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MONTAIGNE AND THE LIFE OF FREEDOM

More than any other early modern text, Montaigne's *Essais* have come to be associated with the emergence of a distinctively modern subjectivity, defined in opposition to the artifices of language and social performance. Felicity Green challenges this interpretation with a compelling revisionist reading of Montaigne's text, centred on one of his deepest but hitherto most neglected preoccupations: the need to secure for himself a sphere of liberty and independence that he can properly call his own, or himself. *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom* restores the *Essais* to their historical context by examining the sources, character and significance of Montaigne's project of self-study. That project, as Green shows, reactivates and reshapes ancient practices of self-awareness and self-regulation, in order to establish the self as a space of inner refuge, tranquillity and dominion, free from the inward compulsion of the passions and from subjection to external objects, forces and persons.

FELICITY GREEN is Junior Research Fellow in history at Trinity College, Cambridge. She has also held fellowships at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study and at the Huntington Library.

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FELICITY GREEN
Trinity College, Cambridge

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Conventions

TEXTS

References to the *Essais* are by book, chapter and page number to the following editions:

P *Les Essais*, eds. Jean Balsamo, Michel Magnien and Catherine Magnien-Simonin. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 2007.

V *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*, ed. Pierre Villey, revised by V.-L. Saulnier, re-edited with a preface and supplement by Marcel Conche. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2004.

F *The complete Essays of Montaigne*, translated by Donald Frame. Stanford University Press, 1958.

The Pléiade edition (P) is based on the first posthumous edition of the *Essais* (1595). All quotations are taken from this text, which provides the most complete version of Montaigne's work.[1] The Villey-Saulnier edition (V), for many years the standard version of the *Essais*, is based on the 'Bordeaux Copy', a working copy of the 1588 text with extensive emendations in Montaigne's own hand. Cross-references to this edition are provided for the convenience of the reader.

The order of certain chapters in the 1595 edition differs from that of earlier editions, due to the displacement of one chapter (*That the taste of good and evil depends in large part on the opinion we have of them*) from I.14 to I.40. In what follows, then, I.25, for example, refers to *On the education of children*, and not to *On pedantry*.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Montaigne revised the *Essais* continually and extensively over a period of two decades, inserting subtle emendations, lengthy *allongeails* and whole

[1] For a more detailed discussion, see Green 2009.

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new chapters as he went along. I have therefore chosen to identify the text with the complete set of its versions and revisions, rather than with its most advanced state. This decision has led me to depart from the Pléiade edition in two important respects: by reinstating the letters conventionally used to signal successive stages in the composition of the *Essais*, and by including earlier variants rejected in the final (1595) recension of the text.

Superscript letters are used as follows: ^{A} refers to the text of the first edition, published in 1580; ^{B} to material added between 1580 and 1588; and ^{C} to all later additions. I have used <angle brackets> to identify those passages where the 1595 text diverges from the Bordeaux Copy. Text present in an earlier state of the work but excised or replaced in later revisions is indicated with a single line of deletion.

The original spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, italicisation and paragraphing have been preserved. However, I have expanded all contractions and changed 'i' to 'j' and 'u' to 'v' in accordance with modern typography (except when quoting from Latin). All Greek words, phrases and titles have been transliterated.

TRANSLATIONS

Donald Frame's version of the *Essais* (F) has provided the starting point for all my translations of Montaigne into English. However, I have frequently taken the liberty of modifying Frame's text to reflect Montaigne's choice of language with greater accuracy. Moreover, because Frame based his translation on the Bordeaux Copy, I have supplied my own translations for those passages added to the 1595 text. When using editions of classical texts for which facing-page translations are provided, I have used these as my starting point, while sometimes modifying them in the interests of a more literal rendering of the original text. All other translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

When translating Montaigne, I have rendered *liberté* as 'liberty' and *franchise* as 'freedom'. I have, of course, been constrained to adopt 'free' and 'freely' as translations of *libre* and *librement*, for which there is no direct English equivalent. In addition, I have occasionally translated *franc* and *franchement* as 'frank' and 'frankly', in contexts carrying a narrower connotation of boldness or plainness in speech. It seems to be the case, more generally, that *franchise* in Montaigne's usage places slightly more emphasis on the moral character of the free man (his fearlessness, his magnanimity), whereas *liberté* tends to draw attention to the lack of dependency and attachment that makes such virtues possible. This distinction is not,

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however, a consistent or significant one: the terms are often used interchangeably by Montaigne – as close equivalents, if not as exact synonyms.[2] I have therefore allowed myself to use both 'freedom' and 'liberty' in my own prose – [C]'to diversify', as Montaigne would put it,[3] without wishing to attach great conceptual importance to the slightly different shades of meaning carried by the two terms.

The original titles of works written in languages other than English (including the *Essais*) have not been translated. The titles of individual chapters of Montaigne's text have, however, been rendered in English.

GENDER

I try to maintain gender-neutral language as far as possible. It is sometimes evident, however, that Montaigne conceives of liberty as a peculiarly masculine quality, and that he is concerned to present himself not merely as a free person but as a free man. In these cases, I have chosen to follow his gendered usage to avoid altering his sense.

[2] In *On vanity*, for example, Montaigne writes that [C]'idleness and freedom' ('l'oysiveté, la franchise') are his 'most favoured qualities' and that [C]'liberty and idleness' ('la liberté et l'oysiveté') are his 'mistress qualities'. III.9: P 1014, 1038; V 969, 992; F 741, 759.

[3] [C]'Pour diversifier'. II.37: P 796, V 758, F 574.

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