

INTRODUCTION
MONTAIGNE AND THE LOW COUNTRIES—SYNOPSIS
AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

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Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) is known as the inventor of the essay, a successful genre, in which the author expresses in a free and personal style his ideas on a great diversity of subjects. Typical for Montaigne are his far-reaching relativism, his strong craving for self-knowledge and self-description and his taste for freedom and tolerance. Montaigne's informal and often recalcitrant way of thinking and writing has had a longlasting influence in Europe. Francis Bacon, Descartes, Pascal, Locke, Voltaire and Rousseau admired or detested him. Goethe and Nietzsche considered him one of the principal figures of European philosophy. For Claude Lévi-Strauss and Julia Kristeva Montaigne stands at the very basis of modern reflections on the multi-cultural society.

His *Nachleben* in and outside France,¹ especially in England, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United States,² has been widely studied. It is therefore surprising that until present no book-length study has been devoted to the multiple and various relationships between Montaigne's *Essais* and the Low Countries. In fact, with the sole but notable exception of studies on Erasmus and Justus Lipsius, only a handful of publications have appeared at all on the subject, and they generally restrict themselves

¹ For France, see Boase M., *The Fortunes of Montaigne. A History of the Essais in France, 1580–1669* (London: 1935); Villey P., *Montaigne devant la postérité* (Paris: 1935); Brunschvicg L., *Descartes et Pascal, lecteurs de Montaigne* (Neuchâtel: 1945), Dréano M., *La Renommée de Montaigne en France au XVIII^e siècle (1677–1802)* (Angers: 1952); Millet O., *La première réception des Essais de Montaigne (1580–1640)* (Paris: 1995).

² See, for instance, Bouillier V., *La Renommée de Montaigne en Allemagne* (Paris: 1921); idem, *La Fortune de Montaigne en Italie et en Espagne* (Paris: 1922); Dédéyan C., *Montaigne chez ses amis anglo-saxons* (Paris: 1946); Balmas E. (ed.), *Montaigne e l'Italia* (Geneva: 1991). See also in Desan P. (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: 2004), the following articles: Canini, Cotton, Florio, Influence de Montaigne (XIX^e et XX^e siècles), Naselli, Nietzsche, Traductions des Essais. The 2004 edition of the *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* does not contain any article devoted to Montaigne's reception in the Low Countries. The new 2006 edition will correct this omission.

to an individual author or a single theme.³ The only overview article, published in 1946 by G.G. Ellerbroek,⁴ is useful, because it reveals a lot of material, but is of course somewhat outdated.

In order to provide an initial impetus to fill this gap in our knowledge, an international conference on the subject was held on 1–2 September 2005 at the University of Leiden entitled *Montaigne and the Low Countries/Montaigne et les Pays-Bas*.⁵ The results proved to be promising and wide-ranging, covering not only the fields of French, neo-Latin and Dutch literature, but also history, art history and book history. The participants were asked to rework their papers into articles, which resulted in the present *Intersections* volume.

This volume studies the threefold relationship which exists between Montaigne and the Low Countries. The first two contributions address the Netherlandish presence in the *Essais*, represented by the famous Erasmus of Rotterdam and by the then recent history of the Southern and Northern Netherlands, and more specifically the Dutch Revolt against the Spaniards. On the subject of Montaigne as a reader of Erasmus, a lot has been written. Michel Magnien succeeds in both synthesizing the bulk of material available and giving some new and surprising insights into the way Montaigne read the *Adagia*, the *Ciceronianus*, the *Colloquia*, and the *Praise of Folly*, to mention only the most prominent of Erasmus's texts featured in the *Essais*. Contrary to the much debated subject of Montaigne's preoccupation with Erasmus, Montaigne's references to the turbulent recent history of the Southern and Northern Netherlands have never been studied before. With a historian's eye, Anton van der Lem discusses the scarce, sometimes faint and distorted echoes from the North which are perceptible in the *Essais* – on the Duke of Alva and his execution of the Counts of Egmont and Hoorne, on Balthasar Gerards, the murderer of prince William the Silent –, placing them in their historical context and thus supplementing and correcting the commentaries of Montaigne's modern French editors.

³ As can be concluded from the bibliographical references in the articles of the present volume.

⁴ Ellerbroek G.G., "Notes sur la fortune de Montaigne en Hollande", *Neophilologus* (1946) 49–54.

