⁸⁷⁶

These three points (the vernacular language, the inclusion of new stories, and an interpretation of prodigies) marked the originality of *Histoires prodigieuses* according to Boaistuau. The use of French gave the work a significant advantage in the book market, making it accessible to a much greater audience than earlier works written in Latin. The selection of new stories was the second factor which made *Histoires prodigieuses* a great publishing success with fifty-five different editions in total and translations into French, English, Spanish and Dutch.⁸⁷⁷ When compared to other successful titles such as Münster's *Cosmographia*, this impressive number of editions gave *Histoires prodigieuses* an extremely high profile amongst the most published

⁸⁷⁴ Boaistuau, P. (ed. Y. Florenne), *Histoires Prodigieuses* (Paris, 1961), Introduction. Bold font is mine. See also Florenne, Y., 'Un quêteur de prodiges', *Mercure de France*, vol. 342 (1961), pp. 657-668.

⁸⁷⁵ For the diffusion of such news and information and the ways of communication in urban societies of sixteenth-century France see Seguin, J.-P., *L'information en France, de Louis XII à Henri II* (Geneva, 1961), and his *L'information en France avant le périodique* (Paris, 1964).

⁸⁷⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, *Advertissement au Lecteur*.

⁸⁷⁷ For more detail see Chapter Two.

and widely-read books at the time. Only a few years later, Amboise Paré wrote that Boaistuau's book 'est ordinairement entre les mains des Dames et Demoiselles'.⁸⁷⁸

However, the novelty of Boaistuau's work lies primarily in the birth of a new genre in France – the *histoire prodigieuse*. As with *Histoires tragiques* and the import of the *histoire tragique* (see Chapter Three), Boaistuau once more surpassed narrative boundaries with his new work. This was influenced by similar German and Swiss works but the synthesis of different features combined with Boaistuau's style gave an air of originality to *Histoires prodigieuses*. The main framework was to recount (raconter) the stories and thereby provoke astonishment in his readers. Encyclopedism was interwoven with apocalypticism and moralising. Natural philosophy and theology were employed equally to explain Nature's diversity and decode the secret meanings of God's creations, a point to be examined further in the following section. The synthesis of such features is the reason why *Histoires prodigieuses* was different from other contemporary wonder-books. In fact, it can even be regarded as a shift towards a new direction from that of the typical works of its kind, a middle point between earlier treatises with a predominantly religious context such as Jacob Rueff's *De conceptu et generatione hominis* (1544), and more natural philosophical-orientated titles such as Amboise Paré's *Des monstres et prodiges* (1573).⁸⁷⁹ However, the continuation of Boaistuau's project was entrusted to François de Belleforest who, in accordance with other writers such as Claude de Tesserant, added more stories and a new dimension to the genre: 'le plaisir de conter'.⁸⁸⁰ The work also acquired an anti-Protestant

⁸⁷⁸ Cited in Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges*, p. 253.

⁸⁷⁹ Jacob Rueff (c. 1505-1558) was a Swiss physician specialising in simple surgery, and a friend of Conrad Gessner. Amboise Paré (c. 1510-1590) was a French royal surgeon, remembered not only for his book on prodigies but also for his surgical techniques and the treatment of battlefield wounds.

⁸⁸⁰ See Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges*, Chapitres XIII and XIX.

character, which was evident in later editions.⁸⁸¹ The *histoire prodigieuse* proved very successful during the Wars of Religion, when wonders and prodigies were seen against a backdrop of a time of religious and political turbulence and uncertainty in human affairs. Its popularity continued into the seventeenth century with the publication of titles such as Simon Goulart's *Thrésor des histoires admirables et memorables de nostre temps* (1600), which gave the genre a wider context.⁸⁸²

Another important characteristic separating *Histoires prodigieuses* from common wonder-books was the use of the term 'prodigious' by Boaistuau. At first, it seemed that he employed the word in a wide context to have the same meaning as 'marvellous', 'admirable' and 'strange'. For example, a 1561 account of the Martin Guerre affair by Jean de Coras was advertised as 'une histoire prodigieuse', proving that the term 'prodigious' occupied a similar conceptual space in the tale of an impostor husband as in Boaistuau's 'histoire prodigieuse d'une fille qui avoit deux testes, et n'avoit qu'un corps' or a 'comette prodigieuse'.⁸⁸³ However, Jean Céard has shown that Boaistuau used the term in a different sense in *Histoires prodigieuses*. By examining several examples, he proved that Boaistuau employed 'prodigious' not as an equivalent of 'marvellous' but as a superior form of surprise and wonder in order to show the rarity of a particular occurrence or a particular creation.⁸⁸⁴ As Natalie Zemon Davis wrote, 'the prodigious is strange, though not necessarily unique; it is

⁸⁸¹ See the forthcoming article 'Print and Polemic in Sixteenth-Century France: the *Histoires prodigieuses*, confessional identity, and the Wars of Religion' in *Renaissance Studies* by Jenny Spinks. I would like to thank her for sending me a final version of this article.

⁸⁸² Simon Goulart (1543-1628) was a French Reformed theologian who fled prosecution and moved to Geneva. He became head of the Company of Pastors after Theodore Beza's death, and wrote many works, mainly of religious nature.

⁸⁸³ For Coras's account on the affair of Martin Guerre see Davis, N. Z., *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), p. 104ff, where she also attempted a synthesis of *histoire tragique*, *histoire prodigieuse* and law.

⁸⁸⁴ Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges*, p. 256.

more rare than other events of its kind'.⁸⁸⁵ Rarity revealed not only Nature's diversity but also God's presence in the world, and this was probably the reason why 'rare' animals and 'rare' natural phenomena were explained at the time as divine messages or signs of forthcoming events. Similarly, a prodigy for Boaistuau was a sign sent by God but regardless of its divine derivation, it also contained a causation associated to Nature.⁸⁸⁶ This combination of theology and natural philosophy will be examined in more detail in a later section.

5.3. *Histoires prodigieuses* as a book of the secrets of Nature

The ninth chapter of *Histoires prodigieuses* revealed a different aspect of Boaistuau's study of Nature, focusing on the story of a man who washed his face and hands with melted lead.⁸⁸⁷ This shows Boaistuau's interest in a field of natural philosophy which was closer to alchemy and chemistry – although not clearly defined at the time as a separate science.⁸⁸⁸ The story, which was taken from Cardano's *De subtilitate*, was about a man in Milan who after washing himself with 'quelque autre eau', was able to withstand the heat of melted lead (see figure 14).

⁸⁸⁵ Davis, N. Z., *The Return of Martin Guerre*, p. 106. Bold font is mine.

⁸⁸⁶ This interpretation of prodigies was a break from the Augustinian tradition which had a great influence on Boaistuau, since St. Augustine identified prodigies as miracles.

⁸⁸⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 27r: Histoire prodigieuse d'un homme de nostre temps qui se lavoit la face et les mains de plomb fondu. This chapter is mistakenly numbered as 'Chap. 8'.

⁸⁸⁸ On early modern chemistry see Debus, A. G., *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2 vols (New York, 1977).

PRODIGIEVSES. 27
HISTOIRE PRODIGIEVSE
d'un homme de nostre temps qui se lauoit la face
Et les mains de plomb fondu. Chap. 8.



Fig. 14: A man washing his hands with melted lead, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560). The beard, the clothes and the turban-like cap suggests a non-European origin, possibly Jewish⁸⁸⁹

Boaistuau rejected Cardano's explanation that 'l'eau de laquelle il [the man] se lauoit, estre faicte de suc de pourpié, et de mercurialle, pour cause de la glutinosité et lenteur'.⁸⁹⁰ However, he did not provide his own explanation but simply gave a short description of materials which could withstand the heat of fire, using examples from antiquity and quoting authorities such as Theophrastus, St. Augustine and Juan Luis Vives.⁸⁹¹ Nevertheless, this story brings to mind two interrelated trends widespread during Boaistuau's time: occultism, and books containing the secrets of Nature.

There was great interest in the occult during the Renaissance and in particular in the middle of the sixteenth century.⁸⁹² The knowledge explosion and the recovery of

⁸⁸⁹ See Biberman, M., *Masculinity, Anti-Semitism, and Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 11.

⁸⁹⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 27v.

⁸⁹¹ Vives also prepared a commentary on St. Augustine's *City of God* – Boaistuau wrote on p. 28v: 'Ludovicus Vives sur l'exposition de ce mesme chapitre, lequel a doctement commenté et illustré les livres de la cité de Dieu de saint Augustin, assure avoir veu à Paris du temps de ses estudes...'. For more details on Vives see Chapter Four.

⁸⁹² A good introduction for more detail on occultism and natural philosophy is Webster, C., *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge, 1982). See also

mystical texts of late antiquity (such as the *Corpus Hermeticum*) had awakened a new interest in natural magic and its allied fields, as well as a fascination with the unnatural and strange. The case of Paracelsus was quite representative of this fascination, which seemed to have stimulated a different approach to Nature and natural philosophy:

Paracelsus was the author of an ‘alternative’ natural philosophy, presenting a magical world-view that is not only different from that of Aristotle, Galen, and the Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages, but from the revived neo-Platonism which also contributed strongly to the Hermeticism of the Renaissance.⁸⁹³

This interest in the occult was also enabled because the boundaries of many fields of study were not clearly defined at the time. As Ian McFarlane wrote:

distinctions between philosophy, science, religion, and para-orthodox thinking (occultism, astrology, alchemy, and so forth) are by no means clear cut [...] This concern with the supernatural has many roots, religious, philosophical, folkloric, and it seems to become even more widespread in the second half of the century.⁸⁹⁴

Similarly, Alfred Rupert Hall commented on the crossovers between natural philosophy and natural magic:

the lines between ‘science’ and ‘magic’ were as yet no more firmly drawn than those between astrology and astronomy. ‘Natural magic’ employing the extraordinary phenomena of magnetism, optics, pneumatics and so forth... was never magic in the true philosopher’s sense at all.⁸⁹⁵

Copenhaver, B. P., ‘Natural magic, hermetism and occultism in early modern science’, in Lindberg, D. C., Westman, R. S. (eds), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 261-301.

⁸⁹³ Hall, A. R., *The Revolution in Science*, p. 87. Paracelsus, born Phillipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), was a Swiss physician, astrologer and alchemist, also remembered for his search for the philosopher’s stone, an alchemical substance which could turn metal into gold. Bibliography on his life and works is vast. See for instance Grell, O. P. (ed.), *Paracelsus: The man and his reputation, his ideas and their transformation* (Leiden, 1998); Ball, P., *The devil’s doctor: Paracelsus and the world of Renaissance magic and science* (London, 2006).

⁸⁹⁴ McFarlane, I. D., *A Literary History of France: Renaissance France, 1470-1589*, p. 206.

⁸⁹⁵ Hall, A. R., *The Revolution in Science*, p. 88.

There is no doubt that this interest in the occult, which combined diverse features such as Gnosticism, Christian theology and Cabbalism, was followed by many writers and had even created a distinct literary genre. For instance in France, there was a lively interest in the study of Cabbalistic tradition as early as the reign of Francis I, and works such as Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (1528) and Marsilio Ficino's *De subtilitate* (1550) were widely recognised, especially in the 1550s. Across the channel, John Dee maintained a reputation as a magus and astrologer, wandering into the sphere of phantoms, demons and spirits.⁸⁹⁶ *Histoires prodigieuses* contained several references to these popular topics. For example in Chapter Fourteen, Boaistuau mentioned the appearance of an incubus to St. Anthony in the desert, which 'auoit forme d'homme, le nez hideux et crochu, deux cornes en la teste, et les piedz semblables à une Cheure'.⁸⁹⁷ Elsewhere, he focused on the question of whether or not devils could copulate with humans, using arguments from a variety of authorities such as St. Augustine and Jacob Rueff. He concluded that devils 'n'ont point de semence, ne peuuent engendrer, car il n'ya point de diuision de sexe entre eux'.⁸⁹⁸ In addition, a lengthy chapter was devoted to 'Spectres, Fantosmes, figures et illusions qui apparoissent de nuict, de iour, en veillant et endormant', in which Boaistuau dealt with various cases of visions, dreams and hallucinations.⁸⁹⁹ He cited examples from

⁸⁹⁶ On John Dee (1527-1608), astrologer, mystic and advisor on matters of geography and navigation for Elizabeth I, see French, P. J., *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (New York, 1972); Harkness, D. E., *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁸⁹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 41v-42r. Anthony of the Desert (c. 251-356) was a monk from Egypt and one of the leaders of early Christian monasticism. His fights with demons were depicted in many paintings, and laid the ground for the discussion of possession in the early modern period. Incubi were demons in male form known for sleeping with women. Their female counterparts were succubi. For more see Stephens, W., *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago, 2002).

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21r.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105r. In p. 122v Boaistuau noted the rarity of the subject ('ceste matiere est rare') and the novelty of his enterprise ('ie n'ay encores trouué aucun autheur Grec ou Latin, qui ayt comprins toutes

antiquity and also ‘choses qui ne sembleront pas moins esmervueillables, que nous auons experimenté de noz ans’, separated between genuine and artificial visions, commented on their causes, and stressed their religious context and origin: ‘plusieurs choses estranges... sont manifestées, non par les yeux du corps, oreilles ou autres membres charnelz: mais par diuine influence et celeste inspiration’.⁹⁰⁰

Why then, did this trend have such a great impact on erudite people such as Pierre Boaistuau, and what purpose did it serve? The answer lies in the central idea running throughout *Histoires prodigieuses*: how best to understand the order of Nature. Robert J. W. Evans had stressed this same point when he noted that ‘the whole mentality of occultism – in its broadest sense – belongs integrally within the cosmology of late Renaissance Europe’.⁹⁰¹ The occult represented something that existed beyond the realm of reality or common human understanding, and therefore could be decoded only through recourse to the supernatural. Magic at the time was closely associated with religion, and this interest in the occult can be interpreted as a search for divine truth in Nature. Allen G. Debus wrote that ‘sixteenth-century natural magic was a new attempt to unify nature and religion’.⁹⁰² This kind of ‘hidden knowledge’ could link the human and natural worlds with the aid of divine revelation. Goodman and Russell have suggested that ‘interest in the occult can be seen as characteristic of an age anxious to penetrate beyond the realm of everyday experience to an underlying

les especes de visions’) – although it is now known that visions and apparitions were common subjects at the time, especially in religious and medical literature. For more see Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1982); Camporesi, P., *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, 1989); Clark, S., *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford, 2009).

⁹⁰⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 111r.

⁹⁰¹ Evans, R. J. W., *Rudolph II and his World*, p. 243.

⁹⁰² Debus, A. G., *Man and Nature in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 13. Also see his edited volume *Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry: Papers from Ambix* (London, 2004).

spiritual reality'.⁹⁰³ The means towards the achievement of this goal was acquired through the study of occult concepts such as alchemy, which was believed to offer a different view of the world.⁹⁰⁴

Another trend closely related to occultism was the idea of books containing the secrets of Nature. These were not books of magic but treatises which revealed recipes, the marvellous properties of natural substances and formulae usually associated with crafts or medicine. There is a very long tradition of works going back to the Middle Ages which claimed to reveal the secrets of Nature. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park saw an overlap between secrets and natural wonders at the time:

Natural wonders often overlapped with 'secrets' and 'experiments' (experimenta), another group of phenomena accessible only to experience; these craft formulas, or proven recipes for medical and magical preparations, often drew on the occult properties of natural substances, and they were excluded from natural philosophy for the same reasons.⁹⁰⁵

The exclusion of secrets from natural philosophy changed in the early modern period and in particular the sixteenth century, when the literary tradition of books of secrets reached its peak with the publication of influential treatises such as Alessio Piemontese's *Secreti* (1555) and Giambattista della Porta's *Magia Naturalis* (1558).⁹⁰⁶ Their reputation as books of 'secrets' carried special weight at the time, as the term was closely related to the occult and hidden knowledge.⁹⁰⁷ Such books were

⁹⁰³ Goodman, D., Russell, C. A. (eds), *The Rise of Scientific Europe, 1500-1800*, p. 168.

⁹⁰⁴ R. J. W. Evans presented alchemy as a solution to Europe's religious and political problems, as alchemists sought to reform mankind. See his *Rudolph II and his World*, p. 201.

⁹⁰⁵ Daston, L., Park, K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, p. 129.

⁹⁰⁶ Girolamo Ruscelli (1500-1566), better known under his pseudonym Alessio Piemontese, was an Italian physician and alchemist. Giambattista della Porta (c. 1535-1615) was an Italian polymath and playwright, and founder of the scientific society *Academia Secretorum Naturae* in Naples.

