On Reading *La Puce de
Madame Des-Roches*:
Catherine des Roches's
Responces (1583)

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Summary: *Catherine des Roches's authorial participation in the famous poetic flea contest during the Grands Jours of Poitiers in 1579 was all but forgotten a decade and a half after her death when Estienne Pasquier claimed the volume of La Puce de Madame Des-Roches as his own by eliminating her name from the title in his collective work La jeunesse d'Estienne Pasquier (1610). As if sensing such a fate and wishing above all to remind her readers of her literary contribution to the contest, Catherine des Roches published her flea poems as responces in her Secondes oeuvres (1583). This study proposes several possible reasons for her inclusion of these replies in her second volume of collected works.*

Who read Madeleine (1520–1587) and Catherine (1545–1587) des Roches, “mère et fille”? And whom, among their contemporaries, did they read? How was this mother-daughter pair perceived? How did they respond in turn to their readers? This study examines a micro-episode of textual conversation that illustrates Catherine des Roches's relation to a select group of readers. The famous flea poems, improvised during the *Grands Jours* of Poitiers in 1579,¹ originated in a spontaneous verbal play between Estienne Pasquier, the renowned Parisian lawyer, and the then published Catherine des Roches. This interchange brought forth a poem from each, then spawned numerous compositions not only from the *habitués* of the salon of the Dames des Roches but from individuals outside the circle and from Catherine des Roches herself. These responses were later gathered in *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches*, published in Paris at the end of 1582, and again at the beginning

of 1583.² While Catherine des Roches's first opening poem to the collection and several of her replies have attracted recent critical attention,³ her publication of these same pieces in her *Secondes oeuvres*, her second volume of collected works, has not. I argue that Catherine des Roches's *responces* of the *Grands Jours* in both the flea collection and her *Secondes oeuvres* are an illustrative form of oppositional reading that lies at the heart of her poetics of writing.

Oppositional practices, according to Ross Chambers, tend to be improvisational and tactical, rather than strategic and calculated. The oppositional is "always a matter of skill, adroitness, flair, of seizing the inspiration of the moment, of exploiting the specifics of a given here-and-now. It is not a *savoir* but a *savoir faire*, a knack."⁴ The Dames des Roches's urban coterie empowered them to practice oppositional forms of speech and writing. Its conversational mode embraced oral improvisation, witty response, and the critical spirit of repartee. Such conversation is staged, in *Ancien régime* France, in terms of the nobleman's sports, the tournament, the hunt, and the *escrime* or swordmanship. Vivaciousness, notes Marc Fumaroli, variety, surprise, the unexpected mark these "jeux mâles."⁵ Further, as with all salons of the period, the literary dynamics resulted in self and group promotion. As the Italian polygraph Stefano Guazzo explains in his *Civile conversation*:

Les lettres despouillent l'homme d'ignorance, les lettres luy donnent adresse à la vie, les lettres le rendent agreable, les lettres lui causent une grande consolation en toutes ses adversitez et finalement le levent de l'ordure, et lie du vulgaire, *les lettres luy servent d'eschele pour monter aux honneurs*, aux dignitez et à la contemplation des choses celestes et divines.⁶

Some time in the mid 1570s, influential members of the Dames des Roches's salon urged their hostesses to publish their works in Paris. The philologist Joseph-Juste Scaliger, the lawyer Scévole de Sainte-Marthe, and the mathematician Claude Pellejay all had connections with literary centers of learning in the capital. The court had also resided for three months at Poitiers in the fall of 1577, no doubt facilitating further connections between the Poitevine *cénacle* and Parisian luminaries. Publishing their works in Paris constituted for the mother-daughter partnership a bid for even greater social promotion as their salon set itself up as a provincial rival with the aristocratic coterie linked to the court.

It is no surprise then that Estienne Pasquier directed his steps toward the Des Roches's household upon reaching Poitiers for the *Grands Jours*. Pasquier's entrance into conversation with the Dames des Roches was a calculated outcome of the Poitevine writers' efforts at inclusion of even more

illustrious participants in their salon, hence more readers of and responders to their works. Pasquier's arrival coincides as well with Catherine's adoption of the genre of the literary *responce*, which this study explores.

