

not cold. By concentrating on this poignant text, I try to say something helpful about why Montaigne is sublime and how sublimity has become a way to articulate the value of aesthetic experience. Oppenheimer thus misses two major points of my study: the appreciation of a great author and a concern for great art.

Oppenheimer holds the relation between sublimity and skepticism to be “self-evident” and implies that further discussion is unnecessary. My opening paragraphs, however, show that the opposite is true: debates about sublimity flourish, in large part because its relation to skepticism remains unsettled. Oppenheimer again disregards what I write when he suggests that Montaigne merely repeats a cliché about Rome expressed by Du Bellay in sonnet 3 of the *Antiquitez*. Not only do I distinguish Montaigne’s attitude from Du Bellay’s, but I also cite the same sonnet as evidence of Montaigne’s engagement, though not agreement, with his precursor.

There is another issue raised by Oppenheimer that my article does not mention. Oppenheimer is wrong to assume that Montaigne’s *Journal de voyage* is only available in Querlon’s version. François Rigolot’s edition (PUF) is based on a handwritten copy of the original manuscript recently discovered in the Fonds Périgord of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Oppenheimer is also mistaken when he asserts, “We are here dealing with a third person’s account of Montaigne’s meditations.” Less than half the text of the *Journal de voyage* was written by a secretary (probably under Montaigne’s dictation); the majority was written by Montaigne himself. Moreover, on the manuscript copy, about two hundred handwritten additions clearly show that Montaigne reread and commented on his secretary’s draft as well as his own first impressions (see Rigolot’s introduction xii ff.).

So the *Journal de voyage* is a much more personal account of Montaigne’s observations and meditations than Oppenheimer suggests. Nobody questions Montaigne’s “humanness,” and many critics have lavished book after book on it. But the relation between sublimity and skepticism—I feel—needs to be analyzed in the context of issues crucial to Montaigne’s time, among them the interest in wonder and the posture of Renaissance humanism toward classical antiquity. The “belletristic elements” that matter to Oppenheimer matter to me too, and I agree that literary criticism often loses sight of literary pleasure. Nevertheless, I believe that there are many ways to enrich the enjoyment of literature, and I believe that “theory” can be one of them.

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Minority Candidates in the Job Market

To the Editor:

I find it odd that Cary Nelson, responding to Nellie Y. McKay’s column on who shall teach African American literature, mentions, as one of the “[s]everal trends” that “may dissuade African American undergraduates from pursuing humanities PhDs,” “the emergence of a new class of full-time, tenure-track faculty positions at annual salaries of \$25,000 or less” (Forum, 114 [1999]: 102). In ten years of teaching graduate students at an institution and in a program whose nonminority PhDs frequently have difficulty finding jobs, I have never seen a minority candidate fail to find a tenure-track position—in some cases a position with a much better salary than that of nonminority colleagues. (For example, one deserving African American PhD was offered a job at a small college in Georgia where she would have made a starting salary \$10,000 higher than many of her colleagues.) Indeed at my institution as at others, a major concern in academic departments is to narrow the salary gap between minority and nonminority faculty members, which is second only to the vast difference in financial status between faculty members who have served in the university’s administration and those who have not.

Because there are few minority PhDs on the academic job market, their value is so great that they enjoy substantial advantages over nonminority job seekers. Indeed, I participated in several job searches at the University of Houston for which only minority candidates were seriously considered, since funds were only available for minority hires. (And I gather from colleagues around the country that this seemingly unconstitutional practice is widespread.)

Strangely, Nelson’s letter defeats the aim it claims to serve—encouraging members of minorities to enter PhD programs, a goal that I also heartily support—by giving the false impression that they will face the same grim conditions as nonminority job seekers. They will not.

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Reply:

The phenomenon that I referred to in my January 1999 letter—the emergence of 1990s tenure-track jobs at annual salaries in the low to mid \$20,000s—is not a race-specific one. Schools that are willing to hire part-time faculty members at \$1,000 per course are increasingly