LOVE ELEGIES OF THE RENAISSANCE:

MAROT, RONSARD AND LOUISE LABÉ

by

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Throughout literary history, the elegy has remained something of a puzzle. For the ancient Greeks, it was simply a poem, on any one of a variety of themes, written in elegiac couplets. The Roman poets of the Augustan Age, who borrowed the Greek elegiac meter and adapted it to Latin, transformed the elegy into a singularly erotic love poem. To the modern reader, the term "elegy" suggests a lyrical poem of a reflective or melancholy nature, or perhaps a lament. Where is the common denominator?

Somewhere between the ancient and the modern lies the sixteenth century French love elegy. It is our purpose in this paper to seize the elegy at that crucial moment in history when, after a lapse of more than fifteen hundred years, the genre was being re-created. We wish to investigate the debt of the sixteenth century love elegy to its sources and, in turn, to suggest the manner in which it paved the way for modern elegiac poetry. To this end, we have selected three poets--Marot, Ronsard, and Louise Labé--whose work appears to illustrate most clearly the evolution of this genre in sixteenth century France. We hope, in the following chapters, by focusing our attention on the work of these three poets, to find the common thread running through the history of the elegy and thus, in some way, to contribute toward unraveling the mystery of this enigmatic form.

CHAPTER I

THE LATIN LOVE ELEGY AND ITS ORIGINS

When the Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse appeared in 1549, du Bellay included the elegy among the antique genres which the poets of the Pléiade intended to revive. Interestingly enough, literary theorists throughout the ages, from Horace to Boileau, have been quite incapable of explaining what an elegy actually is. This poetic form has undergone a curious evolution from ancient to modern times. Through loss of manuscripts and confusion among critics, the origins of the elegy remain veiled in mystery.

In his work on the Pléiade, Henri Chamard aptly described this state of affairs:

> De tous les genres antiques instaurés par Marot, repris ensuite par la Pléiade, le cas de l'élégie est le plus singulier, le plus déconcertant, disons même le plus obscur.[1]

Ronsard himself expressed the confusion which must have existed in his own mind regarding the elegy when he wrote, toward the end of his life, the following preface to the elegies of 1587, published in the first posthumous edition of his works:

> Les vers de l'Elegie au premier furent faits
> Pour y chanter des morts des gestes et les faicts,
> Joincts au son du cornet: maintenant on compose
> Divers sujets en elle, et reçoit toute chose.
> Amour pour y regner en a chassé la Mort.

[1] Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Paris, Didier, 1961, Vol. IV, p. 162.

> Les vieux grammairiens entre eux sont en discord
> Qui premier l'inventa: mais leur cause plaidée
> Pend au croc sous le juge, et n'est encore vuydée.[1]

The last three lines of this preface are obviously a translation of Horace's comments on the elegy in the Ars Poetica:

> Quis tamen exiguos elegos emiserit auctor
> grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est.[2]

Since plagiarism was the order of the day, Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, writing toward the end of the sixteenth century, chose to translate this same small portion of Horace's work. The resulting lines are not devoid of charm, and Vauquelin incorporated them into his own Art Poétique:

> Qui la triste Elegie a premier amenée
> Cette cause au Palais encor est demenee
> Car les grammairiens entre eux en vont plaidant,
> Et soubs le Juge encor est le procez pendant.[3]

Jacques Peletier du Mans also quotes the Latin poet, but mentions his name specifically:

> De l'Elegie, comme dit le sein juge Horace, par ironie, les Grammairiens an sont an grand débat.[4]

Although there is great mystery surrounding the sources and character of the elegy, most theorists follow Horace in stating that it

[1] Pierre de Ronsard, Oeuvres complètes, texte établi et annoté par Gustave Cohen, Paris, Gallimard, Bibl. de la Pléiade, 1950, Vol. II, p. 646.

[2] Horace, Ars Poetica, Loeb Classical Library edition, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 456, ll. 77, 78.

[3] Jean Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, L'Art poétique, Paris, Garnier, 1885, ll. 535-538.

[4] Jacques Peletier du Mans, L'Art poétique (1555), Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1930, p. 66.

originally had a mournful or sorrowful quality, that it was once associated with tombstones and epitaphs, but that somehow the subject of love came to replace the subject of death. In the Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse, Du Bellay characterized elegies as being "pitoyables".[1] The preceding year, Sebillet had written of their nature as being "triste et flébile".[2] Sebillet's choice of adjectives seems to indicate that he had a copy of Ovid's elegies before him, for one here recalls the Roman poet's well-known lament on the death of Tibullus:

Flebilis indignos, Elegeia, solve capillos[3]

Sebillet goes on to specify that, as subject matter, the elegy "traitte singulierement lés passions amoureuses, lésquéles tu n'as guéres veues ni oyes vuides de pleurs et de tristesse."[4]

A century later, Boileau's personification of Elegy in his Art poétique stressed the mournful quality of the genre:

> La plaintive élégie en longs habits de deuil
> Sait, les cheveux épars, gémir sur un cercueil,
> Elle peint des amants la joie et la tristesse.[5]

In this respect, the French critics again seem to be subscribing to a theory of Horace, for whom the elegy originally expressed lamentation

[1] Joachim Du Bellay, La Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse, Ed. critique par Henri Chamard, Paris, Albert Fontemoing, 1904, pp. 207, 208. "Distile avecques un style coulant et non scabreux ces pitoyables élégies à l'exemple d'un Ovide, d'un Tibule et d'un Properce."

[2] Thomas Sebillet, Art poétique françoys, Paris, Soc. des textes français modernes, Droz, 1932, p. 154. (The footnote refers to Ovid.)

[3] Ovid, Les Amours, III, ix, 1, 3, texte établi et traduit par Henri Bornecque, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, 1930.

[4] Sebillet, p. 154.

[5] Boileau, Art Poétique, Chant II, 39-41.

and prayer:

> Versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum
> post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.[1]

In modern times, we have returned to this notion of the elegy so that, in the contemporary reader's mind, the term immediately conjures up images of death, mourning, and country churchyards. This was, however, not at all the case for Clément Marot, the first French poet to publish a book of elegies, in the Suite de l'Adolescence Clémentine toward the end of 1533. It was not true of Ronsard, who devoted numerous elegies to the subject of love, nor of Louise Labé, who published three love elegies at Lyon in 1555. Nor was it true of the three principal Roman love elegists--Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid,--to whom our French elegiac poets, particularly Ronsard, have a certain debt, the extent of which we shall investigate in the course of this paper. Ronsard's previously quoted preface describes just what occurred in Augustan Rome and in sixteenth-century France. Love chased Death from the elegy, so that in the Rome of the first century B.C., the elegy became the preferred vehicle of love poetry, particularly of an erotic nature. The subject of death in the elegy is rare both in Augustan Rome and among the poets of the Pléiade and their contemporaries.

This curious turn of events has been explained in a rather peculiar way by Jacques Peletier du Mans:

> A mon avis, que l'Elegie a été transférée an l'Amour, nô point comme an consideracion de joyeusete: mes plus tôt de tristece, dont les povres amoureus sont toujours pleins, ou pour le moins,

[1] Horace, Ars Poetica, 75, 76.

par ce qu'il i à de tous deus, e du bien e de l'annui.[1]

The explanation offered here by Peletier du Mans, that love replaced death as the subject of the elegy because of the sorrows and suffering generally endured by the lover, appears to us somewhat contrived. Unfortunately, no better explanation has ever been given. In fact, the very notion that the elegy was originally a song of mourning has been much questioned. In order to clarify matters a bit, we must consider briefly the work of the Latin love elegists and the ancient Greek models which may have been available to them.