⁹⁰⁷ Boaistuau's references to elements which could resist the heat of fire derived from the idea that many natural substances had marvellous properties – which were the cause for the action of *mirabilia*. This idea was generally accepted since the thirteenth century, and co-existed with the idea that occult

not just vehicles for the transmission of new or hitherto unknown data but most significantly, they were bearers of attitudes and new approaches which proved important in shaping early modern natural philosophical culture and the ways people looked at the world. William Eamon presented books of secrets as part of ‘the process by which European culture divested itself of the tradition of esotericism in natural philosophy’, and considered their notion of experimentation as a missing link between medieval ‘secrets’ and Baconian experiments.⁹⁰⁸

Thus, the incorporation of secrets into the wide framework of natural philosophy gave them a more popular character during Boaistuau’s time. They were no longer part of an esoteric tradition but of what can be named as ‘popular science’, a study pattern which interpreted features of natural philosophy for a wider audience – though without excluding from its analysis popular beliefs.⁹⁰⁹ Secrets became a common motif among writers of natural philosophy and a favourite topic among readers. This is how they found their way into stories such as Boaistuau’s man who washed his hands and face with melted lead, mentioned above. What was the formula that allowed such a marvellous thing to happen, and how was it possible? The search for secrets reflected an intellectual hunt for knowledge and a wish to discover new methods and ways to master Nature, and understand its uncharted powers. Boaistuau had this same idea in mind when he referred to ‘secretz de nature’.⁹¹⁰ Such aspirations

forces were found in Nature. This was the reason that these marvellous properties were often termed as ‘occult’ to distinguish the hidden from the manifest properties.

⁹⁰⁸ Eamon, W., *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (Princeton, 1994), p. 5. Eamon believes that the success of these works was based on four factors: their connection to a literary tradition that promised to reveal the esoteric teachings of authorities of the past like Aristotle; the fascination they transmitted by promising to allow access to forbidden knowledge that could be exploited for personal gain or the benefit of humanity; the search for an original wisdom as an alternative to scholasticism; and the impact that printing had on the popularisation of such works.

⁹⁰⁹ See Pumfrey, S., Rossi, P. L., Slawinski, M. (eds), *Science, culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe* (Manchester, 1991); Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic, o.c.*

⁹¹⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 28r.

made excellent material for works such as *Histoires prodigieuses*, which might not have been a genuine book of secrets but was surely influenced by the inquiring spirit and the secretive character of such books. This can be clearly seen in two examples. The first was a chapter on ‘pierres precieuses, et plusieurs autres choses esmerueillables, qui se retrouuent ens entrailles de la terre’.⁹¹¹



Fig. 15: A man in search of precious stones, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)

In writing this chapter, Boaistuau contributed to the discussion of the popular subject, the qualities of stones, which had sown the seeds for a series of works called lapidaries. Titles such as Georgius Agricola’s *De re metallica* (1556) and Anselmus de Boodt’s *Gemmarum et lapidum historia* (1609) reflect the continued interest of erudite men in the secrets of minerals and gems.⁹¹² Boaistuau mentioned many examples of precious stones, such as emerald (‘Esmeraulde’), ruby, sapphire (‘Saphy’),

⁹¹¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 42v.

⁹¹² On Agricola see *supra*, footnote 844. Anselmus de Boodt (1550-1632) was a Belgian mineralogist and physician to Rudolf II of Prague. These two men were pioneers in the development of the modern science of mineralogy. For an introduction see Oldroyd, D. R., *Thinking about the Earth: A History of Ideas in Geology* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), and his two essays in Debus, A. G. (ed.), *Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry*, pp. 216-244 and 245-266.

amethyst ('Amatiste'), turquoise, and even included the Lydia stone.⁹¹³ However, it was the diamond ('Dyament') and magnet-stones ('Aymant') which attracted most of his interest. He also explained the birth of precious stones:

Les pierres precieuses sont engendrées entre les rochers, quand le suc distille des pierres dedans les lieux creux, ainsi qu'est engendré l'enfant du sang maternel. Quelquefois elles sont engendrées par le suc des metaulx precieux, comme on les trouue aux mines d'Or et d'Argent.⁹¹⁴

The majority of these references were taken from other works but some were seen by Boaistuau in person, such as a stone 'nommée Astroïtes' which could move and imitate the walk of animals.⁹¹⁵ A description of their qualities contained many rare examples, such as the mineral named 'Nicolus' which made its carrier sad and melancholic, and a spongy stone found in Scotland which could turn salty water into sweet. Another topic touched upon was the ability to distinguish genuine from fake gemstones, and the imposters who made artificial copies in order to earn money.⁹¹⁶ By dilating on precious stones and their secret and marvellous qualities, their 'vertu oculte', Boaistuau presented them as beautiful and mystical objects reflecting not only the hidden powers of Nature but also her divine harmony. Stones, as with a myriad of other natural objects, belonged to a complex cosmological scheme where everything had its appointed place, proving the harmony of God's creation – and thus justifying the logic behind the examination and classification of the occult.

⁹¹³ The touchstone, also known as Lydia stone because of its origin from Lydia in Asia Minor, was used in antiquity for assaying the purity of precious metals and in particular gold.

⁹¹⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 44r.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48r: 'Les vrayes sont discernées d'auec les faulses, par la veue, par la lime, par la substance et atouchement'. On counterfeit precious stones see Chayes, E., 'Tromper les Plus Clair-Voyans. The Counterfeit of Precious Stones in the Work of Rémy Belleau', in Houdt, T. van, *et als* (eds), *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 183-221.

Another example of preoccupation with the ‘secrete propriété de nature’ in *Histoires prodigieuses* was Chapter Twenty-three entitled ‘*Histoires memorables de plusieurs Plantes, avec les propriétés et vertuz d’icelles...*’.⁹¹⁷ Boaistuau cited many classical and contemporary authorities who had written on the qualities of plants and herbs, revealing ‘quelque chose de monstreux, prodigieux ou estrange’. Among these sources there were the names of Pedanius Dioscorides, Pliny, Leonhart Fuchs and Pierre Belon.⁹¹⁸ Boaistuau’s stress on Dioscorides’s work in particular demonstrated the contemporary emphasis on the description and medical application of plants as opposed to their philosophical explanation.⁹¹⁹ This was evident through the use of various examples which stressed the medicinal qualities of plants, such as the Mandrake root. Similarly, the edelweiss (‘Pied de Lion’) could heal external and internal wounds, and the water lily (‘Nenuphar’) could cure bawdiness if drunk as a beverage once a day for a period of forty days. However, not all plants were beneficial to man. Parsley (‘Persil’) could generate epilepsy; aconite (‘Aconit’) was so poisonous that it could cause instant death; all varieties of poppy (‘Pauot’) could cause lethargy which can prove fatal; the exotic root of Bara, ‘ayant couleur et splendeur de flamme, et esclairoit la nuit comme vne lampe’, was the most dangerous of all since it brought death to anyone who touched it.⁹²⁰ The fact that plants were ‘garnies de leurs propres et diuines vertuz’ placed them in the same category as precious stones, finding a place in books such as *Histoires prodigieuses*. They too belonged to the secrets of Nature, their hidden attributes attesting

⁹¹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 83v.

⁹¹⁸ Dioscorides (1st century AD) was a Greek physician and botanist, famous for his work *De materia medica*. Leonhart Fuchs (1501-1566) was a German physician and botanist, considered along with Otto Brunfels as one of the founders of modern botany. His most well-known work was *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* (1542). On Pierre Belon see *supra*, footnote 839.

⁹¹⁹ Physicians required knowledge of the ingredients of drugs, most of which derived from plants. In order to facilitate physicians to recognize these plants, many medical schools had medical gardens. See Cunningham, A., ‘The culture of gardens’, in Jardine, N., Secord, J. A., Spary, E. C. (eds), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 38-56.

⁹²⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 90r-v.

Boaistuau's attempt to decipher their place in God's cosmos and discover their underlying meanings: 'Le Seigneur est esmerueillable en toutes ses oeuvres. Qui est-ce qui a congneu ses secretz, ou qui a esté son conseiller?'⁹²¹ This theological context was even more evident in another theme in the book closely related to the study of the occult and the secrets of Nature: 'les monstres, prodiges et abhominations'.

5.4. *Histoires prodigieuses* as a book of prodigies and monsters

Jean Céard rightly referred to the mid-sixteenth century as 'L'âge d'or des prodiges'.⁹²² Boaistuau's era was a period which saw the wide circulation of books about prodigies, wondrous animals and plants, unexplained celestial phenomena and monstrous births all over Europe. Such works were read by scholars, merchants, artisans and peasants alike, proving the popularity of the concept of 'monstrous' which also appeared in other literary forms. François Rabelais, especially in his *Quart Livre*, described a world of strangeness through a rhetoric which combined his interest in 'monstres' and his role as physician.⁹²³ Shakespeare in his tragedy *Othello* repeatedly used monster imagery to stress irrational behaviour, which culminated in the cry 'O monstrous, monstrous!' when Othello heard about Cassio's dream of

⁹²¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 95r.

⁹²² Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges*, p. 159ff. Historiography on early modern monsters is rich and varied. Beside Céard, see also Park, K., Daston, L. J., 'Unnatural conceptions: the study of monsters in sixteenth and seventeenth century France and England', *Past and Present*, 92 (1981), pp. 20-54; Daston, L., Park, K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, o.c.; Platt, P. G. (ed.), *Wonders, Marvels and Monsters in Early Modern Culture* (Newark, 1999); Hanafi, Z., *The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine and the Marvellous in the time of the Scientific Revolution* (Durham, NC, 2001); Williams, W., *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* (Oxford, 2011). On particular themes see the studies cited in the following pages.

⁹²³ See Kritzman, L. D., 'Représenter le monster dans le *Quart Livre* de Rabelais' in Simonin, M. (ed.), *Rabelais pour la XXIeme siècle* (Geneva, 1998), pp. 349-59; Williams, W., *Monsters and Their Meanings in Early Modern Culture*, Chapter 1: Rabelais's Monsters: Andromeda, Natural History and Romance.

sleeping with Desdemona.⁹²⁴ In art, monstrous creatures depicted in the works of painters such as Martin Schongauer, Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel epitomised the fear of the unknown and wondrous which haunted the age.⁹²⁵ Nature, to the people of early modern Europe, was ‘a swarming cosmos full of myriads of ephemeral metamorphoses’, which ‘gave rise to dreams of extraordinary creatures’.⁹²⁶ Contrary to the past, their feelings of fear and insecurity were not only fuelled by their imagination but by encounters with the wonders and marvels of Nature.

Early modern prodigies and monsters followed the rich classical and medieval traditions of monstrous creatures and races such as the cynocephali, which had featured in popular culture for many years.⁹²⁷ Examples such as the legend of the Antipodes (places at opposite sides of the globe inhabited by monstrous races) demonstrated that many of these medieval traditions co-existed with new findings from the voyages of exploration.⁹²⁸ However, the term ‘monster’ was redefined during the sixteenth century. Until then, it was held to have two main characteristics: grotesque features denoting abnormality,⁹²⁹ and remoteness ‘as a being outside human

⁹²⁴ On Shakespeare and monsters the best place to start is Burnett, M. T., *Constructing ‘Monsters’ in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture* (London, 2002).

⁹²⁵ See for example Schongauer’s *Temptation of St. Anthony*, Bosch’s *Triptych of Haywain* (c. 1500) and Bruegel’s *Dulle Griet* (c. 1562). For a first insight to the idea of the monster in art see Battistini, M., *Symbols and Allegories in Art* (Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 160-174.

⁹²⁶ Camporesi, P., *The Incorruptible Flesh* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 87.

⁹²⁷ On the idea of monster in the Middle Ages see for instance Smith, N. R., ‘Portent Lore and Medieval popular culture’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 14 (1980), pp. 47-59; Friedman, J. B., *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, 1981); Cohen, J. J., ‘The Order of Monsters: Monster Lore and the Medieval Narrative Traditions’, in Sautman, F. C. *et al* (eds), *Telling Tales: Medieval Narratives and the Folk Tradition* (New York, 1998), pp. 37-58; Jones, T. S., Sprunger, D. A. (eds), *Marvels, Monsters and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations* (Kalamazoo, 2002).

⁹²⁸ Flint, V., ‘Monsters and the Antipodes in the early Middle Ages and Enlightenment’ in her *Ideas in the Medieval West: Texts and their Contexts* (London, 1988), pp. 65-80; Friedman, J. B., ‘Monsters at the Earth’s Imagined Corners: Wonders and Discovery in the Late Middle Ages’, in Søndegaard, L., Hansen, R. T. (eds), *Monsters, Marvels and Miracles: Imaginary Journeys and Landscapes in the Middle Ages* (Odense, 2005), pp. 41-64.

⁹²⁹ For a good introduction to the cultural characteristics of monsters see Eco, U., *History of Beauty* (New York, 2004), Chapter 5, and his *On Ugliness* (New York, 2007), Chapter 4.

society, where human society was equated with normality'.⁹³⁰ It may have belonged to Western Christian thought due to the work of writers such as St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville who linked the 'marvellous' and 'wonderful' to Scripture as part of God's plan, but remained on the periphery. In Boaistuau's time the once distant mysterious creatures came closer to human societies. They acquired definite form and more detailed information than before. Compilations such as *Histoires prodigieuses* contained the specific time, location and appearance of monsters, and even a reference if the writer had not been an eye-witness. For example, it was by this means that Boaistuau introduced the story of two girls joined at the forehead: 'leurs fronts s'entretenoient, ensemble sans que par aucun artifice humain on les peust separer, ilz se regardoient intentiuement l'une l'autre, moy Munstere les ay veuz à Mayence, l'an 1501'.⁹³¹ Another difference was the attempt by sixteenth-century authors to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit monsters: 'Je sçay qu'il y a encore vne espece de Monstres artificielz, laquelle est fort familiere à ces prestygiateurs qui vont par les prouinces abuser le peuple pour en tirer argent'.⁹³²

In terms of context, the term 'monstrous' was commonly used as a synonym for the word 'prodigious' in contemporary literary works. This is also confirmed by Boaistuau, who employed the two terms interchangeably. For instance, he noted regarding the emergence of volcanoes: 'Il n'est point estrange que le feu tombant du

⁹³⁰ Wilson, D., *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London, 1993), p. 4. For an anthropological approach to monster see Hodgen, M., *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964), especially chapters 4, 5 and 6; Campbell, M. B., *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 1999), especially pp. 221-256.

⁹³¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 17r.

⁹³² *Ibid*, p. 15v. For further detail see Semonin, P., 'Monsters in the Marketplace: The Exhibition of Human Anomalies in Early Modern England', in Thomson, R. G. (ed.), *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York, 1996), pp. 69-81; Hoffmann, K. A., 'Sutured bodies: counterfeit marvels in Early Modern Europe', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, vol. 24 (2002), pp. 57-70. Also see the reference to counterfeit serpents in *Histoires prodigieuses*, Chapitre 32.

ciel, brusle les lieux qu'il attainct, mais il est **monstreux** de le voir yssir de la terre, sans sçauoir d'ou il prent sa nourriture, origine et naissance'.⁹³³ And in the chapter on plants discussed earlier he referred to their prodigious qualities, such as the case of a certain plant given to Alexander the Great 'laquelle m'a semblé digne d'estre recensée en ce lieu, par ce que l'effect de ceste plante fut **prodigieux**'.⁹³⁴ Prodiges and monsters revealed not only a marvellous occurrence but a rarity, which signified the divine presence. Boaistuau regarded them as revelations of the power of the Creator. They were 'Heraulx, Trompettes, ministres, et executeurs de la iustice de Dieu', used for didactic ends.⁹³⁵ At the same time they were seen as instruments of the divine plan, and signs of a contemporary event, for example a famine or a war. This is further supported by the etymology of the word 'monster'. It derives from the Latin *monstrum* (a portent or warning), which has its roots in *monere*, meaning to warn or remind.⁹³⁶ This idea was not new for sixteenth-century writers, since it can be traced back to antiquity. Ancient Greeks and Romans interpreted unnatural phenomena and portents as signs of divine intention toward Man, and an indication of future events.⁹³⁷

There was also a correlation between the appearance of monsters and public calamity. Their symbolic meaning, which persisted throughout the early modern period, demonstrated not only God's invisible workings and messages, but also moral depravity. For instance, the Ravenna monster in *Histoires prodigieuses* (see figure 16)

⁹³³ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 34r. Bold font is mine. The preoccupation of Boaistuau with natural disasters and their meanings will be examined in the following section.

⁹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 92v. Bold font is mine. However, there were also cases where the term 'monstrous' was used in a derogatory context.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid*, Salutation.

⁹³⁶ See also Matore, G., 'Monstre' au XVIe siècle. Etude lexicologique', *Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature Strasbourg*, vol. 18, no 1 (1980), pp. 359-367.

⁹³⁷ Lewis, N., *The Interpretation of Dreams and Portents in Antiquity* (Wauconda, IL, repr., 1996). It is also interesting to note that the Greek word for monster (*τέρας*) could mean either portent or marvel.

had both male and female sex and consisted of different animal parts, each one symbolising a different vice:

par la corne estoit figuré l'orgueil et l'ambition: par les aesles, la legereté et inconstance: par le default des bras, le deffault des bonnes oeuvres: par le pied rauissant, rapine vsure et auarice: par l'oeil qui estoit au genoil, l'affection des choses terrestres: par les deux sexes, la Sodomie.⁹³⁸



Fig. 16: The Ravenna monster, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)



Fig. 17: A child with four arms and four legs, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)

Appearing in 1512 during the Italian wars, this monster was associated with the sacking of Ravenna which took place in the same year and thus acquired a specific context as an 'augure de desastre'.⁹³⁹ Contrary to its classical predecessors, it was not a portent of the future but a sign of the times, symbolising the punishment for the sins and flaws of the Italian people. This was also the case with a child with four arms and four legs, which was linked to an event of political significance, since it was born on

⁹³⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 172v-173. On the various uses of hermaphrodites in early modern culture the best studies are Gilbert, R., *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (Basingstoke, 2002); Long, K. P., *Hermaphrodites in Renaissance Europe* (Aldershot, 2006). On sodomy see Puff, H., *Sodomy in Reformation Germany and Switzerland, 1400-1600* (Chicago, 2003).

