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## CHAPTER 10

### Fortune, Long Life, Montaigne

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On a slow Monday night in August, 2007, one of Britain's independent television channels, Channel Four, devoted an hour of prime time to broadcasting a program entitled "The Oldest People in the World."<sup>1</sup> The presenter traveled to Japan, Portugal, the United States, and throughout England in order to interview the oldest living European, 113-year-old Maria, the oldest worker in Britain, 100-year-old Buster, an old Japanese woman, Teru, who sang a snatch of an old song, and a number of very old Americans, including the world's oldest person, 114-year-old Emma. The subjects were identified only by their first names. They were asked to reveal the secrets of their longevity, and to tell the camera whether or not they were pleased to have lived so long. The first question they all either refused to answer, claiming ignorance, or answered humorously or piously, attributing their continued existence to some sort of food, such as porridge oats, or to the divine will. The answer to the second was a qualified "no." Charlotte, 110, reckoned that she had lived "too long," and the only words uttered by Emma at her 114<sup>th</sup> birthday party were, "Get me out of this darn chair."

The program declined to draw a moral. But we might consider for a moment the effect produced by not fully identifying the interviewees. It is normally children who are called only by their given names, and, in infantilizing the old in this way, the Channel Four program participated in the ancient topos that compares extreme old age to infancy. This comparison was repeated in the medical literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by André Du Laurens (1558–1609), chancellor of the

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<sup>1</sup> "The Oldest People in the World," perf. and dir. Daisy Asquith, August 20, 2007,.

University of Montpellier and court doctor,<sup>2</sup> among others, and is perhaps most familiar to us now in the “All the world’s a stage” monologue from Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, with its description of the seven ages of man, the last of which “Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,/ Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing” (II, vii, 165–6).

The other category of person sometimes referred to by a single name only, however, is that of the rich and famous: Madonna, Posh, Voltaire. Fortune, we say, has smiled upon them, and they need no other name to be recognizable in the mass-market media or in literary history. What is striking in the cases of the long-lived subjects of the Channel Four program, however, is that neither they, nor indeed the viewer, can claim that there is any evident logic, justice, or purpose in their longevity. Allowing them only a single name seems more a matter of patronizing than of adulation. The moral thus seems less Shakespearean than Biblical, a matter of chance: “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all” (*Ecclesiastes* 9, 5, 11).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the role of fortune as it relates to long life situates itself between these two moral poles of the inevitability of the seven ages of man, that is, his destiny, and pure chance, the face of fortune which favors the bold, but which also, in an equally frequent formulation, favors fools.<sup>3</sup> Cotgrave’s 1611 *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* registers a wide range of

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<sup>2</sup> André Du Laurens, *Discours de la conservation de la vue, des maladies mélancholiques, des catarrhes et de la vieillesse* (Rouen: Le Villain, 1615), p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Kiefer, “Fortune on the Renaissance Stage: An Iconographic Reconstruction,” in Leslie Thomson (ed.), *Fortune: “All is but Fortune”* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2000), pp. 69–79 (p. 70)

meanings for “fortune,” warning us not to be too keen on terminological distinctions and typologies, but also showing exactly this spread between the inevitable and the aleatory: “fortune” is “hap, chance, luck, lot, hazard, adventure; also destinie, fatall necessitie.”<sup>4</sup> In this study, I will be interested in this junction of the ineluctable and the avoidable as it is deployed in one manual of advice about how to live a good long life, Pierre Jaquelot’s *L’Art de vivre longuement sous le nom de Médée*, from 1630, and in the last of the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne, “De l’experience” (III, 13), which is peppered with references to fortune, and which ends with a plea and a prayer on behalf of old age.

