

The Use of Violence and Sympathy's Harm: Michel de Montaigne

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This paper explores how, in the midst of bloody civil war, Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* (1580-95) argues for the utility of violence as a testing ground for virtue and the stability of the soul. In this context, sympathy poses a threat to personal sovereignty—the only measure of certainty in the face of the state's disintegration. Far from seeking compassionate, pacifist alternatives in the midst of his violent times, Montaigne instead argues that it is the praxis of violence within limits that identifies the ethical subject, and the threat of contagious, unreasoning fellow feeling that risks its freedom.

Wednesday, October 17 | 5:30pm | Music Room, Rochambeau House

This event is sponsored by the Department of French Studies at Brown University

