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Research Article

Humanism In French Literature In The 16th Century

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ABSTRACT

The 16th century marked a period of profound transformation across Europe, with France experiencing its own unique evolution amidst the backdrop of religious strife and cultural renaissance. At the heart of this transition was the emergence and evolution of Humanism, a philosophical movement that sought to bridge classical wisdom with Christian theology. Initially rooted in religious contexts, Humanism gained traction through figures like Johannes Reuchlin and Guillaume Bude, who aimed to reconcile ancient texts with Christian teachings. Literary luminaries such as Rabelais and Marguerite de Navarre epitomized this optimistic outlook, even as religious tensions simmered beneath the surface. Poetry underwent a renaissance of its own, with the Pleiades movement led by Du Bellay and Ronsard seeking to enrich French verse through emulation of ancient literary forms. However, by the mid-16th century, this optimism gave way to a more sobering reality as religious conflicts intensified, culminating in the Wars of Religion. Events like the Placards affair marked a turning point, prompting a shift towards a more pragmatic and introspective Humanism, as reflected in the works of Simon Goulart. Despite this, The Lyon poetry scene, represented by figures like Scene, du Guillet, and Lab, contributed to the flourishing literary landscape, drawing inspiration from Humanist ideals and various cultural influences. Theatres also underwent a transformation, with a growing emphasis on classical themes and forms, while religious tensions influenced both Protestant and Catholic poetry. During societal upheaval, writers like Agrippa d'Aubigné and Montaigne offered diverse perspectives on love, religion, and human nature, reflecting the complex tapestry of 16th-century France. Despite the challenges of the era, Humanism remained a driving force, shaping not only literary expression but also broader philosophical and political discourse.

Keywords: Humanism, Reformation, Erasmus, cultural exchange, Renaissance, religious reform

1. INTRODUCTION

The 16th century stands as a pivotal era marked by profound transitions, characterized by a tapestry of significant events that have left an indelible mark on history. Humanism emerges, heralding a fresh perspective on the world, while the Reformation reshapes the trajectory of Christianity. The exploration and conquest of the New World fundamentally alter the social dynamics of Europe and challenge conventional perceptions of the universe. In France, the century commences amidst the turbulence of the Italian wars and draws to a close amidst the tumultuous wars of religion. These transformative currents inevitably permeate the literary landscape of the era, serving as both backdrop and inspiration for the works that emerged from it. Poetry is without a doubt the literary genre that gains the most from technological advancements. Discovered and influential on most poets are the humanist Italian poets Dante (1265-1321), Boccaccio (1313-1375), and Petrarch (1303-1374). Ronsard and the other poets comprising the small Pléiade collective harboured the aspiration to fashion an authentic French poetic art, which is exemplified in Du Bellay's publication La Défense et Illustration de la langue francaise. The author's predicament in the current century is not irrelevant to this ambition. Writers frequently aligned themselves with the regal power because of the increased dissemination of texts and the initiatives implemented by Francis I to promote scholarly discourse.

This overarching movement of affirming France's strength coincides with the aspiration to revitalise the poetic language and the conviction that the French language has the capability to match or exceed the works of antiquitya. Nevertheless, the enduring impact will result from the replication of renowned ancient genres and the emergence of novel vocabulary. Later in the 16th century, religious unrest introduced more macabre themes that influenced literature, whereas Ronsard's poetry, which was light and sensuous, had become a school of thought.
The primary catalyst for developments in the theatrical genre is the fascination sparked by ancient and Italian theatre. The farcical genre experienced tremendous commercial success, whereas the initial tragedies were marred by the imperfections of a genre that was still maturing and could hardly attract an audience beyond the Court. In contrast, the focus of Protestant theatre was predominantly on biblical themes.
In terms of genre definition, narrative is still vague. The audience continues to find attraction in chivalric novels, which are a throwback to mediaeval preferences, and in short stories, there's a lack of apparent genre connection. The term novels did not initially occur in its current form until the 17th century. Rabelais' writings already foreshadow the modern novel in numerous ways. Along with carrying on the story's history, it also tackles issues of war, education, and medicine, capturing the spirit of the 16th century in both form and diversity of ideas.

2. HUMANISM

Humanism, the desire for knowledge extended beyond borders, takes its source from all the influences mentioned above, and uses the proposed means we have just talked about (ancient languages, printing, etc.).
The "prince of humanists" was the Dutch Erasmus (1469-1536), scholar, philologist, philosopher, solicited by kings and popes. He was in epistolary contact with all literate Europe, linked to the Hellenist Guillaume Budé (1468-1540), to the English scholar Thomas Morus (1480-1535). Thus, through this character, we clearly see that Humanism firstly designates a desire for knowledge extended beyond borders.
The consideration of language is closely linked to the issues surrounding poetic form, measurement, and theatre. We try to bring back the quantitative prosody of the Ancients in French. French is the language that gives rise to tragedy, comedy, and new literary forms including the sonnet, ode, elegy, and epistle. This humanism program's topics capture the essence of the eras they are set in. In the sixteenth century, virtue and love were discussed. We envision utopian societies (Thelema of Rabelais; Utopia of Morus) in which people live in harmony with the natural world and with themselves. The myth of the noble barbarian lends continuity to these sometimes-more-apparent than-actual communities. Another theme is the glory that an author receives from the excellence of his work; however, in a century that is devolving into chaos, poets' "consolations against death" will be their only haven (quote from J.B. Chassignet, Le contempt de la vie et consolation contre la mort).
Thus, humanism not only introduces into literary works reflection on the problems of civilization, thought, religion (Calvin), thus evoking the hope of a new art of living (Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre), but it also introduces the emergence of a new tone, where fervor and enthusiasm are tinged with seriousness or humor.
However, the methods of this humanism are like those of free examination which inspired the revolt of Luther and Calvin. We refuse to rely on established authority to interpret texts. The divergences are therefore as numerous as the points in common between humanism and the Reformation. After the break between Erasmus and Luther, and after the affair of the placards, the humanists of France will be forced to choose either Protestant, or faithful to the Church, they will be involved in these great struggles of the century.
Humanists believe that man is the central figure in all inquiries. They want to create a different society and strive for perfection in the arts and morals, drawing on the knowledge of ancient writers. This modification goes against the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages since it is based on old texts rather than the inspired word of God.

León Battista Alberti, Marsile Ficino, Lorenzo Valla, Ange Politien, Jean Pic de la Mirandole, Pétrus Ramus, Juan Luis Vives, Guillaume Budé, Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples, and the Estienne family are the ones spearheading this ferment. These humanists want to teach humanity to advance. The writings of Montaigne, Rabelais, and Erasmus are available in hundreds of copies because to printing technology advancements.

