

Philip Ford and Neil Kenny, eds. *La Librairie de Montaigne: Proceedings of the Tenth Cambridge Renaissance Colloquium 2–4 September 2008*.

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No one who has held a book from Montaigne's personal library will forget the sight of his bold, indelibly individualistic splash of signature across the foot of the title page. These papers, nine in French and three in English, stem from a 2008 colloquium held to explore the books that made up Montaigne's personal *librairie*, including surviving volumes (about a hundred) with provenance traced to his collection and other works he is known to have read. Several papers profit from M. A. Screech's remarkable scholarship (M. A. Screech, *Montaigne's Annotated Copy of Lucretius: A Transcription and Study of the Manuscript, Notes and Pen-marks* [1998]). Each paper offers worthwhile insights into the furnishing of Montaigne's mind, though only a few can be highlighted here.

Alain Legros ponders whether or not Montaigne read the commentaries when he read an edition that included commentaries on a text. Legros draws heavily on the handwritten notes in Montaigne's copy of the Lambin edition of Lucretius to demonstrate that he did. Surprisingly, this paper doesn't quote Montaigne himself to the effect that commentaries almost always obscure the passage they attempt to elucidate: "Qui ne diroit que les glosses augmentent les doubtes et l'ignorance" ("De l'Experience," *Essais* 3.13), which already established as canonical the fact that Montaigne did read commentaries. André Tournon argues, intriguingly but not so convincingly, that Montaigne's notes in Lucretius display evidence of the habits he

might have developed, when working with provincial magistrates as an evaluator of evidence in civil cases.

Emily Butterworth traces Montaigne as a reader of Catullus. She notes passages alluding to the myth of Procne and Philomela, one of whom (antique sources differ) was transformed into a nightingale, forever chattering about her personal experience. In another Catullan poem that Montaigne alludes to, a girl lets fall an apple given by her lover, which reveals her amorous secret. For Butterworth, these passages represent keys to the way Montaigne reveals the private self in his *Essais*.

John O'Brien examines allusions to the poet Anacreon (or poets, as the Renaissance confused the sixth-century BCE poet Anacreon, whose verses are known exclusively though quotation by other writers, with the later versifier preserved in the Greek Anthology). O'Brien uses the glimpses of Anacreon in the *Essais* as an illustration of the way Montaigne skips about in his reading, furnishing his mind with lore that will emerge in Montaigne's own writings, having been assimilated to an extent that sometimes defeats attempts to identify exactly what he is quoting or paraphrasing.

Michel Magnien observes that Montaigne reread Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, adding liberal quotations from it to the republication of his *Essais* in 1588. Montaigne continued to feel slight regard for Cicero's rhetorical powers, but as time passed he found points to admire in Cicero's moral philosophy. Magnien suggests that the dialogue format of the *Tusculan Disputations* appealed more to Montaigne than philosophical writings presented as treatises. He draws a provocative comparison between the *Tusculan Disputations* and the overall program of Montaigne's essays. Both were written in the vernacular, during a period of retirement from public affairs because of a civil war, and focus on an attempt to explore what is really important: confronting mortality and pain, and a search for principles of conduct. Magnien's focus on the usefulness of scrutinizing the successive editions of the *Essais* as a key to understanding the development of Montaigne's thought is echoed in Philippe Desan's persuasive argument that the *Essais* were the work of twenty years of revision. When we picture Montaigne in his library reading and annotating, we mustn't overlook the shelf on which his own books would have been arranged, with margins and endpapers slowly accumulating annotations. Desan traces effects of the events of Montaigne's life on the successive editions. Montaigne was mayor of Bordeaux when the essays were reprinted in 1582, and bears that distinction on the title page of the 1582 reprint; but as his political prominence faded, new layers of the thoughtful recluse persona were added to the text. Jean Balsamo develops evidence that the *Exemplaire de Bordeaux* wasn't the final step between Montaigne's last emendations and the copy Mlle de Gournay worked from when preparing the posthumous edition of 1595.

This appealing and highly recommended volume may tempt readers to drop other projects for a while to reread Montaigne.

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