Dominant in the published testimonies of the encounter between Estienne Pasquier and Catherine des Roches is the element of surprise, surprise in the attempt to overtake each other in witty invention, and surprise at the unexpected result. The Dames des Roches's Parisian publisher Abel l'Angelier, in his address to the reader in *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches*,⁷ highlights this element within their rhetorical duel. Pasquier has asked Catherine to "enchasser" in verse, literally to memorialize as a relic, the flea that he has just sighted on her breast and which she presumably had killed. Each believes the other has conveniently forgotten the mock-heroic challenge. L'Angelier continues: "pensans *se surprendre* l'un l'autre s'entrevoierent ce qu'ils avoient fait. Mais en cecy furent ils eus mesmes *surpris*": through a messenger, both respond to each other, at the same instant, he with his poem, she with hers. L'Angelier leaves no doubt that the contest was a "combat" whose two initial participants multiplied to include an entire coterie with no one victor for "à chascun en demeure la victoire." L'Angelier's part was simply to assemble "ce trofée, qui est la publication de leurs vers."⁸

Pasquier's version in his letter to his good friend and colleague Pierre Pithou expands on his combat motif and on his immense surprise at seeing not simply wit combined with chastity in a woman, but her sheer intellectual dexterity. The figurative duel, or "escrime" as he calls it, begins when Antoine Loisel, an important jurist and legal historian, and Pasquier's travelling companion, undertakes to "gouverner" ("entertaine with discourse" as Cotgrave puts it⁹), Madeleine des Roches, while Pasquier takes on Catherine. In a parenthetical assessment, Pasquier comments on the superiority of his opponent: "mais la fille *est* les livres mesmes," in comparison with her mother, Madeleine Neveu, who has studied a great deal but must constantly supplement her talk with citations and allusions. To his admiration, Catherine has mastered the skill of incisive improvisation. The performance, lasting an hour and a half "at the least," is about to leave Pasquier short of ideas and words, hence "vaincu," when luckily he spies the flea. To Pithou he states:

Et comme nous estions en ces discours, mon bonheur voulut que j'apperceusse une Pulce qui s'estoit parquée au beau milieu de son sein. Je vous dy par exprès mon bonheur: car peut-estre eusse-je esté bien empesché à poursuivre ma premiere route, après un si long entretien, sans ce nouveau sujet. Tellement que je me sens fort redevable à ceste petite bestiole.¹⁰

Moving to the terrain of the female body, that vulnerable Renaissance “blazoned” text, Pasquier seizes on the tradition of the flea encomium. In so doing, he raises a double issue: can Catherine follow him in this circuitous metaphorical game, and, more seductively, will she play its *risqué* thematics? Will she tread in the realm of the *blason*, a genre in which, as Patricia Parker notes, “a woman’s body becomes the engaging matter of male discourse, a passive commodity in a male exchange in which the woman herself, traditionally absent, does *not* speak”?¹¹ Catherine des Roches’s brilliant response authorized the group composition. It showed her not merely knowledgeable of the tradition of the paradoxical encomium but adept at the *responce*, a staple of salon verbal rituals. Pasquier sums up his admiration at Catherine’s nimble, fighting wit in his follow-up letter to Pithou:

je ne la sçaurois si bien assaillir, qu’elle ne se déffende trop mieux, d’une plume si hardie, que je douteray desormais de luy escrire [...]. Je ne veis jamais esprit si prompt ny si rassis que le sien. C’est une Dame qui ne manque point de *responce*.¹²

