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tenacity of Vasari's judgments in the ways in which early Italian drawings came into and were classified in two French collections of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sebastian Schütze also describes the outline of a new project in his essay on the fascinating Viennese art historian and collector of old master drawings, Benno Geiger.

For this volume (supported by a Festschrift Fund at Queen's) the Queen's–McGill press spared no expense. There are many colour illustrations, helping to correct our overly black-and-white understanding of Renaissance drawings. That the very welcome illustrations did not identify media in their captions is a pity given the emphasis on technique and medium in the book overall.

There are many interesting essays in this volume, and readers will derive much benefit from the variety of approaches and issues raised: a valuable cross-section of thinking about drawing. While some of the essays tend to lose the forest for the trees, even the most micrological analyses carry methodological implications for the reader. Steven Stowell's essay struck me as a fitting leitmotif for this tribute to the late McTavish. In Stowell's well-crafted analysis of the role of drawing in Vasari's lives of the artists, drawing the subject of the baptism of Christ was shown to function as a "ritual exercise that transforms youths" much like baptism brings people into the church. This volume beautifully attests to the high esteem in which David McTavish was held by his colleagues and by the many he baptized into the world of old master drawings.

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**Desan, Philippe.**

***Montaigne, A Life.* Trans. Steven Rendall and Lisa Neal.**

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. xxxv, 796 + 21 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0691-16787-9 (hardcover) US\$39.95.

The "consubstantiality" that Montaigne proclaims to exist between his *Essais* and his life invites the reader to see his book as an autobiography. It is, however, an autobiography that is lacking in specifics and that leaves unsaid and unreported many details and periods of its author's life, not to mention the motivations that led him to certain decisions. Hence the curiosity that is aroused in anyone who

reads and enjoys Montaigne's book to find out the reality that subtends his text, to fill in the blanks, and to produce a "complete" Montaigne in biographical form. Writing biographies of Montaigne is a well-worn practice that goes back to the eighteenth century; see vol. 9 (2004) of *Early Modern France* devoted to "The New Biographical Criticism" and vol. 20 (2008) of *Montaigne Studies*, "Biographies of Montaigne," both edited by George Hoffmann with excellent introductions to the topic. Desan's present account of the essayist's life is not only the most recent exemplar of a long tradition, it is also the largest of all the biographies and aspires thereby to be definitive.

Originally published in 2014 as *Montaigne, une biographie politique*, the translated title omits the adjective (in this biography it means "politicking" and not just "political"). The reader thus imagines that Desan is simply updating Donald Frame's canonic *Montaigne: a Biography* (1965), whose organization into chapters he has wisely appropriated. But whereas Frame's account situates Montaigne in his historical, social, economic, and political milieu with the goal of being "scholarly and readable," Desan considers that the author's publication history must also be examined in order to understand his deeper motivations. He seeks to contextualize Montaigne's writing as part of a larger discourse, "in view of his membership in the social, political, and ideological structures that shape him." The conclusion he draws is that Montaigne was neither "a genius (n) or a sage," and had he not published the *Essais* he would have languished among the other *illustres inconnus* of history. But, as Desan points out, his ambition and acumen were such that he ensured his text was marketed carefully—or rather, his *texts*, because each separate edition was calculated to achieve a different political goal at crucial points in his life. When Montaigne is silent, it amounts to a political choice, having to do with career strategies. Hence Desan insists that the *Essais* should not be read cumulatively, because Montaigne's work "almost always corresponded to successive intentions that were antithetical." This would account for the different tone and thematic focus of books 1 and 2 (in both the 1580 and 1582 editions) compared to the more personal essays of book 3 (starting in 1588). That is to say, the *Essais* of 1580, "Moral, Political, and Military Discourses" (chapter 6) reflect that time in his life when Montaigne still believed he might obtain an ambassadorship or other high-ranking position at court. By the time he crafted the expanded *Essais* of 1588, he had come to realize that his singular success lay not in becoming a negotiator, but rather in becoming an "author" unlike any other. Even then, Montaigne had always been

“aware of his reader [...] and used him/her as a means of achieving goals that were initially political before they became literary” (xxviii).