Fortune, it seems, got younger in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she appealed to younger men, and she was identified with the very force of life itself. It has been shown that the iconographic development turned away from the ancient Roman representation of her figure as a matronly older woman definitely wearing clothes, as well as a crown, and holding an orb of domination.<sup>5</sup> The renaissance Fortuna took on the props and properties of Occasio, chance or opportunity, including a strange hair style: with a long forelock blowing ahead of her in the wind, she is bald at the back so that, once past, she may not be seized from behind. From Nemesis, the ancient embodiment of destiny, Fortuna grew wings, and sometimes acquired an urn and a horse’s bridle. In a particularly complicated development, she came to be represented with a sail billowing out behind her, and indeed, one word in Italian for a storm at sea was a “fortuna.” Her most famous attribute, her wheel, generally loses its small human figures circling through its four positions of kingship, fall from power,

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave> (accessed August 23, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Kiefer, “The Conflation of Fortuna and Occasio in Renaissance Thought and Iconography,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1979): 1–27.

powerlessness, and aspiring power, making her a less menacing and more tractable figure. And Occasio was a young woman, usually depicted naked. The renaissance imaginary accommodated less willingly an evil stepmother Fortune or a good and nourishing Mother Fortune; its project seems increasingly to have been fuelled by desire, and Fortune–Occasio was its partner.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, engaging with her was frequently seen to be a matter for the young, and this, at a time when, the ancients' horror of old age having been taken on along with the fascination with their literature, art, and architecture, youth and beauty were worshipped and old age was violently attacked. From the poetry of Ronsard with its ever-hovering menace of aging, ugliness, and the tomb, to Cyrano's *Voyage dans la lune*, whose lunarians are ruled by the young, whom their elders must respect and obey, political theorists, humanists, philosophers, and courtiers worshipped the hero who possessed the qualities necessary to counter Fortune, called by Niccolò Machiavelli, *virtù*.<sup>7</sup> And that hero was necessarily young, as Machiavelli makes clear in this translation of *The Prince* from 1640:

I think it true that it is better to be heady, than wary: because Fortune is a mistresse; and it is necessary to keep her in obedience, to ruffle and force her: and we see, that she suffers her selfe rather to be mastered by those, than by others that proceed coldly. And therefore, as a mistresse, shee is a friend to young men, because they are lesse respective, more rough, and command her with more boldnesse.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lucie Galectéros de Boissier, “Images emblématiques de la Fortune: Éléments d’une typologie,” in Yves Giraud (ed.), *L’Emblème à la Renaissance: actes de la journée d’études du 10 mai 1980* (Paris: SEDES, 1982), pp. 79–125.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Pierre Gutton, *Naissance du vieillard: Essai sur l’histoire des rapports entre les vieillards et la société en France* (Paris: Aubier, 1988); Georges Minois, *History of Old Age from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, trans. Sarah Hanbury Tenison (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Edward Dacres (London: Hills, 1640), pp. 208–9.

It is this embodiment of fortune, I would say, that leads her figure to be collapsed upon life itself. In the Prologue to his 1642 Roman-historical opera, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Claudio Monteverdi set his librettist Busenello's rhetorical contest for superiority between the figures of Fortuna and Virtù, both of whom eventually sing a duet of submission to Amore. But in the course of her attack on Virtù and her own metaphorical self-invention, Fortuna claims for herself the qualities of warmth, light, animation, and activation:

Ogni tuo professore,  
se da me sta diviso  
sembra un foco dipinto,  
chi nè scalda, nè splende  
resta un color sepolto  
in penuria di luce.

[Any one of your adherents,/if separated from me,/seems a painted fire,/which neither warms nor shines,/and remains of sepulchral hue/lacking light.]

Subtract Fortuna, and what remains then is the sepulcher, the chill of the tomb, darkness, and the motionlessness of virtue. Fortuna is necessary both to life, and, as I have argued elsewhere, to the stage.<sup>9</sup> This formulation accords well with the series of readings in the cultural history of gambling recently presented by Thomas Kavanagh, who closes his introductory chapter with Bataille's claim that "To be alive is, madly but inevitably, to roll the dice."<sup>10</sup>

And yet, there was a strong cultural counter-current which held that illness and death were to be aligned precisely with fortune, and that, in order to defeat her and

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<sup>9</sup> Amy Wygant, "Poppea and the Goddess Fortuna in Music," *Glasgow Emblem Studies* 4 (1999): 137–51.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels. A Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 30.

live a long life, it was necessary to turn to science and to art, most particularly the art of the physician. In the emblematic tradition, further, the only age of life in which fortune is regularly depicted as having been defeated is that of old age.

