

REDEFINING AUTHORITY THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY IN DU BELLAY,  
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La gloire devenait donc le bien des poètes, un

trésor céleste donc ils sont les dispensateurs [1] .



Joachim Du Bellay's undertaking of the momentous task of defending and illustrating the French language represents an historic call for activity in the community of writers and poets of his time. Not only is his treatise, *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*, an appeal for an unequivocal effort to embellish, enhance and glorify the French language, making it into a vehicle capable of sustaining a great literature, but it is an invitation to immortality for all who participate. Obtaining immortality through literature was not a new concept in Du Bellay's day. The poets of antiquity were quick to claim that they were endowed from the heavens with a special ability to confer immortality through their poetry. «'Le poète seule entre les hommes a le don d'immortalizer'. C'est l'idée maîtresse et fondamentale que Pindare reprend et repète sans cesse» [2]. The sixteenth century authors,

influenced by the tradition inherited from antiquity, sought to assure themselves a permanent place in literary history. Françoise Joukovsky, in her book *La Gloire dans la poésie française et néolatine du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* illustrates this discussion of the doctrine of glory as exhibited by the works of the Pléiade.

Trois grandes thèmes; le poète a le pouvoir de conférer l'immortalité; il possède de naissance un pouvoir qui devrait susciter l'admiration des hommes; cette dignité l'élève au dessus du profane [3].

Robert Clements speaks of the poet's «monopoly» of glory, for not only could the poet bestow immortality upon others, but he himself would also be remembered. «[...] He (Pindar) had presented the postulate of double poetic immortality, the notion that both the poet and the individual he celebrates win eternal fame» [4].

The poets of the Pléiade readily accepted this doctrine of glory as they enthusiastically studied and imitated the ancient texts. They too sought to assure themselves a permanent place in literary history. True disciples of Pindar and Horace, they considered their own writings imperishable monuments; monuments built not only to glorify their subject (whether an individual or an object) but also a monument to glorify themselves.

Keeping in mind the aforementioned postulate of double poetic immortality, it becomes evident that Joachim Du Bellay's treatise is, in fact, a demonstration of how this is to be accomplished. He is not only interested in the amplification of language, but Du Bellay is also in the process of defining a new concept of language which can be linked with the unique abilities of the poet.

[...] l'idéal de *La Deffence* [...] une poésie d'inspiration très large, capable d'aller chercher son bien dans les modèles grecs, latins ou italiens, pour doter la France d'une littérature nouvelle [5].

In Du Bellay's poetical theory, immortality is linked to movement and flexibility. Du Bellay appeals for action and innovative literary activity on the part of writers for the purpose of making a monument out of the French language, a monument of exemplary value, «assez forte pour se deffendre contre l'injure du tens» [6]. Movement, oscillation, fluidity, creation, mobility, innovation are all key elements in his appeal, for these are the components of the new poetic monument which Du Bellay wants to build. He speaks of a new type of architecture, the architecture of language, one that is fluid and flexible and as such is superior to the rigid architecture of brick and mortar. In *La Deffence* Du Bellay outlines a plan for developing the French vernacular into a fluid and living monument, one which would glorify the nation and survive for centuries because of its ability to be reformed and reshaped with the passage of time. In this article, we will explore Du Bellay's new and flexible architecture of language and how he links it to immortality. We will discuss his criticism of his contemporaries who had no vision for the future and the idea of immortality through literature which, according to him, should be the goal of the truly wise and prudent poet.

## **Transfer of Literary Power From Antiquity to the Sixteenth Century Poet**

It is important to note that the poetic perfection of which Du Bellay speaks in *La Deffence* is not to be found in the present because «Du Bellay's rhetoric locates us in a present of exile, between past and future, between Rome and France» [7]. Poetic perfection (*i. e.*, immortality) is not to be found in the present, but it is to be engendered in the continual movement away from the present and into the future and at the same time away from the present and into the past. David Quint in his *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature*, describes this oscillation of the Renaissance literary text as a «double movement away —from the source to the original self-expression and historical identity of its author, back to the source of its authorized truth» [8]. It is important to add here that not only does Du Bellay envision continuous movement between the original source and the sixteenth century author, but at the same time his rhetoric implies establishing the true poets of his day as the new literary authorities from which future writers must build. In this way, by further expanding Quint's analogy, one can see how, once the sixteenth century poets become established as the new source of authorized truth, future writers will look back on the sixteenth century authors as sources from which to derive their original works. An example of the encouragement Du Bellay gives to his fellow poets, to move away from the present and return to the ancient sources for inspiration, can be found in chapter five of *La Deffence*:

