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Bernard Palissy: Early Career - Securing Patronage and Mimicking Nature in a Moment of Crisis

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**BERNARD PALISSY: EARLY CAREER – SECURING
PATRONAGE AND MIMICKING NATURE IN A MOMENT OF
CRISIS**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by
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B.S., University of South Carolina, 2012
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To my Aunt Londa and Cousin Johnnie... without their unconditional love and support my return to academics would never have happened.

And to my mother... she may not be physically present, but her cosmic spirit will always fuel my life's direction and be an invaluable piece of any success I see in this earthly journey.

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And lastly, I am eternally grateful for my advisor and committee chair, Professor Leslie Tuttle. Without her unwavering support, both personally and academically, my completion of this graduate program and this thesis would not have been possible. Aside from being an excellent historian and passionately pursuing eccentric studies in what I consider the most fascinating aspects of history, she possesses a depth of kindness and care that is bordering on magical. She somehow manages to simultaneously push you in the right direction and give you the freedom to run with sometimes way out-of-the-box ideas. I would describe my experience as her pointing out a thread to pull, and just letting me run with it; then returning, greeting me with so much excitement to see what I discovered. For me, this was something that was absolutely invaluable. She has given me hours of her time with coffee dates, endless conversation about Palissy and early modern France, and helping me navigate the roller coaster of emotions that characterizes the graduate school experience. I recognize how lucky I am to have her on my team during this whole process, and I know I am especially lucky simply to know such a wonderful historian, professor, advisor, and overall genuinely beautiful person.

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Abstract

Early in 1562, France was experiencing a state of high religious tension between Protestants and Catholics that would precipitate the outbreak of the Religious Wars on March 1. A week before, Bernard Palissy, a Huguenot potter, wrote a letter to his Catholic patron from prison in Bordeaux where he was being held on charges associated with an iconoclastic incident in his home city of Saintes. This letter would later be published as a dedication letter for the pamphlet *Architecture et ordonnance*, which featured the description of a grotto commissioned by Anne de Montmorency, Palissy's patron, seven years earlier. This thesis analyzes the pamphlet as a single document to study Palissy's relationship to his patron and to explore the artist's understanding of nature as revealed by the description.

In analyzing the letter, Palissy's anxieties concerning his Reformed identity become apparent as he carefully employs a strategy that dances around his Protestantism and argues that truly ingenious art transcends confessional differences. Further, the letter itself serves as an example of patron-artisan communication between two people from vastly different social classes, in which the artisan was making a request to a high noble. This gives us insights into the vertical power dynamic of the patronage system in early modern France, a relationship that was complicated by confessional differences during a period of religious tension.

The proposed grotto description reveals Palissy's inept attempt to employ the dialogue genre at this early stage of his career, suggesting his aspirations to participate in Renaissance intellectual and cultural life. Further, the description provides insights into Palissy's understanding of art and nature, which indicates early influences from Pliny's *Natural History* and an intention of creating a grotto space that echoes Virgil's lost Golden Age. Palissy argues that ingenious art overcomes nature, specifically a nature that is disorderly, in motion, full of

variety, and in a state of decay. The ingenuity that Palissy obsesses over is characterized by the artisan's ability to capture nature so exactly that the viewer cannot distinguish between real nature and artistic creation.

Chapter One. Introduction

*For now Reader, this Grotto impels you
to contemplate close up an elevated work,
In its vault appearing like a grand tour of the high heavens
In its diversity, around which all is changing.¹*
-Bernard Palissy, 1563

The life and work of Bernard Palissy (1510-1590) provides material interesting to French Renaissance historians, art historians, and historians of science. Palissy was a sixteenth-century French ceramicist and natural philosopher who produced most of his work during the tumultuous era of the Religious Wars. He is best known today as the artist responsible for a style he called “rustique figulines,” earthenware objects adorned with life-casts of animals including lizards, snakes, and frogs.

Palissy represents a lesser-known figure whose work and interests help illuminate the period of the Renaissance in France. In some ways, he exemplifies the idea of a Renaissance man: a polymath possessing wide-ranging talents and knowledge. Historical figures like Leonardo da Vinci have captured the imagination of both scholarly and popular audiences for making strides in seemingly unrelated fields like art and science. Palissy, likewise, made contributions to the fields of ceramic art and to science in the areas of geology and hydrology. These wide-ranging contributions have brought Palissy to the attention of specialists in art history and history of science. However, Palissy still is little known, and is often pigeonholed because of the methodological lens with which scholars apply to him. This is, in part, because few of his ceramic pieces survive and their attribution is often uncertain, and because he only published three works during his life. Yet even with the limited evidence that exists, it is possible to build on the efforts of scholars in a range of fields and piece together a picture of Palissy’s

¹ « Car maintenant Lecteur, cette Grotte te range A contempler de près un œuvre sourcilleux, En sa voûte semblant au grand tour des hauts cieux, En diverses façons qui tout autour se change. » *A&O*, 13.

relationship to Renaissance culture in France. Through it, we see a provincial artisan's aspirations to demonstrate his ingenuity and thereby elevate his work in ceramics and natural philosophy, and also his social status. This thesis probes Palissy's ambitions by focusing on his first publication, a brief pamphlet titled *Architecture et Ordonnance de la grotte rustique de Monseigneur le Duc de Montmorency* likely composed sometime in the period between February 1562 and March 1563.²

A&O begins with a dedication letter to Palissy's patron, the Constable of France, Duc Anne de Montmorency (1493-1567). It then includes a detailed description of a ceramic grotto Palissy was in the course of building as a commissioned project for the duke. The letter and description are rendered especially poignant because Palissy appears to have composed them while imprisoned on suspicion of participation in Protestant iconoclastic violence. His imprisonment coincided with the beginnings of France's religious wars. Not surprisingly, the proposed work of art appears never to have been completed in the form Palissy proposed. Perhaps as a result, this pamphlet has been largely ignored or simply brushed over in the scholarship concerning Palissy. Not only does it refer to an artifact that does not exist, *A&O* is a short document, lacking the depth and development of Palissy's other two publications, *Recepte veritable, par laquelle tous les hommes de la France pourront apprendre a multiplier et augmenter leurs thresors* (1563-64)³ and *Discours admirable de l'art de terre de son utilité, des esmaux et du feu* (1580).

² Palissy dates the dedication letter February 24, 1562 and states that he is writing from the Concierge of Bordeaux where he is held prisoner. We have documentation from his trial and for his provisional release both dated March 24, 1562. We do not have publication documentation for *A&O* aside from the title page stating, "From the printing press of Barthélemy Berton, 1563." Presumably, *A&O* was published not long after Palissy's release from prison at the end of March.

³ We have documentation for the "Contract for the publication of the *Recepte veritable*" showing publication dates from September 3, 1563 to November 4, 1564.

In this thesis, I argue that despite its brevity and lack of polish, *Architecture et Ordonnance* is worthy of scholarly attention. Composed in haste and even in desperation, *A&O* offers interesting insights on Palissy at the beginning of his career. It shows a man trying to make his way during a time when some artisans could achieve the elevated status of *artist*; a Protestant trying to negotiate his position in the Catholic state of France on the eve of the Religious Wars; and a rustic, largely self-taught layman's understanding of nature at a time when printed books brought natural philosophy to new audiences and empirical, practical knowledge gained new credibility in intellectual circles.

In 1562, Bernard Palissy was a 52-year-old Huguenot potter in the city of Saintes, located in the southwest region of France. The date of his birth is still unknown, but most historians agree that he was born in the year 1510 in the town of Agen, France.⁴ Palissy alludes to the first thirty years of his life in his writings, but there exists no documentation to draw concrete conclusions about those years. We can only speculate and must rely on piecing together what he mentions in his later writing because surviving documents do not cover the period before 1558.⁵

Little is known for certain about Palissy's education. Historians infer that he taught himself math and geometry, at least enough to qualify as a land surveyor later in his life.⁶ With Palissy clearly being literate, scholars have concluded he likely read about a dozen books on the

⁴ Leonard N. Amico cites a 1586 document created by prison authorities that states Palissy was "native of Agen in the Agenais," plus Palissy's own vague allusions and the types of clay he used. Amico also gives a great description of why this date makes more sense than the other proposed dates of 1499 and 1520, based on Palissy's associations and influences of contemporaries in *Bernard Palissy: In Search of Earthly Paradise* (New York: Flammarion, 1996), 13; Henry Morely, *Palissy the Potter: The Life of Bernard Palissy, of Saintes*, vol. 1, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1852), 2; Hanna Rose Shell, "Casting life, Recasting Experience: Bernard Palissy's Occupation between Maker and Nature," *Configurations* 12, (2004): 1; Alphonse LaMartine, *Memoirs of Celebrated Characters* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1854), 226.

⁵ Amico, 13.

⁶ Aurèle La Rocque, introduction to *The Admirable Discourses of Bernard Palissy*, by Bernard Palissy, trans. Aurèle La Rocque (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957), 1.

topics of theology, architecture, alchemy, and natural history by the time he wrote *A&O*.⁷ His first trade was as a glass painter or in the stained glass window trade in some fashion.⁸ Some historians speculate that he learned the art of glass painting from his father, while others simply state he apprenticed under an unknown glazier.⁹ Either way, the general consensus is that he learned chemistry through the process of making stained glass.

Before settling in Saintes, Palissy traveled all over France, a practice that was common for young artisans. In 1868, Louis Audiat¹⁰ reconstructed Palissy's route from places he mentions in his published work. These include the provinces of Guyenne, Armagnac, Brie, Champagne, Gascony, Agenais, Quercy, the Ardennes, Languedoc, Auvergne, Burgundy, Bigorre and Béarn.¹¹ After these travels, Palissy returned to Saintes sometime between 1535 and 1539, married and had six children, and also changed his trade to land surveyor.¹² During the course of land surveying he "discovered" a porcelain cup, which he describes as the moment that ignited his search for how to make enamels.¹³ Presumably from this point forward, Palissy pursued making artisanal earthenware which he would later term *rustique figulines*. This art gave Palissy his place in history and it was the reason that he gained the patronage of Anne de Montmorency and later the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici.

⁷ Amico, 14.

⁸ Morely, *Palissy the Potter*, 6; Roque, introduction, 1; LaMartine, *Memoirs of Celebrated Characters*, 232.

⁹ Morely, *Palissy the Potter*, 11; Rocque, introduction, 1.

¹⁰ Louis Audiat (1833-1903) was a French historian, writer and librarian who published many books on Palissy's life and works, as well as histories on the Saintonge region of France, including *Bernard Palissy: étude sur sa vie et ses travaux* (1868); *Les oeuvres de maistre Bernard Palissy* (1888); *Palissy et son biographe. Réponse à M. Athanase Coquerel fils* (1869); *Saint-Pierre de Saintes, cathédrale et insigne basilique* (1871); *Saint Eutrope : premier évêque de Saintes, dans l'histoire, la légende, l'archéologie* (1877), "Audiat, Louis 1833-1903," OCLC WorldCat Identities, accessed May 21, 2020, <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n88130932/>

¹¹ La Roque, introduction, 2.

¹² La Roque, introduction, 2.

¹³ Bernard Palissy, *The Admirable Discourses of Bernard Palissy*, trans. Aure`le La Rocque (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957), 192.

While little is known about the time or motivation for Palissy's conversion, he remained a Protestant throughout his life. He was imprisoned for his religious beliefs no less than three times and eventually died in the Bastille in 1590. Scholars have consistently suggested that he was able to live and create as long as he did because his patrons included Montmorency, the Constable of France, and later the Queen Mother, from whom he received protection despite his religious identity. *A&O* offers insights into the dynamics of a patron-artisan relationship across confessional lines in a time of religious tension, suggesting that such relationships were far from simple. Palissy wrote to Montmorency from the first imprisonment associated with his Protestantism, carefully navigating their unequal socio-economic status and astutely addressing the duke. But his letter simultaneously reveals many anxieties associated with his vulnerable position as a Protestant. In that letter dated February 24, 1562, Palissy's urgency and the modest request he made sheds light on a protection that was far from guaranteed.

Palissy's signature style – the one that brought him to the attention of Montmorency—encompassed both skill at the potter's wheel and a life-casting technique. He combined these to create dinner ware that represented natural environments. His signature pieces included dishes, platters, and ewers decorated with actual-sized animals such as snakes, lizards, and frogs, as well as shells, pebbles, and vegetation. Brightly colored enamels covered these pieces, an aspect of his art Palissy was particularly proud of because he developed enamels thin enough to cover the natural elements completely without obscuring their form. In the 1580 *Discours Admirable*, he wrote of the long years of trial and error that it took to perfect such enamels, although he never revealed his actual process for making them. He also did not detail his life-casting process, just

that he used one. Scholars note the life-casting techniques used by Palissy's contemporaries in other trades, such as goldsmiths, to gain an understanding of Palissy's possible process.¹⁴

The grotto Palissy proposed for Montmorency, described in the body of *A&O*, was a work of much larger scale and ambition; his description of it invites readers to immerse themselves imaginatively in a created environment mimicking nature. Working from this description and Palissy's surviving pieces, his rustic style and desire to recreate nature *as it actually is* takes center stage. The environments he depicted were not idealized; they are not representations of a natural environment that appeals to a refined and orderly sense of beauty. Palissy aspired to a more disorderly, organic, realistic depiction of what natural environments actually look like. This understanding of nature as chaotic, random and ever changing is a theme present throughout *A&O*, and it is crucial in visualizing Palissy's intended grotto space.

This is the first study to examine *A&O* in-depth as a single document. Doing so both extends and complicates the existing historiography on Palissy. Through its sometimes awkward implementation of formal or classical literary techniques, the work demonstrates Palissy's aspirations to participate in Renaissance intellectual and cultural life. Moreover, the context and content of *A&O* suggests areas for further research. In particular, two themes emerge as significant questions for sixteenth century French cultural historians. First, what role did confessional differences play in the patron-artisan relationship during the era of religious conflict? Second, how did a Renaissance-era artisan and aspiring natural philosopher understand "nature" and how did he seek to represent "nature" in his work? *A&O* shows Palissy believed

¹⁴ Amico, *Earthy Paradise*, 86; Shell, "Casting Life," 9; citation they are referring to: "How to Cast Little Lizards," "How to Cast a Shrimp," "Vipers and Serpents," "How to Cast Turtles," "Molding a Turtle," and "Frogs," *Manuscripts Occidentaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, MS. Fr. 640/Microfilm 1965, fols. 122, 123, 124, 140, 141r,v. I; For the details regarding the gruesome life-casting process described in the manuscript see: Amico, *Earthy Paradise*, 86-96; Shell, "Casting Life," 12; Shell, "Ceramic Nature," 54.

that truly ingenious art could transcend confessional differences. Not only that, he measured ingenuity in terms of art that could manipulate the viewer's perception, minimizing its differences from true nature and even besting nature by avoiding the decay that time imposed on natural things.

Most prior work on Palissy has come from the disciplines of art history, history of science, and agricultural history. Art historians have taken the lead, analyzing the objects that are associated with Palissy's name and style. One in particular is Leonard N. Amico who published a book in 1996 which he refers to as a series of pictorial monographs. Amico applies a meticulous methodology drawing from Palissy's surviving ceramic pieces and his published works. In the chapter on grottoes, Amico does a brief art historical analysis of the grotto description in *A&O* and then devotes an entire chapter to a full analysis of *Recepte*. He weaves in information from *Discours* and *A&O* through the other chapters that address the subjects of rustic ceramics, Palissy's relationship to the "Saint-Porchaire" ceramicists, and the many Palissy imitators that sprang up two and a half centuries later. He includes scientific studies on Palissy's surviving ceramic works and discusses the many misattributions of ceramic wares that have been made to Palissy and his workshop. Most importantly, Amico compiled all surviving documentation concerning Palissy and republished this evidence in the appendix.

Amico has two purposes for producing this book; he aims to provide the authoritative biography on "one of pre-revolutionary France's most unusual and captivating folk heroes," and interpret Palissy's writings in order to understand Palissy's hopes, frustrations and fears in the French society that was "militantly censorious of [Palissy's] Protestant creed."¹⁵ All new scholarship concerning Palissy must make use of this reference. I am deeply indebted to Amico's

¹⁵ Amico, *Earthy Paradise*, 6.

work and hope that this thesis adds to the scholarship he has laid out in his monumental publication *In Search of Earthly Paradise*.

Palissy's style and technique is one center of debate in art-historical scholarship concerning his work, with generally two different interpretations emerging. There are those who recognize Palissy's art as unique and elevating ceramics from craft to fine art, and consider his life-casting technique as part of that elevation. And there are those who disapprove of his methods because of the ease of reproduction associated with it, which results in the similarities between pieces, and further a disdain for its boorish appearance, since Palissy is mimicking nature as it is.¹⁶ For the former, Palissy at least achieved his aspirations of elevation from artisan to *artiste* hundreds of years later. In an article, "Bernard Palissy: Prophet of Modern Ceramics," Jerah Johnson argues for Palissy's uniqueness and the significance of his technique in the transition of ceramics from craft to fine art.¹⁷ Palissy's very departure from using the wheel or modeling by employing life-casting techniques is precisely what makes Palissy's work unique. His goal to capture and render nature exactly as it is serves as another theme present in *A&O* indicating his desire to create a space so close to the natural was an ambitious endeavor but not impossible.

In environmental history, or agricultural history in particular, Palissy is generally spoken of positively. Palissy receives the most attention in agricultural history because he wrote treatises on salts and farming, found in both *Recepte* and *Discours*. Grace M. Zeigler praises Palissy for his theories in the field, stating his conclusions "won for him an outstanding place among the

¹⁶ For argument for Palissy's lack of innovation see: M. L. Solon, *A History and Description of the Old French Faience* (Londonn: Cassell and Company, Ltd, 1903), vi-vii.

¹⁷ Jerah Johnson, "Bernard Palissy, Prophet of Modern Ceramics," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 14, no.4 (1983), 408.

naturalists of the sixteenth century.”¹⁸ She continues, “his theories on agricultural practice...show accuracy of his observations and have earned for him a place among the earliest leaders of scientific agriculture.”¹⁹ Ziegler continuously refers to quotes in Palissy’s *Discours* and dissects them, noting the very instances that Palissy was correct in his agricultural observations and praising him for being “many years in advance of scientific research.”²⁰

Palissy undeniably made contributions to science, specifically to the development of geological thought, theories and ideas. In his final publication, *Discours Admirables* (1580), he discusses at length his observations on the subjects of waters and fountains, alchemy, mithridate, ice, vegetative/generative salts, stones and fossils, clay earths, and marl.²¹ However, depending on the field Palissy either receives passing recognition for his contributions, is overlooked entirely, or is disregarded because of his practical approaches. Generally, when Palissy is skipped over it is for reasons commonly associated with the study of the history of science, such as general histories that cover a long period of time or that “science” did not exist in the sixteenth century and the natural philosophy that provided the foundation for positivistic science is disregarded. For example, in Frank Dawson Adams’s *The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences*, Palissy’s contributions are bypassed almost entirely.²² However, there are plenty of places where Palissy receives some credit. Eighteenth-century historians with geological inclinations, such as Georges Cuvier, René Reamur and Buffon, did not hesitate to

¹⁸ Grace M. Zeigler “Agriculture Observations of Bernard Palissy, the Huguenot Potter,” *The Scientific Monthly* 24, no.1 (1928), 29.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Zeigler, “Agricultural Observations,” 30; For more on agriculture see: Stoll, Mark. “‘Sagacious’ Bernard Palissy: Pinchot, Marsh, and the Connecticut Origins of American Conservation.” *Environmental History* 16 (2011): 4-37. For mineralogical chemistry see: Robert Mulhauf, “The Beginning of Mineralogical Chemistry,” *Isis* 49, no.1 (1958), 52.

²¹ Bernard Palissy, *The Admirable Discourses of Bernard Palissy*, trans. Aure`le La Rocque (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

²² F. D. Adams, *The Birth and Development of the Geological Sciences* (London: Bailliere, Tindell and Cox, 1938).

credit Palissy for his contributions to geological thought. In Cuvier's *Essay on the Theory of the Earth*, he states clearly that Palissy correctly theorized that fossils belonged to animals that had lived and died in that same area.

In a more recent instance, a catalog published in 1984 and aimed at illustrating the history of geology from 1500-1850, Palissy is mentioned under the subjects "Paleontology" and "Hydrology." Palissy is credited with "clearly stat[ing] the theory of a perpetual cycle of water" and for stating clearly "that fossils found inland must have lived and died there."²³ Inversely though, Palissy is disregarded in a book devoted to the history of fossilization. Martin Rudwick dismisses Palissy as "anti-intellectual." He argues that Palissy's processes for observation were too self-consciously "practical" and his approach can be chalked up to crass opportunist materialism.²⁴ Rudwick's conclusion for the book is that scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a world-view that essentially prevented them from coming to the correct conclusion that fossils were organic in origin.

The debate around the degree to which the discoveries of natural philosophers played in creating the foundation for modern science is always contentious. Those who want to make the argument for the significance of natural philosophy to the development of modern science will look to people like Palissy to highlight his contributions in established scientific fields and draw connections to his artisanal work. At least, that was my initial interest in him. However, this methodology forces the inquirer to focus only on Palissy's 'science,' and to value his contributions only to the degree that historians of science or scientists themselves find them significant, making it difficult not to pigeonhole Palissy as has been done over and over again.

²³ Derick C. Ward and Albert V. Carozzi, *Geology Emerging* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1984), 12, 24.

²⁴ Martin Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils: Episodes in the History of Paleontology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972), 17.

In my view, Palissy certainly contributed to the field of science; but what is of more importance are his more general aspirations to participate in Renaissance intellectual life as a whole. These aspirations are present in *A&O* suggesting the significance of aspiration in other Renaissance intellectuals with varied and seemingly unrelated interests. The contemporary idea of Renaissance men as defined by pursuit of self-definition and self-improvement is a significant characteristic that Palissy displays; however, this idea is also in tension with the Calvinist call to God wherein Palissy's artistic genius would serve to express his membership among the elect. There is an aspect of ambition present in Palissy's character, an aspiring optimism that seems to fuel his desire to gain success in the form of patronage funding his ceramic arts and his development of natural philosophy laid out in *Discours*. Today, when we think of aspirations it is often with the goal of success at the end of it. Differing definitions of success obviously exist and are dependent on personal ideas. Yet, as the modern world progressed increasing quickly in the areas of science, technology and engineering, we as a society have internalized the notion that STEM fields and progress are one in the same. It is not such a leap to think that early modern natural philosophers who contributed to positivistic science served a purpose in pushing the progress of mankind forward.

In the course of working on this thesis, I found that focusing on Palissy's early aspirations revealed in *A&O* provides a clearer picture of his initial understandings of nature that he would later develop into his final natural philosophical treatise *Discours Admirable*. This brought about the notion that perhaps instead of working backwards from his contributions, a focus on his artisanal and natural philosophical beginnings gives value to tracing the intertwining fields of artisanal craft cultures and the development of natural philosophy, and then positivistic science.

In recent years, historians recognize that studying characters like Palissy requires an interdisciplinary approach. Hanna Rose Shell has done interesting work in this area with two articles that attempt to place the perspectives of art and science scholars onto both Palissy's ceramic works and his writings on geological thought. She uses methodologies drawn from art history and the history of science to contribute to scholarship concerning the contributions of artisanal craft cultures to the foundations of natural philosophy.²⁵ The connections that she draws are sometimes confusing for those without the intricate knowledge of the geology being explained. More should be done in this area for Palissy himself or for other lesser known Renaissance figures, and advisably done by following Shell's example and employing an interdisciplinary approach. But what *A&O* contributes to this conversation is perhaps by analyzing the initial thoughts of figures like Palissy, those wearing various hats of writer, artisan, natural philosopher, we can show how the intermingling of their interests drove progress in each field.

