Paolo Bugliani

A Family Affair: Michel de Montaigne Meets William Hazlitt & Son

Abstract: This paper aims at illuminating a very interesting cultural-mediation case that involved Romantic essayist William Hazlitt and his son, also named William. The linking point was constituted by Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*, which, for William Hazlitt Sr., had represented a source of inspiration to fashion his own kind of modern essay. Hazlitt Jr., on his part, committed himself to editing a volume of Montaigne's *Complete Works*, where he managed to provide a nuanced profile of the French author to an audience who had already become familiar with him via his father. Such an example was to have many followers and imitators.

Keywords: William Hazlitt. Cultural Translation. Michel de Montaigne. *Essais* in England.

A child is sleeping:
An old man gone.
O, father forsaken,
Forgive your son!
J. Joyce, "Ecce Puer"

1. *Introduction*

William Hazlitt, a prolific essayist,[1] a belligerent commentator of his contemporary society, and an aspirant grammarian[2] and metaphysician,[3] was indeed one of the most remarkable prose-writers in modern English literature. In later years, his contribution to Romanticism has been re-evaluated and put at the very core of the Romantic movement itself, as underlined by critic and academic Duncan Wu:

> Romanticism is where the modern age begins, and Hazlitt was its most articulate spokesman. No one else had the ability to see it whole; no one else knew so many of its politicians, poets, and philosophers. By interpreting it for his contemporaries, he speaks to us of ourselves – of the culture and world we now inhabit. Perhaps the most important development of his time, the creation of a mass media, is one that now dominates our lives. Hazlitt's livelihood was dependent on it. […] he took political sketch-writing to a new level, invented sports commentary as we know it, and created the essay form as practiced by Clive James, Gore Vidal, and Michael Foot.[4]

[1] See U. Natarajan, "The Veil of Familiarity: Romantic Philosophy and the Familiar Essay", *Studies in Romanticism*, 42 (1), 2003, pp. 27-44; T. Milnes, "Romantic Essayism", in Id., *The Testimony of Sense: Empiricism and the Essay from Hume to Hazlitt*, Oxford, OUP, 2019, pp. 192-254.

[2] See M. Tomalin, *Romanticism and Linguistic Theory: William Hazlitt, Language and Literature*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

[3] See U. Natarajan, T. Paulin and D. Wu (eds), *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005.

[4] D. Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man*, Oxford, OUP, 2008, p. xxii.

Wu's portrayal is very accurate and pinpoints a crucial feature of Hazlitt's centrality to modern literary tradition, i.e., his ability to gain recognition and fame through a clever use of the nonfiction medium. If the idea of Hazlitt 'creating' the modern essay is debatable – suffice it mention a pivotal figure like Charles Lamb – Wu's argument can be adopted and fruitfully reframed in a 'genealogical' sense. That is to say, if we take Montaigne and his fortune in England as a standpoint,[5] then the ability to 'remediate' for modern times the form that the French jurist had fathered in Bordeaux at the end of the seventeenth century can in fact be seen as a sort of 'second creation'. And, indeed, William Hazlitt played a large and relatively unexplored role in the dissemination of the *Montaignesque* essay in England, so that he, along with his son, can be considered as 'cultural translators' worthy of a detailed study.

The figure of the cultural translator has been recently investigated by Diego Saglia in relation to the circulation of Italian literary heritage in early nineteenth-century Britain, thanks to the contribution of continental mediators such as celebrated Simonde de Sismondi.[6] Hazlitt's ascription of some renowned English literary authors (like Geoffrey Chaucer and Edmund Spenser) to an Italian 'school' might have had political reasons,[7] but it is nevertheless the sign of an attempt to redraw those "networks of cultural interrelations and notions about the national literature"[8] that had Madame de Staël's Coppet salon at its core. The aim of this paper is therefore to follow Hazlitt's engagement with one of France's most influential authors, Michel de Montaigne, and also evaluate the long-lasting influence of his own critical appraisal on his son's 1842 edition of Montaigne's works.

A study of this kind is also to shed light on the reception of an author who had had a close relationship with English literature. The context of the Hazlitts' 'joint Englishing' of Montaigne deserves attention because it led to the first complete English edition and played a crucial role in the delineation of an English Montaigne who was not only co-existent with the French one, but also, "if anything, stronger".[9] Occurring in a period which saw the strengthening of a nationalistic ideal of literature, this joint operation of cultural translation offers a fresh insight into matters of textual and literary criticism, as well as into an evolution of Anglo-French cultural relations that would continue throughout the Victorian Age and among a circle of "politically sophisticated members of British society".[10]

[5] See W.M. HAMLIN, *Montaigne's English Journey: Reading the* Essays *in Shakespeare's Day*, Oxford, OUP, 2013.

[6] See D. SAGLIA, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832: Romantic Translations*, Cambridge, CUP, 2019, pp. 45-46.