⁵ For those who read Dutch, an exhibition on the subject was also held of which a catalogue has been published: Smith P.J. (ed.), *Een Ridder van groot oordeel. Montaigne in Leiden. Catalogus bij een tentoonstelling in de Leidse Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1 september–4 december 2005* (Leiden: 2005).

The second kind of relationship between Montaigne and the Low Countries is limited to one individual case, namely his personal contacts with the Leiden and Louvain professor Justus Lipsius. These contacts not only included their correspondence and the references they made to each other in their works, but also the correspondence between Lipsius and Pierre de Brach and Marie de Gournay on the subject of Montaigne's death. These relationships, which have received some attention in recent years, are here further elaborated by the contribution of Jeanine De Landtsheer, who focuses on the correspondence between Lipsius and Marie de Gournay.

Lipsius and his intellectual network are at the basis of the third, and least known but quantitatively speaking the most extended form of relationship between Montaigne and the Low Countries: his reception. Montaigne's reception, especially in the intellectual circles of Leiden and Amsterdam, was immediate (dating from around 1585) and widespread. Three articles of the present volume address Montaigne's first reception in Leiden. Presenting the general academic context of the young Leiden University (including illustrious names such as Janus Dousa, Lipsius, and J.J. Scaliger, all readers of Montaigne), Kees Meerhoff focuses on the Leiden professor Bonaventura Vulcanius and the manuscript notices he made while reading the *Essais*. Olivier Millet deals with another Leiden professor, Dominicus Baudius (Baudier), who contributed largely to Montaigne's reputation in the Netherlands, although his judgments on Montaigne were mitigated. Johan Koppenol discusses Montaigne's first impact on Dutch vernacular literature of this period, with special attention to the Leiden magistrate and poet Jan van Hout, author of a translation of Montaigne's chapter 'De la modération', dated 1585, which makes it the world's first known translation of Montaigne.

Jan van Hout and the two other literary figures studied by Koppenol – Spiegel and Coornhert – announce Montaigne's popularity among the Dutch authors of the next generations. Two of them, the aristocratic poet and historiographer P.C. Hooft and the emblemist and politician Jacob Cats, both leading figures in the Dutch literary landscape, are studied by, respectively, Jeroen Jansen and Frans Blom. Jansen evaluates the astonishing number of references to Montaigne – 300 of them – found by Fokke Veenstra (1946) in Hooft's works, and places them in the general and theoretical context of humanist imitation. Blom contextualizes references to Montaigne throughout Cats's extended oeuvre, and his special preoccupation with chapter III 5 "Sur des vers de Virgile". Ton Harmsen and Alicia Montoya address

two lesser-known Dutch authors: Harmsen discusses Jan de Brune the Younger, who, in his *Wetsteen der Vernuften* ('Whetstone of the Minds', 1644) not only referred regularly to Montaigne, but also tried to imitate his colloquial style and (seemingly) improvised textual disposition. Montoya examines the woman author Maria Heyns's only known publication, *Bloemhof der doorluchtige voorbeelden* ('Flowergarden of illustrious examples', 1647) which consists of translations of several chapters of Montaigne combined in one volume with translations from Philippus Camerarius's *Operæ horarum subcisivarum sive meditationes historicæ auctiores* (Frankfurt: 1624–1625). It appears, by their choice of Montaigne, that both authors tried to position themselves in the literary field of their day: Jan de Brune may have sought to free himself from the influence of his uncle and namesake Johan de Brune the Elder (see below) who had probably encouraged his young nephew to read Montaigne. Maria Heyns also appeared to be trying to position herself, as a woman reader and writer, in relation to male writers and perhaps particularly her father (or uncle), the printer and emblemist Zacharias Heyns, from whose emblem books she took some illustrations.

This brings us to the unique case of the lawyer and highly talented painter Pieter van Veen, brother of the better-known Otto Vaenius, who abundantly annotated and illustrated his personal copy of Montaigne's *Essais*, much in the same way as Holbein did with his personal copy of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. Van Veen's lavishly illustrated copy of the 1602 edition, now in the British Library, is studied from an art-historical perspective by Elmer Kolfin and Marrigje Rikken, and from an historical one by Warren Boutcher.