Pierre Jaquelot's *L'Art de vivre longuement sous le nom de Médée*, from 1630,<sup>11</sup> is in many ways perfectly typical of the genre of advice manual for the aging that had begun to appear in the sixteenth century,<sup>12</sup> which saw the publication of an unprecedented number of works on the causes and treatment of old age.<sup>13</sup> The assumptions of its argument are derived from ancient medicine both Hippocratic—that old age is brought on by the growing imbalance of the system of four bodily humors—and Galenic—that old age is due to the gradual dissipation of a “heat of life” throughout the course of a lifetime—which will persist into the early eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> So young men, it was thought, were hot, while old men had cooled off, and

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<sup>11</sup> Pierre Jaquelot, *L'art de vivre longuement, sous le nom de Médée, laquelle enseigne les facultez des choses qui sont continuellement en nostre usage et d'où naissent les maladies. Ensemble la methode de se comporter en icelles, & le moyen de pourvoir à leurs offences* (Lyon: Louis Teste-Fort, 1630). Subsequent references will be given parenthetically in the text.

<sup>12</sup> Jaquelot's treatise has been the subject of extended commentary by Magdalena Kozluk and Jean-Paul Pittion, to whom I remain grateful for allowing me to read their “La Médée de Pierre Jaquelot: médecine et culture humaniste, thérapeutique des passions,” in J. Vons (ed.), *Actes du 50e Colloque International d'Études Humanistes: Pratique et pensée médicales à la Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009) prior to its forthcoming publication. I am unfortunately able here only to signal the existence of Kozluk's doctoral thesis, *L'Esculape et son art à la Renaissance. Étude sur le discours préfaciel dans les ouvrages français de médecine 1528–1628* (Tours: Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, 2006); her “Emblematy Andrea Alciato w Medei Pierre'a Jaquelot,” *Meander*, 5–6 (2005–6): 461–79; and a forthcoming article, “Intertekstualno[• u schyBku Odrodzenia: Medea Pierre'a Jaquelota,• (PoznaD Symbolae Philologorum Posnaniensium). A critical edition is in progress.

<sup>13</sup> For a partial enumeration, see Minois, pp. 270–74.

<sup>14</sup> David G. Troyansky, *Old Age in the Old Regime: Image and Experience in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989).

this would explain, for example, the quite literal understanding that would have been in force at the time of Machiavelli's "others that proceed coldly" in the quotation above. Jaquelot's treatise includes a description of the ages of man which places full maturity, the "age of consistence" or "l'age viril," at 30–35, old age between 35 and 50 or 60, and total decrepitude from 50 or 60 onwards (Jaquelot, p. 15). The treatise is not drug- or treatment-based. There is but one vague and dismissive reference to a treatment, for hemorrhoids (Jaquelot, p. 190). Instead, Jaquelot concerns himself with habit, the "choses qui sont continuellement en nostre usage" [things in our continual employ] of his title, which Montaigne called "le breuvage de Circé" [Circe's tipples],<sup>15</sup> thus hinting at the perceived magical status of custom that is referenced in Jaquelot's placing of his treatise under the erudite humanist name of "Médée."<sup>16</sup> These things in our continual employ are what Galen called the "non-naturals," that is, (1) air, (2) food and drink, (3) waking and sleeping, (4) exercise and rest, (5) evacuation and

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<sup>15</sup> And which Hamlet called "that monster custom" (III, iv, 162). Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, eds. Pierre Villey and V.-L. Saulnier (2 vols, Paris: PUF, 1965), vol. 2, p. 1080. Subsequent quotations from Montaigne's *Essays* will be from this edition in the form, essay volume number, essay chapter number, Villey-Saulnier page number, *couche*, cited parenthetically in the text. English-language translations are from *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943).

