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Montaigne: Essais, I, 56 'Des prières' (review)

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sein de la *respublica litteraria* néo-latine pour ouvrir la voie aux débats d'idées de la Pléiade. Si Marot tire parti des innovations de la société à laquelle il appartient pour promouvoir sa fonction de poète, sa *persona* est protéiforme. L'essai s'attache dans ce sens à la multiplication des marques de la présence de Marot dans ses textes. Pour Preisig, le poète se montre plus intéressé par le processus de la création que par le souci de laisser de lui un portrait cohérent et achevé; à la fois masques et miroirs de l'auteur, les divers personnages dont il emprunte les traits constituent une suite d'esquisses qu'il serait vain d'unifier. C'est aussi dans une perspective plurielle que Preisig traite ensuite de l'inspiration de Marot pour envisager l'auteur comme un artisan dépositaire d'un savoir appris et un prophète inspiré: le dialogue avec les Anciens nourrit une pensée religieuse, des aspirations métaphysiques coexistent avec des préoccupations profanes. Dans le sillage des travaux de Defaux, Preisig voit en Marot un témoin des mutations de son temps et un agent de sa transformation. Sous des angles divers, cette analyse montre comment, au fil de ses métamorphoses, l'écrivain devient une figure publique consciente de son image littéraire. On pourrait regretter à cet effet l'absence d'une discussion sur le rôle de la traduction. Mais comme le suggère ce travail nuancé, l'œuvre de Marot prépare les perspectives poétiques de la génération suivante et constitue un jalon marquant de l'histoire de l'émergence de l'auteur.

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MONTAIGNE: *Essais*, 1, 56 'Des prières'. Édition annotée des sept premiers états du texte avec étude de genèse et commentaire par ALAIN LEGROS. (Textes littéraires français, 558). Geneva, Droz, 2003. 264 pp. 65 SwF.

Editors of the *Essais* have argued for and against indicating typographically the different stages of the work's composition. Montaigne's many references to his book as a faithful record of his passage from one minute to the next challenge editors and readers to follow that passage as it progresses. With his edition of 'Des prières', Alain Legros rises to the challenge and shows how fruitful retracing one essay's development can be. Only eight and a half pages (about 1150 words) in the first edition (1580), that essay was one of the few to address explicitly a religious topic at a time when France was torn by wars fought in the name of religion. Responding to the papal censors who had examined the newly published *Essais* during his stay in Rome in 1581, Montaigne added a significant preamble in the 1582 version. Subsequent additions and revisions show him returning persistently to that brief essay. This attractive Droz edition helps the reader to follow the successive stages of the essay by reproducing integrally each new version, with red characters indicating the changes made since the previous version. That alone makes this volume valuable to any serious reader of Montaigne. What makes this book of utmost importance, however, is Legros's commentary through his richly informative 100-page introduction and notes (fifty pages). Central to the essay from its first appearance was Montaigne's affirmation of the Lord's Prayer, which he asserts is the only prayer that Christians need to use. Legros scrutinizes Montaigne's praise of the Lord's Prayer, especially its

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