2.1 The Beginnings of Humanism

If historians traditionally start this movement with Petrarch and Boccaccio in the 14th century in Italy, we can consider Protagoras, a sophist of the 5th century BC, as the first representative of humanism. Indeed, for him, "man is the measure of all things.
But let's go back to the 14th century, which saw this movement grow significantly. With the Turks invading Constantinople, many Greeks fled to take refuge on the Italian peninsula. They bring manuscripts in their original language. Thus, Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) and Le Pogge (1380-1459) translated Roman works, while others, such as Guarino of Verona (1374-1460), Francesco Filello (1396-1481) and Giovanni Aurispa (1376- translated ancient Greek works. Latin poetry was rediscovered, thanks to Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457). Pic de la Mirandola is one of the learned humanists who is admired for his erudition. He published nine hundred theses, fueling the debate between philosophers and theologians. The diffusion of these texts was

favored by progress in printing, but also by the development of cities and universities, which was a rallying point for many humanists. New professions are appearing, linked to teaching, publishing, or reflection on social life. Artists are inspired by these new ideas, Ligorio painting for example, “The Allegory of Sciences”.

2.2. The Expansion of Humanism

German and Dutch humanism were the first to spread. After visiting Florence, Johannes Reuchlin advocated for its introduction in Germany. Reuchlin resisted Emperor Maximilian I, claiming that these outlawed works were a part of humanity's cultural legacy, and the latter did not want Hebrew writings other than the Bible. Erasmus is the most notable envoy for Holland. Germany and Holland hosted book fairs, saw a large increase in publishing, and were countries that encouraged cross-cultural interaction.

Through the papal domains of Avignon, humanism makes its way to France. Yes, that is where Boccaccio and Petrarch resided. French humanism has existed since Charlemagne, and it was also present at the Chartres school in the twelfth century. Compared to its transalpine version, the latter is more concerned with morals and scientific veracity. It was developed by Jacques de Nouvion, Jean Muret, Laurent de Prémierfait, the brothers Gontier and Pierre Col, Jean de Montreuil, Nicolas de Clémanges (1363–1437), Gerson (1363–1429), and others. Aristotelian and Livy translations were well-known at Charles V's court. Above all, however, Francis I and the Italian War encouraged its growth in our nation. The latter founded the Royal Readers College. Etienne Dolet permits the propagation of a Christianized version of a Platovian idea. The poets of La Pléiade, like Ronsard and du Bellay, were affected by this idea. According to Montaigne, men can break free from predetermined truths through reason.

Humanism is also present in Spain (via Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), Hungary (via King Mathias Corvinus), Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584), Spain (via Cardinal Cisneros, who established a trilingual university in Alcalá de Henares), Holland (via Erasme, Agricole, and de Heek), and England (via John Colet (1467-1519) and Thomas More).

Consequently, by 1530, this movement had permeated the entirety of Europe, uniting it under the belief in human progress and a single optimistic ideal. Everyone is present in this momentum: philosophers (Bacon), religious individuals, artists (Leonardo da Vinci), and academics (Francois Rabelais). As a result of this movement, new disciplines, including geography, cosmology, political philosophy, and historical thought, emerged. Erasmus and his In Praise of Madness (1511), which were introduced to England by William Grocyn (1446–1519) and Thomas Linacre (around 1460–1524), were pivotal in advancing humanism and bringing about the Protestant Reformation. Humanism is synonymous with independence from religion and liberty. It facilitates human liberation while projecting the image of tolerance.

2.3. Characteristics of Humanism

From 1470 on, it developed in the religious field. It expresses the concern to achieve a synthesis between ancient writings and the scholastic tradition. Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522) brought Hebrew and its literature up to date. Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) studied Greek and Latin writings with Erasmus. These humanists are, above all, Christians. They also Christianized certain ancient writings, such as Plato's Symposium by Marsilio Ficino. Platonism, widely promoted by Ficino, spread notably in France thanks to Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples (v. 1450–1537), Charles de Bouvelles (v. 1480–1533), and Symphorien Champier (v. 1472–1539). In this Platonism, the study of God as a principle or as an end is at the center of the debate.

After 1530 and the creation of the College of France by François I, always with Plato as a model for those who seek an ideal, a humanism led by the French was expressed, which exalted man and his human qualities. It attracts several social strata, such as the bourgeoisie, parliamentarians, lawyers, and doctors. It reaches the province, affecting the cities of Bourges, Orléans, Poitiers, Toulouse, and Lyon. In 1540, Etienne Dolet published a treatise that emphasised the art of translation and detailed how to translate effectively from one language to another. Thus, Etienne Dolet translated the works of the Romans Caesar, Cicero, Juvenal, Persia, and Sallust into French, and published the works of the Greeks Appian, Diodorus, Epictetus, Euripides, Homer, Isocrates, Plutarch, and Plato in French.

This intellectual and literary revival, along with the confirmation of regal authority and the exploration of the New World, ushered in a period commonly referred to as the golden age. Rabelais's works, such as Pantagruel (1532) and Gargantua (1534), mirror this sanguine outlook on humanity. Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549) endeavoured to harmonise the humanists' Platonism with the traditional theological philosophy of Aristotle. This eventually gave way to the Reformation movement, which regrettably precipitated religious conflicts in France.

Humanism flourished after 1547, at the beginning of the reign of Henry II, King of France, after the demise of Francis I. This is the result of the contributions of royal readers Henri II Estienne (1531–1588), Adrien Turnèbe (1512–1565), and Denis Lambin (1516–1572).

A handful of poets, including those who comprise the group Pléiades, were born simultaneously. Prior to 1547, humanism was manifested predominantly through poetic works, except for Clément Marot's. With Ronsard and du Bellay still in their infancy in 1547, poetry started to emerge as a significant literary genre. Thus, the study of ancient texts will illuminate the sensitivity and imagination of Latin and Greek poets. These humanist poets advocate for the progression of personality because of individual brilliance.

Subsequently, we shall reference the publications of Peletier (Uranie, 1555), Ronsard (Hymnes, 1555–1556), and du Bellay (Antiquités de Rome, 1558).
In 1560, humanism experienced a transformation. The Placards affair of 1534, the Waldensian massacre of 1545, and the religious conflicts all served as pivotal events that announced the demise of optimistic humanism. In 1555, Simon Goulart developed a fondness for the writings of Seneca, which he proceeded to fully translate. Numerous translated treatises provide solace and acceptance during this period of adversity. In 1571, Alexandre le Blancq published a translation of Consolation to Apollonius by Plutarch. Seneca's translation served as inspiration for Robert Garnier's ideas. Early in the seventeenth century, this humanism served as Pierre Corneille's and Jean-Paul Camus's source of inspiration. In the first half of the century, it was pervasive. Concurrent with Platonism, the notion of Epicureanism emerges; nevertheless, it falls short in imposing the concepts of self-imposed withdrawal and retreat. During this time, Plutarch was the preferred author, particularly due to the translations of Jacques Amyot (1513–1593).
The humanistic is politicised. This is evident in the Discourses of Ronsard (1562) and Michel de l'Hôpital's (1505–1573) writings, in which he condemns the civil war. The Discourses on Voluntary Servitude of La Boétie, as well as the works of Francois de la Noue (1531–1591), Innocent Gentillet, and Jean Bodin (1530–1596), challenge the validity of Machiavelli's ideas. Montaigne (1533–1592) brought about a paradigm shift in humanism. While acknowledging the influence of ancient texts, he does not elevate humanity above all else, as did humanists such as Rabelais and Petrarch. In his presence, humanism is humanised.
This humanist movement's expansion, however, faces opposition. This sentiment is prevalent among the nobility, theological universities, and the general populace. The nobility abhors this emerging culture. Academics specialising in ancient languages are often met with derogatory terminology. They are fortunate to have monarchs' protection to establish their authority. Academic institutions that offer theology as a major discipline tend to frown upon this critical mindset that scrutinises religion and doubts the reliability of traditional writings, including Greek translations. Socialites, on the other hand, are unwilling to make a significant intellectual investment and thus disregard this movement.