The volume ends with two contributions of a more editorial and book historical nature. Emblematic for both the importance of the Dutch reception of Montaigne and the unfamiliarity that surrounds it, is the recent rediscovery of Montaigne's lost letter to Mlle Le Paumier (1588) in the University Library of Leiden. The vicissitudes of the travels of this letter, from sixteenth-century Paris to seventeenth-century Amsterdam and Leiden, are reconstructed by Kees Meerhoff and Paul J. Smith, who take the opportunity of editing it from bibliographical autopsy for the first time since Pierre Coste's London, Paris and Amsterdam Montaigne editions, published between 1724 and 1727. The last article, by Philippe Desan, is about the seventeenth-century Dutch, and so-called Dutch, editions of Montaigne's *Essais*, with printing addresses in Leiden, Antwerp, Amsterdam, The Hague, and Brussels. Among other

things, Desan discusses the strategy of French and Geneva publishers in choosing Netherlandish addresses for their pirated editions.

Although these contributions already give some idea of the importance and breadth of the subject – the Low Countries in Montaigne, Montaigne and his personal contacts in Holland, and Montaigne's *Nachleben* in Holland –, this *Intersections* volume is only a beginning. In the rest of this introduction, I present some other intriguing aspects of the Dutch reception of Montaigne which are not dealt with in this volume, but need, I think, to receive some scholarly attention in the near future.

Some quantitative evidence for Montaigne's popularity in the Netherlands can be found in Dutch library auction catalogues published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the footsteps of Daniel Mornet (1910), S.A. Krijn (1917) and Bert van Selm (1987), I did some research, published in the nineties, on the presence of works by Clément Marot, Rabelais, Ronsard, Montaigne and Du Bartas in a corpus of 211 seventeenth-century auction catalogues of private libraries. The outcome of this research included the following percentages: Montaigne was present in 38% of the catalogues studied, Rabelais in 40%, Marot 25%, Ronsard 22%, and Du Bartas 38%. The spread over the period 1601–1700 is uneven. The poets Marot, Ronsard and Du Bartas share a high presence in the first half of the century, followed by a steep decline in the second half, which, in the case of Du Bartas, is dramatic. Rabelais's presence is high in the beginning and at the end of the century, with a slight decrease in the middle (probably due to a lack of new editions between 1628 and 1663). Montaigne's presence is and remains constantly high throughout the century. This coincides with the advice given by Gabriel Naudier, the librarian in the service of Mazarin, in his authoritative *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (1627), which was apparently followed by many Dutch readers. It is interesting to note that Montaigne is mentioned by Naudier in one breath with other authors: two of his *maîtres à penser* from Antiquity, and two of his followers: 'Montagne, Charon, Verulam [= Francis Bacon], auprès de Seneque et Plutarque' (p. 75).⁶

⁶ Naudier G., *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (Paris: 1627) 75.

The table below shows the results that are relevant for our purpose, taken from some other studies: Krijn (1917), Smith (2004), Montoya (2004).⁷ From these results we can surmise that the developments I have described continued into the eighteenth century: Montaigne continues to have a high presence in the eighteenth century with remarkably constant percentages.

	Smith (1997) [211 catalogues between 1601 and 1700]	Krijn (1917) [100 catalogues between 1700 and 1750]	Smith (2004) [28 catalogues between 1736 and 1740]	Montoya (2004) [254 catalogues between 1700 and 1800]
Rabelais	40%	32%	18% ⁸	36%
Montaigne	38%	36%	36%	37%
Marot	25%	25%	29%	— ⁹
Ronsard	22%	19%	14%	—
Du Bartas	38%	16%	6%	—

Although one should be well aware of the pitfalls inherent to this type of research (thus, for instance, a book's presence [or absence] in a private library catalogue does not necessarily imply that it was read [or not read in the case of absence] or even possessed by the owner of the library),¹⁰ it is one of the most precise quantitative methods available for determining an author's popularity.

The catalogues can also provide other interesting information about the Dutch reception of Montaigne. For instance, their more or less accurate, bibliographic descriptions often inform us about individual

⁷ Krijn S.A., "Franse lektuur in Nederland in het begin van de 18^e eeuw", *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 11 (1917) 161–178; Montoya A.C. "French and English women writers in Dutch library (auction) catalogues, 1700–1800. Some methodological questions and preliminary results", in Dijk S. van, e.a. (ed.), "*I have heard about you*". *Foreign women's writing crossing the Dutch border* (Hilversum: 2004) 182–216; Smith P.J., "Du Bartas aux Pays-Bas", *Œuvres & Critiques* 29/2 (2004), 39–61.

