

Ronsard's Eutrapelian Gaillardise

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Abstract:

Thanks in no small measure to the sixteenth-century French poet laureate Pierre de Ronsard, the adjective "gaillard" and its derivatives ("gaillardise" and "gaillardement") emerged to join the most semantically loaded and etymologically enigmatic words of the early modern French language. To the various meanings traceable to the term's Gallo-Roman and Celtic origins and faithfully recorded in the near-contemporary dictionaries, the Pléiade leader adds the ideas of nimble-wittedness, civility, and playfulness inspired by the Aristotelian moral concept of "eutrapelia." The present study not only exposes previously undetected yet copious textual evidence for this association, but it also reveals how Ronsard's eutrapelia-enhanced gaillardise shapes the rhetorical strategies at work in his polemical poetry and, further, contributes to his career-long ambition to bring definition to the "French" identity.

Keywords: sixteenth-century French poetry | *gaillard* | Pierre de Ronsard | early modern French | literary analysis | etymology

Article:

When first recorded (in its adjectival and adverbial forms) during the mid-eleventh century,¹ "gaillard" (and its nominal and adverbial derivatives, "gaillardise" and "gaillardement") bore a close connection to its likeliest Gallo-Roman antecedent, the noun *galia*, meaning "force," which in turn harkened to the Celtic radical, *gal-*, again denoting "force" or "bravery," and ultimately to the Indo-European verb, *gal*, "to be able, to have power."² During the sixteenth century, however, the word acquired a far more flexible semantic reach. Indeed, it would emerge from the poetry and prose of Renaissance France among the most semantically loaded and etymologically enigmatic words of the early modern French language. One has only to consider the entries for "gaillard" in the early seventeenth-century dictionaries of Randle Cotgrave and Jean Nicot to appreciate what had occurred:

Cotgrave: “Gaillard: m. arde: f. Lustie, livelie; frolicke, buxome, cheerefull, blithe, joconde, pleasant, gamesome; brave, gallant; valiant; well disposed, in good tune; also, rash, or somewhat indiscreet, by too much jollitie.”³

Nicot: C’est joyeux, gay, esbaudi, qui tressaut de joye, *Hilaris*. . . . Le François a estendu ce mot à la signification de dehaict, pour dire joyeux, sans souci, prompt à tout faire sans precedant discours. Il le prend aussi en diminution de escervelé, pour celuy qui est peu moins que tel, & attribue le nom de gaillardise par attenuation à un acte follement & indiscretement fait & par trop grande jeunesse, par imitation de ce que ceux qui sont transportez de trop grande liesse, tombent en maints actes indecents, peu et mal considerez. . . .”⁴

While retaining something of its Gallo-Roman and Celtic roots, particularly in Cotgrave’s allusions to bravery, “good tune,” and lustiness (here to be read as a synonym for “livelie,” and thus as a reference to vigor and robustness), “gaillard” has also come to evoke the qualities of playfulness (Cotgrave: “frolicke,” “gamesome,” etc.; Nicot: “joyeux, gay, esbaudi” and “dehaict”) and audacity (Cotgrave: “rash,”; Nicot: “un acte follement & indiscretement fait”). Manifestly, the early modern term has attained a referential plenitude beyond its essentially univocal foundations. But from where, if not its Gallo-Roman and Celtic roots, does this plenitude derive?

The search for an answer brings us perforce to the works of the sixteenth-century French poet laureate and Pléiade leader, Pierre de Ronsard. In no other collection of writings from the period does “gaillard” show up in greater number and semantic variety. A scrutiny of the textual evidence, aided by a judicious review of Alvin Creore’s *Word-Index*, uncovers a total of 176 appearances of the term, including 168 samples of the adjective “gaillard,” one instance of the substantive “gaillarde,” six cases of the noun “gaillardise,” and one use of the adverb “gaillardement.”⁵ By contrast, variants of the word are recorded only eleven times in the five books of Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, fifteen times in the poetic oeuvres of Joachim Du Bellay, and twenty-six times in Montaigne’s *Essais*.⁶ More striking than that frequency is the polyvalence accompanying it. For it is no exaggeration to say that Ronsard manages to illustrate every significant acceptance recorded by the lexicologists.⁷ Indeed, he even adds a few meanings that transcend the lists. It is in two of these unregistered nuances, I would propose, that we detect a nod to the conceptual underpinning we have been seeking. I refer to the ideas of “nimble-wittedness” and “civility” (or “urbanity”) that begin to emerge in the late 1550s and early 1560s. Especially when considered in conjunction with the notion of playfulness, these senses invariably call to mind the ancient Greek concept of “eutrapelia” (pronounced *eh-oo-tra-pe-li'-ah*) promoted by Aristotle in the fourth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the treatise in which the Stagirite, addressing his young son Nicomachus (the work’s subsequent editor), sets out his principal views on the means by which the individual should pursue happiness in society.

Admittedly, two conspicuous caveats might undermine such a correlation. First, the negative connotations of audacity, indecency, and foolishness identified as denotative extensions of “gaillard” by Cotgrave and Nicot would seem wholly antithetical to the notion. Furthermore, at no moment in his career did Ronsard ever actually employ the term “eutrapelia” or any of its Greek or Gallicized derivatives. Nevertheless, there is no dispute that the Vendômois knew Aristotle’s opus thoroughly, as may be confirmed by reading his discourse on ethics, “Des vertus intellectuelles et morales,”⁸ prepared shortly after the coronation of Henri III, and delivered at the Académie du Palais in January 1576. Likewise, through his humanist and ecclesiastical training it is inevitable that Ronsard would have seen commentaries on the concept from the likes of Cicero, Horace, Aquinas, and Erasmus (to name but a few). Moreover, if only thanks to a 1555 letter from Etienne Pasquier referencing Noël du Fail’s 1548 *Baliverneries d’Eutrapel*,⁹ our laureate would have been quite familiar with the Breton story-teller’s five comical dialogues staging one of the most memorable early modern incarnations of the ancient “eutrapelos,” the witty and free-thinking country gentleman, Eutrapel.¹⁰

As important as these biographical coincidences may be, it is the textual evidence that provides the clearest indication that eutrapelia came to infiltrate Ronsard’s thinking and, starting in the late 1550s, to afford a foundation for his pluralistic understanding and use of “gaillard” in its many forms. But these are not the only lessons to be learned from the available inscriptions. Certain examples reveal direct links between the Vendômois’ eutrapelian gaillardise and the playfulness that marks the rhetorical strategies applied in his polemical poetry. An analysis of that evidence and these rhetorical implications will furnish the primary focus of the remarks to follow. The same examination will also provide some intriguing responses to the aforementioned caveats against our theory: responses that will carry the added benefit of elucidating why the foremost French poet of the Renaissance would have privileged the term “gaillard” and the culturally heterogeneous qualities it signifies.

Before we proceed, however, a few more words on the meaning and history of eutrapelia are in order.¹¹ As previously noted, the concept received its first extensive examination in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (ca. 350 B.C.E.),¹² where Aristotle included it among the moral virtues most conducive to true happiness (εὐδαιμονία, literally “well-being”), the supreme goal of life for each member of the human community (*NE* 1.4.2; 10–11). Book 4, chapter 8 of that work takes up the specific matter of how best to occupy one’s relaxation, or free time (ἀναπαύσεως), in connection with the attainment of that end. According to Aristotle, our free time is best spent in “playful conversation” – or more properly, playful amusements (διαγωγῆς μετὰ παιδίας, literally “pastimes pursued in sport”) – governed by good taste and propriety (*NE* 4.8.1; 244–45).