<sup>16</sup> Circé, Homer's bewitching pharmacist-seductress, returned Ulysses' men to him younger, more handsome, and taller than before, after having turned them into pigs by means of a magical drink. Jaquelot's reference to Medea is not to her well-known Euripidean and Senecan child-murdering career in tragedy, but rather to an earlier episode recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, book 7, in which she rejuvenated Jason's aged father, Aeson. This story was frequently depicted in the visual arts of the sixteenth century. See my *Medea, Magic, and Modernity in France: Stages and Histories 1553–1797* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), esp. ch. 1, "Glamour and its Discontents," pp. 13–31 and ch.2, "Medean Renaissance," pp. 33–65. Medea and the rejuvenation of Aeson continued to be cited in connection with advice on long life through the seventeenth century. See Roger Bacon, *The Cure of Old Age, and Preservation of Youth*, trans. Richard Browne (London: Flesher and Evets, 1683), pp. 68–9, where the translator's notes to Bacon's thirteenth-century treatise include Ovid's lines on the Aeson episode.



retention of excrement, and (6) the passions. Galen taught that these things have the power both to conserve and to corrupt us, and Jaquelot is completely orthodox in devoting the bulk of his treatise to the cause of conservation and against the processes of corruption.

However, the “approbation des docteurs en médecine” included in the prefatory material calls Jaquelot’s book “un loüable essay” [a praise-worthy essay], and Jaquelot himself “un esprit qui a beaucoup leu” [a well-read mind]. As for the latter comment, it may well refer to the status of citation in the text, for, as Magdalena Kozluk and Jean-Paul Pittion will point out in a forthcoming study, Jaquelot’s treatise has such frequent and substantive recourse to Biblical, literary, and philosophical citations that his treatise on health and long life, in this far exceeding the conventions of the genre, seems inseparable from them.<sup>17</sup> And as for the status of Jaquelot’s book as “un essay,” this may well refer to its frequently speculative and digressive chattiness. We don’t exactly learn, as we do from Montaigne, that the insides of his ears are sometimes itchy (III, 13, 1097). Nevertheless the subject of clothing, for example, occasions a discussion of the claims of civility as opposed to display and luxury, the kind of clothing to be worn in times of plague,<sup>18</sup> how often clothes should be changed, and so on. It is taken up under the category of the non-natural, “air,”

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<sup>17</sup> Kozluk and Pittion, “La *Médée* de Pierre Jaquelot: médecine et culture humaniste,” forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> Jaquelot’s dedicatee, Charles de l’Orme or Delorme, the vastly long-lived son (1584–1678) of an equally long-lived father (Jean Delorme, c.1547–1637), was physician to the brother of Louis XIII, the duc d’Orléans. He invented a protective costume for doctors to use in times of plague, featuring a mask with a long beak in which were stuffed aromatic herbs. It was still in use in Marseilles in 1720. Delorme was also one of the leading spa enthusiasts of the day, which perhaps encouraged Jaquelot’s positive comments on miraculous healing waters, pp. 134–5. See Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

clothing being a remedy against its injuries, and so a matter of habit. Clothing is thus ultimately a function of the healthy or unhealthy air which one habitually breathes, the air of one's homeland, a situation that allows Montaigne to boast that he wears nothing on his legs but silk stockings, winter and summer (III, 13, 1103). If he ends "Des cannibales," then, with clothes— "Mais quoy, ils ne portent point de haut de chausses" (I, 31, 214) [But what's the use? They don't wear breeches]—this may be an ultimately Galenic comment. Indeed, the actual subject of cannibals and cannibalism does come up in Jaquelot's treatise, another instructive digression under the category of the second non-natural, food and drink, but in the perhaps surprising context of "Des chairs des oyseaux" (Jaquelot, pp. 106–07).