The genre of the *pièce responsive* was popular among poets of the *groupe marotique* attached to the courts of Francis I and Henry II. Verdun Saulnier defines the *responsif* as a common device in Petrarchist poetry; its main characteristic is that it is a *corrigé* or a correction of a given piece.¹³ Linked to a preceding poem, the *responce* takes in fact several forms: (1) as a citation with a rebuttal; (2) as a variation or elaboration of a theme; or (3) as a continuation or *récit suivi*. Frequently the opening lines of the model and its response are identical; at other times the repetition of the final line of the model becomes the *responce*’s *incipit*; or the model’s final line becomes the final line of the *responce*. In short, as Joyce Miller states, “the *responce* borrows the verse form of the model, uses its words, phrases, entire poetic line, all or some of its rhyme words, and rearranges and modifies these elements in such a way as to *confirm, correct, or contradict* the statement of the model.”¹⁴ In the second half of the century, the *responcif* is found in Italian poetic anthologies such as Girolamo Ruscelli’s *I Fiori delle Rime de’ poeti illustri*,¹⁵ a text the Dames des Roches knew, and some *responces* are labelled as such in the manuscript albums of Parisian aristocratic coteries such as those of Catherine de Clermont, maréchale de Retz, Madame de Villeroy and, at the beginning of the following century, Madame de Villarceaux.¹⁶

Of interest to me here are the reasons for Catherine des Roches’s repositioning of her replies from the collaborative volume of *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches*. All nine of these replies are republished in the *Secondes oeuvres* that appeared in Poitiers in June 1583, after the second

printing of *La Puce*.¹⁷ Why did she publish her replies? Clearly, an important reason is that Catherine des Roches wished to remind her readers of *her* active authorial participation in the flea contest.

The majority of Catherine's nine republished flea poems appear in a section entitled *Responces* of which there are a numbered total of 46. Additionally, seven *new* responses, written in 1579 during the *Grands Jours*, are included.¹⁸ These do not appear in the *Puce* volume. Catherine's restatement and expansion of her verse of the *Grands Jours* in a volume that she herself authors, with her mother, are designed to address the ambiguity of authorship of *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches*. To Ann Rosalind Jones's apt query of this group production, "Who owns this text?", the answer is everyone and no one.¹⁹ Estienne Pasquier suggests that the Dames des Roches themselves arranged to have the volume of *La Puce* published.²⁰ But this is unlikely since its publisher Abel l'Angelier admits to releasing it on the sly, without having obtained the participants' permission. It seems that Jacques de Sourdray, a Poitevine lawyer, collected the poems, passing on to l'Angelier "tout ce qui estoit venu en mes mains."²¹ In recasting her replies, Catherine corrects and repositions them: several in the *Secondes oeuvres* bear slight textual differences; two under her name in the *Puce* now appear under Madeleine Neveu's name.²² And most importantly, Catherine des Roches reclaims her own. She does this for a startling reason: verse from *La Puce* published both subsequently and before its first publication in 1582 erased her name altogether. Several of the participants, such as Nicolas Rapin, Courtin de Cissé, and Estienne Pasquier include their flea verse in publications with no specific reference to the context and no mention of Catherine des Roches.²³ And a decade and a half after the death of the Dames des Roches, Pasquier went so far as to claim the volume of *La Puce* for himself, eliminating Des Roches from the title in his collective volume *La jeunesse d'Estienne Pasquier* (1610).²⁴ Furthermore, this process of displacing Des Roches as active authorial participant begins in fact with the flea verses themselves. Nicolas Rapin's Latin "*De Pulice*," for instance, enacts a trial in which the defendant is a flea, the presiding judge is Love, the prosecutors are the magistrates of the *Grands Jours*, and the ground of contention the Lady's bosom.²⁵ While four of the magistrates of the *Grands Jours*, Pasquier, René Chopin, Antoine loisel, and Jacques Mangot are identified by name and lauded for their "*facundo carmine*" (the magic of your eloquence), Catherine des Roches's name is elided: she is metonymically referred to as "*virginis sinus*," the "breast of a virgin." As Tilde

Sankovitch notes, Catherine des Roches herself contributed to this anonymity when she conjured up in her own replies a “pretend-body” or a simulacrum that allowed her to play the game without personal (and problematic) involvement.²⁶ However, when due authorial representation is at stake and counting on name recognition means selling books, Des Roches includes her own replies in the *Secondes oeuvres* to remind her readers of her contribution. In a social world where being in the know counts, she enables her readers to name the “*virginis sinus*.”