⁹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16r. The Ravenna monster appeared in many contemporary accounts in various forms, for more detail see Niccoli, O., *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 35-51; Bates, A. W., *Emblematic Monsters*, pp. 22-27.

the same day as the Venetians and Genoese agreed a peace treaty (see figure 17 in the previous page).⁹⁴⁰ The association of monsters with political or religious upheavals, and their use as tools of social discipline at a time of crisis was not uncommon, as proved by many contemporary works.⁹⁴¹ It was more than mere coincidence that many reports of monsters appeared in France in the second half of the sixteenth century, during the French Wars of Religion.

Similar to the Ravenna monster, another hybrid creature which appeared in the pages of *Histoires prodigieuses* was the Cracow monster. The more well-known Papal Ass and Monk Calf, used in Philip Melanchthon and Martin Luther's polemic against the Roman Catholic Church, were not mentioned.⁹⁴² However, Boaistuau employed the words 'monster' and 'prodigy' not only in relation to hybrid creatures but also for describing 'wondrous' animals and deformed births. Although he did not proceed to a classification of monsters, as did Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiae*, he nevertheless included a variety of different monstrosities which gave his book the appearance of mini encyclopedia of wonders and prodigies.⁹⁴³ Among them was the story of 'un

⁹⁴⁰ Boaistuau probably referred to the 1355 treaty between Venice and Genoa. See Epstein, S. A., *Genoa and the Genoese, 958-1528* (Chapel Hill, 1996), p. 221.

⁹⁴¹ See Brammall, K. L., 'Monstrous Metamorphosis: Nature, Morality and the Rhetoric of Monstrosity in Tudor England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 27 (1996), pp. 3-21; Knoppers, L. L., Landes, J. B., *Monstrous Bodies / Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, 2004).

⁹⁴² See Scribner, R. W., 'Demons, Defecation and Monsters: Luther's Depiction of the Papacy (1545)', in his *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London, 1987), pp. 277-300. There are many interesting studies on the manifestations and uses of monsters in the context of the Reformation and Counter Reformation. See for instance Matheson, P., *The Imaginative World of the Reformation* (Minneapolis, 2001); Maxwell-Stuart, P. G., 'Rational superstition: the writings of Protestant demonologists', in Parish, H., Naphy, W. G. (eds), *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 170-187; Crawford, J., *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in post-Reformation England* (Baltimore, 2005); Spinks, J., *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (London, 2009), especially Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

⁹⁴³ According to Isidore of Seville, monsters could be classified in four large categories: monstrous races, fictitious monsters, individual monsters, and human-beast monsters (hybrids). For a first insight on types of monsters see Céard, J., 'Tératologie et tératomancie au XVI siècle', in Jones-Davies, M. T. (ed.), *Monstres et prodiges au temps de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1980), pp. 5-15; Bates, 'Good, regular and orderly: early modern classification of monstrous births', *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2005), pp. 141-158.

chien engendré d'une Dogue et d'un Ours' which Boaistuau saw in person when he visited London (see Chapter One), and the story of an animal with the face of a bearded man, which appeared in Germany in 1531.⁹⁴⁴ The 'monstrueux et esmerueillable' Bird of Paradise was also mentioned, described as 'vn Oyseau qui n'a aucuns pieds, et vit en l'air, et n'est trouué qu'a mort en la terre, ou en la mer'.⁹⁴⁵ The concept of prodigies was wide enough to include stories of fish and 'autres Monstres aquatiques', in which Boaistuau accommodated classical accounts with contemporary evidence of aquatic monsters. Among them, a flying fish ('Arondelle'), a remora (suckerfish), Tritons, Nereids, and sirens made their appearance.⁹⁴⁶ A further chapter was devoted to serpents and included references to mythological creatures such as the basilisk, as well as contemporary examples such as a 'horrible serpent à sept testes' which the Venetians had brought embalmed from Turkey as a present to Francis I.⁹⁴⁷ Such animals and exotic species were described in contemporary accounts as for example in André Thevet's *Singularitez de la France* (1558) and Pierre Belon's *Les observations de plusieurs singularitez trouvées en Grece et autres pays* (1553), which also served as one of Boaistuau's sources.

However, the majority of 'wonders' in Boaistuau's book consisted of deformed bodies and monstrous births. Human bodies with congenital malformations, more / fewer arms or legs, and even animal parts, transgressed the laws of Nature and surely

⁹⁴⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 95v-96r. On the concepts of animals in the early modern period the best place to start is Fudge, E., *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 2006).

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150v. For more detail see Ogilvie, B. W., *The Science of Describing, o.c.*, pp. 248-256. The Bird of Paradise appeared not only in literary accounts but also in art – see for instance the painting *Earthly Paradise with the Fall of Man* (c. 1614) by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel.

⁹⁴⁶ See also Walsham, A., 'Vox Piscis: Or The Book-Fish: Providence and the Uses of the Reformation past in Caroline Cambridge', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 114 (1999), pp. 574-606.

⁹⁴⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 140r. Boaistuau estimated that this monster was worth 'six mile Ducatz'. For more detail see Magnanini, S., *Fairy-Tale Science: Monstrous Generation in the Tales of Straparola and Basile* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 130-135.

made a lasting impression on sixteenth-century people. Boaistuau noted that such creatures generated ‘grande admiration, ou terreur’ in his readers.⁹⁴⁸ As Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park have suggested, depictions of monstrosity generated feelings of fear, repugnance, but also pleasure.⁹⁴⁹ Their purpose was not only to provide texts with credibility, but also to warn readers of the consequences of immorality. This use of monsters in a scheme of fear, sin and punishment was central to Boaistuau’s project.⁹⁵⁰



Fig. 18: A man out of whose belly issued the body of another man, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)



Fig. 19: Two maidens joined together in one body, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)

Amongst the examples presented in *Histoires prodigieuses*, was a man out of whose belly issued the body of another man (see figure 18), seen in France in 1530, a child whose entrails were visible, two girls joined together at their backs, seen in Italy in

⁹⁴⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, Salutation.

⁹⁴⁹ Daston, L., Park, K., *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, p. 176. See also Kristeva, J., *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York, 1982) on a more general level.

⁹⁵⁰ On this subject see Baltrusaitis, J., *Réveils et prodiges: le gothique fantastique* (Paris, 1960).

1475, and two girls joined together in one body (see figure 19).⁹⁵¹ Related to this category of monsters was also a chapter on women who had given birth to more than one offspring in the same pregnancy, and also a story about a woman in Vienna ‘qu’elle ayt porté cinq ans son fruict mort en son corps’.⁹⁵²

Monstrous births, and in particular conjoined twins, were a topic closely associated to medicine and in particular to the development of anatomy and surgery as a science.⁹⁵³ For instance, Vesalius had written an unpublished second volume of his *De humani corporis fabrica* focusing on illness and monstrosity.⁹⁵⁴ Before the sixteenth century, the theory of surgical study was studied as a unit separate from practical training. These two came to be intertwined gradually, through the revival of works from classical authorities such as Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen, and the multiplication of anatomy theatres (although in France this was slower to develop than in the rest of Europe). The latter’s role was very important, since it allowed students to observe directly the inside of the human body (often those of executed criminals) by means of dissection. As mentioned in Chapter One, Boaistuau was present at dissections in Rome and later Paris, and described human organs in *Le Théâtre du monde*.⁹⁵⁵ However, it seems safe to assume that the writer did not attend a medical autopsy

⁹⁵¹ Such depictions were usually borrowed from broadsheets and pamphlets on the subject of monstrous births, conjoined twins and human-animal monsters, which were circulated widely not only in France but across Europe. See Céard, J., *La nature et les prodiges*, pp. 468-483; Niccoli, O., *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, esp. Chapter Two; Cressy, D., *Agnes Bowker’s cat: Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000), Chapter Two.

⁹⁵² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 137r-138r. According to Boaistuau, the woman carried the dead child from 1545 until 1550, when she was subjected to a Caesarean section – the first of its kind to be performed on a living woman. The source of this story was the Viennese physician Mathias Cornax (c. 1510-1564), who operated the woman.

⁹⁵³ For an introduction see Brockliss, L., Jones, C., *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1997); Broomhall, S., *Women’s Medical Work in Early Modern France* (Manchester, 2004). On conjoined twins see for instance Thijssen, J. M., ‘Twins as monsters: Albertus Magnus’s theory of the generation of twins and its philosophical context’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 61 (1987), pp. 237-246.

⁹⁵⁴ Siraisi, N., ‘Establishing the Subject: Vesalius and Human Diversity in *De humani corporis fabrica*, Books 1 and 2’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 57 (1994), pp. 60-88.

⁹⁵⁵ See Chapter One, p. 50.

(conducted to determine the cause of a person's death and usually attended by a small audience), but a public dissection which was open to anyone.⁹⁵⁶ Guillaume Rondelet was probably the most original anatomist in mid sixteenth-century France, although contemporary anatomy did not yet oppose classical tradition: 'Professors of anatomy in France... were certainly not attempting to dethrone the ancients, and it was not until the mid-seventeenth century... that subversive anatomical discoveries began to affect the faculty curriculum'.⁹⁵⁷ Galenism remained the dominant medical doctrine, and even maintained a more popular form which Laurence W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones named 'popular Galenism'.⁹⁵⁸

The use of classical authorities was nowhere more evident than in the interpretation of monstrous births. They were understood as remarkable medical cases, an approach which enabled their integration to the study of medicine. At the time, medicine was associated with the study of various subjects, and the classification of monsters was in some ways analogous to that of animals and plants.⁹⁵⁹ This is proved by works such as Cardano's *De admirandis curationibus et praedictionibus morborum* (1565) and Marcello Donati's *De medica historia mirabili* (1586), which not only included monsters but analysed them and provided specific explanations for each case.⁹⁶⁰ In fact, the causes for the birth of wonders of Nature had attracted the attention of various writers long before the publication of *Histoires prodigieuses*. St. Augustine argued on the descent of monsters from the human race, while stressing that they were

⁹⁵⁶ On public dissections see Egmond, F., 'Execution, Dissection, Pain and Infamy – A Morphological Investigation', in Egmond, F., Zwijnenberg, R. (eds), *Bodily Extremities: Preoccupations with the Human Body in Early Modern European Culture* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 92-128; Nunn, H. M., *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* (Aldershot, 2005).

⁹⁵⁷ Brockliss, L., Jones, C., *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, p. 102.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-283.

⁹⁵⁹ This will be more evident in the seventeenth century, with works such as Fortunio Liceti's *De monstruorum natura* which marked the beginning of studies on the malformations of the embryo.

⁹⁶⁰ Marcello Donati (1538-1602) was an Italian physician and secretary of the Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga in Mantua.

part of the deliberate diversity of Creation.⁹⁶¹ Nicolas Oresme in his *De causis mirabilium* argued that portents and manifestations of the marvellous (such as monstrous births) did not require supernatural causes to be explained, since they usually derived from overlooked natural causes or errors.⁹⁶² However, the incorporation of the study of monsters into natural philosophy was a long and gradual process, and changed radically only in the sixteenth century. By their integration into the books of physicians and anatomists such as Cardano, Donati and Rueff, a diverse philosophical culture on marvels of Nature became available to those outside universities and medical faculties.

Influenced by these viewpoints, Boaistuau, too, focused on the birth of monsters. As mentioned earlier, one of the novelties of *Histoires prodigieuses* was that it provided 'la raison des Prodiges'.⁹⁶³ Two chapters were devoted to an examination of the causes of monsters, Chapters Five (Des enfantemens monstrueux, et de la cause de leur generation) and Six (Les causes generales de la generation des Monstres, avec plusieurs histoires memorables sur ce mesme subiect). Boaistuau's purpose was to demonstrate the cause of their generation, so that 'la Philosophie, et contemplation de ces choses soit mieux manifestée, et rendue plus claire'.⁹⁶⁴ In doing so, he blended explanations from classical authorities, sixteenth-century natural philosophy, and theology.⁹⁶⁵ Parental inability to control their desires, which violated the gift of God for the proliferation of human kind, served as a common reason for the birth of

⁹⁶¹ See Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVI, Chapter 8, and *passim*.

⁹⁶² Nicolas Oresme (c. 1320-1382) was a French philosopher who wrote on a variety of topics, and Bishop of Lisieux. For more on his work on monsters see Hansen, B., *Nicole Oresme and the Marvels of Nature* (Toronto, 1985).

⁹⁶³ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, Aduertissement au Lecteur.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 13v.

⁹⁶⁵ Even diseases were understood in terms of sinfulness rather than in medical terms. For example, Amboise Paré advised his readers that cure could be found only if they improved their lifestyle.

monsters. Intercourse with menstrual women was another.⁹⁶⁶ A different cause which resulted in malformed children was ‘la superabundance, ou au deffault et corruption de semence, ou a l’indisposition de la matrice’.⁹⁶⁷ In addition, Boaistuau cited astrologers such as Alcavitus who traced the origin of monsters to the stars and the moon, and ‘la corruption des viandes ordes et salles, comme charbons ardans, chair humaine, et autres semblables choses’.⁹⁶⁸ He also noted philosophers such as Hippocrates and Pliny, who stressed maternal imagination as one of the principal causes for monstrous births. This particular idea, which played an important role in early modern theories of monstrosity, was supported by the example of a ‘vierge velue entierement comme vn Ours’ (see figure 20 in the next page).⁹⁶⁹ The cause was that during pregnancy, her mother persistently looked at a picture of St. John the Baptist who was dressed in a fleece.⁹⁷⁰ Another child born half-human and half-dog was explained as divine punishment for the copulation of his mother with a dog (see figure 21).

⁹⁶⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 14r: ‘les femmes souillées de sang menstrual, enfanteront des Monstres’. See Niccoli, O., ‘Menstruum quasi monstruum: monstrous births and menstrual taboo in the sixteenth century’, in Muir, E., and Ruggiero, G. (eds), *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective* (Baltimore, 1990), pp. 1-25.

⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15r.

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Alcavitus (1st century AD) was an Arab astrologer. For a first insight on early modern astrology see Rutkin, H. D., ‘Astrology’, in Park, K., Daston, L. (eds), *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3: *Early Modern Science*, pp. 541-561.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14v. On maternal imagination, see Roodenburg, H. W., ‘The Maternal Imagination. The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland’, *Journal of Social History*, vol. 21 (1988), pp. 701-716, but foremost Huet, M-H., *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

⁹⁷⁰ On this subject see the similar case of the Gonzales sisters in Wiesner-Hanks, M. E., *The Marvelous Hairy Girls: the Gonzales Sisters and their Worlds* (New Haven, 2009).



Fig. 20: A hairy girl, covered in fur like a bear, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)



Fig. 21: A child born half-human and half-dog, taken from *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560)

Based on the above examples, it becomes evident that Boaistuau's explanation of monsters by reference to natural causes did not exclude recourse to the divine. After all, according to Christian writers such as St. Augustine, all of God's creations were marvellous.⁹⁷¹ This idea of *mirabilia* was applied to the understanding of monsters, which were seen as testimonies of the Creator's omnipotence. Their grotesque characteristics gave the impression that they violated the laws of Nature, but in reality this was not the case. Nature, where everything happened for a reason (*Nihil sine causa*), reflected the will of God (an idea which will be explored further in the following section). He was in control of everything and was responsible for all creatures, however strange or hideous they might have been in the eyes of sixteenth-century people. Similarly, the birth of monsters could be attributed to secondary natural causes but depended first and foremost on divine will. As Boaistuau wrote, 'Il est tout certain que le plus souuent ces creatures monstreuses procedent du iugement,

⁹⁷¹ See Psalm 139:14: 'I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: **marvellous are thy works**; and that my soul knoweth right well'. Bold font is mine.

Iustice, chastiment, et malediction de Dieu'.⁹⁷² Such irregularities of Nature served to emphasize the mysteries of the Creation and most importantly the infinite power of the Creator.

As such, monsters symbolised God's secret judgment and served as a moral lesson to any reader. This idea of repentance and amendment was found in all Boaistuau's work, but acquired a clear, specific context in *Histoires prodigieuses*:

les monstres, prodiges et abominations, esquelz... nous y descouvrons le plus souvent un secret iugement et fleau de l'ire de Dieu... lequel nous fait sentir la violence de sa iustice si aspre, que **nous sommes contrainctz d'entrer en nous-mesmes, frapper au marteau de nostre conscience, esplucher noz vices, et avoir en horreur noz meffaictz.**⁹⁷³

Monsters and prodigies were manifestations of God's wrath, and ministers and conveyors of His justice. They were reminders of the divine judgment awaiting all sinners, and symbols of the divine plan. However, monsters were not simply meant to terrorise, their purpose was also to instruct. Their aim was to make people repent and lead a life full of Christian virtue. Therefore, Boaistuau's stories communicated the message of divine punishment and moral edification. As described in *Le Théâtre du monde*, the writer considered Man to be a monster because of his sinful and incomplete nature: 'Mais contemplez l'homme, incontinent qu'il est sur la terre, c'est vn petit monstre hideux'.⁹⁷⁴ In order to become human again, Man needed to come closer to God. Boaistuau succeeded in ideally blending this edifying context with his genuine interest in examining the secrets and wonders of Nature. This same notion was also evident in his analysis of natural phenomena.