⁸ I have no explanation for the meager presence of Rabelais in the consulted catalogues.

⁹ The poets Marot, Ronsard and Du Bartas were not among the authors studied by Montoya.

¹⁰ For these and other methodological problems, see, among others, Lankhorst O.S., "Les ventes de livres en Hollande et leurs catalogues (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)", in Charron A. – Parinet E. (eds.), *Les ventes de livres et leurs catalogues. XVII^e–XX^e siècle* (Paris: 2000) 11–28.

copies of the *Essais*, thus providing important new information to supplement the *Bibliographies* of R.A. Sayce and D. Maskell (on the Montaigne editions, including all known copies, until 1700) and of Jean Balsamo and Michel Simonin (on the book production of the Paris printer Abel L'Angelier).¹¹ It is indeed interesting to know that the copy of the *Essais* found in the library catalogue of Scaliger (1609) is one of the two L'Angelier editions of 1602 (Sayce & Maskell 10), and that the one found in the catalogue of the Utrecht humanist Canter (1617) is the 1582 edition of Bordeaux (Sayce & Maskell 2). In the catalogue of the retail stock of Commelin (a combined catalogue of a family of booksellers) of 1606 the Lyon edition of 1595 (Sayce & Maskell 6) is mentioned; moreover the catalogue contains an intriguing mention of an unknown edition of Marie de Gournay's *Le proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* edited in Paris in 1593 (whereas the first known edition – with privilege – dates from 1594).¹²

Other information given by the catalogues concerns the actual place the books occupy in the library. Auction catalogues often reflect the disposition of the books in the owner's library,¹³ and even impose an authoritative norm on future book owners building up and arranging their own collection.¹⁴ Thus, for instance, the fact that the novels of Rabelais are often mentioned together with the poetry of Clément Marot (and not, for instance, with his translations of the psalms or the poetry of Ronsard or Du Bartas) could indicate that their possessor saw a connection between the two works. Concerning Montaigne, it is worth noting that the *Essais* are often mentioned in the direct context of works on civic behaviour and conversation. See, for instance, the catalogue of the Leiden theologian Arminius (1607), which mentions two copies of the *Essais* in the section 'Libri peregrino idiomate scripti mixtim' (p. 47) in the direct neighbourhood of works by Castiglione and Guazzo, who just like Montaigne, promoted spiritual conversation:

¹¹ Sayce R.A. – Maskell D., *A Descriptive Bibliography of Montaigne's Essais 1580–1700* (London: 1983). Balsamo J. – Simonin M., *Abel L'Angelier & Françoise de Louvain (1574–1620). Suivi du catalogue des ouvrages publiés par Abel L'Angelier (1574–1610) et la Veuve L'Angelier (1610–1620)* (Geneva: 2002).

¹² A printer's error cannot be excluded. See the following note.

¹³ This has to do with the way the catalogues were produced. The books were taken out of the library of the deceased, their titles read aloud by someone and written down by a scribe (this explains the great number of spelling errors in names and titles). Mistakes could also be made by the printer.

¹⁴ This applies specifically to the catalogues of libraries of famous scholars, like Scaliger, Heinsius, Vossius etc.

La civil conversatione de Guazzo.
 Il Cortegiano del conte Bald. Castellano [sic].
 Les Essais de M. de Montagnes.
 [...]
 Le perfaict Courtisan Gallicé & Italicé.
 [...]
 l'Academie François en iii. volumes. [La Primaudaye]
 Les Essais de Michel des Montagnes [...]

All these instances, found more or less at random, prove the interest of a closer and more systematic examination of the 2,174 catalogues of seventeenth and eighteenth-century libraries presently available on microfiche.¹⁵

Some scanty, but very interesting information is provided by so-called ego documents, i.e., contemporary correspondences, diaries, etc. Thus, in 1590 the Leiden bookseller and printer Franciscus Raphelengius wrote to his Antwerp colleague Jan Moretus on 17 November 1590:

S'il est possible de trouver les Essais de Montagne in 4^o de la dernière édition, vous supplie d'en vouloir envoyer 2 exempl. avecques le plus juste prix. C'est pour le sr. de Noortwyck [= Janus Dousa] et l'autre pour Hautenus [= Van Hout].¹⁶

This not only informs us on the rapid international circulation of the copies of the *Essais*, it also implies that Janus Dousa and Jan van Hout, after their first encounter of Montaigne's work around 1585, continued to be interested in him.