2.4. The Influences of Humanism

Humanism greatly impacted the 16th century because its proponents were not delusional individuals. They have a deep love for history and want to better prepare men to face the challenges of life. Humanism excludes the sciences, which are developing on the periphery of this movement. Therefore, neither Bernard Palissy (1510–1590) nor Ambroise Paré (1509–1590) gave ancient writers this much weight. They would rather rely on practice and experience. However, they study some texts, especially those by Copernicus and Archimedes. He thinks that knowledge from the past is essential to making new discoveries.
In the religious sphere, humanism initially adheres to faith. In the Reformation, humanists were not very prevalent. Sextus, two centuries before Jesus Christ, revived and endorsed the notion of man's nothingness, a belief they refuse to accept. For instance, humanism does not presuppose belief, but it also does not rule it out, according to Montaigne.

Humanism also has an impact on politics. The Prince is the main figure in the state hierarchy. Humanists help him remember his responsibilities to God, his people, and himself. They urge citizens to get more involved in public life. Humanists introduced the concept of national identity. Historians such as Claude Fauchet (1530–1602) and Etienne Pasquier (1529–1615) study the history of the French people.
Humanists want to impart to children the fundamentals of knowledge and etiquette so that they become more human as they grow up. As a result, this movement also transforms the discourse on love by making it more mystical. Themes such as nature, virtue, splendour, and love are highlighted by humanism in literature. Jodelle's prisoner Cleopatra (1532–1573) gave rise to the genres of dialogue and French tragedy. The 16th century gave rise to the concept of humanism, which is still relevant today. Although there are undoubtedly similarities between the Renaissance and our own period, this will probably be the topic of future discussion.

ERASMUS

It is certainly not hyperbolic to refer to Erasmus (1469–1536) as the first great European. Did he not say in 1552 that "for friends of letters, the differences of country do not matter" and that "I desire to be a citizen of the world"? Posterity has largely overlooked his many roles as an editor, translator, and commentator, remembering only The Praise of Folly. Despite this, the man had relationships with all the major players in European humanism and took part in some of the continent's most important debates.
Born in Holland, Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus received his early education from the Common Life brothers, who taught him Greek and Latin while also including a Christian religious practice that was in opposition to the scholastic musings of the Middle Ages. He became an Augustinian after taking his vows in 1488, but the strict rules of the convent affected him and prevented him from enjoying secular literature or engaging in poetic endeavours. Instead, he read Lorenzo Valla's Latin Elegances with great enthusiasm, wrote Latin poetry, and diligently studied the classics. Following his priestly ordination in 1492, he departed from the convent to serve as the secretary of the bishop of Cambrai, accompanied on several of his travels. With permission, he travelled to Paris in 1495 to earn his doctorate in theology. Even though he dated Robert Gaguin, the head of literary humanism at the time, the scholastic nuances of the teaching turned him off and

made him irrevocably reject an intellectualist interpretation of religion; he expressed this in the Religious Banquet (1522), a few years later: "These studies can certainly make someone presumptuous and quarrelsome, but can they make them wise? With a certain icy, dry subtlety, they drain the intellect without in any way nourishing or energising it. They defaced theology, which the eloquence of the Ancients had embellished and enhanced, by virtue of their impurity and immaturity.
(Translation from Latin by P.M.)
During this period, Erasmus remained merely a man of letters, participating in essentially shallow literary pursuits. He made his complete commitment to the theological path that would become his own on his first visit to England (1499–1500), where he encountered John Colet in particular. He acquired more proficiency in Greek than he had previously possessed, and he got acquainted with an alternative perspective on the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. Additionally, he befriended Thomas More. It is now clear what his dual career path will entail: he will write and theologize. He initially published the Adages in Paris in 1500. The collection of about eight hundred proverbial terms was compiled from Latin antiquity's writers and annotated for the benefit of individuals aspiring to emulate Latin writing. sophisticated. Throughout the 16th century, the Adages remained popular; from 1508 until the century's conclusion, over a hundred editions were published. The coffers of old wisdom could now be accessed by the educated public, thanks to Erasmus. The Adages are a collection of proverbs, sayings, and formulas that require a thorough study of all Greek and Latin literature. However, they also contain a plethora of developments and digressions that, while ostensibly commenting on a centuries-old expression, allow the author to voice opinions on contemporary issues.

His Christian Soldier's Manual, which he published three years later, developed an evangelical philosophy based primarily on Christ and was in direct opposition to monastic life as well as "Judaic" rites and ceremonies. It promotes a simplified doctrine that avoids the "confusion and diversity of human opinions" and is a purified form of faith. “The most advantageous would therefore be, in my opinion, for some men who were both pious and learned to be entrusted with the task of compiling an abstract from the purest sources of the evangelists and apostles, from the most approved exegetes , the whole of Christian philosophy, in such simplicity that it does not exclude science, in such brevity that it does not exclude clarity that which touches at the same time, that it is treated in the most possible small number of items. »
(Christian soldier's manual, translation by A.J.Festugière, Vrin, 1971, p-74)
This Italian visit, which Erasmus had eagerly anticipated, took place in 1506. He lived on the peninsula for three years, during which time he earned the degree of Doctor of Theology, enabling him to start his significant reforming work. Above all, he met Aldus Manutius, known as the prince of humanist typographers at the time, who proposed that he print an extended version of the Adages. While travelling across the Alps in 1509, he had the idea for a little book that would boost his name more than all his previous and upcoming theological writings: the Praise of Folly, which he dedicated to his friend Thomas More.
Erasmus kept travelling, first stopping in England and later in Basel, which ended up being his favourite city. After that, Erasmus focused on what he saw as the magnum opus of his career: the Greek New Testament edition, complete with a plethora of commentaries and a fresh Latin translation that was distinct from the Vulgate and whose errors he was eager to fix. too significant. We must move fast. In Spain, a well-thought-out document is ready and just needs Holy See approval to be published. The printer, Froben, challenges Erasmus to a real competition that tests the humanist's abilities to outpace the Spanish squad. Erasmus worked quickly on manuscripts that were occasionally unreliable and contained significant gaps. Regardless of the Christian background, its publication in 1516 marked a remarkable work of art that garnered recognition across Europe. It will serve as the basis for the translation of Luther, like the editions of Robert Estienne and Théodore de Bèze, and we anticipate its upcoming reissue in updated and corrected versions. At the same time, Erasmus dedicated himself to publishing Saint Jerome's complete body of work, resulting in the release of nine volumes in that year. He states in his preface that his goal was to bring the great saint back to life, releasing him from the taints and modifications made by the copyists who had ruined him. This edition marks the beginning of a lengthy series that the printer Froben and his heirs produced over a twenty-year period: Saint Cyprian (1521), Saint Hilary (1523), Saint Augustine (1525), and Origen (1536).
“From the moment when two works as important and, as for the second, as daring, as Saint Jerome and the New Testament, were published under the signature of Erasmus, it can be said that the latter had become the center of scientific practice. Only theology when he was already the center and touchstone of classical erudition and literary taste. His prestige continues to grow in all countries, and his correspondence increases in an astonishing way.”
(Erasme, J.Huizinga, Gallimard, 1955, p.155)
The year 1516 is undeniably prosperous. The academy of Christian princes is printed by Froben. Erasmus posits in this treatise the notion of rectifying the inherent shortcomings of the prospective ruler via education and instilling in him the Christian values that permeate early childhood. From his perspective, the primacy of individual moral development and intellectual instruction is what constitutes the salvation of both society and the state. An in stark contrast to Machiavelli's The Prince, the treatise is steadfastly positioned on an educational and moral plane and does not address political matters.