[7] The undertone of Hazlitt's "Lectures" seems to be profoundly pro-European in nature. The "radical historicised view of Dante" (W. BOWERS, *The Italian Idea: Anglo-Italian Radical Literary Culture, 1815-1823*, Cambridge, CUP, 2020, p. 69) that Hazlitt had proposed three years before to the readers of the *Edinburgh Review* was harshly criticised by the acerbic conservative stance of *Blackwood's*, since it sought to present the Italian poet as a common source of modern poetry. This politicised aesthetic project is clearly addressed by Saglia and other staple studies mainly concerned with the socio-political implications of Anglo-Italian cultural relations. See, among the most relevant with regard to Hazlitt: J. COX, *Romanticism in the Shadow of War: Literary Culture in the Napoleonic War Years*, Cambridge, CUP, 2014, and J. STABLER, *The Artistry of Exile: Romantic and Victorian Writers in Italy*, Oxford, OUP, 2013.

[8] W. BOWERS, *The Italian Idea: Anglo-Italian Radical Literary Culture, 1815-1823*, p. 46.

[9] W. BOUTCHER, "Montaigne in England and America", in P. DESAN (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne*, Oxford, OUP, 2016, p. 326.

[10] G. VAROUXAKIS, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 1. In particular, see pp. 103-30 for William Hazlitt's influence on this late nineteenth-century political outcome of the issue.

2. *William Hazlitt (1778-1830)*

In order to assess the translation work by William Hazlitt Jr., we must briefly dwell on his father's pronouncements on Montaigne, which, although not copious, are indeed fundamental to understand the extent to which the essay *à la Montaigne* he promoted would leave an imprint on his son's mind and future choices.

The Round Table (1817), Hazlitt's first collection (written in collaboration with Leigh Hunt), features an essay about *The Tatler*, one of the most influential periodical publications of the preceding century. In "On the Tatler", Hazlitt singles out Montaigne as the initiator of a kind of familiar and yet idiosyncratic "personal authorship",[11] which is said to develop out of a more general "magnanimous and undisguised" egotism, this being almost unanimously recognised as a constitutive ingredient of personal essayism:[12]

> Of all periodical essayists (our ingenious predecessors), the Tatler has always appeared to us the most accomplished and agreeable. Montaigne, who was the father of this kind of personal authorship among the moderns, in which the reader is admitted behind the curtain, and sits down with the writer in his gown and slippers, was a most magnanimous and undisguised egotist; but Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. was the more disinterested gossip of the two. The French author is contented to describe the peculiarities of his own mind and person, which he does with a most copious and unsparing hand. The English journalist, goodnaturedly, lets you into the secret both of his own affairs and those of his neighbours.[13]

Hazlitt's second pronouncement occurred within a notably remarkable frame, that of his successful public lectures at the Surrey Institution, namely in the midst of the fifth talk in the English Comic Writers series, entitled "On the Periodical Essayists". Here Hazlitt builds on the premises of his aforementioned essay on *The Tatler* and proposes a sustained, well-informed definition of the essay as a form in itself, where Montaigne features not only as the very father of modern personal authorship, but also as a great author whose renown can be showcased when thinking of a properly 'national' literary tradition.[14] Also thanks to its focus on Montaigne, Hazlitt's description of the essay has remained one of the most vivid accounts of this literary genre:

> *Quicquid agunt homines nostri farrago libelli*, is the general motto of this department of literature. It does not treat of minerals or fossils, the virtues of plants, or the influence of planets; it does not meddle with the forms of belief or systems of philosophy, nor launch into the world of spiritual existences, but it makes familiar with the world of men and women, records their actions, assigns them motives, exhibits their whims, characterizes their pursuits in all their singular and endless variety, ridicules their absurdities, exposes their inconsistencies, 'holds the mirror up to nature', and shews the very age and body of the time its form and pressure; takes minute of our dress, air, looks, words, thoughts, and actions; shews us what we are, and what we are not; plays the whole game of human life over before us, and by making us enlightened spectators of its many-coloured scenes, enables us (if possible) to become tolerably reasonable agents in the one in which we have to perform a part.[15]

[11] W. HAZLITT, "On the Tatler", in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, eds A.R. WALLER and A. GLOVER, London, Dent, 1903, Vol. I, p. 7.

[12] On this subject, see for instance the rich anthology edited by C.H. KLAUS, *Essayists on the Essay: Montaigne to Our Time*, Iowa City, Iowa U.P., 2012.

[13] W. HAZLITT, "On the Tatler", p. 7.

[14] W. BOUTCHER, "Montaigne in England and America", p. 325.

[15] W. HAZLITT, "On the Periodical Essayists", in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, eds A.R. WALLER and A. GLOVER, Vol. VIII, p. 91.

In this lecture, Hazlitt's attitude to Montaigne assumes the form of a lapidary maxim: "the great merit of Montaigne then was, that he may be said to have been the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man".[16] Thanks to this second commentary, the impact of Montaigne's example on Hazlitt's idea of the essay becomes clearer, and it is crucial to underline that the latter appreciated the quality of intimacy and personal tones informing the genre as it originated in seventeenth-century France.

