Shakespeare en devenir
ISSN électronique : 1958-9476
Courriel : shakespeareendevenir@univ-poitiers.fr

Petrarchism and the culture of dissection: the rhetoric of violence in Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Le Printemps* and Michael Drayton's *Idea*

Par Kjerstin Aukrust et Rémi Vuillemin

Publication en ligne le 30 janvier 2012

Résumé

Pétrarquisme et culture de la dissection: la rhétorique de la violence dans Le Printemps *d'Agrippa d'Aubigné et* Idea *de Michael Drayton.*
En s'intéressant à la rhétorique de la violence, cet article a pour but d'éclairer les liens jamais identifiés à ce jour entre *Le Printemps* (1571-1573) du poète huguenot français Agrippa d'Aubigné et *Idea* (1599-1619) de l'anglais Michael Drayton, qui ont à voir avec ce que Jonathan Sawday a appelé la « culture de la dissection ». Les poèmes étudiés présentent la souffrance de l'amant éconduit comme une douleur d'ordre physique à travers la littéralisation de la topique pétrarquiste. Cette étude tente de comprendre comment une telle description de la douleur participe d'un processus de constitution du sujet. Elle se concentre sur la dialectique entre le caractère unifiant de la lecture d'une part, la fragmentation du corps et du texte d'autre part, c'est à dire, du point de vue rhétorique, entre l'*enargeia* et l'*accumulatio*. Aubigné et Drayton ont eu recours à la même

rhétorique de la violence dans des perspectives différentes : alors que le poète français intègre la violence dans une éthique du sacrifice, son successeur anglais la met en scène pour mieux la rejeter et l'opposer à l'ontologie du mouvement qui parcourt le reste de son recueil.

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Texte intégral

In June 2008, a conference about the representation of violence against the body in literature and in the visual arts in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries was held at the University of Oslo. Two of the papers given there sounded strikingly similar: one dealt with the French Huguenot poet Agrippa d'Aubigné [1] and the other with the English poet Michael Drayton [2]. This unexpected closeness raised a fundamental question: how could those two very different authors turn out to have such close poetics? While the influence of the previous generation of French poets – especially from the *Pléiade* – upon Elizabethan sonneteers is well-documented [3], Desportes seems to be the only French *néopétrarquiste* to have been unequestionably acknowledged as a major source of inspiration for English writers of lyric sequences in the 1590s and in the early 16th century [4].

As it is primarily textual evidence that suggests that Drayton's work might be indebted to Aubigné [5]'s, it seems logical to try and clarify precisely what their poetics have in common. Showing how Drayton may have discovered Aubigné's *Le Printemps* is not the subject of the present paper.

Nor does it claim that Drayton's debt to Aubigné excludes the influence of other French – or, for that matter, Italian – poets. As Stephen Cluclas put it, the English sonnet sequences testify to « a compressed reception of the Petrarchan tradition [6] », a tradition in which Desportes and Aubigné were two of the last French poets to indulge before the fashion for sonnets took off in England. Such a reception entailed that Petrarch, his Italian and French imitators, as well as the French, Italian and English poets who were influenced by them were all read at the same time by late-Elizabethan and early-Jacobean poets.

Aubigné's *Le Printemps* is a collection of love poems that is divided into three separate parts. The first one, *L'Hécatombe à Diane*, is composed of 100 sonnets, whereas the other two comprise respectively 22 *stances* and 52 odes. The majority of these poems were written while the young Aubigné, persecuted because of his faith, lived at the château de Talcy with his neighbours, the Salviati family, at the beginning of the 1570s. Aubigné fell in love with the eldest of the Salviati daughters, Diane (who was also the niece of Ronsard's Cassandre), and dedicated several of the poems from *Le Printemps* to her, including the entire first part [7]. Aubigné's work remained in manuscript form and was only published in the 19th century [8]. Michael Drayton published two sonnet sequences: *Ideas Mirrour* (1594) and *Idea* (1599). The latter was then released again in several modified versions, starting in 1600 and ending in 1619 [9], long after the English fashion for sonnets had died out. These sonnet sequences were allegedly addressed to Anne Goodere, the daughter of his protector, Sir Henry Goodere [10]. *Idea* comprises between 59 and 70 poems, depending on the version considered. The sequence was published together with Drayton's *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, heroic verse letters modelled on Ovid's *Heroids*. In most editions from 1605 onwards, *Idea* was inserted in the *Poems* just before Drayton's *Legends* or *Odes*. This article will mainly deal with the final version of the sequence.

Aubigné's *Le Printemps* and a dozen of poems from Michael Drayton's *Idea* are based on a common interest in violence inflicted upon the body. The purpose of this study is to uncover the common ground between the two

collections by focusing on the way they articulate and are shaped by violence. As Cynthia N. Nazarian asserts, such violence was characteristic of 16th century Petrarchism [11], a literary trend that emphasized destructiveness, showing the suffering of the poet-lover and the fragmentation of the beloved, but that was also a locus where the self was performed and constructed. While Nancy Vickers's article [12] and the numerous studies that have developed and/or qualified her arguments [13] have shown the centrality of textual and physical fragmentation and of the male gaze in Petrarchan poetics, recent studies suggest that bodily pain could be part of processes of subject formation (or self-fashioning) [14]. The related issues of self-fashioning, fragmentation and the gaze become particularly interesting when, as in Aubigné's and Drayton's poems, the basics of the Petrarchan experience are reversed: what happens when the poetic « I », the very self the text is supposed to be fashioning, experiences fragmentation? In that situation, what is the role of the gaze? And who exactly gazes at the victimized poet-lover?

After showing how Aubigné's and Drayton's texts refer to violence primarily because they partake in a common culture that Jonathan Sawday called the « culture of dissection », this paper will therefore focus on two major figures of the rhetoric that sustains this culture in Petrarchan poetry: hypotyposis on the one hand, blazon (a specifically poetic type of *accumulatio*) on the other hand. Finally, it will show what differentiates the two poetics under scrutiny in terms of the role of violence and pain in the performance of the self.