The variability inherent in the picture Montaigne presents of himself, together with the many *lacunae* referred to above, allows biographers of Montaigne to fill in the gaps and choose among passages almost at will. There are thus as many Montaignes as there are readers. David Quint, for example (*Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy: Ethical and Political Themes in the Essais*, 1998), draws a diametrically opposed conclusion from the same material. In his reading, the evolution of essays through successive editions reveals a sustained moral argument that develops the theme of trust, wherein Montaigne challenges a rebellious French nobility to submit to the authority of the monarchy.

To these multiple Montaignes must be added the weight of French tradition: Montaigne in this view (one that he partially fostered himself) is the ideal sage who at the first opportunity—his father’s death—quits the annoyances of the material world to devote himself to the muses, emerging only to travel to Italy, to accept as a duty the mayoralty of Bordeaux, or to serve as mediator among France’s rulers. It was Montaigne after all who solemnly declared his divorce from public “servitude” in a Latin *votum* painted on the wall of his study in 1571.

Desan’s biography sets itself in polar opposition to those two positions, marshalling documented sources to forestall an overly subjective interpretation of Montaigne’s life. In his desire to distance himself from traditionally idealized versions, however, Desan may have gone too far and laid himself open to the criticism that the essayist himself levelled against Guicciardini (II, 10 “Des livres”). Though he thought him to be a trustworthy historian of events, Montaigne regretted that he never attributed actions to any virtuous motive but only to profit and commodity. Desan’s Montaigne seems always to be striving to exploit situations for his own advantage, seeking to rise to positions of power and prestige, and this certainly diminishes his longstanding reputation.

The object of this biography, Desan concludes, is “recovering the time of writing the *Essais* [1572–92] and superimposing it on the time of history” (633). This might seem an odd formulation, but the result fairly reproduces the intent: it is equal parts biography and history of late sixteenth-century France. It must be recognized that this synthesis is a monumental achievement, exploiting as it does years of research by specialists and aggregating stores of archival material that will be much appreciated by Montaigne scholars. The non-specialist

might however find the 650+ pages of text tedious and hard to navigate (not to mention the 150+ pages of scholarly apparatus). As to the translation itself, it is smooth-reading and faithful to the original, though the decision to cite the travel journal and La Boétie's *Servitude volontaire* in outdated English versions—Waters 1903 instead of Frame 1958, Kurz 1942 instead of Schaefer 1998 or Atkinson 2011—seems inexplicably idiosyncratic.

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**Dooley, Brendan.**

*Angelica's Book and the World of Reading in Late Renaissance Italy.*

London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. x, 201 + 9 ill. ISBN 978-1-4742-7031-1 (hardcover) US\$114.

This bibliophilic biography of one copy of a sixteenth-century collection of novellas, now obscure but popular in its time, responds well to being read in the spirit in which it was written: with a mind open to conjecture, an eye for more questions than answers, and a willingness to fuse micro- and macro-history without concern for a few visible seams. Ambitiously inspired, it is also defensively book-ended by prefatory and concluding caveats about, and even advocacy for, its indefinite conclusions, not only in relation to this project but as they inform the humanities at their best. If Dooley admits his preference for the full half of his evidentiary glass, however, the reviewer must observe the glass as a whole. One might begin by pointing to the author's genial tone and the leisurely pace he takes in unfolding his tale of a chance junk-shop find, one concealing a tantalizing ownership inscription which almost miraculously survives in the middle of a volume shorn of numerous initial and final pages. One could then turn to his informed enthusiasm, at times contagious, for the labyrinthine sleuthing his topic engenders as he attempts to learn more about the owner, the book, and the culture they emerged from.

Dooley formulates, but generally finds he cannot firmly answer, countless questions in six chapters that range from analytical bibliography to art history as he consults evidence from Renaissance fictions and sermons to probate inventories and paintings. The author's refusal to narrow his research process