The art historians who react to Palissy's work with disdain because it does not appeal to a higher sense of beauty offer a good example of why a more holistic approach to Palissy is worthwhile. If only his art existed and not his writings, it might be possible to analyze his ceramic pieces at face value. However, Palissy clearly expresses the purpose of his art in *A&O*. He believed ingenious art represented nature as it was, full of movement, variety, disorder and even a state of decay. Even at the onset of Palissy's career as ceramicist and natural philosopher, he had no inclination to create idealized depictions of nature. The judgment of some scholars that

²⁵ See: Hanna Rose Shell, "Casting life, Recasting Experience: Bernard Palissy's Occupation between Maker and Nature," *Configurations* 12, (2004) and "Ceramic Nature," in *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, ed. Ursula Klein and E. C. Spary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 50-70.

his work is “uncouth”²⁶ is understandable when thinking only about his table ware, as Palissy abandoned functionality and produced pieces that would honestly be disturbing to eat food from. Yet, when we imagine those same life-cast natural elements covering the inside of an entire building, we are forced to consider Palissy’s ceramic wares in a different light. It is hard not to feel a bit of awe for what Palissy aspired to do in creating an entirely ceramic cast grotto space.

Each of the subsequent chapters in this thesis addresses one of the questions raised by Palissy’s first publication. Chapter Two probes at the intricacies of patron-artisan relationships by analyzing the dedication letter Palissy wrote to Montmorency. The nature of the letter indicates that it was likely composed as a personal letter, and not originally intended for publication. It offers evidence of how a lowly artisan might handle the glaring differences in rank between himself and his patron in the high nobility. Palissy also addresses the issue of confessional differences, employing a clever strategy that carefully dances around his Protestantism without blatantly denying it. He builds his request on the one thing the two have in common, their mutual interest in the intended masterwork Montmorency had commissioned. The letter documents Palissy’s anxieties about his vulnerable circumstances and reveals his strategic argument that great art transcends confessional differences. Viewed in a larger context, the letter serves as an example of patron-artisan communication from the artisan on the lower side of the vertical power dynamic that characterizes the patronage system in early modern France.

Chapter Three analyzes the grotto description, helping the reader to visualize the grotto that Palissy intended to build. The grotto as an object would have used Palissy’s existing ceramic technique, but in this work Palissy needed to deploy the written word to breathe life into

²⁶ Arthur Lane, *French Faience*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1970), 4.

his “monstrous” building. The chapter examines the description – written in dialogue form—in relation to Renaissance literature and uses it to analyze Palissy’s views of nature. Palissy’s obsession with manipulating the viewer’s perception comes to the forefront, suggesting that eliminating the perceived distinction between work of art and “real” nature is the ultimate aspiration of Palissy’s creative project. Since *A&O* is Palissy’s first written expression of his understanding of nature, focusing on the pamphlet helps pinpoint the sources and inspiration for Palissy’s thinking about natural philosophy, ideas that he would later develop, lecture on, and write in *Discours*.

Palissy was at the beginning of his artisanal career, dedicated to a persecuted religious sect during civil wars that were seemingly endless during his lifetime. Still, he found a way to navigate and pursue his varied interests. He aspired to move from artisan to *artist* and scientist, and we find this evident in his very first publication. *A&O* reveals more about him and the time he lived and worked than any study that measures him up against a singular field of focus and places his significance only within the boundaries of that field. The term Renaissance man encapsulates those who possessed various skills and contributed to various fields, but we learn more from them by studying them holistically in the cultural context they lived. The substance of *A&O* lends itself to this methodology and transports us back to a tumultuous time in France as revealed through the eyes of a lowly artisan, full of ambition and imagination. In this beginning moment we see an aspirational man attempting to collect and project his initial thoughts on nature, simultaneously navigating how to make a proper appeal to his Catholic patron for aid from prison where he was facing a heresy charge.

Chapter Two. Patronage—An Artisan in Troubled Times

Architecture et Ordonnance begins with a personal letter in which Palissy addresses his patron, the Constable of France, Duc Anne de Montmorency. This letter reveals some of the dynamics of the patron-client relationship in sixteenth-century France, the kind of relationship that might exist between an artisan and a nobleman in the upper echelon of French society and politics. In this example, we see that relationship uniquely from the client's point of view, and we enter the conversation at a moment of urgent trouble in Palissy's life. As we shall see, Palissy both deploys a strategy that invokes the names of other nobility from whom he has received protection and justifies his request for aid around the project he and the duke have in common, namely the commissioned grotto.¹ Because what appears to have been written as a personal plea was later published, we have unusual insight into the difficulty of Palissy's situation in the beginning of his career as a Protestant artisan trying to make his way within the religious and political tumult of France on the eve of the Religious Wars. Seeking the right strategy to appeal to his Catholic noble protector, he sought to downplay his own involvement in Protestantism and reaffirm his patronage ties by touting the progress he had made in fulfilling his commission.

Palissy requested aid while in a prison in Bordeaux, where he was being held for suspected involvement in an iconoclastic incident in his town of Saintes. As Reformation historians have documented, iconoclasm was one of the characteristic ways Protestants expressed

¹ There can only be speculation about what Palissy knew about grottos before being commissioned by Montmorency to build the one described in the body of *A&O*. To my knowledge, he did not leave the kingdom of France and see any Italian grottos. However, he states in *Discours Admirable* that he saw the inside of the grotto at Chateaux de Meudon, which belonged to Cardinal de Lorraine, Charles de Guise, and was built by Francesco Primaticcio (1504-1570), the Italian painter, architect and sculptor who spent most of his career in France. Primaticcio is known as the one who brought the Italianate garden and grotto design to France in the mid-sixteenth century. See Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, pp 50-53 for further details about Primaticcio's other grottos in France and description of what the now destroyed grotto at Meudon may have looked like based on comments by Vasari and Pierre de Ronsard's poem *Chant Pastoral* (1559).

their disdain for Catholic idolatry. Violent crusades against idolatry manifested in iconoclasm, as well as civil unrest and armed resistance against legitimate rulers.² According to Carlos Eire, scattered incidents of iconoclasm took place in France as early as the 1520s, but it was not until the 1560s, when Calvinism gained wide acceptance in certain regions that iconoclasm became a significant expression of religious discontent among French Protestants.³ France was the scene of iconoclastic riots in Rouen and La Rochelle in 1560. The pattern spread to other cities in 1561, and by the winter of 1561-62, iconoclastic riots had taken place in cities throughout France.⁴

Whatever happened in Saintes, then, was hardly unprecedented. Unfortunately, the events are poorly documented and what little we know about them comes from documents related to charges against Palissy himself. Leonard N. Amico, an expert on Palissy's life, has published these two documents, "Mandate on the part of the Parlement of Bordeaux for the provisional release of Bernard Palissy" and "Official summary of Bernard Palissy's defense during his trial as a heretic." The first lays out the charges and plan for Palissy's trial, while the latter details Palissy's legal defense, a denial of guilt that claims the charges were concocted by Palissy's "mortal and capital enemies," among the ecclesiastical community in Saintes.⁵ Palissy's irate testimony named his accusers and implied they had personal vendettas against him for reasons he did not specify. We glean from these documents that the image-breaking incident targeted statues in the Saint Pierre Cathedral of Saintes. Both documents are dated March 24, 1563, a mere five

² Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship From Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

³ Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 279.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, App III, Doc IV, Doc V, 229-230. It is unclear whether the titles of these documents are official titles. Amico found them first published in 1920 (H. Patry, "La captivité de Bernard Palissy pendant la première guerre de religion (1562-1563), *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, vol. 69, 1920, 21-25). Now in Bordeaux (Archives départementales de la Gironde, 1B 256, f° 145).

days after the Edict of Amboise officially ended France's first civil war.⁶ Although the statistics for heresy executions are difficult to piece together, William Monter argues that they reached their single year peak in 1559; in other words, the execution of Protestants was a vivid memory and likely still a real possibility.⁷ These were the circumstances under which Palissy was writing.

Historians have long recognized that the hierarchical social structure and incomplete political centralization of early modern France made patron-client relationships essential parts of individual strategies for survival. For the most part, work on these relationships by historians has focused on their social and political significance, while art historians have examined patronage in terms of the market for art and status of the artist. Palissy's letter allows us to unite these approaches. The preeminent social and political historian of patronage in early modern France, Sharon Kettering, argued that the patron-client relationships of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries entailed four general characteristics. First, they were two-person, personal and emotional; bonds of friendship were formed and dependence grew as one or the other moved up the political ladder. Second, patron and client were unequal in status, so the relationship united a superior to a social inferior in a voluntary vertical alliance. Third, the relationship involved reciprocal exchange where material benefits and protections were received from the superior in exchange for loyalty and services from the inferior. Finally, the relationship was continuous,

⁶ Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, xi. See also: Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power During the French Wars of Religion: The Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Penny Roberts, *Peace and Authority During the French Religious Wars C.1560-1600* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); *French Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*. Edited and translated by David Potter (United Kingdom: Macmillan Education UK, 1998) and Nancy Lyman Roelker, *One King, One Faith: The Parlement of Paris and the Religious Reformations of the Sixteenth Century* (United Kingdom: University of California Press, 1996).

⁷ William Monter, "Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe, 1520-1565," in *Toleration and Intoleration in European Reformation*, eds. Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 57.

involving more than a single, isolated exchange.⁸ The letter that opens Palissy's first publication demonstrates that Montmorency and Palissy's relationship generally fit this pattern, although their relationship appeared tenuous at the moment of the letter's composition due to the vast differences in their status and the complications caused by Palissy's imprisonment on charges of heresy. From prison in 1562, Palissy solicited protection for the artisanal work his patron had commissioned, evading the issue of his Protestantism and arguing that artistic genius could transcend confessional differences.

Published as a preface to the pamphlet *A&O*, Palissy's letter functions as a dedicatory letter. However it reads more like a personal letter, following a general structure that was typical of medieval and early modern personal letters and less common for printed dedications that appealed to the dual audience of patron and reader.⁹ Early modern letters, whether dedicatory or personal, were composed to recognize the hierarchical relationship of correspondents. Palissy's letter follows a pattern based on letter-writing manuals considered suitable for a person from a lower social status to address his superior in the social hierarchy. The structural aspects of Palissy's letter adhere to a general elemental arrangement as laid out in the medieval *ars dictaminis*, the rule-bound discipline of letter-writing that structured expression of relationships

⁸ Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and clients in Seventeenth Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 13-18; See also: Kristen Brooke Neuschel, *Word of honor: interpreting noble culture in sixteenth-century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Malcom Walsby, *The Counts of Laval: Culture, Patronage and Religion in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France* (United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2007); Donna Bohanan, *Crown and Nobility in Early Modern France*. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) and Sharon Kettering, "Patronage in Early Modern France." *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (1992): 839-62.

⁹ There are many studies concerning early modern and medieval letters, see *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau and Cécile Dauphin; Katherine Kong, *Lettering the self in Medieval and Early Modern France*; Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth Century France*; Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*; and *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, eds. Toon Van Houdt, Jan Papy, Gilbert Tournoy and Constant Matheussen; For detailed analysis of dedicatory letters see: Jacqueline Glomski, "Careerism at Cracow: The Dedication letters of Rudolf Agricola Junior, Valentin Eck, and Leonard Cox (1510-1530)" in *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*. See also: Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Mater Builder of the Italian Renaissance*, Hill and Wang, 2000. Grafton's methodology for Alberti's pamphlet and prefacing dedication letter of *On Painting* was inspiration for the analysis of Palissy's *A&O*.

with epistolary elements reflecting social status.¹⁰ Katherine Kong has documented how the arrival of the *ars dictaminis* from Italy to France in the twelfth century influenced France's already established dictaminal elements. Her work indicates that Palissy's adherence to the formulaic composition is not surprising.¹¹ The structure, or rather, a suitable arrangement of its material, was integral to the success of conveying the sentiments of the sender, while the tone reflected the relationship of the correspondents and their social status.¹² Kong lays out the five elements of a common letter: the salutation, *captatio benevolentiae*, narration of circumstance, petition and conclusion.¹³ This pattern of conventional elements provides a simple lattice with which to analyze Palissy's letter, enabling us to tease out the various aspects of the patron-artisan relationship. We can break down Palissy's letter to Montmorency into these five parts, and by doing so, formulate an understanding of Palissy's station in relation to Montmorency while better understanding his urgent personal situation in the context of the Religious Wars in sixteenth-century France.

Salutation

The salutation recognizes that Montmorency was a powerful individual within the political hierarchy of sixteenth-century France, and formally acknowledges the vast social distance between him and Palissy. The salutation is straightforward: "to my lord, the Duke of Montmorency, Peer and Constable of France."¹⁴ Palissy uses *Monseigneur* (my lord) to denote

¹⁰ Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY, USA: Boydell & Brewer), 2010, Accessed January 20, 2020. doi:10.7722/j.ctt169wdz6, 2; the term *ars dictaminis* encompasses manuals circulating letter-writing theory, rules, collections of sample letters, and the discipline that taught letter-writing in educational institutions across Europe, see: *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ Kong, *Lettering the Self*, 11.

¹² Kong, *Lettering the Self*, 4-5.

¹³ Kong, *Lettering the Self*, 4.

¹⁴ « À Monseigneur le Duc de Montmorency, Pair et Connetable de France, » Bernard Palissy, *Architecture et Ordonnance de la grotte rustique de Monseigneur le Duc de Montmorency* (La Rochelle : Barthélemy Berton, 1563), 1; source republished by the University of Michigan Library on January 1, 1919; digitized June 6, 2007,

Montmorency's elevated social status as a member of the high nobility, and refers to him by his position of Constable of France, signifying Montmorency's role within royal governance. The Constable was the second commander in chief of the military after the King himself. In addition, the Constable was by tradition a member of the King's council, made up of princes of the blood, peers of the realm, and great officers of the state.¹⁵ In practice, admission to the *Conseil d'état* was by invitation; Montmorency had been so invited, and held a position on the council during the years that *A&O* was written and published and until his death in 1567.

The distance between Palissy's station as an artisan and Montmorency's as scion of a powerful noble family and member of the King's inner circle was massive. We do not know exactly how Palissy came to know the duke or receive his patronage, but Palissy suggests in the letter that their relationship began seven years prior, in 1555, when the grotto was commissioned. Leonard N. Amico suggests that it may have been through Palissy's relationship with the powerful courtier, Antoine de Pons, whom Palissy mentions in his dedication letter, but as Amico concludes, we cannot know with certainty.¹⁶

Vertical social relationships defined the patronage system, thus they were common and important in this era. It was not unusual for people in this time to write letters to those considerably above their social status. In fact, letters could be used to create status, as Katherine

accessed October 10, 2017. All translations are made by the author unless otherwise noted. See complete translation in App I.

¹⁵ Robert J Knecht, *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 16.

¹⁶ Leonard N. Amico, *Bernard Palissy: In Search of Earthly Paradise* (New York: Flammarion, 1996), 28; According to Amico, "Antoine de Pons was an exceptionally wealthy seignory. Named *gentilhomme d'honneur*, he served François I at Ferrara, where the French had already established their presence through Renée of France." His success in the French court was dependent upon "securing the graces of François I and Anne de Montmorency," which he had much success by coming to France "laden with arms and precious gifts supplied by the factories of Ferrara," and later Montmorency would become the godfather to his child. Antoine de Pons was linked to Italy, Anne de Montmorency, and Protestantism through his first wife and "according to the Calvinist theologian Théodore de Bèze, [Pons] embraced the New Religion with such zeal that he successfully converted many of the poor inhabitants of Pons, although the Protestants set fire to this house when he later took on a less sympathetic wife."

Kong shows by pointing to examples of how those in inferior positions could “lodge powerful requests” in well-structured letters.¹⁷ Since the grotto work, a rather large commission, that Palissy writes about in this pamphlet was intended for the duke, it is reasonable that he addressed his dedication letter directly to Montmorency. While Palissy’s relationship with Montmorency is documented by the duke’s ownership of works by Palissy, we have to take Palissy’s word for the actual timing of the grotto commission. Documentation in the form of inventories taken of Montmorency’s collection in his Paris townhome in the years 1556 and 1559 make clear that Montmorency was patron to Palissy.¹⁸ But there is no surviving artifactual evidence of the grotto itself, and there is only documentation for receipt of payment for the grotto several years after this letter, in 1564.¹⁹ We can only glean the nature of their patron-artisan relationship in the year 1562 from what Palissy says in his dedication letter.

Captatio benevolente

The second structural element of letter-writing, *captatio benevolentiae*, was used to secure goodwill from recipients by putting them in a favorable frame of mind.²⁰ Palissy makes his claim on Montmorency’s goodwill by focusing on his success as an artist, particularly by emphasizing recognition from the King himself. Palissy does this by expressing his gratitude for

¹⁷ Kong, *Lettering the Self*, 10.

¹⁸ “First Inventory of Anne de Montmorency’s Collections in his Paris Town house in the Rue Sainte-Avoye (Rue du Temple)” and “Second Inventory of Anne de Montmorency’s collections in his Paris Town House in the Rue Sainte-Avoye (Rue du Temple),” in Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, App III, Doc I, Doc III, 229; Both first published in 1918 and 1919 (L. Mirot, “L’hôtel et les collections du Connétable de Montmorency,” *Bibliothèque de l’école des Chartes*, vol. 79, 1918, p. 311-413 and vol. 80, 1919, p. 151-229). Now in the Château de Chantilly (Archives du château, série A, carton 1).

¹⁹ “Receipt for a Payment made to Bernard, Pierre, and Mathurin Palissy for the grotto of Anne de Montmorency,” in Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, App III, Doc VII, 231; first published in 1876 (A. de Montaiglon, “Quittances de peintres, sculpteurs et architectes français, 1535-1711,” *Nouvelles archives de l’art français*, vol. 4, 1876, pp. 16-17). Now in Paris [Bibliothèque nationale, Ms. Fr. 26 145(154), pièce 774]; This was a partial payment made to Palissy for 100 *livres*. We do not know how much he was paid prior to this for the seven years that he was presumably working on the commissioned grotto before finding himself writing this letter from prison in 1562.

²⁰ Kong, *Lettering the Self*, 4.

Montmorency's patronage and his hopes that the duke will hear a reading of the discussion he offers as testimony to the quality of the work the duke ordered him to undertake.²¹

At the outset, Palissy indicates his main concern is the grotto work, not his personal safety. This deflection is consistent throughout the dedication letter and continues with the elaborate description of the proposed grotto. Palissy strategically emphasized the greatness of the work he was engaged in to secure Montmorency's goodwill. He seeks to prove this by invoking the names of powerful people in the duke's social circle who could attest to his remarkable skill and the progress he had made.

First, he reminds Montmorency of the time when the grotto was commissioned, when King Henry II and the Cardinal of Lorraine attested in the duke's presence that "they had seen some of the greatest works and of the most beautiful things in the world, but they had never seen a work like mine," even if the work in question was but a "simple basin."²² He then thanked Montmorency for presenting him to the King, a real honor in itself, but also because the King purchased that simple basin for *cinquante écus*, or 50 crowns. According to Palissy, the basin was the first piece that he made in what would become his signature style, called *rustique figulines*, and if the King of France valued that piece so highly, he should know that the work he has done thus far for Montmorency "is without comparison more excellent and wonderful."²³ He claims that even the King loved his work enough to purchase it for the high price of 50 crowns, roughly equivalent to the amount an artisan might earn in two years.²⁴ Perhaps Palissy

²¹ « Monseigneur, puisqu'il vous a plu me faire l'honneur de m'employer à votre service, et même en l'œuvre mentionné en ce petit dialogue, je ne pouvais moins faire, que de le vous dédier et vous prier par cet esprit, qu'il vous plaise me faire ce bien de prêter l'oreille à la lecture d'icelui, afin que par cest écrit vous ayez un certain témoignage de l'excellence de l'œuvre qu'il vous a plu me commander il y a environ sept ans. » Palissy, *A&O*, 2.

²² « qu'ils avaient vu des plus grands œuvres et des plus belles choses au monde, mais qu'ils n'avaient jamais vu œuvre semblable au mien. Lequel œuvre n'était qu'un simple bassin » Palissy, *A&O*, 2.

²³ Palissy, *A&O*, 2.

²⁴ One *écus* was approximately 50 *sols tournois* in the year Palissy is writing. It was 45 *sols tournois* in the year 1541. See Frank C. Spooner, Frank, *The International Economy and Monetary Movements in France, 1493-*

continuously highlights those who can attest to the greatness of the work is because Montmorency had not seen any of the completed work in the seven years since it was commissioned. Palissy's strategy was to engage Montmorency in his case by characterizing himself as an artistic genius, attested by the King's purchase of his work.²⁵ Palissy began his letter by linking his artistic career to the royal head of France and Montmorency's close friend and, arguably, a royal patron they share.

Palissy's initial strategy was to secure Montmorency's goodwill by displaying the uniqueness, greatness and high monetary value of his artisanal work through the evidence of the King's opinion on his work, a clever strategy that emphasizes their shared position as clients or subjects of the French king. If that piece was only a small basin, he invited the duke to imagine the exponentially greater work that the grotto will be. In just a few sentences Palissy reveals his overarching strategy, underscoring his artisanal genius and the distinct potential of his work. He relies on this theme throughout the letter to circumvent the troubling differences between himself and Montmorency, the disparity in their socio-economic stations and their confessional differences.

Narration of Circumstance

As we move to the next structural element of letter-writing, narration of circumstance, it is clear that Palissy's invocation of powerful nobles is a tactic beyond securing goodwill. He cites many people within Montmorency's social circle who have been witnesses to the ongoing work and have found it so valuable they were willing to grant him protection across confessional

1725 (United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 1972), 100. A full understanding of the actual value of 50 crowns in this time period is not necessary. What is important is that Palissy states that it was "so highly valued by the aforesaid King and Cardinal," "a été tant estimée par les susdits Roi et Cardinal," Palissy, *A&O*, 2.

²⁵ Surviving documents do not corroborate Palissy's story about being presented to King Henry II nor do we have proof that the King purchased a basin from him, although these events are possible.

lines. Of those, most notable is the Duc de Montpensier, Louis de Bourbon (1513-1582).²⁶

Montpensier was one of the few princes of the blood by the time of Palissy writing *A&O*, but because of the power struggle that ensued after the death of Henry II in 1559 the exact nature of his position is unclear.²⁷ A sizable number of French nobles converted to Protestantism, part of the reason the Reformation took hold in France. But Montpensier, Palissy's protector, was not one of the nobles who converted. He remained Catholic and battled to extirpate Protestantism. Just a few months later, in October of the year that Palissy was writing (1562), Montpensier marched his soldiers into the neighboring town of La Rochelle where he outlawed Protestantism, banished the city's ministers, and replaced the altars in the Catholic churches.²⁸

Palissy wrote from prison and dated the letter February 24, 1562. Before saying anything about being imprisoned, he offers Montpensier as someone who could attest to the greatness of his work, not merely his rustic ceramic basins, but the actual grotto work he was doing for Montmorency. Palissy states:

And to attest to the aforesaid things, I take as witness My lord the Duke of Montpensier, who when he last traveled to Saintonge visited my workshop, accompanied by several great lords. After seeing the greatness of the works, or a

²⁶ According to Keith Cameron in his edited edition of Palissy's *Recepte veritable*, "Duc de Montpensier, Louis de Bourbon, who had succeeded in 1562 to Antoine de Navarre, in the general government of the maritime provinces of Aquitaine, appeared in Saintonge to restore order to these troubled provinces," (Géneve: Librairie Droz S. A., 1988), 49.

²⁷ Richard A. Jackson, "Peers of France and Princes of the Blood," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1971), 27-46; According to Jackson, The Princes of the Blood were "male members of a ruling dynasty and its cadet lines, and capable of becoming king of France if the present king or his direct line should die out..." as compared to The Peers of France, "second only to the king in prestige, represented by the medieval principle of a ruling consortium of king and great barons," Jackson, 28. As far as Palissy is concerned, Montpensier is the most similar example of nobility that Palissy can offer to Montmorency.

²⁸ Judith Pugh Meyer, *Reformation in La Rochelle: Tradition and Change in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1568* (Geneve: Librairie Droz S.A., 1996), 101.

part of them, he offered protection to me and all those in my house, prohibiting the Seneschal of Saintonge and other royal officers from disturbing me and forbidding them to touch my work. And if I should be accused of the new religion (such as it is called) or other crimes, he reserved these charges for his jurisdiction.²⁹

Palissy claims that not only did Montpensier see the work, but he thought it was so great that he granted Palissy protection from being accused of heresy.³⁰ And not only did he safeguard him against a heresy charge, he claimed jurisdiction over other crimes for himself as well, essentially absorbing Palissy as a vassal. Palissy never explicitly states in this letter that he has adopted the Reformed Religion, but his participation was already known in the Saintonge region.³¹ His name was included in a list on a warrant issued by the Parlement of Guyenne for suspicion of heresy in September 1558, our only tangible evidence in regards to his Protestant affiliation prior to writing this letter.³² His acknowledgement here of avoiding a formal accusation, however, is clear evidence that he was already known to be a Huguenot by this point in his life.