Erasmus' prominence reached its zenith between 1516 and 1518. While a chorus of acclamation envelops the humanist, the Pope grants approval to the edition of the New Testament. Scholars are privileged to engage in epistolary correspondence with him, and he receives an abundance of invitations, tributes, and praises—to the extent that immortality is pledged in his name—belonging. With only one goal in mind, Erasmus endeavours to reestablish contact with the primary sources of Christianity, despite facing increasing opposition from the extreme right-wing theologians. After the 1520s, his unwavering commitment to this objective caused him to disregard the revolutionary consequences unfolding within Christianity. During the height of the confessional hostilities, he maintained a neutral stance, which earned him censure from opposing factions. Luther addressed him for the first time in 1519 and made advances, addressing him as "our honour and our hope." Do not both share a common goal of reformation? Could they not equally abhor the external rituals associated with Christianity? Conversely, Erasmus would rather remain concealed and above the fray. While acknowledging certain Lutheran claims' validity and expressing concern that the German monk's failure could ultimately promote obscurantism's triumph, he is apprehensive of the audacity of his own stances and abhors the concept of schism. He maintains optimism regarding his ability to exchange conciliatory and mediating language. Wishing for the imminent destruction of the occurrences. He observes the progression of the religious conflict with a growing sense of despondency. He once remarked in one of his letters, "Luther acts in despair; his adversaries delight him." We shall, however, need only inscribe the epitaph of Christ, who will never rise again, to bear witness to their triumph. (op. cit., p.289, as cited in J. Huizinga) He resists obstinately taking a side, despite being pressured to do so from all sides. When he explicitly requests Luther to cease citing him in his writings, the most traditionalist ecclesiastical hierarchy readily views him as the Lutherans' most dependable ally, rendering his situation precarious and incredibly ambiguous. With determination, he continued to disseminate the Fathers of the Church and, in 1522, he issued the inaugural edition of the Colloquiums, an anthology that has been perpetually expanded. Throughout the years, Les has made an incalculable contribution. While he strives for harmony and peace, controversies remain unavoidable. Substantially, the Bible affirms that the will of man is free, as he argued in his De libero arbitrions, which was published in 1524. He further contended that the denial of free will renders meaningless both divine mercy and justice. Luther wrote De serve arbitrions (Of the Serf Arbitrator) in response to the work two years later; in it, he renounced all human liberty. Many secularists opposed Erasmus, even though he aligned himself with the Church's authority and tradition to find moderate and conservative formulations. Erasmus was criticised, in accordance with a renowned formula, for having "laid the egg that Luther hatched." The final significant controversy in which he was involved compelled him, perplexingly, to oppose the very humanist camp: he condemned a portion of the Christian truth in a dialogue titled the Ciceronianus (1528) and was scarcely averse to paganism. Erasmus spends his final years disseminating the great sacred texts with a certain attitude of retirement: disillusioned by the failure of his moderating efforts, he ceases all efforts to intervene during events and instead observes them.

He withdrew [...] from this gigantic struggle, which he so rightly called a tragedy, and the 16th century, bold and violent, swept over his head, scorning his ideal of moderation and tolerance.
(J. Huizinga, op.cit., p.301)

One could say that Erasmus, in a sense, experienced the same failure as all humanists who despise compromise. Nevertheless, Erasmian thought garnered immense acclaim from Montaigne, Descartes, and Leibniz, and it was instrumental in shaping European consciousness. Distinct from all forms of extremism and perplexed by its aversion to intolerance, it attempts to establish the groundwork for a practical morality that maintains an awareness of the limitations of the human condition. It is significant that the German writer Stefan Zweig (1881-1942), fleeing Nazi persecution, paid tribute in these terms to the “prince of humanists”:

"Intolerance, in Erasmus's view, was the inherited malignancy of our society." Because they all pertain to the human domain, he was certain that it would be possible to end the divisions that exist between men through mutual concessions and nonviolent means; he was certain that nearly all disputes could be resolved through transactional means, provided that the ringleaders and instigators did not continually add fuel to the fire [...] Although he refrained from coercing others to embrace his views, he steadfastly declined to associate himself with any particular religious or political affiliation.
(Erasme, Grasset, 1985, p. 14)

3. CLEMENT MAROT

Clement Marot, born in 1496, was the son of the rhetorician Jean Marot, the official poet of Anne of Brittany. He served Francois I until 1527. Already implicated in several controversies (during Lent, he consumed bacon, for instance), he is under suspicion in the "cupboards" incident of 1534. The court of Ferrara subsequently sequestered him for two years. Reuniting with France after an abhorrent abjuration ceremony, he was compelled to retreat once more in 1542 after the progression of the Psalm translation.

Clement Marot, a product of the rhetoricians (as evidenced by works such as The Temple of Cupido and the Conquest of Ferme Amour, composed during the nuptials of Francois I and Claude de France), also operated as a satirical poet (he employs mediaeval-era motifs: deceived husbands, women, monks, etc.). An alternative

instance, more groundbreaking for its time, is Hell, a satirical critique of the immoralities and transgressions of Justice (he is one of the few individuals to speak out against torture in this lengthy poem of 500 lines). He attempted to imbue this antiquated material with his modern sensibilities through his translations of ancient authors (Virgil, Ovid, etc.).
Marot was the inventor of new forms; in fact, he rather developed already existing forms, such as the epistle, where he introduced a familiar or lyrical tone, or the “coat of arms”, which was an entire poem aimed at praising or denigrating a person, an object, a detail most often. The success was such that it sparked a real competition (the winner of which was Maurice Scève for a Blason du sourcil). Finally, let us point out that Marot would be at the origin of the importation into France of the sonnet, a form of Italian origin popularized by du Bellay.