The commonly held theory that the elegy was once a lament is not entirely valid and may be based on a false etymology of the term. Actually, among the poets of ancient Greece the elegy appears to have had various themes, of which the lament for the dead was only one example. The word is derived from the Greek "elegos", song of mourning, and was apparently used in this sense in Euripidean tragedies.[2] However, certain Greek-English lexicons offer, as the first definition of "elegos", song or melody, originally accompanied by the flute, and later lament, or song of mourning.[3] The notion of flute accompaniment is important in the history of the elegy. It has even been suggested, since most ancient elegies are not laments, that "elegos"is in some way related to a word of eastern origin, perhaps Phrygian, such as survives in the Armenian "elegn", meaning reed or flute, and that the original

[1] Jacques Peletier du Mans, L'Art Poétique (1555), Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1930, p. 183.

[2] Cf. Georg Luck, The Latin Love Elegy, London, Methuen & C. Ltd., 1969, p. 25.

[3] E.g. Liddell, Greek-English Lexicon.

meaning was simply "flute song".[1] Ronsard alluded to the use of a wind instrument in the above-quoted preface in which he described the verses of the earliest elegies as "joincts au son du cornet".

In any case,--and in this respect the musical accompaniment is significant,--the elegy seems to have been a metrical rather than a thematic notion among the ancient Greeks.[2] The Greek poets invented the elegiac couplet, or distich. Using the heroic meter, the dactylic hexameter as a basis, they created a new meter consisting of one line of dactylic hexameter followed by one of dactylic pentameter, producing a musical and somewhat haunting effect. The elegaic meter has been described as one particularly suited to a personal, or subjective, type of poetry inasmuch as the shorter second line seems to be a reflection on the longer first one.[3] The hexameter followed by a pentameter are the unequal lines to which Horace refers by the previously quoted "versibus impariter iunctis" in the Ars Poetica.

This meter was used in ancient Greek elegies, whatever the subject matter, and characterized the genre, the first elegist probably

[1] Cf. Oxford Classical Dictionary and Boisacq, Emile, Dictionnaire Etymologique de la langue grecque, Heidelberg et Paris, 1938. Also, Georg Luck, p. 27.

[2] Cf. Dora Elisabeth Frey, Le Genre élégique dans l'œuvre de Ronsard, Imprimerie Georges Thone, Liège, 1939, p. 5: "L'élégie ancienne, conformément à la prédominance des critères de forme dans la poésie antique, est donc tout d'abord une notion métrique."

[3] Cf. Georg Luck, p. 28: "The charm of the elegiac couplet--a charm easily felt but hard to describe--may be explained in a number of ways. There is an element of surprise in the pentameter: it seems to begin like the hexameter which has preceded it, but instead of rolling along majestically, it suddenly stops and reverses, becoming its own echo."

being Mimnermus of Colophon, who wrote in the seventh century B.C. According to whatever few fragments exist, Mimnermus apparently dedicated one of his two books of elegies to Nanno, a woman whom he supposedly loved, although this title may have been given to the book later by Alexandrian grammarians. The elegies are not love poems, but appear to have dealt with a variety of themes, one of which was the pleasures of youth and the horrors of impending death, a foreshadowing of the Epicurian theme. Other themes treated in elegiac couplets by ancient Greek poets are conviviality, as in flute songs sung over wine, and identified with the poet Phocylides, military or political themes, attributed to Solon, as well as epitaphs and inscriptions on votive offerings.[1] Among these ancient Greek elegists, the most significant is undoubtedly Mimnermus, whose inspiration Roman elegists occasionally mention. Actually, even Mimnermus' influence is negligible, and he is at most, according to the Propertian scholar Frédéric Plessis, the mythical father of the love elegy.[2]

The possible contribution of the Alexandrian poets Callimachus and Philetas to the Latin love elegy is more worthy of our attention. Here, too, everything is quite speculative because of the fact that there are no extant fragments of Hellenistic love elegies. It is known that a school of poets flourished at Alexandria in the third century

[1] Cf. J. Wight Duff, A Literary History of Rome, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1960, pp. 399 ff. Also, Jean Bayet, La Littérature Latine, Paris, Armand Colin, 1965, pp. 253 ff.

[2] Cf. Frédéric Plessis, Etudes Critiques sur Properce et ses élégies, Paris, Hachette, 1884, p. 256: "S'ils l'invoquaient (les élégiaques romains), c'est qu'ils voyaient en lui le créateur lointain, j'allais dire mythique, de l'élégie amoureuse, et la seule supériorité qu'ils aient pu lui attribuer sur Callimaque, est l'antériorité."

B.C. around the library of the Ptolemies, of which Callimachus was chief custodian. The Alexandrian poets, of which Callimachus and Philetes seem to have been the most prominent, produced a mannered type of poetry, filled with mythological references, and aimed at perfection of form. There was much imitation of earlier types, including the epitaph. What is significant, and somewhat odd, is that the Roman love elegists claim to have taken these Alexandrian poets as models. Propertius proclaims himself the Roman Callimachus in IV, i, 64 ("Umbria Romani patria Callimachi") and appeals to the Alexandrian poets for inspiration on four other occasions.[1] Although Tibullus does not mention them, Ovid speaks of Callimachus once when, with a touch of irony, he describes the Alexandrian poet's work as being judged far superior to his own.[2] Since few fragments of Alexandrian elegy have been found, and none at all of love elegy, one wonders to what poems Propertius and Ovid could be referring. Ironically, the one complete Alexandrian elegy in existence is available to us only in Latin translation. It is Catullus' #66 or "Lock of Berenice" (De Coma Berenices), a lengthy poème de circonstances in elegaic couplets filled with mythological allusions and said to be a translation of a poem by Callimachus. The twenty or so lines of the original which have been discovered attest to the faithfulness of Catullus' translation.[3]

[1] Propertius, II, i, 40; II, xxxiv, 32; III, i, 1; III, ix, 43. Cf. Properce, Elégies, texte établi et traduit par D. Paganelli, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, 1929.

[2] Ovid, Amores, II, iv, 18, 19.

[3] Cf. Moses Hadas, A History of Latin Literature, New York, Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 86.

The question then arises whether a group of Alexandrian love elegies ever existed from which the Roman love elegists could have drawn their inspiration. Almost all the poems of Philetas have been lost. According to Frédéric Plessis, approximately fourteen hundred lines of Callimachus' work have survived, little in comparison to what no longer exists, but quite a bit in comparison to Philetas:

> Mais ce qui n'a point péri est justement ce qui était moins digne de survivre, des hymnes, pièces officielles nécessairement froides et guindées, et les épigrammes. Nous n'avons plus les élégies de celui que Quintilien, interprète de l'opinion générale, disait le premier dans l'élégie, 'princeps elegiae'.[1]

Perhaps Quintilian is using as his criterion Callimachus' Aetia (Causes), a long narrative and historical elegy which is in no way a love elegy.

I. M. Lonie argues that it is difficult, if not impossible, to believe in the existence of Alexandrian subjective love elegy since no fragments of such elegies have been found.[2] He defines subjective love elegy as "elegy of an erotic nature, reflecting and to some extent analyzing the poet's own experience", and suggests that references in Propertius' and Ovid's work to Alexandrian elegy can be interpreted in another way. According to this critic, it is a question of the contrast between epic and all other kinds of poetry. Callimachus disliked epic, and "so long as it was not epic, Alexandrian and Latin poets were writing in the Alexandrian tradition".[3]

[1] Plessis, pp. 268-69.

[2] I. M. Lonie, "Propertius and the Alexandrians", AUMLA (Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association), #11, Sept. 1959, pp. 17-34.

[3] Ibid., p. 25.