[...] je voudroy' bien (dy-je) les avertir d'employer cete grande eloquence à recueillir ces fragmentz de vieilles chroniques francoyses, et comme a fait Tite Live des annales et autres anciennes chroniques romaines, en batir le cors entier d'une belle histoire y entremeslant à propos ces belles concions et harangues à l'immitation de celuy que je viens de nommer, de Thucidide, Saluste, ou quelque autre bien

approuvé, selon le genre d'écrire ou ilz se sentiroient propres. Tel oeuvre certainement seroit à leur immortelle gloire, honneur de la France, et grande illustration de nostre langue (DI 237-238).

Here the author of *La Deffence* is encouraging writers to look to past literary works for sources of inspiration. He speaks of gathering «[...] ces fragmentz de vieilles chroniques francoyses [...] et autres anciennes chroniques romaines» to create something new. This is an example of movement from the source («vieilles chroniques», etc.) to the original self-expression of the sixteenth century author («en batir le cors entier d'une nouvelle histoire») and again back to the source of authorized truth (à l'imitation [...] de Thucydide, Saluste, etc.). The process however, doesn't stop here because as indicated in the text, Du Bellay envisions a type of original literary creation which «seroit à leur immortelle gloire». In order for this to happen, movement must not be limited between the past and the present, there must be expansion into the future for therein lies the poet's hope for immortality. The litmus test of a work which will survive the ages is its usefulness as a source of literary creations for writers in generations to come. If Quint is correct in his theory that the Renaissance text moves away from the ancients to the sixteenth century writers and vice-versa, then it can also be said that this activity continues with each succeeding generation as new writers replace the old as the authorized source. Once the Renaissance poet is established as the new, validated authorized source by virtue of his creative work, the flow of creative activity moves from the present to the future where unborn generations of writers will return to the sixteenth century texts for literary fragments to be used in composing their own original works and in their attempts to establish themselves as the authoritative source.

Du Bellay gives an interesting example of this process of equaling or even replacing the original authorizing source by another generation of writers when he explains how the Romans enriched their language by turning to Greek writers for their source of inspiration:

Si les Romains (dira quelqu'un) n'ont vaqué à ce labeur de traduction, par quelz moyens donques ont ilz peu ainsi enrichir leur langue, voyre jusques à l'égaler quasi à la greque? Immitant les meilleurs auteurs grecz, se transformant en eux, les devorant, et, apres les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang et nourriture, se proposant, chacun selon son naturel et l'argument, qu'il vouloit elire, le meilleur aucteur, dont ilz observoient diligemment toutes les plus rares et exquisés vertuz, et icelles comme grephes, ainsi que j'ai dict devant, entoint et apliquoient à leur langue. Cela faisant (dy-je) les Romains ont baty tous ces beaux ecriz, que nous louons et admirons si fort: egalant ores quelqu'un d'iceux, ores le preferant aux Grecz (DI 98-99).

The Romans returned to the source not simply to gather fragments of a great literary past but to devour and be transformed into these Greek authors. Du Bellay uses this vivid organic metaphor to depict the important function of the Greek poets, for they were a source of nourishment and life for the Roman poets [9]. According to Margaret Ferguson, the «eating or 'innutrition' metaphor implies a process of total transformation, of radical appropriation in which one entity actually becomes another [...] it is the ancient author —devoured and digested by the imitator» [10]. Terence Cave

interprets this act as a «a reciprocal process of incorporation and consubstantiation: the reader is transformed into what he reads (which Du Bellay refers to as the author rather than the text); at the same time, he converts it into his own substance (author again being equated with text)» [11].

This process of assimilation and conversion is made possible by the Latin au-thors' return to the original source (the Greeks), to be nourished. Du Bellay describes how the Latin authors, through their diligence and hard work, then moved away from the source «[...] les convertissant en sang et nourriture...» and created something new; «Les Romains ont baty tous ces beaux ecriz»... Here again one sees a movement back to the first source of authorized truth because Du Bellay speaks of «immitant les meilleurs auteurs grecz».