4. RABELAIS

Among his many accomplishments, this Renaissance master of French storytelling was a devout follower of the Catholic faith, a scholar, a jurist, a top-tier physician, and, most notably, the creator of the burlesque epic of the giant Pantagruel, in which his boundless imagination and linguistic prowess are on full display.

As early as 1494, François Rabelais came into this world close to Chinon. He was a Franciscan monk who studied Hebrew and Greek before being compelled to join the Benedictines in Poitou due to the seizure of his writings. Rabelais studied law at the University of Poitiers and spent time there learning the language and customs of the common people. He was defrocked in 1530 but continued to serve as a priest all through the 16th century. After finishing medical school at Montpellier, he became immediately known as a doctor who was closely associated with the city's intellectual elite. The "prince of the humanists," Erasmus, was a particular correspondent of his. When the widely read the magnificent and inestimable chronicles of the great and colossal giant Gargantua came out, he was inspired to write Pantagruel, which he published under the pen name Alcofribas Nasier (anagram of François Rabelais). He continued to work on writing in addition to his medical vocation, producing Gargantua in 1534, The Third Book in 1546, and The Quarter Book in 1555. He served as a physician to Jean du Bellay, a Parisian bishop who later became a cardinal, and to his brother Guillaume du Bellay, a Piedmont governor. Meanwhile, the ecclesiastical authorities denounced all these writings, and Rabelais occasionally thought it best to let them go unread.
He died in Paris in 1553, and the Fifth Book, posthumous, appeared between 1562 and 1564, although its authenticity is partly doubtful. The narrative begins with Pantagruel's life and ends with King Gargantua, his father. In every tale, Rabelais recounts the protagonists' early years, schooling, and burlesque skills before narrating the establishment of the abbey of Thélème, which adopts a non-monastic austere philosophy based on the maxim "Do what you want." The Fourth and Fifth Books describe the voyage of Panurge, Pantagruel, and his friends, who set out to consult the Dive Bottle's oracle. Through the stops, the author can critique and allegorically depict the wrongdoings in the world, particularly those associated with the church and justice. "Be yourself the interpreter of your enterprise" is how the priestess of the Dive Bottle will interpret the oracle, arguing in favour of a Rabelais with a strong sense of freedom in how he lives.
Therefore, parodying the real world and elevating a new way of living known as "Pantagruelism" constitute the two fundamental issues that give the work its unity and attraction. We have already established that Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel is considered a fervent anthem of triumphant humanism, a topic that requires attention across various subjects. Rabelais describes the aristocratic education of a king's son there, an education whose goal is to produce a cultured society, in opposition to the caricature of a disastrous system.
Rabelais does not claim to replicate the external reality exactly, and the entirety of his output advances his humanist ideal. Regarding criticism, Rabelais does, on occasion, expressly commend royal policy (conquest policy, Gallican policy, attack against the Decretals, etc.); however, his main targets are the monks, the credulity that supports superstitions (pilgrimages, relics, saints, etc.), and the disdain for the body, mortification, or even the pope.
The significance of each of these parodies begs the question of Rabelais's religious beliefs. Some critics contend that Rabelais, in his playful repartee, embodies the harmless mediaeval heritage. Some, however, have noted that Rabelais's humour can't be dismissed because of the Reformation. Because scepticism was unthinkable in the 16th century, Rabelais was left wondering: was Erasmus, or anybody else, a devotee of a more cerebral than mystical religion? Evangelist, ready to get back to what the Bible says? A follower of a religion that leans towards deism. It is quite tough to choose between the many theories that have been put out. Nonetheless, it should be highlighted that the entire piece emphasises the necessity of living in balance with nature, free from excessive animality or mortification.

Though the author frequently portrays himself as a joker, a drinker, and an eater, let's not overlook the qualification of this unmistakably summary portrait of Rabelais; he does, in fact, encourage his reader to "break the bone and suck the real marrow," that is, to go beyond outward appearances and discover the hidden meaning within his works. We so find ourselves in a similar predicament to Gargantua, torn between his deceased spouse and his infant son, unsure of how to respond.

THE AGE OF RONSARD, A NEW AESTHETIC: “golden age of humanism”.
From the appearance of the Pléiade (1549) to the Wars of Religion (1562).

5. THE FRAMEWORKS OF THE NEW AESTHETICS.

During this period which almost exactly covers the reign of Henry II (1547-1559), while Ronsard lived until 1585, we witnessed the birth of a new aesthetic, prepared by the efforts of Lyon poetry.
Henry II is a mediocre protector of letters and the Arts, although his court is very brilliant. It was with his reign that the Italian wars ended, with the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559.

Learned Poets:

Poets, the pinnacle of humanism, are now well-bred, powerful individuals who aim to challenge the ancient Greeks and Italians. From then on, it is the rare aficionados they are speaking to, rather than the public. François Pétrarque (1304–1374) heavily influenced the 16th-century poets, such as Scève, Ronsard, du Bellay, or d'Aubigné, who used analogies, antitheses, and metaphors to convey their intense or depressing emotions (notice that Pétrarque transmits the sonnet form). Neo-Platonism, previously discussed with Ficino, also influences these writers.

7. SHAPES AND THEMES

The sonnet was the most popular fixed form around the middle of the 16th century, and love was a favourite theme. Recall that a sonnet is a fixed-form poem consisting of 14 lines, split into two quatrains and a six, which are further divided into two tercets (= stanzas of 4, 4, 3, and 3 lines). Around 1550, Alexandrine's dominance, or even the rhyme scheme's alternation, became established because of La Pléiade's numerous studies on language, style, and prosody. In the poems, we elevate a sensual yet melancholic art of life, plagued by a death preoccupation, through tender lyricism.
The poet's mission is now the highest notion going forward. Instead, Ronsard views the poet as a king's instructor. With his art in hand, he must work hard to win fame. Before studying the authors of La Pléiade, you must make the essential detour through Lyon poetry.

LYON POETRY: Maurice Scève and the others...