For that to be achieved it is necessary to follow the philosopher’s all-pervasive doctrine of the mean and conform in speech and action to the middle ground between two extremes: buffoonery, practiced by the vulgar fellows (βωμολόχοι) who “itch to have their joke at all costs, and are more concerned to raise a laugh than to keep within the bounds of decorum” (*NE* 4.8.3; 244–45),

and boorishness, the way of the churlish chaps (᾽ ἀγροικοί) “who never by any chance say anything funny themselves and take offences at those who do” (NE 4.8.3; 244–47). The median mode of behavior is eutrapelia, the virtue of the educated gentleman (εὐτραπέλιος) whose nimble, or “well-turning” (εὐ-τροπέειν), wit allows him to play easily in words and deeds while remaining ever mindful of the need for good taste and tact. To quote the philosopher:

Those who jest with good taste are called witty or versatile – that is to say, full of good turns; for such sallies seem to spring from the character, and we judge men’s characters, like their bodies by their movements. . . . The middle disposition is further characterized by the quality of tact, the possessor of which will say, and allow to be said to him, only the sort of things that are suitable to a virtuous man and a gentleman: since there is a certain propriety in what such a man will say and hear in jest, and the jesting of a gentleman differs from that of a person of servile nature, as does that of an educated from that of an uneducated man. (NE 4.8.3–5; 246–47)

Subsequent thinkers found a wealth of inspiration in the Stagirite’s ethical and rhetorical reflections. Traces of his ideas are plainly present, for example, in volume 7 of Cicero’s *Epistulae ad Familiares*, letters 32 and 33 (written in early 50 B.C.E.). Here the Roman orator and statesman not only addresses a certain P. Volumnius whose good-natured sense of humor earned him the *cognomen*, “Eutrapelus,” but, in letter 32, he also reminds us of his personal predilection for sharp punning, subtle hyperbole, laughable innuendo and wittiness.¹³ Horace evokes the same merrymaking Eutrapelus character in his *Epistularum Liber Primus*, letter 18 (written to his friend Lollius Maximus in 20 B.C.E.); only, this time the picture is that of a wise trickster whose ruse to expose and ruin the vain and insincere is offered as a method by which the wealthy patrician might test the fidelity of those he would call his friends.¹⁴

An Apostle and several Fathers of the Church likewise took an interest in Aristotle’s pronouncements. At the outset these commentators were highly critical of the eutrapelian mode of conduct. In his masterful study of the idea of play through the ages, Hugo Rahner has identified two main objections. On the one hand, there was a sense that eutrapelia might promote obscene talk or ridicule and could therefore divert us from our duty to imitate God. This position was most vehemently espoused by St. Paul in the fifth chapter of his letter to the Ephesians (1–4):

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. . . . But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints. Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar [i.e., eutrapelian] talk. . . .¹⁵

On the other hand, there was a fear that eutrapelia involved a level of jollity that could interfere with the need “to find an exact balance between Christian seriousness and a serene acceptance of the world,” or more practically, with the necessity to educate “the naturally light-hearted and witty Christian, the product of the civilization of later antiquity, in the seriousness of Christian

behavior.” Early theological doctors like Clement of Alexandria and Ambrose were among the principal purveyors of this warning (Rahner 1972, pp. 96–97).¹⁶

It was not until Thomas Aquinas took the trouble to reread the *Nicomachean Ethics* that Aristotle’s true sense would be restored and eutrapelia would finally begin to gain favor in the Church. Two principal texts prepared the grounds for this redemption. With Book 4, Lecture 16:C (854 and 859) of the *Ethicorum Aristotelis Ad Nicomachum* (ca. 1271), St. Thomas dispels the previous confusions by reaffirming the distinctions we have already outlined. There he follows Aristotle in emphasizing that eutrapelia is a virtue of the mean, proper to the gentleman who exercises his wit in good taste, i.e., in accordance with human decency and in a way that he can “becomingly give an amusing turn to what is said and done.”¹⁷ In the *Summa Theologica* (ca. 1273) he expands on this commentary, offering apologies for all manner of play. His most stirring defenses appear in Question 168, Article 2 of the *Secunda Secundae*. On one occasion the theologian reminds us that Aristotelian eutrapelia is restrained by the “rule of reason” and the dictates of “modesty.”¹⁸ In another instance (the *sed contra* that will subsequently be upheld and elaborated), St. Thomas points out that the play and cheer eutrapelia serves to enhance are fully consistent with Christian doctrine. On the authority of St. Augustine’s *De Musica libri sex* (2.15), the theologian concludes that all “wise and virtuous” men (i.e., Christians) should “relax at times” – but not simply for the refreshment thereby provided to the body. Eutrapelia-based pleasure also provides a relief from “psychological tiredness” and thus a “remedy for the weariness of [the] soul” (Aquinas 1964b, pp. 216–217). Hence, it ultimately contributes to the balance among all the facets of our being: a balance which, once attained, insures that the good Christian is able to stay the arduous course required of serious spiritual devotion and moral study.¹⁹

Upon entering the Renaissance, eutrapelia found both its supporters and its detractors. On the negative side were prominent Evangelicals and Reformers such as Jacques LeFèvre d’Étaples and Jean Calvin, whose perceptions were shaped primarily by the complaints of St. Paul. In the sermon based upon Ephesians 5 that he composed for the third Sunday in Lent and published among his 1525 *Epistres & évangiles*, LeFèvre, for example, closely mirrors the Apostle’s position by characterizing eutrapelian banter as “villaines et folles parolles” antithetical to the ways of all devout followers of Christ.²⁰ Calvin expresses a similar sentiment in his 1548 *Commentary on the Epistle of the Ephesians*, when he insists that eutrapelian behavior is “not at all in keeping with the character of a godly man” because “it is exceedingly difficult to be witty without becoming satirical, and as jesting itself carries in it a portion of conceit.”²¹

Supporters of the quality, on the other hand, seem to have adopted the Thomist spirit, doing their best to restore the authentic intent of Aristotle’s proposition. For the lexicographer Robert Estienne this meant providing a definition in his *Latine linguae thesaurus* (1543) that impartially contrasts the original meaning of eutrapelia advanced by the Stagirite with the pejorative idea of “scurrilitas” (buffoon-like, indecent jocularities) presented as an equivalent for the term in the Vulgate version of St. Paul’s epistle:

Eutrapelia: the expression is Greek, perhaps meaning what among us is called urbanity, charm, gaiety [“festivitas”], and facetiousness. Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* interprets eutrapelia as a kind of “educated indecency,” that is, learned banter. Paul in Ephesians 5 understands it as buffoonery, or as a scurrilous sophistication not befitting a serious man.²²