A second reason for Catherine des Roches’s publishing her replies is that by positioning these amid other responses written on other diverse occasions and addressed to other *destinataires* including a number of women, she disengages her production from the fetishized, univocal conversation on the flea. The circulation of other terms of conversation repositions the Dames des Roches’s salon at intersections that broaden its scope. Indeed, Catherine’s *responces* cover many varied topics such as the sending (no. 6) and receipt of gifts (nos. 6, 15); thanks for compliments to which she refuses indebtedness (nos. 7, 12, 15, 36, 40); praise of female friendship (nos. 3, 10, 11); urging a female friend to pursue the path of virtue, knowledge, and writing (nos. 1, 34) and praise of those women who do (nos. 10, 11, 18, 29); a farewell to a friend on his journey abroad (no. 16) and encouraging notes to friends who mourn the absence of a loved one (nos. 2, 5); a summons to treat her with respect, not arrogance (no. 32), and to abandon an “Amour eventée” for her (no. 4). More crucially yet, Catherine’s flea poems link up with the theme of writing found in many of her other *responces* and throughout her works.

Hence, a final reason for Catherine des Roches’s publishing her poems of the *Grands Jours* is to highlight the significance for her of writing and publication. To do this, she explores the two central rhetorical aspects of the *genre responcif*, the *corrigé* model and the confirmation model. An example of the *corrigé* model is found in two of her four replies to Estienne Pasquier. These replies demonstrate Catherine des Roches’s skill at sidestepping erotic innuendo. In the first model poem, Pasquier’s speaker praises Catherine for instilling life into his verse through her song, but he bemoans the “death” that he undergoes when she does so. The final line “Tu fais vivre mes vers, et mourir leur auteur” is echoed in Catherine’s ensuing response: “la grace de vos vers / Fait mourir mes escrits, et me donne la vie.”²⁷ In a chiasmic *pointe*, she not only reverses the life/death analogy but locates the source of her life not in his *person* (as he does her) but in his “vers,” in writing.

In the second instance, Pasquier responds to Catherine's salon reading of her "Hymne de l'eau," published in the *Oeuvres* of 1578 and 1579. Pasquier contrasts Catherine's powerful river to the waters of Helicon, and the inspiration she offers to that obtained of Mount Parnassus. Clearly, he is better off seeking his inspiration from her by drinking from her "sainte eau." But curiously, he concludes, the more he drinks from her, "le plus je m'altere, / Et m'ambrase ton eau d'un feu perpetuel."²⁸ In her erudite come-back, Catherine expands on the origins of fire, one of the four primeval elements, and the purest of them all; Vulcan, the master of fire, she continues, set Jupiter's mind on fire to beget Minerva; and Pasquier, whose verse is proof of the divine fire within him, cannot in fact burn since he is fire: "Ni la terre ny l'air, ny l'eau ne vous font guerre / Et ne pouvez bruler vous qui n'estes que feu." Again, Catherine deflects the erotic innuendo, emphasizing instead the intellect, and the written word to resist the depiction of her as a mere bodily text.

Catherine des Roches not only corrects; she *contradicts*. Odet de Turnèbe, another *habitué* of the salon of the *Grands Jours*, a brilliant young lawyer and son of a famous father,²⁹ addressed to Catherine thirteen sonnets entitled "Sonets sur les ruines de Luzignan."³⁰ Throughout his sonnet sequence, Turnèbe plays on the meaning of "fort" (castle) and "rocher" or "roc" (the once impregnable castle of Lusignan was built on a high rocky hill), the latter part of Catherine's matronym Des Roches. In the first nine sonnets, the ruined castle becomes a melancholic image for war-torn France; the poet meditates, as Du Bellay once had,³¹ on the fragility of life, the passing of civilizations and their monuments be they Assyrian or Roman, and the tragic end of the House of Lusignan and of its legendary founder, the "sage Magicienne" Mélusine. Then, in sonnet 10, he addresses in a *carpe diem* poem a "Dure beauté cruelle, ingrate et fiere" who has been obdurate to his amorous sighs: she, it is, who should now take a long look at the fort, a metonymy for his broken heart. In the final sonnet "A Madame des Roches," Turnèbe's poet bemoans his incapacity to shift from the poetry of ruins to singing her praise for: "Ma vois, qui ne peut chanter que des ruines, / N'ose s'aventurer à un sujet si haut."³² In her reply, Catherine praises Turnèbe's skill in using "l'encre, la plume, et le livre" to build a new fort which will have a better chance of overcoming the ravages of time and war. Then, in a stunning reversal of Turnèbe's master-pupil rhetoric, she takes the high ground by giving *him* a lesson in Neoplatonism: the new owner of