The question of the possible influence of Alexandrian poetry on the "poetae novi" of the Augustan era has much occupied scholars. Rather than imitating actual models, the Roman elegists were probably inspired by a certain attitude toward poetry, implicit in Callimachus' "new poetics" and most clearly represented in his epigrams. According to this theory, the poet concentrated on elegance of composition and refinement of form rather than the communication of eternal truths. The poet no longer had the sacred mission attributed to him by earlier Greek lyric poets, such as Pindar, and echoed by Ronsard in his hastily written Abbregé de l'Art Poetique François (1565).[1] The Alexandrians humanized the poet, freeing him to express his own feelings and describe his own experiences.[2]

Emile Cahen is of the same opinion as I. M. Lonie concerning the possible existence of Alexandrian love elegy. In his introduction to a translation of Callimachus' work, he declares that this type of elegy could not have existed:

> Une question reste, qui est d'importance, celle de savoir si Callimaque avait écrit des "élégies" amoureuses, au sens de l'élégie latine. . . . Aucun fragment, aucun vers ne nous est attesté comme faisant partie d'un recueil d'élégies. . . . Or il est inadmissible qu'un tel recueil n'êut pas laissé quelque

[1] Quoted by Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Vol. II, p. 68.

[2] Cf. The Poems of Catullus, transl. by James Michie, Rupert Hart-David, London, 1969; intro. by Robert Rowland, pp. 13-15. p. 15: "The slightest incident could be transformed into a skillfully constructed epigram whose validity . . . would derive from its neatness and the extent to which the common stock of gossip--the equivalent, in a sense, of the Alexandrians' common stock of myth--was cleverly alluded to. The New Poets could with stubborn irreverence insist on regarding these elegant and frequently obscene trifles as poetry, and the fact that the literary establishment regarded them as worthless would only have reinforced their determination to be different and independent."

> trace. . . . Et surtout l'idée même de la longue élégie amoureuse est exactement contradictoire à la manière volontairement brève et ramassée de Callimaque dans l'expression du sentiment. Nous connaissons un Callimaque, poète érotique: c'est celui des Epigrammes et de quelques pièces, peut-être des Poèmes; il n'y en a jamais eu d'autre.[1]

If we take Callimachus' erotic epigrams as having somehow inspired the Latin elegiac poets, then we easily see Catullus as the transitional figure and precursor of the Latin elegists. The fact that he was also the translator of Callimachus' "Lock of Berenice" lends credence to this theory. Of Callimachus' Epigrammes, sixty-three pieces survive. They are all written in elegiac distichs and cover a variety of subjects, of which the main categories are the funereal epigrams, or epitaphs, and the erotic epigrams. Again, the themes of love and death are associated, but probably because these are such personal, subjective themes, and that the epigram, being generally a poem of only two to six lines, is particularly suitable to the spontaneous expression of feeling. Sulpicia's short, passionate poems to her love Cerinthus, which form part of the Corpus Tibullianum and have been expanded into full-length elegies by Tibullus, are further evidence of this fact. Of course, in Callimachus' epigrams, as in all subjective poetry, the literary element is joined to the expression of personal feeling and experience.[2] The question of the limits of sincerity in the elegy, of where subjectivity ends and literary convention begins, is one that can be applied to all the poets studied in this paper.

[1] Callimaque, texte établi et traduit par Emile Cahen, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, 1922, pp. 11, 12.

[2] Emile Cahen stresses this fact in his introduction to Callimachus' work.

The notion of the erotic epigram as a "miniature elegy"[1] then leads us to Catullus. Catullus was the first Roman poet to compose poems in elegiac meter, at least the first whose works are extant. Before him, there was apparently a poet by the name of Cornelius Gallus who published four books of love elegies about an actress named Lycoris. Unfortunately, all of Gallus' poems have been lost, and the only reason that we know of their previous existence is that his close friend Virgil pays tribute to him and to his unhappy love for Lycoris in his Tenth Eclogue.[2]

Of the 116 poems of Catullus which are in existence, fifty-two are written in elegiac meter (#65-116). Some of these consist of only a few lines; others are quite long, such as the previously mentioned "Lock of Berenice" and the somewhat obscene "Dialogue with a Door" (#67), a piece of calumny about a young married woman in Verona. Among the short pieces are certain love poems dedicated to Lesbia which might be termed epigrams and which are clearly forerunners of the love elegy, such as the exquisite poem #85, consisting of only one distich.

Odi et amo: quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

The last word "excrucior" conveys the agony that the poet experiences through the ambivalence of his feelings for Lesbia, through the fact that he is able simultaneously to hate and love the same woman, to despise her for her infidelity and yet to continue desiring her.

In another epigram, a lovely one consisting of two elegiac

[1] Robert Hallowell describes it as such in Ronsard and the Conventional Roman Elegy, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1954.

[2] Cf.: Extremum hunc, Arathusa, mihi concede laborem.
pauca meo Gallo, sed quae legat ipsa Lycoris,
carmina sunt dicenda: neget quis carmina Gallo?

distichs, Catullus tenderly declares his love for Lesbia, and there is a fusion of physical and spiritual love:

> Nulla potest mulier tantum se dicere amatam
> vere, quantum a me Lesbia amata mea's.
> nulla fides ullo fuit umquam foedere tanta
> quanta in amore tuo ex parte reperta mea st.[1]

Also included in the series of poems in elegiac meter is Catullus' well-known lament on the death of his brother, ending with the familiar line:

> atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale.[2]

According to one critic, this poem, along with another on the destruction of Catullus' love for Lesbia, marks the transition from epigram to elegy.[3] The epigram, as a vehicle for the expression of personal feeling, was expanded into the longer elegy which, in the hands of the Roman elegists Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, would become an ideal medium for subjective poetry reflecting the whole gamut of human emotions, particularly love.

In order to understand the phenomenal appearance of the Latin love elegy, we must consider the social conditions of the period that produced it. Much is attributable to the new political state of affairs, the "pax augusta" which followed the turbulence of civil wars before Octavian came to power in 31 B.C. The ideals of Republican Rome, represented by the poet and historian Ennius, gave way to a new

[1] Catullus, #87.

[2] Catullus, #101.

[3] Cf. E. A. Havelock, The Lyric Genius of Catullus, New York, 1967, p. 140. The author cites Catullus #76. In this particular poem, Catullus implores the gods to free him from the suffering and despair that is his lost love: "eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi."

ethic, that of an elegant and cultivated society enjoying all the advantages of leisure. It is not difficult to see how, in such an environment, a more subjective type of poetry might easily arise, in which the expression of personal feelings would replace the interests of the State.[1]

It is certainly of some significance that in Augustan Rome, very much as in court society during the reigns of François Ier and Henri II, women began to enjoy a rather high social status. One reason appears to have been the presence of a large number of Greek courtesans in Rome, many of whom were cultured and well-educated.[2] Just as the presence of cultured Italian courtesans in sixteenth-century France was to inspire French women, such as Louise Labé at Lyon, aristocratic Roman women seem to have emulated these fashionable courtesans from Greece. The more significant role of women in Roman society contributed much to the creation of poetry devoted to the relationships between men and women.

Moreover, the reforms proposed by Augustus to restore moral values, encourage marriage, and make adultery a public offense, had very little success. Traditional marriage was losing its meaning in Rome of the First Century B.C., as marriage involved no religious ceremonies and divorce became increasingly easy to obtain.[3] We know that Ovid himself

[1] Cf. Moses Hadas, A History of Latin Literature, p. 184: "Only 'gentlemen' can indulge in the preoccupation with their own sensibilities in the mood of studied wistfulness and self-pity called elegiac." In his introduction to the Poems of Catullus (London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969, p. 13), Robert Rowland describes the work of the Latin elegists as "fashionable, witty, personal poems written by men of leisure for their own amusement."