⁹⁷² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 13v.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid*, Salutation. Bold font is mine.

⁹⁷⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 54.

5.5. *Histoires prodigieuses* as a book of natural disasters

Similar to prodigies and monsters, natural disasters were another central theme in *Histoires prodigieuses* which demonstrated Boaistuau's preoccupation with natural philosophy.⁹⁷⁵ Incidents such as fire, lightning, earthquakes and floods were regularly reported in the Middle Ages, but during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such reports increased, partly due to the development of print and the wider dissemination of news, but also because of climatic changes which occurred in Europe at the time.⁹⁷⁶ These changes were particularly evident towards the end of the sixteenth century, and have attracted the attention of scholars who have associated them with the study of various subjects.⁹⁷⁷ Since Fernand Braudel first stressed the importance of climate in his seminal *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II* (1949), several studies have been published on the ways climatic change can be associated with the study of various aspects of early modern history.⁹⁷⁸ Although initially related predominantly to economic activities, the impact of climate is now examined on a much wider spectrum which includes society, religion and politics. A recent example is Sam White's *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern*

⁹⁷⁵ On the concept and definitions of disasters see Berlioz, J., Quenet, G., 'Les catastrophes: définitions, documentation', in Favier, R., Granet-Abisset, A.-M. (eds), *Histoire et mémoire des risques naturels* (Grenoble, 2000), pp. 19-37.

⁹⁷⁶ Fagan, B., *The Little Ice Age: How Climate made History, 1300-1850* (New York, 2000).

⁹⁷⁷ See for instance Benedict, P., 'Civil War and Natural Disaster in Northern France', in Clark, P. (ed.), *The European Crisis of the 1590s: Essays in Comparative History* (London, 1985), pp. 84-105; Landsteiner, E., 'The Crisis of Wine Production in Late Sixteenth-Century Central Europe: Climatic Causes and Economic Consequences', *Climatic Change*, vol. 43, no. 1 (1999), pp. 323-334.

⁹⁷⁸ Braudel, F., *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley, 1996), vol. 1, part I, IV: The Mediterranean as a Physical Unit: Climate and History. See also Le Roy Ladurie, E., *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate since the year 1000* (New York, 1971); De Vries, J., 'Measuring the Impact of Climate on History: The Search for Appropriate Methodologies', *Journal for Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1980), pp. 599-630; Wingley, T. M. L., Ingram, M. J., Farmer, G. (eds), *Climate and History: Studies in Past Climates and their Impact on Man* (Cambridge, 1981); Lamb, H., *Climate, History and the Modern World* (London, 1982); Pfister, C., Brázdil, R., Glaser, R. (eds), *Climatic Variability in Sixteenth Century Europe and its Social Dimension* (Dordrecht, 1999).

Ottoman Empire, which explored the consequences of climatic change on the systems of provisioning in Ottoman lands, and their direct association with the Celali Rebellion (1596-1610).⁹⁷⁹

Natural disasters appeared in contemporary accounts, diaries, books and pamphlets, and even in chronological lists compiled especially for their recording. Their descriptions usually had a providential character, and their prodigious symbolism – enhanced by the use of woodcut illustrations – were another reason for their wide circulation.⁹⁸⁰ The search for methodical explanations of natural phenomena was a long process which began before the sixteenth century, and was gradually accepted as being compatible with the Scriptures. Popular understanding of fire, flood, earthquakes, comets and tempests, and of reasons for their occurrence, was not significantly different amongst the various religious and social groups. Such incidents were linked to the will and glory of God, leading to a deeper appreciation of the world and the divine plan. As mentioned in Chapter Three (see pp. 170-171), they were also associated with prophecies on the impending end of the world, a concept which persisted throughout the early modern period and derived greatly from a hostile natural environment and a sense of insecurity and fear, as described by Jean Delumeau and Robert Muchembled.⁹⁸¹ However, the theological context of natural disasters did not exclude a more empirical understanding which attributed their birth to natural causes. This tendency was well represented in Boaistuau's book.

⁹⁷⁹ White, S., *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2011). See also Zachariadou, E., *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire* (Heraklion, 1999).

⁹⁸⁰ See for instance Bogucka, M., 'The Destruction of Towns by Natural Disaster, as reported in Early Modern Newspapers', in her *Baltic Commerce and Urban Society, 1500-1700: Gdansk/Danzig and its Polish Context* (Aldershot, 2003).

⁹⁸¹ Delumeau, J., *La Peur en Occident: XIVE-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1978); Muchembled, R., *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1985), Chapter 1.

Chapter Eleven contained accounts of floods and disasters caused by excessive amounts of water ('Deluges, et inundations prodigieuses'), taken from both the classical period and contemporary accounts. Among the examples used, the Deluge was mentioned first. It was seen as the most destructive natural disaster which had ever occurred on the earth, sent from God 'pour la [la terre] purifier et nettoyer des pechez des hommes'.⁹⁸² However, Boaistuau commented on the catastrophic nature of all ensuing floods, as 'il sembloit que Dieu eust oublié la promesse qu'il avoit faicte à Noë, de ne plus ruiner le genre humain par eau'.⁹⁸³ Other examples included a flood in Phrygia in 1230, a flood in Italy during the reign of Henry IV of England (1399-1413), another in the Low Countries near the city of Dordrecht in 1446, a flood in Flanders and Brabant in 1530, and the overflow of Tiber in Rome in the same year. Their descriptions stressed the destruction resulting from the power of water. For instance, in Dordrecht 'la mer se desborda de telle fureur, qu'elle rompit les chaussées... couvrit toute la terre, renversa les villes et villages, de sorte qu'il y eut lors seize paroisses noyées, et bien cent mil hommes perduz avec leurs femmes, enfans, et bestial'.⁹⁸⁴ Similarly, the floods in Flanders and Brabant were so cataclysmic that 'les chaussées et rampars ne furent pas seulement rompus, mais les villes, villages et toutes creatures animées furent rauies et emportées par la violente irruption de l'eau, et toutes les villes maritimes furent rendues nauigables comme la pleine mer'.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸² Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 32r. See Genesis 6-9.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 33r.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32v. For an insight on the issue of floods in the Low Countries see Eßer, R., 'Fear of water and floods in the Low Countries', in Naphy, W. G., Roberts, P. (eds), *Fear in Early Modern Society* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 62-77; Greefs, H., Hart, M. C. (eds), *Water Management, Communities and Environment: the Low Countries in Comparative Perspective, c. 1000- c. 1800* (Gent, 2006).

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Boaistuau described the overflow of Tiber as follows: 's'esmeut de telle sorte qu'il monta par dessus les plus haultes tours et estages de leur cité. Et sans le dommage des pontz rompus, des biens, or, argent, bled, vin, draps de Soye, farines, huilles, laines, et autres meubles, iusques à la concurrence de trois millions d'or, il y eut plus de trois mille personnes, tant hommes, femmes, que petitz enfans qui furent suffoquez, et exteinctz'.

Such dramatic descriptions emphasised not only the ‘marvellous’ attribute of floods (‘ces choses sont esmerveillables’), but most importantly their divine derivation.⁹⁸⁶ Floods were interpreted as manifestations of God’s wrath, and signs of His will. Their occurrence could have been attributed to secondary natural causes, but the apocalyptic atmosphere at the time left no room for questioning of their primary cause which was that floods were sent by God as punishment for human sin. This was evident in human response to such calamities, even when understood as a multi-faceted event, subject to different levels of interpretation and causation, including human error.⁹⁸⁷



Fig. 22: Depiction of a flood, taken from Boaistuau’s *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560). Two scenes on the left side of the picture create a great contrast: while a man climbs a tree to protect himself from the rise of waters, an older man finds refuge in prayer.

Floods were symbols of the Creator’s omnipotence, and also contained a moral lesson. As Alexandra Walsham noted, ‘the concluding refrain was always the same:

⁹⁸⁶ Compare the idea of marvellous floods in Rabelais who, describing the physical needs of Gargantua, wrote that the giant ate herds of cattle, drank barrels of wine, and pissed floods. See Rabelais, F. (tr. M. A. Screech), *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (London, 2006), pp. 257-258.

⁹⁸⁷ See for instance Schenk, G. J., ‘... prima ci fu la cagione de la mala provedenza de’ Fiorentini...’ Disaster and ‘Life World’ – Reactions in the Commune of Florence to the Flood of November 1333’, *The Medieval History Journal*, vol. 10 (2007), pp. 355-386. For more on the issue of human response see Bawden, G., Reycraft, R. M. (eds), *Environmental Disaster and the Archaeology of Human Response* (Albuquerque, NM, 2000).

zealously repent and amend ‘least a more fearful punishment, and a longer whip of correction draw blood of us’; put on sackcloth and ashes and implore the Lord to withdraw His hovering sword’.⁹⁸⁸

Apart from floods, a providential framework was evident in other kinds of natural disasters contained in *Histoires prodigieuses*, such as lightning, thunder, and tempests: ‘Histoires prodiges merueilleux des fouldres, Tonnoires et tempestes, avec les exemples de ce qui est advenu de nostre temps’.⁹⁸⁹ Amongst the examples were the storm in Milan in 1521 in the camp of the French troops, and the thunder over the city of Mechelen (‘Malynes’) in the duchy of Brabant in 1527. A fleeting reference was also made to meteorites as ‘pierres dures de couleur de fer... lesquelles estoient tombées du ciel’, and the meteorite which fell on Sugolie, Hungary, during a storm in 1514.⁹⁹⁰ As well as these examples, Boaistuau devoted attention to the disastrous effects of such phenomena and their impact on local communities. For example, he described at length the Mechelen thunder which resulted to the death of three hundred people:

car le tonnerre esbranla tellement ceste miserable cité, que les citoiens pensoient en un instant estre engloutis aux entrailles de la terre: Car apres ce grand esclat, et bruyt horrible de nuées, commença à se manifester un esclair comme une lampe ardente, duquel sortoit une puanteur intollerable, comme de souffre: sans qu’on peust sçavoir dont cela procedoit, sinon ceux sur lesquelz ceste foudre estoit tombée, iusques à ce que finalement le bruyt courut par la ville que le feu du ciel estoit tombé sur la porte d’Arene, en laquelle on avoit mis plus de huict cens caques de pouldre à canon [...] Le lendemain on trouva

⁹⁸⁸ Walsham, A., *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 124. On floods and natural disasters see particularly Chapter 3: ‘Visible sermons’: Divine Providence and Public Calamities. Also see Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, especially Chapter 4.

⁹⁸⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 21v.

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 26v.

(comme lon dit) tout à l'entour de ceste tour démolie des **corps mors, iusques au nombre de trois cens, et bien cent cinquante dechirez et blessez.**⁹⁹¹

However, the reasons for the occurrence of such celestial phenomena were, for Boaistuau, of equal importance to the fascination they generated for his readers: 'Ce n'est pas assez ce me semble pour contenter le Lecteur... si nous n'assignons les causes dont ilz naissent, et sont engendrez'.⁹⁹² Influenced by the recovery of classical works on the subject, Boaistuau relied on Aristotle's work *Meteora* (*Meteorology*), explaining at length the philosopher's theory on the formation of tempests, caused by two types of vapour and their interaction with lower or higher air strata of different temperatures:

il y a deux sortes de vapeurs qui montent incessamment en l'air: dont les unes sont chaudes et humides, et d'autant qu'elles sont les plus pesantes, demeurent en la mediane region de l'air, et lá sont condensées et espoissies, et en fin se resouldent et convertissent en pluies, gresles, neiges, et autres choses semblables. Les autres exhalations qui sont eslevées de la terre en l'air sont chaudes et seiches, et par leur chaleur et siccité elles sont eslevées plus hault que les precedentes, de sorte qu'elles parviennent iusques à la supreme region, et lá s'eschauffent et s'enflamment de telle sorte, que d'icelles se procréent et engendrent les feuz et flammes, les comettes ardentes, dragons et autres choses semblables.⁹⁹³

Boaistuau's influence from classical writings and his references to natural philosophical causation of celestial phenomena did not prevent him from constructing a theological framework, based on examples taken from the Scriptures and from

⁹⁹¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, pp. 22v-23r. Bold font is mine. Boaistuau also noted other examples of death caused by thunder, such as the case of the ancient Iranian philosopher Zoroaster. On Zoroastrianism see Boyce, M., *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden, 1975).

⁹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 23r.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 23r-v. Tempests were also formed by the interaction of vapour with clouds: 'Or s'il advient que ses vapeurs seiches viennent quelquefois à penetrer et s'engouffrer dedans quelque nuée, elles la fendent par la partie la plus subtile, et lors l'esclair apparoit et le ciel tremble, puis de l'ardeur de ce conflict qui sort de la nuée naissent les fouldres, de sorte que nous pouvons dire que le tonnerre est au ciel ce que le tremblement est à la terre'. According to Aristotle, there were three different categories of lightning and tempests: 'l'un qui brusle, l'autre qui noircist, le troisieme duquel la nature est admirable, et presque du tout incongneue des Philosophes'. Apart from *Meteora* which was translated into French as early as the end of the thirteenth century, other classical works on weather and climate included Seneca's *Natural questions*, and Hippocrates's *On airs, waters, and places*.

history. Violent winds, storms, and lightning were sometimes caused by demons, who were permitted to initiate such events according to God's will: 'les tempestes ne sont pas tousiours referées és causes naturelles, mais quelquesfois les diables, desquelz la principale puissance est en l'air (comme saint Paul tesmoigne) les suscitent et engendrent, quand il plaist au Seigneur de leur lacher la bride'.⁹⁹⁴ This idea remained widely accepted, appearing a few years later in Jean Bodin's *Universae naturae theatrum* (1596). The notion of a powerful and omnipresent God who regulated everything in Nature was the key to Boaistuau's explanation of celestial phenomena. As such, the natural causes noted earlier by Aristotle added another level of causation which glorified the harmony of the Creation. Since God had provided all earthly creations for the use and instruction of Mankind, natural philosophy would be able to fulfill this intention by improving Man's understanding of the operation of Nature. Thus, he could decipher the secret meanings of 'fouldres et tempestes' which were sent as signs of God's justice and as means to moralise: 'les choses que nous avons expérimentées de noz ans touchent de plus pres au marteau de nostre conscience, et nous rendent plus diligens à contempler les merueilleux effectz de espouventable iustice de Dieu'.⁹⁹⁵

Stars, eclipses, strange lights, comets, and other apparitions in the sky were also explained within the same spectrum.⁹⁹⁶ Boaistuau noted classical as well as contemporary incidents, such as the appearance of three suns in Venice in 1532 (see figure 23 below) which he quoted from Cardano's *De varietate rerum*, and a 'pluye

⁹⁹⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 23v.

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 22r. On this notion see Fulton, E., Roberts, P., 'The Wrath of God: explanations of crisis and natural disaster in pre-modern Europe', in Levene, M., Johnson, R., Roberts, P. (eds), *History at the End of the World? History, Climate Change, and the Possibility of Closure* (Penrith, 2010), pp. 67-79.

⁹⁹⁶ For an insight see North, J. D., 'Comets, Necessity, and Nature', in Van Berkel, K., Vanderjagt, A. (eds), *The Book of Nature in Early Modern and Modern History* (Leuven, 2006), pp. 275-298.

de sang’ which fell near Fribourg in 1555. However, the example discussed at length was a comet which appeared in Normandy (‘Vuestrie’) in 1527. As shown in figure 24, on top of this comet appeared the figure of a hand holding a sword, and on its side swords, axes, lances, and heads of bearded men. It was described as having lasted ‘vne heure et vn quart’, had a red colour and was seen by many people.

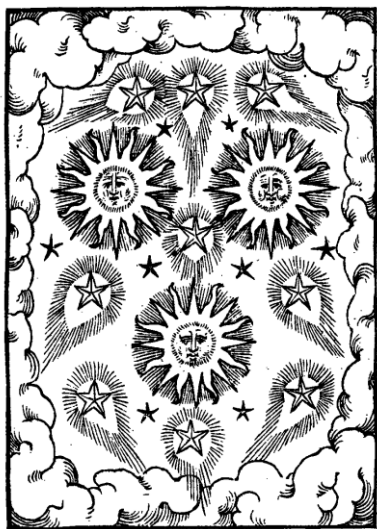


Fig. 23: Three suns and comets in the sky, taken from Boaistuau’s *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560).



Fig. 24: The red comet, with stars, swords and human heads in the sky, taken from Boaistuau’s *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1560).

