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Paris: STFM, 2015.

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REFERENCES

Pierre de Ronsard, Œuvres complètes, edited by Paul Laumonier, Raymond Lebègue and Isidore Silver, Paris: STFM, 2015, 7 vols. ISBN: 978-2-86503-293-8. 150 €

- 1 All specialists of the poetic works of Pierre de Ronsard, known as the “Prince of Poets”, have paid tribute to Paul Laumonier’s dedication in his chronological edition. His enterprise started in 1914 with the publication of volume I (*Odes*) and ended in the volume XVI (*La Franciade*). The next volumes (XVII to XX) were prepared by Raymond Lebègue and Isidore Silver after his death in 1949. The last was published in 1967 and was followed by a set of *errata* and *addenda*, as well as the useful index (tome XX) in 1975. The strengths of Laumonier’s edition have been praised since the beginning of the project. These are mainly the chronological perspective that facilitate the understanding of the text within its context; the perception of the evolution of Ronsard’s poems with a list of their variants; critical notes that shed light on Ronsard’s literary sources, and his influence on the time. The result of this collaborative work, initiated by the founder of modern criticism in the field of Ronsard studies and carried on by his faithful disciples, has been a reference work used by generations of scholars.
- 2 The new edition that has been released by the *Société des Textes Français Modernes* is more of a reprint than a revised edition. In an attractive cream coloured box, readers will find the complete set of 20 tomes bound in 7 volumes. The editors of the new publication explain that they want to provide a corrected edition that includes *errata* which were listed and reprinted in some volumes for the past few decades. They also wish to present the complete set in a modernized binding (acid-free paper, new binding). The tables of concordance (t. VII, pp. 466-515) with the “Pléiade” edition (ed. J. Céard, D. Ménagier and M. Simonin, Paris: Gallimard, 2 vols., 1993-1994), and the new pagination added at the bottom of each tome make it easier for the reader to navigate

Ronsard's complex works. Any initiatives to promote Ronsard's poetry, are most welcome, as the quality, range, and volume of his works are to be celebrated. This reprint offers the opportunity to discover almost the entirety of Ronsard's literary production and replaces previous copies in which the binding and pages are fragile due to much use. It is unfortunate that readers who wish to replace one or two volumes will have to pay for the whole set priced at 150 Euros.

- 3 It is also puzzling why the *Société des Textes Français Modernes* has not taken advantage of this opportunity to provide a fully revised edition. Since the completion of the Laumonier-Lebègue-Silver edition, a large quantity of first-class scholarship has been published, and this reprint does not include it. Since the first print, reprints have sometimes presented a list of *errata* and *addenda*, but this accumulation of "cahiers additionnels" does not help the understanding of Ronsard's poetry (in this new edition, they are simply duplicated at their original place and in tome XIX). Also, these revisions may seem dated since the first set appeared hundred years ago, and tome XVIII fifty years ago. For example, *La Franciade* was printed in tome XVI in 1950. An appendix included earlier versions, both manuscript and printed, of the epics with numerous variations that are crucial in measuring the extent of Ronsard's later revisions. These were unknown to Laumonier and were provided by R. Lebègue. In 1982, Lebègue and Guy Demerson printed a cahier additionnel with a bibliography, critical notes that affect some of Laumonier's original footnotes (pp. 378-395), and the variations in Ronsard's poems. In Laumonier's time, the well-informed reader had to read Ronsard's text of 1572, with its variants on each page, as well as the ones listed at the end of the book to ensure proper understanding. Recent discoveries have brought to attention the existence of other variants collected in the Turin manuscript (book IV) as written about in Rouget's *Ronsard et le Livre* (2010). To fully understand the text, the reader will have to have tome XVI of Laumonier's edition, a second copy open to the "Cahier additionnel"-section, the list of variants found in the manuscript (Rouget, 2010), as well as the commentaries provided by the extensive notes of the Pléiade edition. In addition, these should be supplemented by the analysis recently published by D. Bjaï, C. Jomphe, J.-C. Ternaux, B. Méniel and many other scholars. *La Franciade* is not the only problematic edition. Tome IV of *Les Amours* (1552) is perhaps more significant, given its popularity in the field of Renaissance studies. In spite of attempts made by R. Lebègue to amend the poetic text and update bibliographic information, this edition presents *Les Amours* as it originally appeared with some corrections and bibliographical additions from 1982. He unfortunately chose to leave out the important *Commentaire* by M.-A. de Muret. This oversight is repeated in tome X, where the "Second livre des Amours" ignores the *Commentaire* by R. Belleau. Volume IV encompasses an antiquated analysis and lacks support from a diverse collection of scholarly study.
- 4 Laumonier's intent was to provide a chronological set of the original editions of Ronsard's books and to list all later variants of the individual poems. This was an extensive ambition that brought him the respect and admiration of all Ronsardian critics. Some of these scholars, in particular Silver in 1953, and J. P. Barbier-Mueller in 1982-1984, have noticed that the transcriptions of the poems are sometimes inaccurate. The reason for this can easily be explained by the turmoil of the World War as material could be lost or inaccessible editions. In spite of his devotion to Ronsard, Laumonier had initiated a monumental project that he could hardly achieve alone. The first tomes (the *Odes*, in particular, which were the focus of Laumonier's thesis) are usually well