This idea of the periodical essay as both a popularly dynamic and an intimately contemplative form also shines through one of Hazlitt's most often quoted literary formulae, that of the 'familiar style', whose aesthetic lineaments entailed, on the one hand, the rejection of the prejudice regarding the alleged vulgarity of common things, words, and works,[17] and, on the other, the establishment of a literary tradition capable of appropriating past illustrious examples while remaining anchored to a contemporary *milieu*.[18] In drawing the readers' attention to the output of his colleague, Charles Lamb, Hazlitt highlighted how the latter's habit to imitate a "quaint" and "old-fashioned" manner of conversation was to be seen as the legacy of a circle of seventeenth-century English authors – "Burton, Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Brown"[19] – who had unquestionably been influenced by the form initiated by Montaigne.[20] Hazlitt was thus tracing the essay's roots back to a pre-Augustan literary scenario close to Montaigne's.

This enthusiastic judgement did not change after Hazlitt's European wanderings through France and Italy, where he was accompanied by his son. In fact, his experience on French soil would sharpen his awareness and cognisance of the French cultural context.[21] In a series of essays later collected in *The Plain Speaker* (1826), Hazlitt further developed his portrait of Montaigne. If in "On the Conversation of Authors" and "On Personal Character" he makes but a cursory reference to him while discussing bookish knowledge and physiognomy, in "On Old English Writers and Speakers" Hazlitt showcases a more comprehensive and eloquent description of the author of the *Essais*; this is significant since it is part of a wider scrutiny of the state of French letters and of their relation to English literature.

As is frequently the case with Hazlitt, he had a specific contemporary target in mind, namely Lord Byron, whose fame abroad worried him as he perceived it to signal a marked decadence of English reputation on the Continent. Typically, Hazlitt moves on to review a considerable number of neglected but illustrious seventeenth-century English authors.[22]

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 92.

[17] See the following comment: "How simple it is to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning! Surely it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low, to be always pedantic and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word, if you never use a common English word at all" (W. HAZLITT, "On the Familiar Style", in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, eds A.R. WALLER and A. GLOVER, Vol. VI, p. 243).

[18] Differently put, "[f]amiliarity was a technique for coming to terms with past high culture; it was also a means of surviving the political iniquities of the present" (G. DART, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures*, Cambridge, CUP, 2012, p. 11).

[19] W. HAZLITT, "On the Familiar Style", p. 254.

[20] P. BUGLIANI, *Metamorfosi di un genere: il saggio in Inghilterra 1580-1780*, Lucca, La Vela, 2020, pp. 46-50.

[21] D. WU, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man*, p. 358.

[22] In doing so, Hazlitt strikes an amicable blow at his friend and fellow essayist Charles Lamb, deprecating his xenophilic appreciation of the writings of St Evremond. In fact, it was Charles Lamb who more consistently championed a re-evaluation of autochthonous prose writers such as Jeremy Taylor, Robert Burton and Thomas Browne in both his critical writings and his famous *Essays of Elia* and *Last Essays of Elia.*

Although his argument is quite straightforwardly nationalistic in spirit, he concludes on a surprising conciliatory tone. After hinting at the eighteenth-century evolution of literature in the direction of a sobering down "after the revolution, into a strain of greater demureness, into a Dutch and German fidelity of initiation of domestic manners and individual character",[23] he draws a parallel with the situation in France:

> French literature has undergone great changes in like manner, and was supposed to be at its highest in the time of Louis XIV. We sympathize less, however, with the pompous and set speeches in the tragedies of Racine and Corneille, or in the serious comedies of Molière, than we do with the grotesque farces of the latter, with the exaggerated descriptions and humour of Rabelais (whose wit was a madness, a drunkenness), or with the accomplished humanity, the easy style, and gentlemanly and scholarlike sense of Montaigne. But these we consider as in a great measure English, or as what the old French character inclined to be, before it was corrupted by courts and academies of criticism.[24]

If the following essay in the collection, "Madame Pasta and Mademoiselle Mars", circles around the account of stern prejudices against the mechanistic imprint of the French frame of mind,[25] what needs highlighting is the fact that, according to Hazlitt, the most favourably appreciable trait of French literature pertains to what can be considered 'English'. Hazlitt stresses the ease with which some landmarks of the French literary canon can coexist with what he casts as the best examples of English early modern prose.

This specific remark might be filtered through Warren Boutcher's insightful and provocative conclusion of his considerations about the Anglo-American absorption of Montaigne, i.e., that "the English Montaigne, the 'great books' of Montaigne sitting on the shelves of bookstores only in English translations, the Montaigne who supposedly invented the English literary essay, the Montaigne who influenced and continues to influence English and American literature, just *is* Montaigne".[26]

3. *A Francophile Education*

Montaigne was thus a recurrent haunt within the essayistic production of Hazlitt, who showed a profound acquaintance not only with the former's work, but also with seventeenth-century prose writing as a whole. In order to assess the influence of this familiarity on his son's career as a translator, a very interesting document may serve as a profitable starting point. In an 1822 piece entitled "On the Conduct of Life", William Hazlitt Sr. spreads open his own pedagogical beliefs and offers his then pre-adolescent son some common-sense pieces of advice for his (quite difficult) schooldays.

[23] W. HAZLITT, "On Old English Writers and Speakers", in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. HOWE, New York, Anchor Books, 1967, Vol. XII, p. 322.

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 323.