There are indications in this passage that Du Bellay has in mind the possibility that the Renaissance writer will at some point not only match the accomplishments of the ancient authorities but even replace them, because he speaks of how the literary works of the Romans equal and in some cases are superior to the Greek literary creations «[...] egalant ores quelqu'un d'iceux, ores le preferant aux Grecz». The Romans, through the process of returning to the past, have enriched their language and created a new literature for their people which consequently serves as a source of literary activity for the sixteenth century poet. The movement between the original source (the Greeks) and the Romans has occurred. The establishment of the Romans as authorities (equal to or greater than the Greeks) occurs only because of the activity of succeeding generations of writers; as Du Bellay indicates «[...] que nous louons et admirons si fort...». All of this activity is in the future because the Romans are dead. Thus, there has been movement from the Roman (present) into the sixteenth century (future) and the Romans are now validated as an authorized source.

An interesting question now arises; now that the Romans, by virtue of their creativity, have succeeded in producing works from which succeeding generations of writers have produced works, have they succeeded in permanently displacing the Greeks as the authorized source? Du Bellay's rhetoric indicates that he wants the sixteenth century poets to not only equal, but to surpass the poets of antiquity in the quality of their literary work. Here is another passage where Du Bellay gives an example of the Roman authors surpassing their Greek predecessors in literary accomplishments:

Ciceron et Virgile, que volontiers et par honneur je nomme tousjours en la langue latine, des quelz comme l'un se feut entierement adonné à l'immitation des Grecz, contrefist et exprima si au vif la copie de Platon, la vehemence de Demosthene et la joyeuse douceur d'Isocrate, que Molon Rhodien l'oyant quelquefois declamer, s'ecria qu'il emportoit l'eloquence grecque à Rome. L'autre immita si bien Homere, Hesiode et Thëocrit, que depuis on a dict de luy, que de ses troys il a surmonté l'un, egalé l'autre, et aproché si pres de l'autre, que si la felicité des argumens qu'ilz ont traitez eust esté pareille, la palme seroit bien douteuse (DI 99-101).

Here one poet is praised because he «[...] emportoit l'eloquence grecque à Rome» and another poet is praised for having «surmonté», «egalé» and «aproché» the literary

genius of Greek writers. Du Bellay does not intend to imply here that Greek literature is no longer eloquent after having been appropriated by the Romans or that the very act of surpassing or equaling Greek literary accomplishments diminishes in any way the Greek status. History teaches us rather that literary greatness can be shared, for the two cultures are regarded with equal respect. And although Du Bellay, in *La Deffence*, often complains about the fact that there is nothing left to invent; that the Ancients have done everything:

Les larges campagnes greques et latines sont déjà si pleines, que bien peu reste d'espace vide. Ja beaucoup d'une course legere ont atteint le but tant désiré. Long temps y a que le prix est gagné... (DI 330)

and in other places he seems to view the writers of antiquity as enemies with whom the sixteenth century poet must do battle in order to steal their power (DI 338-340), in many more pages of *La Deffence*, Du Bellay devotes time to singing the praises of these Greek and Roman authors.

Instead of viewing the accomplishments of the Romans as an act which replaces the Greeks, one could follow Joukovsky's view that the modern man «découvre dans le passé une substance vivante dont l'essentiel demeure...» and that the long dead ancient poets are «sans cesse ressuscité sous des formes nouvelles» through the works of modern writers [12]. This continuing rebirth of the writers of antiquity, through the creative works of poets of succeeding generations is what gives immortal glory and honor to these literary giants. According to Du Bellay, each generation of writers, by moving away from the present and returning to the past to study and imitate the literary geniuses of the past, can, in turn become immortal themselves. In the above passage, Du Bellay explains how the Romans were «entièrement adonné à l'imitation des Grecs» (DI 99-101) which is similar to the assimilation and transformation metaphors discussed earlier. In order to obtain this «substance vivante dont l'essentiel demeure» [13], in order to resuscitate the dead authors, in order to bring Greek or Roman eloquence to sixteenth century France, this total transformation or radical appropriation must take place. Thus, when Du Bellay talks about equaling or surpassing the writers of antiquity, the real goal is for writers to ground their verse in an authorized source and establish their own individuality as literary creators, for they are to be a generative source for future poets [14].