Turnèbe's fort is no longer the magician Mélusine, a highly ambiguous heroine, but Ariosto's "sage Logistille" seconded by:

Les Muses, les Vertus, les Graces et l'Amour:
Je dy l'Amour venu de la Venus celeste.³³

Des Roches contradicts Turnèbe's rhetoric of earthly love with an emphasis on the celestial Venus.³⁴ The final rejoinder is that Turnèbe should find satisfaction in his "excellent ouvrage" whose worth is guaranteed by his valor, or "vertu" as in the version of the *Secondes oeuvres*. Here again, Des Roches shifts the discursive terrain from a focus on short-lived physical/bodily love to the acquisition of immortality through writing and above all "vertu," the most long-lasting quality as Cathy Yandell has noted.³⁵ In des Roches's mythology "vertu" is associated with the enterprise of writing. This is vividly made clear in *responces* to female addressees: in *responce* 34, for instance, she urges a friend to add to her beauty, wealth and fine breeding, "la Vertu sage" for then Minerva will grant her "la Gloire [...] En propos, efetz, écris."³⁶

Lastly, Des Roches uses the *responce* genre to *confirm* an interlocutor's appraisal of her. But this is rare. The lawyer Pierre Le Loyer's "Raisin à Catherine des Roches" originated in Catherine's gift to him of some grapes. The first part of the lengthy narrative poem spins out of a mock-philosophical meditation on the "metaphysics" of the grape, its roundness comparable to that of atoms, orbits, and to Democritus's "Mondes infinis." Left tantalizingly unstated, but nonetheless guessed at, is the Ronsardian application of Aristotelian roundness to the female breast in a flea poem Ronsard had revised in 1578. The last tercet of the sonnet reads:

Le ciel n'est dit parfait pour sa grandeur.
Luy et le sein le sont pour leur rondeur:
Car le parfait consiste en choses rondes.³⁷

Pierre Le Loyer invents the tale of a nymph called Botrys (meaning a "bunch of grapes" in Greek). Botrys kills herself to escape from a rape attempt by her pursuer Lycurgus; the gods then metamorphose her into a grape vine that they bestow upon humankind. How much more precious, states Le Loyer, is Catherine's gift of grapes for which he gives thanks with his gift to her of a poem! Des Roches's five-stanza "response faite promptement," improvised on the spot, focuses entirely on the tale of Botrys, sidestepping once again all (hidden) reference to the female body. She highlights the advantages of

Botrys' heroic suicide for in losing a marriage the virginal follower of Diana gains in fact a rich "loyer" or reward in the form of literary immortality:

Heureuse dont ce froid courage
Ne sçeut à l'amour s'employer,
Puisque perdant ton mariage
Tu gagnes un riche LOYER.
Heureuse de voiler ta face
Dessous un pampre verdissant,
Puisqu'un LOYER te donne grace
Par son vers tousjours fleurissant.³⁸

Des Roches combines the trope of compliment, wittily embedded in a pun on Loyer's name, with a reading that confirms her personal life-long choice: she, like Botrys, has chosen the path of resistance to sexual/marital dispossession to gain for herself immortality through letters.