Palissy did not deny being a Protestant yet he subordinated his confessional identity in these circumstances. He emphasized that he was not directly tied to the iconoclastic incident and that his imprisonment was the result of a personal vendetta. His affiliation with the new religion at this specific moment was evident in his mention of the reason for his imprisonment:

²⁹ « Et pour attestation des choses susdites, j'en prends à témoin monseigneur le duc de Montpensier, lequel se transporta dernièrement qu'il était en Saintonge à mon atelier, accompagné de plusieurs grands seigneurs. Lequel après avoir vu la grandeur de l'œuvre, ou partie, il mit en sauvegarde moi et tous ceux de ma maison. Interdisant au Sénéchal de Saintonge et autres officiers royaux, de non me perturber, ne toucher à mon œuvre. Et partant que j'aurais été accusé de la nouvelle religion (qu'on appelle) ou autres crimes, qu'il en réservait à lui la connaissance. » Palissy, *A&O*, 2.

³⁰ Heresy in this time was "the conscious rejection of Catholic doctrine," Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 44.

³¹ Best evidence of Palissy's religious beliefs is found in *Recepte veritable* (La Rochelle: Barthélemy Berton, September 1563-November 1564). This is Palissy's second publication after *A&O*. He was released from prison around end of March 1563.

³² "Warrant on the part of the Parlement of Guyene for the arrest of Bernard Palissy," in Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, App III, Doc II, 229; H. Patry discovered this document in 1902. It is the earliest known allusion to Palissy's persecutions. Amico lists this source as found in *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, vol. 51, 1902, 77-78. Now in Bordeaux (Archives départementales de la Gironde, 1B 195, f° 177).

that is “the Dean and chapter of Saintes made me prisoner ... to draw from me testimony against certain wealthy citizens of the city of Saintes, whom they accuse of breaking their images, in the hope of recovering money for the repair of them.”³³ This statement seems intentionally to obscure his association with the Reformed Religion and does not seem in keeping with the charge of heresy he appears to have faced. Instead, Palissy deflected again, specifically focusing on money, as though if the cathedral chapter received payment for the broken images, this would remedy Palissy’s legal problem. Knowing that the act of image-breaking or iconoclasm was one of the specific ways in which Protestants displayed their contempt for Catholic worship, the fact that the chapter fingered Palissy suggests his affiliation with Protestantism was known, or at least highly suspected. Whether he actually had any knowledge useful to the chapter, Palissy’s involvement in the Protestant movement made him suspect. We should be skeptical of his purposeful wording that the reason for his imprisonment was charges of iconoclasm against *other* citizens.

What is important here is that Palissy was accused of association with an act considered heretical; ironically, this particular act (iconoclasm) entailed the destruction of art, by a man who considered himself an artistic genius. Reformed Protestants had specific reasons to justify iconoclasm, essentially they were destroying art that they believed idolized God. The Reformed idea of doing away with idolatry is very complex, theologically and intellectually. And the physical acts of violence towards altars and idols in the Catholic church that followed were not entirely upheld by the main leaders of the Protestant Reformation.³⁴ Being that Palissy’s

³³ « le Doyen et chapitre de Saintes m’ont fait constituer prisonnier ... pour tirer de moi témoignage contre certains riches citoyens de la ville de Saintes, lesquels ils accusent d’avoir rompu leurs images en espérance d’avoir de l’argent pour la réparation d’icelles » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

³⁴ For a coherent and complete intellectual history of iconoclasm see Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship From Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Protestantism derives from John Calvin's teachings, Calvinist views of idolatry are of interest here. While Calvinists were every bit as concerned with the same matters as Lutherans like *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*, they paid more attention to the way the divine ought to be approached, such that "the finite cannot contain the infinite."³⁵ In other words, they disagreed with the Catholic practice of idols and relics because they saw it as an attempt to contain the infinite. Carlos Eire sums it up best in arguing that Calvinists aimed "to do away with any practice that compromised the 'spiritual' worship commanded by God, [and so] the Reformed launched a vigorous attack on all external objects of devotion that had previously been charged with religious value."³⁶

Palissy's art endeavored to mimic nature, and Calvinists believed the works of nature to be evidence of God's wisdom. This raises the question of how Palissy thought his work might be related to religion considering the sole subject of his art was nature. Amico speculates about this notion in analyzing *Recepte*, but there are no indications of Palissy's thoughts on art, nature, and his Protestantism in *A&O* to speculate about an answer to this question. Here he downplays his Protestantism and the immediate question is the degree to which he felt it necessary to de-confessionalize his letter to Montmorency. Palissy's association with image-breaking indicates his confessional ties, and he rightfully felt the need to circumvent the confessional difference between himself and Montmorency.

If Montpensier afforded him the level of protection Palissy describes, it suggests confessional difference did not make a patron-client relationship impossible. We know nobles maintained ties among themselves across confessions, however whether this occurred in the patron-artisan relationship is worth examining, especially because it was apparently uncertain for

³⁵ Eire, *War Against the Idols*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Palissy personally. The letter suggests Palissy believed and wanted Montmorency to believe confession should not be an issue, especially if the artisan's work was as great as he claims was his own. In other words, Palissy hoped to subordinate his Protestantism by highlighting the artisanal ingenuity which had won him protection from other powerful Catholic nobles.

The Religious Wars have been frequently described as “aristocratic conflicts sheltering under the cloak of religion,” implying that the question of religious affiliation was not necessarily the most important factor to nobles in determining whether or not they participated in interactions and transactions with one another.³⁷ Historians of this period have shown that religious affiliation was often chosen as a strategy to gain favor or to express rebellion; sometimes, confession was less an expression of actual spirituality or religiosity and more about political strategy. Whether Palissy's Reformed affiliation mattered to Montmorency we cannot know, especially since we do not have evidence that Montmorency even read this dedication letter. What is evident here is that Palissy was aware of the confessional differences and worried that it might be an important factor, and so applied tactics accordingly.

Palissy assumed that the confessional difference was important, if anything, out of respect but also perhaps a little fear. Montmorency was the Constable of France, a military commander who would go on to lead many battles against Protestant rebellion, including the battle between Catholics and Protestants at Saint-Denis on November 10, 1567 where he suffered battle wounds and died two days later.³⁸ He was known as a devoted Catholic, even forming the triumvirate with Francis, Duc de Guise, in 1561, a reaction to the Queen Mother's perceivable

³⁷ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 29; For nobility forming connections and the question of confessional affiliation see: Kristen Brooke Neuschel, *Word of honor: interpreting noble culture in sixteenth-century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 31.

³⁸ Not to be confused with his second son, Henri de Montmorency (1534-1614) who was a *politique* and also constable. Anne de Montmorency never wavered in his role to extirpate Protestants from France.

willingness to compromise with Huguenots.³⁹ Given the uncertainty of his predicament, and the fact that his patron was not in favor of tolerating Protestants, Palissy had reason to worry he was not going to have his request granted without employing a strategy that carefully danced around the subject of confessional differences.

The clearest indication of this delicate situation is that Palissy did not directly ask Montmorency to intercede and negotiate his release. Even so, the long list of noblemen's names he chose to invoke and the fact of his physical imprisonment suggest this was his real aim. Other historians have assumed that the letter requests protection for his person, a reasonable conclusion given the circumstances under which the letter was written.⁴⁰ However, it is significant that Palissy never explicitly petitions the duke to negotiate his release or afford him any protection over his own person. I interpret this as an example of Palissy's prudence in approaching a noble of Montmorency's station. While Palissy displays boldness in the invocation of noble personages for his examples, he does not endeavor to make a request that could be considered unseemly. He was painfully aware of the distance between his position and that of his patron, a distance that was both socio-economic and complicated by confession.

Palissy mentions other prominent people who afforded him protection such as the Lord of Jarnac and the Lord of Pons, who were witness to a letter written by the Lord of Burie, "to the Sénéchal de Saintonge (brother of the Dean of Saintes, in my region) ordering that he permit me to complete your work in peace."⁴¹ Antoine de Pons, the Lord of Pons, was a known Protestant convert among the nobility, but also had personal connections with Montmorency; the duke was

³⁹ Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46-7. Triumvirate was created to seek aid from Phillip II of Spain to drive all Protestants from France.

⁴⁰ See Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, and Aurèle La Rocque, introduction to *The Admirable Discourses of Bernard Palissy*, by Bernard Palissy, trans. Aurèle La Rocque (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

⁴¹ « au Sénéchal de Saintonge (frère du Doyen de Saintes, ma patrie) qu'il me permît parachever votre œuvre en paix » Palissy, *A&O*, 2.

the godfather of his child.⁴² In all, Palissy listed the names of more than thirty noblemen to convey his connections and adduce the level of protections he received before finding himself in his current situation. But of course, if he had all these protections, they clearly had not been enough to keep him out of prison.

Palissy casts the chapter of Saintes as the villains who had the audacity to ignore protection orders from powerful nobles, and thus reveal the tenuous chain of command and the rivalries between civil and religious powers in this era:

My Lord, I have found it good to alert you that despite the safeguard My Lord of Montpensier has given me, and those letters that the lords of Burie and of Pons wrote to the Seneschal de Saintonge, notwithstanding that I was charged to complete your work, monsieur the Dean and chapter of Saintes made me prisoner as a criminal in the conciergerie of this city of Bordeaux.⁴³

The chapter of Saintes was the governing religious body in the city, holding religious jurisdiction and thus a separate and potentially rival power of the *sénéchausee* who was in charge of judging civil cases sent up from inferior courts.⁴⁴ It seems the letters of protection sent to the seneschal of Saintes, along with Montpensier's command to the seneschal to leave Palissy in peace, were for naught. Given the confused jurisdictions over civil and religious matters in this era, Palissy had no guarantee that these protections would be sufficient.⁴⁵ On the eve of civil war, persecution of

⁴² Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, 28.

⁴³ « Monseigneur, j'ai trouvé bon vous avertir que quelque sauvegarde que Monseigneur de Montpensier m'ait donné, et quelques lettres que les seigneurs de Burie et de Pons aient su écrire au Sénéchal de Saintonge, ce nonobstant ainsi que j'étais après pour parachever votre œuvre monsieur le Doyen et chapitre de Saintes m'ont fait constituer prisonnier comme un malfaiteur en la conciergerie de cette ville de Bordeaux, » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

⁴⁴ Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 17.

⁴⁵ See Monter: While gathering the statistics for heresy executions, he makes an important point that those executed in the later 1560s were officially condemned for non-religious charges, that "there was now abundant justification for secular judges to hand down death sentences to members of a rival religious organisation," further that the "crime of heresy had become so fully secularized that it almost disappeared from legal vocabularies." Monter, "Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe," 60.

heresy had revved up because “a well-organised Reformed church, whose members had infiltrated even the sovereign Parlements, increasingly frightened Henri II.”⁴⁶ While Henri II was focused on the Italian Wars against the House of Hapsburg, the number of Huguenots was increasing in France. By the time the conflict of the Italian Wars ended in 1559 and he turned his full attention to the Protestants in France, the issue was more substantial; his reaction came from fear and resulted in a drastic increase in persecutions that year.

The overall goal of Palissy’s narration of circumstance was to inform Montmorency that he was working on the grotto, which he could not complete due to being imprisoned. While we might assume that he was leading up to asking the duke to intercede on his behalf, he did not make that request in the letter. In fact, after stating that he is imprisoned, he did not even mention that the work cannot be completed but rather submits, “From which follows that while I am here your work is in danger of being ruined, and it is the truth, it has already been bombarded with many assaults.”⁴⁷ Once again, Palissy deflected attention from his personal status or peril, focusing on the grotto work; it was the work that was in danger.

In the final part of the narration of circumstance, Palissy altered his tactic slightly, no longer referring to powerful locals who sought to protect him, but offering examples of occasions on which his work was protected, whether because observers recognized its ingenuity, recognized it actually belonged to Montmorency, or both:

And if it had not been for the captain Nog[a]ret, [the soldiers] would have done great damage the day that the city of Saintes was sacked. Also the lord of Richelieu having heard the greatness of the work, shouted through his horn through the streets and

⁴⁶ Monter, “Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe,” 57.

⁴⁷ « Dont s’ensuit que pendant que je suis ici votre œuvre est en danger d’être ruiné, et à la vérité, on lui a déjà baillé plusieurs assauts. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

crossroads of the city of Saintes, that the said work was for you and that no one be so bold as to touch it, nor stay in my house, because of the said task.⁴⁸

Palissy offers up the striking image of a noble shouting through the streets demanding the grotto work be left alone because it belonged to Montmorency, and also because he had *heard* of the work's value. Palissy's strategy to highlight protections of the work itself is wisely painted to remind his patron his investment is at stake. But it is also chosen to emphasize the unique talent and growing renown of its creator. In this instance Palissy suggests Richelieu did not even have to see the work to know its greatness; its reputation alone precipitated the act of pulling out his horn to shout.

In building his case Palissy emphasizes his work has garnered renown on its own accord and also highlights its association with the powerful Catholic, Montmorency, subtly distancing it from his personal concerns as a Protestant artisan. Anyone daring to bring about harm to the work would be insulting the duke himself, not piously disciplining the Huguenot potter who made it. In his narration of circumstance, Palissy's approach was arguably quite sagacious, suggesting he possessed pragmatic knowledge about how to negotiate the judicial and religious tensions of his era. Given the confusion of powers, Palissy's best and only course of action was to tap into patronage ties and focus on his shared interest, and investment, with Montmorency—protecting and finishing the grotto. It was the only interest they had in common. He was careful to avoid any explicit statements about his adherence to Protestantism, but was also careful not to deny it. He neglected to give any detail of his involvement in the image-breaking situation, simply proclaiming his innocence towards the end of the letter by reiterating that when he is

⁴⁸ « Et n'eût été le capitaine Nog[a]ret, on y eût fait grand dommage le jour que la ville de Saintes fut saccagée. Aussi que le seigneur de Richelieu ayant entendu la grandeur de l'œuvre, fit crier à son de trompe par les rues et carrefours de ladite ville de Saintes, que ledit œuvre était pour vous et que nul ne fût si hardi d'y toucher ne loger en ma maison, à cause de ladite besogne. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

justifié or exonerated he would use his freedom to complete the commissioned project.⁴⁹ So, in the end, it was protection for the work that motivated Palissy's petition.

Petition

The petition is the next element of letter-writing in the *ars dictaminis*; it is the specific request of the letter that the sender is asking of the recipient.⁵⁰ The petition section of the letter highlights the urgency of action to protect the work by Palissy, asking Montmorency to order the chapter be responsible for protecting the work from the depredations of soldiers. Palissy prefaces his request by giving his understanding of the circumstances in Saintes at this time, namely that soldiers are housed in the town, and maintained at the expense of the city, solely for the safety of the seneschal, dean and chapter. These soldiers, according to Palissy, "do not let pass a week without doing some breaking, or opening at night in barns and workshops, where your said work is stored."⁵¹ As a result, the duke's commission was in immediate danger.

Note that Palissy is again de-confessionalizing the situation by bringing attention to violent acts committed by "soldiers," who seem to act outside of confessional motivations. But he further seeks to transfer responsibility to the *sénéchausee*, dean and chapter who are in charge of these soldiers. Even with the personal protection Palissy previously received in the form of letters written on his behalf to the seneschal, and the intervention of noblemen during instances of conflict in the city, Palissy fears for the safety of the work because of his mistrust in the *sénéchausee* and his enemies, the dean and chapter of Saintes. If they threw him in prison when

⁴⁹ « par ce que de bref après je prétends être justifié et parachever l'œuvre susdit » Palissy, *A&O*, 3. Palissy's use of the word 'justified' suggests an honor component that could be further explored. For the purposes of this thesis, his use of the word suggests the tenuous relationship he had with the dean and chapter of Saintes, his 'mortal and capital enemies.'

⁵⁰ Kong, *Lettering the Self*, 4.

⁵¹ « Ce néanmoins il y a un tas de populace et certains argolets, lesquels sont entretenus aux dépens de ladite ville de Saintes et lieux circonvoisins, seulement pour la sûreté des personnes dudit Sénéchal, Doyen et chapitre dudit lieu. Lesquels argolets ne laissent passer une semaine sans qu'ils ne fassent quelque brisure, ou ouverture de nuit ès granges et ateliers, ou est votre dite besogne.» Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

he himself had protections, he cannot trust that the work will be safe without intervention by a more powerful authority, at least not in his workshop. And so he pleads:

This considered, My Lord, I have found no better means than to request that you issue an order to one of your secretaries, that he write to the gentlemen of the Parlement of the city of Bordeaux where I am prisoner, that they please compel said chapter of Saintes, my legal opponent, to take inventory of your work, and to keep protection of it there during my imprisonment.⁵²

According to Palissy, the chapter is capable of guarding the work because they own many vacant buildings.⁵³ Palissy adds that “this will be the way that your work will be preserved, and if some damage occurs, the said chapter will reply, which has the wherewithal to satisfy to your interests.”⁵⁴ Thus, Palissy’s explicit request in the letter is not that the duke work for his release, but rather that the duke force the very people responsible for his imprisonment to be made legally responsible for storing the work safely.

Palissy petitions that the work transfer to the care of a Catholic institution in order to protect their shared concern for the work of art, but especially to reiterate Montmorency’s financial stake in it. Palissy may be distrustful of the chapter but he may not have expected Montmorency to share the same sentiment. Palissy further gives the duke due regard by requesting him to order his secretary to write to the Parlement of Bordeaux; he does not expect the duke to write a letter himself. His request, at its essence, is simply asking the duke to protect his own monetary interests. While Palissy is obviously very proud of his own work and makes

⁵² « Ce considéré, Monseigneur, je n’ai rien trouvé meilleur que de vous prier de commander à un de vos secrétaires, qu’il écrive à messieurs de Parlement de cette ville de Bordeaux où je suis prisonnier, qu’ils leurs plaise contraindre ledit chapitre de Saintes, mes parties, de prendre votre œuvre par inventaire, pour icelui garder durant mon emprisonnement. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

⁵³ « Ce qu’ils peuvent aisément faire, attendu qu’ils ont plusieurs logis vacants. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

⁵⁴ « ...ce sera le moyen que votre œuvre sera conservé, et s’il s’ensuit quelque ruine, ledit chapitre en répondra, qui a bien de quoi satisfaire à vos intérêts. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

clear he intends to complete it upon his release, he implores the duke to intercede on behalf of the work because “that will be the way that the money I have received from you will be insured.”⁵⁵

Here, we can see that Palissy’s concerns were multifaceted. He may have worried that he himself would be financially ruined by the destruction of the work that had already been completed. As a result, Palissy expressed concerns over the money Montmorency had already invested in the project. Taking into account his desire to transfer legal responsibility to the chapter, we may suspect Palissy felt a personal concern about his financial liability with respect to the money he received when the grotto was commissioned. If any damage occurred during his imprisonment, either to the work itself or the tools and supplies he required to complete it, he was at risk for financial repercussions. He could find himself financially ruined if Montmorency demanded he satisfy the contract or return the money he had paid in advance. In this sense, Palissy’s request that the duke compel the chapter to take inventory of the work and hold it in their vacant storage facilities is essentially a request that the chapter be made legally responsible for storing it safely—a legal transfer of responsibilities from himself to the chapter. Palissy was concerned about the possibility of soldiers entering his workshop, an entirely rational anxiety about his endangered livelihood when he was imprisoned and unable to protect it.

Throughout the letter, Palissy frequently invokes what seems like legal language, suggesting he was familiar with the worlds of justice and litigation. For example, he cited the names of respected men who have seen the work he was engaged in for Montmorency as if to prove that work existed, in the event it was destroyed. As a result, the letter alternates between a defensive and submissive tone. He often prefaces each of the names he invoked with the phrase

⁵⁵ « ...que ce sera le moyen que les deniers que j’ai reçu de vous seront assurés... » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

“I take as my witness,” or some variation of such, referring to those he names as *témoins* [witnesses]. He provides a list of more than twenty individuals who can attest to the work completed thus far.⁵⁶ The strategy of invoking names of nobility to highlight protections he received does not explain his decision to include a literal list of people who “will attest and certify that there is nothing in this small dialogue that does not contain truth.”⁵⁷ This quasi-legal quality to Palissy’s letter constitutes the major way that it is different from the tone of conventional dedicatory letters, and even complicates what otherwise seems to follow the pattern of a letter of petition to a social superior. It is as if Palissy is preparing a legal defense in the case that his property or the completed grotto work incurs catastrophic damage.

Palissy’s careful strategies in narrating his circumstances reveal he was in a dire situation. Why did he not ask Montmorency to intercede on his behalf? Through almost every structural element of the letter Palissy leads us to believe that he will petition Montmorency to intercede on *his* behalf, albeit likely justifying his request in the interests of completion of the masterpiece Montmorency has commissioned. But Palissy had to frame his petition carefully because of the vast difference in social status and confession that separated him from his patron at this moment of intense religious and political tension.

The Letter’s Conclusion

In the last structural element of the conventional letter, the conclusion, Palissy shifts to a clearly submissive tone, apologizing for his lack of style, emphasizing the urgency of his situation, and expressing his humble station in relation to Montmorency. He concludes by emphasizing that he needs a protector. Before closing the letter with well wishes for the duke’s life and health, he seeks consideration of his situation in regards to his writing, “If the said things

⁵⁶ Palissy, *A&O*, 2-3.

⁵⁷ « attesteront et certifieront qu’il n’y a rien en ce petit dialogue qui ne contienne vérité. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

are not written in a style worthy of you, you will please have regard to the quality and capacity of the author, also consider where this writing was done, and done in haste.”⁵⁸ He suggests an awareness that his writing may not be up to par in quality that is expected when addressing someone of Montmorency’s station, but he asks this be excused due to his circumstances. Palissy’s use of the word “haste” recognized that the completed work was in imminent danger of destruction, the main reason, he claimed, for his urgent request that Montmorency intercede. Writing this letter was Palissy’s best strategy to protect the work. But haste possessed a noticeable duality; by apologizing for the quality of his writing Palissy emphasized the limits of his situation, the limits of his writing ability, and in a way, emphasized his own station as lowly artisan. It emphasized his urgent need for the aid of a powerful personage.

Palissy cemented his denouement in the complimentary close, “Done in the concierge of Bordeaux, this 24th day of February 1562. Your most humble, most obedient and most affectionate servant, Bernard Palissy.”⁵⁹ This sign-off from prison emphasized again his powerlessness. He also used three expressions of leave-taking when one or two typically were used to conclude letters of compliment.⁶⁰ The expressions, ‘very humble’ and ‘very obedient’ were printed in the *Instruction à écrire des lettres* as the proper closings for those of the most elevated status, princes, lords, officers of the crown, first presidents of parlement, those addressed as *Monseigneur*; whereas the expression ‘very humble and affectionate servant’ was reserved for those addressed as *Monsieur*.⁶¹ It was not unusual to diverge from the rules listed in

⁵⁸ « Si les choses susdites ne sont écrites d’un style digne de vous, il vous plaira avoir égard à la qualité et capacité de l’auteur, aussi du lieu où cet écrit a été fait à hâte. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

⁵⁹ « Fait en la conciergerie de Bordeaux ce 24 jour de février 1562. Votre très humble, très obéissant et très affectionné serviteur Bernard Palissy. » Palissy, *A&O*, 3.

⁶⁰ Roger Chartier, “Secrétaires *for the People?* Model letters of the ancien régime: between court literature and popular chapbooks,” in *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau and Cécile Dauphin, trans. Christopher Woodall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 83.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

letter-writing instruction manuals,⁶² but Palissy's use of three expressions is peculiar. In other dedication letters like the two in his next publication, *Recepte veritable*, he used the expression "your very humble and affectionate servant" for both the Queen Mother and Duke Montmorency.⁶³ What could this possibly indicate about the imprisoned Huguenot potter? The most apparent suggestion is a sense of desperation. After all his careful insistence about the importance and ingenuity of the work, the danger it was in, and the need to insure the money Montmorency had spent thus far, Palissy's desperation spills out in the last lines of the letter.

