

When I am playing with my cat, how do I know she is not playing with me?  
Montaigne and Being in Touch with Life by Saul Frampton.  
faber and faber 2011.

The title of this book exerted a magnetic force on me, and it suggested that the author's approach to his illustrious subject would be a manageable, accessible one. Of the illustrious Michel de Montaigne himself I knew little, other than his name, his country of birth, his status as a respected 16<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, and a little about his writings, especially the Essays.

By the time, I had finished the book, superbly written by Saul Frampton, I was not only informed about Montaigne but was deeply enamoured of him and his writings.

When I am playing with my cat...is at one and the same time biography, history and literary analysis, bringing Montaigne's life and times, and his enthusiasms and dreads into vivid focus. It is written with passion and it is easy to see why: though a man of his time, with its brutality, superstition, primitive medicine and ignorance, Montaigne entertained many ideas and philosophies which make him as relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as to the 16<sup>th</sup>, possibly even more so.

In his Essays, Montaigne wrote about anything and everything, and when he travelled his journals showed an acute observer who missed very little.

This is a glorious introduction to Michel de Montaigne, an inspirer to read or re-read the writings of its subject, and my favourite book of the last 6 months, at least.

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