Such phenomena were understood as signs and precursors of future events: ‘Ces figures fantastiques, comme dragons, flammes, Cometes et autres semblables de diuerses formes, qui se voyent quelquefois au ciel, si elles portentent, **predisent ou annoncent quelque chose à venir**’.⁹⁹⁷ As such, after the appearance of the red comet, wars were fought in many kingdoms in Europe and the Ottoman troops advanced. According to Cardano, hairy figures in the sky and similar apparitions signified famines, diseases, wars, and the mutation of kingdoms. On other occasions, they were associated with a major event. For Lefèvre d’Etaples (cited by Boaistuau as ‘Faber Stapulensis’), celestial phenomena could signify infertility, bloodshed, wars, and the

⁹⁹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 68v. Bold font is mine.

death of princes. For example, when Francesco I Sforza died in 1466, it was reported that three suns appeared in the sky over Rome. As Tabitta van Nouhuys has shown in her study of the 1577 and 1618 comets in the Netherlands, such incidents were closely connected with the political and cosmological views held at the time.⁹⁹⁸

When explaining the origin of the comets, Boaistuau once more combined a theological and a natural philosophical approach. He wrote that comets generated ‘grand terreur et estonnement’ in the people who ignored their causes, and made them pray ‘pensant que l’ire de Dieu fut enflammée contre leurs pechez’.⁹⁹⁹ But he also cited Aristotle’s *Meteora*, dilating on the natural causes which created such phenomena and which were, as in the case of thunder and tempests, the result of the interaction between vapours and air strata. For the Breton writer, comets, eclipses and stars had a natural derivation and their understanding depended on the study of Nature: ‘Cherchons doncques desormais en nature les causes et essences des choses’.¹⁰⁰⁰ It was for this reason that he accused astrologers as being liars and impostors and blamed them for passing on incorrect information. In the sixteenth century, the belief that heavenly bodies could influence life on earth was widely held: ‘la pluspart des actions humaines dependre des constellations celestes’.¹⁰⁰¹ Such beliefs were widespread not only amongst the illiterate but also the erudite, such as Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei. The practice of astrological weather forecasts was commonly used in many countries, including France, as proved

⁹⁹⁸ Van Nouhuys, T., *The Age of Two-Faced Janus* (Leiden, 1998).

⁹⁹⁹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 67r. See Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Chapter 5: Prayer and Prophecy.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 71r. On the longevity of Aristotelian theories in relation to the study of comets see Van Nouhuys, T., *The Age of Two-Faced Janus*.

¹⁰⁰¹ In order to prove the fraud of astrologers, Boaistuau noted the prognostication of a great deluge in February 1524 because of the ‘conionction de toutes les planettes au signe de Pisces’. He added that contrary to the astrologers’ predictions, the month proved to be one of the calmest of the year.

by many calendars, prognostications, and almanacs.¹⁰⁰² Astrology was also part of the curriculum in many renowned Renaissance universities. By attacking astrologers and their theories, Boaistuau separated himself from a tradition which regarded astrology as part of the domain of natural knowledge. In this way, *Histoires prodigieuses* can be added to the list of contemporary natural philosophical works which challenged the place of astrology in the understanding of Nature long before its ultimate removal from learned culture in the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁰³

Another kind of natural disaster which featured frequently in contemporary accounts was that of the earthquake. For instance, they were discussed by Amboise Paré in the twelfth chapter of his *Des monstres et prodiges*. Boaistuau devoted a whole chapter to the ‘*tremblemens de terre*’, mentioning several examples of ancient cities which had been hit by earthquakes, such as Ephesus, Sardis, Caesarea, Nicomedia, Antioch, Rome, and the island of Rhodes.¹⁰⁰⁴ He also referred to the 1345 earthquake in Venice, and described at length the Lisbon earthquake of 1538:

nous avons mesmes de noz ans experimenté le semblable, en l’an de nostre sauveur, mil cinq cens trente huit, le vingtsixiesme iour de Ianvier, ou le royaume de Portugal fut tellement esbranlé par le croulement de la terre, qu’il tomba à Lisbonne (comme les modernes écrivent) bien mil ou douze cens edifices, et plus de deux cens autres qui tendoient à ruine, et dura ce tourment huit iours, reiterant les assaulx cinq ou six fois le iour: Dequoy tous les pauvres habitans furent si bien intimidez, qu’habandonnans leurs maisons ilz erroient par les champs et logeoient soubz le ciel.¹⁰⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰² On astrological weather forecasts see Jenks, S., ‘Astrometeorology in the Middle Ages’, *Isis*, vol. 74 (1983), pp. 185-210. Also see the section on astrology in Thomas, K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

¹⁰⁰³ See Rutkin, H. D., ‘Astrology’, in *The Cambridge History of Science, o.c.*

¹⁰⁰⁴ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 36v: Prodiges de quelques horribles tremblemens de terre, advenuz en diverses provinces, avec un prestige de Sathan, lequel par son astuce fait precipiter un chavalier Romain en un gouffre.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 38v. Another earthquake was also recorded the same year in Naples.

Such descriptions stressed the marvellous features of natural disasters, and had undoubtedly a lasting impression upon readers. For example, the destructive impact of the ‘Great Earthquake’ in England in 1580 was reported in numerous contemporary pamphlets and broadsheets, and was listed in chronologies of historical events well into the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁰⁶ Boaistuau’s account also alluded to the prodigious character of earthquakes. Similar to the flooding, thunder, tempests, and comets examined earlier, the trembling of the earth was understood to be a divine sign of a providential nature, and further proof that the end of the world was at hand.¹⁰⁰⁷ These phenomena appeared repeatedly in sixteenth-century sermons, and were related to immorality, epidemics or the Ottoman danger. Interpreted as signs of God’s wrath, their aim was to make people faithful, repentant and obedient.¹⁰⁰⁸ Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin employed earthquakes in their texts, using the rhetoric of theological guilt.¹⁰⁰⁹ Moralising tracts such as Stephen Batman’s *The Doome warning all men to the Judgement* (1581) and Thomas Beard’s *Theatre of God’s Judgements* (1597) contained similar images of natural disasters which manifested the presence of God in Nature. However, the fact that such phenomena were understood as having a divine derivation did not exclude recourse to evil powers when examining their causes. For example, Boaistuau interpreted the death of a Roman knight who cast himself into a chasm as the Devil’s chicanery.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁶ Walsham, A., *Providence in Early Modern England*, pp. 130-135.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Matthew 24:6-7: ‘And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: **and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes**, in divers places’. Bold font is mine.

¹⁰⁰⁸ See for instance Van de Wetering, M., ‘Moralizing in Puritan Natural Science: Mysteriousness in Earthquake Sermons’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 43 (1982), pp. 417-438.

¹⁰⁰⁹ The best studies on the subject are Schreiner, S. E., *The Theatre of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Durham, 1991), and Young, D. A., *John Calvin and the Natural World* (Lanham, MD, 2007).

¹⁰¹⁰ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 39r: ‘Marcus Curtius excellent et magnanime chevalier Romain, armé de toutes pieces, et monté sur le meilleur cheval de son escuirie, se precipita en cest

The debate as to whether earthquakes can be attributed to divine or natural causes stemmed from the Middle Ages. Disaster reports in Boaistuau's time often combined both, examining earthquakes on a scale which ranged between the 'prodigious' and the 'empirical'. Although seismology as a separate field was not yet developed, this did not prevent the investigation of the causes of geological phenomena, using mainly the work of classical natural philosophers such as Aristotle and Pliny. Boaistuau noted that earthquakes were formed because of the movement of underground gases:

Aristote, Pline, et en general tous ceux qui ont traicté de l'emotion de la terre, attribuent les causes de ce malheur **aux vapeurs et exhalations qui sont encloses aux entrailles de la terre**, lesquelles cherchant à sortir, et à s'évaporer la secouent, mouvent, et agitent, et estant ainsi esbranlée en aucuns lieux, les murailles tombent, aux autres se font des abismes.¹⁰¹¹

A similar explanation was provided for the emergence of volcanoes, another 'marvellous' natural phenomenon analysed in Chapter Twelve.¹⁰¹² After citing many examples (such as the volcano eruption in the French city of Calene, Hecla in Iceland, and Vesuvius and Aetna in Italy) and authorities on the subject, Boaistuau referred to the interaction between elements such as sulphur, alum, tar and water, and to the shape of the earth which caused fire to be thrust violently to the surface:

Les Philosophes ont serché la cause de ces flammes avec grande diligence, puis ont trouvé en fin, que **le souffre, alun, le bitumen et l'eau sont cause d'entretenir ce feu**, mesmes aux lieux ou la terre est fort grasse, et ce feu ne pouvant longuement vivre sans souspirail, lors qu'il trouve yssue il commence à se produire avec violence.¹⁰¹³

abisme, lequel à l'instant mesme fut bouché, **tant les prestiges du diable estoient grands en ce siecle**'. Bold font is mine. This story was cited from Julius Obsequens's *Des prodiges*, see *supra*.

¹⁰¹¹ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 39r. Bold font is mine.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid*, p. 33v: Prodigieuse mort de Pline, avec une briefue description de la cause des flammes, qui sortent de certains endroitz de la terre. Boaistuau wrote at the beginning of this chapter: 'Il n'est point estrange que le feu tombant du ciel, brusle les lieux qu'il attainct, mais **il est monstrueux de le voir yssir de la terre, sans sçavoir d'ou il prent sa nourriture, origine et naissance**'.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid*, p. 34v.

At this point, Boaistuau diverged from the explanations of Plato and Aristotle which traced the heat of volcanoes in underground rivers to the friction of the wind, and seemed to fall in line with the views of contemporary natural philosophers.¹⁰¹⁴ Georgius Agricola in his *De re metallica*, although barely mentioning volcanic activity, had a theory similar to that of Boaistuau, believing that volcanic eruptions were caused by gases under pressure.¹⁰¹⁵ Could Boaistuau, who cited Agricola by name, have read his work which was published in 1556? Or could he have been influenced by another naturalist interested in the subject? What is certain is that he accepted a natural cause for the emergence of volcanoes: ‘Et quant aux flammes hideuses et perpetuelles qui sortent de la Montaigne, la cause... est naturelle’.¹⁰¹⁶ The fact that no divine intervention was mentioned in this case proves that not all natural disasters were seen as sent by God – at least not to the same degree. Occasionally, writers adopted a more natural philosophical approach without recourse to the supernatural, and at other times a combination of the two. This was clearly the writer’s choice, and depended not only on his personal beliefs but most probably on the nature of his work. Whatever the case, the prodigious-moralising context was ever present, even when not explicitly noted but hinted at in the desolating effects of a volcanic eruption:

laquelle a esté autrefois tant fertile, et toutefois le feu qui y est naturel a tout embrasé, gasté et ruiné... elle ietta tant de feu que deux villes en furent embrasées, et sortit du sommet d’icelle des fumées si espoisses, que **la lumiere du Soleil en estoit obscurcie, et les iours sembloient nuictz**, et tout

¹⁰¹⁴ Of course, this did not mean that the theories of classical authorities were challenged. For example, Plato’s explanation was adopted by Conrad Gessner, and Aristotle’s theory survived until the eighteenth century. For a general introduction see Barnes-Svarney, P. L., Svarney, T. E., *The Oryx Guide to Natural History: The Earth and all its Inhabitants* (Phoenix, 1999), Chapter 30.

¹⁰¹⁵ Other notable early modern naturalists interested in volcano activities were Conrad Gessner, Johannes Kepler, René Descartes and Athanasius Kircher.

¹⁰¹⁶ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 35r.

à l'entour les champs estoient si plains de cendres qu'ilz egalloient la hauteur des arbres.¹⁰¹⁷

For Boaistuau, natural philosophy could never contradict religion. In fact, the agreement between them, which echoed Thomas Aquinas's synthesis of reason and faith, was the connective tissue of every chapter in *Histoires prodigieuses*. This unity of truth was also evident in the classification and examination of knowledge throughout the book, and served the same purpose: to reveal the harmony of Nature, and the glory of God. Nature was the mirror of God's will: 'la nature qui pend contre bas, n'est autre chose, que une belle face et figure de Dieu, ou quelque livre ou mirouer plain de divinité'.¹⁰¹⁸ In the same spirit, the study of marvels and wonders of Nature attested not only to the diversity and perfection of Creation, but to the power and greatness of the Creator. Boaistuau proposed a natural philosophy which confirmed this divine authority, emphasising the perfect order of the universe and following the fundamental principle that the truth is all-embracing.

¹⁰¹⁷ Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses*, p. 35v. Bold font is mine.

¹⁰¹⁸ Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580), p. 186.

CONCLUSION

Pierre Boaistuau's writing career was defined by the manifestations of humanism in mid sixteenth-century France. In order to examine its influence on the compilation of Boaistuau's works and the ways it was employed for different purposes, this study began with a fresh evaluation of the writer's life. Although there is a lack of evidence concerning his biographical details, a correlation of all scattered data demonstrated a close association between the contemporary humanist trends and practices and Boaistuau's whereabouts between 1540 and 1560. Analysis of his education in three French universities, his travels in Italy, Germany, England and Scotland, his service to the Crown as secretary to the French ambassador to the East, his preoccupation with different disciplines, and his broad network of acquaintances, revealed the literary profile of a writer clearly influenced by the humanist climate of his time. In addition, it was the same environment which shaped the production of his seven works, transplanting the values and ideals of French humanism in a variety of ways.

In order to show how these humanist trends were integrated into Boaistuau's works and used for different purposes, a thematic standpoint was adopted for the rest of the thesis, closely examining the entirety of Boaistuau's works under four principal themes: print culture, narrative fiction and philosophy, political theory and historical writing, and natural philosophy. Firstly, his work was analysed against the backdrop of early modern print culture. The exploration of the rich publishing history of Boaistuau's books, with more than 260 editions, set his role as a successful writer on a whole new level. Moreover, the features of his books offered the possibility for an overview of the manifestations of the art of printing in sixteenth-century France, and

of a particular set of features which typified the French book industry at the time. By identifying Boaistuau's work with four key areas of the industry, namely the centralised production, the physical nature of books, the use of vernacular language, and the popular topics, the extent of its representative character was also evident.

Boaistuau employed humanism in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. One of which was the celebration of the revival of classical learning, which also served as the framework for the communication of his ever-present moralising message. This was evident in the examination of *Histoires des amans fortunez*, which contributed to the rise of the nouvelle in Renaissance France, and of *Histoires tragiques*, which popularised the genre of histoire tragique. Most importantly however, and closely associated with the argument of this study, was that the evaluation of these titles added to the humanist practices of translating and editing texts during a time of lively literary development. Similarly, analysis of *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme* shed new light on the combination of humanist trends and Christian theology, and on the ways they could be used to serve both literary and moralising ends. The examination of Boaistuau's views on the human condition proved beneficial for the study of Renaissance philosophy and in particular Neoplatonism and Neostoicism, but also made clear that humanist ethics could harmoniously co-exist alongside Christian rhetoric.

Humanism also found its way into works of political theory and history, which used classical frameworks and material for their compilation. This was apparent from a close reading of two works by Boaistuau never previously discussed: *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* and the *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et*

catholique. The examination of the first added to the study of the notion of divine monarchy in France, following a long literary tradition, and to the genre of mirror for princes. As proved, the issue of the qualities and responsibilities of the ideal Christian ruler was treated by writers such as Boaistuau from a humanist perspective, which drew inspiration from Ancient Greek and Roman models and incorporated a system of humanist values such as virtue and erudition. Written in support of the Crown, Boaistuau's *Chelidonium Tigurinus* demonstrated how these humanist influences could be used for political purposes. At another level, examination of the text of *Histoire des persecutions* revealed its relevance to the study of history in sixteenth-century France, and in particular of works of ecclesiastical history. It also demonstrated how Boaistuau used his historical narrative of the persecutions and heresies of the first Church to shape his anti-Protestant rhetoric and strengthen the Catholic faith, which in turn disclosed another use for humanist research: that of religious ends.

The analysis of *Histoires prodigieuses* cast light on another area which humanism could be applied: that of natural philosophy. This was an aspect of Boaistuau's book examined for the first time, illustrating how it could contribute to the study of wonder-books, interpretation of monstrous births and natural disasters, French anatomy, the occult and books on the secrets of Nature, and contemporary trends such as an early form of encyclopaedism. It also proved how the knowledge explosion and new attitudes towards the classification of knowledge experienced at the time were boosted by humanism, and how natural philosophy and theology co-existed in the mindset of intellectuals, and could be inter-related. This work was another example of the ways in which humanism could be used to serve other than scholarly purposes, such as the examination of Man and Nature and the understanding of a rapidly

changing world. The agenda of French humanists was broad and varied, and their shared cultural values were applied to natural philosophy with the same ease as to literary works, politics and religion.

The case of Boaistuau exemplified the adaptability of humanism, which was not a rigid, self-contained unit as many scholars still believe, but had many forms and embraced many different aspects to suit the changing political, religious, and intellectual character of the mid sixteenth-century. This broad nature and system of beliefs and practices of humanism, which cannot be put into a single formula, constituted its dynamic and ability to penetrate almost every aspect of Renaissance life, ensuring its longevity.

APPENDIX A

TABLES OF EDITIONS OF PIERRE BOAISTUAU'S WORKS BETWEEN 1556 AND 1751

For the compilation of these tables, lists of editions of Boaistuau's works published in other studies have been taken into account. In particular, Michel Simonin's lists of *Le Théâtre du monde* and *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*, Richard Carr's list of *Histoires tragiques*, and Andrew Pettegree, Malcolm Walsby and Alexander Wilkinson's lists of Boaistuau's works published before 1601.¹⁰¹⁹ Online resources such as Gallica have also been used, a full list of which is contained in the bibliography, as well as the catalogues of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Herzog August Bibliothek, the British Library, the Wellcome Library of Medicine, the National Library of Scotland, the Edinburgh University Library, the John Rylands Library, the Cambridge University Library, and the Birmingham University Library. The tables contain the year and place of publication, name of publisher(s), language, and format (where this is possible) of each edition. The year of a new edition appears in bold fonts.