Why Palissy adopted the strategies we have analyzed in this letter to Montmorency constitutes a question we cannot fully answer without comparison to letters of a similar nature. Fortunately, we have two dedicatory letters in *Recepte veritable*, published in 1563, with which we can compare this letter from prison dated in 1562. The first dedication letter of the *Recepte veritable*, addressed to the Queen Mother, is considerably shorter, provides vague thanks for honoring Montmorency's request to negotiate his release, and submits an unsolicited patronage request couched in a suggestion that the book that follows contains useful information for the construction of her garden at Chenonceaux.⁶⁴ This "self-recommendation" fits within the dynamics typical of dedicatory letters.⁶⁵ Both letters in *Recepte*, the one addressed to the Queen Mother and the one addressed to Montmorency, include the vocabulary that reveals and veils Palissy's intentions, also typical of dedicatory letters.

⁶² Chartier points out that *secrétaires*, like Puget de La Serre's *Secrétaire à la Mode* (17th Century), often left no explicit recommendations, and thus "[purchasers] would never manage to accumulate sufficient knowhow to complete his or her correspondence without making some blunder in etiquette." Chartier, "Secrétaires for the People?" 83.

⁶³ Bernard Palissy, *Recepte veritable*, ed. Keith Cameron (Geneve: Librairie Droz S. A., 1988), 47, 51. Palissy actually adds *trés* to affectionate in the close of the dedication letter to the Queen Mother.

⁶⁴ Palissy, *Recepte veritable*, ed. Cameron, 46-47. Also, there is no evidence that Montmorency negotiated his release.

⁶⁵ Toon Van Houdt and Jan Papy, introduction to *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of letter writing in Early Modern Times*, eds. Toon Van Houdt, Jan Papy, Gilbert Tournoy, Constant Matheussen (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2002), 6.

Admittedly, the *Recepte veritable* dedication to Montmorency is based on this letter in *A&O*, sharing much of its content. But it has been stripped of the submissive language. Furthermore, the *Recepte* makes clear appeals to Protestant sentiment, rather than subordinating this aspect of Palissy's identity. He names the same nobles, he places blame on the dean and chapter for his imprisonment, and he insinuates that they disrespected Montmorency by keeping him from his work and physically endangering that work.⁶⁶ He refers to his captors as his "mortal and capital enemies," and to their hands as "captive" and "bloodthirsty."⁶⁷ He makes no attempt to veil his Protestantism, even invoking the scripture in the first few sentences of the letter, "Jesus Christ left us a counsel written in Saint Matthew, Chapter 7, by which he forbids us to sow the daisies in front of the pigs, lest they turn against us, and tear us apart,"⁶⁸ to be exact. He pointedly acknowledges that his life was in danger by stating, "if I had confessed to the judges of this city, they would have killed me, before I had received any service from you."⁶⁹

Finally, the dedication of the *Recepte veritable* is different in that there is not one mention, not a single reference, to the greatness of Palissy's work, probably because at the point of writing *Recepte* he was no longer in prison and did not need to justify himself or appeal to a common interest between himself and Montmorency. The dedication letter for *Recepte veritable* marks itself as a preface for a work aimed at a Protestant audience.⁷⁰ It is much more conventional to the genre of dedication letters, underscoring the dedication letter of *A&O* as

⁶⁶ Palissy, *Recepte veritable*, ed. Cameron, 48-51.

⁶⁷ « pour me tirer hors des mains de mes ennemis mortels et capitaux. » 48 « Je me fusse tresbien donné garde de tomber entre leurs mains sanguinaires » *Recepte*, 49. « Aussi estant entre leurs main prisonnier » *Recepte*, 50.

⁶⁸ « Jesus Christ nous a laissé un conseil escrit en Sainct Matthieu, chapitre 7, par lequel il nous defend de ne semer les marguerites devant les pourceaux, de peur que se retournans contre nous, ils ne nous deschirent » *Recepte*, 48.

⁶⁹ « que si je me fusse confessé ès Jugess de ceste Ville, qu'ils m'eussent fait mouorir, auparavant que j'eusse seu obtenir de vous aucun service. » *Recepte*, 49.

⁷⁰ See Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, Chapter V, 154-185 for a full analysis that teases out Palissy's Protestantism in *Recepte veritable*.

originally personal. Once released from prison, Palissy had the freedom to express his ideas and feelings about the Reformed religion.

The comparison of the two letters reiterates how fraught Palissy's situation was in the spring of 1562, when he petitioned his patron from a prison. By piecing together the broader context in which Palissy wrote, and comparing the two dedication letters addressed to the duke, Palissy's fear for his life is apparent even if he never mentions it here.

The dedication letter of *A&O* is a personal letter from an ambitious artisan of modest station to a duke and peer of France, composed at a moment of personal and political crisis. Palissy employed a prudent strategy to bridge the vast difference in their stations and to minimize their confessional differences in a time of religious tension. Following the rules for courteous correspondence that sought to guarantee his petition a favorable hearing, Palissy cleverly focused on the interest he and his correspondent shared, namely completing the grotto masterpiece toward which both he and Montmorency had made considerable investments. This letter provides an example of how social inferiors could approach their betters in times of trouble, using the vertical ties of the patron-client system to negotiate their position within the chaotic, overlapping authorities of the early modern French state. Further, the letter gives us insight into the artist-patron relationship in other than art market terms.

The artist as client in a patron-client relationship fits within the general characteristics Kettering lays out, two-person, unequal in status, reciprocal exchange, and continuous, however loyalty and service, and protection as exchange were complicated by confessional differences because the artist, in this case, was outside the nobility. Palissy did not have connections within the nobility to further or influence Montmorency's string of loyalty. All he had to offer was his

artisanal work. This letter illuminates the differences between patron-artist and patron-client relationships as artists like Palissy did not have political or even confessional influence that would be of value to someone like Montmorency.

The very way that Palissy sought to circumvent the issue of his Protestantism unwittingly reveals how problematic his position was in the context of the French Religious Wars. Noblemen might overlook confessional differences in forming power networks, but the silences of Palissy's dedication letter in *A&O*, especially compared with the overt and even angry Protestantism of the otherwise similar letter that opened *Recepte veritable*, reveals how Palissy's vulnerable situation forced him to emphasize his powerlessness in ways that he would later renounce. His purposeful downplaying of his Protestantism in *A&O* forces us to recognize that Palissy's situation was far more urgent and disempowering than the norm and made a relationship across confessions more tenuous, at least one in which the artisan and patron stand on such very different social levels—where Palissy was not in or even near the echelon of the nobility.

Finally, Palissy's involvement with image-breaking raises questions about his own views regarding the relationship between art and nature. How does Palissy's potential involvement with image-breaking speak to his sentiment as an art-making Protestant? Part of Reformed theology is the belief that "the goal of life is knowledge of God, and this is obtained, in part, through contemplating the works of nature as evidence of his Wisdom."⁷¹ All of Palissy's art endeavors to mimic nature. Clearly he believes his artisanal work to be of exemplary quality, even though he employs it as a tactic to convince Montmorency to listen to his request, his choice to do so indicates he holds that belief to some extent. In the attached grotto description, he continually

⁷¹ Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, 181.

refers to the monstrosity and ingeniousness of the proposed grotto undoubtedly illustrating his opinions on his own work and insinuating his own genius. It is hard to escape the view that Palissy considered the pursuit of ceramic art to be his calling, or that he considered his talents to suggest he was favored by God.

Palissy's views are intriguing because Calvinists generally did not express their religious views through visual mediums, but rather through song, poetry, and Reformed architecture. The Reformed respect for the Word of God rendered literature a good way to express Calvinist sentiment. Creating a pure space for worship was also safely orthodox. But few were the visual artists who were Calvinists, a reality reflected in the paucity of art history scholarship on Calvinist themes. During the sixteenth century, the horror of idolatry that motivated Calvinists to destroy Catholic relics and images did not make the visual arts a likely "calling" for Calvinists.⁷² This is not to say that Calvinist artisans ceased doing business for Catholic patrons. As Benjamin J. Kaplan has shown, Protestant artisans still produced religious works for Catholic patrons such as in the case of "the French city of Nimes, [where] a Calvinist apothecary sold candles to Catholics, a Calvinist goldsmith produced a chalice, and Calvinist ironsmiths placed a cross on top of a Catholic church."⁷³ Even in Augsburg, Lutheran artisans produced objects for Catholic worship and devotion.⁷⁴ Palissy did not intend to create a grotto space with Catholic imagery for

⁷² See scholarship analyzing Calvinist arts in these forms: Daniel W. Doerksen, "George Herbert, Calvinism, and Reading "Mattens", *Christianity and Literature* 59, no. 3 (2010): 437-51; Steven Ozment, "Gospel Art," in *The Serpent and the Lamb: Cranach, Luther, and the Making of the Reformation*, 148-72 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); W. Stanford Reid, "The Battle Hymns of the Lord Calvinist Psalmody of the Sixteenth Century," *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies* 2 (1971): 36-54; Leslie P. Spelman, "Calvin and the Arts," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 6, no 3 (Mar 1948), 246-252.

⁷³ Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 2009), 253.

⁷⁴ Ibid. See also the complicated situation in Antwerp for artists and their work as a profession and the ways it was complicated by iconoclasm: Tianna Helena Uchacz, "Outside-In: The Intrusion of Ornament into Sacred Narrative." In *Ornament and Monstrosity in Early Modern Art*, edited by Hammeken Chris Askholt and Hansen Maria Fabricius, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 124.

his patron, nor was his intention to produce a work that insinuated his Protestant beliefs, and there is little evidence that Palissy's work was anything other than secular.⁷⁵

Palissy's notions about nature and its connection to Protestant theology would be better understood by analyzing *Recepte*, a work which foregrounds Palissy's Calvinist identity. And yet, while Amico pursues this theme he only comes away with speculation:

One wonders if Palissy's art, which concentrated almost exclusively on the image of a serpent invading an island and causing fish and other creatures to flee, may have codified for him and his followers the image of 'snakelike tractors' attacking the Elect, represented by the fish, that ancient symbol of Christianity.⁷⁶

The difficulty of making any firm conclusions is heightened by the fact that Palissy's art was, seemingly, designed and used in secular contexts. It is a tantalizing question to wonder how Palissy thought his work might be related to his religion, but *A&O* in particular does not provide any answer, because circumstance dictated he downplay his religion. He clearly did not want to talk about it here.

The charge of iconoclasm placed Palissy in an ironic position; he feared the breaking of his own work by soldiers working for those whose art had been broken, the dean and chapter of Saintes. Furthermore, Palissy's lifelong commitment to Calvinism and his career as an artist who studied nature and produced secular work leave us with lingering questions about how he viewed his own art in relation to his Reformed identity. But, there is no answer here for the attached grotto description is without any reference to Reformed ideology. He argues only that ingenious

⁷⁵ For an interesting discussion concerning the patronage of art moving from religious to decorative in the case of England's split with the Roman Catholic Church see: Sara N. James, "Image Making and Image Breaking: Art under the Tudor Monarchs. Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I, 1509–1558," in *Art in England: The Saxons to the Tudors: 600-1600*, 229-78 (Oxford; Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016).

⁷⁶ Amico, 185.

art overcomes nature, pursuing his point with reference to Classical rather than Biblical allusions.

Chapter Three. Manipulating Perception—*l'art ingénieux surmonte la nature*

The bulk of the pamphlet *Architecture & Ordonnance* presents a fascinating, detailed description of the grotto Palissy planned for his patron Montmorency, adding to its interest as documentation of the artist's ideas at the start of his career. The main theme emerging from the pamphlet is Palissy's claim that he possesses the artistic talent to mimic nature so exactly that his art will enchant the viewer with its "monstrosity" and "strangeness." The character in the dialogue named "Réponse" evinces the desired effect when he notes that "the grotto rendered me speechless, even in such a way that it seems to me that it was a dream, or vision because of the monstrosity of the edifice."¹ Palissy's narrative description suggested his edifice was intended to evoke spaces reminiscent of the dream-like journeys found in popular Renaissance romances such as the *Songe de Poliphile* (*Hypnerotomachia Poliphile*) and *Roman de la rose*. In this way, the grotto intended to conjure associations with the lost Virgilian Golden Age, a blend of soft and hard primitivism, recreating an idyllic space that was nevertheless subject to the decay that real nature imposed.

Palissy argued that *l'art ingénieux surmonte la nature*, that is, "ingenious art overcomes nature." By this he meant that a truly gifted artist demonstrated ingenuity, first, by capturing nature as it is: in constant flux, including in various states of decay. Second, the artist mimicked nature so skillfully that he could manipulate perception, tricking or "enchancing" the viewer so that art might be taken for nature itself. Finally, ingenious art overcame nature because, unlike the real thing, it had the power to last.

¹ « laquelle grotte m'a rendu tout ébahi, voire en telle sorte qu'il me semblait en la voyant que c'était un songe, ou vision à cause de la monstruosité de l'édifice. »

Architecture et Ordonnance provides important insight into Palissy's education at the time it was written (presumably 1562.)² Palissy scholars Leonard N. Amico and Aurèle La Rocque both address the question of intellectual influences on the artist. Amico focuses on what Palissy might have read prior to the publication of *Recepte veritable* (1563), presenting the general consensus that Palissy was self-taught in many aspects of his life. Amico proposes that Palissy probably read no more than a dozen books, "including three theological works, some treatises on architecture, two or three alchemical tracts, at least a couple of natural histories and two romances," *Songe de Poliphile* and *Roman de la rose*.³ Given the close dates of publication for *Recepte* and *A&O*, this is likely the level of education Palissy was operating with when writing *A&O*. La Rocque focuses on what Palissy read throughout his lifetime in the introduction to his translation of Palissy's final publication *Discours Admirable*, a collection of his theories on nature, elements and agriculture. *Discours* is considered to reflect Palissy's final thoughts on natural philosophy, which he published at the age of 70, 10 years before he died. La Rocque notes that Palissy quotes Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* so carefully in *Discours* that we are certain Palissy had access to a translation by 1570.⁴ In this chapter, I argue that *A&O* suggests that Palissy was influenced by Pliny considerably earlier, by the time he wrote the description of the grotto in 1562 or early 1563.

² Although it was not published until 1563; we have no documentation for the publication like we do for *Recepte* which was published later in the year 1563.

³ Leonard N. Amico, *Bernard Palissy: In Search of Earthly Paradise* (New York: Flammarion, 1996), 14.

⁴ Aurèle La Rocque, introduction to *The Admirable Discourses of Bernard Palissy*, by Bernard Palissy, trans. Aurèle La Rocque (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1957), 11.

Pliny the Elder was a Roman intellectual born in 23 CE. He died in 79 CE after the eruption of Vesuvius.⁵ He is well known for the encyclopedic volumes of *Natural History*, a massive collection of thirty-six books covering the topics of:

... astrological, meteorological, and geological phenomena; the geography of the Earth; the diverse forms taken by human life, its achievements and limitations; animals of land, sea, and air; comparative anatomy; the vegetable kingdom; medicines; and last of all, minerals and metals, under which rubric fall the uses of metals and minerals in painting, sculpture, and architecture.⁶

Pliny's sections on the arts, particularly on painting, the art of modeling, works in pottery, and sculpture are of particular interest here.⁷ A number of overlapping ideas suggest Pliny's influence on Palissy early in his career. From Pliny, Palissy absorbed an understanding of nature as a complex system, worthy of study and of careful imitation through art. This focus on nature would orient his entire career, and is already visible at the early stage when *A&O* was composed. Even at this early stage, Palissy aspired to transcend mere artisanship by creating objects that mimicked nature as closely as is possible.⁸

⁵ Loyd Haberly, Introduction to *Pliny's Natural History: An Account by a Roman of What Romans Knew and Did and Valued, Compacted from the many volumes of the Historia Naturalis*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), v-iv.

⁶ Trevor Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5-6.

⁷ While Palissy was likely influenced by Pliny's writings on geology, animals, vegetation, and metals and minerals, these subjects are not covered in *A&O*. A comparative study between *Natural History* and *Discours Admirable* is a potential area for further research.

⁸ At a quick glance, there appears to be little scholarship on the reception of Pliny the Elder in the Renaissance, at least by figures like Palissy, artisan and aspiring natural philosopher in 1562; Some scholarship that may be interesting in regards to Pliny's reception in the Renaissance, see: Susanna De Beer, "THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN: The Geographical Revolution in Humanist Commentaries on Pliny's Natural History and Mela's De Situ Orbis (1450-1700)," in *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (1400 -1700)*, edited by Karl Enekel and Henk Nellen, 139-98. (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press), 2013; Sarah Blake McHam, "Pliny's Influence on Vasari's First Edition of the 'Lives'." *Artibus Et Historiae* 32, no. 64 (2011): 9-23; and Rowan Cerys Tomlinson, "'Plusieurs Choses Qu'il N'avoit Veuës': Antoine Du Pinet's Translation of Pliny the Elder (1562)," *Translation and Literature* 21, no. 2 (2012): 145-61.

As La Rocque notes, Palissy carefully quotes Pliny's *Natural History* in his *Discours*, indicating Palissy had access to a translation, at least by the time he wrote the later work. Pliny noted the ability of an artist to render natural elements exactly, to the point of confusing reality and molded product, in the section titled "Art of Modeling." He wrote, "M. Varro states that he knew an artist at Rome, Possis by name, who executed fruit, grapes, and fish with such exactness that it was quite impossible, by only looking at them, to distinguish them from the reality."⁹ This artist used the art of modeling in clay, a method Pliny described as "so uniquely universally adopted that there could be neither figure nor statue made without its model in clay."¹⁰ Further, Pliny praised Lysistratus of Sicyon as the first to reproduce human features to give a faithful likeness.¹¹ Similarly, in the section "On Sculpture" of *Natural History*, Pliny states:

This art has arrived at incredible perfection, both in successfulness and in boldness of design. As a proof of successfulness I will adduce one example, and that of a figure which represented neither god nor man. We have seen in our own time in the Capitol ... a bronze figure of a dog licking its wounds.¹²

He further elaborates on the sculpture's "miraculous excellence and its perfect truthfulness," which had a "novel kind of security," because the piece was valued so highly that "the keepers of it should be answerable for its safety with their lives."¹³ In his natural history, Pliny considered it noteworthy to document the artists and works that captured natural objects with great skill. The ingenuity that Palissy ascribed to his proposed grotto echoes the way Pliny commented on artwork in his *Natural History*.

⁹ *Natural History*, 161.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Loyd Haberly, *Pliny's Natural History: An Account by a Roman of What Romans Knew and Did and Valued, Compacted from the many volumes of the Historia Naturalis* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), 164-165.

¹³ *Natural History*, 165.

Since this thesis uses *A&O* as evidence of Palissy's early aspirations, *A&O* and *Recepte veritable* deserve comparison because they were published within a year of each other. *Recepte veritable* was published in September and November, 1563.¹⁴ We do not have an exact publication date for *A&O*, aside from the year 1563 as it appears on the title page. Nevertheless, the *A&O* dedication letter's date of February 1562, suggests *A&O* was composed before *Recepte*. The similarities between the contents of the two works indicates *A&O* was possibly a rough draft of *Recepte*; its unusually personal dedication letter and the pamphlet's uneven quality suggests it may have been published without Palissy's consent. Even so, there are major differences that make *A&O* worthy of study in the context of Palissy's intellectual and artisanal career. While the *Recepte* is significantly longer than *A&O*, it has many Protestant overtones that take the focus away from Palissy's artistic intent. *A&O*, by contrast, is less weighed down by the religious overtones present in *Recepte* that may have been Palissy's reaction to the trauma of imprisonment for his religious beliefs. *A&O* shows Palissy as a Renaissance man whose Protestantism was but one aspect of his life, highlighting his earliest notions of art and nature.

This chapter seeks to contextualize the masterwork described in the body of Palissy's *A&O* pamphlet. It begins with an analysis of Palissy's initial, inexpert attempt to write this description in the genre of a dialogue, an indication of his aspiration to participate in Renaissance intellectual life. It then provides a description of what the grotto, had it been completed, might have looked like. This description serves as a foundation for the discussion that follows, which argues that Palissy intended to evoke the Renaissance theme of a lost Golden Age by building an

¹⁴ "Contract for the publication of the *Recepte veritable*," in Amico, *Earthly Paradise*, App III, Doc VI, 230; first published in 1906 (G. Musset, "La 'Recette véritable' de Bernard Palissy," *Recueil de la Commission des arts et monuments de la Charente-Inférieure*, vol 17, 1906, pp. 319-321, with facsimile). Now in La Rochelle (Archives départementales de la Charente-Maritime, 3E 2148).

enchanted place where the visitor would lose track of distinctions between art and nature.

Successfully creating this space would prove his ingenuity as an artist.

Inexpert: Mimicking the Dialogue Genre

Palissy employed the dialogue technique in the body of the *A&O* meant to describe his masterwork. Dialogue was a common genre in the Renaissance, though Palissy's dialogue is at best a clunky beginner's effort. Three main problems separate Palissy's pamphlet from the accepted understanding of the genre: first, it lacks the artful introduction or prologue typically found at the beginning of a dialogue; second, it lacks fully developed characters, and, finally, it lacks a motivating structure and thus reads as disorganized. While letter-writing guides existed, there were no complete treatises devoted to dialogue writing in Palissy's era, merely scattered comments from antiquity pieced together to support divergent views on the genre.¹⁵ Thus, Palissy likely did not compose his dialogue according to a manual.

Palissy failed to employ the few accepted elements of dialogues as his contemporaries understood them. In analyzing the Italian humanist Carolus Sigonius's *De dialogo liber* (1561), Donald Gilman reiterates the elements of dialogue as a technique as Sigonius understood them from studying Cicero. Firstly, dialogues are bicameral, having an introduction or *praeparatio*, and a debate or *contentio*.¹⁶ The *praeparatio* was akin to a prologue, introducing the speakers, scene and subject to be examined, and also intended to capture attention and direct it to the issue to be discussed. As we will see, Palissy failed to do this in the dialogue for *A&O*. Further, Palissy's argumentation is not artful because the pamphlet is disorganized and lacks a clear argument to drive its narrative, at least until the end. Perhaps Palissy's use of dialogue aspired to

¹⁵ Colette H. Winn, "Prologue" *The Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547-1630: Art and Argument*, ed. Colette H. Winn (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press), 1993, 2.

¹⁶ Donald Gilman, "Part I: Theories of Dialogue," *The Dialogue in Early Modern France, 1547-1630: Art and Argument*, ed. Colette H. Winn (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press), 1993, 42.

be argumentative and expository, a category of the genre that typically drew more or less on classical models from Plato or Lucian.¹⁷ However, Palissy does not appear to have drawn from these models or any models for that matter. It is almost as though Palissy was told that the dialogue form was useful and he did his best to write what he imagined that to be.

Palissy's inept employment of the dialogue genre reveals early indications of his aspirations to participate in Renaissance intellectual life.¹⁸ He continued to employ the dialogue form in his later written works, both *Recepte veritable* (1563) and *Discours Admirable* (1580). In *Recepte veritable*, Palissy's characters have the same names, Demande and Réponse, but their characterization is better developed. The characters in *Discours* are Théorique and Pratique, again straightforward naming, however his ability to employ the dialogue technique unmistakably matured between the years *A&O* and *Discours* were published, as Aurèle La Rocque points out in his introduction comparing *Recepte* and *Discours*.¹⁹ What we see with *A&O* is Palissy's first attempt to broach the intellectual life he desired to participate in.

Palissy's graceless use of the dialogue technique is made apparent at the onset with the introduction. He states, "To have an easier understanding of the present discourse, we will treat it in the form of dialogue, which we will introduce two persons, one will ask, the other will respond, as follows."²⁰ Palissy did not even venture to name his characters; they are what they do. This one sentence at the start of the pamphlet is Palissy's entire introduction. *A&O* simply lacks the *praeparatio* akin to a prologue, and Palissy only introduced the speakers, not the scene

¹⁷ Winn, 2.

¹⁸ See Gilman's discussion of Tasso, a critic of the genre in the 16th century, who defines the dialogue form as "imitation of argument," Gilman, 73.