[25] Their "perverse fidelity to detail" (*ibidem*, p. 333) and their lack of "aerial perspective" (*ibidem*) have been significant to the construction of Hazlitt's own metaphysical *Weltanschauung*. See U. NATARAJAN, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power*, Oxford, OUP, 1998 for the (still) soundest discussion on this.

[26] W. BOUTCHER, "Montaigne in England and America", pp. 326-27.

Despite the stockpile of commonplaces informing the piece, we can still get glimpses of what a Hazlittian education might have entailed.[27] Predictably enough, the section that interests more closely the discussion of the role of the translator, as enacted by both father and son, is the part where Hazlitt suggests to his son what his relationship towards study and study subjects ought to be. The beginning is quite noteworthy: "As to your studies and school-exercises, I wish you to learn Latin, French, and dancing".[28] Such a remarkable triad deserves closer investigation. If the devotion to dance is to be interpreted in light of Hazlitt's defiance of any excessive consecration of otiose solitary reading, the two languages that he exhorts his son to learn reveal a stimulating pedagogical orientation. The incitement to master Latin also arises from a somehow narcissistic motivation: "I would have you learn Latin partly because I learned it myself, and I would not have you without any of the advantages or sources of knowledge that I possessed – it would be a bar of separation between us".[29] A father's desire that his son should benefit from the very advantages of his own education is only one side of the question, since the classics, in Hazlitt's view, are a sort of 'discipline of humanity':

> The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding, as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views; it accustoms the mind to take interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life; and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear, which bows only to present power and upstart authority.[30]

This power to broaden our horizons, which Hazlitt ascribes to the classics alone, may indeed be loosely referred to any type of (liberal) literary upbringing. Finally, the choice to learn French acquires a great significance when traced back to Hazlitt's envisaging a sort of *in-vitro* reduplication of his own intellectual exuberance. He connects French with the 'business' of life, with the practical side of it as opposed to the loftier ideals concerning the contemplative *otium* typically associated with the figure of the artist: "I would have you, as I said, make yourself master of French, because you may find it of use in the commerce of life".[31] Having himself relied on the trade of letters, mainly (but not only) consisting of periodicals, Hazlitt feels the need to caution his son against scorning such a vibrant world, and thus suggests a mastery of what was, at that time, the *lingua franca* of the erudite and literary world. Given the actual career William the younger would eventually embark on, this last piece of advice sounds the most appropriate.

[27] Among the most interesting Hazlittian points are his attack on egotism (a critical attitude that he connected with his Dissenter's background) and his views on misanthropy and marriage, which, given the intent of this specific essay, are treated in a palpably mild way by the otherwise notoriously cantankerous essayist.

[28] W. HAZLITT, "On the Conduct of Life; or, Advice to a Schoolboy", in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, eds A.R. WALLER and A. GLOVER, Vol. XII, p. 425.

[29] *Ibidem*, p. 426.

[30] *Ibidem*.

[31] *Ibidem*.

4. *William Hazlitt (1811-1893)*

What seems to be the soundest way to assess William Hazlitt the younger's import in this history of cultural appropriation is to consider his endeavour on the backdrop of his father's seminal appreciation of Michel de Montaigne. This does not imply that the significance of his own commitment should be belittled, but rather that one should always bear in mind the cultural *milieu* in which Hazlitt the younger lived and worked.

As a matter of fact, "that Little Nero"[32] was left, at his father's death, with no other possible professional outcome than becoming the editor of the latter's literary output, which he did collect and publish in 1836, along with an edition of probably the most ambitious philosophical work by Hazlitt, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, which had been first published in 1805 and gone largely neglected since then.

In the 1830s William Jr. became a collaborator of the *Morning Chronicle,* thus entering the same political scenario of periodicals that had been animated by his father's belligerent voice before him, and would be soon featuring Charles Dickens's and William Makepeace Thackeray's insights. William Jr.'s employment was granted by William Coulson, whom he had met through Charles and Mary Lamb's mediation, thus through the agency of his late father's literary *coterie*. It was then that another meeting, with David Bogue, marked a turn in his career, namely that of the completion of his professionalisation as a translator and editor.[33] He became a contributor to Bogue's *European Library* series, whose aim was to provide affordable editions of classics of continental literature like Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, whose very first English translation was indeed Hazlitt Jr.'s. This European dimension can be read against the background of a cultural ferment that characterised the early and mid-nineteenth century and whose most compelling testimony is the *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (1837) by Henry Hallam.

Alongside this steady 'European commitment' to Bogue's project, Hazlitt Jr. continued his freelance editing and translating job for other publishers, and it was his collaboration with John Templeman that ensured British readers the first complete edition of Michel de Montaigne's works in 1842. Featuring not only the essays, but also the very first translation of the *Journal de voyage* and a selection of ten private *Letters,* this endeavour must be considered a fundamental step in the history of the English reception of Montaigne.