1. *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus*

1556	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis	French
	Paris	Estienne Groulleau	French
	Paris	Vincent Norment	French
1557	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
1559	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1560	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
1560	London?	[copy dedicated to Elizabeth I]	French
1564	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jeanne Bruneau	French
	Paris	Jean Longis	French
1567	Paris	L. Chancelier	French (8°)
	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (12°)
	Paris	Vincent Norment	French
	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jeanne Bruneau	French
1570	Antwerp	Jacques Monnotz	French (8°)
1571	London	Henry Bynneman	English
1572	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French
1576	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French
1576	Rouen	Thomas Mallard	French
1577	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French
1578	Paris	Hierome de Marnef	French (16°)
1579	Rouen	Unknown	French (16°)

¹⁰¹⁹ See relevant works in the Bibliography.

1585	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French (16°)
n.d.	Paris	L. Chancelier	French

2. *Histoires des amans fortunez*

1558	Paris	Gilles Gilles	French (4°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French
	Paris	Jean Caveiler	French

3. *Le Théâtre du monde*

1558	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1559	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1560	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
1561	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (16°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French
1562	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (16°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (16°)
	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
1563	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
	Paris	Jean Ruelle	French (8°)
1564	Alcala	Andres de Angulo	Spanish (8°)
1565	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (16°)
	Paris	Robert le Mangnier	French (8°)
	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jean Bruneau	French (16°)
1565	Antwerp	Christophe Plantin	French (16°)
1565	Lyon	Nicolas Perrineau	French
1566	London	Thomas Hacket	English (8°)
1566	Alcala	Andres de Angulo	Spanish (8°)
1566	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (8°)
1566	Lyon	Jean Martin	French (16°)
1567	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French (16°)
1568	Lyon	Jean d' Ogerolles	French (32°)
	Lyon	Jean d' Ogerolles	French (16°)
	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French (16°)
1569	Alcala	Juan de Villanueva	Spanish (8°)
1570	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
1570	Antwerp	Christophe Plantin	French (16°)

1571	Paris	Jean Ruelle	French (16°)
1572	Paris	Guillaume Chaudière	French (16°)
1572	Lyon	François Durelle & Benoist Rigaud	French (16°)
1573	Antwerp	Christophe Plantin	French (16°)
1574	Cologne	Johannes Gyminicus	French / German (8°)
1574	Alcala	Juan Iñiguez de Lequerica	Spanish (8°)
1574	London	Thomas Hacket	English (8°)
1575	Paris	Hierome de Marnef & Guillaume Cavellat	French
	Lyon	Nicolas Perrineau	French
1575	Alcala	Juan Iñiguez de Lequerica	Spanish (8°)
1575	Antwerp	Christophe Plantin	French (16°)
1576	Paris	Nicolas Bonfons	French (12°)
1576	Antwerp	Lucas Bellerus	Latin (8°)
	Antwerp	Lucas Bellerus	Latin (12°)
1576	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French (16°)
1577	Rouen	Nicolas Lescuyer	French (16°)
1578	Paris	Vincent Normant	French (16°)
	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (16°)
1578	Lyon	Etienne Michel	French (16°)
1578	Antwerp	Willem Silvius	French
1579	Lyon	Héritiers de S. Beraud	French
1580	Paris	Hierome de Marnef & Vefue de Guillaume Cavellat	French (16°)
	Paris	Etienne Petit	French (16°)
1580	Antwerp	Christophe Plantin	French (8°)
1580	Rouen	George l'Oyselet	French (16°)
1580	Lyon	Etienne Michel	French (16°)
1581	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
	Paris	Hilaire Le Bouc	French
1581	London	John Wyght	English (8°)
1583	Paris	Nicolas Bonfons	French (16°)
	Paris	Claude Micard	French (16°)
	Paris	Laurent du Coudret	French (16°)
1583	Lyon	Etienne Michel	French (16°)
1584	Paris	Robert le Fizelier	French (16°)
	Lyon	Unknown	French (16°)
1585	Paris	Claude Micard	French / Latin (8°)
1585	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French
1585	Rouen	Thomas Mallard	French
1585	Valladolid	Diego Fernández de Córdoba	Spanish (8°)
1587	London	Edmund Bollifant	French (16°)
1587	Würzburg	Heinrich von Aich & Johannes Gyminicus	French / German (8°)
1588	Würzburg	Heinrich von Aich & Johannes Gyminicus	French / German (8°)
1588	Dresden	Petrus Albinus	German

1588	Lyon	Jean Gzaud	French (8°)
1589	Antwerp	Lucas Bellerus	Latin (8°)
	Antwerp	Lucas Bellerus	Latin (12°)
1589	Lyon	François Didier	French (16°)
1590	Rouen	Henry Le Mareschal	French (12°)
	Rouen	Théodore Reinsart	French (12°)
	Rouen	Louis Costé	French (12°)
1592	Lyon	Abraham Cloquemin	French (16°)
1593	Antwerp	Cristophe Plantin & Jean Mourentorf	French (8°)
1593	Antwerp	Martin Nutius	Spanish (16°)
	Antwerp	Martin Nutius	Spanish (12°)
1593	Lyon	Héritiers Symphorien Béraud	French (16°)
1594	Antwerp	Martin Nutius	Spanish
	Antwerp	Guislaine Janssens	French
1595	London	George Bishop	French (16°)
1596	Antwerp	J. Mourentorf et C. Plantin	French (16°)
1596	Rouen	N. Mulot	French
1597	Geneva	Guillaume de Laimarie	French (16°)
1599	Antwerp	Martin Nutius	Spanish (12°)
1601	Douai	J. Bogard	French
1604	Douai	J. Bogard	French
1605	Rouen	Unknown	French (16°)
1605	Prague	G. Nigrinus	Czech (8°)
1606	Lyon	J. Durelle	French
1606	St. Gallen	Georg Straub	German (8°)
1607	Geneva?	Jacob Stoer	French (16°)
1607	Basel	Jakob Trew	German (12°)
1607	Antwerp	Gasparis Belleri	Latin
1608	Amsterdam	Cornelis Claesz	Dutch (8°)
1608	Rouen	Adrien Morront	French (12°)
1609	Lindau	Marx Forster	German (8°)
	Cologne	Bernhard Wolter	French?
1612	Lyon	Unknown	French?
1612	Mainz	Marx Forster	German (8°)
1615?	Paris	A. Breintivvyd?	Welsh
1616?	Paris?	Unknown	Welsh
1619	Cologne	Jean de Tournes	French / German/ Italian / Latin (8°)
	Cologne	Jean de Tournes	French / German/ Italian / Latin (12°)
	Cologne	Jean de Tournes	French / German/ Italian / Latin (16°)
	Geneva	Jean de Tournes	French / German/ Italian / Latin (12°)
1621	Geneva	Jacob Stoer	French
1622	Lyon	C. Chastellard	French?
1659	Leipzig	Johann Scheibens; Johann Bauer	German (12°)

1663	London	Sam. Ferris	English (8°)
1671	Basel	J. R. Genath	German (12°)
1679	London	R. Bentley & M. Magnes	English (12°)
n.d.	Rouen	Guillaume Mullet	French (12°)
n.d.	Rouen	Romain de Beauvais	French (12°)
n.d.	Rouen	L. Dumesnil	French (16°)
n.d.	Rouen	Theodore Roinsart	French (24°)
n.d.	Rouen	L. Costé	French
n.d.	Troyes	N. Durol	French
n.d.	Lyon	A. Cloquemin	French
n.d.	Lyon	C. Morillon	French (12°)

4. *Bref discours de l'excellence et dignité de l'homme*

1558	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1559	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
1560	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
1562?	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French
n.d.	Troyes	Edme Briden	French
n.d.	Troyes	Nicole Durol	French
n.d.	Rouen	Guillaume Mullet	French
n.d.	Lyon	Jean Didier	French (12°)

5. *Histoires tragiques*

1559 ¹⁰²⁰	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (8°)
	Paris	Benoist Prevost	French (8°)
1559	Paris	[copy dedicated to Elizabeth I]	French (8°)
1560	Paris	Unknown	French (8°)
1561	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French
	Lyon	Unknown	French (16°)
1563	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jeanne Bruneau	French (16°)
	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (16°)
	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French
1564	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (16°)

¹⁰²⁰ The same year Vincent Sertenas published Belleforest's *Continuation des histoires tragiques*, which was published again in 1560. See Chapter Three.

	Paris	Gilles Robinot	French (16°)
1564	Lyon	Jean Martin	French (16°)
1567	Antwerp	Jean Waesberghe	French (8°)
1567	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (16°)
1568	Paris	Jacques Macé	French (8°)
1570	Turin	Cesar Farine	French (16°)
1571	Paris	Vincent Norment	French (16°)
	Paris	Janne Bruneau	French (16°)
1575	Lyon	Pierre Rollet	French (16°)
1578	Lyon	Pierre Rollet	French (8°)
1580	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
1582	Turin	Cesar Farine	French (16°)
1596	Lyon	Benoist Rigaud	French (16°)
1601	Rouen	P. Calles	French (12°)
1603	Rouen	Adrian de Launay	French (16°)
1603-04	Rouen	Pierre l'Oyset	French (16°)
1616	Lyon	Pierre Rigaud	French (16°)

6. Histoires prodigieuses

1560	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (4°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Mangnier	French (4°)
	Paris	Vincent Sertenas, Robert le Magnier, Jean Longis & Etienne Groulleau	French (4°)
1561	Paris	Vincent Sertenas	French (8°)
	Paris	Etienne Groulleau	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean Longis & Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1564	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jeanne Bruneau	French (8°)
	Paris	Hierome de Marnef & Guillaume Cavellat	French (8°)
	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1566	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jeanne Bruneau	French (8°)
	Paris	Hierome de Marnef & Guillaume Cavellat	French (8°)
	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
1566	Lyon	Jean Martin	French (16°)
1567	Paris	Jacques Macé	French (8°)
	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
1567	Paris	Vincent Norment & Jeanne Bruneau	French (16°)
1568	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
	Paris	Vincent Normant	French (8°)
1569	London	Henry Bynneman	English (4°)
1571	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
1574	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (12°)
1575	Paris	Charles Macé	French (8°)
	Paris	Hierosme de Marnef & Guillaume Cavellat	French (16°)

1576	Paris	Charles Macé	French (8°)
1578	Paris	Hierosme de Marnef & veuve G. Cavellat	French (16°)
1578	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
	Paris	J. Bereau	French (16°)
	Paris	Vincent Normant	French (8°)
1580	Paris	Hierosme de Marnef & veuve G. Cavellat	French
1581	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
1582	Paris	Hierosme de Marnef & Guillaume Cavellat	French (16°)
	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (16°)
1583	Paris	Hierosme de Marnef & Guillaume Cavellat	French (16°)
	Paris	Vincent Normant	French (16°)
1586	Medina del Campo	Francisco del Canto y Benito Boyer	Spanish (8°)
1592	Dordrecht	Jasper Froyen	Dutch (8°)
	Dordrecht	P. Verhaghen	Dutch (8°)
1594	Antwerp	Guislain Janssens	French (12°)
1595	Antwerp	Guislain Janssens	French (12°)
	Antwerp	Guislain Janssens	French (8°)
1596	Amsterdam	Cornelis Claesz	Dutch (8°)
	Antwerp	Guislain Janssens	French (12°)
1597	Antwerp	Guillaume Janssens	French (8°)
1597-8	Paris	Guillaume Cavelat	French (16°)
1598	Lyon	Jean Pillehote	French (12°)
	Paris	Gabriel Buon	French (16°)
	Paris	Vefue Guillaume Cavellat	French (16°)
	Paris	Jean Pillehote	French (16°)
1603	Madrid	Luis Sanchez	Spanish (8°)
1608	Amsterdam	Cornelis Claesz	Dutch (8°)
1608	Antwerp	Gheleyn Janssens	Dutch (8°)
1657	Amsterdam	J. van Duisberg	Dutch (12°)
1670	Antwerp	Jacob Mesens	Dutch (8°)
1751	Paris	Jean de Bordeaux	French (12°)

7. Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique

1572	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
	Paris	Vincent Normant	French (8°)
	Paris	Guillaume de La Nouë	French (8°)
1576	Paris	Guillaume de La Nouë	French (8°)
	Paris	Robert le Magnier	French (8°)
	Paris	Vincent Normant	French (8°)
1586	Paris	Guillaume de La Nouë	French (18°)

APPENDIX B

DEDICATORY PIECES TO PIERRE BOAISTUAU

- From *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1556).

1.

Sonnet de O. de Beauregard Lyonnais, sur la traduction de l'histoire de l'Institution des Princes Chrestiens, à P. Bouaistuau Secretaire de monseigneur de Cambray ambassadeur ordinaire pour le Roy en parties du leuant.

Qui voudra voir comme un Prince doyt suiure
Le chemin fait par les pas de vertu,
Qui voudra voir comme un Prince est vestu
Qui voudra voir comme un Prince doit viure
Qui voudra voir le plomb, l'erain, le cuyure
Ou sont escriptz les riches dons qu'ont eu
Les Princes grands, dont le bruit ne s'est teu,
Euure ses yeux, son esprit et ce liure
Qui voudra voir un Prince gouverner,
Qui voudra voir un Prince ne donner
A ces subietz exemple vicieux:
Qui voudra voir un Prince entre tous digne
De gouverner une ronde machine
Euure l'esprit, et ce liure et ses yeux.

2.

Sonnet de luy mesme aux Lecteurs.

Vn nouveau feu cy bas se fait cognoistre
Qui du hault ciel semble diuinement,
Estre coulé sur l'esbahissement
De mon esprit, heureux de le voir estre:
Trois langues vont l'esternel de son aistre
En noz soucys, trois foyz celestement,
Paignant de traitz que ma langue autrement
Dans voz espritz ne vous peult faire naistre:
Grecz enuieux qui vostre gloire esteinte
Plorée auez par les siecles passez,
Et vous Romains qui la vostre auez plainte,
Et vous François qui la vostre embrassez
Brullez encor d'une gloire seconde,
Qu'un feu Breton vous rallume en ce monde
ENCORE.

3.

Sonnet de François Dambrun gentilhomme de la maison de madame la Duchesse de Ferrare.

Maint Prince vit et maint Prince a esté,
Maint Prince à fait redouter sa main forte,
Maint Prince à fait mainte trompette torte
Bruyre le nom de sa principauté.
Maint Prince en terre à maint peuple domté,
Maint Prince a fait que sa gloire n'est morte
Maints ans ya, maint Prince à fait en sorte,
Qu'il est au ciel par sa vertu monté.
Maint Prince a fait que la memoire chante,
Les durs efforts de son arme trenchante
Maint Prince peult egaller leur vertu.
Mais ce Prince est si hautement estrange
Qu'il deffendoit seulement sa louange,
Si le sçauoir de Launay se fust teu.

- From *L'Histoire de Chelidonius Tigurinus* (Anvers, I. Monnotz, 1570).

4.

Ode a P. Bovaistuaux Secretaire de monsieur de Cambray, Ambassadeur pour le Roy
aux parties de Leuant, par Ian de la Lande Gentilhomme de la maison de Monseigneur
Danguyen.

N'endurons que nostre Bretagne
Endorme sa uoix et ses yeux
Ce pendant que la France gaigne
Vn honneur qui est enuieux
Sus cettui tà dont les antiques
Arrouserent les champs Romains
Et les Tebains, et les Atiques
Aux labeurs de leurs riches mains
Pendant que loyr et loyre sonna,
Leurs beaux vers sur leurs lucz dorez
Tant que larmonie en resonance
Aux peuples loing d'eux separez
Ie te pry mon Launay n' endure
Que nostre Ocean se soit tu
Comme estonné, par un murmure
Homicide de sa vertu
Pendant que sus ces riués douces
Les neuf seurs baignent leurs beaux crins
Ondoyans en leurs lantes courses
Fay apparoir noz Dieux marins
Aueq une douce tempeste
Vn air doucement irrité
Qui face plouoir sur ta teste
L'honneur que tu as merité
Que te sert la riche memoire.
Dont troys langues t'ont coronné
Si tu es chiche de la gloire

Et des tresors quel t'ont donnés
Et que te sert que tu excelles
Les premiers hommes qui ont eu
Le nom de scavans, si tu celes
L'excellence de ta vertue
La main du laboureur mesure
Dans son champ, et dans son sillon
Le blé, pour en cueillir l'usure,
L'esté avec le faucillon:
Toy qui as sementant de peines
Tant de labeurs les ans passez
Que tes estudes en sont plaines
Tant as de telz biens amassez
Faictz en apparroistre a cette heure
En Grec et François et Latin
Sur peine que ton nom ne meure
Avec ses os quelque matin
FIN

5.

