

Sixteenth-Century French Poetry (a small sample)

Maurice Scève

Délie 439

French text from Maurice Scève. "Délie 439." *The Délie of Maurice Scève*. Edited by I.D. McFarlane. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966), 360.

Bien que raison soit nourrice de l'ame,
Alimenté est le sens du doux songe
De vain plaisir, qui en tous lieux m'entame,
Me penetrant, comme l'eau en l'esponge.
Dedans lequel il m'abysme, & me plonge
Me suffoquant toute vigueur intime.
Dont pour excuse, & cause legitime
Je ne me doibs grandement esbahir,
Si ma tressaincte, & sage Dyotime
Tousjours m'enseigne a aymer, & hair.

Though reason is the nursemaid of the soul,
The sweet power of my sensuous dreams
Of vain pleasure, follows me everywhere,
Penetrating me, like water in a sponge,
Thrusting and plunging me into the abyss,
Suffocating me in my inmost heart.
This for excuse, although legitimate
Cannot amaze me or leave me in shock,
If my holy and wise Diotima
Still teaches me to love, and how to hate.
(Trans. M. Bryson)

Louise Labé

Sonnet 16

French text from *Ouvres de Louise Labé*. Edited by Prosper Blaincheman. (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1875), 124.

Après qu'un tems la gresle et le tonnerre
Ont le haut mont de Caucase batu,
Le beau jour vient, de leur revêtu.
Quand Phebus ha son cerne fait en terre,
Et l'Ocean il regaigne à grand erre,
Sa seur se montre avec son chef pointu.
Quand quelque tems le Parthe ha combatu,
Il prent la fuite et son arc il desserre.
Un tems fay vù et consolé pleintif,
Et defiant de mon feu peu hatif;
Mais, maintenant que tu m'as embrasée
Et suis au point auquel tu me voulois,
Tu as ta flame en quelque eau arrosée,
Et es plus froit qu'estre je ne soulois.

After a time in which hail and thunder
Have beaten the top of Mount Caucasus,
A beautiful day comes, clothed again in light.
When Phoebus encircles his land again,
And dives into the sea, his pale sister
Moves back into our view with pointed crown.
When for too long the Parthian warrior fights,
He turns from his arc and loosens his bow.
I consoled you once when I saw you sad,
And that aroused my long slow-burning fire;
But now that you have brought me to a burn
And brought me to the point to which you wished,
You've doused your waning flame in watered streams,
And yours is colder than mine can ever be.

Sonnet 18

French text from *Ouvres de Louise Labé*. Edited by Prosper Blaincheman. (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1875), 126.

Baise m'encor, rebaise moy et baise;
Donne m'en un de tes plus savoureux,
Donne m'en un de tes plus amoureux:
Je t'en rendray quatre plus chaus que braise.
Las! te pleins tu? Ça, que ce mal j'apaise,
En t'en donnant dix autres doucereus.
Ainsi meslans nos baisers tant heureux,
Jouissons nous l'un de l'autre à notre aise.
Lors double vie à chacun en suivra;
Chacun en soy et son ami vivra.
Permetts m'Amour penser quelque folie:

Kiss me once more, kiss and then kiss me again;
Give me one of your most savory,
Give me one of your most amorous,
And I'll return them four times hotter than coals.
Does sadness fill you? Let me appease that pain,
By giving you ten other sweets;
Thus mixing our happy kisses
We may enjoy each other at our ease.
Then we will live twice:
Each ourselves, and each in the other's love.
Love, let me dream, at least, about such foolish things:

Tousjours suis mal, vivant discrettement,
Et ne me puis donner contentement
Si hors de moy ne fay quelque saillie.

It hurts me, living so discreetly,
And nothing will give me contentment
Unless I break outside myself.

Poetry from Further Afield (Armenia, sixteenth-century)

Nahaphet Quchak

Hayren 20

Armenian text transliterated from Nahaphet Quchak, *Haryur u mek hayren*. Edited by Arshak Madoyan and Irina Karumyan. (Yerevan: Sovetakan Grokh, 1976).

Im sirts i qo var sirud'
zet ashnan khazel ku dokhay.
Artsunq i yeress I ver'
zet garnan andzrev ku tsokhay.
Hogis i yisne elav,
mek mi qo tsotsoyd char ara.
Tsotsiks e tsotsid sovor,
ayl uhnd vor yertay, mek asa'.

From your burning love,
my heart trembles like an autumnal leaf:
My tears streaming down my face:
as if a spring rain drizzles.
My soul is being tortured,
Give me the cure of your bosom.
My body is used to your body,
Tell me, how will I live if it leaves?
(Trans. A. Movsesian)

Hayren 65

Qani marn zis berer,
qahani chem xostovaner.
Urtekh qahanay teser,
nay tsrer champus u yeler.
Vortekh mek akhvor tesel'
girk u tsots vi dem gnatser.
Tsotsikn em jamptun arel,
tsuhtserun em khostovaner.

How many faults are born,
I haven't confessed to the priest:
Wherever a priest I've seen,
I've changed my route and left:
Wherever a beauty I've seen,
I've straight gone to her bosom and embrace,
Made her bosom my altar,
To her tits I've made my confessions.
(Trans. A. Movsesian)

Hayren 81

Im bartsragnats lusin,
shat barev tar im kivselin:
--Z barevd yes I ur tanem,
chem giter uhztunn kivzelin:
--Gna I veray taxin,
bardzr pat u tsarn I mijin.
Nster I tsari shqin,
k khme ir lurj apikin,
Khme u hayren k'ase.
t' <<Inch anush e sern u ginin>>.

My high and noble moon,
Take many greetings to my beauty
--Where should I take your greeting?
I don't know your beauty.
--Go to the upper neighborhood
Where she sits between the high wall and the tree:
Sitting in the shadow of the tree,
Drinking with seriousness,
Drinking and singing hayrens:
As "How sweet are love and wine!"
(Trans. A. Movsesian)