Pierre Le Loyer's ensuing "Response à la mesme Dame, sur la Botrys, faicte aussi promptement" returns quick compliment for compliment. Addressing Botrys directly, Le Loyer claims that Des Roches has immortalized in her verse both he and his creation:

O ma Botrys, que d'heur ce fut à moy
Quand je te prins pour sujet de ma Rime!
Car ceste Muse en me vantant par toy
Nous rend tous deux en immortelle estime ...
Et la vie te rend
Et la gloire me donne.³⁹

Not to be surpassed, Catherine des Roches penned another comparatively lengthy *responce* to Pierre Le Loyer which did not appear in *La Puce* but which she published in the *Secondes oeuvres*.⁴⁰ In a direct address to "chaste Botrys," Des Roches compares her to the Ovidian nymph Arethusa whose beauty aroused the lustful river god Alpheus. Like Botrys, Arethusa flees her pursuer until at wit's end, she calls on the goddess Diana to transform her into a stream of water. Le Loyer now drinks from this stream; in memorializing Botrys, the jurist has wisely ensured his own immortality.

The *genre responcif* enabled Catherine des Roches to correct, contradict, and more rarely to confirm poems addressed to her by the participants of the flea contest of the *Grands Jours*. The publication of *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches* likely prompted her to include her own *responces* in her *Secondes oeuvres*. She thereby counters the threat of literary anonymity and capitalizes on name recognition to sell her books. She also publicizes

her desire for fame founded on her writing, not on her fabled flea. To those who pursue her with eroticized language as the expression of their mastery of a rhetorical code, she opposes a rhetoric of distancing from the body that contests their assignment of the female body within that code. Indeed, her female speaker is neither a passive commodity, nor is she absent. To Estienne Pasquier's immense surprise, Catherine des Roches entered the risqué terrain of the *blason* as a conversational performer, intellectual opponent, and "sage fille"⁴¹ in a game necessitating rhetorical skill, as well as the ability to create a counter mythology of her own.

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Notes

1. The extra court sessions of the "Grands Jours de Poitiers" of 1579 were ordered by Henri III on account of the disturbances of the civil wars. Parisian parliamentary *hommes de robe*, accompanied by their families, were appointed to preside over these sessions.
2. *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches. Qui est un recueil de divers poèmes Grecs, Latins et François, composez par plusieurs doctes personnages aux Grans jours tenus à Poitiers, l'an M.D. LXXIX* (Paris: pour Abel l'Angelier, 1582). As George Diller surmises, a smaller number of copies were printed in 1582, for there are only two extant today, one at the Bibliothèque de Besançon (211 792 Rés.), and the other at the Bibliothèque Méjanes at Aix-en-Provence (title page reproduced in Avenir Tchemerzine, *Bibliographie d'éditions originales et rares d'auteurs français des XV^e, XVI^e, XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* [Paris: Plée, 1927–1934], p. 417). The date of the permission to publish is November 7, 1582. A second printing, probably at the beginning of 1583, produced a large number for there are numerous extant copies (see George Diller, *Les Dames des Roches. Étude sur la vie littéraire à Poitiers dans la deuxième moitié du XVI^e siècle* [Paris: Droz, 1936], pp. 79–80). All emphases added are mine.
3. Cathy Yandell, "Of Lice and Women: Rhetoric and Gender in *La Puce de Madame Des Roches*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 20 (1990): 123–135; Ann Rosalind Jones, "Contentious Readings: Urban Humanism and Gender Difference in *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches* (1582)," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 48 (1995): 109–129; and Tilde Sankovitch, "The Body and Its Figures: Textual Strategies in the Writings of the Dames des Roches," in Colette H. Winn and Donna Kuizenga, eds., *Women Writers in Pre-Revolutionary France: Strategies of Emancipation* (New York: Garland, 1997): 57–68.
4. Ross Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading Oppositional Narrative* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), p. 10.
5. Marc Fumaroli, *Trois institutions littéraires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 147.
6. Stefano Guazzo, *La civile conversation*, trad. Gabriel Chappuys (Lyon: Jean Beraud, 1579), II, p. 237; cited in part by Fumaroli, *Ibid.*, p. xxxii. Guazzo's work first appeared in Italian in 1574.