## **The Vernacular as a Newly Authorized Source**

Du Bellay emphasizes throughout the text that the French poet must express himself in his native tongue if his works are to rival the literary productions of Antiquity. He explains how the Romans attained their honorable status through the use of their native language, a status which would have been impossible to attain if they had tried to compete with the Greek writers using the Greek language.

Quand Ciceron et Virgile se misrent à écrire en latin, l'eloquence et la poésie etoint encor' en enfance entre les Romains, et au plus haut de leur excellence entre les Grecz. Si donques ceux que j'ay nommez, dedaignans leur langue, eussent escrit en grec, est-il croyable qu'ilz eussent egalé Homere et Demosthene? Pour le moins n'eussent ilz été entre les Grecz qu'ilz sont entre les Latins (DI 328).

Du Bellay uses this passage as an example to show sixteenth century poets what can be accomplished, in spite of the deficiencies of one's native language. The Greek language was far superior to the Roman language: («[...]

l'eloquence et la poësie etoint encore en enfance entre les Romains») just as at the time of the publication of *La Deffence*, the French language lacked sophistication and poetical eloquence. Yet, in spite of the poor state of the vernacular, the Romans worked with it and enriched it, and now the Renaissance poets find themselves borrowing from the Latin models of eloquence to express themselves. The solution Du Bellay proposes then is not to abandon the vernacular, but to improve and enrich it.

Donques, ò toy, qui doué d'une excellente felicité de nature, instruict de tous bons ars et sciences, principalement naturelles et mathematiques, versé en tous genres de bons aucteurs grecz et latins, [...] ò toy (dy-je) orné de tant de graces et perfections, si tu as quelquefois pitié de ton pauvre langaige, si tu daignes l'enrichir de tes thesors, ce sera toy veritablement qui luy feras hausser la teste, et d'un brave sourcil s'egaler aux superbes langues greque et latine... (DI 233-235)

In this passage, Du Bellay is making an appeal to his fellow contemporary poets who have rediscovered the texts of antiquity. Because of their return to the authorized source, they have been («[...] ornés de tant de graces et perfections...») and («[...] instruicts de tous bons ars et sciences [...] de bons aucteurs grecz et latins...»). Du Bellay uses the word «thesors» to exemplify the great value he places on the knowledge gained by their contact with the ancient texts. According to Du Bellay's poetical theory, the encounter with literary authorized sources should of necessity produce a corresponding movement toward form [15]. Du Bellay refers to this form as the recreated text in the present and in the specific passage cited above, Du Bellay is calling for a recreation or embellishment of the French language. The poetic perfection of the vernacular is to be engendered in the movement from the present to the past to find these «thesors», in order that they may be used in the present day reconstruction of the language. The return to the past, thus, in Du Bellay's mind has practical applications for the poets work in the present. «La tâche la plus urgente est de forger cet instrument, d'ameliorer ce vehicule, de 'rendre illustre' la langue vulgaire» [16]. Just as in a passage cited earlier Du Bellay praises the Romans for having made Latin as eloquent as Greek, he now encourages sixteenth century poets to make the French vernacular a worthy vehicle of poetic expression.

The first phase of this perfection of the language as stated earlier is to be engendered in movement from the present to the past. The second phase, as indicated by the tenses that Du Bellay uses in this passage is to be engendered in the movement from the present to the future. Du Bellay begins with the use of several past participles. As a result of the study of antiquity, the poet is «doué», «instruict» and «versé en tous genres de bons aucteurs». If the poet is fulfilling his present task: «[...] si tu daignes l'enrichir...» (verb in the present) then «ce sera toy veritablement qui luy feras hausser la teste...» (verbs in the future). Just as the establishment of the Romans as an authorized source (equal or greater than the Greeks) occurred only because of the activity of generations which followed them, so the validation of the sixteenth century poet's work will occur only in the future.

### **Historical and Cultural Continuity as it Relates To Du Bellay's Theory**

It is clear then, that the total process of artistic creation is subjected to historical and cultural influences. As indicated in several passages already cited from *La Deffence*, Du Bellay continually links what the poet creates to what he has uncovered from his exploration of the past. Du Bellay's theory is based on historical continuity because the modern poet seeks to align himself with the Ancients, the goal being to share in their immortality.