¹⁹ See the English translation by Aurèle La Rocque, *The Admirable Discourses of Bernard Palissy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 1957. La Rocque points out the differences of *Recepte* and *Discours*, noting that the latter is better organized and that Palissy clearly paid more attention to his presentation of his subjects, taking "pains to plan his approach to each topic in the manner that he thought clearest and best," 7.

²⁰ « Pour avoir plus facile intelligence du présent discours, nous le traiterons en forme de dialogue, auquel nous introduirons deux personnes, l'une demandera, l'autre répondra, comme s'ensuit. » Palissy, *A&O*, 4.

nor subject to be examined, and he certainly did not capture attention and direct it to the issue to be discussed.

The lack of fully thought-out characters is the most noticeable misstep in *A&O*. Dialogues center on a discussion or debate between at least two characters; if one or both lack proper development, the entirety of the work suffers. Palissy created two characters, Demande and Réponse. The former is a somewhat curious, naïve questioner. The latter is essentially Palissy, though Réponse refers to Palissy in the third person as “the worker.” The intimate knowledge of the artwork that Réponse possesses suggests the character is a conduit for Palissy; only a few times does Réponse acknowledge that the worker told him what he is relaying. Réponse as a character is more consistent, whereas Demande is sometimes overtly in awe of Réponse’s information, sometimes incredulous, and sometimes inquisitive in an overly convenient way serving only to give Réponse the opportunity to continue the description.

In the beginning of *A&O*, we see Demande as a naïve character who yearns only to learn of Réponse’s knowledge of the grotto. His first two interjections are the phrases, “I beg you to make me hear in greater detail,” and, “I beg you, do not grow weary of making me understand everything well.”²¹ These suggest that his character may be simply a filler used to break up the initial narrative description, leaving the Demande character without any sort of quality or ideas.

By comparison, the character of Demande in the slightly later and more polished *Recepte veritable* begins with quality in the first instance of speaking:

I cannot clearly hear your design, because you say that you are looking for a mountainous place, to make a delightful garden. It is an opinion contrary to that of all the Antiques and Moderns: because I know that one commonly searches planar places, to build gardens:

²¹ « Je te prie me faire entendre bien au long, » and, « Je te prie, ne te lasse point à me faire bien entendre le tout. » Palissy, *A&O*, 4, 5.

also I know well, that several having bumps and burrows in their gardens, have to spend a lot of money to flatten them. That being said, please tell me what moved you to find a mountainous place to build your garden.²²

Demande, in other words, is a cohesive character at the start of *Recepte*, with an opinion that offers a reason for dialogue, and motivates his curiosity. In *A&O*, Demande is simply sewed together as the pamphlet moves forward, displaying only one facet at a time.

After the initial description of the grotto in *A&O*, Demande abruptly becomes argumentative, stating that what Réponse told him thus far seems impossible: “I have heard till here, everything that you have wanted to tell me without interrupting you, in such a way that I have heard from you many things that no man could ever persuade me to believe, because these seem to me impossible.”²³ With this abrupt transformation, Palissy added substance to the Demande character of *A&O* by engaging the debate aspect of dialogue writing.

The argument Demande and Réponse will have is about the possibility of making ceramics that imitate nature so closely that they can fool the viewer. For Demande, this is impossible due to the miniscule aspects of scales on reptiles as well as the veins in leaves and herbage. Demande notes that reptiles have, “an infinite number of small scales, so it is impossible for any man to sculpt them, or even count them, because they are not equal in size,

²² « Je ne puis clairement entendre ton dessein, parce que tu dis que tu cherches un lieu montueux, pour faier un jardin delectable. C'est une opinion contraire à celle de tous les Antiques et Modernes : car je say qu'on cherche communement les lieux planiers, pour edifier jardins : aussi say-je bien, que plusieurs ayans des bosses et terriers en leurs jardins, se sont constituez en grands fraits pour les applanir. Quoy consideré, je te prie me dire la cause que t'a meu de chercher un lieu monteux pour edifier ton jardin. » Bernard Palissy, *Recepte veritable*, ed. Keith Cameron (Géneve: Librairie Droz S. A., 1988), 57.

²³ « J'ai entendu jusques ici, tout ce que tu m'as voulu conter sans t'avoir en rien interrompu de propos, combien que j'aie entendu de toi plusieurs choses, que nul homme ne me saurait tant persuader que je les pusse croire, parce qu'elles me semblent impossibles » Palissy, *A&O*, 6.

and even the scales of the tail are not similar to those of the head.”²⁴ He adds that, “Now I know well that it is impossible to sculpt such herbs, because they are small, thin leaves, and intricate structures.”²⁵ Demande thus acquires substance, first conceding that such artistry may be possible, but then rejecting that because the thickness of enamel alone would make it impossible for ceramic work to mimic nature so faithfully.²⁶

The argumentative characteristic does not last long for Demande’s doubts melt away, and he returns to his simple character, awestruck at Réponse’s claims that the worker, “has found means to render all these enamels,” thin enough to not obscure the form of the sculptures.²⁷ Réponse gives Demande little reason to accept his claim, requiring that Demande simply believe that the worker has found a way to render enamels without covering the minute details of the sculptures even though Demande previously doubted such enamels exist. Demande responds to this with, “You have given me so many answers, that I no longer know what to say, except that I pray you be so kind to make me understand more about this admirable building.”²⁸

Demande’s naïve reactions play into a recurrent theme that Palissy’s work excites admiration and exceeds expectations. It recalls Réponse’s initial description of being rendered speechless by the monstrosity of the building. Demande, in turn, is literally ‘stupefied’ and struck dumb by the grotto, just from Réponse’s description. Palissy thereby emphasizes his theme that this artisanal grotto will enchant the viewer. However, Demande is not a cohesive

²⁴ « un nombre infini de petites écailles, qu’il est impossible à nul homme de les insculper, ne même compter, par ce qu’elles ne sont égales en grandeur, et même que les écailles de la queue ne sont semblables à celles de la tête. » Palissy, *A&O*, 6.

²⁵ « Or sais-je bien qu’il est impossible d’insculper telles herbes, parce qu’elles sont petites, ténues de feuilles, et leurs refentes sont difficiles. » Palissy, *A&O*, 6.

²⁶ Palissy, *A&O*, 7.

²⁷ « a trouvé moyen de rendre tous ces émaux... » Palissy, *A&O*, 7.

²⁸ « Tu m’as donné tant de raisons, que je ne sais plus que dire, sinon de te prier, que ton plaisir soit de me faire entendre le surplus de cestui admirable bâtiment. » Palissy, *A&O*, 7.

character, and this naivety is not an effective means to convince the reader to feel the same way as Demande. It simply characterizes Demande as naïve.

The final major stylistic problem with the dialogue is its disorganization. Palissy needed to describe the layout of the grotto, but this resulted in clunky sentences and confusion about why Demande and Réponse need to interact. While Palissy is passionate about arguing for the wondrousness of the work, this seems secondary to first displaying a clear blueprint of the grotto. He started the description with, “First the building is forty feet long, twenty feet wide and seventeen feet high, not counting the arch of the vault, whose pan and main door are decorated with several terms [i.e. columns with busts] so close to the human form, that there is no man who would not be astonished to see them.”²⁹ He emphasized the skill of the artisan by describing the clothes of the terms as well as their hair, and then returned to giving the layout:

These terms are situated and posed on certain pedestals which will serve as pillars.

Inside the entrance of the portal and above the heads of the terms, there is an architrave, frieze and cornice. And above the same cornice are many windows which rise up to the vault. And between two of each window there is a term which serves as a pillar and separates these windows.³⁰

The rest of the overall description continues in this manner. When Palissy wanted to point out things that illustrated the ingenuity of the worker, he used the phrase, “You must note here,” and then elaborated on whichever theme he sought to emphasize. Sometimes he just interjected

²⁹ « Premièrement le bâtiment contient quarante pieds de long, vingt pieds de large et dix-sept pieds de haut, non compris l’arc des voûtes, dont le pan et entrée du portail est enrichi de plusieurs figures de termes, si près approchant de la forme humaine, qu’il n’y a homme qui ne fût étonné de les voir. » Palissy, *A&O*, 4. *Term* is the word Palissy uses for the rest of the pamphlet to refer to the human forms or busts. I will use the same word for the rest of this chapter.

³⁰ « Lesquels termes sont situés et posés sur certains piédestaux qui serviront de piliers. Au-dedans de l’entrée dudit portail et au-dessus des têtes desdits termes, il y a un architrave, frise et corniche. Et au-dessus de la corniche susdite sont plusieurs fenêtres qui montent jusques au près de la voûte. Et entre les deux d’une chacune fenêtre il y a un terme qui sert de pilier et séparation desdites fenêtres. » Palissy, *A&O*, 4.

awkwardly something to the effect of, “it is also so close to the natural.” Blueprint language even found its way into sections intended primarily to highlight the worker’s ingenuity: “All these species of fish abovementioned spout water from the mouth, inside the pond, which is below the terrace, in such a way, that when the pond is full the excess of is disgorged through a secret canal and goes in a grand garden, which is in front of the grotto.”³¹ This particularly clunky sentence illustrates Palissy’s whiplash, inelegant effort to blend description with his argument that the grotto produces amazed reactions in its viewers.

We may guess that the primary reason Palissy composed *A&O* was to give Montmorency a better understanding of his commissioned work. Yet this motivation rendered as dialogue means that Palissy’s dialogue lacks literary artistry and clarity. Unlike his dedication letter, which followed an established formal arrangement and showed a certain level of skill and tact, his attempt to mimic the dialogue form without a clear understanding of how to employ it requires the reader to do a lot of the heavy lifting.

Description: *C’est d’une grotte rustique !*

Palissy’s inexpert employment of dialogue writing, along with the general disorganization of the pamphlet, render the description of his proposed masterpiece confounding for the reader. While Palissy clearly intended to evoke the wonder a viewer would experience, it is difficult for a modern reader to come away from the text with a clear understanding about what the building would actually have looked like.³² Nevertheless, a basic mental picture of the grotto Palissy hoped to construct for Montmorency is essential to comprehend how the work was intended to evoke the theme of a lost Golden Age. Understanding what the building was

³¹ « Toutes lesquelles espèces de poissons susdites jettent l’eau par la gueule, dedans le fossé, qui est au-dessous de ladite terrasse, en telle sorte, que quand ledit fossé est plein la superfluité de l’eau dégorge par un canal secret et se rend en un grand jardin, qui est au-devant de ladite grotte. » Palissy, *A&O*, 5.

³² See Appendix B of this thesis for Diagrams 1 and 2 for visual aid to this description.

supposed to look like adds resonance to Palissy's repeated use of the language of monstrosity and strangeness, and suggests a kind of enchantment meant to entice the reader and entrance the viewer, should the grotto have seen completion. These aspects are only clear after several readings of the pamphlet and when we visualize the building as a whole. To capture the essence of Palissy's intention of creating a space with natural elements that are entirely cast and enameled ceramics presents its own challenges, as seen by Palissy's own attempt with the dialogue genre. Nevertheless, we shall try.

Walking up to the entrance of the grotto, the viewer finds a garden in the front. Palissy does not indicate what type of garden, nor does he provide a full description of it. Rather he mentions it in passing to signify where the water in his pond flows, spilling from interior fountains, and then down through the central pond; the garden thus serves an engineering purpose, providing a spillover spot to avoid overflows within the grotto. From the front, we see that the building is approximately twenty feet tall and a definite twenty feet wide.³³ Stepping through the *portail* or entrance, our feet find a *pavé de dessous* or a cobblestone floor. In keeping with Palissy's insistence at every turn to circumvent geometric shapes for organic, presumably this cobblestone is made of ceramic tiles that mimic natural rocks rather than the square and rectangular cut stone we might imagine. Once inside, we see that the length of the grotto extends forty feet. To our left and right, there are several columns separating niches that serve as seats. Palissy states there are twelve seats on each side, thus there must be at least thirteen columns on each side for there to be a column between each niche and two to bookend the row of niches.

³³ Palissy indicates that the height of the building is 17 feet, not including the vaulted ceiling. I have given the extra three feet to account for the ceiling in attempts to understand the building's dimensions upon seeing it from the outside.

Palissy's design provided a row of amply sized, separate niches from which viewers could experience the grotto at their leisure.

In the center, the grotto features an elongated pond extending its entire length from the entrance to the terraced area, which extends approximately three feet from the back wall.³⁴ The pond is one foot wide and one foot deep, thus akin to a central ditch full of water. The terrace is not a flat elevated surface like a stage, but rather more like terraced land. Walking on the cobblestone from the door to the terrace, niches and columns on one side and pond on the other, this distance would be about thirty-seven feet; climbing the terraced steps, counting three at one foot length each, we reach the grotto's end making a total length of forty feet.³⁵

This wall opposite the entrance is made to look like a large boulder or rock, with bumps and concavities; from the terrace to the architrave it is eight feet in height. Above this boulder wall, there is an architrave, frieze and cornice that rings the entire structure. And above that, there are windows separated by busts that bear the weight of the vaulted ceiling. Palissy states that the height of the entire grotto is seventeen feet, not including the vaulted ceiling. Therefore, if the terrace is three steps, let us say six inches high for simplicity, and another six inches before the boulder wall begins, the height is ten feet for the terrace and boulder wall, four feet for the architrave, frieze and cornice, and three feet for the busts, fitting squarely in Palissy's given dimension of seventeen feet tall. He does not give dimension for the vaulted ceiling, but we can make the assumption that it is approximately three feet given that the average height from floor to ceiling is between eight and 10 feet, and the dimensions of a vaulted ceiling average at thirteen

³⁴ Palissy only gives the width and depth of the pond and simply states, "et en longueur autant que contient le travers de ladite grotte," and in length as far as the grotto extends. *A&O*, 5.

³⁵ This is an educated visualization taking into account my own assigned sizes of the columns and niches, as well as the terrace, to piece together within Palissy's indication that the grotto extends 40 feet.

feet.³⁶ Thus, the height of the grotto from cobblestone floor to highest point in the vaulted ceiling is twenty feet high. All in all, the grotto is as tall as it is wide, and is an elongated building doubling in length that of its width. In its proportions, the grotto mimics the nave of a church.³⁷

Now that we can imagine the layout of the grotto, we can visualize the space by painting a word picture to explore Palissy's aesthetics and understand what he intended to evoke. What is important to Palissy is that every decorative aspect displays variety. Nothing is uniform, as we see varying colors, and varying states of decay. Even the architectural elements that we would imagine to be geometric were formed with irregular, organic shapes. Man-made elements are being taken over by Palissy's artisanal vegetation.

And so, returning to the cobblestone floor, we see niches and columns on the right and left walls. The elongated pond features fountains decorated with ceramic fish, and the opposite wall is constructed to mimic a bumpy boulder. If we look up, we see an architrave, frieze and cornice, above which are windows alternative with busts that circle all around the grotto. Above that, there is a vaulted ceiling consisting of organically shaped windows. We are immediately enchanted by the way Palissy has constructed these windows, placing them only in the uppermost part of the space. Therefore the light coming in is solely from above; it is patchy due to the free-form shapes. This design element intentionally obscures our view of the various decorative elements of the grotto, and the uneven light aids in entrancing us to accept the

³⁶ This is average for our time, but since the height before the adornment of busts and windows is 10 feet, it is easier to imagine these dimensions. For architectural historians, this would be an interesting endeavor to follow perhaps looking to understand Palissy's interpretation of vaulted ceilings, as well as the dimensions of the grotto as a whole in the context of changing architecture in the time of the Reformation.

³⁷ Again, this could be a nice foray to delving further into the confessional differences within patronage-client relationships discussed in Chapter Two, interpreted from an architectural historical perspective. See *Protestant Aesthetics and the Arts*, eds. Sarah Covington and Kathryn Reklis (UK: Routledge, 2020), specifically "Chapter 4: Tradition and Invention" by Emily Fisher Gray for a comparative discussion of Catholic versus Lutheran aesthetics; She states: "The pre-Reformation church was a longitudinal, hierarchical space, with a long nave separating the profane world at the western doors from the sacred altar on the high ceilings, emphasizing the vertical distance between sinner and God."

possibility that all the ceramic elements Palissy adds might be real. Everywhere we look we see life-casted animals, particularly snakes and lizards, placed carefully in random ways to resemble these animals in their natural habitat, as was developed on Palissy's tableware (see figures 1 and 2).³⁸ The creatures crawl on the boulder wall and around the pond, as well as on the architrave, frieze, and cornice. They rest in concavities, and just creep about as living creatures would naturally do. Above the cornice among the busts, we find birds and field cats haunting about. In the pond, there are fish both inside and on the edge. Those on the edge spout water from their mouths causing the water in the pond to stir, a trick that obscures our view through the water and leads us to think the fish inside the pond are moving and real.

If we sit in one of the niches, we see above us a festoon of fruits hanging between each column. As we move toward the terrace, we notice that each niche is different. Some are strewn with shells and pebbles, while others are similar to the boulder wall with bumps and concavities, presumably with snakes and lizards resting in them. We note that the columns are also strange in the sense that their shape is not perfectly smooth but rusticated, swirling with blue and white enamels and adorned with ceramic rocks, rather like the surviving capital presumably intended for this grotto or the one for the Queen Mother.³⁹ The architrave, frieze and cornice are rusticated in a similar fashion. As we reach the terrace, we look up and see the emblem of Montmorency in antique lettering – APLANOS or “straight ahead”—on the frieze of the wall opposite the entrance. Every aspect of the grotto evokes the sense of being in a cave, with the animals creeping about, and vegetation filling the gaps.

Several types of vegetation are represented, but Palissy specifically mentions mosses, grasses, and ivy. In this semi-dark environment, we do not find any colorful flowers but mostly

³⁸ Found in this thesis, Appendix B.

³⁹ Amico, figure 23., 34.

see various shades of green and gray. The ivy is overtaking the architectural elements of the space, surrounding the columns and busts, and the mosses are hanging everywhere as if to suggest the vegetation is taking over, as it would on antique ruins. But Palissy specifies that even the plants are in a state of decay, as are the columns and busts. All of the architectural elements are rusticated and degrading, indicating the passing of time or the condition of having been acted upon by the elements of nature. As Palissy puts it, they are *mangé de l'air* or “eaten by the air.”

All of the aspects of the grotto possess variety and display various states of decay. Palissy described one of the terms, or human figures as “appear[ing] to be formed from a gray stone, in which in many places of his body there are pebbles and shells as though nature had created them within the stone of the statue.”⁴⁰ Another term is made from “jasper stone, whose two eyes are two shells, and the mouth and form of the nose, chin and cheeks are formed of shells, composing all together the geometry and human form.”⁴¹

Palissy, with the help of my own imagination after several readings of the pamphlet, enchanted me and I emphatically believe that should he have been successful in completing such a massive project, those who entered the grotto would be enchanted as well. The constructed space aimed to mimic nature and enchant the viewer by manipulating perception to the point that the viewer believed his work to be natural. He attempted to enchant his reader by using the words monstrosity and strangeness, and a dream-like narrative similar to those found in early modern romances. Still, he aspired to physically create this space, which begs the question—how did Palissy intend to enchant the viewer for them to believe his work to be natural? How could

⁴⁰ « ...semble qu'il soit d'une pierre de grison, par-mi, et en plusieurs endroits de sa corporance il y a plusieurs cailloux et coquilles comme si nature les avait créés parmi la pierre de ladite statue. » Palissy, *A&O*, 10.

⁴¹ « ...qui est de pierre de jaspe, dont les deux yeux sont deux coquilles, et la bouche et forme du nez, menton et joues sont formées de coquilles, en observant toujours la géométrie et forme humaine. » Palissy, *A&O*, 10.

he master nature by physically capturing its essence? He would employ ingenuity because as he wrote for his main argument, *ingenious art overcomes nature*.⁴²

Ingenuity: Necessary for Artisanal Mastery Over Nature

Palissy's quest to display ingenuity entailed a specific view of nature. Real nature was not symmetrical or orderly: it was constantly in motion, random, chaotic, in a state of decay, and full of variety. To recreate these qualities in his grotto, he sought to manipulate the viewer's perception by infusing his man-made structure with variety, disorder and randomness. Further, he aimed to conjure the illusion of movement every place he could think of. He purposely obscured the symmetry of structural elements of his building, further emphasizing the disordered aspect of nature. He also manipulated perception, playing with light and aiming to mimic the effect of time by designing the degradation of his architectural elements and depicting natural elements overtaking the architecture, an enchanting aspect that evoked the Virgilian Golden Age.

For Palissy, to demonstrate ingenuity would be to trick viewers into believing his artisanal work to be real. The argument of Palissy's dialogue was that the skill of the grotto's creator enabled him to capture minute detail, render enamels so thin artisanal animals and vegetation did not lose their form, and thereby recreate the experience of being in a cave. Furthermore, Palissy argued that the strength and endurance of earthenware could make his masterpiece even better than nature, an aspect of ingenuity that further illustrates Pliny's influence on Palissy.⁴³ Here, I argue that at the outset of his career Palissy understood four

⁴² « ...l'art ingénieux surmonte la nature. » Palissy, *A&O*, 14.

⁴³ I deduce Palissy's understanding of nature here solely from the pamphlet, without drawing on any of the ideas represented in *Recepte* or *Discours*, albeit these ideas evolve and become more sophisticated in these later works. Another great area for further research would be to pull on this thread and study the evolution of Palissy's understanding of nature as it matures into full proto-scientific theories.

aspects of nature he needed to capture in order to trick the viewer: movement, disorder, variety and the effects of time represented by states of decay.

Movement is a main aspect Palissy manipulated in his effort to capture nature. He depicted this with the fountains by using the motion of water to manipulate the viewer's perception. Palissy described how the fish on the edge of the pond act as fountains, spouting water into the pond. When the pond is full, the water is disgorged to a garden in front of the grotto. The fountain design displays Palissy's ability to address practical aspects of the grotto. If he installed fountains, he needed to speak to the feasibility of doing so. Even so, Palissy did not tell us where the water comes from, merely where it goes. Nevertheless, his description suggests an appreciation of engineering necessary to bring his idea to fruition. In the dialogue, however, Palissy reemphasized how the fountain mimics nature and manipulates the viewer's perception by creating the illusion of movement. He states:

You must note here that this large number of water spouts which fall from the mouths of the fish move the water inside the pond, so that we occasionally lose the sight of the fish, and because of the movement of water and of certain circulations caused by the spouts, it appears that the fish stir in the pond.⁴⁴

The goal of the fountain is to create motion, moving the water and obscuring its clarity to give the appearance that the ceramic fish inside are moving like real fish do in nature. This emphasizes Palissy's notion that nature is in motion. It also indicates that mastery over nature includes manipulating natural elements such as water. Capturing both of these elements, if the

⁴⁴ « Il te faut ici noter que ce grand nombre de pissure d'eaux qui tombent de la gueule des poissons, font mouvoir l'eau qui est dedans le fossé, de sorte qu'on perd le poisson de vue par intervalles, à cause du mouvement de l'eau et de certaines circulations que causent lesdites pissures, de sorte qu'il semble que le poisson se remue dans ledit fossé. » Palissy, *A&O*, 5.

worker is ingenious with his art, results in tricking the viewer, a key component of mastering nature.

Palissy also emphasized nature in motion through the animals he has life-cast. He described the reptiles by writing that:

some are crawling upwards, others are crawling askew, and still others are descending downward, making many movements imitating nature. And above all, you will take great pleasure in seeing the newts and lizards, because they mimic nature so closely, lacking only movement.⁴⁵

There is motion in this entire sentence; the reptiles are crawling, descending downward, moving in different directions, just as we see them behaving in their natural environment. There is also movement in the way that Palissy described the ivy; it is also creeping and crawling. On the columns there is “certain shoots of ivy which crawl and surround the columns,”⁴⁶ and on the terms “there is some ivy, which is creeping along the body by surrounding and circling the form of the term, thus you see what ivy commonly does on old buildings.”⁴⁷ Palissy draws a direct connection between movement and nature. Even when Palissy saw ivy in nature, he saw it in motion, slowly wrapping itself around man-made objects, like old buildings. For Palissy, nature is in motion, and if he wanted his art to master nature, he had to employ ingenuity to capture this motion. To capture movement is not an easy feat, as any artist will tell you. But Palissy must capture motion that is random and chaotic because this is another aspect of nature.