7. Abel l'Angelier's address appears to be a summary of a letter that Pasquier wrote concerning this event. Pasquier's letter, which circulated in manuscript form, thus appeared at the beginning of *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches*, and was later included in his *Lettres* (Paris: Abel l'Angelier, 1586), VI, 8, fols. 186^v–193^r.
8. "Au lecteur," *La Puce de Madame Des-Roches*, fol. a-iii.
9. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London, 1611; rpt. Columbia, SC, 1950).
10. Estienne Pasquier, *Choix de lettres sur la littérature, la langue et la traduction*, ed. Dorothy Thickett (Geneva: Droz, 1966), p. 14.
11. Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies. Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 131.
12. Pasquier, *Choix de lettres*, p. 20.
13. V.-L. Saulnier, "Étude sur Pernette du Guillet et ses Rymes," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 4 (1944): 33–36. See also Howard Kalwies, "The Responce Genre in Early French Renaissance Poetry," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 65 (1983): 77–86.
14. Joyce Miller, "In the Margins of Amatory Discourse. The Responces of Pernette du Guillet," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24 (1993), p. 354.
15. Girolamo Ruscelli, *I Fiori delle Rime de' poeti illustri* (Venice: Giovambattista and Melchior Sessa, 1558). See Marie-Françoise Piéjus, "Lecture et écriture selon des anthologies poétiques au XVI^e siècle en Italie," in *L'écrivain face à son public en France et en Italie à la Renaissance*, eds. Ch.-A. Fiorato and J.-C. Margolin (Paris: Vrin, 1989), p. 348.
16. *Album de la mareschale de Retz* (BN Ms. Français 25,455), *Album de Madame de Villeroy* (BN Ms. Français 1718), *Album de Madame de Villarceaux* (BN Ms. Français 24,320). Several *responces* figure as well in Antoine de Cotel's *Mignardes et gaies poesies* (1578), known to the Dames des Roches: in one, Cotel's poet thanks a lady for her gift (fol. 5^r), while in another he responds to an epigram given to him during a *mascarade* (*Response sur le champ à la Nymphe qui le luy donna*, fol. 20^v). There are, of course, many other instances of *responces* in poetic collections of the period.
17. A total of eleven poems are ascribed to Catherine des Roches in the volume of *La Puce*. However, two of these, "Aux Poetes chante-Puce" (fols. 44^r-45^r) and "Au printams de vostre jeunesse ..." (fols. 79^r-80), appear in the *Secondes oeuvres* under Madeleine des Roches's name.
18. These seven new poems are: nos. 6 and 19 addressed to René Brochard, no. 9 to Marie de Lavau, daughter of Jean de Lavau, lawyer at the Paris Parlement, nos. 20 and 25 to Guy de Lavau, sieur de La Coudraye, no. 27 to Pierre Le Loyer, and no. 28 to the sieur de Clair-Or, *Secondes oeuvres* (Poitiers: Nicolas Courtoys, 1583).
19. Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p. 126. Erica Harth reminds us that the concept of authorship was fluid in *Ancien régime* France. The author was not necessarily defined as one who owned a text or had even composed it but rather as a figure "imbricated in a structure of social, literary, and financial relationships," "The Salon Woman Goes Public ... or Does She?," in *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*, eds. Elizabeth Goldsmith and

Dena Goodman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 186. Catherine des Roches is unusual in seeking to highlight not merely her partnership in such relationships but her “authority” over her own production.

