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We know a great deal of what Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), Shakespeare's near-contemporary and fellow literary mastermind, thinks. We know, because he tells us on page after page of his *Essais*, which have marked literature and thought since the European Renaissance and remain to this day compelling reading. It might seem surprising, with this wealth of evidence at hand, that Montaigne could prove so elusive in his thinking. Yet elusive he proves, as volatile as he is voluble. What, we are left wondering, does all that thinking amount to? How is it to be understood? And what value might it have for us?
Montaigne has too often seen his thinking reduced to the expression of an '-ism'. Richard Scholar investigates the nature – and detail – of Montaigne's evolving attempts to seek out that elusive thing called truth. Examining at close quarters passages from across the *Essais*, Scholar provides twenty-first-century readers with a companion guide to a text that is rooted in the time and place of its composition and yet continues to speak to the present, to haunt its readers, to ask them the questions that matter.

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