Erasmus provides a comparable clarification in a note on the “scurrilitas” translation in his own commentary on Paul’s letter: “Eutrapelia, that is facetiousness or charm. Now among the philosophers it is accepted in a good sense. . . .”²³ The renowned humanist iconoclast also had occasion to personify the concept in two of his colloquia. Much as Noël du Fail will do some two decades later, Erasmus creates a hero named Eutrapelus who will serve as a sort of witty master of ceremonies, in the 1524 *Convivium fabulosum*, and as his spokesman, in the 1526 *Puerpera*.²⁴ And of course, there is Stultitia, the nimble-minded heroine/narrator of *The Praise of Folly* (1509) who incarnates the very principle of *festivitas* (gaiety and playful wittiness) that Estienne will ascribe to eutrapelia in his 1543 *Thesaurus*.²⁵

With all of this as background, we are prepared to discern the eutrapelian resonances in Ronsard’s applications of the term “gaillard.” Beginning with the sense of nimble-wittedness, our investigation locates the earliest representations in the 1559 *Second Livre des Meslanges*. In fact, two instances may be found in the same poem: the encomiastic *A Monsieur du Thier, seigneur de Beau-Regard*, addressed to Henri II’s Controller of Finances and Secretary of State (one of four), Jean Du Thier. The first sample comes at the start of the work, as our poet maneuvers cautiously to compare Du Thier’s marvelous qualities with those of a king:

Il est vray, mon du Thier, qu’un seigneur comme toy
Donne plus de travail à celebrer qu’un Roy:
Car la gloire des Roys en suget est fertile,
Et ne travaille guiere une plume gentille,
Ny un *esprit*
gaillard, s’il a reçu tant d’heur
Que de ne s’effroyer de chanter sa grandeur.

.....
Mais pour loüer un moindre il fault de l’artifice,
Affin que la vertu n’apparoisse estre vice.
(10:39, vv. 5–16; my italics and emphasis)

Whereas a poet needs neither “une plume gentille” (a kind of charitable pen) nor “un esprit *gaillard*” (a nimble wit) to sing the splendors of a king’s glory, he needs both of those resources when praising a man of lesser rank lest that praise make the latter’s virtue appear as a vice. This risk is all the more imposing in the case of a nobleman like Du Thier, whose virtues (we will subsequently learn) are easily on a par with those of a great monarch.

The second example arises nearer the end of the poem, as Ronsard applauds Du Thier's widely recognized literary gifts:

Mais sur tout, mon du Thier, jaloux je porte envye
A cette liberté nourrice de ta vie,
Aux bons mots que tu dis, à ton *esprit naïf*,
Si *prompt* & si *gentil*, si **gaillard** & si vif,
Qui *doctement* adonne aux vers ta fantasie,
Te faisant amoureux de nostre Poësie.
(10:45–46, vv. 159–64; my italics and emphasis)

Of course, these claims of envy are more color than conviction. Ronsard simply had no poetic equals at this time, and well he delighted in proclaiming the fact. Nevertheless, he unquestionably recognized certain personal and writerly talents in his subject, talents which subsume a spirit of the sort we are considering. Although the juxtaposition of “gaillard” and “vif” in verse 162 might suggest the attribution of physical vigor, and so a use of “gaillard” that conforms to the term's Gallo-Roman and Celtic roots, the broader semantic field includes descriptors that point invariably to the idea of an agile intellect. Besides the adjectives “naïf” and “prompt,” whose combined association with “esprit” evokes meanings that coincide best with the Cotgrave translations “livelie, quicke” (in the first case) and “prompt, quicke, speedie, nimble” (in the second), the adverb “doctement” evokes the notion of erudition (Cotgrave: “Learnedly, skilfully, cunningly . . .”). The adjective “gentil” likewise accommodates a eutrapelia-based interpretation. In this case, though, it is the nuance of civility that prevails. While it is not impossible that Ronsard may be acknowledging Du Thier's inner benevolence, in the context of a discussion about the secretary's quick-wittedness the modifier would more likely pertain to his social graces.

Although similar examples of the nimble-witted sense of “gaillard” may be found in pieces as diverse as the 1564 *Hymne de l'Autonne*,²⁶ the 1565 *Elegie à Monsieur de Foyx*,²⁷ and even the 1569 *Paroles que dist Calypson*,²⁸ its showing in the *Discours amoureux de Genevre* of the 1564 *Recueil des Nouvelles Poësies* leaves the most lasting impression. This is the versified love lament in which Ronsard romanticizes the events attending and following his *innamoramento* with the browneyed blond Genèvre, a second-string beloved he courted in the early 1560s. About two-thirds of the way through the poem and well into the lengthy intra-diagetic anecdote in which Genèvre herself takes narrative charge to explain how the death of her first true love hardened her heart to all subsequent amorous advances, we hear the dying counsel she received from that lover – remarks of special relevance to our present investigation:

Ou bien, si ta jeunesse encore fresche & tendre
Veut apres mon trespas nouveau serviteur prendre,
Au moins je te supply de vouloir bien choisir,
Et jamais en *un sot* ne mettre ton desir,

A fin qu'*un jeune fat* à mon bien ne succede,
Ains *un amy gaillard* en mon lieu te possede.
(12:269, vv. 275–80; my italics and emphasis)

The opposition between a “sot,” or “jeune fat,” and an “amy gaillard” says it all. Whereas the expiring boyfriend would be eternally offended were Genèvre to fill his place with some young ninny (“ce depit me seroit/ Plus grief,” he insists a few lines later “que tous les maux que Pluton me feroit” [vv. 285–86]), he would be honored were she to chose a friend of the “gaillard” sort – i.e., the opposite of the foppish idiot, someone who is nimble-witted and sensible.

Instances where Ronsard employs “gaillard” to evoke notions of civility are at least as prevalent. While the 1559 poem to Monsieur du Thier affords the earliest possible case of this usage, a more conspicuous illustration appears in *Le Voyage de Tours, ou les Amoureux Thoinet et Perrot*, initially published in the 1560 *OEuvres* as part of the second book of *Amours*. It emerges only a few verses into this eclogue, as the poet Perrot (Ronsard) traces the route he and his friend Thoinet (Antoine de Baïf) took to reach a wedding on the Island of Saint-Cosme,²⁹ where they will eventually rendezvous with, and complain about, their uncooperative beloveds, Marie and Francine (respectively):

Nous partismes tous deus du hameau de Coustures.
Nous passames Gastine & ses hautes verdurees:
Nous passames Marré, & vismes à mi-jour
Du pasteur Phelipot s'eslever la grand tour
.....
Ce pasteur, qu'on nommoit *Phelipot le gaillard*,
Courtois, nous festoya jusques au soir bien tard.
(10:215, vv. 29–36; my italics and emphasis)

The Phelipot in question is Philippe de Ronsart, the poet's cousin and master of the château de Beaumont-la-Roncé. Of particular interest here, however, is the anadiplosis juxtaposing the kinsman's epithet, “le gaillard” (v. 35), and the adjective “Courtois” (v. 36). Phelipot is “gaillard,” the syntax plainly indicates, by virtue of his *courtoisie*, a disposition which, in the present context, would subsume not only his urbanity (insofar as he cordially welcomed the travelers into his home), but also his eutrapelian taste for social merriment, as demonstrated by his successful effort to regale (“festoyer”) his guests late into the night (“jusques au soir bien tard”).

