

Philippe Desan, ed. *Les Chapitres oubliés des Essais de Montaigne: Actes des journées d'étude à la mémoire de Michel Simonin*.

Bibliothèque Littéraire de la Renaissance: La librairie de Montaigne 1. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2011. 280 pp. €58. ISBN: 978-2-7453-2243-2.

In this new collection of essays based on a conference held at the University of Chicago in Paris in 2010, Philippe Desan and his team of European Montaignistes attempt to find new ways of reading the *Essais*. The concept of forgotten chapters sounds misleadingly simple, as if the only goal were to study marginalized chapters from an otherwise abundantly examined book. However, the notion of *oubliés* signifies several kinds of editorial neglect in the life of this work, especially Montaigne's own forgetting, referring to the chapters he left alone after one version. The novelty in this approach is that rather than relying on the perspective scholars have enjoyed since Pierre Villey, who divided Montaigne's thought into a tripartite evolution from the first, second, and last editions of his essays (the A, B, and C layers as they are marked in many editions), Desan's team asks questions about chapters that remained fixed in time. This is precisely the debate Giovanni Dotoli takes on in his essay "Montaigne entre le fixe et le mobile," in which he argues that within the architecture of the *Essais*, it is important to think not only of a Montaigne in motion, but also as an editor who purposely chose from time to time to be static and unchanging. The goal of the volume is thus to explore these chapters that Montaigne leaves alone, to find out if they characterize a deliberate editorial practice, and to determine if their immobility has something new to reveal to readers about another side of Montaigne, perhaps strange to us and, as Desan argues quoting the *Essais*, to Montaigne himself. Is this a way to reinforce the "premier

Montaigne” of the first book, rather than the “dernier Montaigne” of the third, or have we been too quick to differentiate between these two personas?

The volume includes sixteen articles by scholars from France, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, and England. Desan also writes a clear introduction problematizing the notion of forgotten chapters and offering a list of the chapters that count as forgotten, with an annotation of what small editorial changes were made in each throughout the three editions. A large number of articles may be categorized as studying the ways in which brief and neglected chapters, especially from the first book, or what has been referred to as the “premier Montaigne,” nevertheless reflect fully realized aspects of Montaigne’s thought. Other contributions reveal that based on the form (usually brief) and placement of these neglected chapters, we learn more about the author’s editorial practices and the Essay Project in general than we would by focusing on the developed chapters around them alone.

This collection is at the cutting edge of what has become a rebirth in Renaissance studies of the history of the book and of editorial practices. Although this volume is geared toward Montaigne specialists, other researchers working on compilers, editors, and illustrators in the Renaissance might also appreciate it, because it offers several convincing approaches to the material. I was also struck by the interdisciplinary nature of these articles, which show that studies in the history of the book are by nature across several different fields: history, art history, philology, philosophy, and religious studies.

As Desan states at the end of his introduction, some volume contributors analyze chapters forgotten by Montaigne based on the list he establishes, while others work on chapters neglected by the critics, although these two kinds of forgetting are not mutually exclusive. I think the volume would be slightly stronger if the initial notion of chapters *oubliés* by Montaigne himself had been maintained throughout. But, given that this is a proceeding, the coherence is still strong. Another issue of uniformity is the reference to Montaigne’s *Essais*, which changes from article to article and creates great confusion when authors refer to chapter numbers. It makes the reader wonder: what is the edition of reference for Montaigne’s *Essais* today?

ALISON CALHOUN
Indiana University