Aubigné, Drayton and the « culture of dissection »

The two articles mentioned above, both published in the volume *Corps sanglants, souffrants et macabres XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, show how in Aubigné's and Drayton's poems alike, the Petrarchan *topoi* are made literal

by means of a macabre imagery which put strong emphasis on death and the physical wounds of the heart as expressions of unreciprocated love. Body imagery replaces the metaphorical expression of feelings. This renewal of the commonplaces is first and foremost characterised by a high level of precision, particularly when it comes to the physiological details that are written into the traditional *topoi*.

This feature is especially visible in the different Petrarchan images related to the love-wounded heart: the *topoi* of the burnt, engraved or slaughtered heart, the separation of the heart from the body or its exhibition are all subjected to a radical rewriting that gives them a violent intensity. Drayton's lover claims:

> My hart was slaine, and none but you and I,
> Who should I think the murder should commit? […]
> But ô, see see, we need enquire no further,
> Upon your lips the scarlet drops are found,
> And in your eye, the boy that did the murther,
> Your chekes yet pale since first they gave the wound.
> (Sonnet 2, l.1-2 ; l.9-12)

The lips of the lady are not compared to coral as they usually are in Petrarchan blazons. Here red is quite literally the colour of the lover's blood, which indirectly suggests a form of cannibalism from the part of the lady. The eyes are the dwelling of Cupid, not seen as a mischievous boy but as a murderer. The usually red cheeks are white as a result of the guilt of the lady. Though playful, this sonnet hints at the physical violence of love. Aubigné's third *stance* provides another example of this (l.1-15):

> A longs filetz de sang, ce lamentable cors
> Tire du lieu qu'il fuit le lien de son ame,
> Et séparé du cueur qu'il a laissé dehors
> Dedans les fors liens et aux mains de sa dame,
> Il s'enfuit de sa vie et cherche mille morts.

Plus les rouges destins arrachent loin du cueur
Mon estommac pillé, j'espanche mes entrailles
Par le chemin qui est marqué de ma douleur :
La beauté de Diane, ainsy que des tenailles,
Tirent l'un d'un costé, l'autre suit le malheur.

Emphasis is put on the deformed body, of which only a pile of blood and entrails remains after the heart is taken away (« séparé du cueur », l.3). The poet exploits the violent potentiality of the Petrarchan *topos* by adding horribly precise details and by placing the opening of the body at the centre of the poem. By doing so, he affirms his willingness to take the metaphor literally. The extreme materialisation of the metaphors stems from the repetitive use of macabre details (« longs filetz de sang », « estommac pillé », « entrailles »). Together, these anatomical references contribute to the brutal opening of the body and replace a metaphorical language with one that is physical and tangible: the heart is not merely a semi-abstract entity, the seat of human emotions, but first and foremost a bodily organ, a most carnal reality [15].

The poems of *Le Printemps*,along with approximately a dozen of poems from *Idea*, thus distinguish themselves from other Petrarchan love poems both in their violence and their very precise presentation of the love wound. They literally « body forth » pain, as several critics have suggested [16], and this is achieved by the encounter between Petrarchan poetics and a new culture shaped by the practice of anatomy.

Jonathan Sawday described this aspect of early-modern culture as the « culture of dissection [17] », a culture of violence based on a fragmented and divided body [18]. Aubigné and Drayton's love poems are products of this culture. According to Sawday, « in the sonnet sequences of the late 16th & early 17th centuries, the (female) body was a text there to be « read » and « interpreted » by the lover-narrator [19]. » Nowhere is this more obvious than in Drayton's sonnet 2: the deciphering of the blazon leads to the identification of the lady as the slayer of the lover's heart. One of Drayton's other rare uses of the blazon shows a body made of hollows,

nests and cavities, that is therefore much more reminiscent of the Vesalian body than of the Aristotelian or Gallenic ones:

> Love once would daunce within my Mistress eye,
> And wanting musique fitting for the place,
> Swore that I should the Instrument supply,
> And sodainly presents me with her face:
> Straightwayes my pulse plays lively in my vaines,
> My panting breath doth keepe a meaner time,
> My quav'ring artiers be the Tenours straynes,
> My trembling sinews serve the Counterchime,
> My hollow sighs the deepest base doe beare,
> True diapason in distincted sounds,
> My panting heart the treble makes the ayre,
> And descants finely on the musiques ground;
> Thus like a Lute or Violl did I lye,
> Whilst he proud slave daunc'd galliards in her eye.
> (Sonnet 9, 1599 edition)

The main focus of the poem might be music, but the precision of terms such as « pulse », « vaines » (l.5), « artiers » (l.7) or « sinews » (l.8) is striking. The painful harmony [20] of Love's music is made possible by a sum of hidden cavities and vessels.

Like most of their counterparts, Aubigné and Drayton focus on the pain of the lover. However, their treatment of Petrarchan poetics conveys the sense of a particularly acute pain. This is what can sometimes be read in inverted blazons such as Drayton's sonnet 9, in which the blazon does not just structurally echo the culture of anatomy. It is also related to a clearly « anatomical » conception of the body. This sonnet, along with a number of others, is grounded in a literal rewriting of Petrarchan *topoi* through the culture of dissection. This is particularly blatant in sonnet 50:

> As in some Countries farre remote from hence,
> The wretched Creature, destined to die,

Having the Judgement due to his Offence,
By Surgeons beg'd, their Art on him to trie:
Which on the Living worke without remorse,
First make incision on each mast'ring Veine,
Then stanch the bleeding, then trans-pierce the Coarse,
And with their Balmes recure the Wounds againe;
Then Poyson, and with Physicke him restore:
Not that they feare the hope-lesse Man to kill,
But their Experience to increase the more:
Ev'n so my Mistres workes upon my Ill;
By curing me, and killing me each How'r,
Onely to shew her Beauties Sov'raigne Pow'r.