⁴⁵ « Mais au-dehors des fosses, les uns sont rampant en sus, les autres rampant de travers, et les autres descendant en bas, en faisant plusieurs gestes imitant le naturel. Et sur tout, tu prendrais grand plaisir à voir les langrottes et lézards, et ce pour cause qu'ils approchent si près du naturel, qu'il ne leur reste que le mouvement. » Palissy, *A&O*, 5.

⁴⁶ « certains jetons [rejetons] de lierre qui rampent et vironnent à l'entour desdites colonnes. » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁴⁷ « il y a certains jetons de lierre, qui rampent au long du corps en environnant et circuyant la forme dudit terme, ainsi que tu vois que les lierres font communément ès vieux bâtiments. » Palissy, *A&O*, 10.

Second, nothing in nature is orderly or symmetric, at least not to Palissy. We see this in the quote about the reptiles' movement; to make them appear natural, they must be moving in different directions. However, capturing randomness in every aspect of the grotto causes tension because, although Palissy aimed to make his structure appear to be a cave, it was still a building, with a door, windows, and architectural elements like the architrave, frieze and cornice. Even so, he sought to avoid the regularity that most man-made buildings sought. Consider that he described the windows as admirable because “they do not fit in any direct line, nor are they perpendicular, but rather twisted, bumpy, irregular and very strange and rustic.”⁴⁸

The construction of the windows was also done to obscure perception by employing an ingenious strategy to hide their relation to the built environment. As Palissy explains it: “to better imitate nature and to better resemble a natural rock, which is not a building, the inventor hung the *fermures* of said windows from the outside of the building, so that those inside the grotto will not see other things other than the form of a cave rock.”⁴⁹ With the structural elements on the outside, from the inside the viewer sees organically shaped windows rather than a geometric form like a square or rectangle. Again, Palissy constructed an element not found in nature in a manner to accentuate the themes that uphold his argument, mimicking nature and tricking the viewer by employing ingenuity. He obscured the view of the structural elements by moving them to the outside, manipulating the viewer's perception, enchanting them to believe they are inside a cave found in the natural world.

⁴⁸ « qu'elles ne tiennent aucune ligne directe, ni perpendiculaire, ains sont tordues, bossues, biaises et rustiques fort étranges. » Palissy, *A&O*, 5.

⁴⁹ « Et pour mieux imiter le naturel et afin qu'il ressemble mieux un rocher naturel, que non pas un bâtiment, l'inventeur a pendu les fermures desdites fenêtres par le dehors du bâtiment, afin que ceux qui seront dedans la grotte ne voient autre chose sinon une forme d'un rocher cavé. » Palissy, *A&O*, 6.

The tension between natural and built environments is continued in Palissy's description of the named architectural elements not being geometric shapes that we might imagine but rather:

[A]bove the niches and the columns, there is an architrave, frieze and cornice, which circle all around the grotto. Of which the architrave and cornice have no form of moldings, only the appearance, imitating the rocks having several bumps and concavities, all adorned and enriched with the things above. As for the frieze, it is a jasper that imitates nature very well.⁵⁰

Even the vaulted ceiling of the grotto was “twisted, bumpy, monstrous, mimicking nature and enriched by many things which would be long to discourse.”⁵¹ Palissy enriched and adorned the geometric forms we would normally associate with an architrave, frieze, cornice, and vaulted ceiling with his artisanal work to obscure their structural function. He described them all as twisted, bumpy, having concavities, again using monstrosity and strangeness to dissolve expected distinctions between man-made and natural forms. Palissy circumvents geometry to express nature as random and disorderly.

Palissy described the niches that function as seats, but those are also adorned and enriched in various ways, some with bumps and concavities. The niches make twelve seats on each side of the grotto, separated by columns, an element that Palissy described as, “a very useful invention.”⁵² The niches, however, “are concaves inside of the wall, conforming to the

⁵⁰ « au-dessus des niches et colonnes y a un architrave, frise et corniche, qui règnent tout à l'entour de ladite grotte. Dont l'architrave et corniche n'ont aucune forme de moulures, ains seulement quelque apparence, en imitant les rochers ayant plusieurs bosses et concavités, le tout orné et enrichi des choses que dessus. Quant est de la frise, elle est d'un jasper imitant de bien près le naturel. » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁵¹ « sont tordues, bossues, monstrueuses, contrefaites et enrichies de plusieurs choses qui seraient longues à discourir. » Palissy, *A&O*, 10.

⁵² « ...d'une invention fort utile. » Palissy, *A&O*, 7.

proper style of a niche, and its proper name is such.”⁵³ Palissy described the niches as being the “proper” form because their function as seats is important, yet some of them still possess bumps and concavities as he described of the above-mentioned architectural elements.

Palissy further obscured order and applied the third important element of his understanding of nature: variety. He described four different types of niches, one “has that which is all masonry of pebbles that resemble natural ones.”⁵⁴ Another “which is all of sea shells, arranged so close together there is no empty space between.”⁵⁵ And another “that is made of bumps and concavities, in the style of a rock, garnished with mosses, grasses and animals,” like that of the rock fountains.⁵⁶ And, “[a]fter that there is another, which is rustic as if it had been mined by the air and dissolved by the winds and frost that you see in certain dissolved stones.”⁵⁷ Each niche is different and Palissy pointed out those differences by giving these four examples.

Palissy further infused his grotto with variety by applying different colors. Réponse continues describing the terms stating:

I have seen many others in various styles, some of chalcedony, others of various jasper, others of gray crafts, others the color of emerald having some veins, as one would commonly see in several pebbles. Indeed, I have seen some which are enameled the color of bronze, resembling more a metal or a copper, than anything else.⁵⁸

⁵³ « ...concaves au-dedans de la muraille, formés à la propre façon d’une niche, et son propre nom est tel. » Palissy, *A&O*, 7.

⁵⁴ « ...est toute maçonnée de cailloux qui ressemblent les naturels, » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁵⁵ « ...qui est toute de coquilles maritimes, arrangées si près l’une de l’autre qu’il n’y a rien de vide. » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁵⁶ « ...qui est faite par bosses et concavités, en façon d’un rocher, garnie de mousses, herbages et animaux ainsi que je t’ai conté du rocher des fontaines. » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁵⁷ « Après celle il y en a une autre, qui est rustique comme s’elle avait été de l’air et dissoute par les vents et gelée, et en telle forme que tu vois que dedans certaines pierres dissoutes se trouvent certains cailloux... » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁵⁸ « J’en ai vu plusieurs autres de diverses façons, les uns de couleur cassidoine [chalcédoine], les autres de divers jaspes, les autres de grisons madrés, les autres de couleur d’émeril ayant certaines veines, comme l’on voit communément en plusieurs cailloux. Voire en ai vu aucuns qui sont émaillés de couleur de bronze, ressemblant plus à métal ou à cuivre, que non à autre chose. » Palissy, *A&O*, 10.

While the niches alternate between two colors they do not possess the same colors as the terms; “The niches are different in workmanship. Because one is all of the color of Agate and the other of Porphyry, and some of the others of various jaspers. Some are gray in color, others crafted in the manner of marble, or of a bastard jasper.”⁵⁹ As for the columns, “they are always changing the pairs of colors in ways that would be too long to describe.”⁶⁰

Palissy employed variety, in colors, shells and pebbles, as well as manipulation of geometric elements to mimic the organic aspect of nature, but he also used the adjectives monstrosity and strangeness to portray and emphasize the enchanting aspects of the space. In recent years, scholars have devoted significant attention to early modern interpretations of monsters and natural wonders and their relation to the natural world order.⁶¹ Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park reject the notion of a linear progression of attitudes toward natural wonders from sources of delight and pleasure to objects of scientific inquiry. They suggest, instead, the simultaneous existence of three separate complexes of interpretations of the monstrous, each of which evoked an associated emotion: horror, pleasure and repugnance.⁶² Palissy’s invocation of the monstrous and strange with a positive connotation in his grotto suggests his purpose was to portray nature at play. Park and Daston observe that in the seventeenth-century, “A flagrant decoupling of form and function, as in the case of the enchanting but useless variety of seashells

⁵⁹ « Les niches susdites sont différentes de labeur. Car il y en a une qui est toute de couleur d’Agate et l’autre de Porphyre, et aucunes des autres de divers jaspes. Il y en a aucunes qui sont de couleur de grison, madrées en manière de marbre, ou d’un jaspé bâtard. » Palissy, *A&O*, 7-8.

⁶⁰ « ...elles sont toujours par couples rechangeantes de couleur et de façon qui seraient trop longues à déduire. » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

⁶¹ See: Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1993); Ottavia Niccoli, “Chapter 2: Monsters, Divination, and Propaganda in Broadsheds,” in *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Jean-Pierre Seguin, *L’information en France avant le périodique: 517 canards imprimés entre 1529 et 1631* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1964); Jean Céard, *La Nature et les Prodiges : L’insolite au XVI^e siècle, en France* (Gêneve: Librairie Droz S. A., 1977) ; Luke Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden: The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁶² Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park. *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 176.

or flowers, was widely celebrated as evidence of nature at play.”⁶³ Palissy’s insistence on variety speaks to the notion of nature at play that Daston and Park observed as an element of early modern ideas of nature.

While Palissy’s grotto space did not contain monsters, he described the space and everything in it as monstrous and strange. His use of the term recalls the words of the English polymath Thomas Browne (1605-1682) analyzed by Daston and Park. In *Religio medici* (1642), Browne noted that “There are no grotesques [for even in monstrosity] there is a kind of beauty, nature so ingeniously contriving the irregular parts, as they become sometimes more remarkable than the principall Fabrick.”⁶⁴ This is the kind of monstrosity Palissy aimed to evoke. Browne described nature as ingenious because of its monstrous potential to generate variety, and Palissy repurposed monstrosity to demonstrate his artisanal ingenuity.

The final aspect of nature that Palissy sought to capture was nature’s permanent state of change and decay. We observe nature in a state of decay in some of the previous quotations, particularly Palissy’s description of the terms or niches seeming to have degraded from the elements of wind and frost acting upon them. Additionally, he captured nature itself decaying by playing with the colors of moss, noting that “some of the mosses are fertile and green, pulsing with more of the humors than others which have more shaved, short hairs, and are consequently pale in color, denoting sterility in humors.”⁶⁵ This care to mimic the passage of time in his own artisanal vegetation is a clear indication of Palissy’s effort to faithfully recreate and even master nature.

⁶³ Daston and Park, 201.

⁶⁴ Quoted from Daston and Park, 201.

⁶⁵ « C’est qu’aucunes des mousses sont gaillardes et vertes, se ressentant plus de l’humeur qu’aucunes des autres qui sont plus rasées et courtes de poil, et conséquemment pâles de couleur, dénotant stérilité d’humeur. » Palissy, *A&O*, 8.

Palissy's emphasis on mimicking nature and capturing minute details, particularly that of hair, scales and the veins of leaves and vegetation, provides additional evidence of the influence of Pliny's *Natural History*, even at this early stage in his career. When Demande becomes skeptical, he questions Réponse on the possibility of capturing the details of the tail of a reptile or the small, thin leaves that characterize grass. Réponse retorts:

I can assure you that the worker has used such industry that there is not a line, stroke, nor scale, that he has not observed in this said sculpture. As is of the herbs I can assure you in the same case, that the worker has spared no effort, that he sculpted just as nature has taught him, as it appears in the outside world.⁶⁶

Similarly, the festoons of fruit that adorn the niches are richly detailed, producing a reaction in the visitor:

...these said trophies are formed of many pears, apples, cucumbers, grapes and other species of fruits sculpted and enameled so much like nature that one is entirely amazed to see the fine edges, veins and arteries of the leaves of the fruits are apparently like those from nature. This was what most engendered my admiration.⁶⁷

The intent is to leave a viewer *entirely amazed*; Réponse's admiration is *most* engendered because the artisanal work, the sculpting and enameling so skillfully wrought that even the minute elements appear natural. The notion that artistic achievement should be appreciated

⁶⁶ « Je te peux assurer que l'ouvrier a usé de telle industrie qu'il n'y a ride, touche, ni écaille, qu'il ne soit observé en ladite insculpture. Quant est des herbes je te peux assurer en cas pareil, que l'ouvrier n'a rien laissé, qu'il n'ait insculpé juste ce que le naturel lui a enseigné, ou fait apparaître en l'extérieur. » Palissy, *A&O*, 6.

⁶⁷ « Ainsi ledit feston traversant le haut de la niche, est posé comme par enrichissement de pavillon au-dessus de la tête de celui qui est assis dedans ladite niche, et conséquemment toutes les autres niches sont ornées de semblables trophées. Et te faut ici noter que tous lesdits trophées sont formés de plusieurs poires, pommes, concombres, raisins et autres espèces de fruits insculpés et émaillés si près du naturel, que l'on en est tout émerveillé, même que les petites arêtes, veines et artères des feuilles desdits fruits sont apparentes en telle sorte comme aux naturelles. Ce qui m'a le plus rendu en admiration. » Palissy, *A&O*, 7.

primarily for its faithful recreation of natural elements echoes Pliny's comments on the arts in his *Natural History*, one of the few works scholars know that Palissy read.

Even more telling, Palissy's chose the example of a sculpted dog, recalling Pliny's story about the bronze sculpture of a dog licking its wounds that had won such acclaim in Rome.

Similarly, Réponse informs Demande:

And of this you must not doubt, and again I dare to say, that there is a dog lying in this work, the hairs of which are sculpted as finely as natural hairs, and in such a way approaching their natural forms that many other dogs approaching it in this place have taken to growling and barking against a dog which has no power to defend itself, nor even yelp at them.⁶⁸

The example of the dog is fascinating because Palissy not only emphasized that he could trick people with his sculptures, but also that he could deceive other animate life forms.

Palissy's discussion of the strength of earthenware in *A&O* indicated his knowledge and appreciation of the earth as an artistic medium. Palissy's defense of earthenware is reminiscent of Pliny's section titled "Works in Pottery" in *Natural History*. Discussing such objects, he comments that "[s]tatues of this nature are still in existence at various places ... wonderful too for their workmanship, and from their artistic merit and long duration more deserving of our respect than gold."⁶⁹ Pliny's comparison with gold recalls his moral disapproval of the luxury he saw in his era. He offers, in response, respect for humble pottery by emphasizing aspects of the

⁶⁸ « Et de ce ne te faut douter, et encore je t'ose dire, qu'il y a un chien couché audit œuvre, les poils duquel sont insculpés de même grosseur que leur naturel, et en telle sorte approchant dudit naturel que plusieurs autres chiens approchant en ce lieu se sont pris à gronder et japper contre celui qui n'avait puissance de se défendre, ne même de glattir [glapir] à eux. » Palissy, *A&O*, 6.

⁶⁹ *Natural History*, 162.

workmanship and its long-lasting quality. He augments his argument for earthenware by pointing to its many utilitarian uses:

[the earth], in her productions in the shape of pottery alone would more than suffice in their variety to satisfy our domestic wants; what with gutter tiles of earthenware, vats for receiving wine, pipes for conveying water, conduits for supplying baths, baked tiles for roofs, bricks for foundations, the production, too, of the potter's wheel."⁷⁰

Pliny thereby infused creative power and moral purity into the potter's wheel, tying the earth to basic needs, like water and shelter, via the skilled manipulation of an artisan. For him, this speaks to human industry. He continued to argue for the nobility of earthenware combined with human industry by noting how ingeniously potters manipulated and mixed materials:

What is there that human industry will not devise? Even broken pottery has been utilized; it being found that, beaten to powder and tempered with lime, it becomes more solid and durable than other substances of a similar nature, forming the cement known as the "Signine" composition, so extensively employed for making the pavements of houses.⁷¹

In these ways, Pliny argued that the artisan's ingenuity was best exemplified when the humblest materials were transformed into lasting, durable, objects.

Palissy evoked similar appreciation for skillful uses of earth as a medium in *A&O*. In an argument with Demande about the fragility of "vessels of the earth," Réponse reinforces that it is the skill of the artisan that determines the quality of earthenware for "earth is not breakable itself, but it is the form which we give it, which causes fragility."⁷² Demande refutes his argument by citing the pieces of a particular artist by name, stating, "works of the earth made by an Italian

⁷⁰ *Natural History*, 162.

⁷¹ *Natural History*, 163-4.

⁷² « ...la terre n'est point frangible de soi, mais c'est la façon que l'on lui donne, qui cause la fragilité. » Palissy, *A&O*, 11.

named Maître Jérôme, a man excellent in his art, begin to fall down in ruin.”⁷³ Palissy acknowledges this artist’s excellence but still maintains that “this Italian ... he made his work without regard to the future.”⁷⁴ He argues that earthenware as a medium cannot be blamed for this artist’s work falling to ruin. It represented a mistake of the artist, if his intention was for his works to last forever, as was the case with Palissy’s grotto. Artistic ingenuity required “the worker” not only to make stable earthenware, but also to take the steps to ensure his works were strong enough to last forever. So, for Palissy, ingenuity entailed both capturing the state of decaying that typified real nature, and arresting that decay to preserve his earthenware masterpiece. In this way, ingenious art could best nature on an elemental level.

Palissy reinforces his argument for the strength of earthenware by providing examples comparing stone and cooked brick, a comparison that again resonated with some of Pliny’s ideas about pottery and the earth. Réponse asked, “have you not seen some towns which the walls are of cooked bricks, which walls resist the cannon better than those of stones do?”⁷⁵ Réponse cites the example of the Egyptian pyramids, erected of bricks, emphasizing that they were still standing, seemingly everlasting. He then pits stone and brick physically against each other stating, “Take a stone of those which we commonly cut for the doors and windows, and the form of the same size and thickness of a brick, then take the brick and the said stone, and strike the one against the other, then you will know that the earth is much stronger than the stone.”⁷⁶ Palissy shows here a clue that he himself employed experimental techniques in developing his

⁷³ « ...œuvres de terre qu’un Italien nommé Maître Jérôme, homme excellent en son art, avait fait, toutefois ces choses commencent à tomber en ruine. » Palissy, *A&O*, 11.

⁷⁴ « ...cet Italien ... il a fait son œuvre d’icelle sans avoir égard à l’avenir. » Palissy, *A&O*, 11.

⁷⁵ « Qu’ainsi soit, je te demande, as-tu pas vu certaines villes desquelles les murailles sont de briques cuites, lesquelles murailles résistent mieux au canon que ne font celles de pierres ? » Palissy, *A&O*, 11.

⁷⁶ « Prends une pierre de celles desquelles on taille communément les portes et fenêtres, et la forme de la même grandeur et épaisseur qu’une brique, puis prends ladite brique et la pierre susdite, et frappe l’une contre l’autre, lors tu connaîtras que la terre est beaucoup plus forte que la pierre. » Palissy, *A&O*, 11.

art, controlling variables by comparing the materials of the *same size and thickness* to test their strength. He pushes this example further by offering the same experiment with stone and earth but “cut in the fashion of a vase.” In this case he argues “you will see then that of earth breaks and tears that of the stone.”⁷⁷ The argument Palissy voices through Réponse implies the artisanal work of the grotto will last against the elements of nature.

Like Pliny, Palissy promoted appreciation for the durability of earthenware and emphasized the artisanal ingenuity required to ensure the longevity of a piece. Pliny praised human industry and connects it to strength and durability, while Palissy pushed that further by arguing the artisan’s ingenuity finds its expression in the durability and lifetime of the earthenware creation. In Palissy’s argument for earthenware, specifically enameled earthenware, he explicitly stated that his proposed grotto “will be able to last forever.”⁷⁸ Just as Palissy manipulated the element of water to trick the viewer, thus mastering nature through perception, he also manipulated the earth with the element of fire to master nature in its element of change, creating art that would be enduring, overcoming decay.

Palissy’s debt to Pliny’s *Natural History* seems clear. Palissy absorbed from Pliny an understanding of nature as something to be valued and mimicked through ingenious human art. Pliny’s praise of the potter’s wheel, human industry and faithful likeness certainly influenced Palissy’s initial understanding of his artisanal work. These values would persist, and indeed characterize the rest of Palissy’s career.

⁷⁷ « ... taille en façon d’un vase...tu verras lors que celui de terre brisera et mettra en pièces celui de pierre. » Palissy, *A&O*, 11.

⁷⁸ « ...que la grotte susdite pourra durer à jamais. » Palissy, *A&O*, 12.

The tension between change and permanence that Palissy represented with his plan for Montmorency's grotto evokes a central issue in Renaissance culture, as elaborated by Erwin Panofsky in his classic article, "Et in Arcadia ego: On the Conception of Transience in Poussin and Watteau." Palissy's obsession with the enduring power of man-made objects while capturing the state of decay inherent in nature, suggests a nostalgia for other times and places. With this grotto, I argue, he aimed to create an Arcadian space that enchanted visitors by evoking a lost Golden Age.

Scholars generally agree on the, "close association between concept of renaissance and the theme of the Golden Age in thought and literature of the period."⁷⁹ Panofsky analyzes the etymological evolution of the phrase "Et in Arcadia ego," noting that Virgil's Arcady came to evoke a perfect blend of soft and hard primitivism, embodying duality. Panofsky explains that soft primitivism, "conceives of primitive life as a golden age of plenty, innocence and happiness—in other words, as civilized life purged of its vices," as opposed to hard primitivism which, "conceives of primitive life as an almost subhuman existence full of terrible hardship and devoid of all comforts ... as civilized life stripped of its virtues."⁸⁰ In Virgil's works – very influential in Renaissance culture – the idea of a lost golden age ties these two conception together by evoking the longing for a time and place where life was utopic, but also acknowledging that this place no longer exists. Palissy's grotto arguably embodies this idea, creating a space where the passage of time stands still as a dream-like architectural space falls into ruin, overtaken by an abundant, changing nature.

⁷⁹ L. B. T. Houghton, *Virgil's Fourth Eclogue in the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 24.

⁸⁰ Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 297.

As Panofsky points out, Virgil's ideal Arcady was characterized by dissonance between the inevitability of human suffering and superhumanly perfect surroundings. These clashing ideas coexisted, and were resolved in "that vespertinal mixture of sadness and tranquility" at day's end that Virgil's poetry evoked.⁸¹ Palissy's grotto alluded to this "vespertine" moment as the space, even with the sun at its highest point in the day, would never have been brighter than evening. In the cave-like space, the visitor left everyday life for an ethereal space where the effects of the passage of time and natural decay were visible, but the passage of time was arrested. The space blended man-made and natural elements in an ethereal present.

Palissy may have evoked Virgil directly with the vegetation overtaking the architectural elements of his grotto. Virgil's Eclogue V includes description of two shepherds approaching a cave overrun with vines: "Or in deep shelter stay, in yonder cave—See how 'tis garnished by the wild vine's sprays!"⁸² Palissy carefully described elements of his grotto "beset by moss," and specified that tendrils of vines were overtaking the bodies of the term "because of its old age and antiquity."⁸³ We do not know that Palissy read Virgil, however the ties between the imagined spaces of Virgil's pastoral is a lovely comparison; it is not difficult to imagine Palissy being inspired by a pastoral poem given his personal association with country life.⁸⁴

There are other literary influences to note here. Historians agree that Palissy read at least two romances, *Hynerotomachia Poliphlii* (*Songe de Poliphile*) and *Roman de la Rose*. Amico draws direct connection between *Songe de Poliphile* and *A&O*, noting that both describe a fountain decorated with fish that when the water is overfilled the fish appear to be swimming

⁸¹ Panofsky, 300.

⁸² "Eclogues of Virgil (1908)/Eclogue 5," Wikisource, last edited 4 January 2019, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Eclogues_of_Virgil_\(1908\)/Eclogue_5](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Eclogues_of_Virgil_(1908)/Eclogue_5)

⁸³ « Et sur lesdites mousses, ou parmi icelles, y a certaines plantes et diverses espèces d'herbes, qui ont crû sur le corps et figure dudit terme à cause de sa grande antiquité. » Palissy, *A&O*, 9.