More convincing still, perhaps, are the times when Ronsard actually replaces “gaillard” by “courtois” in subsequent versions of a given poem. Substitutions of this type occur on five separate occasions. In the 1578 edition of *Le Cyclope amoureux*, for example, Ronsard deliberately exchanges one term for the other as he reconstructs his praises to the work's dedicatee, a fellow clergyman-poet, Charles d'Espinay:

Je sçay bien, d’Espinay, que vous scavés comment
On se peult aller d’un si plaisant tourment,
Apollon vous honore, & ceste belle troppe
Qui suit par les rochers les pas de Calliope:
Puis vous estes COURTOIS [replaces *gaillard*], & je sçay bien aussi
Que rien ne vous plaist tant qu’un amoureux soucy. . . .
(10:277, vv. 23–28; my capitals, italics, and emphasis)

The likeliest explanation for the revision of verse 27 lies in the greater clarity achieved by the change. Although the Vendômois probably meant to recognize the idea of urbanity in the initial formulation, a virtue that would manifestly merit the admiration of Apollo and the Muses noted in the preceding two verses, the emendation avoids any implication of an immoderate fancy for matters of the flesh that might arise in the context of the subsequent reference to d’Espinay’s fondness for “un amoureux soucy.”³⁰ Such an innuendo could scarcely have been tolerated once d’Espinay was crowned bishop of Dol in 1565.

The substitutions in the *Hymne de l’Esté* and the three elegies, *A Monsieur de Foyx*, *A Monsieur de Belot (La Lyre)* and “Pour vous aymer, Maitresse, je me tuë,”³¹ speak to a similar attention to clarity. At times, of course, a word switch may be further inspired by straight-forward formal factors. In the 1565 version of *A Monsieur de Foyx*, for instance, “gaillard” shows up twice in close succession (twelve verses apart) to characterize the same individual (the apostrophized subject of the poem, Paul de Foix, Charles IX’s ambassador to England). Egotistical concerns may also have inspired corrections. This explanation is especially poignant when one considers that Ronsard makes all of the substitutions while preparing the 1578 edition of his *OEuvres*. Since the ascension of Henri III to the throne in 1574, the Vendômois regarded every editorial improvement as contributing to his overall campaign to eclipse the rising star of Philippe Desportes, the new king’s favorite poet and, consequently, the most formidable challenger the Pléiade leader would confront during his career.³² Such motives notwithstanding, these lexical modifications testify above all to Ronsard’s willingness to exercise a kind of eutrapelian moderation when employing the superdetermined signifier “gaillard.

Culminating the evidence that eutrapelia profoundly influenced Ronsard’s conception and use of “gaillard” is the 1563 *Responce de P. de Ronsard Gentilhomme Vandomois, aux injures & calomnies, de je ne scay quels Predicans, & Ministres de Geneve*, our laureate’s longest (1,176-verses) and most personal reply to the belligerent Huguenot pamphleteers who had taken him to task for the anti-Reformist views he recorded in the recently published *Discours des miseres de ce Temps*, the *Continuation du Discours*, and the *Remonstrance au peuple de France*.³³ This poem is remarkable not only for the number of times it evokes “gaillard” to denote one or the other of the nuances we have been studying, but also for the link it establishes between the gaillardise of nimble wit and civility and the property of playfulness that distinguishes both the polemical rhetoric operating throughout the piece and Aristotelian eutrapelia in its truest sense.

In the first regard, we discover that the original 1563 version of the *Responce* contains more instances of the word “gaillard” than nearly any other poem the Vendômois would write: seven cases in total.³⁴ What is more, among those seven cases, four – hence the clear majority – denote or imply the qualities of nimble-wittedness or civility. The earliest of these comes up as Ronsard openly engages Reformer criticisms against his desultory writing style: “Laisse respondre ceux que je touche en mon livre,/ *Ils ont l’esprit gaillard*, ils me sauront poursuivre/ De couplet à couplet . . .” (11:123, vv. 119–21; my italics and emphasis). The “ceux” and “Ils” to whom Ronsard refers are most likely the leaders of the Protestant military forces, Louis de Bourbon-Condé and the Coligny brothers: the very “Princes & Seigneurs” he praises in the poem’s prefatory “Epistre”³⁵ as an expression of support for Catherine de Médecis’ edict of Amboise, the peace treaty signed on 12 March 1563 that put a brief halt to the recent religious and civil hostilities. Unlike our author’s extremist Protestant critics – epitomized by Antoine de La Roche-Chandieu, alias Zamariel, the principal interlocutor of the *Responce*³⁶ – these eminent readers enjoy an “esprit gaillard” insofar as they possess the intellectual agility, or nimbleness of wit, to “poursuivre/ De couplet à couplet” the less than linearly logical flow of his divinely inspired verse.

An equivalent nuance of wittiness marks the example that enters into a praise of Etienne Jodelle: “Jodelle ayant gagné par une voix hardie/L’honneur que l’homme grec donne à la Tragedie, / . . . / La brigade qui lors au ciel levoit la teste / . . . / Honorant son *esprit gaillard & bien apris*,/ Luy fait present d’un bouc, des Tragiques le pris.” (11:141–42, vv. 471–78; my italics and emphasis). Here Ronsard replies to accusations that the Vendômois and his Brigade brethren had once engaged in the pagan sacrifice of a goat to celebrate the successful debut of Jodelle’s tragedy, *Cléopâtre*, in February 1553.³⁷ Although great Greek tragedians were not in fact celebrated in the fashion enacted by Ronsard and his friends, the point is unmistakable: Jodelle received this exotic tribute because his agile wit and sound erudition (“son esprit gaillard & bien apris”) made him worthy of the honor.

An illustration of “gaillard” in the sense of civil coincides with the final representation of the term, in the more explicit commendation of Louis de Condé arising near the end of the poem: “[Condé] est *doux & courtois, né de bonne nature*,/ *Qui a l’esprit gaillard, l’ame gentille & pure*,/ Qui cognoistra bien tost, tant il est Prince bon,/ Les maux que ton orgueil a commis sous son nom.” (11:170, vv. 1071–74; my italics and emphasis). Whether out of conviction or simple political expediency, Ronsard is unequivocal in his admiration for the celebrated prince and former patron. Rather than commend his intelligence or wit, however, a move that would blatantly contradict the apprehensions he had formerly expressed about Condé’s wisdom in choosing to side with the Reformers,³⁸ our poet applauds a “gaillard” spirit that, in the company of redundant praises for a kind and courteous nature, a pure and noble soul, could only be taken as a comment on the Prince’s gentlemanly disposition to behave with urbanity and charm.

The fourth example constitutes a distinctly more equivocal application of “gaillard,” one that connotes the concept of civility while simultaneously suggesting the idea of amorous vitality. It comes as part of Ronsard’s response to Zamariel’s callous assaults upon his deafness and in anticipation of his defense against the Huguenot’s villainous claims about his sexual promiscuity and a resulting case of venereal disease (“la verolle”):³⁹

Vrayment quand tu estois à Paris l’autre année
Descharné, deshalé, la couleur bazanée,
Et pasle tout ainsi qu’un Croissant enchanté,
.....
J’avois compassion de ta pauvre fortune.
Or, à ce qu’on disoit, ce mal tu avois pris
Travaillant au mestier de la belle Cypris,
Toutesfois contemplant ta taille longue & droite,
Ta main blanche & polye, & ta personne adroite,
Te cognoissant *gaillard, honeste, & gratieux,*
Et faire sagement l’amour en divers lieux,
(Tu sçais si je di vray) je fis à Dieu priere
De te faire jouïir de ta santé premiere. . . .
(11:130, vv. 251–64; my italics and emphasis)

The affiliation of “gaillard” with “honeste,” “gratieux,” and the indicated aristocratic physical attributes (a straight and narrow stature, a refined white hand, a well-formed body) inevitably calls to mind a gaillardise of the genteel and urbane sort. On the other hand, the sexual connotations of the preceding and subsequent verses likewise tap into the Gallo-Roman etymon, “galia,” and its sense of force or vigor, which would here expand to include a sprightly engagement in the arts of the amorous Cyprian. Thus this instance presents “gaillard” in a way that not only underscores the semantic polyvalence and heterogeneous heritage of the word, but also utilizes those properties to enhance the playful polemical rhetoric through which Ronsard can successfully poke fun at and disarm Zamariel and his mean-spirited Reformer confederates.