The Petrarchan *topos* of love that both kills and revives is interpreted literally to convey the sense of acute pain. This is a scene of torture that looks very much like a dissection, and the terms that are used (words and phrases such as « surgeon » (l.4), « incision » and « mast'ring Veine » (l.6), « stanch the Bleeding » and « trans-pierce the Coarse » (l.7)) are clearly related to such a practice. The term « Coarse » could point either to a live or dead body. The roles of the physician and of the executioner were considered to be quite close at the time, and this closeness is made obvious here. This sonnet therefore depicts the dissection of a live body, something that probably aroused the fears of Drayton's readers: « to peer into the body was to undertake a journey into a corrupt world of mortality and decay [21] » according to Jonathan Sawday.

Like Drayton, Aubigné repeatedly plays with imagery related to dissection, as these two famous stanzas from the sixth *stance* show:

J'ouvre mon estommac, une tumbe sanglante
De maux enseveliz : pour Dieu, tourne tes yeux,
Diane, et voy au fond mon cueur party en deux
Et mes poumons gravez d'une ardeur viollente,
Voy mon sang escumeux tout noircy par la flamme,
Mes os secz de langeurs en pitoiable point

> Mais considere aussi ce que tu ne vois point,
> Le reste des malheurs qui sacagent mon ame.
> (l.1-8)

Again, Aubigné shows great attention to detail in this exposition of the open body: six body parts are mentioned in the first two stanzas (« estommac » (l.1), « yeux » (l. 2), « cœur » (l. 3), « poumons » (l. 4), « sang » (l. 5), « os » (l. 6)). The whole body is thus presented to us as an anatomical catalogue of the love-hurt body. This emphasis on anatomy starting with the opening of the chest [22] and finally revealing the bones creates a movement which resembles that of a dissection [23]. All the body parts become visible signs of pain. The violent imagery of this poem gives new relevance to a worn-out Petrarchan *topos*. It also aims at leaving a brutal and upsetting impression in the reader's mind, an effect which is quite frequent in Aubigné's poetry.

The culture of dissection echoes the two poets' interests both because of its focus on the body and because of the violence it implies. Such a literal way of associating Petrarchan love poetry with the culture of dissection was to our knowledge quite rare in France and England in the early modern period. Violence was, of course, a major aspect of late Petrarchism, as Cynthia Nazarian, among others, has recently showed. But if we read the aforementioned *Idea* sonnets and compare them to Spenser's *Amoretti*, Nazarian's assertion that « Spenser's sonnet sequence is full of blood and tyranny, war and dismemberment [24] » begins to sound like a bold overstatement. In fact, while Spenser's poetry is obviously informed by the culture of dissection to a degree, its indebtedness to it tends to remain metaphorical. It certainly cannot compare to Aubigné's and Drayton's bloody descriptions of bodies being opened [25]. Another English author of love poetry influenced both by Petrarchism and the culture of dissection was John Donne, but his poetic was far more remotely Petrarchan than Drayton's or Aubigné's. In France, although poets such as Jean de la Ceppède, Jean-Baptiste Chassignet or even a dying Pierre de Ronsard used anatomical imagery in their writing [26], violence, the body and dissection were the most clearly associated in Aubigné's poetry.

Interestingly, Aubigné's sixth *stance* comprises a request for Diane to look, or maybe even to watch his pain. The insistence on vision and sight, along with the careful consideration of the spectator/reader's gaze are not mere details: they are central to the culture of dissection, and it is no surprise that they come to be associated with the subsequent fragmentation of the Petrarchan lover into body parts.

The rhetoric of the gaze and fragmentation

Let us consider Aubigné's sixth *stance* again. The attention to anatomic detail is accompanied by a strong invitation directed to the recipient of the poem, an appeal to look, to witness the bloody spectacle: « tourne tes yeux », « vois », « considère ». This repeated use of the apostrophe betrays the central role of the beloved's gaze.According to Jonathan Culler, « the vocative of the apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to constitute him [27] ». In Aubigné's poem, the verbs in the imperative are addressed to another subject, whose gaze gives significance to the bloody spectacle [28]. Gaze is central both to the culture of dissection and to Petrarchism, and plays a prevalent role in the constitution of the subject, a term that can be understood in two different ways: « the modern meaning […] designates the site of thought and experience, and the Renaissance meaning […] proclaims the subordination of the governed [29] ». In Aubigné's poems, poetic self-dissection is essentially paradoxical, being both a means of subjection and of subject-formation, a recognition of the absolute authority of the beloved as well as an attempt to constitute oneself through her gaze.

Drayton's sonnet 50 does not comprise any apostrophe or incentive to look. Its grounding in the culture of dissection does not just rely on the content of the scene it describes, however. Rather, it appears in the use of a rhetorical construction meant to achieve visual representation – or

enargeia – in the mind of the reader, a device aimed at achieving *copia* according to Erasmus:

> We employ this [enargeia] whenever, for the sake of amplifying or decorating our passage, or giving pleasure to our readers, instead of setting out the subject in bare simplicity, we fill in the colours and set it up like a picture to look at, so that we seem to have painted the scene rather than described it, and the reader seems to have seen rather than read [30].

Hypotyposis and other related figures were used to achieve visualisation according to the principles of *enargeia*, *evidentia*, *ekphrasis* or *illustratio* [31]. Quintilian defined *evidentia* in the following way :

> It is a great gift to be able to set forth the facts on which we are speaking clearly and vividly. […]At times, again, the picture which we endeavour to present is fuller in detail […]. So, too, we may move our hearers to tears by the picture of a captured town. For the mere statement that the town was stormed, while no doubt it embraces all that such a calamity involves, has all the curtness of a dispatch, and fails to penetrate to the emotions of the hearer. But if we expand all that the one word "stormed" includes, we shall see the flames pouring from house and temple, and hear the crash of falling roofs and one confused clamour blent of many cries: we shall behold some in doubt whither to fly, others clinging to their nearest and dearest in one last embrace, while the wailing of women and children and the laments of old men that the cruelty of fate should have spared them to see that day will strike upon our ears. […] For though, as I have already said, the sack of a city includes all these things, it is less effective to tell the whole news at once than to recount it detail by detail [32].