Maurice Scève (1500–1560), the preeminent embodiment of Lyon poetry, can be seen as standing closest to Ronsard in terms of literary perspective rather than Marot. Prior to the outbreak of the Wars of Religion, Scève and the Lyonnais relied heavily on the climate of their city, which was France's true intellectual capital, for their success. Then, printers and bankers brought glory to this border town (recall that Savoy was a foreign nation at the time), and beginning in the 15th century, the economic and intellectual supremacy of Lyon was ensured not only by the Swiss and Germans but also by Italians. It is imperative to bear in mind that Lyon served as the epicentre of the printing industry and that Dolet and Rabelais made it their home.
Scève is closely associated with the emergence of Lyon's finest poetry. Délie finds inspiration in the works of Pernette du Guillet (1520–1555), the woman who inspired Scève to write about her; these are the Rimes, which were published in 1545 and sing of her affections. Additionally, a famous poet known as "Belle Cordière," Louise Labé (1524–1566), was a disciple of Petrarch but primarily self-reliant despite the profound influence of Scève. Despite being an "immoralist" prior to receiving the letter, Louise Labé was cognizant of the scandalous nature of her poems since they depict a woman singing of her love for a man and are violent, impassioned, and sensual in nature. Discontent consumed Labé during this period. Self-published literature was thus invented by Louise Labé. Pontus de Tyard (1521-1605), bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône and acquaintance of Scève, represents the connection between the theory of poetry and the production of La Pléiade. Although he belonged to a distinct literary genre than Louise Labé, he exemplifies this connection.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PLEIADE

The name Pléiade, which evokes a constellation of stars, was given late – around 1556 – to a group, which varied, of seven authors gathered around Ronsard. It commonly designates the best known of the army of poets who worked, in the years 1550-1560, to renew French poetry.

8.1 A DOCTRINE OF THE PLEIADE

They referred to the elite of the Brigade encircling Ronsard as the Pléiade. The movement's guiding principle is that by "illustrating," or enriching, the French language, it can attain the same level of complexity, refinement, and manageability as ancient languages. Du Bellay proposes that we can create new words by borrowing from Latin, Greek, Old French, the language of professions, and provincial dialects. Additionally, it suggests an expansion of the lexicon through the utilisation of numerous metaphors, allegories, and comparisons.
The critique of mediaeval poetry lacks merit and can be likened to a betrayal of the Greeks, the Latins, and the Italians (as stated by du Bellay): through emulation of renowned foreign works, we forsake conventional

forms of composition (such as rondeau, ballad, and farce) in favour of styles developed by the ancients—notably the sonnet, ode, elegy, epigram, tragedy, and comedy.

Moreover, the Pléiade poets significantly contributed to the alteration of the perception of the poet, who was subsequently believed to possess a "inspired" art, i.e., behemoth-like irrationality that propelled their creation. The authors aim to reclaim the honour that their predecessors attained in battle through the medium of writing, and they have achieved this goal... Indeed, both at the Court and throughout Europe, the Pléiade concepts prevail. Thus, the mediaeval poets were subjected to an outrage that can only be condemned, and this preeminence bestowed upon them by the classical movement is due to the Pléiade.

DU BELLAY (1522-1560)

Early orphaned and raised in Anjou from 1522 onward, Joachim du Bellay endured a neglected and melancholic upbringing. Following his legal studies in Poitiers and his 1547 encounter with Ronsard, he travelled to Paris in pursuit of Dorat's humanist philosophy. The Defence and Illustration of the French Language, which he credited with originating French poetry while disregarding the poets of the Middle Ages, is due to him. By leveraging the enrichment of the French language, he formulated the notion that it was necessary to emulate the ancients and the Italians to surpass them.

Then, commencing in 1558, he published Les Regrets and Les Antiquités de Rome, which he composed during his four-year stay in Rome. During this turbulent four-year period, which was rife with diplomatic and military developments, he was able to emulate the ancient authors whose works he advocated. He sang of the city's decline using the same imagery and vocabulary that Latin authors had employed to extol its magnificence. He expresses his longing for his birthplace and his disillusionments in Les Regrets, as well as his satirical view of the splendour and refinement of modern Rome. A fresh sense of disillusionment has emerged in France: the Court of Kings is merely inferior in quality to the Court of Popes.

RONSARD (1524-1585)

The gentleman Pierre de Ronsard is a descendant of Italian War combatants' offspring. Having been ill with a medical condition that rendered him unsuitable for a profession in arms, he changed his course of action and began working as a clerk. Baïf and he commenced Greek lessons under the tutelage of Jean Dorat at the age of twenty. His first ode was published in 1547, and it remained in circulation until 1552. His notoriety and prosperity accumulated rapidly thereafter. He composes odes in four volumes, in which he extols both legendary figures and recognisable motifs. He accomplishes the task that du Bellay predicted would be accomplished by inventing the words and techniques that the language is devoid of. He held the esteemed position of official poet of the Court from the time he turned 40 until the demise of Charles IX. Ronsard's inaugural collection of Hymns was published in 1555. Within this volume, the author explored significant humanistic themes, including mortality, eternity, the stars, and even demons.
After the American Civil Wars, poetic themes became more timely, polemical, religious, and political. Ronsard, a devoted disciple of Charles IX, vehemently and forcefully defends the Catholic position in a series of speeches bearing evocative titles (e.g., "Speech on the Misfortunes of the Present").

Nevertheless, his primary focus was on a subject matter that would later become the nomenclature of one of his most exquisite compositions: Les Amours. Numerous names permeate his body of work, including Sinope, Genèvre, and Astrée, but Cassandre, Marie, and Hélène in particular, whose names continue to inspire verses etched in all memories... The initial poems dedicated to Cassandre depict an idealised form of love, while Hélène's romantic relationships are imbued with a tranquil melancholy influenced by death (it is the affection of an elderly gentleman, occasionally resentful, plagued by the thought of his demise). Although love may not be able to triumph over mortality in the end, the poet maintains an aspiration to do so through posthumous glory—a goal that permeates his entire body of work. A limited number of elements in Ronsard's poems invoke the Christian concept of death; he appears incapable of conceiving of a world distinct from our own, and this man, who is so enthralled with life, acknowledges that death is an inevitable consequence of all existence; thus, loving life is, in a sense, accepting death. This preoccupation with time will influence his interactions with the world and motivate him to develop the carpe diem motif, which is not only Horatian but also Ronsardian in nature. Consistent throughout Ronsard's body of work is his profound appreciation for the natural world and the aesthetic and ethical significance he attributes to its representations (consider the rose, a symbol of the frailty of humanity, for instance).

Moreover, Ronsard considers nature and mythology to be constituents of the same universe. The poet employs mythology as a device of insinuation; for instance, he discerns that the nomenclature of Hélène de Surgères alludes to the persona of Helen of Troy, thereby implying the concept of impeccable beauty.
In short, this man who had from the outset had the audacity to proclaim his ambition to conquer death by raising himself to the rank of gods, knew how to take on this reckless undertaking, and was unquestionably the greatest poet of his time, even if he did not receive from ungrateful posterity the reward he expected and

deserved (criticisms of Sainte-Beuve and Boileau, who refuse that poetry is a “sacred madness” as Ronsard said).

Around Ronsard:
Jean-Antoine de Baïf (1532-1589)
He also attended class with Dorat at Coqueret College. His ambition to combine poetry and music, as well as his recurrent disputes with Ronsard, have made him notorious. Consequently, in 1570, he established the Academy of Poetry and Music and reinstated ancient metrics and prosody. While the production may have been subject to occasional doubts regarding quality, it was plentiful and diverse, spanning from the scientific Météores in 1567 to the Petrarchist Amours de Méline in 1552.