The last effect becomes clearer in the most poetically consequential inscription of “gaillard” in the poem. It appears as Ronsard returns to the pamphleteer complaints about the incoherence of his writings with a comment on the nature of the true poet and his art that represents one of the most practical theoretical reflections he will ever share.⁴⁰

En l’art de Poësie, un art il ne faut pas
Tel qu’ont les Predicans, qui suivent pas à pas
Leur sermon sceu par cueur, ou tel qu’il faut en prose,
Où toujours l’Orateur suit le fil d’une chose.
Les Poëtes gaillards ont artifice à part,
Ils ont un art caché qui ne semble pas art
Aux versificateurs, d’autant qu’il se promeine
D’une libre contrainte, où la Muse le meine.

(11:160, vv. 869–76; my italics and emphasis)

Insofar as the “Poètes” in question possess the acumen required to meet the challenging rhetorical task of hiding the traces of artifice in their verses, the qualifier “gaillards” once more refers to an agile intellect or wit.⁴¹ At the same time, however, the term may also be read to signify “playful,” if only for its identification with the attribute that enables true poets to effect a semblance of Furor-driven freedom in their art (“Ils ont un art caché qui . . . se promeine/ D’une *libre* contrainte . . .” [my italics]).⁴² As Johan Huizinga and Hugo Rahner have demonstrated, freedom is, after all, one of the distinguishing qualities of play.⁴³ By contrast, the Huguenot “orateurs” and “versificateurs” who lack this playful eutrapelian gaillardise are condemned to spurn the Muse’s freespirted lead, preferring instead to perpetuate the prosaically plodding utilitarian mode of writing promoted by the early modern Ciceronians whose commitment to a *dispositio* guided by linear logic would be a regular object of Ronsard’s poetic disapproval.⁴⁴

On a more basic level, the eutrapelia-based gaillard spirit of play is likewise found to mark the temper of the *Responce* as a whole. In truth, that spirit may be said to obtain as the principle upon which the polemical rhetoric of the poem is primarily founded. This is not to insinuate that Ronsard’s words are therefore merely facetious and the medium of a message devoid of profound significance. Huizinga has amply shown that “the consciousness of play being ‘only pretend’ does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness” (1950, p. 8).⁴⁵ Indeed, it is thanks to the playfulness in his presentation that Ronsard ultimately achieves his wholly serious goal of casting the follies of the Reformer critics and their illegitimate cause into sharpest relief.

In the passage just considered, the oxymoron “libre contrainte” constitutes a simple but vivid enactment of the ludic rhetoric at work. By employing a figure whose essential function is to juxtapose overtly discrepant terms and, in so doing, to play with the possibilities of language and received conceptual schemas, the Vendômois heightens the reader’s interest in the terms and structures involved. In this case, Ronsard thereby draws attention not only to the eutrapelian implications of “gaillards” addressed previously, but also to his support for what Malcolm Quainton has called “une *discordia concors* esthétique”: an aesthetic that conflates the seemingly antithetical notions of freedom and coherence to yield what our poet, in the 1565 *Abregé de l’Art poétique françois*, will dub “la belle disposition,” a naturalistic ordering of text that maximizes topical and formal variegation while insuring overall comprehensibility (Quainton 1997, p. 69).⁴⁶

The playfulness is plainer still elsewhere in the *Responce*. One has only to recall the fun-poking periphrasis about Zamariel’s youthful indiscretions (signaled above), and the famous hyperbole characterizing the same adversary as a drooling and venom-vomiting werewolf (“Lougarou”) (11:123–28, vv. 123–210). For the most explicit evidence of the defining role accorded to play throughout the piece, however, we turn to the prefatory prose epistle and the challenge Ronsard

raises in the opening verses of the poem. It is here also that the ludic rhetoric comes to intersect and effectively subsume the audacious aspect of “gaillard” hitherto sidelined in our study.

In the “Épistre au lecteur” we are especially struck by the aonistic – and hence fundamentally ludic – image that will determine the forensic attitude of the ensuing poem. This image appears when Ronsard shifts his attention from what his detractors have done to him to what he intends to do to his detractors, whom he now fuses into the personage of a single “Predicant”:

. . . il [faut] que tu penses, Predicant, que je ne suis rien moins que toy, quel que tu sois. Le camp est ouvert, les lices sont dressées, les armes d'encre & de papier sont faciles à trouver: tu n'auras point faute de pasetemps. Mais à la vérité je voudrois que pour esprouver mes forces, tu m'eusses présenté un plus rude champion. . . . Suppliant de rechef celuy qui se sentira si **gaillard** que d'entrer en la barriere contre moy, ne vouloir trouver estrange si tout ainsi qu'en pleine liberté il tonne des mots injurieux contre le Pape, les Prelats & toute l'ancienne constitution de l'Eglise, je puisse aussi de mon costé parler librement contre sa doctrine, Cenes, Presches, Mariages, predestinations fantastiques & songes monstrueux de Calvin. . . . (11:114, ll. 55–71: my emphasis)

The contest metaphor firmly inscribes the Vendômois' response in the realm of play. The imagined confrontation between our poet and the Predicant (or, alternatively, his more worthy “champion”) is essentially a public tournament of pens and paper, a competitive event of the sort Huizinga has shown to bear “all the formal characteristics of play” and to belong functionally “to the sphere of the festival, which is the play-sphere.” (1950, p. 31).⁴⁷

The inclusion of the qualifier “gaillard” is also significant. On the one hand, it reaffirms the term's connection to the ludic dimension of eutrapelia. As a key descriptor of the opponent Ronsard would most wish to face in the tournament ring (“en la barriere”), the adjective unmistakably evokes the spirit of playfulness peculiar to those who participate in such combats. On the other hand, the insertion of “gaillard” expands the play into the domain of language and poetry proper. As elsewhere, the qualifier inscribes a multitude of significations and thereby opens up a ludic space where, like the arena in which the author and the Predicant's stand-in would duel to gain support for their respective religious views, the various denotations compete for the notice of the attentive reader. In addition to the idea of playful, “gaillard” registers its etymological meanings of strong and brave following our poet's stated wish to engage an adversary with “forces” and “courage” worthy of his own.