[2] Cf. George Luck, The Latin Love Elegy, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969, p. 23.

[3] Cf. Jean Bayet, La Littérature Latine, Paris, Armand Colin,

was married three times and twice divorced. The more relaxed moral code is reflected in the appearance of the Ars Amatoria in 1 B.C., which contributed to Ovid's later banishment from Rome by Augustus. For this long, didactic poem on the art of seduction, Ovid chose to write in elegiac meter. It is also evident in the so-called "canon of adultery"[1] in Latin love elegies, for the elegiac love affair always exists outside the possibility of marriage. Horace treats the subject of adultery as one of the most common vices of the period in Satires I, ii.[2] Catullus' Lesbia is actually Clodia, wife of a governor. Tibullus' Delia, the inspiration of his first book of elegies, is a woman named Plania; she was probably a freedwoman, a "libertina", and thus disqualified from traditional marriage under Roman law. Nemesis, who appears in Tibullus' second book, is a courtesan. Propertius' Cynthia was Hostia, the daughter or grand-daughter of a famous poet, and probably a courtesan. Ovid's Corinna is very likely an artistic creation, a composite of many women the poet has known, and she is often referred to as having a husband.[3]

1965, p. 254. "Ainsi Auguste avait pris une série de mesures, les 'lois juliennes' pour favoriser les mariages féconds, pour combattre le célibat, et réprimer l'adultère, mais il suffit d'ouvrir les élégiaques pour se rendre compte du peu d'intérêt qui s'attacha, dans la société mondaine, à de telles dispositions." Cf. also Georg Luck, The Latin Love Elegy, p. 22.

[1] Frank O. Copley, Latin Literature from the Beginnings to the Close of the Second Century A.D., Univ. of Michigan Press, 1968, p. 252.

[2] Horace, Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica, with an English translation by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 18-28.

[3] Esp. Amores, I, iv, 1: "Vir tuus est epulas nobis aditurus easdem". Frank O. Copley emphasizes that this is a convention of pseudo-adultery, since the woman in question is usually assumed to be a slave or freedwoman and thus disqualified from legal marriage.

All are talented and educated women in accordance with the ideals of the period as reflected in Ovid's Ars Amatoria. Propertius' Cynthia is a "docta Puella" who dances, sings, plays the harp, and writes as good poetry as the ancient Greek poetess Corinna.[1]

The Latin love elegists substituted love, leisure, and artistic endeavors for the patriotic ideals of Republican Rome, and for that they seem continually apologetic. Catullus refers to his love poems as "nugae", or trifles.[2] Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid often feel guilty about not devoting their time and talents to some nobler pursuit, such as the writing of tragedy, or perhaps epic, as their contemporary Virgil has done. In Book III #9 of Propertius' elegies, the poet's patron Maecenas has evidently urged him to write in a loftier vein. The poet protests, saying that his small ship and sails do not belong on the vast ocean; rather, his place is on a little river. He opposes the "tumidum mare" of epic poetry to the "exiguum flumen" of love poetry, or elegy.[3] Ovid expresses a similar discomfort with elegy in Book III #1 when, in the dark and dreamlike atmosphere of an ancient forest, he meets two figures, Elegy and Tragedy. Elegy is beautiful and graceful, and curiously enough, one of her feet is longer than the other,[4] a reference of course

[1] Propertius, II, iii.

[2] Catullus, #1, l.4.

[3] ll. 35, 36: "Non ego velifera tumidum mare findo carina;
tota sub exiguo flumine nostra mora est."
In Book IV of the Elegies, Propertius has evidently yielded to the pressure exerted by his patron because the book is devoted mainly to the grandeur of Rome and other patriotic themes.

[4] Cf. l. 8: "Et, puto, pes ille longior alter erat".

to the hexameter and pentameter of the elegiac couplet. But in her, even this slight deformity is a source of beauty.[1] Tragedy is fierce and threatening in appearance. She asks the poet when he will have finished with the foolish loves that make him a laughingstock everywhere. She commands him to abandon elegy and write tragedy. Elegy gently defends herself, invoking the protection of Venus. The poet's response is to pacify both; for the present time, he will devote himself to the Amores, but afterward, a nobler work (grandius opus) awaits his attention.

The comparison between soldier and lover is another characteristic of the Latin love elegy. The ideal of the "amator" has replaced the "miles" of Republican Rome.[2] Consequently, military metaphors abound, and Venus and Mars often appear in such poems as complementary deities. The following are only three examples among many:

> Hic ego dux milesque bonus (Tibullus I, i, 75)
>
> Non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis,
> hanc me militiam fata subire volunt (Propertius, I, vi, 29, 20)
>
> Militat omnis amans et habet sua castra Cupido (Ovid, I, ix, 1)

In addition to the theme of the adulterous love affair and the vision of the lover as soldier, there are, in the Latin love elegy, a certain number of conventional themes that constantly recur as leitmotifs. These are catalogued in detail by Robert Hallowell in his study

[1] Cf. line 10: "Et pedibus vitium causa decoris erat".

[2] Frank O. Copley (op. cit., p. 267) calls attention to the fact that this leads to the use of sexual puns in Ovid's elegies, e.g., "nocturna bella" (Amores, I, ix, 45).

on Ronsard and the Roman elegy.[1] Among them are the theme of infidelity or unrequited love and the consequent suffering endured by the poet. A stock character is the "lena", or entremetteuse, who greedily tries to turn the girl's interest away from the poet and toward a wealthier lover, a "dives amator". The poet then condemns the venality of women and evokes a mythical Golden Age before man's corruption by wealth. There is also the theme of illness, for the girl whom the poet loves, or even the poet himself, invariably falls ill, and the poet prays for a swift recovery. At some point, one of the lovers inevitably makes a dangerous journey, which will involve a period of separation, and the poet prays for a safe return. There is also a curious conventional theme which the Roman elegists evidently borrowed from the poets of Alexandria.[2] It is the serenade before the mistress' door, an outgrowth of the Greek theme by which the lover, after a night of drunken revelry, is denied admission to his lady's house. He spends the night on the cold, hard doorstep, addressing his lament to the inexorable door (ianua) and entreating it to open.[3] This also recalls the previously quoted bit of lewd gossip about a woman from Verona, Catullus' "Dialogue with a Door" (LXVII), which is probably a parody on the theme, Catullus having been

[1] Robert E. Hallowell, Ronsard and the Conventional Roman Elegy, University of Illinois Press, 1954, pp. 30 ff.

[2] Cf. Callimachus, Epigrams XLII and LXIII. (trad. Emile Cahen, pp. 115 and 121).

[3] E.g. Tibullus, I, ii; Propertius I, xvi; Ovid, I, vi. Also see Copley, p. 259, for a discussion of this "vigilatio ad clausas fores", as well as Laumonier, p. 581, footnote: "Il y en a plusiers exemples (de la lamentation devant une porte fermée) dans l'Anthologie grècque, chez les élégiaques latins et néo-latins (v. par ex. Pontano, Amor., I, "Carmen nocturnum ad fores puellae; "Queritur ante limen puellae").

an enthusiastic student of Alexandrian poetry.

Two other themes worthy of mention and to which we shall have the occasion to refer again, particularly in respect to Ronsard, are the immortality of poetry and the epicurean "carpe diem" theme. Propertius assures his Cynthia that his books will make her the most famous of all beautiful women, more so than Calvus' Quintilia or Catullus' Lesbia.[1] Ovid ends his third book of elegies with the certainty that they will continue to live after his death.[2]

As for the "carpe diem" or "carpe florem" theme, that ethic which, as Paul Laumonier indicates, is not attributable solely to Anacreon or Epicurus, but rather is at the very basis of religious tradition and of human nature itself,[3] the elegists embraced it with all the fervor of their contemporary Horace. It had furnished the theme of Catullus' celebrated "vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus" (Catullus V). Similarly, Tibullus implores Delia to enjoy the pleasures of love while the Fates allow, for shadowy death will soon overtake the lovers.[4] Propertius urges Cynthia, while there is still time, to enjoy love, which,

[1] Propertius, II, xxv, 3, 4:
"ista meis fiet notissima forma libellis,
Calve, tua venia, pace Catulle, tua."