On fortune, Jaquelot is clear: Fortune represents chaos and uncertainty, and you should not trust your health to it. The credo of his treatise is that "La vie peut estre conservée, & la mort retardée par Art" [life can be preserved and death delayed by art] (Jaquelot, p. 42), and he thus places the art of medicine, long life, and his great antique witch Medea, on one side of a line, on the other side of which are ranged ill health, death, and chance. For, while some may argue, he says, that "la guerison des maladies appartient à la fortune et non pas à l'Art" [whether or not you recover from illness depends on fortune, not art] (Jaquelot, p. 35), those who claim to recover without the aid of doctors seldom do so without the aid of medicine, either by using medicines without thinking of them as such and so by accident, or by treating themselves with contraries (Jaquelot, p. 36). Accordingly, "il faut par ces raisons que le mespris cede à la dignité, que la science l'emporte par dessus la fortune" [this is why contempt should give way to respect, and why science should raise it [the art of medicine] above fortune]. If Jaquelot then goes on to describe in some detail how the

old may conquer fortune, this seems to be the topic as well of a certain group of emblems and para-emblematic forms from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In Van Veen's *Quinti Horatii Flacci Emblemata* from 1607, the image accompanying "Amant alterna Camoenae" [The Muses love a switch], shows a figure of Fortuna with the familiar forelock, and the wings of Nemesis (Figure 1). To the right is a female warrior figure with shield and spear and the owl of Minerva peering out from near her feet. Between them is a child, neither "the infant/ Mewling and puking" nor yet "the lover,/ Sighing like furnace" but a child, with Shakespeare's "shining morning face" (*As You Like It*, II, vii, 141–6) in partial profile. Both Fortuna and Minerva have taken one of the child's hands, and Fortuna holds out her forelock, dangling opportunity directly in front of the path uphill to the temple in the background. But the child's face is turned away from Fortuna; its entire body leans towards the strong warrior figure, and the image seems to suggest, in spite of, or in addition to, its Horatian motto, that childhood, whether literal or metaphorical, is the time of a vacillation between wisdom, strength, and virtue literally on the one hand, and fortune on the other. The distribution of weight of the three very sculptural figures, with Fortuna advancing to the right and Minerva striding forward and to the left, suggests that the two figures hold the child in a whirling, dizzying, circular motion of confusion and quite possibly of exhilaration and amusement. The child, then, like the Muses, loves to switch, and at this stage of life Fortuna will not relinquish her hold, nor does the child want her to.

The title page of the 1662 Elzevir edition of Francis Bacon's *Historia regni Henrici septimi* depicts a wonderfully heteroclitite Fortuna (Figure 2). She has the wings of Nemesis, as well as her bridle and urn, the forelock and unstable ball at her feet, to say nothing of the beautiful naked body, of Occasio, her own wheel, and ships

under sail, leaning in the wind, in the background. The figures interacting with her are divided into two pairs, each containing a soldier, Shakespeare's fourth age of life, and a mature man with "beard of formal cut" whom Shakespeare refers to as a justice (*As You Like It*, II, vii, 155), the fifth age. The pair on the left are resisting fortune, the justice preventing the wheel from turning by jamming it with a long pole, the soldier reaching out to stop the motion of the unstable ball upon which Fortuna is balancing. The pair on the right are, well, feeling her. The soldier's hands grasp her naked hips, and the hand of the justice towards the viewer rests on her thigh. His other hand is behind her, its position and possible activity hidden from view. Quite apart from the comment which this title page may be making on the text to follow, it seems as well to be depicting interactions with fortune, chance, and destiny by those in particular ages of life, the soldier certainly in Shakespeare's fourth age, and the justice in perhaps what Du Laurens called the first stage of old age, after 50, which is proper for governing states.<sup>19</sup> Again, a kind of choice is presented. One can either attempt to fix fortune, to preserve the political and economic status quo, represented by the wheel with an ecclesiastical crown at the top and with agricultural tools at the bottom; or one can flatter her and attempt to seduce her, and hope that she will turn her face and smile. Fortuna, however, is literally bigger and higher than both pairs of men. She is represented as above-lifesize, they must look up to her, and she does not return their gaze, but instead looks over their heads, out of the picture frame. But neither, it must be noted, does she look directly out at the reader. Instead, she seems to focus a Mona Lisa-like smile somewhere off to the left of this stage.

