Rouget, François. Ronsard et la fabrique des Poèmes

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towards whom the original study was clearly aimed, but for advanced students alike.

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Rouget, François.
*Ronsard et la fabrique des Poëmes.*

This volume is one of a series of monographs that François Rouget has written on Pierre de Ronsard—and joins his many important works on the study and editing of the French poet. Rouget’s *Ronsard et la fabrique des Poëmes* appears in a distinguished series of Librairie Droz, known for its publication of scholarly and critical editions and texts. Rouget adds significantly to the substantial books on Ronsard by Benedikte Andersson, Elizabeth Armstrong, Pierre Champion, Fernand Desonay, Danièle Duport, Doranne Fenoaltea, Philip Ford, André Gendre, Alex Gordon, Paul Laumonier, Bruce Leslie, Daniel Ménager, Pierre de Nolhac, Christine Pigné, Olivier Pot, Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, Albert Py, Malcolm Quainton, Marcel Raymond, Margaret de Schweinitz, Isidore Silver, Michel Simonin, Dudley Wilson, and others, all of whom and more Rouget considers while making his own distinct contribution. Rouget is in good company in the past century of Ronsard scholars, and builds on this scholarship effectively. This recent book is a study worthy of the close attention of scholars—not simply of Ronsard but of Renaissance poetry, French poetry, comparative literature, Renaissance studies, humanism, culture, and the history of the book.

Rouget opens his book by stating that the reputation of this poetry was not always good: “Les Poëmes, que Pierre de Ronsard rassemble dans le tome III de la première [édition] collective de ses Œuvres (1560), n’ont pas toujours eu bonne presse” (9). According to Rouget, some of the first readers had been dazzled, blinded, stunned (“éblouis”) by, among other things, the abundance or profusion (“foisonnement”) of these poems, their thematic diversity, and an
unceasingly renewed prosody (10). For Rouget, Ronsard pushed this variety to
the extreme, which was an obstacle to its acknowledgement (“reconnaissance”)
(10). Ronsard brings order to this variety to resolve the paradox of an aesthetic
of perfect movement (“la mouvance parfaite”), the concordia discors or discor-
dia concors as Quainton and Pouey-Mounou note (12). Ronsard’s poetics is a
plenitude of contraries, and here he creates a mosaic of forms and subjects in a
new space that envisions an original world (12–13). Through rhetoric and en-
unciation, as Rouget argues, Ronsard modifies the ethos, the poet who redraws
the contours of his persona (13). Rouget uses a felicitous phrase when speaking
about “l’image d’un poète en rupture,” of a Ronsard in rupture. In Rouget’s
view (to translate), the continual displacements that the Poëmes undergo are
characteristics of the conception that Ronsard has of poetry: the experience of
an aesthetic order that governs the disorder of the world (13–14).

The book contains many insights into this side of Ronsard’s poetics. For
instance, Rouget avers that Ronsard—and here I translate or paraphrase, as
elsewhere—conceives in his Poëmes, a vast natural space staged on three levels,
three degrees of the division of the landscape that recover the high, middle, and
low Virgilian styles (63). Ronsard sometimes mixes the three within a single
poem and creates, paradoxically, an illusion of a creation in movement (“d’une
création en mouvement”) (63). Rouget observes the creativity of Ronsard, who
resorts to a double diffusion of poems in separate collections and within the
Œuvres in order to measure the distance between the two (81). Historians who
studied the career of Ronsard have long noted that he sought to liberate himself
from the corset of the odes and of the sonnets (83). For Rouget, Bocage and
Meslanges explore lyricism, hybridization, and generic tension and are part of
an act of the birth of the poems. Moreover, Rouget discusses fortune, virtue,
and the movement from the grave tone marking the death of Jean Brinon in
Meslanges to a poet looking for the fold or response (“repli”) of nature, the
place of a soothing (“apaisante”) solitude, the writing of the two collections
balancing between joy and sadness (“tristesse”) without falling suddenly from
one to the other (129, 131). In 1561, amid internal conflict in France and ex-
ternal pressures, Ronsard chose withdrawal (177). Using new means, Rouget
claims, Ronsard strove to attain the natural—becoming the centre of a poetry
that converges nature and humanity, heaven and earth, wildness (“sauvage”)
and culture, his temperament a renewed inspiration (179). Rouget often uses
metaphors to describe Ronsard at work as a poet: how he shapes collections
and his Works, for instance, saying that the renovation of the edifice of Oeuvres presents a new physiognomy, where we observe the work of the mason anxious to achieve the right balance and the harmonious relation of structures (225). In 1569, Ronsard’s hybrid writing (“l’écriture hybride”) of poems feeds on the imagery that the concordia discors induces (227). In this interpretation, Rouget continues with his metaphorical and imagistic language, speaking of Ronsard: “Dans le miroitement de leurs images et la dilatation de leurs formes rythmiques, les Poèmes offrent une belle méditation sur le passage du temps, des êtres et des choses” (302). This imagery is of mirroring, shimmering, reflecting: a meditation in sight and sound on time, beings, and things. Rouget’s book begins and ends with images, returning to the aesthetics of variety and to the poetics of the collection (328).

Although critical editions and articles focus on Poèmes, Rouget’s volume stresses the whole of Poèmes as the place of begetting, of poetic creation, where Ronsard reaches for plenitude through analogies and opposites. Rouget examines separate collections from the Bocage of the Odes to the Sixiesme et Septiesme livres des Poèmes (1569), then explores their evolution within the collective editions. Rouget analyzes this new space of theme and poetic forms, an orchestration of difference. Ronsard continually reorganized the Poèmes, the poetics of his poetry, ordering aesthetically a disorderly world. Ronsard has a staying power for poets and those given to poetry, and Rouget’s book helps us to understand Ronsard and to read him again and again.

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Sowerby, Tracey A., and Joanna Craigwood, eds.
Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World.

Tracey A. Sowerby and Joanna Craigwood have brought together an accomplished and beautifully produced interdisciplinary collection that examines early modern literary-diplomatic relations. The contributions involve analysis