[2] Ovid, III, xv, 19, 20:
"inbelles elegi, genialis Musa, valete,
Post mea mansurum fata superstes opus."

[3] Paul Laumonier, Ronsard, poète lyrique, Paris, Hachette, 1932, p. 564: "Et il nous semble qu'elle eût existé de tout temps, même sans Epicure et Aristippe, car elle est au fond de la nature humaine."

[4] Tibullus, I, i, 69, 70:
"Interea, dum fata sinunt, iungamus amores;
iam veniet tenebris Mars adoperta caput."

however long it may last, is never quite long enough.[1]

Within the framework of certain conventional themes, each Roman elegist has his own distinctive character. Refined, elegant Tibullus, "culte Tibulle", as Ovid refers to him in his haunting elegy on Tibullus' death[2], is most concerned with the joys of love in the peace and tranquility of the countryside. In his first elegy to Delia (I, i), he deplores those who spend their lives in the pursuit of wealth, as well as those who travel far and wide, on land and sea, to conquer new lands, such as his patron Messalla. The poet's ideal is to spend his life in the country with Delia, and on a wintry night, when the icy winds blow, to fall asleep in his familiar bed, with the woman he loves pressed tenderly against him. Unlike the others, he will be a general and soldier in the service of Venus ("Hic ego dux milesque bonus", l. 75). Here again military metaphors abound.

Like Catullus and Propertius, Tibullus was a poet of youth, as he lived to be little more than 35 at most. We know that he died in 19 B.C., the same year as Virgil, but the date of his birth is alternately given as 55 and 48 B.C. Amid the conventional elegiac themes, his elegies to Delia are filled with delicious rustic tableaux which convey all the freshness and serenity of Virgil's Eclogues. Tibullus suffers, as all the Roman elegists do, the infidelity of the woman he loves, who has allowed herself to be lured away by the conventional "dives amator" through the treachery of the "lena" (I, v and vi). He suffers all the

[1] Propertius I, xix, 25, 26:
"Quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes:
non satis est ullo tempore longus amor."

[2] Ovid, Amores, III, ix, 66.

Catullian ambivalence of simultaneous love and hate. Nowhere is the pain more intense than in the elegies of Book II (iii, iv, and vi) dedicated to the haughty courtesan Nemesis, who desires only wealth and luxury and scorns the poet's attentions while inspiring his most passionate desires. Here, in a manner that anticipates Petrarch, love is perceived as slavery (servitium) and torture.[1]

Like Propertius and Ovid, Tibullus considers himself an "erotic expert"[2] and, with a touch of humor, he awaits the day when, as a teacher in the art of love, he will have a whole following of eager young students.[3] Also in a somewhat satirical vein, he deplores in Elegy I, vi, the fact that the unfaithful Delia has now turned against him his own lessons in the art of deceiving her husband. Now the poet-lover has been caught in his own trap.[4] This didactic and satirical element of Roman elegy of course anticipates the appearance of Ovid's Ars Amatoria.

Tibullus' elegies are constructed with exquisite artistry; the themes are delicately interwoven, and the technique of the monologue intérieur, in which one idea engenders another, conveys every nuance of feeling. The poet's main preoccupation is the distance

[1] Cf. II, iv, 6: "Uror, io! remove, saeva puella, faces".

[2] This subject is discussed in an article by Arthur Leslie Wheeler, "Propertius as Praeceptor Amoris", Classical Philology, Vol. V, Jan.-Oct. 1910, pp. 28-40. Mr. Wheeler refers to "the erotodidactic element which is the chief characteristic of Roman elegy."

[3] I, iv, 79, 80.

[4] I, vi, 10: "heu! heu! nunc premor arte mea"!

between dream and reality, between what is and what might have been, or what could possibly be. It is a theme which, in its wistfulness, is closely linked with the entire elegiac tradition. In I, v, Delia's infidelity and cruelty recall to the nostalgic poet his dream of living with her in the peaceful countryside. Now all that is recognized as illusion.

In I, iii, the poet, an unwilling participant in a military expedition has fallen ill in Greece.[1] His present loneliness and disillusionment lead to the nostalgia of a mythical Golden Age, when men were not yet motivated by the desire for riches and conquests. He then returns to reality. If only he may not die alone and forgotten in a strange land. The fear of death leads the poet to the hope and reassurance that, if he should die alone, he will be taken by Venus and Cupid to the Elysian Fields, the delights of which he then proceeds to imagine. But oscillating between hope and despair, he then envisions a possible alternative as he evokes the lower depths, with Cerberus, Ixion, Tantalus, and all the conventional mythological details. The elegy nevertheless ends on an optimistic note, as the poet envisages a possible safe return, after all, to the arms of Delia.[2]

[1] Cf. Tibulle et les auteurs du Corpus Tibullianum, texte établi et traduit par Max Ponchont, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, 1924, p. 22. In his introduction to this elegy, Max Ponchont describes Tibullus as a forerunner of the Romantic poets and the theme of this elegy as "le thème--qui deviendra le grand thème romantique--de la solitude morale."

[2] Cf. Max Ponchont, op. cit., p. 23: "Les deux grands thèmes de la mort et de l'amour ondoient et s'entrelacent dans tout le cours de la pièce et en réalisent l'unité en nous menant de contraste en contraste. Poésie profondément humaine en somme, par cette tristesse et cette inquiétude que traverse l'ardeur de vivre, par son balancement

When, in the Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoyse, Du Bellay advises French poets on the art of writing elegies, it is as follows:

> Distile avecques un style coulant et non scabreux ces pitoyables élégies, à l'exemple d'un Ovide, d'un Tibule, et d'un Properce, y entremeslant quelquesfois de ces fables anciennes, non petit ornement de poesie.[1]

Of the three Latin elegists discussed, Propertius is undoubtedly the most learned, the poet whose work is, in the Alexandrian manner, most filled with obscure mythological references, with the "fables anciennes" to which Du Bellay alludes.[2] It is perhaps for his reflective nature and for the resulting lack of spontaneity in some of his elegies that, according to Frédéric Plessis, Propertius was long neglected in France.[3] Nevertheless he appears to have been quite popular in his time, as indicated by the fact that lines of his poems, as well as those of Ovid, were found scratched on walls of houses at Pompeii. His stormy five-year love affair with Cynthia (Hostia, the grand-daughter of a poet), provided the general theme for his first three books of elegies, of which only Book I, generally referred to as the Cynthia Monobiblos, appeared during his lifetime. In Propertius' poems, even more than in

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perpétuel du malheur présent au bonheur rêvé, des terreurs de la mort à l'élan de l'amour, de la détresse à l'espérance."

[1] Du Bellay, La Deffence, op. cit., pp. 207, 208.

[2] Book IV of Propertius' Elégies is inspired by Callimachus' Aetia, and his extensive use of mythology is Alexandrian.

[3] Cf. Plessis, p. 283: "La critique française se désintéresse depuis trop longtemps de Properce et de ses élégies". . . . "Ce qui rebute chez Properce, c'est le sérieux qu'il apporte dans la passion. . . . Sa poésie manque trop souvent de jeunesse et de fraîcheur."