According to Du Bellay, the contact with the texts of antiquity is proof of the survival of certain spiritual forces [17]. This «spiritual forces» take on a new physiognomy when viewed from different perspectives in time. Culture also affects the way these forces are used by the author. For example, in the passage cited earlier one writer is praised for having brought Greek eloquence to Rome (DI 99-101). Once that much admired and sought after Greek eloquence was introduced into Roman society, it was no longer the sole possession of the Greek people because what was transplanted into the Roman society, while keeping elements of the Greek culture, also took on some of the elements of the Roman culture. This new creation then bore a unique Roman stamp, although its origins were in another culture. Cicero is praised by Du Bellay for having «[...] contrefist [...] la copie de Platon, la vehemence de Demosthene et la joyeuse douceur d'Isocrate» (DI 99-101). The works of Plato and the others were transplanted into the Roman culture. The works that Plato, Demosthenes and Isocrates had produced were influenced by their respective personalities, their creative geniuses and their life perspectives which were shaped by the time and culture in which they lived:

[...] l'essence de la litterature est «artifice» l'art de redistribuer selon un ordre original, lié à la culture et aux capacités de chaque auteur, des réalités connues, qui existent en nature, en acte, ou dans la pensée de l'homme, en puissance [18].

When Cicero «counterfeited» their works, he took portions of something that was unique and original to the Greek culture, and unique to that particular historical time period and made it his own original self-expression. He was able to appropriate that «substance essentiel qui demeure». His manipulation resulted in his work taking on a different physiognomy because he could view the literary creations of Plato and the others from a different time and a different culture. As one progresses in time, each successive generation of poets will look at the same works of Plato and the other Greek writers from a different angle. The distance in time from the original work will vary according to the century and will produce different viewpoints which will give impetus to new and varied creations. Also, each generation will be able to compare Cicero's efforts to create something new from his imitation of Plato, to the sixteenth century poets' imitation of Cicero. Thus, the natural progression of history will produce multiple sets of works to be compared one to the other. Each creative work or structure built by the poet-architect will (in succession) contain some of the imperishable elements of the previous structure of the generation before.

What Du Bellay is advocating in his historical and linear view of poetical perfection is the unity and harmony brought about by the continuousness of the creative process. Homage is given to:

[...] cette faculté suprême de l'écrivain, qui «reclasse» les choses, qui eclaire d'un jour nouveau le «déjà connu», par une opération qui n'est pas sterile, mais qui se soude au contraire, dans la continuité de l'histoire, à la catégorie de la durée qui relève de l'esprit [19].

We see then, that the personality of the artist, his creative genius, and his life perspective all work together in the creative process and the final literary product passes through history from one generation of writers to another. Joukovsky states that «le temps est comme l'image mobile de l'éternité» and in like manner, it is the hope of Du Bellay that the literary productions of the sixteenth century poet can survive throughout eternity as it takes on this mobile character. One of Du Bellay's purposes in writing *La Deffence* was that he wanted to help the Renaissance writer «ennoblir le présent en y faisant entrer le passé» [20]. The linear and historical aspect of Du Bellay's theory is explained by Joukovsky as «un voyage a travers le temps» [21]. Margaret Ferguson refers to this phenomena as literary power, moving through time without being diminished [22]. David Quint describes it as «links between the products of human history and a transcendent or divine source of meaning» [23]. Robert Sabatier in *Histoire de la Poésie Française* has a similar view when he says «Toute la littérature forme une longue chaîne et les plus grands noms sont nourris d'imitation transmuée» [24].

This continuousness of the creative process is reflected in Du Bellay's instructions for the glorification of the French language. *La Deffence* focuses on the continual reshaping, manipulation and embellishment of the French language, an undertaking which, in fact, would never cease.

Du Bellay se tourne précisément du côté de la langue pour montrer comment la poétiser, il établit [...] une manière de lire et d'écrire portant sur les éléments constitutifs et dynamiques du français [25].