First of all, some comments are due on Hazlitt Jr.'s *Essais* text, where he did not include his own translation, but rather revised for a modern audience the version by Charles Cotton, dating from 1685-1686. Moreover, at that time, Florio's version was not so popular among the nineteenth-century educated *elite*.[34] As claimed by Philip Ford, while "Florio's version remained out of print until the late nineteenth century, Cotton's translation became

[32] Perhaps the most famous mention of Hazlitt the younger is in one of John Keats's letters, where the poet came up with this interesting diminutive appellation. The phrase is quoted by Hazlitt the younger's son, who not only revised his father's translation of Montaigne discussed here, but also wrote a detailed memorial of the Hazlitt clan, underlining the literariness of such a distinguished household. See W. CAREW HAZLITT, *Four Generations of a Literary Family: The Hazlitts in England, Ireland and America, Their Friends and Their Fortunes, 1725-1896*, London and New York, George Redway, 1897, Vol. I, p. 106.

[33] M. LESSER, "Professionals", in P. FRANCE and K. HAYNES (eds), *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, Oxford, OUP, 2006, Vol. IV (1790-1900), pp. 90-91.

[34] It was only in 1892 that Florio's Montaigne regained its place in the history of cultural translation, also thanks to its inclusion in David Nutt's editorial project (the *Tudor Translation* series).

the standard version of the French text, still being reprinted in the twentieth century".[35] The case of Montaigne's reception in the mid-nineteenth century was quite peculiar, and it is therefore all the more significant to place Hazlitt Jr.'s editorial choice in its proper literary context:

> Two Renaissance prose writers had never gone out of favour: Rabelais and Montaigne. For these the Nineteenth Century was generally content with the old translations. The Rabelais of Urquarth and Motteux (1653-94) continued to be published sometimes in a bowdlerized form, and was not displaced by the relatively accurate, but archaizing *Five Books and Minor Writings* of W.F. Smith (1893). Montaigne was read in revised versions of Charles Cotton's translation of 1685-6, which was given a new lease life by W.C. Hazlitt's edition of 1877: the text, revised by the editor's father William Hazlitt the younger, was closer to Cotton than that given in eighteenth-century editions.[36]

The importance here granted to William Jr.'s edition of the *Works* is due to the fact that, although its actual novelty consisted in the translation of the *Journal,* there is an uncommon abundance of paratextual matter specifically dedicated to the *Essais* proper. The general "Preface" does indeed tackle this latter work alone, giving an invaluable insight into Hazlitt Jr.'s idea of the role of the translator.

The first question he addresses is the choice to re-issue Cotton's translation. Instead of justifying his 'recycling', he endorses Cotton's party with ample quotations from the latter's paratextual elements such as the "Dedication" and "Preface"; he then proceeds to ascertain his personal contribution, i.e., the correction of many inaccuracies in the almost two-hundred-year-old Restoration 'Englishing' of the French *essayiste*. Hazlitt lists five textual *loci* where his intervention was deemed indispensable (see *Appendix*).

Even a preliminary glance allows one to detect the accuracy and scrupulousness of Hazlitt Jr.'s emendations, as for instance in the case of Book II, Chapter 6 (Table 5), where he intervenes and corrects Cotton's misinterpretation of the referent of a relative clause, thus changing the somewhat hilarious nonsensical image – Hazlitt calls it "a sad imputation"[37] – of Montaigne choosing to give his wife a lame horse. In Book I, Chapter 55 (Table 1), Cotton misinterprets the French "barbarie" for a toponym, translating it as "Barbary", instead of "barbarism". A further lexical misunderstanding is at the core of Cotton's version of a passage in Book I, Chapter 57 (Table 3), where he renders "oisiveté" with "Vacancy", rather than "idleness". More serious is the mistake Cotton makes in a passage from Book I, Chapter 56 (Table 2), though, in a sense, counterbalancing the misogynistic mishap of the horse/wife blunder (II, 6): by misreading Montaigne's claim about women being unable to deal with Theology, Cotton transforms Montaigne's misogynistic assertion into a general (and rather inconsequential) statement according to which "Man" (with a capital letter, meaning humanity, both men and women) would be unfit to Theology. Another 'religious' mishap is unearthed by Hazlitt in Cotton's version concerning Book II, Chapter 2 (Table 4), where he transposes the French word "secte" into the contextually ambiguous "sect", thus branding the philosophical Stoic School as a rather unworthy clique.

[35] P. FORD, "Charles Cotton's Montaigne", *Montaigne Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum*, 24, 2012, p. 118.

[36] P. FRANCE, "France", in ID. and K. HAYNES (eds), *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, p. 233.

[37] W. HAZLITT (ed.), *The Complete Works of Michel de Montaigne*, London, Templeman, 1842. The "Preface" bears no indication of page number.