There was, however, a literary and pictorial tradition which showed Fortuna being soundly defeated, indeed tied naked to her own wheel, the wind taken out of her

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<sup>19</sup> Du Laurens, *Discours [...] de la vieillesse*, 246.

sail. “Sapiens supra Fortunam” in the 1618 *Emblemata* of Florent Schoonhovius shows the goddess prone, a leg and one outstretched arm already securely fastened to her wheel, and the other arm in the process of being roped to it by a figure with the long beard of old age, dressed in a long robe or cloak (Figure 3). Her deflated sail is a prominent feature of the image, lying in an arc behind her on the ground. The image on the title page of the 1649 Rotterdam edition of Petrarch’s fourteenth-century *De remediis utriusque fortunae* participates in the same iconographic tradition, and Petrarch’s dialogue about how to treat with fortune advises that only impoverished wisdom is capable of defeating her.<sup>20</sup> This conjunction of wisdom and poverty, capable of insulating against fortune’s blows and blandishments, illustrates a Christian ideal in some examples of the emblematic tradition.<sup>21</sup> But the image of the victor is clearly an old man, and, indeed, even within the general early modern valorization of youth, it was allowed that the old have certain advantages over them. Montaigne is unexceptional for his time in observing that “il est possible qu’à ceux qui emploient bien le temps, la science et l’expérience croissent avec la vie” [it is possible that in those who employ their time well, knowledge and experience grow with living], before going on to point out that “mais la vivacité, la promptitude, la fermeté et autres parties bien plus nostres, plus importantes et essentielles, se fanissent et s’alanguissent” (I, 57, 327–28) [but vivacity, quickness, firmness, and other qualities much more our own, more important and essential, wither and languish]. Francis Bacon was more succinct: “Age doth profit rather in the powers of understanding, then in the vertues of the will and affections.”<sup>22</sup> The long-lived

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<sup>20</sup> Thomson, *Fortune*, p. 20, catalogue no. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Thomson, *Fortune*, p. 20, catalogue no. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Essaies* (London: John Jaggard, 1613), no. 23, “Of young Men and Age.”

Venetian Luigi Cornaro (1470–1566) pointed out that an extra ten years at the end of life can be quite useful, as a result of just these age-specific attributes, “wherein wisdom and all kinds of virtues is most vigorous. Are not almost all the learned books that we have, written by their Authors in that age, and those ten years?”<sup>23</sup>

The old, then, in the emblematic and para-emblematic traditions, whatever qualities have dimmed in them through living a long life, possess other qualities that allow them to take on fortune and win. Like the child whirled about in a dizzying game by Fortuna and Minerva, and the adults currying fortune’s favour or stopping her cold, the aged are probably to be understood figuratively in the moralizing tradition of emblematics. But when wisdom and understanding are depicted, an old man is chosen as its image, and fortune goes down to defeat, as she would not normally do when pitted against the child or the soldier. Jaquelot’s coupling of long life and the defeat of fortune’s empire over health, then, is probably not just a passing reference. Or if it is, it would be in fact more interesting and more useful for my purposes here, the “throw-away” line being a more reliable index into unexamined, widely assumed postures than is the comment thought through with care. Accordingly, this coupling of old age and the defeat of fortune may well have a kind of broad cultural power of suggestion, which, in matters of disease and cure, is immense. If an entire culture, that is, expects the old to conquer fortune, then they will have a fighting chance of doing so.