Sonnet de Pierre Tredehan Secretaire de Monseigneur le Cardinal de Meudon

Quand ie uoy de Launay le labeur profitable,
Il me souuient encor des uieux siecles passez
Et des diuins harpeurs, les rochers amassez
Qui dansoyent escoutans l'armonie amirable.
Quand ie uoy de Launay la douceur agreable,
Il me semble d'ouyr les fredons compassez
D'une lire Amphione, ou bien les tons haussez
D'un harpeur de lien, d'orphee esmerueillable
Quand ie uoy de Launay les mesurez accords.
Il me semble de uoir tous ces trois dans son corps.
Pour abreger, Launay, quand tes cordes tu princes,
Il me semble de uoir plantez deuant mes yeux
Le Thebain, l'Apolon, l'Orphee ingenieux,
B [] rissans des Citez, et façonnans des Princes.

- From *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1559).

6.

B. de Girard Gentilhomme Bourdelois, au Seigneur de Launay.

SONNET

Plein de Philosophie, et d'honneur, et de gloire
Deuant nous spectateurs, tu as ioué, LAUNAY
Au Theatre mondain, l'homme dés qu'il est nay
Faisant iouer aussi sa vie transitoire.
Puis gaignant sur toymesme, et sur ton heur victoire,

Tu nous fis voir, poly, maint Amant fortuné
Basty par une Royne: et maint discours orné
Des passions d'amour, soubz ta Tragique histoire.
Ores tu nous fais voir, comme vn Prince Chrestien
Doit gouuerner le frein de son peuple, et le sien,
Pour estre aimé et craint pas toutes ses prouinces.
Ainsi monstres tu tout, et comme doyuent viure,
Se porter, et s'escire, et la vertu ensuyure
Les hommes, les Amans, et l'histoire, et les Princes.

7.

Sonnet de Iehan de La Lande, gentilhomme Breton, au Seigneur de Launay.

Vn nouveau feu cy bas se fait cognoistre,
Qui du hault ciel semble diuinement
Estre coulé sur l'esbahissement
De mon esprit, heureux de le voire estre:
Trois langues vont l'eternel de son aistre
En noz soucis, trois fois celestement,
Paignant de traitz que ma langue autrement
Dans voz espritz ne vous peult faire naistre:
Grecz enuieux qui vostre gloire esteinte
Plorée auez par les siecles passez,
Et vous Romains qui la vostre auez plainte.
Et vous François qui la vostre embrasez
Bruslez encore d'une gloire seconde,
Qu'vn feu Breton vous rallume en ce monde.

8.

Av seigneur de Launay, Iehan Broë de Tournon.

SONET.

Ie ne scay d'ou te vient ceste heureuse influence
Ny quel astre Launay, preside en tes espritz,
Que ce que des Latins et Grecz tu as compris
Tourne par ta doctrine en plus grand cognoissance.
Ia lon voit tes escriptz auoir telle excellence
Qu'ayans et le vulgaire et les doctes surpris
Sont encor' leuz des Rois et des Princes appris,
Tant doulx – coule l'appas de ta docte eloquence.
Mais plus les y attire vne admiration
Qu'on a de voir en toy ceste perfection
D'auoir en si peu d'ans tant des choses cogneues:
Ne voit on pas aussi ton sçauoir plus qu'humain
Ia desborner la France, et d'vn vol plus hautain
Par le peuple estranger retentir iusq'aux nues?

- From *Histoires des amans fortunez* (Paris, G. Gilles, 1558).

9.

L. du Lys au seigneur de Launay.

SONNET.

Si le diuin esprit de main docte emallé,
Mieux que thresor qui soit, ne retiroit la vie,
De l'oubly du sarcueil, morte seroit l'enuie
Qui pour Homere auoir la Grece atenailé.
Si l'ouurage sauuer diuinement taillé
Vne loüenge estoit à la mort asseruie,
Virgile n'eust aillé la gloire d'Italie,
De la terre emperlée, et du peuple ecaillé.
Si le ciel à quelcun a donné tant de gloire,
De les pouuoir tous deux sacrer à la memoire,
N'est il presque adoré comme le dieu des dieux.
Parquoy monde Launay arme toy d'assurance,
Que c'est oeuvre et les tiens dignes de saint silence,
Engraueront ton nom au plus clair lieu des cieus.

10.

Gabriel de Lyvene Gentilhomme Angoulmois, Au seigneur de Launay.

SONNET.

Launay, dont la vertu, et doctrine feconde
Est vn large present de la troupe des dieux:
Tu nous fais tous les iours d'vn art labourieux
Gouster le miel sucré de ta docte faconde:
Vn Chelidon traduit, vn Theatre du monde,
Te publient par tout docte, et ingenieux,
Fidele traducteur, et autheur studieux,
Tant de grace, et bien dire, en l'un, et l'autre abonde.
Ores tu nous fais voir corrigé, et reuue,
Cest oeuvre plus parfaict qu'il ne fut oncques veu,
Et ainsi es tu né pour le profit publicque.
Quel genre d'escripture, Amy, t'est estranger?
Tu profites en tout ou ton esprit s'applique
Ou soit ce pour traduire, escrire, ou corriger.

Fama et Fortuna.

11.

Au seigneur de Launay, Breton, Francois de Belleforest Comingeois.

ODE

Come à l'entour d'vn beau verger
Les mouches à miel bourdonnantes

Viennent sur les fleurs colliger
 Tant des fruitiers, herbes, que plantes,
 Vn miel tres agreable et dous,
 Et presque necessaire à tous:
 Come durant vn dous printens
 La vierge court apres la rose,
 Comme ses yeux, gais, et contens
 Admirent la beauté enclose
 Parmy le poignant d'vn Rosier.
 Ou sur vn nouailleur fruitier,
 Come le mesnager soigneus
 Ne craint de grimprer, pour y prendre
 Le fruit, du quel fut desireus
 Et que le tems luy fait attendre:
 Ainsi de toy, ô mon Launay,
 De toy, à bon droit ie diray.
 Qui pour nous paistre de douceur,
 Pour nous souler de mignotise,
 Pour nous faire sentir tel saueur
 Qui des plus douces fleurs soit prise,
 Tant de colliger ez soigneus
 Que, ny le fruitier espineus,
 Ny des grans arbres la hauteur,
 Ny les ronces tant soyent poignantes
 Ne te font laisser tel labour.
 Ainsi tes mains plus diligentes,
 Que la mouche miel colligeant,
 Que le mesnager recueillant,
 Deffrichent les lieux plus espais,
 Emandans les arbres et plantes.
 Ainsi, ô mon Launay, tu fais
 Les choses rudes tres plaisantes,
 Et d'vn liure, plus qu'imparfait
 Vn docte ta main en a fait.
 I'ay veu cest oeuvre discourant
 De chascun ouurier sous l'esponge,
 Ie l'ay veu vagabond, errant,
 (Si ie ne me decoy, ou song [])
 Sans oser monstrier sa grandeur,
 Sans espandre sa grand douceur.
 Encor l'ay veu, à touts propos,
 Courtisé des espritz ignares:
 Ie l'ay veu souuent sans repos,
 Feuilleté par les plus Barbares,
 Qui en l'[]score seulement
 Recherchoient leur contentement.
 Lors me plaignois, tout despité,
 De ceste saison importune:
 Lors despitois tout irrité,
 Ceste peu constante fortune,

Qui en telles mains laissecheoir,
 Vn oeuvre de si grand scauoir.
 Mais desque i'ay veu denteler
 Ta docte et bienheureuse lime,
 Mais des que ay ouy marteler
 Sur le taillant de tous le prime,
 Par lequel []monder tu peux
 Les fruitiers que bons rendre veux:
 Lors ay ie dit, heureux l'esprit,
 Qui de tel fruit mis la semence:
 Plus heureux celuy qui apprit,
 De l'exposer en euidence:
 Lequel maintenant tant dispos,
 De ce beau liure tant propos
 Auec les dieux aux heureux chains
 Ou son Ame sainte reside:
 Scachant que ses comptes plaisans,
 Deuoient estre vn iour par l'aide
 De toy, ô Launay, corrigés,
 Et de leurs sauuages purgés,
 De quelque getton ne sentant
 La douceur propre à sa racine,
 De quelque bourgeon forlignant
 De satige franche, et diuine
 De quoy tel honneur receueras
 Que à iamais le los tu auras
 De faire reluire en plain iour
 Ce qu'estre obscurcy ne merite:
 Et qui parés d'un saint atour
 Ce liure choisi pour l'eslite
 Ou les dames trouuer pourront
 Quand lasses, et tristes seront.
 Et dequoy chasser leur ennuy,
 Et dequoy leurs filles instruire:
 Et surquoy doiuent prendre appuy
 Celles, qui desirent de luyre
 Entre les dames, de bonheur,
 Qui n'ayment rien que leur honneur.
 Doncques, ô liure le plus beau,
 Qu'ores nostre France contemple,
 Sors de ton tenebreux tombeau,
 Pour estre colloqué au temple,
 Ou chascun te contempera,
 Et ou chascun t'honorera.
 Souz ton voile sacré feras,
 L'esprit, qui t'enfanta, paroistre,
 Et le correcteur orneras
 De tel gloire, qui fera croistre,
 Autant son nom, comme tu peux,
 Par luy, sur tous te dire heureux.

Ou Mort, ou Vie.

- From *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1560)

12.

I. D. R. S. D.

Si Bretagne, LAVNAY, se sent bien honorée
De tes premiers escritz, que chascun a peu voir,
Ores tu luy fais bien meilleure cause auoir
De se sentir de toy plus encor decorée.
Ta vertu seulement n'y est pas admirée,
Mais en tous les endroitz, que peult appercevoir
De son oeil le soleil, tu as fait recevoir
Tes escritz maçonnez de peine elabourée.
Si que tout l'univers remply de ta memoire
Tes oeuvres admirant, ia te donne la gloire
D'estre l'un des premiers qui le mieux a escrit:
Et puis que me portant si bonne affection
Tu m'as tout rendu tien par obligation,
Je seray toujours tien et de corps, et d'esprit.

13.

René de Rieux au S. De Launay, Boaistuau.

Les Muses t'ont donné ceste grande abondance
LAVNAY de tes escritz pleins de diuinité,
L'univers qui les a admirables gousté
N'en peut assez louer la force et l'excellence.
Tu scais assez combien tu es loué par France,
Et combien ton país, ou tu n'as guiere esté
A d'honneur, de plaisir, et de felicité
De t'auoir donné nom, vie, laict, et naissance.
Mais ores nous donnant cest oeuvre de Prodiges,
Au plus hautain sommet de l'immortalité
Tes oeuvres, et ton nom immortel tu eriges:
Et si fais esbahir de ceste rareté
Auecques la Vertu qui t'est toujours compaigne,
Les Muses, l'univers, la France, et la Bretagne.

14.

De alis dict de cenac, svr les Histoires Prodigieuses du. S. de Launay, Boaistuau:
Sonnet.

L'Hercule des Gregois, qui par sa grand vaillance,
Douze foyz estonna les hommes et les Dieux,
Est maintenant lá hault faict Citoyen des cieux,
Pour auoir combatu les monstres à outrance.

Launay tu es aussi l'Hercule de la France,
Et auras quelque iour autant que luy ou mieux,
Ayant par ton sçauoir d'un bras victorieux
Tant de foys abatu le monstre d'ignorance:
Tu as, Launay, tu as doctement esclaircy
Le point qui plus tenoit l'homme docte en soucy
Des Prodiges monstreux décriuant la nature,
Et as rendu ce nom si doux et gracieux,
Que i'ose bien nommer, Launay, Prodigeux
Ton esprit, ton sçauoir et ta docte esriture.

15.

Loys du Lys au seigneur de Launay, sur les Histoires Prodigeuses.

Ceux là, mon cher Launay, sont ilz mors au tumbeau,
Qui nous ont enseigné les Monstres, les ostentes,
Les prodiges fatalz, les horribles portents,
Nous prédire et monstres de noz vices le fleau?
Ceux là ne viuront ilz, qui d'un diuin cerueau
Dans telz signes ont leu les menasses cysantes,
Les verges du Seigneur desia toutes sanglantes,
Comme dans vn cartel, sans en rompre le seau?
Et plus que tous ceux là, celuy ne doit il viure,
Qui par force et par art des monstres nous deliure?
Ne crains doncques la mort, toy qui chasse de France
Par tes doctes escriptz tant de monstreuses voix,
Et qui contrains par l'oeil de se rendre aux abois
Par tes monstres hideux le monstre d'ignorance.

16.

Ode de Jaques Grevin de Cler-mont, av Seigneur de Launay

Celvy qui d'une main songneuse
Append le doux fruict de ses ans
Avec la troupe desireuse
Des plus asseurez courtisans,
Qui ont d'une course premiere
Franchy le sentier peu battu,
Pour dans une longue carriere
Cherir les filles de vertu.

Celuy qui d'un grand cueur mesure,
Avec la Rithme de ses vers,
Le beau chef-d'oeuvre que Nature
Monstra battisant l'univers:
Ou qui par le fil d'une histoire
Poursuit les faitz plus merueilleux
Dont la veritable memoire
Se chargea dès les siecles vieux:

Celuy certes, serenouelle
Vne autre vie apres sa mort,
Que iamais la Parque cruelle
Ne pourra tirer sur le bord,
Ou les vndes oublieuses
De l'impetueux Acheron
Emportent les vmbres poureuses
La part ou les conduit Charon.

Ce grand Demon, ce vieil Homere
Immortel, delaisa son corps
Auec la commune misere
Fidele compagne des mors,
Pour voler iusqu'à noz oreilles,
D'aage en aage renouellant
Le doux nectar de ses merueilles
Qu'il va dans noz cueurs distillant:

Pour auoir discouru l'enuie
Et le flambeau, qui fist armer
Toute l'Europe encontre Asie,
Et les orages de la mer,
Ou il a faict vaguer Vlisse
Comme banny dix ans entiers,
Luy grand Prince exerçant l'office
Des miserables mariniers.

Ainsi toy par ta preuoyance
Tu te bastis en tes escriptz
Vne eternelle demeurence
Auecque ces diuins espritz,
Que d'autant des-ja tu surpasses
Qu'est admirable le proiect,
Sur qui doctement tu compasses
Le beau dessein de ton subiect.

Car c'est luy qui te fera viure
Tant qu'on verra les branslementz
Des corps celestes s'entresuyvre,
Tant qu'on verra les elementz
Et les diuerses sympathies
Des corps culbutantz de trauers
Renoueller dix mille vies,
Dans le vague de l'uniuers.

Bien que pour l'heure nostre France
Ingrate, semble despiter
Ceux qui d'une braue assurance
Or s'efforcent de resister
Aux effortz de la Parque fiere,

Qui nous serrant soubz le fardeau
Dont nostre vie est heritiere
Cache vn beau nom dans le tombeau.

Bien qu'une Brigide eshontée
De badins, de sotz, d'ignorans,
Se voye plus souuent montée
Aux degrez ou sont aspirans
Ceulx là, qui forgent dans la teste
De leur auare volonté,
Les despouilles et la conqueste
Que iamais ilz n'ont merité.

Bien qu'ilz soyent des premiers, si est-ce
Que le temps moins fauorisé
Regrette ce qu'en sa ieunesse
Trop ignare il a desprisé:
Et ia commence à se desplaire,
Prisant d'aduantage tous [ceulx]
Qui plus heureux ont sc[] faire
Le chemin pour monter aux cieux.

Poursuys doncq, de Launay, cest [oeuure]
Dont tu as mis le fondement,
Et qui docte nous a fait preuue
Du reste de ton iugement:
Poursuys-le, et pense que la France,
Ia des-ia dessilant ses yeux,
Commence à chasser l'ignorance
De qui s'armoient les enuieux

[]e puisse-ie, afin de viure
[] les mains des plus-sçauantz,
Dedans [] beau sentier ensuyvre,
Pour monstrier à ces ignorantz,
Ennemys des dons que Mercure
Et les Muses ne m'ont caché,
[] que dans le sein de Nature
Plus curieux i'ay recherché.

- From *Histoire de persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique* (Paris, R. le Magnier, 1576)

17.

Svr la mort et les doctes oeuvres du feu Seigneur de Launay,
Autheur de ce present liure.

Sonnet.

De la mort, du tombeau, de l'oubly, de l'enuie,
Le dard, l'obscurité, l'iniure, le venin,
Ne peut outrer, noircir, esteindre, et mettre à fin
De Launay les escrits, le los, le nom, la uie:
Ains plustost de la mort sa naissance est fortie,
Du cercueil est issu son lustre plus diuin,
De l'oubly sa memoire, et du cueur du malin
Sur sa gloire enuieux sa gloire est reussie.
Car ses doctes labeurs espars en l'univers
Peuent vaincre, brizer, secher, mettre à l'enuers,
Mort, tombeau, l'eau lethee, et la bouche enuieuse.
Et faire que son nom celebre et glorieux
Viue, luise, demeure, et soit victorieux
Maugré mort, bierre, oubly, et l'enuie odieuse.

P. Tamisier

- From *Le Théâtre du monde* (Paris, G. Robinot, 1559)

18.

Sonet de I. A. de Baif au seigneur de l'Aunay.