Rémy Belleau (1528-1577)
He incorporated numerous genres of consistent calibre into his poems, including descriptions, coats of arms, and sonnets, as a hellenist and humanist who was both scrupulous and ardent. Without disregarding the influence of mythology, he was a master rhythmician and visual artist who could depict the dynamic and the living. Ronald aptly described him as a "painter of nature" when he awarded him the seventh star of the Pléiade.

Étienne Jodelle (1532-1573)
Though her peers regarded her as having a remarkable intellect, Jodelle is still far from taking her proper position in the annals of literature. We largely lack knowledge about his life story, except for the fact that he faced the king in Paris in 1558 after taking responsibility for the unsuccessful party he was furious over. This poet was incredibly inventive; he used syntactic and rhythmic disruptions to convey his feelings and worries.

9. THEATER

It is important to note that La Pléiade begged for a historic French theatre. Even though the Reformation's new mentality has led to a drop-in play that link comedy with the sacred, the themes are still extremely mediaeval, and the farce goes on. The 16th century saw the emergence of tragedy because of the translation of Greek or Latin plays (such as Médée by La Péruse in 1556), some of which were religious tragedies (Théodore de Bèze in 1550 depicting Abraham sacrificing, and particularly Robert Garnier's Les Juives in 1583, the most darkly tragic biblical play of that era).

Protestant poetry:
William of Bartas (1544-1590)
He was a devoted Calvinist who wrote the First Week, which tells the story of the creation of the world, and the Second Week, which tells the story of Adam's descendants' exploits, two works whose magnificence astonished Europe... Later, Goethe referred to him as "the king of French poets."

Catholic poetry:
All poets have religious concerns; Marc de Papillon de Lasphrise (1600), for example, composed prayers after publishing wildly romantic declarations to a young nun or even to his cousin. More importantly, certain secondary writers are genuinely fixated on God: Sonnet meditations on Christ's death were published by Jean de la Ceppède (1623); Jean-Baptiste Chassignet (1635?) wrote religious poetry that expressed his curiosity about a world that seemed to be reverting to chaos.

AGRIPPA OF AUBIGNÉ (1552-1630)
He was an extraordinary person in terms of the depth of his virtues and the intensity of his hatreds; he was aggressive and unrepentant, uncompromising and uncorruptible, and he never gave up the struggle for his political ideal, sometimes using a pen and other times a weapon.

Agrippa d'Aubigné was born in Saintonge in 1552 and had a meticulous education—at the age of six, he could read four languages: French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He began fighting the Catholics in 1568, fulfilling his father's vow to him when he was just seven years old by swearing to avenge the Protestants put to death in the wake of the Amboise conspiracy (1560). A truce enabled him to write the first section of Printemps and the Hécatombe à Diane (a hundred poems dedicated to Diane Salviati, niece of the Cassandra that Ronsard sang); in this eclectic collection, d'Aubigné assumes the role of Ronsard's pupil. When he returned to fighting for his faith as a soldier, he barely avoided the massacre at Saint-Barthélemy on August 23, 1572. In the meantime, he later befriended Henry of Navarre. But in 1593, he finally parted with Henry IV, whom he would never forgive for having betrayed his abjuration. Because of this split, D'Aubigné becomes the Protestant party's spirit.
During his retirement in the Vendée stronghold of Maillezais, he persisted in publishing his magnum opus, Les Tragiques. The assassination of the monarch delayed the completion of this monumental work and his

Histoire Universelle, both condemned in Paris in 1620. In 1630, he concluded his work in Bernes and Geneva, where he sought refuge before passing away.
The collection includes poems about love and death, despair, blood, and Diana's Hecatomb. The author employs techniques and themes that were prevalent in the works of his predecessors yet emphasises their contradictory qualities, bringing them into unanticipated combinations.

During his final years in Geneva, d'Aubigné undertook the translation of Psalms, a task that had been accomplished by countless poets in relation to religion and conflict. As psalm singing is an integral part of the Reformed liturgy, this issue of harmony between the music and the French Hebrew text became significantly more than an aesthetic concern for the Protestants. He attempted to modify the French Hebrew text by restoring the ancient verse's measure. D'Aubigné presents anticlerical, social, and political satire in The Confession of Sancy and the Adventures of Baron de Foenestre. Additionally, he lampoons the triumphant courtly morality of appearance.
It is nevertheless essential to bear in mind that his magnum opus is a lyrical and satirical epic—the poem Tragiques, an epic of the Religious Wars. Under the signature of L.B.D.D. (the desert goat), this composition was not published until 1616. While simultaneously extolling the martyrs of the Reformation and its tribulations, the author condemns, in seven volumes, the suffering of a people and the accountability of kings, greats, and judges. Through this genuinely apocalyptic piece, d'Aubigné not only proclaims the retribution of the culpable on earth, but also levels an audacious allegation against the Cardinal of Lorraine or Catherine de Medici.
Malice in opposition to splendour, martyrs before reward—the antithesis seems to be the central figure of the work. Not only does the juxtaposition of the supernatural with the realistic or historical allegory of history, reality, and daily terror reveal the completeness of the Tragics, but it also highlights the fundamental tension between allegory and reality.

In this way, Agrippa d'Aubigné emerges as a poet associated with the final generation of the Renaissance, a generation that has witnessed revolutions that demolish established notions and is characterised by conflicts. As a result, the poets' responses can no longer be like those of their predecessors. However, his primary commitment was to Calvinism; his faith influenced every aspect of his life, including his poetry and works. Regardless of whether expressing himself politically, satirically, romantically, epically, or burlesque-style, the poet is always pitiful and prophetically prescient, viewing the world as a theatre and terrestrial time as illusory.

MONTAIGNE (1533-1592)

According to Nietzsche, Montaigne's writings "truly increased the pleasure of living on this earth." Michel Eyquem, born at the Château de Montaigne in the Bordeaux region, comes from a family of newly aristocratized merchants. His father gave him an unusual education: at the age of two, he was given to a German tutor and later enrolled in Bordeaux's Guyenne College. His mother tongue was Latin. He became a magistrate after completing his legal studies, and he and Stephen of Boeotia remained lifelong friends. After his father passed away in 1568, he married and inherited Montaigne's name, castle, and land. The next year, he translated Raymond (de) Sebond's Natural Theology, an entirely religious work that would nevertheless have an impact on his own output. After resigning from his role as counsellor to the Bordeaux Parliament in 1571, Montaigne withdrew to his castle's "library," where he wrote the Essays, which saw their publication in their first edition in 1580. His recuperation was a relative one: afflicted with gravel illness, or stone disease, he journeyed through spa towns, art towns, France, Germany, Switzerland, and particularly Italy. Upon his election as mayor of Bordeaux, he arrived in the city with a travel journal he had not intended to publish, capturing the minutiae of everyday life on the Italian peninsula, surpassing the grandeur of the Italian Renaissance.
When Montaigne was re-elected mayor in 1583, he was able to keep Bordeaux safe from the excesses of civil conflict. He's still working at the trials. Henri IV attempted, but was unsuccessful, to entice Montaigne to court after 1589, since he showed little interest in the major royal concerns. Montaigne read and worked on his essays until his passing in 1592.
The Essays, his principal work, are displayed as an original picture by him depicting important historical events. It contains several observations and notes on many topics, including "On idleness," "On liars," and "On constancy." This book is ambiguous because it does not fit into any existing genre—only the one it invents, the essay.