Furthermore, and for the first time in our investigation, the word simultaneously connotes “audacious.” Paired with the ironic adverbial intensifier “si” (“so” or “to such a degree”), it calls to mind the considerable brass required of the person who would willingly confront Ronsard inside the tournament enclosure. The audacity at issue, however, ought not to be confused with the gratuitously deleterious boldness associated with eutrapelia by St. Paul and the early modern Evangelicals and Reformers. It in no way fosters ridicule and lewdness since it is neither wanton

nor fatuous. Rather, like the eutrapelia promoted by Aristotle, the audacious gaillardise represented by Ronsard is tempered by the regulations of the play-based agonistic encounter – here, the prescription to convene within a defined “barriere” a pair of comparably skilled contestants equipped with only “armes d’encre & de papier.” What is more, this audacity is fundamentally purposeful: it is a facet of wit constructively employed to promote a given theological position.

The image of a ludic contest between “gaillard” opponents appears again at the start of the poem. Elaborating on the argument that the Predicant interlocutor is unworthy of his “propos” and “armes” (11:118, v. 24), Ronsard insists that the man is simply too “faible” (11:118, v. 25) to qualify as his adversary. He is not only a “[m]iserable moqueur” and “bragard” (11:116–17, vv. 1 and 6), but also a hypocrite who steals the verses of the very person whose words and ideas he would condemn (11:117, vv. 13–16).⁴⁸ For that reason a more qualified and (as the prefatory epistle has prepared us to infer) “gaillard” replacement is suggested: Théodore de Bèze, the distinguished humanist scholar whom our poet holds in high regard despite his role as a leader in the Calvinist cause. Ronsard intends to fence with this “grand guerrier & grand soldat” (11:118, v. 27) using the pen that has earned him honors across all of Europe (“escrimer/Du baston qui [le] fait par l’Europe estimer”: 11:118, vv. 25–26). So armed, the Vendômois will have a proper means to defend himself – and then some:

J’ay dequoy me deffendre & dequoy l’irriter
Au combat, si sa plume il veut exerciter,
Je scay que peut la langue & Latine & Gregeoise,
Je suis maistre *joueur* de la Muse Française,
.....
Vif, ardant, & gaillard, sans trembler soubz l’audace
D’un vanteur qui par aultre au combat me menace.
(11:119, vv. 37–44; my italics and emphasis)

Although cut from the *Responce* in 1584 (when our poet finally accepted the disappointment that de Bèze would never answer his challenge), these verses are extremely useful for the focus they bring to the concepts we have been considering. By revealing Ronsard’s persuasion that the power of his quill derives from his knowledge of languages, for instance, they effectively reconfirm the central role of an agile wit in the proposed contest. Moreover, by declaring our poet’s status as the French Muse’s “maistre joueur” (master-player), these verses openly ascribe the ludic spirit as much to Ronsard and the competition in which he will engage as to the Vendômois’ interaction with the Muse throughout the Response and his poetic career in general.

It is therefore apparent that Aristotelian eutrapelia had a profound impact on Ronsard’s moral thinking and poetic practice – an influence never fully recognized in the previous critical literature. The imprint of this concept is especially prominent among the numerically unparalleled applications of the term “gaillard” (and its derivatives) throughout his writings. The

senses of nimble-wittedness, civility, and playfulness that Ronsard takes a lead in fusing to the word's previously established ideas of strength and vigor coincide in every significant way with the elements of eutrapelia delineated in the Stagirite's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Even when "gaillard" connotes audacity, that trait proves authentically eutrapelian for its affiliation with an agile wit employed constructively and in a measure moderated by the prescriptions of a purposeful agonistic encounter.

Still unclear, however, is why Ronsard would have avoided all explicit mention of eutrapelia (whether in Greek or some Gallicized form). Given his declared affection for Hellenic culture and the credit he so often took for transporting the Greek Muses to France,⁴⁹ that silence seems somewhat surprising. It may simply be, of course, that the Vendômois sought to evade the controversies that would have come with assigning to himself and others a quality that had been so misunderstood and maligned over the centuries. Such an attribution would only have put him at a disadvantage in his verbal bouts with the belligerent Reformers. A more compelling explanation would cite the benefit Ronsard gained by integrating the concept into a cluster of ideas whose lexical signifier, "gaillard," already enjoyed a deep Gallic connection. After all, the notion of bringing the light of Greece to his homeland was less about an adjunction of the two cultures than about their *synthesis*. In addition to reinvigorating the intellectual and artistic life of his country, Ronsard aspired to shape a French identity that would incorporate the best of the civilization in which his society located its primary roots. Whereas his omnipresent borrowings from Homer, Pindar, Anacreon, Plato and Aristotle (to name but a few) were most effective in the first regard, his Hellenically enhanced applications of "gaillard" made a subtle yet substantial contribution to the second goal.

Admittedly, the Hellenized French identity that would result inscribes a fundamental paradox: a culturally hybridized selfhood should scarcely qualify as a "selfhood" at all (in the short term, that is, until the identity being supplemented has been fully effaced and supplanted by the new amalgam). Nevertheless, our poet and his Pléiade brethren perceived little problem with this inconsistency. Their indifference is apparent enough in Ronsard's personal quest to become the "Gaulois Apollon," the French incarnation of the ancient *Greek* god of poetry;⁵⁰ it is similarly evident in Du Bellay's 1549 *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*, where the theories on imitation overtly conflict with the work's patriotic ambitions.⁵¹ The point – or so the Pléiade authors wished their readers to believe – was that an improvement was being made: *Frenchness* would only be enriched by the new assimilation.⁵² While it is beyond the scope of this study to rule on the ethical appropriateness of this dream, there can be no doubt that the "gaillard" spirit, in all its senses, has become an integral part of what it means to be French and that Ronsard played a seminal role in bringing that definition into being.

Notes

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1. The earliest known record of “gaillard” may be found in the *Chanson de Roland*. In fact, the term appears on 5 occasions: 4 times as an adjective describing the physical power of Roland’s dead body, King Charlemagne, his captains, and the traitor Ganelon (vv. 2895, 3086, 3115, and 3763); once as an adverb indicating the fervent manner in which the consecration of the French dead was carried out (v. 2959). See *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. T. Atkinson Jenkins (1929; s. l.: American Life Foundation, 1977) and Joseph J. Duggan, *Concordance of the Chanson de Roland* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), 162.

2. For more on the etymology of the term, see *Le Robert Dictionnaire Historique de la langue française*, P. Robert and Alain Rey, eds. (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1994), 861; Emmanuèle Baumgartner, *Dictionnaire étymologique et historique de la langue française* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1996?), 347. See also Algirdas Julien Greimas and Teresa Mary Keane, *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance* (Paris: Larousse 1992), 318. For the Indo-European, see *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, William Morris, ed. (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 1515.

3. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues, 1611* (Menston, Eng.: Scholar Press Ltd., 1968).

4. Jean Nicot, *Thresor de la langue françoise, tant ancienne que moderne* (1621) (Paris: Editions A. et J. Picard et Cie., 1960).

5. See Alvin Creore, *A Word-Index to the Poetic Works of Ronsard* (Leeds: W. S. Maney and Son Ltd., 1972), 626–627. In fact, Creore lists only 173 instances of the term. As elsewhere, however, his register is not entirely free from error.

6. For more detail on the appearances of “gaillard” and its derivatives in each of these works, see J. E. G. Dixon and John L. Dawson, *Concordance des oeuvres de François Rabelais* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), 379; Keith Cameron, *Concordance des oeuvres poétiques de Joachim Du Bellay* (Geneva: Droz, 1988), 270; Roy E. Leake, *Concordance des Essais de Montaigne*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1981), 1:560.