A bien bon droit, Launay, tu nommes ceste vie
Le Theatre du monde, ou les Dieux immortels
Prennent plaisir de veoir les maleureux mortels
Ou rire en Comedie, ou plaindre en Tragedie.
Heureux sera celuy, qui voiant la lumiere,
Spectateur seulement, des autres debandé,
S'exemptera du ieu qui nous est commandé,
Celuy de l'heur des Dieux ne s'estoignera guiere.
O Launay, meritant une louange grande,
Des troubles d'uiourd'hui tu te fais spectateur
Ou plus que la raison toute rage commande,
Et depeignant au vif le Theatre du monde,
Tu ouures le chemin pour iouir de cet heur,
Nous tirant des maleurs dont ceste vie abonde.

19.

Av Seignevr de Lavnay

F. de Belleforest Comingeois. Sonet.

Si du flateur de court la langue piperesse
(Qui charouille et endort les plus discretz humains)
S'arrestoit, contemplant cest oeuvre de tes mains,
A lors que tu nous peincts et l'humaine foiblesse.
Et les assaulz diuers qu'une folle ieunesse
Endure, en bastissant ses desseings plus que vains,
Et les ans, de trauaulx, de la Mort mesme pleins,
Qui font foibles les pas de l'auare vieillesse.

O Launay, ny les grans, ny ceux la qui les pipent
Par vn sucré propos: ny ceux la qui dissipent
Le droict ça bas planté, ne mettroient en desordre.
Ce qu'vne fois le Ciel limita iustement.
Mais, las! ce nostre temps, est brouillé tellement,
Qu'a bon droict tu en peux separer tout bon ordre.

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Boaistuau, P., *Histoire des persecutions de l'Eglise chrestienne et catholique, faisant vn ample discours des merueilleux combats qu'elle a soustenuz, estant oppressée & affligée soubz la tyrannie de plusieurs Empereurs Romains, commençant à nostre Sauueur Iesus Christ, & à ses Apostres, & quelle a esté la constance de leurs successeurs en icelle. Par feu Pierre Boistuau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne* (Paris, R. le Magnier, 1576).

Boaistuau, P., *Theatrum mundi minoris: sive Humanae calamitatis oceanus; Ex Gallico in Latinum translatus sermonem interprete Laurent. Cupaerus* (Anvers, L. Bellerus, 1576).

Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques, extraictes des oeuvres Italiennes de Bandel, & mises en langue François. Les six premieres, par Pierre Boisteau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne. Les douze suiuanes, par Franc. de Belle Forest, Comingeois* (Lyon, P. Rollet, 1578).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde, ou il est fait vn ample discours des miseres humaines: composé en Latin par P. Boaystuaau, surnommé Launay, puis traduit par*

luy mesme en François. Avec un brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme (Anvers, C. Plantin, 1580).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde* (Rouen, G. l' Oyselet, 1580).

Boaistuau, P., *Theatrum mundi The theatre or rule of the world, wherin may be seene the running race & course of euery mans life, as touching miserie and felicitie, wherein be contained wonderfull examples and learned deuises, to the ouerthrowv of vice and exalting of vertue. Wherevnto is added a learned and pithie worke of the excellency of man, written in the French and Latine tongues by Peter Boaistuau, Englished by Iohn Alday, and by him perused, corrected and amended, the olde translation being corrupted* (London, J. Wyght, 1581).

Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses extraites de plusieurs fameux auteurs, Grecs et Latins, sacrez et prophanes, diuisées en cinq tomes: Le premier par P. Boaistuau: Le second par C. de Tesserant: le troisiésme par F. de Belle-forest, Le quatriésme par Rod. Hoyer, & le cinquiésme traduit de nouveau par F. de Belleforest. Nouuellement augmentées de plusieurs histoires, et enrichies de leur effigies outre les precedentes impressions* (Paris, H. de Marnef et G. Cavellat, 1582).

Boaistuau, P., *XVIII Histoires tragiques. Extraites des oeuvres Italiennes de Bandel, et mises en langue Française. Les six premières, par Pierre Boisteau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne. Les douze suivans, par Franc. de Belleforest, Comingeois* (Turin, C. Farine, 1582).

Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses extraites de plusieurs fameux auteurs, Grecs et Latins, sacrez et prophanes, diuisées en cinq [six] tomes: Le premier par P. Boaistuau: Le second par C. de Tesserant: le troisiésme par F. de Belleforest: le quatriésme par Rod. Hoyer: et le cinquiésme traduit de nouveau par F. de Belleforest [et la sixiésme tome par I.D.M.]* (Paris, H. de Marnef et G. Cavellat, 1583).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde, où il est fait un ample discours des miseres humaines; Avec un petit traité de l'excellece et dignité de l'homme* (Paris, C. Micard, 1585).

Boaistuau, P., *L'Histoire de Chelidonium Tigurinus sur l'Institution des Princes Chrestiens, & origine des Royaumes, traduite de Latin en François, par Pierre Boaistuau* (Lyon, B. Rigaud, 1585).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Theatre du monde, ou il est fait vn ample discours des miseres humaines. Composé en latin par P. Boaystuaue, surnommé Launay, puis traduit par luy-mesme en François. Avec vn brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme* (London, E. Bollifant, 1587).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde: où il est fait un ample discours des miseres humaines. Le tout bien reueu & corrigé en ceste derniere impression & enrichy d'un indice. Composé par P. Boistuau surnommé Launay* (Lyon, J. Gazaud, 1588).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde, ou il est fait vng ample discours des miseres humaines. Avec ung brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme. Faict en*

François, par P. Boaysteau, surnommé Launay, et nouvellement traduit en Aleman, tres utile pour apprendre tant Aleman que François (Wirtzeburgi, H. Aquensis, 1588).

Boaistuau, P., Theatrum mundi: Das ist der Welt Schawplatz, oder Spiegel der Welt: darinnen vom Elende, Trübsal und Jammer der Menschen, ... gehandelt wird Pierre Boistuau Launai (Dressden, printer unknown, 1588).

Boaistuau, P., Theatrum mundi minoris, sive humanae calamitatis oceanus. Ex Gallico in Latinum translatus sermonem, interprete F. Lauren. Cupaero Carmelitano Mont. Gerardi, sac. Th. Licent (Anvers, L. Bellerus, 1589).

Boaistuau, P., Het wonderlijcke Schadt-Boeck der historien, begrijpende vele seltsame, vremde ende wonderbaerlijcke gheschiedenissen, bevonden inde nature, ende hare cracht en werckinghen soo in den Menschen als inde beesten ende Elementen & c... Vergardet wt vele gheloofweerdighe autheren (Dordrecht, J. Froyen, 1592).

Boaistuau, P., Le Théâtre du monde, ou il est fait vn ample discours des miseres humaines: composé en Latin par P. Boaystuaau, surnommé Launay, puis traduit par luy mesme en François. Avec un brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme (Anvers, Veuve C. Plantin et J. Mourentorf 1593).

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Boaistuau, P., Le theatre du mondeou il est fait vn ample discours des miseres humaines: compose en Latin par P. Boaystuaau, surnomme Launay, puis traduit par luy-mesme en francois. Avec vn brief discours de l'excellence & dignite de l'homme (London, G. Bishop, 1595).

Boaistuau, P., Le Théâtre du monde, ou il est fait vn ample discours des miseres humaines. Composé en Latin par P. Boaystuaau, surnommé Launay, puis traduit par luy mesme en François. Avec un brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme (Anvers, Veuve C. Plantin et J. Mourentorf, 1596).

Boaistuau, P., XVIII Histoires tragiques, extraites des oeuvres Italiennes de Bandel, et mises en langue Française. Tome Premier. Les six premieres, par Pierre Boisteau,

surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne. Les douze suyuan, par François de Belleforest, Comingeois (Lyon, B. Rigaud, 1596).

Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses et memorables, extraictes de plusieurs fameux auteurs, Grecs & Latins, sacrez et prophanes, diuisées en six Liures. Le premier composé par P. Boaistuau: Le II par C. de Tesserant: le III par F. de Belleforest: le IIII par Rod. Hoyer: le V. traduit du Latin de M. Arnould Sorbin Euesque de Neuers, par F. de Belleforest; Y est adiousté le VI. contenant plusieurs histoires, la pluspart aduenues de nostre temps, avec leurs portraits & figures conuenables (Paris, G. Buon, 1598).*

Boaistuau, P., *Histoires prodigieuses extraictes de plusieurs fameux auteurs, Grecs et Latins, sacrez et prophanes, diuisées en six tomes: Le premier composé par P. Boaistuau: Le second par C. de Tesserant: le troisieme par F. de Belleforest: le quatrieme par Rod. Hoyer: le cinquiesme traduit du Latin de M. Arnould Sorbin par F. de Belleforest, et le sixiesme recueilly par I.D.M. (Paris, G. Cavellat, 1598).*

Boaistuau, P., *Histoires tragiques extraits des oeuvres italiennes de Bandel, & mises en langue français; les six premières par Pierre Boisteau, surnommé Launay ... les douze suyuan, par François de Belle-Forest (Rouen, A. de Launay, 1603-4).*

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde, ou il est fait vn ample discours des miseres humaines. Composé en Latin par P. Boyastuau, surnommé Launay, puis traduit par luy mesme en François. Avec un brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme (Douai, I. Bogard, 1604).*

Boaistuau, P., *Theatrum mundi minoris. Ssyroký Plac neb Zrcadlo Swěta. To gest; Ziwý Kontrffekt nezčjslných Bijd wsseho Lidského pokolenij w tomto Swětě Rytirugjcyho. Z latinského Jazyku na Český přeložený a W^oubec wydany. Od Nathanaéle Wodnianského z Vračowa. G. M. C. Zřizené Komory w Královstwj Českém puchalterye registratora (Prague, G. Nigrini, 1605).*

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde: représentant par un ample discours les misères humaines. Composé en Latin par P. Boyastuau surnommé Launay, puis traduit par luy mesme en françois. Le tout bien reveu & corrigé en ceste dernière emprission, & enrichi d'un indice ([Geneva?], J. Stoer, 1607).*

Boaistuau, P., *Theatrum mundi minoris, sive humanae calamitatis oceanvs. Ex Gallico in Latinum translatus sermonem, interprete F. Lauren. Cupaero Carmelitano Mont. Gerards, Sac. Th. Licent. Tertia aeditio. Cui accessit Tractatus de Hominis Excellentia (Antverpiae, G. Belleri, 1607).*

Boaistuau, P., *Het wonderlijcke Schadt-Boeck der historien: Begrijpende vele seltsame vremde ende wonderbaerlijcke gheschiedenissen bevonden in de natuere ende hare cracht en werckinghen soo in den Menschen als inde beesten ende Elementen & c... In vier deelen begrepen By een vergardet uyt vele gheloofweerdighe Authenren, Door P. Bosteau (Amsterdam, C. Claerz, 1608).*

Boaistuau, P., *Theatrum mundi. Et speculum vitae humanae. Das ist: Schauwplatz der Welt: Unnd Spiegel des gantzen menschlichen Lebens: Darinnen von Elend vnd*

Armutseligkeit deß Menschen, durch alle vnd jede Alter vnd Stände Menschliches Lebens, gehandelt wird (Lindau, M. Forstern, 1609).

Boaistuau, P., *Theatrum mundi, et speculum vitae humanae. Das ist: Schauwplatz der Welt: Unnd Spiegel des gantzen menschlichen Lebens, ... ; Mit angeh. sonderb. Tracttätlein von Fürtrefflichkeit und Würde deß Menschen* Peter Boaysteau gen. Launay (Maintz, M. Forstern, 1612).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde representant par vn ample discours les misereres humaines / compose en latin par P. Boisteau surnommé Launy natif de Bretagne & traduit par luy mesme en francois, puis en allemand par Laurentius Rotmundus de Sangal, & nouvellement en italien par Jean de Tournes ; avec un brief discours de l'excellence de l'homme. Le tout bien reveu & corrigé en ceste dernière impression & enrichi d'un tres ample indice.* (Cologne, I. de Tournes, 1619).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde, representant par vn ample discours des misereres humaines: composé en Latin par P. Boistuau, surnommé Launay, natif de Bretagne, puis traduit par luy-mesme en François. Auec un brief discours de l'excellence & dignité de l'homme. Ce tout bien reneu & corrigé en ceste dernière impression, & enrichi d'un indice comprenant les principales matieres* (Antwerp, J. Stoer, 1621).

Boaistuau, P., *Le Théâtre du monde, oder, Schauplatz der Welt: darinnen zu voller Gnuge... Anfangs in Lateinischer, hernachmals in Frantzöischer Sprach. durch P. Boaystau, sonsten Launay genannt, verfasst; anitzo aber in unsere teutsche Mutter Sprach... aussgefertiget... von Johann Moritz Friederichen* (Leipzig, J. Scheibens, 1659).

Boaistuau, P., *The theatre of the world: in the which is discoursed at large the many miseries and frailties incident to mankinde in this mortall life : with a discourse of the excellency and dignity of mankinde, all illustrated and adorned with choice stories taken out of both Christian and heathen authors ... being a work of that famous French writer, Peter Bovistau Launay, in three distinct books; formerly translated into Spanish by Baltazar Peres del Castillo; and now into English by Francis Farrer* (London, S. Ferris, 1663).

Boaistuau, P., *Spiegel des Menschlichen Lebens. In welchem Des Menschen vielfältiges Elend auffgedeckt und die heutiges Tags im schwang gehende Laster vorgestellt werden, ... übersetzt durch J.T. V.D.M.* (Basel, J. R. Genath, 1671).

Boaistuau, P., *The theatre of the world: or, a prospect of humane misery. Wherein is set forth an ample discourse of those numerous and unavoidable calamities which are the inseparable attendants of mankind, from the cradle to the tomb. Composed first in Latin by Peter Boyatuau, a Britain by birth, and afterwards done into French by himself. Whereunto is added a brief discourse of the dignity and excellency of man* (London, R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1679).

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De Belleforest, F., *Le septiesme tome des histoires tragiques* (Paris, E. Richard, 1582).

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De Belleforest, F., *Le sixiesme et dernier tome des histoires tragiques, et nouvelles de Bandel* (Lyon, B. Rigaud, 1583).

Gesner, C., *De piscibus et aquatilibus omnibus libelli III. Noui. Authore Conrado Gesnero Medico & philosophiae naturalis interprete in Schola Tigurina. I. Scholia & emendationes in Halieuticon P. Ouidij Nasonis. II. Aquatiliium Animantium Enumeratio iuxta Plinium, emendata & explicata, serie literarum. III. Eorundem Nomenclator Germanicus longe copiosissimus. Et alia quaedam ad Piscium historiam pertinentia* (Zurich, A. Gesner, 1556).

Goldwurm, C., *Wunderwerck und Wunderzeichen Buch, Darinne alle fürnemste Göttliche, Geistliche, Himlische, Elementische, Irdische und Teuflische wunderwerck, so sich in solchem allem von anfang der Welt schöpfung biß auff unser jetzige zeit zugetragen und begeben haben, kürztlich unnd ordentlich verfasst sein. Der gestalt vor nie gedruckt worden* (Frankfurt am Main, D. Sphelius, 1557).

Gruget, C., *L'Heptameron des nouvelles de tres illustre et tres excellente Princesse Marguerite de Valois, Royne de Nauarre, remis en son ordre, confus au parauant en sa premiere impression. Dédié à tres illustre et tres uertuese Princesse Jeanne, Royne de Nauarre, par Claude Gruget Parisien* (Paris, V. Sertenas, 1559).

Lycosthenes, C., *Wunderwerck oder Gottes unergründliches vorbilden, das er inn seinen geschöpffen allen so Geystlichen so leyblichen in Fewr, Luft, Wasser, Erden... dem Menschen in Gflügel, Vieh, Thier, Visch, Gwürm, von anbegin der weldt, bis zu unserer diser zeit, erscheynen lassen...* (Basel, H. Petrus, 1557).

Lycosthenes, C., *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum Chronicon: quae praeter naturae ordinem, motum, et operationem, et in superioribus & his inferioribus mundi regionibus ab exordio mundi usque ad haec nostra tempora, acciderunt* (Basel, H. Petrus, 1557).

Münster, S., *La cosmographie universelle, contenant la situation de toutes les parties du monde, avec leurs proprietéz & appartenances: La description des pays & regions d'icelluy. La grande varieté & diverse nature de la tere. Le vray pourtraict d'aucuns*

animaux estranges, avec le naturel d'iceulx. Les figures & pourtraictz des villes & citez plus notables. les coustumes, loix & religions, de toutes nations, avec l'origine, accroissement & transport des royaumes & seigneuries, & les genealogies & faictz des roys, ducz & autres de la terre, continuant jusques à l'an 1555 (Paris, H. Pierre, 1556).

Münster, S., *La cosmographie universelle de tout le monde: en laquelle, suiuant les auteurs plus dignes de foy, sont au vray descriptes toutes les parties habitables, & non habitables de la terre, & de la mer leurs affectes et choses qu'elles produisent puis la description & peinture topographique des regions, la difference de l'air de chacun pays, d'où aduient diuersité tant de la complexion des hommes que des figures des bestes brutes: et encor, l'origine, noms ou appellations tant modernes qu'anciennes, & description de plusieurs villes, citez & isles, avec leurs plantz, & pourtraictz, ... avec plusieurs autres choses, le sommaire desquelles se void en la page suivante. Auteur en partie Munster, mais beaucoup plus augmentée, ornée & enrichie par François de Belle-forest, Comingeois...* (Paris, M. Sonnius, 1575).

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