⁸⁴ Another area of research with the potential to be further explored is a deeper comparison to Virgil's work with Palissy's grotto description here and the one in *Recepte veritable*.

because of the ripples.⁸⁵ Romances were perhaps the most popular non-religious reading material in Palissy's time, and it is clear literature inspired his vision for his fountain. Esteban Alejandro Cruz has attempted to reconstruct the space of Philiphilus' dream in *Hypnerotomachia*, but notes the challenges to visual interpretation posed by discrepancies in the amount of detail offered in the text; the reader must, at some level, offer his own design interpretation.⁸⁶ Palissy sought to spell out, in minute detail, what his grotto would look like. In *A&O*, Palissy takes the reader on a journey to evoke enchantment similar to the dreamlike narratives of the two romances.

The grotto description reveals Palissy intended to create a space that echoed Pliny's *Natural History*, which praised using art to capture a faithful likeness of nature, and also praised the human ingenuity necessary to overcome the decay to which nature is subject. The description highlights the pleasant monstrosity and strangeness of the space to be created, a space characterized by movement, variety, and disorder at every turn, but nevertheless a space that inspired reflection, tranquility and delight. The grotto would have been an Arcadian inspired place like Virgil imagined and Renaissance readers valued: a Utopia of beauty and bliss that had become distant in *time*.⁸⁷ Palissy's intention was not to create a utopian space, but to evoke a sense of the Virgilian lost Golden Age by enchanting the viewer and depicting – while mastering—the passage of time. The tension between capturing decay, a sign of nature's evanescence, and mastering decay constituted the magical ingredient that would demonstrate the ingenuity of Palissy's artisanal masterpiece. masterpiece.

⁸⁵ Amico, 96.

⁸⁶ Cruz, Esteban Alejandro. *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: An Architectural Vision from the First Renaissance* Volume I. United States: Xlibris US, 2012. (Google books doesn't give page numbers??); See also *Mirrors and Mirroring from Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*. Eds. Lilia Diamantopoulou and Maria Gerolemou. United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020 for comparative study of the two romances.

⁸⁷ Panofsky, 303.

Conclusion

Bernard Palissy wrote to Duc Anne de Montmorency on February 24, 1562, a week before the outbreak of the French Religious Wars on March 1st. He remained in prison until the following year when he was released on March 24, 1563, five days after the Edict of Amboise ended the first war (March 19, 1563). There is uncertainty concerning whether he returned to working on the grotto for Montmorency, but presumably he continued the work for another few years because he received payment from the duke on February 1, 1564. He probably wrote *Architecture et ordonnance* during his time in prison, and likely began writing *Recepte veritable* during the same time or shortly thereafter.

The grotto did not see completion as Palissy lost his patron when Montmorency died on November 12, 1567, two days after suffering wounds in the Battle of Saint-Denis. Leonard N. Amico notes that Palissy probably repurposed some of his work for Montmorency to use for a grotto for the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, whom he began receiving patronage from around the time of Montmorency's death.¹ He was commissioned to build a similar grotto for the Queen Mother's Tuileries Gardens, however, there is also uncertainty concerning the completion of that grotto as the Queen Mother abandoned the garden project in the year 1572.²

Physical evidence for either grotto only exists in fragments found in an excavation of Palissy's Paris atelier.³ Like Amico notes, there is no evidence that the grotto meant for Montmorency was ever built and the fragments that remain are likely what was intended for the Queen Mother, essentially rendering any analysis of the grotto fragments and the description in *A&O* speculation at best. The physical evidence at least in part substantiates the claims of

¹ Leonard N. Amico, *Bernard Palissy: In Search of Earthly Paradise* (New York: Flammarion, 1996), 54.

² Amico, 69.

³ For discussion of these fragments see Amico, "Chapter II: The Grottoes," in *Earthly Paradise*, 46-81.

patronage Palissy received from Catherine de Medici, indicating that although he never converted, he continued to work for powerful noble patrons, certainly not insignificant the highest noble family of France. His self-titling of *inventeur des rustiques figulines du Roi* portrays his boldness but arguably cannot be wholly contested as he received the patronage of the royal family.⁴

Palissy's artisanal career certainly flourished even though the death of his patron, Montmorency, precipitated the loss of that patronage. He continued to pursue his interests in natural philosophy evident in his publication of *Discours Admirable*, and found a way to portray his Reformed religious identity expressed in *Recepte veritable*, though *Recepte* still portrays his passions of art mimicking nature similarly found in *A&O*. The fact that Palissy never converted, despite the anxieties and fears in the dedication letter of *A&O* and the worries about Protestants in France needing a safe haven he made clear in *Recepte*, suggests any analysis of Palissy cannot divorce him from his religious views. However, the document of *A&O* was Palissy's first publication and his letter to Montmorency was intentionally void of his religious affiliation; these two aspects are precisely what makes *A&O* significant considering his final treatise on natural philosophy does not express his Protestantism and the analysis here shows early indications of his understanding of nature.

Palissy went on to have a long and fruitful career though he never converted, and died in prison as a Protestant in the Bastille (1590). This thesis does not aim to divorce him from his Protestantism, but rather sets this aside because *A&O* does not indicate his views on art and

⁴ "Catherine de' Medici's accounts for the expenses related to the grotto by Bernard Palissy and his sons Nicolas and Mathurin," in Amico, *Earthy Paradise*, App III, Doc IX, 231; Was partially published in 1842 prior to the nineteenth-century discovery of the Tuileries grotto fragments (J.-J. Champollion-Figeac, "Correspondance," *Le cabinet de l'amateur et de l'antiquaire*, vol. 1, 1842, pp. 277-278). Now in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale, Ms. Fr. 10 399, f° 31recto à f° 32 verso).

nature stem solely or significantly from his religious views. Studies that pursue this facet of his life should not consider this thesis an argument that reduces the significance of his Protestantism to his perspective. Simply, this thesis argues the significance of *A&O* because it is without Protestant overtones, allowing for a clearer understanding of Palissy's notions of art and nature at the beginning of his career.

Aside from Amico's brief art historical analysis of *A&O*, there has been little study done by scholars on the contents of the pamphlet, and further there is no in-depth analysis of the dedication letter until now. This thesis shows the document has historical value in studying Palissy, as well as gleaning insights into patronage-artisan relationships in sixteenth-century France, and argues for deeper study of lesser-known figures who exemplify traits associated with the characteristics of a Renaissance man. The dedication letter's uniqueness as a personal letter from a lowly artisan to a member in the upper echelon of nobility during a time of religious tension reveals how confessional differences complicated navigating the patronage system that could determine the success of artisanal careers. The letter shows the moment an artisan was trying to construct a patronage connection that would launch him into a career more auspicious than that of a regional potter. Palissy employed an astucious strategy by appealing to his patron about the only thing they had in common, the commissioned grotto work. And in doing so, he argued that ingenious art could transcend confessional differences.

The description of the proposed grotto for Montmorency is significant because it reveals Palissy's early understanding of the relationship of art and nature, as well as his views of nature itself, and his ambitions to participate in Renaissance intellectual life. Palissy attempted to employ the dialogue genre in his description, underscoring the argument that *A&O* reveals those intellectual aspirations. Further, Palissy's incorporation of the descriptors monstrosity and

strangeness, as well as his dream-like narrative indicate inspiration from early modern romances and his desire to emphasize the enchanting aspect of the proposed grotto should it have seen completion. The elements of monstrosity and strangeness suggest he subscribed to the notion of nature at play. He saw nature in motion, full of variety, disordered and in various states of decay. His argument is that ingenious art overcomes nature and he depicted this by evoking a sense of the Virgilian lost Golden Age specifically by arresting nature in a state of decay. He expresses views of art and nature that indicate early influences of Pliny's *Natural History*, namely an appreciation for art that conveys a faithful likeness and that is enduring, possessing the distinct quality of durability. All of these elements uphold Palissy's theme that truly ingenious art masters nature by manipulating perception and tricking the viewer into believing his artisanal work to be nature itself. This theme derived from influences of Pliny's *Natural History* and characterized the rest of Palissy's artisanal career, and arguably provided the base for his natural philosophy. These aspects being present in his earliest work is what makes studying *A&O* significant.

Palissy's place in history from the perspectives of art history and the history of science sometimes fail to realize how his art and natural philosophy were intricately connected and his exploration of both subjects drove progress in each field. This is a case study of one lesser-known Renaissance man, and a study that focuses on a moment in his life. This moment, however, was a significant one, early in his career and which a major project and perhaps his life on the line; it is also one which illustrates his conceptions of art and nature. Knowing his relevance in the history of ceramic arts and his contributions to the fields of hydrology and geology forces us to ponder how he came to make earthenware that aimed to mimic nature so closely as well as how he came to the natural philosophical conclusions expressed in *Discours*.

Analyzing his first published work gives us insight into his earliest notions of both art and natural philosophy as the foundation for his most matured thoughts, and further indicates the significance of aspiration and ambition, and the role those traits serve in propelling the evolution of his intellectual pursuits.

Lastly, there are several places where I indicate suggested areas of further research. I am of the mind that scholarship, at the very least, should engage in an ongoing conversation. This study of *A&O* provides a foundational examination of Palissy's early career and offers many directions to pursue further research. The proposed grotto possessed the dimensions of the nave of a church. This could be developed further by applying an architectural historical perspective that analyzes the changing architecture in the Reformation and the confessional differences of patron-artisan relationships seen in Chapter Two. This thesis draws connections between *A&O* and Pliny's *Natural History* focusing mostly on the sections concerning art. *Natural History* covers many topics, such as geological phenomenon, and minerals and metals, suggesting that a comparative study between *Natural History* and *Discours Admirable* would be a fruitful and enlightening endeavor. Further, the focus of this thesis is on Palissy's understanding of nature solely in *A&O*, but I suspect that an interesting area for further research is to build upon this study and analyze *Recepte* and *Discours* to trace the evolution of Palissy's understanding of nature as it matured into full proto-scientific theories. Lastly, there is potential for research that further explores Virgil's work by drawing connections to Palissy's grotto description here and the one in *Recepte veritable*. The life and work of Bernard Palissy, while studied by some historians, is still a subject with many areas to probe at—this thesis provides a methodological lens that could be applied to his other published works, specifically focusing on the cultural context in which they were written.

Appendix A. Complete Translation of *Architecture et ordonnance*¹

Architecture and Ordinance
Of the Rustic Grotto
Of My Lord the Duke Of Montmorency
Peer and Constable of France

At La Rochelle,
From the printing press of Barthélemy Berton.

1563.

To the Reader.

In these times of trouble and calamities, friend reader, seeking some honest human exercise, which with other better meditations, would remove me from part of so much trouble, where I see myself enveloped, with many, I informed myself to put forward a small discourse, of a great and noble thing. It is a rustic grotto, which my lord the Constable beforehand has commanded be made for him. You will know that the work in all geometric parts is so ingeniously divided and leads, that the discussion I propose here to you, will bring you pleasure and admiration.

Farewell.

To My Lord the Duke of Montmorency,
Peer and Constable of France,

¹ The format of this translation coincides with the 1919 reprint from the University of Michigan Library, digitized in June 2007. This reprint introduced the pamphlet to Palissy scholars in the early twentieth century. A sixteenth century copy is very rare as previous “oeuvres completes” for Palissy do not mention it.

My Lord, because you enjoyed doing me the honor of employing me to your service, and even in the work mentioned in this small dialogue, I could not do less, than to dedicate it to you and pray to you with that spirit, that pleases you to do me this good to lend an ear to the discussion here, so that by what is written you have a certain testimony of the excellence of the work that you ordered me about seven years ago. Also, My Lord, may it please you to remember that when it pleased you to order the said work, that the late King Henri and monsieur the Cardinal of Lorraine attested in your presence, they had seen some of the greatest works and of the most beautiful things in the world, but they had never seen work like to mine. The said work was only a simple basin, for which the late king made me give by his liberality fifty crowns, with your help, when it pleased you to present me to his majesty. I pray to you, My Lord, to consider that if this first piece that I made, was so much esteemed by the aforementioned King and Cardinal, and more than a thousand other kind spirits, how much can you assure yourself in the present, that the work that I have done for you since the seven aforementioned years, is without comparison more excellent and wonderful? I can assure you that if I wanted to narrate along the monstrosity of the thing, I would need more than one ream of paper for the discourse, indeed without writing anything but the truth. But I worked to write as briefly as I could in this small dialogue, which should be called an abstract, or an epitome, rather than a dialogue. And know well that it does not contain half, not a hundredth part of the excellence of the work, nevertheless no one could think the writing was greater than the work. However, I submit myself to die shamefully, if the aforementioned is not true. And to attest to the aforesaid things, I take as witness My lord the Duke of Montpensier, who when he last traveled to Saintonge visited my workshop, accompanied by several great lords. After seeing the greatness of the works, or a part of them, he offered protection to me and all those in my house, prohibiting the Seneschal of Saintonge and other royal officers from disturbing me and forbidding them to touch my work. And if I should be accused of the new religion (such as it is called) or other crimes, he reserved these charges for his jurisdiction. I take also to witness My lord the Prince of La Roche-sur-Yon, who when he was ill was carried by four gentlemen to my workshop, to see the work. I take also to witness the lord of Burie, which has written three times to the Sénéchal de Saintonge (brother of the Dean of Saintes, in my region) ordering that he permit me to complete your work in peace, witnesses the lord of Jarnac and the lord of Pons, who were present when one of the three letters was written. And who by his grace interceded for me with the said lord of Burie. Others who saw the work include the late King and the Queen of Navarre, accompanied by the lords and ladies of Rohan.

My lord the count of La Rochefoucault.

Two brothers of My lord of the Tremouille.

My Lord the abbot of Cormery.

My Lord of Soubise.

The baron of Aubeterre.

Sir Francois of Candale and his brother, Sir Christophe.

The lord of Estissac.

Monsieur the baron of Mirambeau and his brothers.

Monsieur of Montendre.

The sons of the lord of Candale.

The lord of Cosnac.
Monsieur de la Chataigneraie.
Two lords of the house of Bourdeille.
The lord of Sansac.
The baron of Curton.
The lord Dauzances.
The Archbishop of Bordeaux.
The Bishop of Rieux.

And as many as four thousand gentlemen, with presidents and counselors, treasurers, recipients and others of good sense who will attest and certify that there is nothing in this small dialogue that does not contain truth. How many not one of the above has not seen a small part of the work. All this considered, My Lord, I have found it good to alert you that despite the safeguard of My Lord of Montpensier has given me, and those letters that the lords of Burie and of Pons wrote to the Seneschal de Saintonge, notwithstanding that I was charged to complete your work, monsieur the Dean and chapter of Saintes made me prisoner as a criminal in the conciergerie of this city of Bordeaux, to draw from me testimony against certain wealthy citizens of the city of Saintes, whom they accuse of breaking their images, in the hope of recovering money for the repair of them. From which follows that while I am here your work is in danger of being ruined, and it is the truth, it has already been bombarded with many assaults. And if it had not been for the captain Nog[a]ret, they would have done great damage the day that the city of Saintes was sacked. Also the lord of Richelieu having heard of the greatness of the work, shouted through his horn through the streets and crossroads of the city of Saintes, that the said work was for you and that no one be so bold as to touch it, nor stay in my house, because of the said task. Nevertheless, there are low persons and certain argolets, that are maintained at the expense of the city of Saintes and the surrounding areas, only for the safety of persons of said Senechal, dean and chapter of said place. These argolets do not let pass a week without doing some breaking, or opening at night in barns and workshops, where your said work is stored. This considered, My Lord, I have found no better means than to request that you issue an order to one of your secretaries, that he write to the gentlemen of the Parlement of the city of Bordeaux where I am prisoner, that they please compel said chapter of Saints, my legal opponent, to take inventory of your work, and to keep protection of it there during my imprisonment. This they can easily do, since they have many vacant homes. If you would do this, this will be the way that your work will be preserved, and if some damage occurs, the said chapter will reply, which has the wherewithal to satisfy your interests. I believe that if you would be so good as to write to the court, that will be the way that the money I have received from you will be insured, because I expect very soon to be vindicated and to complete the said work, which I assure will satisfy you greatly. I can assure you that if I were to begin it again I would not be able to do as much as now exists for thirty thousand livres. If the said things are not written in a style worthy of you, you will please have regard to the quality and capacity of the author, and also consider where this writing was done, and done in haste. Which is the place where I will pray the Lord God give you perfect health and a good and long life.

Done in the concierge of Bordeaux, this 24th day of February 1562.

Your most humble, most obedient and most affectionate servant, Bernard Palissy.

To have an easier understanding of the present discourse, we will treat it in the form of dialogue, which we will introduce two persons, one will ask, the other will respond, as follows.

Demande.

Brother and friend, where have you been it has been a good long time that I have not seen you in this city?

Reponse.

I was on commission in the country of Saintonge, looking to the fortifications and fortress of Saintes, the city capital of Saintonge, where I benefited a lot and learned many secrets of my art of geometry and architecture, because of certain edifices and antique ruins, which are in this city. They were constructed in the time of Caesar and other ancient emperors, which is a memorable thing. And among other things, I have seen in this city of Saintes a grotto of rustic figuline, built and invented by a master Bernard Palissy, at present prisoner in the conciergerie of Bordeaux. The grotto rendered me speechless, even in such a way that it seems to me that it was a dream, or vision because of the monstrosity of the edifice.

Demande.

I beg to you to make me hear in greater detail, the construction of this building, that you say to be so strange and monstrous.

Reponse.

Even if all the poets of Europe, Asia and Africa had endeavored to write and to make you understand, it is impossible that even their minds could make you understand a hundredth part of this work. Nevertheless to give you enjoyment, I will speak to you about what I am able to remember.

First the building is forty feet long, twenty feet wide and seventeen feet high, not counting the arch of the vault, whose pan and main door are decorated with several terms, so close to the human form, that there is no man who would not be astonished to see them. Because the accoutrements and linens of which they are coiffed and dressed resemble the nature, so that many seeing this work have returned maintaining obstinately that the cloth which clothes these terms is real. Also the hair and hair of beard. The eyebrows are sculpted of the same thickness as natural body hair. These terms are situated and posed on certain pedestals which serve as pillars. Inside the entrance of the portal and above the heads of the terms, there is an architrave, frieze and cornice. And above the same cornice are many windows which rise up to the vault. And between each two windows there is a term which serves as a pillar and separates these windows. But it should be noted that all the terms which are between said windows, are all rustic and fashioned in strange modes, as I will make you understand below. Also above this portal are various coats of arms of, including those of the king, and of the said Lord Constable. But you will understand better the beauty when I have told you the rest.

Demande.

I beg you, do not grow weary of making me understand everything well.

Reponse.

The pinion which is opposite, on the other side of the grotto, directly opposite of the portal, is unspeakably enriched. Firstly at the foot of the pinion and joining the cobblestone floor, there is a pond containing in depth and breadth a foot, and in length as far as the grotto extends. This pond is full of diverse species of fish, including those which inhabit maritime waters, and those in freshwater. And the spaces between the fish in the pond is enriched with many pebbles, mosses, corals, herbage and strange stones. All these things imitate nature just as do the fish.

On the edge of the pond there is a terrace, on which are sculptures of an infinite number of fish, as well as turtles, crayfish, canker fungi, frogs, regal and sea spiders, red mullets, pike, sea dogs and other species of rare and strange fish. All these species of fish abovementioned spout water from the mouth, inside the pond, which is below the terrace, in such a way, that when the pond is full the excess of the water is disgorged through a hidden canal and goes in a large garden, which is in front of the grotto. You must note here that this large number of water spouts which fall from the mouths of the fish move the water inside the pond, so that we occasionally lose sight of the fish, and because of the movement of water and of certain circulations caused by the spouts, it appears that the fish stir in the pond.

Above the terrace is a sculpture in the fashion of a strange rock, continuing up to the height of eight feet tall. This rock is completely covered with bumps and concavities, as you commonly see of maritime rocks. The rock is enriched and adorned by many pebbles and strange stones of diverse colors.

It also features all of the species of shells which are commonly found in sand and rocks of the ocean. Also, the rock is adorned with an infinite number of species of herbs, which customarily grow in aquatic sites and on maritime rocks, such as finger-ferns, maidenhair ferns, politicon, hair of Venus, polytrichum, polypod, and other such species of herbs suitable for this matter. Also the rock is adorned and enriched with several and diverse species of mosses, on the herbs and rocks, there is an infinite number of animals and reptiles. For example in the holes, bumps, or concavities there are several grass-snakes, serpents, asps and vipers, some layered and twisted together one way with others a different way. Outside the pits, some are crawling upwards, others are crawling askew, and still others are descending downward, making many movements imitating nature. And above all, you will take great pleasure in seeing the newts and lizards, because they mimic nature so closely, lacking only movement. And above said rock there is an architrave, frieze and cornice, which tops the said grotto all around. The architrave and cornice are sculpted with bumps and concavities, ornamented and enriched with things above. And on the frieze, there are several ancient letters which are "APLANOS," which is the motto of the said constable. Above this frieze are several windows no less admirable as the abovementioned rock, because they do not fit in any direct line, nor are they perpendicular, but rather twisted, bumpy, irregular and very strange and rustic. For they are long and narrow as

if one had made narrow gates with great hammer blows through a rock, large enough for a man to pass through. And to better imitate nature and to better resemble a natural rock, which is not a building, the inventor hung the *fermures* of said windows from the outside of the building, so that those inside the grotto will not see other things other than the form of a cave rock. And you must know here that everything I have told you of the entrance of the *portail* and of the front wall, in similar form there is a term in between each set of windows. These terms serve as a extra pillar to support the vault and are insculpted monstrously in various fashions of which I will make a narration for you hereafter.

Demande.

I have heard till here, everything that you have wanted to tell me without interrupting you, in such a way that I have heard from you many things that no man could ever persuade me to believe, because these seem to me impossible. In the first place, you have made me understand that all these animals and species of herbs who are in this work, they are approaching so close to nature that there is nothing to add and nothing to criticize. Now, I know well that the serpents, lizards and newts have an infinite number of small scales, so it is impossible for any man to sculpt them, or even count them, because they are not equal in size, and even the scales of the tail are not similar to those of the head. And similarly you would have made me understand that there are certain species of herbs that resemble true nature, among the others you have named for me are haircap moss and maidenhair ferns. Now I know well that it is impossible to sculpt such herbs, because they have small, thin leaves and intricate structures.

Reponse.

I can assure you that the worker has used such industry that there is not a line, stroke, nor scale, that he has not observed in this said sculpture. As for the herbs I can assure you in the same case, that the worker has spared no effort, that he sculpted just as nature has taught him, as it appears in the outside world. There are no small nerves, arteries and small ribbings, which are scattered inside the leaves, however small they possess, that the worker does not observe in his sculpture. And of this you must not doubt, and again I dare to say, that there is a dog lying in this work, the hairs of which are sculpted as finely as natural hairs, and in such a way approaching their natural forms that many other dogs approaching in this place have taken to growling and barking against a dog which has no power to defend itself, nor even yelp at them.

Demande.

If it is as you say, then I have won by another point. Because I recall that you have said, that everything was enameled of suitable enamel colors. Now I know well that enamel is an incrustation which carries at least the thickness of two leaves of paper when it is laid and applied on the work. Therefore, it follows that all the scales of the animals and constructions of small leaves and other subtle things, are covered and obscured because of the thickness and coverage of said enamels. And so it must be, considering the work of the Italians and those of

Pisa, and of Valence, and even the workers of Lyon. And without taking the trouble to go so far, take note of the works of an excellent workman, that King Francis, first of his name, brought back from Spain. This workman made many beautiful things at the chateau of Cognac and Madrid. Nevertheless, you will find that all the enamels of the aforesaid workers carry thickness so large that all the subtle finishes of their sculpture are obscured and part of their form is lost, because the thickness of said enamels.

Reponse.

I am grateful to you, that you have considered the difficulties which this work poses. And you have accurately raised the principle points and difficulties which exist. Also the examples that you cite to me are worthy ones. Nevertheless, I can assure you that the workman and inventor of the work of which is spoken, has found means to render all these enamels diaphanous and transparent, in such a way that the form of the sculpture appears as well after it is covered with enamel as before. And I dare to say, that I have seen in this work, a term that has a belt of seal skin of four fingers width, covered in a white enamel speckled with tan, yellow, gray and black. Despite being covered in all these enamels, the hair of the said belt has not lost its form, and is of the same size as hair, just as before. I recall that the workman recounted to me, that he had invested more in looking for the way to render these enamels diaphanous, than on all the rest of his inventions. For this reason I can assure you that the above is true.

Demande.