In this way, the poet, who's working in this fluid medium, the language, has the ability to leave his own unique imprint, an imprint which will have future ramifications. Whatever words he chooses to add to the language, whatever literary devices he uses to create the perfect poetic expression, the poet's work will have a definite impact on future writers. They will be influenced by the choices the poet of today makes for the language long after his death. One of the reasons the enterprise of the Renaissance Humanism proved to be so fecund is that its scrutiny of the past tended to imply a latent pressure upon the present and future [26].

We have discussed the unity of the creative process through an historical or linear view and how the past affects the present. It is also possible to see how this process can be viewed in a vertical dimension. Du Bellay uses a very interesting plant metaphor to express a view of creativity as an exploratory journey downward into the earth which results in a corresponding upward growth above the soil which represents the artists' originality.

Le tens viendra (peut estre), et je l'espere moyennant la bonne destinée francoyse, que ce noble et pyussant royaume obtiendra à son tour les resnes de la monarchie, et que nostre langue (si avecques Francoys n'est du tout ensevelie la langue francoyse) qui commence encor'à jeter ses racines, sortira de terre, et s'elevera en telle hauteur et grosseur, qu'elle se pourra egalier aux mesmes Grecz et Romains, produysant comme eux des Homeres, Demosthenes, Virgiles et Cicerons, aussi bien que la France a quelquesfois produit des Pericles, Nicies Alcibiades, Themistocles, Cesars et Scipions (DI 73-74).



This plant metaphor is used to explain in another way this historical view of the continuity of creativity. He uses this plant metaphor to equate the probing, downward movement of the roots of a plant with the diligent research and study of the past done by the poet in search of the gems of creativity. The poet's work begins with the roots: «[...] nostre langue [...] qui commence encore à jeter ses racines...». This passage represents another way that Du Bellay uses to emphasize that the poet is to nurture himself by establishing himself in an authorized source, which is of course, the writers of antiquity.

The process of searching for, examining and becoming familiar with these literary products is compared in this passage to roots which push further and further into the earth in search of sustenance for the tree. (The tree represents, in this instance, the artist's productivity, his literary creations). The deeper the roots plunge, the richer the earth and consequently, the stronger, taller and more productive the tree becomes. The tree in turn produces fruit, which becomes the source of nourishment for future writers.

Just as the food for the tree is buried beneath the soil, so the source of creative inspiration for the sixteenth century writer lies buried in the past. It can be said that Du Bellay in *La Deffence* continuously emphasized the exploratory character of research as well as the constructive, artistic character of the writer's work [27]. This is true because Du Bellay continually links what the poet creates to what he has uncovered from his exploration of the past along with how he uses it in his writings. The nourishment (in other metaphors Du Bellay uses «fragmentz» or «thesors») which is pulled upward through the roots produces a plant (an original literary work) which «[...] sortira de terre et s'elevera en hauteur et gros-seur...». The verbs «sortir» and «s'elever» give the visual image of movement upward and outward which can be compared to the horizontal image of the metaphor discussed earlier (DI 237-238) of backward and forward movement. The past, present and future are represented in this metaphor also. The roots sprout from the seed, very close to the soil. As the roots plunge deeper into the past, more nourishment is brought upward to the present and the poetical creation is represented by the sprouting of a plant. The deeper the roots, the bigger and stronger the plant, so we have movement in two directions at once, downward and upward.

A truly original and creative work «[...] pourra egaler aux mesmes Grecs et Romains». Just as on the horizontal scale future poets will look backward to the sixteenth century poets as sources for inspiration, so on a vertical scale the fruit produced by the tree will be devoured by the future writer; «[...] produysant comme eux des Homeres, Demosthenes, Virgiles et Cicerons...». The sixteenth century poet in this way enters another phase of poetic creation when his creations are devoured and transformed into original poetical expressions of future poets. Du Bellay shows once again through this vertical perspective of the creative process how the originality of the Renaissance poet is thus to be measured not only against the past, but also the future [28].

The truest expression of a language, because it is living and vibrant and because of the importance of seeing it in its totality, is in its constant reforming and reshaping. Du Bellay recognized this when he said:

[...] Dieu, qui a donné pour loy inviolable à toute chose cree de ne durer perpetuellement, mais passer sans fin d'un estat en l'autre... (DI 122)

Hence the true validity of a language is to be found in movement and not at any one point. Du Bellay's theory for *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* is based on the need for the active work of the poets to embellish the language, reshaping it to reflect their culture. Du Bellay's concept of language in *La Deffence* is that it is an organic entity and without growth, movement and activity, it becomes stale, stagnant and useless. Because the French language had not been used in the past for literary, philosophical and scientific expressions it was inferior to Latin just as at one time Latin was inferior to Greek.