Tibullus', love is depicted as a kind of madness that enslaves the poet, depriving him of his reason.[1] In the very first elegy, the poet describes this madness which has overtaken him at the sight of Cynthia and which has already lasted a whole year. The elegiac lover is pale, thin, and inflicted with insomnia. He suffers more tortures than Tantalus and Sisyphus; love is a wound, an illness for which there is no cure. In III, xvii, he seeks a remedy in wine, and in III, xxi, he sees a possible solution in a trip to Athens. The only other alternative for the tormented lover is death, and the themes of love and death are interwoven in many of Propertius' elegies. The poet is literally obsessed by death, and he envisions that he and Cynthia will die together.[2] In a macabre poem at the end of the collection (IV, vii), Cynthia appears to him from beyond the grave in a dream and reproaches him for his infidelity. In fact, she had died some years before, perhaps poisoned by one of her servants. It has been noted that, of all the elegiac heroines, Cynthia is by far the most real, the most interesting, and the most vividly depicted.[3] She is the only one who has any reality for us. In II, ii, her beauty and talent are described in detail. Her hair is long and flowing, her eyes gleam like stars, her skin is like rose petals floating in pure white milk.[4] The poet loves her passionately:

[1] Cf. Archibald W. Allen, "Elegy and the Classical Attitude toward Love: Propertius I", Yale Classical Studies, Vol. XI, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1950, pp. 255-77.

[2] "Sed non effugies: mecum moriaris oportet" (II, viii, 25). "ambos una fides auferet, una dies" (II, xx, 18).

[3] Cf. Kirby Flower Smith, "Propertius: A Modern Lover in the Augustan Age", Sewanee Review, Vol. XXV, 1917, pp. 20-39.

[4] "utque rosae puro lacte natant folia" (II, iii, 12).

"Cynthia prima fuit; Cynthia finis erit" (I, xii, 20)

His love recalls, in its complexity, Catullus' love for Lesbia. In LXXII, Catullus declared that he had loved Lesbia not as an ordinary mistress, but as a father loves his own children:

> dilexi tum te non tantum ut vulgus amicam,
> sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos

Similarly, for Propertius, Cynthia is everything in life--home, family, joys of every instant:

> Tu mihi sola domus, tu Cynthia, sola parentes,
> omnia tu nostrae tempora laetitiae.

In Book II, xv, a delightful erotic elegy, Propertius describes, with much tenderness, the intimate details of a night of love with Cynthia,[1] and the poem ends with the epicurean theme of the brevity of life and the urgency of enjoying the momentary pleasures of love.[2] The poem recalls Ovid's lovely elegy on an afternoon of love with Corinna (I, v), but is far more reflective. In Propertius' elegy, the poet considers the ephemeral quality of pleasure and its philosophical implications. The wealth of precise descriptive details and actual bits of conversation lend an intimacy and reality that are not present in Ovid's poem.

In Elegy I, xviii, Propertius reveals himself as a forerunner of Romanticism. Here nature seems to participate in the suffering of the poet-lover and, in Lamartinian accents, Propertius proclaims that the woods will resound with the cry of Cynthia, and the solitary rocks will be filled with her name:

[1] "O me felicem! O nox mihi candida! et o tu
lectule deliciis facte beate meis!"

[2] "forsitan includet crastina fata dies". (l. 54)

Sed qualiscumque es resonent mihi Cynthia sylvae
nec deserta tuo nomine saxa vacent.

The phenomenon of the Latin love elegy ended with Ovid, or rather, with his banishment from Rome by Augustus in A.D. 8. Of the three Latin elegists, Sebillet recommends Ovid alone as an example for French poets to follow.[1] In his Amores which, as Ovid tells us, originally consisted of five books and were later reduced to three, the love elegy reached its consummate refinement of form, but with less depth and sincerity than we find in Catullus', Tibullus' and Propertius' work. Ovid's Corinna is far less vivid and less interesting than the other elegiac mistresses. She is never really described in any personal sort of way, the poet telling us only, according to convention, that she is beautiful and often unfaithful. She is generally acknowledged to be a fictional creation inspired by various women whom the poet has loved. Ovid traces the course of an elegiac love affair with all its vicissitudes and the conventional cast of characters: the jealous husband, the inexorable guardian of the door (ianitor), the "lena", who convinces the lady to betray her poet-lover with a "dives amator" etc.[2] He paints a vivid picture of the society of the time--of the fashionable, elegant city that was Rome in the late first century B.C.--of its banquets (I, iv), its horse races (III, ii), its shops (I, vii, 100), and its theaters (II, ii, 27; II, vii, 3 ff.). One senses that Ovid

[1] Thomas Sebillet, Art poétique (op. cit.), p. 155: "Or si tu requiers exemples d'Elégies, propose toy pour formulaire celles d'Ovide escrittes en sés trois livres d'Amours: ou mieux ly lés élégies de Marot. . . ."

[2] Cf. Henri Bornecque, Ovide, Les Amours, Paris, 1930, p. vii: "Ovide nous présente l'histoire d'une liaison avec tous ses incidents, depuis ses premiers symptômes jusqu'à la rupture définitive, en passant par toutes les phases de l'amour, heureux, trompé, défiant, jaloux."

suffers less than the other elegists. He is perhaps most genuine when he is being witty and a bit satirical, such as in II, xix, where he admonishes Corinna's husband for not guarding her carefully enough and thereby depriving the poet of the pleasures of "forbidden fruit". Similarly, in II, vii, he indignantly denies having seduced Corinna's hairdresser Cypassis, only to admit in the following elegy that it is, in fact, the case. Much of Ovid's charm lies in this fickle and frivolous side of his nature.[1] Certain of his elegies teeter on the edge of poor taste, such as I, xiv, in which he admonishes Corinna for having ruined her hair by dying it, II, xiii and xiv, regarding Corinna's attempted abortion, and II, vii, in which the poet recalls in detail an incident of sexual impotence. Others are exquisitely delicate, such as the elegy on the death of Corinna's parrot,[2] in which the use of unfamiliar words and the strange repetition of hard consonants in the first two lines (psittacus, imitatrix) suggest a certain bizarre quality or exoticism associated with the rare parrot from India. This elegy, of course, recalls Catullus' even more moving poem on the death of Lesbia's pet sparrow.[3]

The lovely complaint to Aurora (I, xiii) in which the poet implores the dawn, personified by the blonde goddess in her horse-drawn

[1] Cf. Frank O. Copley, (op. cit.), p. 268: "Propertius and Tibullus write about love; Ovid writes about sex."

[2] II, vi: "Psittacus, Eois imitatrix ales ab Indis,
Occidit; exsequias ite frequenter, aves."

[3] Cf. Catullus II, ll. 3-5:
"Passer mortuus est meae puellae,
Passer, deliciae meae puellae,
quem plus illa oculis suis amabat."

chariot, to delay her course and so to leave him more time to lie in his beloved's arms, anticipates the medieval aubade. A conventional complaint to the inexorable doorkeeper (I, vi) is punctuated by the haunting refrain:

tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram.

The point at which Ovid attains new heights of lyricism is in his deeply moving elegy on the death of Tibullus (III, ix), corresponding to Catullus' elegy on his brother's death (CI), and in which he depicts the son of Venus himself in mourning for the poet of love. The central theme is that of the immortality of literature for, Ovid tells us, nothing escapes the greedy funeral pyre except poems:

Defugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos (l. 28)

Thus the names of Nemesis and Delia, Tibullus' loves, will live on eternally, while all that remains of Tibullus himself is ashes enough to fill a small urn. If, however, the spirit exists and we are more than ashes, adds the poet, then Tibullus' soul will inhabit the cool Elysian glades, in company of his dear friends, the poets Calvus and Gallus. The elegy ends on a contemplative note uncharacteristic of the generally flippant Ovid and more reminiscent of Tibullus himself.

