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'J'ayme ces mots.. . ': expressions linguistiques de doute
dans les 'Essais' de Montaigne (review)

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insistence on divine justice as well as divine goodness, and he situates that endorsement in the related contexts of post-Tridentine theology and the unfolding project of Montaigne's book. When Legros examines the revisions to 'Des prières' that appear on the Exemplaire de Bordeaux and in Gournay's 1595 edition, he casts light on Montaigne's authorial quirks in that project's final years. Legros corroborates André Tournon's efforts to acknowledge Montaigne's puzzling — sometimes startling — practices of segmentation and punctuation on the Bordeaux copy. (Readers far from the Bordeaux Municipal Library can now follow Tournon's argument more easily, thanks to Philippe Desan's quadrichrome facsimile, Fasano–Chicago, 2002.) In all seven of the versions examined here, what emerges is Montaigne's unwavering condemnation of those who invoke divine help to accomplish evil ends, who seek God's forgiveness without forgiving those who have offended them. Haunting the *Essais* is the spectre of soldiers near Montaigne's home praying for God's help as they prepare to burn the towns of their adversaries, torture their captives, and reap the spoils of war. In his examples of empty pious rituals and phony repentance, Montaigne delivers a severe if oblique indictment of Catholic Church doctrines on sin and reconciliation and opts for the authority of the Lord's Prayer. In this most insightful reading to date of 'Des prières', Legros makes of that essay a prism through which we can better discern Montaigne's position on the religious issues hotly contested in his lifetime.

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'J'ayme ces mots...': expressions linguistiques de doute dans les 'Essais' de Montaigne.

By KIRSTI SELLEVOLD. Paris, Champion, 2004. 318 pp. Hb €48.00.

This book offers some detailed and dense linguistic analyses of selected expressions of doubt in Montaigne's *Essais*, taking its cue from a passage in 'Des boyteux': 'J'ayme ces mots qui moderent et amolissent la temerité de nos propositions: A l'avanture, Aucunement, On dict, Quelque, Je pense et semblables'. Seeking to exploit a linguistic method for a literary audience, the book is interdisciplinary in scope, and draws on the concept of polyphony to explore how a phrase may include and indicate different points of view. The linguistic concepts are used as tools to read certain key passages in the *Essais* that incorporate expressions of doubt in order to inscribe a distance between the writing subject and his writing. The book provides some rigorous linguistic analysis of the chosen expressions (*à l'avanture, il semble que, il me semble que, je trouve que* and *je pense que*), and explores furthermore how this approach can illuminate some long-standing and perennially fascinating questions in interpreting the *Essais*: the position of the writing subject in relation to his material, the status of quotation and imitation, problems of epistemology and the question of Montaigne's scepticism. Indeed, it is Kirsti Sellevold's claim that a linguistic analysis of these expressions of doubt provides a fresh way of reading the emergence of a concept of personal identity that has been identified in the *Essais*, and in particular the presence of the writing subject in his text. The book consists of an analysis of the frequency and significance of these expressions

of doubt in Montaigne's time, a theoretical chapter on the linguistic concepts that interest the author, and a series of detailed analyses from selected chapters of the *Essais*, of which the sections on 'De l'utile et de l'honneste' are perhaps the most ambitious and successful. In this choice of key passages, Sellevold is able to discuss the implications of some of the larger religious, political and ethical questions that loom in the *Essais*. The book is well situated in terms of the literary critical debate that precedes it, with particular reference to the work of André Tournon, Terence Cave and Antoine Compagnon. Although it is useful and illuminating to set the author's readings alongside those of literary critics, the freshness and novelty of the linguistic approach may perhaps have been enhanced if these critics' conclusions were incorporated towards the end of the analysis, rather than framing it from the introductory sections. Despite this, this remains a book that offers an original and thought-provoking approach to Montaigne's text and its inscription of doubt, scepticism and revision.

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Character and Conversion in Autobiography: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre. By PATRICK RILEY. Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2004. x + 224 pp. Hb \$42.50.

Patrick Riley's study of autobiographical writing in early modern and modern France focuses on conversion as a schema used by authors to structure both their life and their writing. The archetype for this organization of self and text is Augustine's *Confessions*. In this precursor to the autobiographical genre, Augustine recounts his early life as a spiritual journey leading to a profound religious conversion, a transformation of the self whose nature is in part conveyed to the reader through a transformation in the text itself: at the end of Book 9, the *Confessions* shift abruptly from the narration of Augustine's early life to an atemporal introspective exploration of spirituality. Riley claims that Augustine's use of conversion in shaping both the form and the content of the *Confessions* was imitated or recast by many writers in the Western tradition, including the four he has chosen to illustrate his thesis. In the least compelling of these four studies, Riley describes Montaigne's *Essais* as a counterpoint to Augustine's model of the self; according to Riley, Montaigne replaces Augustine's dramatic moment of conversion with a multitude of 'micro-conversions': 'Montaigne is able to reject the subjective break that radical conversion demands only because he views experience as an unbroken continuum of *micro-conversions*' (p. 61). However, it is not clear that the *Essais* are a response to Augustine rather than simply being a different way of writing about the self. Riley's argument focuses almost exclusively on one essay, 'Du repentir', where Montaigne discusses his self-portrait and the notion of repentance, but even here neither conversion nor repentance strike us as central to Montaigne's project. Riley's thesis is more intriguing with respect to the autobiographical texts of Descartes, Rousseau and Sartre. However, he does not analyse conversion's role in shaping the form and content of these works in sufficient detail. Riley summarizes the content of these works at length but does not adequately explain how these summaries