Another testimony from ego documents concerns the unique case of the diary kept by the The Hague schoolmaster David Beck (1594–1634) for the year 1624. In this diary he meticulously noted his occupations and incidents from daily life. His French readings in that year included Marot, Ronsard, Agrippa D'Aubigné and Montaigne. The first reason for him to reread Montaigne seemed to be the translation of Virgil's *Georgica* which he was making and which he resumed 'after a year' on the 1st of July. Here follow some extracts from his diary:

July 4th. The weather is clean, clear, marvelous and lovely, very temperate with lasting sunshine. I did nothing else than read during half an hour in Montaigne's *Essais* before going to school, and after school more than an hour in the *Art poétique* by Jacques Pelletier [...]

¹⁵ See Gruys J.A. – Kooker H.W. de, *Book Sales Catalogues of the Dutch Republic, 1599–1800* (Leiden: 1997–2000).

¹⁶ Quoted by Van Selm, *Een menighe treffelijcke Boecken*, 135, n. 85.

July 5th. The weather as above, but more sultry. I did nothing at all, because I felt very lazy again, except for reading in the evening in M. de Montaigne the chapter entitled “d’Aucuns Vers de Vigile”, and I made some notes. [...] ¹⁷

These notices suggest that Montaigne was often read for his authoritative judgements on poetry. Another testimony of this way of reading Montaigne is furnished by the greatest of the Dutch poets, Joost van den Vondel, who in the laudatory introduction of his *Du Bartas* translation quotes in French Montaigne’s statement on high poetry: ‘La bonne la supreme la divine, est au dessus des regles de la raison [...] Elle ne pratique point nostre jugement: elle le ravit & ravage’. ¹⁸ This reliance upon Montaigne’s authority in literary matters is in line with references by Jan de Brune the Younger to the soundness of Montaigne’s judgement on poetry (see Ton Harmsen’s article) and Maria Heyns’s translation of Montaigne’s chapter “Des livres” (see Alicia Montoya’s article).

The combination of Montaigne’s *Essais* and emblems, as can be seen in the works of Cats and Maria Heyns, but also in the emblem books by Otto Vaenius, seems to be an idiosyncratic trait of the Dutch reception of Montaigne (compared to his reception in other countries). From this perspective an interesting figure is the abovementioned Johan de Brune the Elder, who was the author of a collection of ‘emblematic essays’ entitled *Emblemata of zinne-werck* (1624). As can be seen in Figure 1 of Ton Harmsen’s article, the traditional tripartite layout (motto, illustration, subscription) on the left-hand page (p. 294) is followed by an essay on the right-hand page (p. 295) with explicit reference to, and quotations from Montaigne: the emblem’s subject (the face cannot hide feelings of love) is exemplified by a quotation from the *Essais*: ‘Tout le mouvement du monde se resout & rend en cest accouplage: c’est une matiere infuse par tout: c’est un centre, où toutes choses regardent’.

The essayist’s great authority is also visible in the field of medicine. Montaigne’s numerous criticisms of medicine are taken up by the Dutch physician Johan van Beverwijck (1594–1647). In his extended

¹⁷ Beck D., *Spiegel van mijn leven; een Haags dagboek uit 1624*, ed. S.E. Veldhuijzen (Hilversum: 1993) 126–128.

¹⁸ Vondel J. van den, *De Heerlyckheyd van Salomon. Of het tweede deel van de vierde dag der tweeder weke, gedicht by wylen Guillaume de Saluste Heere van Bartas [...]* (Amsterdam, Dirk Pietersz. Pers: 1620).

medical oeuvre Van Beverwijck regularly quoted Montaigne with approval, but in 1633 he also published a Latin pamphlet to defend his discipline against Montaigne's scepticism. This pamphlet was translated into Dutch in 1641 under the title *Bergh-val* (the fall of the mountain), with a pun on Montaigne's name, and in 1730 into French: *Défense de la médecine contre les calomnies de Montaigne*.¹⁹ The Dutch reception of Montaigne's scepticism on the subject of medicine is, as far as I know, an unexplored field.