Hazlitt Jr. demonstrates a sound linguistic control of the French language, and his translation verges on a multi-layered activity that, though still remaining a cultural undertaking (similar to Cotton's Restoration attempt), also acquires a more 'technical' dimension. Such a dimension looks up to an ideal of accuracy that cannot but be traced to the nineteenth-century developments of philology as a human science in the Romantic period.[38] Besides mastering the language, Hazlitt was aware of the coeval critical debate on literary translation, as witnessed by his quoting one of the authorities he turned to in order to gain expertise and act as Cotton's corrector:

> The style and spirit of Cotton's version it would be impossible to improve upon: and I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion that, the inaccuracies in question being now carefully corrected, the present edition of the essays of Montaigne fully comes up to the definition of a good translation suggested by Lord Woodhouselee, viz. – "That in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native as it is to those who speak in the language of the original work." Here, indeed, as in the case of Ozell's Rabelais, the position might be even more strongly put.[39]

Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee (1747-1813) was a prominent figure of his times, his career spanning from historiography and legal studies to periodical essay-writing and the translation of Italian poetry (Petrarch) and German drama (Schiller's *Die Räuber*). His *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1791) was also very influential. Fraser Tytler's conception drew near to what one might suitably call a 'European library', and his idea of translation resembled "a primary vehicle for cross-cultural exchanges, one which could make available 'all the stores of ancient knowledge, and creating a free intercourse of science and of literature between all modern nations'".[40] From the definition quoted by Hazlitt Jr., Fraser would also draw three corollaries,[41] the third of which is accompanied by a reflection that is worth quoting in full, since it includes specific examples from Montaigne:

> The translation is perfect, when the translator finds in his own language an idiomatic phrase corresponding to that of the original: MONTAIGNE (*Ess.*: 1, I, c: 29) says of Gallio "lequel ayant été envoyé en exile en l'isle de Lesbos, on fut averti à Rome, *qu'il s'y donnoit du bon temps* et que ce qu'on lui avoit enjoint pour peine, lui turnoit à commodité." The difficulty of translating this sentence lies in the idiomatic phrase "*qu'il s'y donnoit du bon temps*". Cotton finding a parallel idiom in English, has translated the passage with becoming ease and spirit: "As it happened to one Gallio, who having been sent an exile to the isle of Lesbos, news was not long after brought to Rome that *he there lived as merry as the day was long*; and that what had been enjoined him for a penance, turned out to his greatest pleasure and satisfaction." Thus, in another passage of the same author (*Essais*. 1, I, c: 29): "*Si j'eusse été chef de part*, j'eusse prins autre voie plus naturelle." "*Had I rul'd the roast*, I should have taken another and more natural course." So likewise (*Ess.*: 1, I, c: 25): "Mais d'y enforcer plus

[38] Romanticism, and especially German Romanticism, can be considered the very cradle of the modern ideal of translation as both a cultural practice and also (and perhaps primarily) a practical dexterity that entailed a thorough study. For a historiographic array, see A. BERMAN, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, Engl. trans. S. HAYVAERT, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992.

[39] W. HAZLITT (ed.), *The Complete Works of Michel de Montaigne*, n.p.

[40] D. SAGLIA, *Romantic Translations*, p. 6.

[41] "That the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work"; "That the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original"; and "That the translation should have all the *ease* of original composition" (A. FRASER TYTLER, *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, London, Dent, [1791] 1907, p. 7; emphasis added).

avant, et de *m'être rongé les ongles à l'etude d'Aristote*, monarche de la doctrine moderne." "But to dive farther than that, and to have *cudgell'd my brains in the study of Aristotle*, the monarch of all modern learning".[42]

Fraser Tytler contributed to a redefinition of the role and figure of the translator, who began to acquire a status that transcended the mere label of 'interlingual translitterator' in favour of a more reputable position as creative agent:

> From the consideration of those general rules of translation which in the foregoing essay I have endeavoured to illustrate, it will appear no unnatural conclusion to assert, that he only is perfectly accomplished for the duty of a translator who possesses a genius akin to that of the original author. I do not mean to carry this proposition so far as to affirm, that in order to give a perfect translation of the works of Cicero, a man must actually be as great an orator, or inherit the same extent of the philosophical genius; but he must have a mind capable of discerning the full merits of his original, of attending with an acute perception to the whole of his reasoning, and of entering with warmth and energy of feeling into all the beauties of his composition.[43]

In the twentieh century, this stress on language proficiency and idiomatic competence would be placed with new intensity by another literary figure involved in the Anglo-French dialectics, namely Hilaire Belloc in his work *On Translation* (1931). Belloc's contribution offers a "brief but highly intelligent and systematic approach to the practical problems of translating and to the whole question of the status of the translated text".[44] It can be said to stand between accounts hailing the translator as a genius of sorts, virtually on a level with the creative author, and other assessments that saw the translator as a professional figure whose primary aim was crossing linguistic barriers and facilitating the act of reading. It was on this threshold that William the younger seemed to aim at positioning himself.

Adding further qualities to the profile of the conscientious scholar, Hazlitt Jr. put together a critical paratext which is indeed crucial to the understanding of his work as a translator. This paratext is made up of the aforementioned "Preface", where he sketches out his project; a standard bibliographical insert; a selection of "Critical Opinions"; a section containing "Bibliographical Notices" that trace and systematise the editorial history of the *Essais*; and an introduction to the *Diary of the Journey of Michel de Montaigne into Italy through Switzerland and Germany in the years 1580 and 1581*, where Hazlitt Jr. prefaces his translation of Montaigne's diary via a detailed account of the circumstances that led him to focus on it. The overall impression is of a scrupulousness that verges on punctiliousness, as for instance when the author sets about describing in detail the manuscript of the journal he used for his translation.[45]