Quand Ciceron et Virgil se misrent a ecrire en latin, l'eloquence et la poesie etoint encore' en enfance entrer les Romains, et au plus haut de leur excellence entre les Grecz (DI 328).

It is because of Du Bellay's desire for French to be liberated from its present state of atrophy that he calls for creative activity on the part of writers. The only escape from deterioration or fossilization is in movement; the language can be brought to perfection by fervent activity.

Il faut donc travailler, travailler, travailler, étudier cette riche Antiquité et y piller les sacrés trésors afin d'orner nos temples et nos autels [29].

Throughout *La Deffence* the author constantly points out the superiority of verse over brick and mortar. Those who try to guarantee their immortality and eternal glory by erecting marble statues, magnificent pyramids and other edifices of stone will find their labor «[...] sujetes aux injures du ciel et du tens, de la flamme et du fer...» (DI 243). These structures cannot survive throughout eternity because by their very nature they are inflexible and cannot move and flow with time. Anything that endures is in a constant state of mutation and transformation. Anything static and immovable will be destroyed. Only the poet's pen can negate the forces of destruction and rescue that which lives in the present from future oblivion.

La gloire du peuple romain n'est moindre (comme a dit quelqu'un) en l'amplification de son langage que de ses limites. Car la plus haulte excellence de leur republique, voir du tens d'Auguste, n'etoit assez forte pour se deffendre contre l'injure du tens, par le moyen de son capitole, de ses thermes et magnifiques palaiz, sans le benefice de leur langue, pour la quele seulement nous les louons, nous les admirons, nous les adorons (DI 320-321).

In this passage Du Bellay calls attention to the fact that participation in the future glory of France involves the amplification of its language. The enrichment of the language is hailed by the poet as an effective way to aggrandize a country. In fact the author seems to indicate in the text that this method is even more praiseworthy than the activities which involve extending the borders of a nation. «La gloire [...] n'est moindre [...] en l'amplication de son langage que de ses limites». The reason given: «Car la plus haulte excellence de leur republique [...] n'etoit assez forte pour se deffendre contre l'injure du tens...». The greatest obstacle to the immortal glory for a nation or a poet is time. Nations arise and perish, architectural structures are built and destroyed, but their praise lies in «[...] leur langue, pour la quele seulement nous les louons, nous les admirons (et) nous les adorons» (DI 321). Du Bellay does not want the reader to forget, that it is poetic activity which makes it possible for everyone to participate in this future glory.

Du Bellay wants the poet to be conscious of the importance of his role in society and how valuable the poet's work is to the king. Poetry should no longer be in the shadow of courtly service, the poet no longer a humble, self-abasing servant attentive to every trivial whim of: «Les dames et damoizelles».

Du Bellay's concept of language is that it transforms and fluctuates gradually during its evolution from past forms to newly created forms. There is a consciousness of language as a tool and medium of communication. At each succeeding stage the transformation is to be clearly understood and evaluated by several authors to determine if this transformation will be a useful addition to the language. Widespread use of the newly created entity in the language will be the final determination of its acceptability. The newly created term then mutates and takes on «une nouvelle physionomie» gradually as the authors change its usage and look at it from different angles, in some instances adding to it and subtracting from it. Once the new mutation is complete, we are at another stage which must in turn be re-evaluated, not only in terms of the original point of departure, but also in terms of its relation to the intermediate step.

Du Bellay outlines a program in *La Deffence* wherein the French language can be brought to perfection and given the same respect accorded to the Greek and Latin languages. He does this by redefining the status of the poet and redirecting his efforts so that the poet properly establishes himself as the source of authorized truth for future generations. This transfer of literary power from antiquity to the sixteenth century poet immortalizes his poetic works and now, as the new literary authority, the poet embarks upon the program Du Bellay outlines for enriching the language. Du Bellay calls for fervent creative activity and clarity in writing. Du Bellay's entire program for the new poet centers on the restructuring and manipulation of the language. He demonstrates that the immortality that the poet longs for can be conferred by his authoritative use of language and in order to obtain this immortality all men are totally dependent upon the poet.