The example of Van Beverwyck demonstrates that Montaigne was often considered a controversial author. In his contribution to the present volume, Johan Koppenol mentions Coornhert's disapproval of Montaigne's 'pernicious paradoxes'. This brings us to another Calvinist author at the end of the sixteenth century: Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde. In a pamphlet entitled *Response apologetique* (Leiden, 1598) Marnix speaks of Montaigne and 'son grand prophete David George' – by whom he means David Joris, leader of a spiritualist movement in the Low Countries. Marnix does so in reaction to an anonymous pamphlet *Antidote ou Contrepoison* (1597) directed against Marnix's own attack in Dutch against the spiritualists (*Ondersoekinghe ende grondelijcke wederlegginghe der geestdrijvische leere* (1595)). The anonymous author of the *Antidote*-pamphlet has been identified by C. Kramer as Emmery de Lyere (ca. 1550–1618), who sympathised with the spiritualist movement, and who for the argumentation of his *Antidote* largely borrowed (even whole pages!) from Montaigne and Sebastian Franck, without naming his sources. In his *Response* Marnix (who had Montaigne's *Essais* in his library),²⁰ proved that he was well aware of the Montaigne citations and was able to recognize them. This pamphlet struggle is of interest especially for its religious implications, i.e. the spiritualist way in which Montaigne's first readers could have read the *Essais*, and linked them with the works of Sebastian Franck.

One of the important subjects that the present *Intersections* volume only touches upon is the Dutch translation of the *Essais* made in 1674 by J.H. Glazemaker (ca. 1620–1682), also known for his Dutch translations of the oeuvres of Descartes and Spinoza. Although there has been some

¹⁹ See Ellerbroek G.G., "Un adversaire hollandais de Montaigne au XVII^e siècle: Johan van Beverwijck", *Neophilologus* 31 (1947) 2–8.

²⁰ As is clear from the auction catalogue of his library. This catalogue, dated 1599, is the world's first known printed auction catalogue.

study of the bibliographical aspects of his Montaigne translation – Pot-tiée-Spirree’s study surprisingly concludes that Glazemaker’s translation was not as successful as one might surmise from the existence of three editions²¹ –, there does not exist a study of his practice and ideas on translation. In any case, the translator’s choice of Montaigne, together with other philosophers, could imply that the *Essais* were considered a philosophical work. Analogies between Spinoza and Montaigne are a subject of speculation among modern historians of philosophy. And should contemporary Dutch readers not have noticed the remarkable analogy between the famous opening phrase of Descartes’ *Discours de la méthode* (published in 1637 in Leiden) – ‘Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée: car chacun pense en estre si bien pouruû, que ceux mesme qui sont les plus difficiles a contenter en toute autre chose, n’ont point coustume d’en desirer plus qu’ils en ont’ and Montaigne’s statement: ‘On dit communément que le plus juste partage que nature nous aye fait de ses graces, c’est celuy du sens: car il n’est aucun qui ne se contente de ce qu’elle luy en a distribué’ (II 17, 657),²² they were undoubtedly well aware of the position Descartes took against Plutarch and Montaigne in the discussion about the dignity of man and the nature of the human soul.

This brings us to a last, and certainly most controversial, field in which the influence of Montaigne is discernible: seventeenth-century Dutch painting. According to some modern art historians,²³ echoes of Montaigne’s modern empathy with animals, and his ideas on the equality (even supremacy) of animals to humans – ideas to which Descartes opposed his concept of ‘animaux-automates’ –, can be found in Dutch animal painting, especially in the works of the Antwerp painter Frans Snyders and his disciple Jan Fyt. Although there exists no hard evidence

²¹ In fact, the three editions of 1674, 1680 and 1692 are not three separate editions, but three different issues of the same edition, provided with a new title page. See Pottée-Spirree F., “Les éditions des *Essais* de Montaigne en néerlandais au XVII^e siècle”, *Bulletin du Bibliophile* (2000) 147–152.

²² Consulted edition: *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*. Edition conforme au texte de l’exemplaire de Bordeaux. Ed. P. Villey, Rééd. V.-L. Saulnier. 2 vols. (Paris: 1978).