Many of Montaigne’s comments on fortune and long life in III, 13 are, as I have begun to suggest, in no way unusual for his time. That he imagined himself as having one foot in the grave at the age of 56 is, as we have seen, strictly in line with

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<sup>23</sup> Luigi Cornaro, *How to Live for a Hundred Years and Avoid Disease*, trans. George Herbert (Oxford: Aldin, 1935) p. 43.

notions of aging current in his day. His fierce independence in the managing of his own health was also a widely-shared attitude. Early modern physicians expected patients to be mainly responsible for themselves, and Bacon, for example, points out that “a mans own Observation what hee finds good of, & what hee finds hurt of, is the best *Physicke* to preserve health.”<sup>24</sup> Cornaro comments that “No man can be a perfect Physician to another, but to himself only.”<sup>25</sup> Even Montaigne’s striking comments on the life cycle of his malady, kidney stones—“La constitution des maladies est formée au patron de la constitution des animaux” [The constitution of diseases is patterned after the constitution of animals] (III, 13, 1088)—are shared, for example, by Jaquelot, who, in his discussion of the seasons of the year under the topic of “air” notes that spring often sees the return of chronic illnesses, which are reborn, like every other living thing, at that time of year (Jaquelot 63).

Even the great theme of Montaigne’s final essay, experience, and its connections with a particularity resistant to any law or treatment, is one shared by others who write from the perceived vantage of the end of life. Cornaro observes that

Every one by long experience may know the qualities of his own nature, and what hidden properties it hath, what meat and drink agrees best with it: which things in others cannot be known without such observation, as is not easily to be made upon others; especially since there is a greater diversitie of tempers, than of faces. Who would beleve that old wine should hurt my stomack, and new should help it; or that cinnamon should heat me more then pepper? What Physician could have discovered these hidden qualities to me, if I had not found them out by long experience?<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bacon, no. 17, “Of Regiment of Health.”

<sup>25</sup> Cornaro, p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> Cornaro, p. 42.

And readers of Montaigne will know as well that his comments on the health of the body situate themselves, albeit in Montaigne's characteristic higgledy-piggledy fashion, within the topics of the six Galenic non-naturals. We hear about the air of his house (His first home repair was to the fireplaces, so that they wouldn't smoke. III, 13, 1104), his food and drink (He likes melons, III, 13, 1102, considered a very risky leaning<sup>27</sup>), his sleeping habits (He dreams very little, III, 13, 1098), the movement and rest of his body (He's always late, III, 13, 1095; and he fidgets, III, 13, 1105), his evacuations (almost always first thing in the morning, III, 13, 1085), and his passions (the ugliness of anger, III, 13, 1073).

There is nevertheless, and in a way that can only be suggested here, a profound linking in Montaigne's essay of the habit and health of the body to the question of time, and this is perhaps most legible in his comments on fortune and long life. For Montaigne, as for Jaquelot, fortune is, on the one hand, clearly on the side of disease. He must thank fortune, he says, for assailing him so often with the same weapon (his stones) (III, 13, 1092), and he refuses, when ill, to add the insult of doctors' advice to the injury of fortune, for "et par fortune et par art me voylà hors de ma route" ["And both by fortune and by art, there I am off my road] (III, 13, 1080). But, on the other hand, fortune is a structure that inhabits and invades Montaigne's

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<sup>27</sup> The translator's notes to Roger Bacon's *The Cure of Old Age* advise that "melons are very corruptible and cause vomiting and looseness. Johannes Cuspinianus in the Life of Frederick the Third writes, how four Emperours dyed of eating Melons. And Cucumbers are as bad: For it seems that the immoderate use of Cucumbers and Melons brought so many Patients to a French Physician of Lions, that he built him a stately House with the Inscription in Letters of Gold: Les Concombres, & les Melons/ M'ont fait bastir cette Maison. Cucumbers cold did build this Hall/ Musk-Melons crude did furnish all" (pp. 152–3).



essay, intertwining itself with the very materiality of his words, and a short example must suffice to suggest the depth of this engagement.

Montaigne has just broached the topic of the embrace of the culture of the body, beginning with his “Moy, qui ne manie que terre à terre” [I, who operate only close to the ground] (III, 13, 1106). In a long interpolation, his voice characteristically shifts between “nous,” as he describes the kill-joy mind and “son estre insatiable, vagabond et versatile” [its insatiable, erratic, and versatile nature] and “moy” in a beautifully parallel construction,

Moy qui me vente d’embrasser si curieusement les commoditez de la vie, et si particulierement, n’y trouve, quand j’y regarde ainsi finement, à peu pres que du vent. Mais quoy, nous sommes par tout vent (III, 13, 1106–07).