7. The only exception would be “gaillard” as the masculine noun denoting the roundhouse of a ship.

8. See Pierre de Ronsard, *OEuvres complètes*, eds. Paul Laumonier, Isidore Silver, Raymond Lebègue, 20 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1914–75), 18: 451–460. Henceforth, all allusions to

Ronsard's writings will pertain to this edition. Citations are likewise derived from the Laumonier edition and will be described, parenthetically, with reference to volume, page, and verse (or line) number in that work. For more on Ronsard's philosophical debt to Aristotle's ethical treatises, see Isidore Silver, "Ronsard's Ethical Thought," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 24 (1962): 88–117, 339–374.

9. This point is clearly made by Ernest Courbet in his edition of du Fail's work: *Les Baliverneries et les contes d'Eutrapel*, t. 1 (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1894), Notice p. II.

10. The popularity of this personage is demonstrated by his reappearance, three years after our poet's death, in Du Fail's 1588 *Contes et discours d'Eutrapel*. Other *eutrapeloi* from the period would include Erasmus' Eutrapelus (see below) and, perhaps, Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel.

11. The remarks that follow are inspired largely by Hugo Rahner's *Man at Play*, trans. Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), esp. 91–105; Donald Blais' "Eutrapelia: The Dynamics of Divine and Human Playfulness," Master's thesis, University of St. Michael's College (Toronto, ON), 1993; Charles Foulon's preface to his critical edition of Noël du Fail's *Les Baliverneries d'Eutrapel* (doctoral thesis for the 3e cycle, Université de Rennes [Rennes: Gaël Milin], 1969); and Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950).

12. The present investigation employs Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1982). Citations of this work will be described, parenthetically, by the conventional classical reference locators followed by the page positions (for the Greek and English) in this edition.

13. See *EF* 113 (7.32) in Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 494–495.

14. See Horace, *Q. Horati Flacci Sermones et Epistulae*, ed. John Carew Rolfe (New Rochelle: Caratzas Brothers, 1976), 119, ll. 31–36. In the same missive, Horace also revives the doctrine of the mean, both when he portrays the true friend as being between the false sycophant (or parasitic fake) and the ill-mannered, uncouth boor (cf. p. 118, ll. 3–8), and when he insists that "virtue lies between extremes" (p. 118, l. 9).

15. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), NT 276–277. St Jerome reiterates this warning in his *Comment. in Ep. ad Ephesios* III, 5. Paul's and Jerome's positions are summarized in Rahner 1972, 96 and n. 2.

16. Objections of this sort were founded on a misreading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for Aristotle was quite emphatic that the eutrapelos should avoid all extremes (cf. *NE* 4: 8.8–10: 246–249).

17. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, vol. 1, trans. C. I. Litzinger (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1964a), 365–366 and 368–369.
18. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 44, eds. Blackfriars (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964b), 218–219.
19. This idea is more explicitly stated in Aquinas 1964a, 4.16C, section 851 (368). Cf. Rahner 1972, pp. 100–104 and Blais 1993, pp. 11, 15 (and passim).
20. “. . . employons nous de tout nostre pouvoir de nous offrir a luy comme hostie visve et sainte en evitant fornication, toute immundicite et avarice qui sont choses si abominables que elles ne sont point a nommer. En evitant pareillement toutes villaines et folles parolles: qui ne sont point choses appartenantes aux Chrestiens.”: Jacques LeFèvre d’Étaples, *Epistres & évangiles pour les cinquante & deux semaines de l’an*, eds. Simon du Bois and M. A. Screech (Geneva: Droz, 1964), n, ii. Cf. the evangelical humanist’s 1512 commentary on the Vulgate edition passage in *S. Pauli epistolae XIV ex Vulgata, adiecta intelligentia ex graeco, cum commentariis* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1978), 171.
21. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of the Ephesians*, in *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans 1948), 306.
22. “Eutrapelia. Dictio est Graeca, idem forte significans quod apud nos urbanitas, lepor, festivitas et facetia. Aristoteles in Rhetoricis Eutrapeliam interpretatur πεπαιδε’υμενη υ’ ρις hoc est eruditum convivium. Paulus ad *Ephes.* cap. 5 pro scurrilitate accipit, sive scurrili urbanitate gravi viro indigna.”: *Dictionarium, seu Latine linguae thesaurus*, vol. 1 (Paris: R. Stephani, 1543).
23. “Ευτραπλία, id est facetia, sive lepos. Nam in bonam partem apud Philosophos accipitur . . .”: *Opera omnia, emendatiora et auctiora, ad optimas editiones praecipue quas ipse Erasmus postremo curavit summa fide exacta*, vol. 6 (London: The Gregg Press Ltd., 1962), 850–851.
24. See Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, vol. 1, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 571–618.
25. For more on the place of “festivitas” in Erasmus’ work and its association with Stultitia, see Hoyt Hopewell Hudson, “The Folly of Erasmus,” in Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, trans. H. H. Hudson (New York: Modern Library, 1941), xi–xli (esp. xxxvi ff).
26. 12:46, v 3. The sense we are considering becomes more prominent when “gaillard” is replaced by “subtil” beginning in 1578 (presumably to avoid a redundancy in connection with the qualifier “vigoreux” that follows).

27. 13:156, v. 136. The term “gaillard” appears a second time on p. 157, v. 148, though, in this instance the primary sense seems to have been “courtois,” as indicated by the revision in 1578 (the whole passage was eventually suppressed in the 1587 version).
28. 15:55, v. 160. This inscription involves an equivocal reference to Penelope that may be read to mean “young” or “imprudent” as well as “clever.” The term appears again in the 1578 version of v. 262 (15:60), which was subsequently deleted as part of a twelve-verse suppression in 1584.
29. Site of the Vendômois’ future priory near Tours.
30. In fact, the latter allusion should denote nothing more than an innocent interest in tales of the lovelorn like the one of Polyphemus and the disdainful Galathea that will complete the poem.
31. *Hymne de l’Esté* (1564): 12:39, v. 79; *Elegie à Monsieur de Foyx, Ambassadeur du Roy en Angleterre et Maistre de ses Resquettes* (1565): 13:156–157, vv. 136 & 148; *A Monsieur de Belot* (1569): 15:24, v. 175; “Pour vous aymer, Maitresse, je me tuë” (1569): 15:216, v. 79.
32. The much applauded *Premières oeuvres* of Philippe Desportes were first published in 1573, one year before the coronation of the new king. For more on Desportes’ rising favor at the court of Henri III, see Pierre de Nolhac, *Ronsard et l’humanisme* (Paris: Champion, 1921), 209.
33. Starting with the 1567 *OEuvres*, these pieces were published collectively with three other poems: the *Elegie à Guillaume des Autelz*, the *Elegie à Lois des Masures*, and the *Institution pour l’adolescence du roy*. The history and influence of these polemical works is examined in Malcolm Smith, *Ronsard: Discours des misères de ce temps* (Geneva: Droz 1979), esp. 21–25. See also the notes in Ronsard, *OEuvres complètes*, eds. Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager, and Michel Simonin, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 1571–1612; and Laumonier’s introduction to volume 11 of the *OEuvres complètes* (1914–75 [1973], pp. xi–xvii). The Laumonier edition continues to be the source of all citations here.
34. Only one piece contains more entries: the second book of the *Franciade* project, whose original 1572 edition contained ten separate examples of the adjective “gaillard.” It should be emphasized, however, that in their final forms (after multiple editorial suppressions and additions), both works in fact reach a perfect parity, each retaining exactly seven instances of the word.
35. “Je ne fais point de doute que ta malice ne se soit maintesfois efforcée de vouloir sous couleur de belles parolles irriter les Princes & Seigneurs contre moy, interpretant faucement mes escrits. . . . Quand à moy je les estime Princes & Seigneurs si magnanimes, & genereux, que je n’en croy rien, m’asseurant qu’ils ne voudroient estre ministres de la mechante volonté d’un si petit galland que toy. . . .” (11:113, ll. 32–42). The interlocutor in this instance is simply identified as “Predicant mon amy.” We shall return to this letter below.
36. Zamariel (Hebrew for “Song of God”) was the principal “Predican”-pamphleteer who had criticized Ronsard for his remarks about the Prince of Condé in the *Remonstrance au peuple de*

