Plutarque

Éditions, Traductions, Paratextes

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QUOT LECTIOINES, TOT TURNEBI
ADRIEN TURNEBE IN RECENT EDITIONS OF PLUTARCH’S DE ANIMAE PROCREATIONE

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Abstract — Current critical editions of Plutarch’s *De animae procreatione* frequently mention the contributions of Adrien Turnèbe (Adrianus Turnebus, 1512 – 1565) in their *apparatus critici*. Behind this single name hide different sources which should be acknowledged in their diversity. For Turnèbe’s reading of *De animae procreatione* we can refer to the handwritten notes in his reading exemplar, his edition of the work, and his translation. These sources do not always present the same textual solutions. By discussing all passages from *De animae procreatione* where current editors refer to Turnèbe, I sketch this diversity of sources and point to some misunderstandings which arise when it is not taken into account.

Key words — *De animae procreatione*, edition, translation, marginalia, humanism, Renaissance

1. Introduction

If Montaigne’s judgement is to be trusted, this paper brings together two of the greatest men in intellectual history: Plutarch and Adrien Turnèbe, or, as Montaigne lovingly calls them, ‘nostre Plutarque’ and ‘mon Turnebus’. Plutarch, whom Montaigne knew through Amyot’s translation, is lauded as ‘si parfaict et excellent juge des actions humaines’. Montaigne was so deeply influenced by the Chaeronean’s work that he had the feeling of ‘le connoistre jusques dans l’ame’. This influence is clear throughout his *Essais*, where he refers to Plutarch’s work over five hundred times. Less ubiquitous but perhaps even more heartfelt is his appreciation for the humanist Adrien Turnèbe, who died fifteen years...
before the first edition of the *Essais* (1580) was published. In *Du pédantisme* Montaigne warmly praises Turnèbe as the prototypical opposite of the snobbish pseudo-intellectuals, who are targeted in this essay (‘le plus souvent ils ne s’entendent ny autruy, et [...] ils ont la souvenence assez pleine, mais le jugement entierement creux’). Turnèbe is exceptional because his great learning – ‘n’ayant faict autre profession que des lettres, en laquelle c’estoit, à mon opinion, le plus grand homme qui fut il y a mil’ ans’ – is free from any pedantry. This is what made him ‘l’ame la plus polie du monde’

Adrien Turnèbe (1512 – 1565) started his career as a professor of Greek at the university of Toulouse in 1545. On the death of his master Jacques Toussaint two years later, he returned to Paris, where he had studied, in order to become the Royal Reader in Greek at the *Collège des lecteurs royaux* (which is now the *Collège de France*). Subsequently, from 1561 until his death in 1565, he moved to the chair of Royal Reader in Greek and Latin Philosophy. Equally important was his appointment as *Imprimeur royal pour les livres grecs*, a position which he assumed in 1552. After four astonishingly productive years, he resigned from this post and was succeeded by his trustee Guillaume Morel.

Turnèbe’s appointment as the royal printer marks the start of a prolific period in which he edited, translated, and commented a variety of classical texts, both pagan and Christian. From his scientific accomplishments during this period and the years thereafter, it is clear that Turnèbe shared Montaigne’s enthusiasm for Plutarch. In 1552, his first year as royal printer, he published no less than four volumes of Plutarch: an edition and a translation of both *De animae procreatione* and *De primo frigido*. Four years later an annotated translation of *De defectu oraculorum* followed. In the posthumously published *Opera omnia* we find further translations of the *Septem sapientium convivium* and the spurious works *De fato* and *De fluviis*. Moreover, an autograph manuscript conserves a translation of *De virtute et vitio*. 

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7 *Essais* i, 25 (p. 139 VS).
8 *Essais* ii, 23 (p. 440 VS). Montaigne also praises Turnèbe for his poetry and says that he ‘sçavoit plus et sçavoit mieux ce qu’il sçavoit, que homme qui fut de son siecle, ny loing au delà’ in *Essais* ii, 17 (p. 661 VS). On the different ways of writing Turnèbe’s name – Montaigne normally uses the Latinized name ‘(Adrianus) Turnebus’, using the French ‘Adrien Tournebu’ only once – see Lewis 1998: 28–31.
9 The definitive study about Turnèbe’s bio-bibliography is Lewis 1998, on which I rely for the following paragraph.
10 An exhaustive overview can be found in Lewis 1998: 105–212.
11 While Plutarch may be Turnèbe’s favourite Greek, his favourite author overall was undoubtedly Cicero. This latter appreciation was manifestly not shared by Montaigne; see e.g. Green 1975.