Germaine Lafeuille, *Cinq Hymnes de Ronsard*. Genève: Librairie Droz, 1973. Pp. 239. Fr.s. 54, —

This important dissertation written at Harvard University between 1950 and 1952 under the direction of Herbert Dieckmann, has finally found its way into print. Those who have followed Ronsard scholarship were not ignorant of this work's existence, principally because of the considerable place I. Silver gave to it in his "Ronsard Studies" for the period 1951-1966, *BHR*, XXII (1960), 253-254. In his appraisal of this "valuable and searching" work, Silver did, however, take issue with one of Prof. Lafeuille's conclusions that suggested that the "poeta philosophus" was inclined to give poetic form precedence over "science" and philosophic content. In another context — but one bearing directly upon the subject treated by G. Lafeuille — Silver pointed out that the thesis in question contains a very well reasoned explanation as to "why Ronsard preferred the Ptolemaic astronomy as the basis for his cosmological poetry" (in Silver's article "Ronsard's Reflections on the Heavens and Time," *PMLA* LXXX, (1965), 345). What Silver had found on p. 45 of the typescript can now be read on p. 20 of the printed version, with variations that are significant enough to indicate that the author was not satisfied to leave unrevised what she had written twenty years earlier, although as we read in the brief preamble, "Les chapitres I-V conservent dans l'ensemble le texte de l'original, avec une large addition à la fin du dernier."

The statement in the first chapter of *Cinq Hymnes de Ronsard*, "*Hymne du Ciel*," which showed that Ronsard was looking backward rather than forward in his concept of the universe was concluded by Prof. Lafeuille in the following manner (in the earlier version, from which Silver quoted): "Que Ronsard, loin de chercher les nouveautés, les ait fuies, qu'il se soit tourné vers la plus vieille représentation. . . révèle son objet: chanter, non pas informer, composer un hymne et non un traité," or, according to the variant in the printed version, "faire oeuvre de poète, non de savant." A few pages later on we read, à propos of the same *Hymne*: "Trois grandes questions: origine du monde, cause de la création, singularité ou pluralité des mondes sont touchées: mais. . . sans qu'il y ait le moindre signe que le poète ait vu le problème et considéré ses solutions" (pp. 29-30). We can pick up the trail in Silver's article: "Most of the elements of [Einstein's] description of the geocentric theory are present in Ronsard's *Hymne du Ciel*. . ." (p. 345).

Of the numerous hymns that Ronsard wrote, the most significant of which were gathered in the two collections of 1555 and 1556, Germaine Lafeuille has chosen, besides the *Hymne du Ciel*, four other "hymnes philosophiques" written in "vers graves": the *Hymne de l'Eternir* where Ronsard gave a vast *amplificatio* to the hymn *Aeternitati* by Marullus (reproduced by L. on pp. 216-217 of the *Appendices*, not on p. 215, as is stated in n. 4 on p. 42); the *Hymne de la Philosophie*, where the poet introduced "un abrégé d'encyclopédie médiévale" (p. 61); the *Hymne de la Justice*, which the poet dedicated to Charles Cardinal de Lorraine and which is mainly concerned with the "idée divine antérieure aux sociétés humaines" (J. Frappier, quoted by L. on p. 83, n. 1); finally, *Les Daimons*, which was not designated as a hymn by Ronsard, although Albert-Marie Schmidt took it upon himself to underline the pertinence of this poem by calling his critical edition and commentary

Hymne des Daimons. In fact, one could say that Schmidt's "thèse complémentaire" (which accompanied his *La Poésie scientifique en France au XVI^e siècle*) has helped considerably to call our attention to the beauties and complexities of this poem, even if we are not won over by Schmidt's somewhat sensationalist references to "criminologie démoniaque" or "La névrose des procès de sorcellerie" (p. 7).