20. In a letter to Antoine Loisel antedating the second printing of *La Puce*, Pasquier states: “On a depuis vostre partement imprimé nostre Puce de Poitiers ... Je ne sçay qui en a esté l’ordinateur (car le Libraire ne me l’a voulu dire) mais je croy que cela vient de la boutique de mes Dames des Roches,” *Lettres*, fol. 224^r.
21. *La Puce*, Preface, fol. a-ii.
22. See n. 17.
23. Courtin de Cissé and Nicolas Rapin include their verse in volumes antedating *La Puce*. Cissé’s “Pucelette noirelette” appeared in his *Oeuvres poétiques* (Paris: Gilles Beys, 1581), fols. 55^v-57^v; Rapin’s two Latin flea poems “*De Pulice Pictavii decantato Anno 1579*” and “*De eodem*” in *Les Plaisirs du Gentilhomme champêtre* (Paris: Lucas Breyer, 1581), fols. 37^r-37^v.
24. *La Puce, ou Jeux Poétiques François et Latins. Composez sur la Puce aux Grands Jours de Poictiers l’an MDLXXIX, dont Pasquier fut le Premier Motif*, in *La Jeunesse d’Estienne Pasquier et sa suite* (Paris: Jean Petit-Pas, 1610): 565–582. George Diller intimates that Pasquier may in fact have authorized the publication of *La Puce* of 1582 for he ends his preface to the *Puce* published in his *Jeunesse d’Estienne Pasquier* with: “... j’ay voulu dresser ce trophée qui est la publication de leurs vers, laquelle je te prie recevoir d’aussi bon coeur, qu’elle t’est par moy présentée. De Paris le dixieme septembre 1582.” This date, antedating the publication of *La Puce*, does not appear in the original 1582 collection (Diller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 82–83).
25. Nicolas Rapin, *Oeuvres*, ed. Jean Brunel (Geneva: Droz, 1982), I, pp. 247–248.
26. Tilde Sankovitch, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.
27. *La Puce*, fol. 5^v; *Secondes oeuvres*, no. 24, fol. 71.
28. *La Puce*, fol. 80^v; *Secondes oeuvres*, no. 3, fol. 74.
29. Odet de Turnèbe’s father, Adrien de Turnèbe, a renowned hellenist, was professor at Toulouse from 1533 to 1547 before his nomination to a chair at the Collège Royal in Paris. Montaigne, who attended his classes, calls him “mon Turnebus.”
30. *La Puce*, fols. 72–75. In 1574, on orders from Catherine of Medicis, the Catholic troops of the Duke of Montpensier destroyed the castle of Lusignan, some 8 km. from Poitiers. The castle was occupied by the Protestant troops of Gaspar de Coligny.
31. See Marie-Madeleine Fontaine’s study of Du Bellay’s influence on Turnèbe in “Les Antiquitez chez les dames Des Roches: les *Sonets sur les ruines de Luzignan* d’Odet de Turnèbe (1579),” *Oeuvres et Critiques*, 20 (1995): 197–208.
32. *La Puce*, fol. 75.
33. *La Puce*, fol. 75^v; *Secondes oeuvres*, no. 30, fols. 73^v-74.
34. Catherine des Roches contradicts Turnèbe in much the same way as Annibal opposed his interlocutor in Stefano Guazzo’s *Civile Conversation*, which Des Roches had probably read

in Chappuys' 1579 French translation. To the Chevalier's "J'ay tousjours estimée non seulement vaine et inutile, mais dangereuse et dommageable la conversation des femmes" (II, 257), Annibal responds: "Mais à fin que nous ne soions trompez il faut sçavoir qu'il y a une Venus au ciel et une autre en terre. Cete cy est mue de l'amour lascif, et cete là de l'amour honneste," *Op. cit.*, p. 259.

35. Cathy Yandell, *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

36. *Secondes oeuvres*, fol. 75^v.

37. Pierre de Ronsard, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Paul Laumonier *et al.* (Paris: Hachette-Didier-Droz, 1914–1967), V, p. 110.

38. *La Puce*, fol. 85^v; *Secondes oeuvres*, no. 26, fol. 71^v. "Loyer" is capitalized in the version of the *Secondes oeuvres* to highlight the word play.

39. *La Puce*, fol. 87.

40. *Secondes oeuvres*, no. 27, fol. 71^v.

41. Pasquier's words concerning Des Roches in his letter to Pierre Pithou, *La Puce*, fol. a-iii–v; *Lettres*, ed. Thickett, p. 16. My thanks to Marian Rothstein for helpful comments on an earlier version.