



The Spring – The Hecatomb for Diane, VI | Le Printemps – L'hécatombe à Diane, VI

Text Information

Author | Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné

Language | French

Period | 16th Century

Genre | Love Poetry, War Poetry

Source | Archives Tronchin 157, Bibliothèque de Genève

Collection |

URL | http://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/daubigne_spring_sonnet_vi/

Transcription by Henri Weber.

Translation and introduction by Nora Baker.

Introduction to the Text

Best known for his civil war epic *Les Tragiques*, Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné (1552-1630) spent his early years in the thrall of Diane Salviati. Salviati was the niece of Cassandra, the muse of the famous French poet Ronsard. D'Aubigné's work *Le Printemps* – 'Spring' – is composed of two parts. The first is a compilation of one hundred sonnets dedicated to his beloved, entitled *L'hécatombe à Diane*. The word 'hecatomb' evokes a sacrificial practice in Ancient Greece, where one hundred cattle or other livestock would be slaughtered in honour of the gods. Though the goal of d'Aubigné's sonnets is ostensibly to praise Diane, his imagery is characteristically visceral, flavoured by his experience of the violence of France's Wars of Religion (1562-1598). Diane's family sheltered d'Aubigné following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, but, as she was Catholic and d'Aubigné Protestant, their love was not to be. The author's later works express some wistful reflections on the youthful exuberance that led him to idolize this unattainable woman. It is thought that *L'hécatombe à Diane* and the latter section of *Le Printemps*, the *Stances et Odes*, were composed in the early 1570s.

Introduction to the Source

This poem is a unicum copied in Zaragoza, Biblioteca de la Universidad de Zaragoza, MS 210, fol. 98v-99r (the Cançoner de Saragossa). The manuscript has been digitized here. It contains a compilation of Catalan verse dating to 1461-1462. It is the oldest known manuscript to transmit Ausiàs March's poetry, and an important witness to the transmission of the poetry of several other authors, including Pere Torroella and Lleonard de Sors.

About this Edition

I have reproduced and rendered in English two sonnets from the *Hécatombe* for which no other translation appears to be available, with notes indicating places in the text where the author has crossed out initial words and added new ones (I follow Henri Weber's 1960 critical edition of the *Printemps* in this regard). The present transcription is based on the manuscript holding entitled 'Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné. Le Printemps et divers textes' in the Archives Tronchin 157 at the Geneva Public Library (Bibliothèque de Genève). This manuscript can be consulted here : <https://archives.bge-geneve.ch/ark:/17786/vtaac0b3ff1aa240f22/dao/0#id:1767626689?gallery=true&brightness=100.00&contrast=100.00¢er=689.570,-1832.348&zoom=6&rotation=0.000>. The folio numbers for the translated sonnets are f.77v-78. Other manuscript exemplars of this work can be found in the Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français (ms.816/12), and in the aforementioned Archives Tronchin 159.

Further Reading

Perry, Kathleen A. "Motherhood and Martyrdom in the Poetry of Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné." *Neophilologus*, vol. 76, no. 2, 1992, pp. 198–211., doi:10.1007/bf00210169.

- An analysis of the effects of d'Aubigné's turbulent childhood on the representation of women in his poetry, with particular reference to the parallels drawn between Diane Salviati and the hunter goddess Diana/Artemis of classical lore.

"Martyrdom, Anatomy, and the Ethics of Metaphor in d'Aubigné's *L'hécatombe à Diane* and *Les Tragiques*." *Love's Wounds: Violence and the Politics of Poetry in Early Modern Europe*, by Cynthia Nyree Nazarian, Cornell University Press, 2016, pp. 117–179.

- An examination of civil war violence reflected in love poetry





Perry, Kathleen A. "A Re-Evaluation of Agrippa d'Aubigné's « Printemps »: Youthful Love or Mature Theology?" *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 51, no. 1, 1989, pp. 107–122.

- Argues for the consideration of the poems of the *Printemps* as condemnations of the Catholic Church.

Perry Long, Kathleen A. "Victim of Love: The Poetics and Politics of Violence in 'Le Printemps' of Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné." *Translating Desire in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, edited by Craig A. Berry and Heather Richardson Hayton, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Press, 2005, pp. 31–47. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*.

- An exploration of Petrarchan and Catullan aspects of d'Aubigné's early poetry.

Kuperty-Tsur, Nadine. "The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre and Baroque Tendencies in France: The Impact of Religious Turmoils on the Aesthetics of the French Renaissance." *Poetics Today*, Translated by Sam W. Bloom, vol. 28, no. 1, 2007, pp. 117–142., doi:10.1215/03335372-2006-017.

- A look at the influence of the Wars of Religion on Early Modern French poetry in general, and on a poem from *Le Printemps* in particular.



The Spring – The Hecatomb for Diane, VI | Le Printemps – L'hécatombe à Diane, VI

Hardy, j'entreprendray bravement de te rendre eternelle	Boldly I will undertake to render you eternal,
Targuant de mes escrips ton nom contre la mort	Shielding* with my writing your name against death;
Mais en t'éternisant, je ne travaille fort	But in eternalizing you, I need barely work*:
Ta perfection n'est en aucun poinct mortelle	Your perfection is in no way mortal.
Rien n'est mortel en toy ta chasteté est telle	5 Nothing in you is mortal, and your chastity is such
Que le temps envieux ne luy peut faire tort	That jealous time cannot do it wrong.
Tes dons thresors du Ciel, ton Nom exemptz du port	Your gifts, treasures from Heaven, your name, exempt from the port
Et du fleuve d'oubly ont la vue immortelle.	And from the river of forgetfulness, have immortal life.
Mesmes ce livre heureux vivra infiniment	Even this happy book will live infinitely
Pource que l'infiny sera son argument	For the infinite will be its subject.
Or ie ren graces aux Dieux de ce que i'ay servie	10 However, I thank the Gods for that which I have served:
M Toute perfection de grace & de beauté	All perfection of grace and of beauty;
Mais ie me plein à eux que ta severité	But I bemoan to them that your severity,
Comme sont les vertus, aussi est infinie	Like your* virtues, is also infinite.

Critical Notes

Translation

Line 2	From the Middle French 'targe' meaning 'shield'.
Line 3	Literally "I do not work hard"
Line 14	Literally 'the virtues', but I have changed this to a personal pronoun in English.