²³ Koslow S., *Frans Snyders: The Noble Estate; Seventeenth-century Still-Life and Animal Painting in the Southern Netherlands* (Antwerp: 1995); Wolloch N., “Dead Animals and the Beast-Machine: seventeenth-century Netherlandish paintings of dead animals, as anti-Cartesian statements”, *Art History* 22 (1999), 705–727; Cohen S.R., “Animal Life and Death in the Netherlandish Game Piece”, in Enenkel K.A.E. – Kolfin E.E.P. – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Early Modern Zoology. Animals in Art, Literature and Science* (Leiden: forthcoming in 2007).

for this hypothesis (because nothing is known of the books owned or read by these painters) one can cite in favour of it not only the Dutch tendency to emblemize the *Essais*, but also Pieter van Veen's interest in the animals described by Montaigne in his "Apologie de Raymond Sebon". To give some figures, of the entire set of 191 illustrations, 87 come from the "Apologie", of which 19 have animals as subject, among them an illustration of Montaigne's famous words: 'Quand je me jouë à ma chatte, qui sçait si elle passe son temps de moy plus que je ne fay d'elle?' (II 12, 452).

In the present year 2006, marked by the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the birth of Rembrandt van Rijn, it seems appropriate to recall some remarkable points of coincidence between the painter and the essayist. This subject is not new: it was explored some years ago by Andrew Small among others.²⁴ Indeed, the pictorial metaphors Montaigne uses to qualify his self-description ('c'est moi que je peints' ("Au lecteur"); 'Pourquoy n'est-il loisible de mesme à chacun de se peindre de la plume, comme il [i.e. the King of Sicily] se peignoit d'un creon' (II 17, 653)), his preoccupations with affectation and theatricality in his self-portraits ('Or je me pare sans cesse, car je me descriis sans cesse' (II 6, 378)), his increasing fixation on and sharp and merciless description of his own aging process, all remind us of some important and characteristic aspects of Rembrandt's self-portraits. In their analysis of studio images of seventeenth-century painters – a genre invented in Leiden by Rembrandt in 1629 – Katja Kleinert and Cécile Tainturier have recently demonstrated that the Leiden painters posited themselves as intellectuals and scholars, and identified themselves with Leiden as a university town. And in this context – given Montaigne's popularity in the Leiden intellectual circles of those days – it would not have been out of character if they had read Montaigne, or at least heard of him.²⁵

²⁴ See, for instance, Small A., *Essays in Self-Portraiture. A comparison of technique in the self-portraits of Montaigne and Rembrandt* (New York, etc.: 1996), and the brief mention of Montaigne by Van de Wetering E., "The multiple fonctions of Rembrandt's Self-Portraits", in White C. – Buvelot Q. (eds), *Rembrandt by himself* (Zwolle: 1999) 8–37 (p. 19). A lot of art historians will undoubtedly disagree with Van de Wetering's denial of all attempt at self-analysis in Rembrandt's self-portraits.

²⁵ Kleinert K. – Tainturier C., "Schilders uit de verf. Leidse ateliervoorstellingen uit de zeventiende eeuw", in Roding J. – Sneller A.A. – Thijs B. (eds.), *Beelden van Leiden. Zelfbeeld en representatie van een Hollandse stad in de Vroegmoderne Tijd, 1550–1800* (Hilversum: 2006) 107–148.

Moreover, the only known meta-pictorial statement by Rembrandt, made in a letter to his protector, the poet-diplomat Constantijn Huygens, another reader of Montaigne, may contain some Montaignian echoes. This rather enigmatic statement about the purpose of his art, i.e. to achieve ‘die meeste ende di naetuerelste beweeghelickeijt’ (the greatest and most natural movement) strongly reminds us of Montaigne’s statements on movement, one of the essayist’s major themes:²⁶ the world is in perpetual, Heraclitean movement (‘Toutes choses sont en fluxion, muance et variation perpetuelle’ (II 12, 601)). Life, everything, even immobility is movement (‘Nostre vie n’est que mouvement’ (III 13, 1095); ‘La constance mesme n’est [...] qu’un branle plus languissant’ (III 2, 805)), the essence of things and human beings is movement (‘Estre consiste en mouvement et action’ (II 8, 386)), his writing and his self-portraiture have man’s movement as their main subject: ‘Je peints le passage: non un passage d’aage en autre, [...] mais de jour en jour, de minute en minute’ (III 9, 994), but they are doomed to failure: ‘à chaque minute il me semble que je m’eschape’ (I 20, 805).

Again, we should be as careful with these hypotheses as with the other ones emitted above. But they all demand further study, confirmation or refutation. The present volume hopes to provide a solid basis for further exploring the rich field of the varied relationships between Montaigne and the Low Countries.

²⁶ For a thematic overview, see Jeanneret M., “Mouvement”, in Desan P. (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: 2004) 694–697.

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