Enargeia (or *ekphrasis*) is therefore achieved through a detailed account, as Ruth Webb explains :

> For the ancient rhetoricians, ekphrasis could be applied not only to the background of action (time, place, manner, perpetrator) but to the action itself. An ekphrasis was distinguished from a *diegesis* not by the nature of

> the subject matter, but by the degree of reference to visible phenomena and the effect it had on the audience [33].

The etymology of the word *ekphrasis* means « to tell in full, to give all the details [34]». This aspect is obvious in sonnet 50, as in other poems by Drayton and Aubigné. First, a very technical (one could say clinical) vocabulary is used. Words with a strong emotional impact are favoured. In that regard, the repeated allusions to blood are tantamount to red blots on the page. There are also structural implications. The limited length of the poems, especially in the case of the sonnet, hinders the development of a detailed description of the scene. The poems therefore tend to have a looser logical structure than the others and to rely on juxtaposition and more generally on *accumulatio* (a device that, according to John Hoskyns for instance, permitted the author to convey the intensity of feelings [35]). In Drayton's poems, this process is favoured by the structure of the so-called Shakespearean sonnet: as the sestet is no longer composed of two tercets but rather of one quatrain and a couplet, the *volta* that was traditionally placed at the end of the second quatrain tends to disappear. The sonnet loses the syllogistic or nearly syllogistic quality that it often had in the Petrarchan tradition. Many of Drayton's sonnets therefore have a twofold structure allowing enough space for the visual effect to develop in the course of the poem despite its short length: on the one hand, twelve lines of verse based on *enargeia*, on the other, the concluding couplet. The first twelve lines of the poem tend to be made of juxtaposed fragments, duplicating the violence inflicted upon the body in the very structure of the text.

Here, as in poem 197 of Maurice Scève's *Délie*, « fragmentation is a pre-condition of speech, which in and of itself is constantly at risk of faltering [36] ». Jonathan Sawday notes that « to be too much of the courtier is to risk being made a subject of blazon oneself, to have one's 'members' scattered over the countryside in satiric asides, gossip, or comment. Against this possibility, therefore, the courtier deployed a rhetoric of aggressive masculinity [37] ». This is to be observed in poems by Drayton

and Aubigné in which the lover reminds the lady of her mortality, as if exacting revenge on her for her indifference:

Non, l'air n'a pas perdu ses soupirs miserables,
Mocqués meurtris, payez par des traistres sousris :
Ces souspirs renaistront, viendront espouventable[s]
T'effrayer à misnuict de leurs funestes cris ;
L'air a serré mes pleurs en noirs et gros nuages
Pour crever à misnuict de gresles et d'orages.

Lors son taint perissant et ses beautez perdues
Seront l'horreur de ceux qui transis l'adoroient,
Ses yeux deshonorés des prunelles fondues
Seront telz que les miens, alors qu'ilz se mouroient,
Et de ses blanches mains, la poitrine offencée
Souffrira les assaulx de la juste pancée.

Aux plus subtilz demons des regions hautaynes,
Je presteray mon cors pour leur faire vestir,
Pasle, deffiguré, vray miroer de mes peines ;
En songe, en visions, ilz lui feront sentir
Proche son ennemy, dont la face meurtrie
Demande sang pour sang, et vie pour la vie. (*Le Printemps*, Stances IV, 95-102)

There's nothing grieves me, but that Age should haste,
That in my dayes I may not see thee old,
That where those two cleare sparkling Eyes are plac'd,
Onely two Loope-holes, then I might behold.
That lovely, arched, pollish'd Brow,
Defac'd with Wrinkles, that I might but see;
Thy daintie Hayre, so curl'd, and crisped now,
Like grizzled Mosse upon some aged Tree;
Thy Cheeke, now flushe with Roses, sunke, and leane,
Thy Lips, with age, as any Wafer thinne,

> Thy Pearly Teeth out of thy Head so cleane,
> That when thou feed'st, thy Nose shall touch thy Chinne:
> These Lines that now thou scorn'st, which should delight thee,
> Then would I make thee read, but to despight thee. (*Idea*, Sonnet 8)

While the tones of the two poems are slightly different, both resort to a carefully exacerbated expressivity. They confront the lady's body, especially her eyes, with its mortality. Drayton's poem might be less macabre than Aubigné's but this is compensated for by the aggressive final couplet. The same type of tone can be observed in sonnet 6:

> How many paltry, foolish, painted things,
> That now in Coaches trouble ev'ry Street,
> Shall be forgotten, whom no Poet sings,
> Ere they we well wrap'd in their winding Sheet?
> (Sonnet 6, l.1-4)

Whereas Aubigné's poem can be understood as a morbid *rêverie*, Drayton's sonnets are characterized by a threatening tone, as the poet tries to blackmail the lady into giving him her attention in exchange for poetic immortalisation. This is one of the major differences between the two poets. It also suggests that the blazoning of the lover might have a different significance in each case. If Aubigné unquestionably indulges in a « poetic fantasy of male surrender to female division [38] », the same cannot be easily said of Drayton. However, both authors resort to self-anatomization, and draw attention to it through apostrophe and/or hypotyposis. The specific ways in which they use those devices still has to be explained.

Both poets use a rhetoric whose aim is to obtain the attention of the lady and, by way of consequence, to let her gaze constitute the poet-lover. Interestingly, the use of *enargeia* originally had to do with judiciary oratory: «theories of *enargeia* were in fact developed originally in classical Greece for such forensic contexts in which « the narrator set out to reproduce the vividness of ocular proof through language » in the absence of physical evidence [39]. » In rhetorical terms, the Petrarchan love poem being based

on praise, it should be ascribed to the epidictic genre. Here, it is based on the judiciary. The two poetic collections we are analysing therefore enact a cross-fertilization of two rhetorical genres for the poetic purpose of enhancing the reading experience. *Enargeia* is indeed « a passage that can be inserted to increase the dramatic effect of the amplification […] ; used as a part of a *koinos topos*, its purpose is first and foremost to arouse the appropriate emotions as part of a larger amplification [40] ». The two poets were probably aware of that fact, and some of their poems are explicitly related to the whole process of criminal enquiry, trial and punishment.