Whatever Greek models may have been available to inspire Latin poets in the second half of the first century B.C., the love elegy is a distinctly Roman creation.[1] What we may safely assume is that, taking

[1] Cf. Properce, Elégies, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, 1929, p. viii: "L'élégie, c'est-à-dire le lyrisme de l'amour, a trouvé pour la première fois son expression complète à Rome; c'est là qu'elle s'est épanouie en chefs-d'œuvre, telle une plante qui, dans un bon terrain, donne ses meilleurs fruits ou ses plus belles fleurs."

as a point of departure Alexandrian epigrams and other works of which mere fragments survive, the Latin elegists produced a large number of love poems that were very much a product of the leisurely climate of the Augustan Age. They chose to write in the elegiac meter already introduced into Latin literature by the poet-historian Ennius because they found that of all the meters used by Greek poets, the hexameter followed by the pentameter was best suited to the expression of personal feelings. It was lyrical and, in a certain manner, anti-heroic. Thus Ovid, in his first elegy, announces in a pseudo-Virgilian manner that he had intended to sing of arms and combats in a majestic rhythm (the hexameter) so that the meter would suit the subject, the second verse being equal to the first. Cupid, adds the poet playfully, began to laugh and furtively removed one foot.[1]

The elegy then, rather than owing its origins to epitaphs, was a metrical notion which, in the hands of the Roman elegists, resulted in a very personal type of poetry devoted chiefly to the subject of love. Unlike epic verse in which the poet disappears behind his subject matter, the elegy allowed the poet free rein in the expression of his own experiences and feelings, particularly the joys and sorrows of love.[2] The modern connotation of the term would then be a return to an

[1] Amores, I, i, 1-4:

"Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
Edere, materia conveniente modis.
Par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido
Dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem."

Cf. also Frédéric Plessis (op. cit., p. 251): "Il vaut mieux reconnaître que l'élégie, née postérieurement au mètre élégiaque, l'a choisi comme un moule pour s'y couler et lui a dû son nom."

[2] In answer to the question "Qu'est-ce donc que l'élégie"? M. Plessis answers: "L'élégie, dit l'abbé Faguier, doit être l'expression

earlier etymological notion by which the word "elegos" for the ancient Greeks signified "song of mourning."

As far as our sixteenth-century French poets are concerned, we know that at the collège de Coqueret, Dorat accorded an important place in the curriculum to the Roman elegists.[1] Ronsard alludes to them from time to time, as in his "Amours de Cassandre", LXVII:

> O moy deux fois, voire trois bien-heureux,
> S'Amour me tue, et si avec Tibulle
> J'erre là bas sous le bois amoureux[2]

and in his Elégie à Cassandre:

> Mais que me sert d'avoir tant leu Tibulle,
> Properce, Ovide, et le docte Catulle?[3]

Furthermore Dorat, in his role of ardent Hellenist, also included in the program of study the Alexandrian poets, including Callimachus, and his pupil and later literary adversary, Apollonius of Rhodes.[4]

In Chapter III we shall have further opportunities to examine Ronsard's debt to the Roman elegists. Meanwhile, Chapter II will be devoted to Marot's elegies and to another curious occurrence in the history of the love elegy, its confusion with the épître.

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d'une mélancolie passionnée. . . . Le poète y épanche ses douleurs et ses joies; il y chante surtour ses amours et ceux d'autrui."

[1] Cf. Robert E. Hallowell, op. cit.

[2] Ronsard, éd. Gustave Cohen, Vol. I, p. 29.

[3] Ibid., p. 98.

[4] Cf. Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Paris, Didier, 1961, Vol. I, p. 109: "Dorat, malgré tout son mérite, a quelque peu faussé le goût de ses élèves en leur faisant lire des poètes énigmatiques tels que Lycophron et Nicandre. Doit-on s'étonner, dans ces conditions, que la Pléiade n'ait jamais bien su distinguer d'Athènes Alexandrie?"

CHAPTER II

CLÉMENT MAROT AND "L'ÉPÎTRE AMOUREUSE"

In any discussion of Marot's erudition, or of his lack of it, one almost invariably finds the words of the poet's close friend, the jurisconsult from Toulouse Jehan de Boyssonné: "Marotus latine nescivit." This statement, along with Boileau's often quoted reference to Marot's "élégant badinage", has given us a distorted, or at least a very limited view of Marot the poet.

Obviously, neither Boileau nor Boyssonné is being quite fair to Marot. One has only to consider two deeply moving epistles, one addressed to François Ier, the other to Marguerite in 1536 during Marot's exile in Italy, to see how the poet, in a mood of exquisite melancholy, is capable of transcending the mere badinage of which Boileau speaks. In the same way, the myth of Marot's "ignorance" has caused him to be somewhat underestimated.

Ironically, the poet himself has helped to perpetuate this myth. The account that he gives of his readings in the Sixteenth Elegy is far from impressive:

> J'ay leu des Sainctz la Legende dorée
> J'ay leu Alain, le tresnoble Orateur,
> Et Lancelot, le tresplaisant menteur,
> J'ay leu aussi le Romant de la Rose,
> Maistre en amours, et Valere et Orose,
> Comptants les faictz des antiques Rommains;
> Brief, en mon temps, j'ay leu des Livres maintz.[1]

[1] Clément Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, éd. critique par C. A. Mayer.

If one takes Marot at his word, as critics too often have done, he appears to be a creation of the waning Middle Ages, very far from the enormous culture and erudition of the Renaissance humanists. Without pretending that Marot's background in the classics compares with that of his contemporaries Dolet and Rabelais, or with that of the Pléiade, which is to follow, we must see him as the transitional figure that he really was, or as one has occasionally pictured him, a sort of Janus with eyes turned simultaneously toward the past and the future.

Even Sainte-Beuve, who is not exceedingly kind to Marot, admits that the poet's account of his own readings is far from complete.[1]

> Le choix de ses lectures est aussi curieux que borné. Pour être juste cependant, il faut ajouter au catalogue Virgile, Ovide, Catulle, Martial, Pétrarque et Villon, dans lesquels le poète n'avait pas dû moins profiter que dans Orose et Valère Maxime.[2]

In fact, it would be absurd to suggest that a poet who, on at least four occasions, referred to himself as the "Maro de France"[3] was not at least somewhat acquainted with the writings of Virgil. It appears that Marot, by mentioning only authors whom it was fashionable to read in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is, as C. A. Mayer indicates, simply imitating, with filial respect, a passage of a

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London, The Athlone Press, 1964, p. 247.

[1] Cf. C. A. Sainte-Beuve, Tableau Historique de la poésie française au 16e siècle, reprod. photographique avec des Notes par Marcel Françon, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Schoenhof's, 1963, pp. 19-38.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

[3] Cf. L'Enfer, ll. 360 ff; L'Epître de Frippelippes, l. 252; L'Epître XLIV, l. 118. Also Marot's introduction to Ovid's Metamorphoses.

poem by Jean Marot.[1]

As far as Boyssonné's long remembered words are concerned, Pierre Villey explains them, I think, quite satisfactorily in his study Marot et Rabelais:

> On a beaucoup exagéré, je crois, l'ignorance de Marot. Qu'il n'ait pas lu le grec, que presque personne ne comprenait dans ces premières années du seizième siècle, rien de plus certain ni de moins surprenant. Mais il est probable qu'il a lu le latin beaucoup moins mal qu'on ne l'a prétendu. . . . Je sais bien que Boyssonné, un ami de Marot, a écrit qu'il ne savait pas le latin: "latine nescivit". Mais, pour un érudit de la trempe de Boyssonné, savoir le latin, c'était le savoir à sa manière à lui, le parler et l'écrire, et prétendre en latin à l'ample rotondité de la période cicéronienne.[2]

Even the absurdly jealous Sagon, who lost no opportunity to malign Marot, but who apparently was somewhat of a latinist himself, criticized Marot's lack of knowledge in this domain:

> . . . il ne sait un seul mot de latin
> Et veut prêcher comme un Saint-Augustin.[3]

Villey affirms that it is because his background compares so unfavorably with that of the new generation of scholars that Marot humbly exaggerates his own ignorance in his preface to Ovid's

[1] Clément Marot, Œuvres Lyriques, éd. critique par C. A. Mayer, London, The Athlone Press, 1964, p. 247. The editor shows that Clément Marot has merely imitated a passage of Jean Marot's "La Vray disant Advocate des Dames":

> Qui chercheroit dedans voz garde-robbes
> L'on trouveroit le Romman de la Rose:
> N'y cherchés pas Vallere, ny Orose,
> Le Champion, ny les Faitz Maistre Alain.