Although not original, the most remarkable piece of Hazlitt Jr.'s output is the "Critical Opinions" section, which includes twenty-one extracts of various length from secondary works relating to the *Essais* and to Montaigne, starting from the long "Preface" to the 1595 edition of the *Essais* penned by Marie de Gournay, Montaigne's *fille d'alliance*. Without sounding like a plead for the recognition of a proto-feminist pre-eminency in the transmis-

[42] *Ibidem*, p. 138.
[43] *Ibidem*, pp. 204-205.
[44] S. BASSNETT, *Translation Studies. Third Edition*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 81.
[45] See W. HAZLITT (ed.), *The Complete Works of Michel de Montaigne*, p. 523.

sion of Montaigne's masterpiece, this inclusion is significant because it sheds light for the first time on a seminal female contribution to the dissemination of Montaigne's essayistic lesson (a share that both Florio and Cotton had tellingly excised from their translations).[46]

One of the most striking features of this catalogue is also the fact that "it separates and implicitly parallels the stories of French […] and of English critical reception of Montaigne",[47] juxtaposing a French list spanning from Gournay to Jean-François de La Harpe (1739-1803) with a British one, extending from George Savile, Viscount Halifax, to the already mentioned Henry Hallam (1777-1859). This process of 'Englishing' was enacted with a purposeful intent, and can easily be interpreted as a conscious act of cultural translation of a 'French' genre onto English shores.[48] This act of critical assemblage was unquestionably conspicuous, and the choice to give a significant predominance to pronouncements by English writers illustrates how deep and vibrant the anglophone debate was.

5. *Conclusion*

The role of the editor was evidently one that Hazlitt Jr. took on very seriously. He managed to combine the material experience he gained in the process of editing his father's (mainly essayistic) works with the practical skills in foreign languages that his father himself had recommended he should cultivate during his school years. With reference to the interpretation of Montaigne's writing, what he lacked in terms of closeness was supplied by his father's insightful decision to include a sound linguistic education in William Jr.'s academic curriculum. His acquired mastery of the French language, alongside the connections in the publishing business provided by his father's *coterie*, ensured Hazlitt Jr. the intellectual capability and practical possibility to pave the way for a crucial step in Montaigne's afterlife. If analysed with an eye to his father's scholarly interest in the French master, this was also a noteworthy step in the history of the personal essay as a genre.

Moreover, behind this literary and philological enterprise stands one of the most straining relationships in the life of any human being, i.e., the symbolical and psychologically invested confrontation with the father. William Hazlitt Sr.'s image, embodied in his essayistic voice, kept looming large in his son's literary activity. And, in light of the Montaigne project discussed here, this might be seen as the perpetuation of a legacy that was not at all exclusive of their family, but interested a whole plethora of authors who, ever since 1580, have continued to chisel and adjust an astounding literary 'invention' such as the essay, as originally conceived by a retired man of law in Southern France.

[46] The role of both de Gournay and the "distinguished female patrons" prompting and enjoying the fruits of Florio's first English translation is dealt with in W.M. HAMLIN, *Montaigne's English Journey*, p. 9 and *passim.*

[47] W. BOUTCHER, "Montaigne in England and America", p. 326.

[48] See on this C.H. KLAUS, *Essayists on the Essay*, pp. xv-xvii.

Appendix

Table 1[49]
Book I, Chapter 55

En la plus espesse barbarie, les femmes Scythes, apres s'estre lavées, se saupoudrent et encroustent tout le corps et le visage de certaine drogue qui naist en leur terroir, odoriferante; et, pour approcher les hommes, ayans osté ce fard, elles s'en trouvent et polies et parfumées. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, p. 316)	In the wildest part of Barbary, the Scythian Women, after Bathing, were wont to Powder and Crust their Faces, and whole Bodies, with a certain Odoriferous Drug, growing in their own Territories; which being cleans'd off, when they were found Perfum'd and Sleek. (C. COTTON [ed.], *Essays*, pp. 611-12)	In an age of the darkest barbarism, the Scythian women, after bathing, were wont to powder and crust the face, and the whole body, with a certain odoriferous drug, growing in their country; which being washed off, when they were about to have familiarity with men, made them perfumed and sleek. (W. HAZLITT [ed.], *The Complete Works*, p. 146)	In deepest Barbary the Scythian women powder themselves after washing and smother their whole face and body with a certain sweet-smelling unguent, native to their soil; when they take off this cosmetic they find themselves smooth and nice-smelling. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *The Complete Essays*, 1993)

Table 2
Book I, Chapter 56

Mais ce n'est pas par cette preuve seulement qu'on pourroit verifier que les femmes ne sont guieres propres à traiter les matieres de la Theologie. Une vraye priere et une religieuse reconciliation de nous à Dieu, elle ne peut tomber en une ame impure et soubmise lors mesmes à la domination de Satan. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, p. 325)	But it is by this proof only, that a Man may conclude, no Man is very fit to treat the Theological Affairs. A true Prayer, and Religious reconciling of our selves to Almighty God, cannot enter into an impure Soul, one at the very instant subjected to the very Dominion of Satan. (C. COTTON [ed.], *Essays*, p. 629)	But this is not the only proof we have that women are not altogether fit to treat of theological matters. A true prayer and religious reconciling of ourselves to God, cannot enter into an impure soul, subjected at the time to the dominion od Satan. (W. HAZLITT [ed.], *The Complete Works*, p. 150)	But that is not the only proof we have of the truth that it hardly befits women to treat Theological matters. A devout reconciliation with God, a true prayer, cannot befall a soul which is impure and, at that very time, submissive to the domination of Satan. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *The Complete Essays*, 1993)