The last poem of *Hécatombe à Diane* and sonnet 46 of *Idea* are personal reinterpretations of the love trial, which was the main conceit of Petrarch's Poem 360:

> Au tribunal d'amour, après mon dernier jour,
> Mon cœur sera porté, diffamé de bruslures,
> Il sera exposé, on verra ses blesseures,
> Pour cognoistre qui fit un si étrange tour.
> A la face et aux yeux de la céleste cour
> Où se preuvent les mains innocentes et pures,
> Il seignera sur toy, et compleignant d'injures,
> Il demandera justice au juge aveugle Amour.
> Tu diras : C'est Venus qui l'a fait par ses ruses,
> Ou bien Amour, son filz. En vain telles excuses !
> N'accuse point Venus de ses mortels brandons,
> Car tu les as fournis de mesches et flammesches,
> Et pour les coups de traict qu'on donne aux Cupidons,
> Tes yeux en sont les arcs, et tes regards les flesches.
>
> Plain path'd experience, the unlearneds guide,
> Her simple followers evidently shewes,
> Sometime what schoolemen scarcely can decide,
> Nor yet wise Reason absolutely knowes:
> In making triall of a murther wrought,
> If the vile actor of the heinous deede,

Neere the dead bodie happily be brought,
Oft hath been prov'd the breathlesse coarse will bleed;
She coming neere that my poore hart has slaine,
Long since departed (to the world no more)
The auncient wounds no longer can containe,
But fall to bleeding as they did before;
But what of this? Should she to death be led,
It furthers justice, but helps not the dead.

While Love and the lover are judged in Petrarch's poem, the lady stands accused in his two successors' pieces. This is a scene of ordeal, or revelation, based on the Petrarchan *topos* of the severance of the heart from the body. Although there is no properly developed hypotyposis in those poems, the visual impact on the reader of blood and of the imagery of the severed heart duplicates the material evidence that the bleeding heart provides to the judge and jury. The will to prove the guilt of the lady has the function of mutating pain into violence, or, in other words, of turning the reader's attention towards the unworthiness of the perpetrator.

In Aubigné's poems, the poet-lover can only resort to justice to establish the lady's wrongs. The poet sacrifices himself, and his revenge consists in showing the macabre result of this sacrifice to the lady, forcing her to acknowledge her guilt [41]. The metaphor of the trial acts as a mediation between the conceit of love as a sacrifice and the desire for the lady's gaze and attention. « The suffering subject is constituted in an aesthetic field that works to establish a sense of affective intimacy radiating from the spectacle of the suffering body, to communicate the most intimate sense of a « self » [42]». In Drayton's sonnet, by contrast, there is no sense of the production of an intimacy. Importantly, the poem comprises no call for justice to be done, but questions the very significance of a punishment provided by human justice. The idea of a revenge is made pointless, no deep or transcendent self is to be attained, and justice becomes a mere word devoid of any meaning for the victim. Here, the trial conceit is only used to undermine the Universal of justice on which it is based.

The two writers might resort to the same rhetoric of violence, but the uses of this violence and the pain it produces vary considerably from one poet to the other. As the subsequent remarks show, making sense out of pain heavily depended on the respective cultural and material contexts in which the Aubigné and Drayton were writing.

The meaning of pain

That Aubigné and Drayton were both fascinated by the culture of dissection is hardly surprising. Their focus on violence belies the political violence that was exerted at the time, in a European historical context of war and religious struggles. The Saint Bartholomew's day massacre, the political plotting and repression that went along with this context unquestionably made a strong impression on the two poets. These events explain their interest in a violence that even invaded the supposedly intimate field of Petrarchan poetics through a literal re-writing of its tropes. Critics have insisted that the love poems of *Le Printemps* were, like Aubigné's epic and most famous work, *Les Tragiques*, written at a time of warfare: « Il s'agit bien, […] à une époque où l'influence du politique sur le littéraire s'exerce en profondeur, d'une poésie d'amour « engagée » […] qui n'a que très peu de choses à voir avec le néo-pétrarquisme conventionnel […] [43] ». Aubigné's experience as a soldier fighting on the Protestant side of the civil conflict leaves bloody traces in his love poems. Some of his most cherished motives have to do with the open body and the exposure of wounds that are the signs of a double injury caused both by a failed relationship and by war [44].

> Si *Le Printemps* charrie autant de sang et de cadavres, s'il hante les lieux funèbres et dévastés, c'est aussi parce qu'il voit le jour dans un contexte désolant, celui des guerres et des massacres qui ravagent la France. […] L'imaginaire poétique se nourrit des carnages qui affectent le royaume, des conflits qui divisent le pays [45].

The depiction of the inside of the body is informed by the political context. Aubigné embraces pain, opening his chest himself. His poetry seems to be a case study confirming Truman's theory:

> I contend that just as pain may inscribe the « truth » of the subject, it may also act to illuminate a « depth » of the subject. This articulation of depth, of an « inner life, » may produce a subject who, by embracing the pain of the body as a constitutive element of her/his self, is able to invert monarchical power even as it works to inscribe itself upon her/him [46].

In *Le Printemps*, the Petrarchan lover accepts the lady's power only to define himself. The « monarchical power » is replaced by Diane Salvati's social and emotional power over Aubigné. The poet tries to make sense of the historical context and of the failure of his love affair at the same time. It has to be noted, however, that *Le Printemps* mostly took on an intimate significance, as it was addressed to only one person and was not meant to be published. As opposed to *Les Tragiques*, its poetic remains limited to the confines of a love relationship.