Montaigne incorporates author quotations into what is essentially an observation of the world through books. Moreover, he sees it as an opportunity to become eternal by becoming well-known to his parents and friends. Because of this, the essays are essentially lengthy monologues covering a wide range of topics; nonetheless, because the chapters are based on the author's current inspiration, their logic deviates from any overarching scheme.
The essays primarily describe Montaigne himself: his inquisitiveness, love of reading, loathing of restrictions, honesty and sincerity frequently linked to irony and comedy, poor memory, mistrust of emotions, strong

taste for fantasy, and, lastly, his extraordinary capacity for happiness despite illness and isolation! Nonetheless, some paths remain constant. The first is the search for a philosophy that enables people to "know how to live" in a brutal century. Following the untimely death of his companion La Béotie in 1563, Montaigne became fascinated with death. To withstand the anguish, he initially turned to the philosophy of the Stoic thinkers of antiquity, such as Seneca or Plutarch, who believed that man's primary purpose in morals was to harden himself against suffering. He then begins to incline towards scepticism because of fresh readings, and he challenges human reason and its claims in Raymond de Sebond's Apology. His catchphrase, "What do I know?" sums up the culture of his era nicely (we talk about heliocentrism, the retreat of global frontiers, etc.). Montaigne therefore shows that the unstable and the relative constitute the sole true aspects of human nature.

When it comes to contemplating religion, Montaigne seems to follow Catholic doctrine with unquestioning compliance. He is not a fan of either mysticism or fanaticism, and this relativism lets us put him in the category of "politicians," moderate opponents of both the League and the Protestants (who, in his opinion, are to blame for the chaos that is raging throughout France). Furthermore, he stands out against all kinds of cruelty, particularly colonial conquest brutality and torture in court.

Ultimately, his thoughts on education demonstrate that it is appropriate to enhance a child's inherent qualities and help him become a better, smarter person. Montaigne suggests an education like his own, guided by a tutor and enhanced through readings, travel, and talks, rather than advocating for a group education. As a result, the focus is now on training the body and judgement rather than turning the student into an "abyss of science," as it was in Rabelais' day.

Some of Montaigne's characteristics, such as his individualism, selfishness, and conservatism, may turn us off. However, this "book consubstantial with its author" is still fascinating; in fact, the author himself describes himself in his book: "I have no more made my book than my book has made me." Lastly, let's discuss a quality of Montaigne that I believe no one can dispute: his wager on happiness.

"Every opinion in the world is in agreement that the pursuit of pleasure is our ultimate objective, albeit through distinct methods." This sceptic made a wager amidst the turmoil of history, not for utopian happiness but for an accessible one. It was a bet on a very earthly happiness, the only one that does not appear to be a chimera to man despite its frailty.

Conclusion

The literary, religious, and cultural transformations of the 16th century established it as a defining era. The emergence of humanism, motivated by an intellectual pursuit for enlightenment and the acquisition of knowledge, fundamentally transformed societal values. The Renaissance humanists, motivated by individuals such as Erasmus, endeavoured to foster inquisitiveness, originality, and ethical development. As evidenced by contrasts with the Reformation, this intellectual movement also generated animosity towards religious orthodoxy. An examination of the historical lineage of humanism unveils a diverse and profound fabric, bearing in mind its emergence in 14th century Italy and its profound historical foundations in ancient Greece. Later intellectuals, including Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla, moved the movement forward, while earlier figures like Petrarch and Boccaccio established its foundation. Humanist ideals influenced the formation of professions, universities, and artistic expression throughout Europe because of the dissemination of classical texts, which was facilitated by innovations such as printing technology. Humanist ideas and theological and social upheavals characterised the 16th century as a vigorous intellectual ferment. Humanism's legacy inspires inquiry and creativity, highlighting the ongoing search of knowledge and progress in individuals and society. German and Dutch humanism, led by Johannes Reuchlin and Erasmus, transformed 16th-century European culture and philosophy. Humanist values spread over Europe, fostering a golden age of enlightenment characterised by a deep appreciation for classical learning, individual creativity, liberty, and tolerance despite initial resistance. Through works like Erasmus's "In Praise of Madness," humanism led to the Protestant Reformation and promoted reason and freedom from religious dogma. This intellectual surge joined philosophers, religious thinkers, artists, and academics, creating new disciplines, and moulding the Renaissance. Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, who traversed the turbulent landscape of religious reform with a determination to restoring Christianity's essence via direct contact with its basic sources, epitomises this era of great ambiguity yet immense influence. Erasmus's significant contributions to biblical studies and philosophical discourse shaped his time's intellectual environment despite criticism and conflicts.

Clement Marot and François Rabelais' diverse legacies shaped Renaissance literature. French poetry was forever changed by Marot's satire and critique, which moulded European literature. Emulation and competition followed him, and his popularisation of the sonnet showed his importance in poetry form. Rabelais's burlesque epic tales entertained, criticised society, and promoted humanism. He explored human complexity and invited viewers to find hidden meanings in his works. Marot and Rabelais demonstrate the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation, paving the way for future poets and intellectuals to broaden literary discourse and cultural viewpoints. The popularity of sonnets and Lyon poetry in the 16th century shows the era's profound shifts in literary perspectives and cultural influences, setting the stage for

future innovation and exploration. Renaissance French literature was transformed by the Pléiade poets, led by Ronsard and Du Bellay. Their efforts to elevate the French language and recast the poet as an inspired artist revived French poetry and left a legacy that continues to impact European literature and culture. Their emphasis on linguistic brilliance and poetic creativity resonates with later poets and writers, highlighting their lasting impact on literary history. Moreover, upon examining French literature from the 16th century, one emerges upon an epoch characterised by significant religious, social, and political transformations. The transformation of the cultural milieu brought about by the Reformation is mirrored in the development of French theatre and the invention of tragedy. Prominent individuals of the time, including Agrippa d'Aubigné and Montaigne, present divergent yet perceptive viewpoints. Agrippa fervently adheres to Calvinism, while Montaigne's contemplative essays offer profound understandings of the human condition during disorderly society. Collectively, these authors make significant contributions to the intellectual, religious, and cultural currents of their era, which are reflected in a tapestry of French literature that is rich in insight. As a result, future generations of writers and philosophers are profoundly influenced by their works.

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