[49] In the first column, Montaigne's original French text is the one provided by the *Montaigne Project* online edition: M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, University of Chicago, ARTFL Montaigne Project, ed. P. DESAN, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:2:0.montaigne (last accessed on 1 June 2020). The two central columns contain Cotton's and Hazlitt Jr.'s versions: C. COTTON (ed.), *Essays of Michael Seigneur de Montaigne*, London, Printed for T. Basset, M. Gilliflower and W. Hensman, 1685; W. HAZLITT (ed.), *The Complete Works of Michel de Montaigne*. For a contemporary comparison, Screech's 'reference' translation is given in the last column: M. DE MONTAIGNE, *The Complete Essays*, Engl. trans. M.A. SCREECH, London, Penguin, 1993, Kindle edition.

Table 3
Book I, Chapter 57

Pour ce coup, je me plains des loix, non pas dequoy elles nous laissent trop tard à la besongne, mais dequoy elles nous y emploient trop tard. Il me semble que, considerant la foiblesse de nostre vie, et à combien d'escueils ordinaires et naturels elle est exposée, on n'en devroit pas faire si grande part à la naissance, à l'oisiveté, et à l'apprentissage. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, p. 329)	And for this reason it is, that I complain our Laws, not that they keep us too long to our Work, but that they set us to work too late. For the Frailty of Life consider'd, and to how many Natural and Accidental Rubs it is Obnoxious and Expos'd: for a large Vacancy, and so tedious a course of Education. (C. COTTON [ed.], *Essays*, pp. 637-38)	Methinks, considering the frailty of life, and the many natural and ordinary wrecks to which it is exposed, we should not give so large a portion of it to idleness, either in childhood or in apprenticeship to the world. (W. HAZLITT [ed.], *The Complete Works*, p. 152)	But now I am complaining not that the laws allow us to work so late but that they are so late in putting us to work. It seems to me that, considering the frailty of our life and the number of natural hazards to which it is exposed, we should not allow so large a place in it to being born, to leisure and to our apprenticeship. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *The Complete Essays*, 1993)

Table 4
Book II, Chapter 2

Toutes actions hors les bornes ordinaires sont subjectes à sinistre interpretation, d'autant que nostre goust n'advient non plus à ce qui est au dessus de luy, qu'à ce qui est au dessous. Laissons cette autre secte faisant expresse profession de fierté. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, p. 347)	All actions exceeding the ordinary bounds are liable to Sinister interpretation: For as much as our liking does no more proceed from what is above, than from what is below it. Let us have this other Sect and make a downright profession of fierceness. (C. COTTON [ed.], *Essays*, p. 27)	All actions exceeding the ordinary bounds are liable to sinister interpretation: for asmuch as our taste does no more affect what is above than what is below it. Let us leave that other set, which makes an express profession of haughty superiority. (W. HAZLITT [ed.], *The Complete Works*, p. 159)	All actions which exceed the usual limits are open to sinister interpretations, since higher things are no more to our taste than inferior ones. Let us leave aside that other School which makes an express profession of pride. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *The Complete Essays*, 1993)

Table 5
Book II, Chapter 6

Comme j'approchai de chez moy, où l'alarme de ma cheute avoit des-jà couru, et que ceux de ma famille m'eurent rencontré avec les cris accoustumez en telles choses, non seulement je respondois quelque mot à ce qu'on me demandoit, mais encore ils disent que je m'advisay de commander qu'on donnast un cheval à ma femme, que je voyoy s'empestrer et se tracasser dans le chemin, qui est montueux et mal-aisé. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, p. 377)	As I drew near my own house, where the Alarm of my fall was already got before me, and that my family were come out to meet me, with the hubbub usual in such cases; I did not only make some little answer to some questions that were askt me, but they moreover tell me, that I had so much sense, as to order that a horse I saw trip and faulter in the way, which is mountainous and uneasy, should be given to my wife. (C. COTTON [ed.], *Essays*, p. 77)	As I drew near my own house, where the alarm of my fall was already got before me, and my family ran to me with the clamour usual in such cases, I did not only make some little answer to the questions that were asked me, but they moreover tell me that I had so much sense about me as to order them to give a horse to my wife, who, I saw, was toiling and laboring along the road, which was a steep and uneasy one. (W. HAZLITT [ed.], *The Complete Works*, p. 172)	As I was nearing my home, to which news of my fall had already run quickly, and after members of my family had greeted me with the cries usual in such circumstances, not only did I answer a word or two to their questions but they say that I was determined to order a horse to be provided for my wife whom I saw struggling and stumbling along the road, which is difficult and steep. (M. DE MONTAIGNE, *The Complete Essays*, 1993)

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