Drayton's *Idea*, on the contrary, targeted a wide readership, as it was published on several occasions (five different versions of the work exist). Recent studies have shown that Drayton was particularly aware of the implications that printing his poems might have in terms of self-representation and self-promotion [47]. His sonnet sequence is therefore much more likely to take a political significance. Such a meaning is not to be found in the evocation of war or of the Saint Bartholomew's day massacre, though the latter was well-known in Elizabethan culture, as testified by John Foxe's account of it in his *Acts and Monuments* and Marlowe's play *The Massacre in Paris*. A specific aspect of the culture of dissection has to be taken into account here:

> There is a danger of misunderstanding the 'meaning' of anatomy, and its singular importance in early-modern culture, if we fail to place this peculiar form of investigation within the larger scope of the criminal investigation which, inevitably, preceded public dissection. What took

> place within the Renaissance anatomy theatre, then, was intimately connected to what had taken place immediately before the body arrived on the dissection table [48].

Drayton's sonnets include scenes of enquiry (sonnet 2), of torture and/or execution (sonnet 50), and of trial (sonnet 46). In sonnet 50 in particular, it might not have been the mysteries of the interior of the body that Drayton was interested in. Significantly, in the poem, the emphasis is placed on the absolute power that the surgeons have over the body. All they seek is « to increase their experience », a phrasing that is reminiscent of the fact that the practice of dissection was still considered scandalous and feared by most. The couplet of the poem insists on the lady's « soveraigne power », showing that what is at stake here has to do with the exertion of absolute and irresistible power. The poem is best understood in its relationship to torture, a practice that was an aberration in the English judicial system, but that was briefly revived at the end of Elizabeth's reign [49].

Although only some of the cases of torture involved Catholics, « the threat posed by Catholicism was relevant to the goals of torture as a means of investigation in a way that other threats to Elizabethan authority by and large were not [50]. » It was reinstated as a means of repressing and dismantling Catholic networks after the Reidolfi, Throckmorton and Babington plots and Campion's Jesuit mission. Could sonnet 50 therefore be construed as a direct attack against Elizabethan anti-Catholic repression, knowing that it was first published in 1599? Although Drayton, who grew up in Warwickshire (a notoriously pro-Catholic part of England at the time), was no Catholic, there is ground for thinking that « Drayton's religious position was one of tolerance that sometimes moved towards a sympathy for the not so distant Catholic past [51] »: in his satire *The Owle* (1604), for instance, Drayton harshly criticized James's anti-Catholic laws. His representation of a scene of torture could therefore be tantamount to resistance against the repression of the Catholics:

> It was at the level of representation that Catholics mounted a formidable resistance, exposing in their pamphlets the violent silence on which

> English accusations of Catholic treasons depended. If the English authorities had the power to torture their victims to appropriate their speech, Catholics had the power to appropriate the scene of torture as a subject of representation in their pamphlets. […] For the practitioners, torture is a violent extension of an insufficient discourse ; for the victims, its representation is the discursive extension of a (probably impossible) bodily resistance [52].

This interpretation, which is consistent with the first date of publication of sonnet 50, poses a problem for the 1619 edition of *Idea*, at a time when Catholics were no longer seen as a threat to the Crown. Why would Drayton have defended them? What is more, sonnet 50 does not indicate any will to « embrace » the violence that is exerted. In his sonnets related to the culture of dissection, Drayton never presents it as a successful process. In the poems already quoted in the present article, the criminal enquiry is ridiculed (sonnet 2) and justice is meaningless for the victim (sonnet 46). What seems to be at stake is not the revelation of a deep inner truth, but rather « a tendency to call into question the representational economy both of martyrology and of martyrdom [53] ». In that sense, the poet is close to certain Catholics who « defined the truth they defended in terms of its discontinuity from utterance and representation [54] ».

As opposed to Aubigné, Drayton does not seek to stage a « righteous martyrdom [55] » : the pain that is inflicted upon the Petrarchan lover is showed to be absurd and meaningless. This major difference between the two poetics can easily be seen in the poems themselves. Aubigné encourages the reader to gaze inside the body, opening it himself, initiating the inward movement necessary to deciphering it. Drayton, on the other hand, does not describe the inside of the body, but shows how a generally vague or anonymous third party wounds it and makes it bleed. In this case, the body is immobilized while it is victimized, as if it refused to partake in its own dissection. This would not be so significant if it was not in contradiction to the way the poet defines himself elsewhere in the sonnet sequence : « My Verse is the true image of my Mind, // Ever in motion, still desiring change » (To the reader, v. 9-10). This definition is grounded in an

ontology of movement that stands in sharp contrast to any endeavour to encompass the Petrarchan lover's identity [56]. Drayton paradoxically produces and circumscribes his subjectivity by affirming that it remains in a state of flux. The potential symbolic value of torture or dissection scenes is cancelled out. In the economy of the whole sequence, their function therefore seems to display a will to escape power, be it the power of love or the power of political rulers. More generally, this analysis would be consistent with Drayton's wish to escape the pressure of social superiors or of patrons, as the poet « was noticeably hostile to distinctions of class [57] ». As Andrew Hadfield asserts, « patronage was only important to him in so far as it served this aim [establishing himself as a major poet in print] and Drayton was quite prepared to be rude to those aristocrats too foolish to grasp his merits as a writer [58] ». Violent scenes might therefore manifest the anxiety of the printed poet, a will not to yield himself to the potential disparaging and fragmenting power of the reading public. No reader can know the true self of a writer that only defines himself as a volatile entity shifting from one state to the other, a Heraclitean poet that refuses to be subjected.