[I, who boast of embracing the pleasures of life so assiduously, and so particularly, find this to be, when I consider the matter thus minutely, virtually nothing but wind. But what of it? We are wind everywhere.]<sup>28</sup>

Montaigne’s slide here from the French “venter,” “to boast,” to “vent,” “wind,” is in one way captured well by Frame’s translation, for a braggard is said to be full of (hot) air. But it is a pity to lose in English the sound of the pun, as the noise of the wind is its first delight, according to Montaigne: “Et le vent encore, plus sagement que nous, s’aime à bruire, à s’agiter, et se contente en ses propres offices, sans desirer la stabilité, la solidité, qualitez non siennes” [And even the wind, more wisely than we, loves to make a noise and move about, and is content with its own functions, without wishing for stability and solidity, qualities that do not belong to it] (III, 13, 1107).

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<sup>28</sup> Translation modified.

There is, firstly, a technically physiological side to Montaigne's comment here, for Galenic medicine in the sixteenth century imagined the body as being composed of three materials, air, liquids, and solids, necessitating their constant replenishment with often impure substances, with the consequence that bodies age.<sup>29</sup> There was an important physical sense, then, in which we are air, if not exactly wind, everywhere. That said, Montaigne, in common with the writers of health manuals, was never above the odd earthy and/or rude comment, and the sense of "breaking wind" should probably be included in the possibilities for "nous sommes par tout vent."<sup>30</sup>

But secondly, Montaigne here clearly turns the wind into an image of someone or some thing capable of wisdom, that quality so widely associated with old age and the defeat of fortune: it loves and desires "plus sagement que nous." The wind loves, he says, to make noise and move about, much as does Montaigne himself, with his loud voice and his fidgeting, and much as his text with its pun on "vent" has itself just raucously done. Further, Montaigne's image of the wind is congruent with one aspect of fortune herself, as, in a complicated series of readings of a passage from Plato's *Laws* by Ficino, Machiavelli, and others, fortune was increasingly understood in the sixteenth century to be not just generally a ship at sea, its sail, or pilot, but specifically the wind driving it through a storm.<sup>31</sup> Stability and solidity do not belong to fortune, to "us," to the body, to Montaigne, or to his text, and to take this fully on board is to be wise, "sage," like the wind itself. But it is also to have, then, the abovementioned fighting chance of defeating fortune, the chance, precisely, of a text, and a chance that

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<sup>29</sup> Du Laurens, pp. 243–4.

<sup>30</sup> Even the immortals produced feces, opines Jaquelot, pp. 191–2.

<sup>31</sup> Kiefer, "The Conflation of Fortuna and Occasio," p. 6.

takes this passage on the whirlwind ride so enjoyed by the child. It is, indeed, to be old.

Montaigne's essay famously ends with a plea on behalf of old age, "Or la vieillesse a un peu besoin d'estre traictée plus tendrement" [Now old age needs to be treated a little more tenderly], and with a prayer spoken by "nous" on its behalf to Apollo (III, 13, 1116). There are many beauties in this, for Apollo is the god of health and warmth, as well as of the oracular injunction to "know thyself." But Apollo, as Jaquelot reminds us, is also a god forever young, always represented, like Bacchus, without a beard (Jaquelot, p.126). The end for Montaigne, then, is old age recommending itself, and entrusting itself, to the eternally youthful (who nevertheless probably defecates). Quite a good image of the fortunes of a text, and its readers.

#### List of Figures

1. "Amant alterna Camoenae." Otto van Veen. *Quinti Horatii Flacci Emblemata*. Antwerp: Verdussen, 1607. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Glasgow University Library.

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3. "Sapiens supra Fortunam." Florent Schoonhovius. *Emblemata*. Gouda: Burier, 1618. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Glasgow University Library.