You have given me so many answers, that I no longer know what to say, except that I pray you be so kind to make me understand more about this admirable building.

Reponse.

The two sections of the grotto to the right and to the left feature a very useful design. Because all along there are seats, twelve on each side. And these seats are concavities inside of the wall, conforming to the proper style of a niche, and its proper name is such. And between each two niches or seat, there is a column and pilaster, which separate the said niches. And above each niche, there is a trophy, or festoon, that is attached at an end on the head of a column of the right side, and the other end of the trophy is attached on the other column which is on the left. The said festoon crossing the top of the niche, is situated as enrichment of the pavilion above the head of the one who is seated below said niche, and consequently all the other niches are ornamented by similar trophies. And I must note here that these said trophies are formed of many pears, apples, cucumbers, grapes and other species of fruits sculpted and enameled so much like nature that one is entirely amazed to see the fine edges, veins and arteries of the leaves of the fruits are apparently like those from nature. This was what most engendered my admiration.

The Niches.

The niches are all different in workmanship. Because one is all of the color of Agate and the other of Porphyry, and some of the others of various jasper. Some are

gray in color, others crafted in the manner of marble, or of a bastard jasper. There is one which is all masonry of pebbles that resemble natural ones, but they are more pleasant because of their luster and polish. There is another, which is all of sea shells, arranged so close together there is no empty space between. After this there is another that is made of bumps and concavities, in the style of a rock, garnished with mosses, grasses and animals like those I told you about at the rock fountains. After that there is another, which is rustic as if it had been mined by the air and dissolved by the winds and frost that you see in certain dissolved stones, where you find certain pebbles or shells, that the air could not harm because of their hardness. In this case the workman of this niche sculpted many shells and pebbles to better imitate nature. If I wanted to discourse to you about the excellence of these niches, I would never be done. Whereby I will not make a very long speech to you about them, but I will please you now with the excellence of the columns and pilaster.

The Columns.

You must note that each niche has two columns of similar style, one on the right, the other on the left, of which one pair is all of shells, two others are sculpted in the style of a rock which would have been eaten of the air. These columns are garnished from above with mosses and small herbage, which have grown on the columns, where there is a notable thing about these two columns. Some of the mosses are fertile and green, pulsing with more of the humors than others which have more shaved, short hairs, and are consequently pale in color, denoting sterility in humors. Also it has two others that are rusticated as if by great hammer blows, which are marbled in various colors. There are two others which are mined and at intervals strewn with shells and pebbles, and certain shoots of ivy which crawl and surround the columns. And moving on to the next, they are always changing the pairs of colors in ways that would be too long to describe. Whereby I am of the opinion to enter on the subject of the rest of the building. But I do not want to forget to tell you that the pilaster and pedestals, and between the pedestals are sculpted and enriched with all the aforesaid things. But because it would take too long to make the discourse, let's come now to the other members that are above the aforementioned niches.

First, above the niches and the columns, there is an architrave, frieze and cornice, which circle all around the grotto. Of which the architrave and cornice have no form of moldings, only the appearance, imitating the rocks having several bumps and concavities, all adorned and enriched with the things above.

As for the frieze, it is a jasper that imitates nature very well. And in said frieze are several letters which are the motto of the lord Constable. Which letters enrich and embellish the said frieze grandly.

Demande.

What? You promised to recount to me everything, and at present you do not say to me anything about what is above the cornice?

Reponse.

I thought I made you understand, by describing to you the gable of the fountains that is all around the grotto, above the cornice, are all windows. I will tell you these are monstrous windows, skewed and twisted, in the manner and form of the sprocket of the fountains. And in between each window, there is a term that serves as part of the pillar and support to bear the vaults, holding such an order (or thereabouts) as certain figures that you see in an antique building, which is in Bourdeaux, named the Palais Tutelle. As for the enrichments of the windows, they are no less admirable than the things above. Whereby at present it is time that I stop.

Demande.

Indeed, but you promised to amply declare to me and make understood the strange monstrosity of the terms, that you say which are all around the grotto, above the cornice.

Reponse.

There is not a man of gentle spirit who would know how to retain a thousandth parts of the strangeness and monstrosity of these things. Nevertheless, of what I can remember, I will tell you a part of it.

I recall there is a term, that I could not look at without laughing, because of its monstrosity, because its attire or coiffure is cloth twisted in a strange fashion. Nevertheless, the fibers and weave of the cloth are so visible that there are few men who do not think that this is a real cloth. And the face of the term is eaten by the air, having for the form of the eyes, two shells, inside these are the depression of the eyes. And much of the attire on the body of the term, are so close to nature that even the fustians and striped cloth present itself in the form of real cloth. And the feet of this term, which is in the form of the column, is rusticated and enriched with diverse mosses, herbs and strange stones.

After this one, I have seen another that is no less strange than the first, which all its fashion and body is twisted, humpy and eaten of the air, and beset by moss, because of its old age and antiquity. And on the said mosses, or among them, there are certain plants and diverse species of herbs, that have grown on the body and figure of the term because of its great antiquity. Nevertheless, the said term still holds a rather apparent form of the human body, even in the bumps and wrinkles of the chest and other surfaces, which commonly appear in the human form. However, the foot is formed and sculpted in the form of foot of a column. And the worker has done this for a reason.

I have seen another, which is formed of nothing but shells, as are often found to exist in maritime parts. If these stones and rocks are broken into pieces, they are all shells formed into stone. And as these said shells are more durable than the rest of the stone, the shells are so closely joined one to the other, that there is no space between them. And nevertheless the said term is in itself a geometry similar to the human form, so very apparent that it satisfies all those who look at it.

I have also seen another, that is strangely rusticated and appears to be formed from a gray stone, in which in many places of his body there are pebbles and shells as though nature had created them within the stone of the statue. And after these I have described, there is another that is jasper stone, whose two eyes are two shells, and the mouth and form of the nose, chin and cheeks are formed of shells, composing all together the geometry and human form. Also in several places of his body there are shells. And besides said term figure, there is some ivy, which is creeping along the body by surrounding and circling the form of the term, thus you see what ivy commonly does on old buildings.

I have even seen another which has almost lost his human form, indicating its greater antiquity. And yet, despite being dissolved and eaten by the air, it satisfied me and recreated my spirit greatly, because he is terribly glossy and the color of turquoise, having many veins and white grains, which greatly beautify the statue.

I have seen many others in various styles, some of chalcedony, others of various jasper, others of gray crafts, others the color of emerald having some veins, as one would commonly see in several pebbles. Indeed, I have seen some which are enameled of the color of bronze, resembling, more a metal or a copper, than anything else. If you want to know more, I must give myself time to think about it. Because I do not remember at present all that I have seen.

Demande.

And above the heads of the terms and windows that you have told me, what is there further?

Reponse.

Nothing, only a cornice, which circles all around the grotto, on the cornice are posed several rooks, crows, pigeons, hay cats and owl cats and other such species that commonly haunt rocks and ancient ruins. And above the cornice is the vault of the grotto, which is twisted, bumpy, monstrous, mimicking nature and enriched by many things which would be long to discourse.

Demande.

I have not asked you yet, of what material is the edifice of the grotto. By what I beg you to tell me.

Reponse.

The grotto is built of terracotta and enameled over.

Demande.

Really?, But then it is in danger to break up and be of short duration. One finds it very strange to invest so much money in a work so fragile. Because one knows well how much vessels of the earth risk cracking.

Reponse.

To those that take the argument on the vessels of the earth in saying that the earth is fragile, it is easy to forgive them, because they understand nothing of what they say. Because

if they had considered well, they would find that it is not the earth that is fragile, but mishaps and the forms which we give to the earth. Thus, I ask you, have you not seen some towns which the walls are of cooked bricks, which walls resist the cannon better than those of stones do? Have you not read in the past how much of the pyramids were erected of bricks in the country of Egypt for a perpetual memory, of which we still find at present the vestiges? Have you read of the people of Israel, who were captive under the Pharaoh, which people made so large a quantity of bricks for to erect their pyramids and other buildings? Do you still want to understand better? Take a stone of those which we commonly cut for the doors and windows, and the form of the same size and thickness of a brick, then take the brick and the said stone, and strike the one against the other, then you will know that the earth is much stronger than the stone. And to see this even better, take one of the stones and cut it in the fashion of a vase, or vessel of earth of the same size and thickness than that of the earth that you made, then take the two vessels and strike the one against the other, you will see then that of the earth breaks and tears that of the stone. If these examples do not satisfy you, give me two masons, having each a well sharpened hammer, and see that one of them works all day on tiles of stone to make doors and windows, and that the other works all day to carve bricks, you will see in the evening which of the two will have spoiled his hammer. I assure myself that if the brick is cooked as it should, that fire will go out from there with each hammer blow. And especially those which are enameled, because they are cooked two times. There is no metal fitting so good that it is not suddenly spoiled, in carving bricks. By which I concluded that the earth is not a breakable item itself, but it is the form which we give it, which causes fragility.

Demande.

But why then at the chateau of Madrid did some vases and plumbing and other works of the earth made by an Italian named Maitre Jerome, a man excellent in his art, begin to fall down in ruin.

Reponse.

I confess to you that this Italian was an excellent man in his art, but in this case lacking philosophy, or perhaps due to indigence, or lacking experience, caused this flaw, which happened because not knowing nor having used previously earths of Paris, or its environs, or not being able to find others, he made his work without regard to the future. Wherefore you must understand that for this accident you have no way to blame earthenwork itself. Because as you have seen, there are some stone quarries which the stone is porous, airy and dissolutive, similarly there are also clays which are very porous and spongy, as they are watered by rains that fall from above. And if being soaked they come to freeze, the water will do violence to the body where it will be locked. Which can cause a ruination to the future. It is the same with the stones as with clay, but works which are not subject to water are not prone to such accidents. By which this worker of the grotto has never intended to use any sort of clay that they have not known well and tried before. And if I have understood the worker said that the earth with which he made his grotto is so subtle, weighty, metallic and compacted that when it is fired well we would take out the fire

as it were a pebble. And while it is not prone to these kinds of accidents, even so the worker has not intended to apply any outside of the grotto, everything of his work is joined to the masonry inside, joined and bound with the wall, that he himself makes at the same time, in day and hour, so much that the things being so bound and joined together, the mortar and the cooked earth have such affinity, that within a few years, the mortar will be as hard, or harder, than the stone, because of the great dryness and alteration of the clay, which will be two times fired. This is why I have come to understand by good arguments that the worker has pointed out to me, that the grotto will be able to last forever. And twelve men will be able to walk inside it, while twenty-four will be able to be seated, without impeding each other.

You must at present be satisfied by the examples that I have given to you on the fragility of earthenwork. Such is the excellence of the work, I have seen one very rare thing among others, that is, that the worker showed me some seating, at the base of the niches, which were of a marbled sort and worked with labor so very subtle there is not a painter, nor portraitist, whose brush could make features or lines so delicate and subtle as these which made the seating. These feature, or lines do not resemble portraiture, because they are products of imaginations or strange ideas that form these seats.

As I was contemplating these fantasies and ideas, the inventor of the grotto said to me about this. This work seems to you beautiful? Yes, I said, and very strange. Then he said to me, it is more strange than you think because the veins, figures and labors which appear on the outside, are also embedded on the inside, this which I did not desire to believe, and so I told him. Then he took a bit of one of the pieces, and having broken in many places, he showed to me the truth of the thing. Because in whatever place that the piece was broken, one could see the veins and shapes in all parts of the bits, as if were a natural stone. This I have found very strange and admirable.

As well as I have to contemplate the fantasies and ideas, the inventor of the grotto said to me about this. This work seems to you beautiful? Yes, I said, and very strange. Then he said to me, it is very strange that you *cuidez*. Because the veins, figures and labors which appear by outside, are also embedded by the inside, this which I did not desire to believe, so I told to him otherwise. Then he took a plot of the pieces, and having broken in many places, he showed to me the truth of the things. Because in some place that the barrel piece was broken, one could see the veins and shapes by all the parts of the fractions, everything so it would have been a natural stone. This I have found very strange and admirable.

Demande.

The inventor of the work, is he rich?

Reponse.

Among all the artisans of Saintonge, or even of France, there is not a single one that is more than he, a poverty to see and write about such that he does not have a way of being able to feed himself, seeing that he is being detained as a prisoner, without having done a single thing wrong.

Demande.

How can this be? Given that he has received so much money from the Monseigneur the Constable? And also that he has made many basins of earth, that he has sold ten *écus* a piece.

And also that he has made a large number of vases and other vessels that he has sold for very expensive prices.

Reponse.

Will you think about the invention that he sought for the space of twenty years, without any progress, how this might have been accomplished, if not for great costs and expenses? I myself have well understood, that this worker lost work worth more than ten thousand livres by mistakes in firing, mistakes in knowing the ovens, or in the enamels. I will also say that he would not today be able to make the tools or devices that served his work for eight thousand livres. Also that the worker has always been burdened by a large number of children, as he is at the present.

Beyond that, this worker is so curious that if he receives two *écus*, he is always willing to spend one of them to search for new inventions. So much so that he prefers a tool of his art, to nice clothes. In such fashion that you need not explore more to understand the cause of his poverty. If someone had shown him the knowledge for nothing and he had been given a shop furnished with tools, then one might have occasion to reproach him for his poverty. Which is the place or I pray you to give me leave, I commend you farewell.

SONNET.

The grace of the Lord is not common to all,
As we see here in the ingenious art
Of this kind worker, nor also of high heavens
The curse is not always all one.

For even though he does not have the opportune wealth,
If he has in him so precious a gift,
That in this most divine art the most ingenious
He must be esteemed, in spite of fortune.

What? will anyone tell me, & could we see well
Both the poor and the wealthy equal in their knowledge,
Or that the rich man had no science in himself?

I do not say that, but you dare to boast.
The poor man of this, without frightening me,
That under a vile cloak lies great patience.

SONNET TO THE READER

I do not wish to boast of the strange work,
Either of a Pyramid, or of the marvelous
Rhodian Colossus, the proud portrait.
Also from you great Tower died your praise.

For now Reader, this Grotto impels you
to contemplate close up an elevated work,
In its vault appearing like a grand tour of the high heavens
In its diversity, around which all is changing.

Then the herbs that near the natural veranda,
And the small fish that in the water flow,
Also the bright enamels the thin cover.

It is true to make you say, of seeing this and there,
The creeping animals around this,
That ingenious art overcomes nature.

TO THE READER.

Rustic in the vaults of labor, as long as it has been boiled Palisse
Molds and decorates the countless witnesses.
In this way he treats, the work of restoring them again to the true, of colors;
So that you may find no less ingenuity of rustic servants.²

² “*Rustica dum cocto Palissius antra labore/ Fingit, & innumeris testibus ornat opus./ Sic tractat, veros operi redditque colores,/ Rusticum vt invenias nil minus ingenio.*” *A&O*, 14.

Appendix B. Figures and Diagrams



Figure 1. Follower of Bernard Palissy (French, Agen, Lot-et-Garonne 1510-1590 Paris). Platter, last quarter 16th Century, Ceramics-pottery. 52.1 x 39.7 x 7.1 cm (20 1/2 x 15 5/8 x 2 13/16 in.), 53.225.52 Gift of Julia A. Berwinnd, 1953 to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, United States.



Figure 2. Attributed to Bernard Palissy (French, about 1510 - 1590). *Oval Plate*, mid-16th century, Lead-glazed earthenware. 6.2 × 33 × 25.3 cm (2 7/16 × 13 × 9 15/16 in.), 97.DE.46 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alain Moatti in honor of Peter Fusco to The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California, United States.

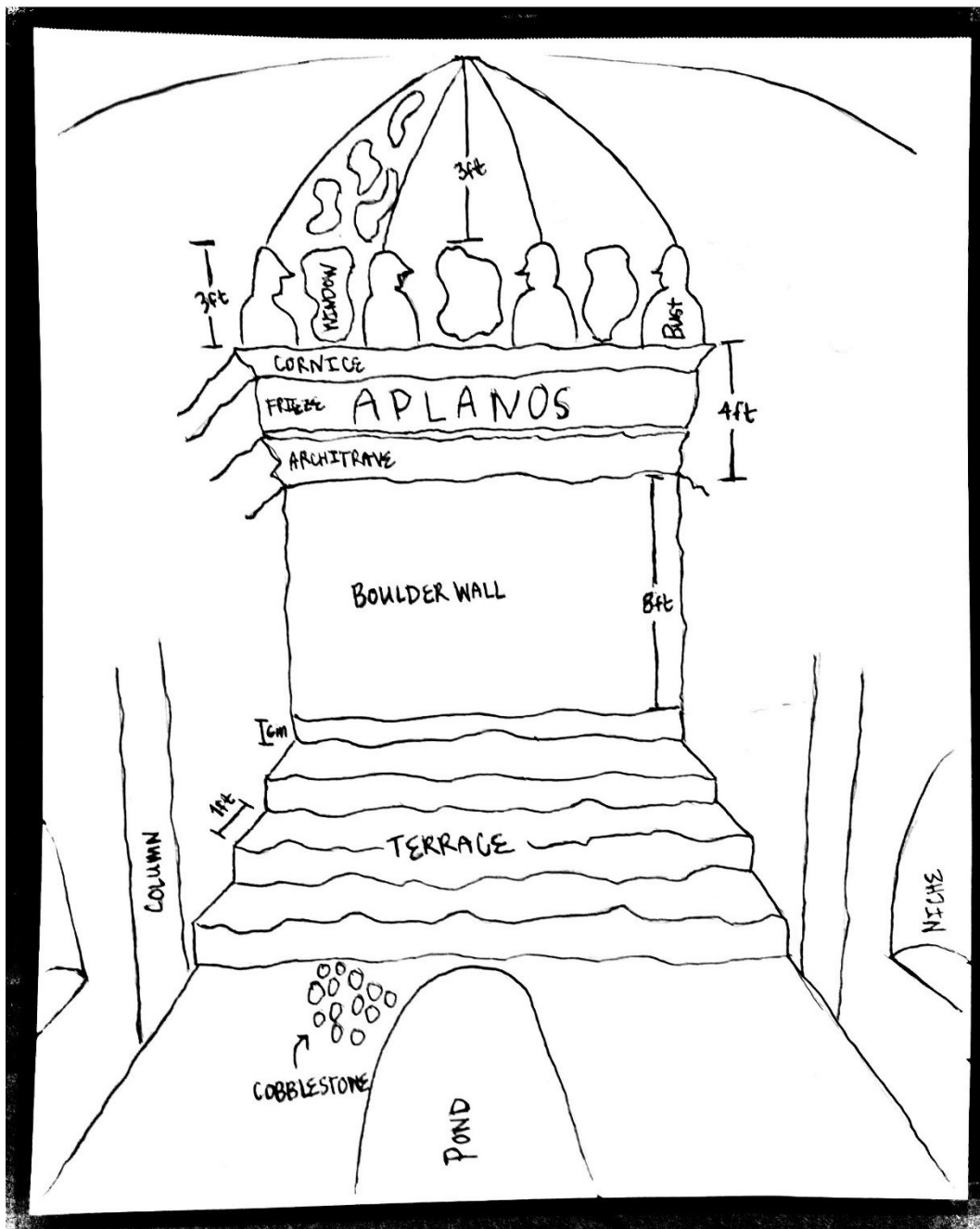


Diagram 1. Interior of proposed grotto for Montmorency based on description given by Bernard Palissy in *Architecture et ordonnance*; view from foot of terrace facing back wall. Karissa Bailey, March 2020.

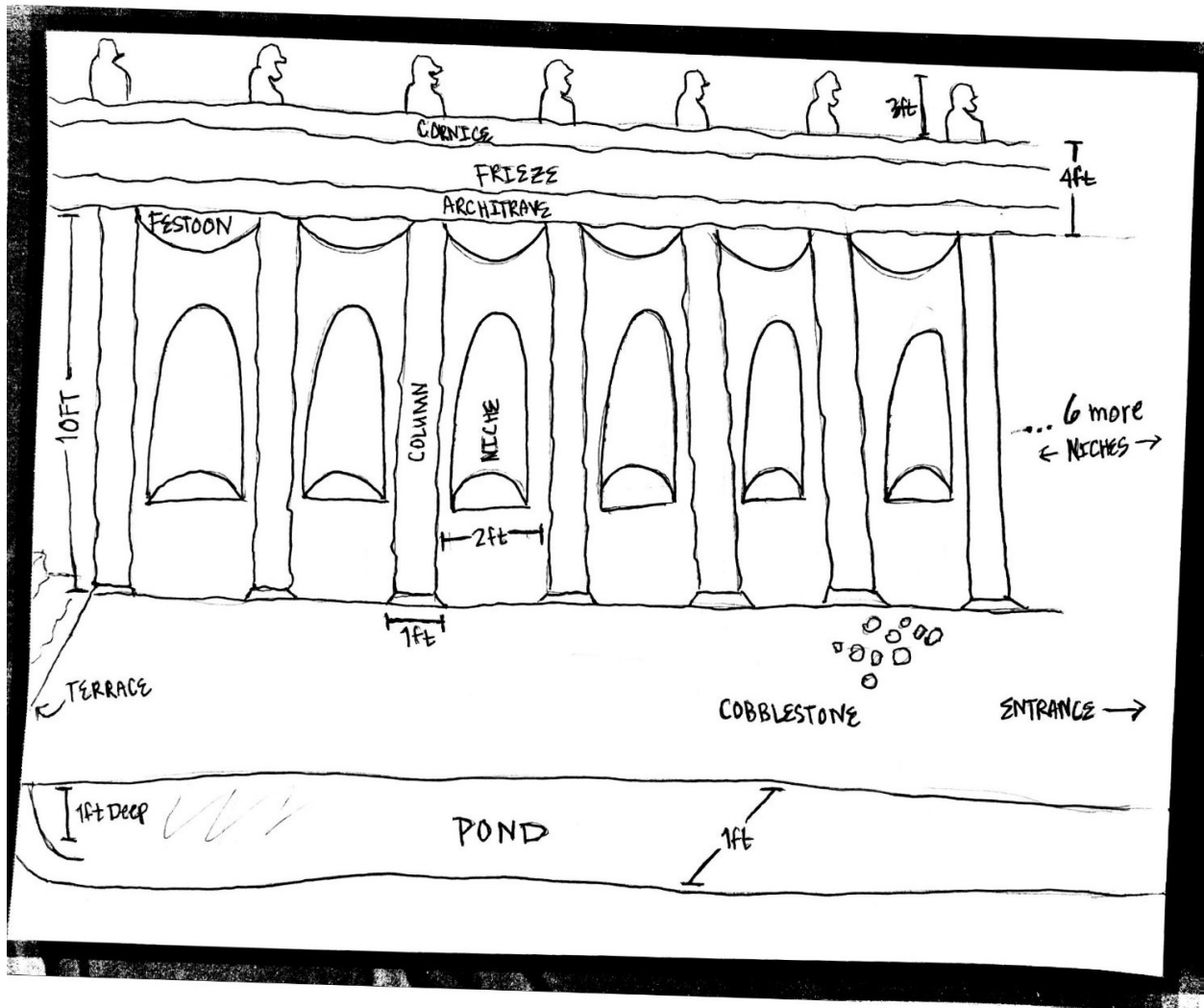


Diagram 2. Interior of proposed grotto for Montmorency based on description given by Bernard Palissy in *Architecture et ordonnance*; view of right interior wall. Karissa Bailey, March 2020.

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Vita

Karissa Bailey was born in Charleston, South Carolina in the year 1990. They pursued higher education at the University of South Carolina where they received a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and Art History in 2012. During their undergraduate studies, they fully realized a deep anxiety about the defunding of the arts and the push for specialization in STEM fields, fueling an already present search for how art and science blended and drove progress throughout history. They went on to pursue this blend of art and science in the field of art conservation by studying in Italy where they received a Post-Baccalaureate Certification in Art Conservation from the Studio Arts College International in Florence. They then worked in the private sector at a small studio outside of Philadelphia and learned the practice of antique frame conservation. Unfulfilled, they sought to relieve the nagging feeling that an answer about the intertwining fields of art and science lay in the early modern period and came to Louisiana State University to study under the amazing Europeanists that made up their committee. They anticipate graduating with a Master's of Art in History in August 2020 and plan to continue towards a PhD.