As could be expected, the differences between the two poetics under analysis stem from the respective historical and political contexts in which they wrote. However, the comparison has shown that their Petrarchan poems also had to be contrasted in terms of the way they perform the self. They might share an interest in the culture of dissection, but their closeness is only superficial. While Aubigné's rhetoric of violence is rooted in an ethics of sacrifice and martyrdom, Drayton's essentially acts as a foil against which his Heraclitean self is set. When the French poet willingly subjects himself (in the two senses of subjection and subject-formation) to and according to the lady's gaze, his English successor tries to resist the encompassing and dissecting power of the authority of the lady, of political rulers or, maybe, of the reading public. His treatment of dissection or enquiry scenes suggests that any attempt to extract truth from his body will result in failure—or in total annihilation that will not yield any meaning.

If anything, this paper shows that Truman is right when he contends that pain has multiple meanings [59]. One wonders, however, what is the role of suffering when its representation is combined with a certain form of scepticism [60]: how can pain lead to self-knowledge if self-knowledge is impossible? How can suffering allow the uncovering of an inner self for writers who only have a very confused notion of interiority? And finally, if the self is in a constant state of flux, is it still possible to conceive of a subjectivity?

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Notes

[1] Kjerstin Aukrust, « ‘J’ouvre mon estomac’ : Agrippa d’Aubigné et le corps macabre », in *Corps sanglants, souffrants et macabres XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, éd. Charlotte Bouteille-Meister et Kjerstin Aukrust, Paris, Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010, p. 101-113.

[2] Rémi Vuillemin, « ‘My heart was slaine’ : le pétrarquisme des sonnets de Drayton entre blessure d’amour et mise à mort », in *Corps sanglants, souffrants et macabres XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, éd. Charlotte Bouteille-Meister et Kjerstin Aukrust, Paris, Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010, p. 115-128.

[3] See for instance Janet G. Scott, *Les sonnets élisabéthains : Les sources et l’apport personnel*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1929, p. 293.

[4] Janet G. Scott, op. cit., p. 293. Drayton himself wrote that he didn’t want to « filch from Portes, or from Petrarch’s pen », thereby providing an indication that Desportes’s influence must have been significant indeed. See *Ideas Mirrour*, dedicatory sonnet.

[5] We have chosen to write Aubigné rather than d’Aubigné, « pour respecter la désignation correcte, celle du reste que le poète a lui-même retenue, que choisissait A. M. Schmidt, et que recommandait V. L. Saulnier ». See Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, « Violences d’Aubigné », in Olivier Pot (éd.), *Poétique d’Aubigné. Actes du colloque de Genève*, mai 1996, Genève, Droz, 1999, p. 17.

[6] Stephen Cluclas, « Thomas Watson’s *Hekatompathia* and European Petrarchism », in Martin McLaughlin, Letizia Panizza et Peter Hainsworth (eds), *Petrarch in Britain. Interpreters, Imitators, Translators over 700 years*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 217-227.

[7] See Agrippa d’Aubigné, *Sa vie à ses enfants*, éd. Gilbert Schrenck, Paris, Librairie Nizet, 1986, p. 77 : « Ayant son peu de biens entre les mains, il devint amoureux de Diane Salviaty, fille aisnée de Talcy. Cet amour luy mit en teste la poësie françoise, et lors il composa ce que nous appelons son *Printems* ».

[8] Aggripa d'Aubigné, *Le Printemps, L'Hécatombe à Diane*, « Les éditions », p. 132.

[9] The quotations are from the 1619 edition of *Idea*, unless otherwise indicated. The reader will find the text of the in Hebel, William J. ; Tillotson, Katherine ; Newdigate, Bernard H. (eds), *The Works of Michael Drayton*, 5 vols, Oxford, Shakespeare Head Press, 1931-1961. The editors quote the 1619 edition of Idea with only minor spelling or punctuation changes.

[10] Bernard H. Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and his Circle*, Oxford, Shakespeare Head Press, 1961. It is to be noted that the relevance of such biographical assumptions have been questioned by more recent critics. Jean R. Brink, for instance, denounces the « romantic flourishes » of Newdigate's work. See her *Michael Drayton Revisited*, Boston, Twayne publihers, 1990, p.2.

[11] Cynthia Nyree Nazarian, "Petrarch's Wounds : Love, Violence and the Writing of the Renaissance Nation", thèse de doctorat, Princeton, 2008.

[12] Nancy Vickers, « Diana Described : Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhymes », *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Writing and Sexual Difference (Winter, 1981), p. 265- 279.

[13] See for instance Barbara L. Estrin, *Uncovering Gender and Genre in Wyatt, Donne and Marvell*, Durham, London, Duke University Press, 1994.

[14] James C.W. Truman, « The Body in Pain in Early Modern England », *Early Modern Literary Studies* 14.3, January 2009, p. 1-37.

[15] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Les Thèmes amoureux dans la poésie française (1570-1600)*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1975, p. 331: « L'image s'efface sous la violence crue du geste décrit, comme, dans le même temps, le cœur perd son caractère semi-abstrait (lieu du sentiment), pour devenir estomac, réalité purement charnelle ».

[16] François Rouget, « L'Éros et la démesure : la poétique des Odes et des Stances dans *Le Printemps* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné », *Albineana* 8, Cahiers

d'Aubigné, Association des Amis d'Agrippa d'Aubigné, Niort, 1997, p. 15 : « la place du corps se substitue à l'expression figurée des sentiments. » See also Michel Jeanneret, « Les styles d'Agrippa d'Aubigné », *Studi francesi*, 32 (1967), p. 254 : « La passion frénétique de d'Aubigné, si impatiente de se fixer, transmet aux mots et aux images qui l'expriment une matérialité presque charnelle ».

[17] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned. Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. viii : « This book traces what I have come to call the 'culture of dissection' in the early-modern period. »

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 2 : « dissection is an insistence on the partition of something (or someone) which (or who) hitherto possessed their own unique organic integrity ».

[19] *Ibid.*, p.137.

[20] In the 1600 edition of *Idea*, this sonnet is entitled « To harmony ».

[21] Jonathan Sawday, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

[22] « Estomac » means « poitrine », see Edmond Huguet, *Dictionnaire de la Langue française du seizième siècle*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1932.