It would seem fair to say that Germaine Lafeuille has done for the five compositions she discusses what Schmidt had already done in his way for the *Daimons*, with the notable difference that she does not offer the complete text (which is not to be regretted, with the critical editions now at our disposal, practical considerations aside). In many respects chapter V, "*Les Daimons*," is the most arresting, not only because of its length and "l'étrangeté de la matière, la vigueur et l'éclat de la forme," but also because Lafeuille is in continuous discourse with Schmidt, with whom there is more disagreement than agreement, mainly because the earlier interpreter "prend, à son accoutumé, ses termes de comparaison dans la doctrine démonologique ou religieuse" (p. 178), even where it is idle to look for the arcanum of occultism, as in connection with Ronsard's gallery of "démons rustiques." On the other hand, among the bookish sources, we find here nearly thirty references to a work that Schmidt disregarded entirely, the Greek treatise on demonology by Michael Psellus (A.D. 1018-78/9), which was translated into French in 1576 by Pierre Moreau (although Cioranescu gives the year 1573). This work is considered by L. to be one of the two main sources of *Les Daimons*, the other being *De deo Socratis* of Apuleius, "a flamboyant declamation on the Saiuórlöv of Socrates, probably based on a Greek original" (*Oxford Classical Dict.*). At the beginning of the tenth section of the discussion of *Les Daimons*, the "Conclusion," we read: "On pourra lire dans le *Commentaire* [of Schmidt] une analyse complexe des vingt derniers vers du poème. Cette complexité est due au fait que le critique a méconnu l'unité de ce morceau qui, à mon avis, est bâti sur l'idée d'exorcisme" (p. 188).

This remark brings into relief one salient trait of G. Lafeuille's work: she is consistently concerned with the poetic "chant," while one could hardly say that she is neglecting "la fable." We are alerted to this interest in aesthetic values by the early references to René Char and Victor Hugo. Several analyses of Ronsard's verse reveal a fine sensibility that is couched in a language that has its own élan, like "les points névralgiques de la période" and "l'accompagnement d'une basse continue qui rappelle l'allure de la marche solennelle" (p. 45) or the poetic assessment of vv. 369-370 of *Les Daimons*, where the frightened poet brandishes his sword and cuts the surrounding air to bits, as if the evil spirits were indeed corporeal: "vers serrés, contractés comme les mâchoires d'un homme terrorisé (prédominance des monosyllabes: saccades du geste bref, mélange d'explosives et de nasales labiales. . .)." At this point, and especially with regard to the verses that follow immediately, a mention of Hugo's "Les Djinns" might not have been inappropriate.

Thus a careful evaluation of Ronsard's sources, hitherto known or unknown, combined with a perceptive appraisal of Ronsard's *mise en scène* of these sources, characterizes the study of Germaine Lafeuille. As one would expect, the visual aspects are not overlooked where the musical ones are lent such a sensitive ear. However, in the area of iconography I felt a certain disappointment. The apocalyptic vision in the *Hymne de la Justice* quite appropriately summons a scene from Dürer's

Apocalypse (but why 80 pp. removed from the place where it comes into play?). The other illustrations, portraits of Ronsard, Odet de Coligny, and Michel de l'Hospital really do not have much bearing. It is of course hazardous to connect certain "scenes" in Ronsard with pictorial representations belonging to the Renaissance period, although Professors Graham and McAllister Johnson of the University of Toronto are shedding more and more light on these elusive interrelations. G. Lafeuille is reasonably sure about the contribution of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* to Ronsard's furbishing of "La Cour d'Eternité" (Chap. II, ii, pp. 47-48), but why not reproduce one of Ripa's "virtù" or one of the woodcuts in Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili* (*Le Songe de Poliphile*)? And there surely could have been a useful and easily accessible illustration in support of the "Notions scientifiques" that serve as a preamble to the *Hymne du Ciel*.

The fact that the author wished to take cognizance of recent scholarship is evident in the Conclusion and in the Bibliography, which goes to 1970, including the relatively recent works of Gendre, Gordon, and the first volume of Silver's *The Intellectual Evolution of Ronsard*. D.P. Walker's *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* and Gadoffre's *Ronsard par lui-même* came upon the scene about ten years earlier, but it is these rather disparate authors whom Prof. Lafeuille engages in order to update her research and certain of her attitudes. The unfortunate effect is that the very end of her book suggests some hasty collage work that blurs the edges of the vast canvas that she has put before us. It may be perfectly safe to call Ronsard "un génie solaire," but I think it is precarious to let ourselves be ensnared too readily by black or white magic and to take a belated look at Jungian archetypes, only to get lost in an ever-repetitive hall of mirrors. At least, this does not effectively round out a work that was written with rather different principles in mind. And these principles, partly historical, partly aesthetic, were united by Germaine Lafeuille in a manner that promises for her *Cinq Hymnes de Ronsard* an important and permanent place in the still rapidly growing literature on Ronsard. Beyond the horizons contemplated by the poet, we are taken to the outer reaches of Renaissance thought, where stars yet unknown perform their "dançe ordonnée."

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