France (see 11:95, vv. 611 ff). The primary “ministre” to which the title alludes was Bernard de Montméja, or “Mont-Dieu,” minister of Chauny (Picardy) and another Huguenot pamphleteer with venomous words for our laureate’s politics and poetry.

37. See Montméja’s *Response* in Jacques Pineaux, *La Polémique protestante contre Ronsard* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1973), 1:81 (vv. 343–46). Cf. the anonymous 1563 *Remonstrance à Ronsard* (Pineaux 1973, 1:213 [vv. 563–67]).

38. See Ronsard’s *Remonstrance*, 11: 95–96, vv. 611–640.

39. The Protestant pamphleteers even went so far as to attribute Ronsard’s deafness to the malady. See Montméja’s *Response* (Pineaux 1973, 1: 83 [vv. 375–76]) and Florent Chrestien’s 1553 *Seconde Response de F. de la Baronie à Monsire Pierre de Ronsard* (Pineaux 1973, 2:355, [vv. 519 ff]).

40. The list of Ronsard’s theoretical reflections is, of course, extremely long and includes poetic principles such as “copieuse diversité,” the *furor poeticus*, the *poeta vates*, and *ekplexis*. For commentaries on these concepts, see Perrine Galand-Hallyn et al., *Poétiques de la Renaissance: le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur héritage en France au XVIe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2001), *passim*; and Roberto E. Campo, *Ronsard’s Contentious Sisters: The Paragone between Poetry and Painting in the Works of Pierre de Ronsard* (Chapel Hill: NCSRL, 1998), *passim*.

41. This attribution may likewise be a nod to Cicero’s recognition of acumen as one of the essential mental attributes of the able orator. See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: W. Heinemann Ltd., 1942), 1: 80.

42. Although the link between this freedom and vatic poetic frenzy is already apparent in the present allusion to the “Muse,” the idea is more explicitly addressed eleven verses later: “Ainsi le bon esprit que la Muse espoingonne, / Porté de sa fureur sur Pernasse moissonne / Les fleurs de toutes pars, errant de tous costés. . . .” (11:161, vv. 887–89 and ff).

43. Rahner: “we especially associate with the idea of play” (1972, p. 11). According to Huizinga, freedom is the “first main characteristic of play” (1950, pp. 7–8).

44. At the same time Ronsard held Cicero in the highest esteem and openly assimilated his theories on the creative imagination and other matters (see note 41, above), he exhibited unmistakable anti-Ciceronian tendencies, particularly in his experiments with the possibilities of poetic *dispositio* and his applications of the Pindaric (and Erasmian) principle of “copieuse diversité.” Indeed, the reference to “l’Orateur” may be read as a subtle allusion to all of the Ciceronians who corrupted the teachings of the great Roman orator. Recent studies of Ronsard’s play with textual arranging include Claudine Jomphe, *Les théories de la dispositio et le Grand OEuvre de Ronsard* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), 189 ff; Malcolm Quainton, “Ronsard et la

‘libre contrainte’,” in *Lectures de Ronsard: Les Amours*, ed. Claudine Nédélec (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1997), 67–75; and Campo 1998, pp. 98, 105, and *passim*. On the Ciceronian and anti-Ciceronian debates of the period, see Galand-Hallyn 2001, pp. 468–469, and *passim*; and Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 39–77. I shall return briefly to these ideas below.

45. The distinguished Dutch cultural historian goes on to emphasize the fallacy of the “play”-“seriousness” dichotomy in his remarks on the ludic qualities in all manner of rituals – religious, political, and aesthetic. Rahner reconsiders this matter in his application of Ernst Curtius’ concept of the humanist ideal of the “grave-merry” (1972, pp. 34 ff). We shall return to the serious implications of play below. 46. The naturalness of this ordering is emphasized in the verses immediately following the “Poètes gaillards” passage. There Ronsard likens the free-flowing spontaneity he envisions both to “les Ardens [qui] aparois[sent] de nuit / . . . / . . . ores sur un rivage, / Ores desur un mont, ou sur un bois sauvage.” (the Hermes fires that appear at night over water and above mountains and woods: 11:161, vv. 877–80) and to “L’Avette [qui] . . . / sans suivre une trasse / Erre de pré en pré, de jardin en jardin. . . .” (the bee that wanders from field to field, garden to garden: 11:161, vv. 881–86).

47. In fact, the cultural historian devotes a major part of his study to deconstructing the opposition between the *agon* and play (cf. pp. 40–41, 48 ff).

48. Here Ronsard makes an all but explicit reference to the highly plagiaristic *Palinodies* from late 1562 (Pineaux 1973, 1: pp. 1–27).

49. Ronsard even alludes to this distinction in the *Responce*: “Je fis d’autre façon que n’avoient les antiques, / Vocables composés, & frases poétiques, / Et mis la poësie en tel ordre qu’apres, / Le François s’egalla aux Romains & aux Grecs.” (11:167–68, vv. 1023–26). For more on the laureate’s passion for Greek culture see Isidore Silver in *Ronsard and the Hellenic Renaissance in France I: Ronsard and the Greek Epic* (2d ed.; Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1987) and the second portion of this study, *Ronsard and the Grecian Lyre*, 3 vols. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981–87).

50. Cf. *A Monsieur de Belot (La Lyre)*, 15: 28–29, 284 ff.

51. The contradictions in the Angevin’s “manifesto” have been eloquently exposed in Margaret Ferguson’s *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 18–53. See also Eric Macphail, *The Voyage to Rome in French Renaissance Literature* (Saratoga: ANMA Libri & Co., 1990), 31–33.

52. This perception was broadly connected to the *translatio studii* theory: the view that Renaissance France could become the new Greece or Rome by imitating the best in ancient philosophy, science, and the arts. In a very real sense, then, Pléiade aspirations were motivated by a deep-seated sense of cultural inferiority. At the same time, though, those ambitions were spurred both by a paradoxical resentment of all things Italian (paradoxical, that is, insofar as

Ronsard and his brethren otherwise owed so very much to Italian *literati* like Petrarch, Ficino, Bembo, Aretino, Sannazaro, and Speroni – to say nothing of the greats of Roman antiquity) and by a fervent wish to see the French prevail over their southern neighbors as the cultural leaders of the day. To that end, Ronsard (above all others) considered privileging the imitation of the Greeks a most effective strategy.

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