[23] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Emblèmes de la mort. Le dialogue de l'image et du texte*, Paris, A.-G. Nizet, 1988, p. 135.

[24] Cynthia Nazarian, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

[25] Nazarian herself recognizes that Aubigné's *Le Printemps* displays more violence that Spenser's *Amoretti*. See *ibid.*, p. 155, note 232.

[26] Kjerstin Aukrust, *Violences du corps. Une étude du macabre chez Ronsard, Aubigné et Chassignet*, Oslo, Unipub, 2008.

[27] Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, London Routledge Classics, 2001, p. 157.

[28] Mathieu-Castellani, Les Thèmes amoureux dans la poésie française, *op. cit.,* p. 335 : « le cœur mis à nu n'a de valeur que s'il est vu ».

[29] Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Early-Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 2.

[30] Erasmus, *De Copia*, quoted in Laetitia Coussement-Boillot, *Copia* et *cornucopia* : *la poétique shakespearienne de l'abondance*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2008, p. 68.

[31] Those terms might be defined in slightly different ways according to the author and the period considered. We will consider them as equivalents here.

[32] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library, 1920-1922, p. 246-249 (VIII, 3, 61-69).

[33] Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, London, Ashgate, 2009, p. 67.

[34] *Ibid.*, p.74.

[35] John Hoskins, *Directions for Speech and Style by John Hoskins*, ed Hoyt H. Hudson, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1935, p. 24-25.

[36] Cynthia Nyree Nazarian, *op. cit.,* p. 45.

[37] Jonathan Sawday, *op. cit.,* p. 204.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.191.

[39] Ruth Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 89, and Kathy Eden, *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.

[41] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *Agrippa d'Aubigné, Le Corps de Jézabel*, Paris, PUF, 1991, p. 58-59 : « En position de victime, il prétend établir un

pacte avec son bourreau, et opérer, par l'automutiliation sacrificielle, comme on l'a vu, une médiation qui détourne la violence. […] La violence masochiste, aisément retournée en sadisme, semble le seul recours possible pour ouvrir au désir sa voie. Tandis que le ça se satisfait de libérer ses pulsions agressives, s'enchantant de scènes cruelles, le surmoi impose le châtiment qui sanctionne la faute. Innocent, je suis martyrisé par toi; coupable, je me livre moi-même au martyre, mais en t'imposant de me voir ouvert et sanglant, je te punis de ta froideur au prix de ma souffrance: tel est à peu près le discours du *Printemps* ».

[42] C.M. Truman, *op. cit.*, § 18.

[43] Fernand Desonay, « Introduction », in Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Le Printemps. Stances et Odes*, t. II, Genève, Droz, 1952, p. XLIV.

[44] See Mathieu-Castellani, *Les Thèmes amoureux dans la poésie française*, *op. cit.*, p. 338 : « Tout naturellement, la réalité de la guerre sert de contrepoint dramatique à l'expression du sentiment amoureux, et la couleur rouge du combat devient celle de l'amour. »

[45] Véronique Ferrer, « *Le Printemps* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné ou les épreuves du pétrarquisme », in *Les poètes français de la Renaissance et Pétrarque*, éd. Jean Balsamo, Genève, Droz, 2004, p.452.

[46] C.M. Truman, *op. cit.*, § 15.

[47] Andrew Hadfield, « Michael Drayton's Brilliant Career », *Proceedings of the British Academy*125, 2003, p. 119-147.

[48] Jonathan Sawday, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

[49] See C.M. Truman, *op. cit.*, §16, and Elizabeth Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1998, p. 24.

[50] Elizabeth Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[51] Anna Swärdh, *Rape and Religion in English Renaissance Literature. A Topical Study of Four Texts by Shakespeare, Drayton, and Middleton*, Uppsala, Uppsala University, 2003.

[52] Elizabeth Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 34-35.

[53] *Ibid.*, p.44.

[54] *Ibid.*, p.52.

[55] C.M. Truman, *op. cit.,* § 16.

[56] See Rémi Vuillemin, « Le Recueil pétrarquiste à l'ère du maniérisme : poétique des sonnets de Michael Drayton, 1594-1619 », PhD Dissertation, Université de Strasbourg, 2011.

[57] Jean R. Brink, *op. cit.*, p.5.

[58] Andrew Hadfield, *op. cit.*, p.119.

[59] C.M. Truman, *op. cit.,* § 37.

[60] Rémi Vuillemin, « Le Recueil pétrarquiste à l'ère du maniérisme », p. 510-514.

Pour citer ce document

Par Kjerstin Aukrust et Rémi Vuillemin, «Petrarchism and the culture of dissection: the rhetoric of violence in Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Le Printemps* and Michael Drayton's *Idea*», *Shakespeare en devenir* [En ligne], N°5 - 2011, Shakespeare en devenir, II. Anatomic poetics: violence, the state and the self, mis à jour le : 03/12/2019, URL : https://shakespeare.edel.univ-poitiers.fr:443/shakespeare/index.php?id=553.

Quelques mots à propos de : Kjerstin Aukrust

Kjerstin Aukrust has a Ph.D. in French Literature from the University of Oslo. Her doctoral thesis, *Violences du corps. Une étude du macabre chez Ronsard, Aubigné et Chassignet*, was completed in 2008. In 2008, she organised an international conference at the University of Oslo, which resulted in the publication of the proceedings two years later: *Corps sanglants, souffrants et macabres. La représentation de la violence faite au corps en Europe aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, Charlotte Bouteille-Meist ...

Quelques mots à propos de : Rémi Vuillemin

Rémi Vuillemin teaches English at Nancy 2 University and has just completed a PhD entitled « The Petrarchan Sequence in the Age of Mannerism : the Poetics of Michael Drayton's Sonnets, 1594-1619 » under the supervision of Professor Jean-Jacques Chardin at the University of Strasbourg. He has given papers in several conferences and research seminars in France and abroad, and has published three articles. Two of them deal with Drayton's sonnets: « De l'idéalisation à la fragmentation : les voies d ...