edited. In the later ones, the editor has been less careful and discrepancies are found between the variants listed by Laumonier and the original collected editions that are now accessible online through Gallica of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. M. Simonin observed that Laumonier was not aware of existing manuscripts, as well as some earlier printed editions of Ronsard's poems published in the books of his contemporaries. J. P. Barbier-Mueller caught a number of typographical mistakes in Laumonier's transcription of the *Second livre des Meslanges* (1559) and the *Discours* (1562). My own reading has confirmed that there are numerous mistakes in the transcription of the other texts, for instance in the separate editions of *La Promesse* and *Le Proces*, and the collected editions from 1560 to 1587. Of course, some of these errors are inevitable and Laumonier cannot be held responsible, given the enormous task he was able to accomplish. However, these observations should warn the specialists who might be tempted to use this edition to interpret a poem and use the list of variants.

- 5 Laumonier was an immense scholar, a man with great vision who dedicated his life to the study and the dissemination of Ronsard's works. He also deserves praise for his chronological edition produced with the Société des Textes Français Modernes. This edition, like any great monument, has revealed cracks and gaps over the years. Even the "établissement du texte" should be scrutinized carefully in some tomes. In short, we must read Ronsard's epics with a modern eye.
- 6 It is now time to follow Laumonier's footsteps in the preparation of a new edition, which should be strictly chronological and separate poems and books. Verification of all the variants on the originals, updated information on the early editions (Barbier-Mueller, Rouget), recorded semantic variants, and enriching the critical aspect with modern scholarship published since the Pléiade edition (Bjaï, Pouey-Mounou, Duport, Denizot, Pigné, Carnel, Ford, Langer, Maira, Alduy, Cornilliat, etc.) should be the focus. Finally, Ronsard's texts (manuscripts and printed versions, both in verse or in prose) that were included in the final section of tome XVIII should include a critical edition fuelled by recent discoveries, and poems attributed to the poet deserve to be completed and reassessed. Until such a modern edition is published, continued use of Laumonier's edition should be done cautiously, and of course, with the aid of the Pléiade edition and modern editions of separate poetic books such as *Les Amours* (A. Gendre), *Les Hymnes* (A. Py), and *Les Discours* (M. Smith).

AUTHORS

FRANÇOIS ROUGET

François Rouget is Professor of French and a specialist of Renaissance poetry at Queen's University (Canada). He has published in collaboration several critical editions of poets (O. de Magny, P. de Tyard, Ph. Desportes) and manuscript albums (Catherine de Clermont, Marguerite de Valois). He is the author of *Ronsard et le Livre* (Geneva : Droz, 2 vols., 2010-2012) and the general editor of the *Dictionnaire de Pierre de Ronsard* (Paris: H. Champion, 2015).