#### NOTAS

[1] H. Franchet, *Le Poète son oeuvre d'après Ronsard*, Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, París, 1922, pág. 116.

[2] H. Chamard, *Histoire de la Pléiade*, I, Didier, París, 1939, pág. 356.

[3] F. Joukovsky, *La Gloire dans la poésie française et néolatine du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Librairie Droz, Génova, 1969, pág. 17.

[4] R. J. Clements, *Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1942, pág. 42.

[5] F. Joukovsky, *op. cit.*, pág. 403.

[6] J. Du Bellay, *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* (edition critique par H. Chamard), Slatkine Reprints, Génova, 1969, pág. 320. All subsequent references to *La Deffence* will be taken from this

edition and will be noted in the text by the abbreviation di and the number(s) of the corresponding page(s).

[7] M. W. Ferguson, «The Exile's Defense: Du Bellay's *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*», *pmla*, 93, 1978, pág. 286.

[8] D. Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1983, pág. 24.

[9] M. Dassonville, «De l'unité de *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*», *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 27, 1965, pág. 101. Dassonville discusses how the writers of antiquity are to be a source of nourishment for sixteenth century poets.

[10] M. W. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pág. 284.

[11] T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*, Claredon Press, Oxford, 1979, págs. 64-65.

[12] F. Joukovsky, *op. cit.*, pág. 114.

[13] F. Joukovsky, *loc. cit.*

[14] D. Quint, *op. cit.*, pág. 30.

[15] Th. Green, «Resurrecting Rome, The Double Task of the Humanist Imagination, Papers of the 13th Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies», in P. A. Ramsey (ed.), *Rome in the Renaissance the City and the Myth*, Binghamton, XVIII, 1982, pág. 44.

[16] M. Dassonville, *op. cit.*, pág. 104.

[17] F. Joukovsky, *op. cit.*, pág. 114.

[18] E. Balmas, «Rhétorique et originalité chez les poètes de la Pléiade», in F. Gray and M. Tetel (eds.), *Textes et intertextes: Etudes sur le xvr<sup>e</sup> siècle pour Alfred Glauser*, Nizet, París, 1979, pág. 22.

[19] E. Balmas, *loc. cit.*

[20] F. Joukovsky, *op. cit.*, 241.

[21] F. Joukovsky, *loc. cit.*

[22] M. W. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pág. 281.

[23] D. Quint, *op. cit.*, pág. 24.

[24] R. Sabatier, *Histoire de la Poésie Française*, II, Albin Michel, París, 1975, pág. 135.

[25] F. Gray, *La Poétique de Du Bellay*, Nizet, París, 1978, pág. 19.

[26] Th. Green, *op. cit.*, pág. 41.

[27] Th. Green, *loc. cit.*, pág. 42.

[28] D. Quint, *op. cit.*, pág. 4.

[29] R. Sabatier, *op. cit.*, pág. 135.

## RESUMEN PARA REPERTORIOS BIBLIOGRÁFICOS

TÍTULO: REDEFINING AUTHORITY: *THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY IN DU BELLAY*.

AUTOR: Vivian Brown.

LUGAR: Morehouse College.

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ABSTRACT: *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* is a document written by Du Bellay, not only to outline the program of the Pléiade reformers, but also to mark significant changes in the manner in which the poet's privileges and responsibilities are perceived. Du Bellay draws an important correlation between literary originality, poetic authority and the poets claim to be able to build immortal monuments using the medium of language. This study examines how Du Bellay uses *La Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* and *Les antiquitez de Rome* to illustrate his claims that the poet could use his craft to construct a new social identity for the patron. This article also shows how this new type of poetic activity brings a new respect for the historical and cultural role the poet plays in the shaping of society.

KEY-WORDS: french literature / 16<sup>th</sup> century-history and criticism / Joachim Du Bellay-criticism and interpretation / french sonnets-history and criticism / politics and literature-France / Renaissance-France.

TOPÓNIMOS: France / Rome, Italy.

PERÍODO HISTÓRICO: 16<sup>th</sup> century.