

Manuscript discovery sheds new light on Montaigne's library

Researchers from the University of Warwick and the Université François-Rabelais Tours have identified the first manuscript known to have belonged to the eminent French essayist, Michel de Montaigne.

Of Montaigne's celebrated library, thought to have contained around 1,000 books, only 101 are known to have survived. Until now, no manuscript (other than Montaigne's own annotations in printed works) was known to bear the mark of the writer's provenance. The sixteenth-century manuscript, held at the Herzog August Bibliothek at Wolfenbüttel, contains copious notes by an unknown individual based on lectures on Roman law by the distinguished jurist and historian François Baudouin. Montaigne's Latin signature 'Michaël Montanus' is clearly visible on the manuscript's title page.

Ingrid De Smet of the Centre of the Study of the Renaissance, University of Warwick, explained the significance of her discovery: "The identification of Montaigne's ownership of this work is exciting for the study of sixteenth-century French intellectual culture. It confirms Montaigne's legal interests and potentially opens new vistas for the

reading of his *Essays* and the understandings of his political views." Alain Legros of the Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Université François-Rabelais (Tours) added: "Baudouin was known as a *moyenneur*, a champion of the idea of reconciliation between Calvinists and Catholics at the famous Colloquy of Poissy, held in the same year (1561) as this lecture course on law at the university and the publication of his book on the link between the study of world history and law. Later Montaigne will read Baudouin's history of Poland. This discovery invites us to look more closely at Montaigne's *Essays* in the light of Baudouin's thinking and writing."



Notes for editors

The article, 'Un Manuscrit de François Baudouin dans la librairie de Montaigne', is published in the Swiss journal *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* – Tome LXXV: 2013 – pp. 105-111. For further information or to arrange interviews with Dr Ingrid De Smet, contact Luke Harrison, Communications Manager on +44 (0)2476 574255/150483, m: +44(0)7920 531221 or luke.harrison@warwick.ac.uk.

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The French national and regional government released substantial funding in July 2012 for a three-year international collaborative project *Montaigne à l'œuvre* [MonLOE] ("Montaigne at work", February 2013-2015), directed by Prof. Marie-Luce Demonet. This will include a new virtual reconstruction of Montaigne's library as well as new transcriptions and digital reproductions of the works he owned. For more information on MonLOE, visit www.univ-tours.fr/Montaigne.asp