V.-L. Saulnier makes the same comparison in Les Elégies de Clément Marot, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1968, p. 89.

[2] Pierre Villey, Marot et Rabelais, Paris, Champion, 1923, p. 17.

[3] "Epître aux deux soeurs de Clément Marot", quoted by Pierre Villey, p. 18.

Metamorphoses with the modest expression, "si peu que je y comprins".

At some time before 1515, even before he wrote "Le Temple de Cupido", a poem steeped in medieval allegory, the young Marot produced a translation of Virgil's first Eclogue. It is unnecessary to insist upon the flaws and inaccuracies which have been found in this youthful work. Alice Hulubei writes of Marot's ignorance of Latin grammar and vocabulary, of his omissions and failure to properly comprehend the text, and of his mediocre, sometimes obscure style.[1] Nevertheless, Mme. Hulubei admits that it is probably Marot who first introduced the eclogue into the French language, and its influence on his later works, such as the delightful "Eglogue au Roy soubs les noms de Pan et Robin" and "La Complaincte d'un pastoreau chrestien", is obvious. Actually, in translating Virgil's first Eclogue, Marot was merely following the tradition of his first teachers, the Rhétoriqueurs,much as he did in "Le Temple de Cupido". Octavien de Saint-Gelais, who was quite a fashionable poet at the time, had translated Ovid's Héroïdes in 1508 and Virgil's Aeneid in 1509.[2] Nevertheless, the implications of such an attempt as far as Ronsard, Du Bellay, and their contemporaries are concerned, are significant.

In later years, the quality of Marot's translations from the Latin seems to have greatly improved, although even his rendering of the first Eclogue enjoyed a certain success when it finally appeared in L'Adolescence Clémentine in 1532. In 1526, he translated the first

[1] Alice Hulubei, L'Eglogue en France au 16e siècle, Paris, Droz, 1938, pp. 50, 51.

[2] Pierre Jourda, Marot l'Homme et l'Œuvre, Paris, Boivin & Cie., 1950, p. 66.

book of Ovid's Metamorphoses, which was published in La Suite de l'Adolescence Clémentine toward the end of 1533. His translation of the second book was to be published posthumously. In his introduction to Book I, dedicated to François Ier, Marot refers to the meaning of "metamorphose" as "transformation", and then proceeds, with his customary wit, to make an amusing play on words:

> Et pour ceste mesme cause, je me suis pensé trop entreprendre de vouloir transmuer celuy qui les autres transmue; et après, j'ai contrepensé que double louenge peult venir de transmuer un transmueur, comme d'assaillir un assailleur, de tromper un trompeur, et moquer un moqueur.[1]

It was during the poet's exile at Ferrare in 1535-1536 that he began to perfect his knowledge of Latin language and literature. It is clear that Marot, as early as 1527, was familiar with Catullus' work, because he had already secured the favor of Renée de France, cousin of François Ier, that year by composing an "épithalame", in the manner of the Latin poet, in honor of her marriage to the Duc de Ferrare.[2] At the court of Ferrare, until the hostility of the Duc made it necessary for him and other French members of Renée's entourage to flee, Marot apparently felt quite at home. He enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of a very literary and cultured milieu, open to the religious ideas of the Reform, where other Frenchmen, such as his friend Lyon Jamet, had

[1] Clément Marot, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, Alphonse Lemerre, 1873, Tome III, p. 154. Clément Marot, Les Traductions, ed. by C. A. Mayer (Tome VI of the Oeuvres Complètes) is in progress.

[2] "Le Chant Nuptial du mariage de Madame Renée de France, avec le duc de Ferrare" is an imitation of Catullus' epithalame composed in honor of the marriage of Manlius Torquatus which is in turn, an imitation of a Greek model. (Cf. Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris, Cambridge, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1968, LXI, pp. 68-85.

found refuge. Liberating himself from the early teachings of the Rhétoriqueurs, he evolved even more toward a personal style. He came in contact with the work of the Italian strambottists, such as that of Olympo de Sassoferrato, which inspired the "blasons anatomiques du corps féminin", although Joseph Vianey suggests that these strambotti were, by that time, already printed, known and admired in France.[1]

In his "Epître au Roy nouvellement sorty de maladie", Marot tells François Ier how much he has been profiting from his enforced stay at Ferrare to study the classics and to improve his knowledge of Italian and Latin:

> Tu trouveras ceste langue italique
> Passablement dessus la mienne entée,
> Et la latine en moy plus augmentée,
> Si que l'exil, qu'ilz pensent si nuysant,
> M'aura rendu plus apte & plus duysant
> A te servir myeulx à ta fantasie . . . .[2]

It is undoubtedly at this time that Marot began to read Ovid's Tristia and Epistolae ex Ponto, letters in which the exiled poet, in elegiac couplets, pleads for a reduction in his sentence and expresses his nostalgia for Rome. These letters were to inspire the two "elegiac" epistles to François Ier and Marguerite earlier mentioned, and the exiled Marot, seeing in himself a French Ovid, quotes them extensively. It is here that we find the image of Ulysses regretting his native land, suggested by Ovid and which Du Bellay would later use to

[1] Cf. Joseph Vianey, Le Pétrarquisme en France au 16e siècle, Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1969, réimpression de l'édition de Montpellier et Paris, 1909, p. 50. In the opinion of A. M. Schmidt (Etudes sur le XVIe siècle, éd. Albin Michel, Paris, 1967, p. 184), "le blason est issu d'un sémillant genre médiéval, le dit."

[2] Clément Marot, Les Epîtres, éd. critique par C. A. Mayer, London, The Athlone Press, 1958, pp. 208-10.

great advantage.[1]

Marot also began to study the epigrams of Martial, which he was later to translate, and which, along with those of the Italian strambottists Tebaldeo and Serafino dall'Aquila, were to have a profound influence on his own huitains and dizains.

At some point, possibly during this culturally enriching exile in Italy, Marot must have read or re-read the love elegies of Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius. In the opinion of Pierre Jourda, it was several years earlier that Marot began to study the Roman elegists:

> Marot, en effet . . . a utilisé les Latins plus qu'on ne le croit d'habitude. Il ne s'est pas borné à traduire les Métamorphoses. Il a lu, sans doute vers 1530, et avec l'expérience d'un homme et non plus l'ignorance d'un enfant, l'œuvre élégiaque d'Ovide, celle aussi de Tibulle, de Catulle, et de Properce auxquels il a emprunté pour ses élégies des lieux-communs, des comparaisons, des images.[2]

Strangely enough, there are relatively few themes and images in Marot's elegies that can be traced to the Roman elegists. Certain scholars have devoted much time and effort to studying and attempting to catalogue them.[3] However, it is now generally acknowledged that Marot's debt to the Latin love elegists is negligible. It is a well established fact, though, that Clément Marot created the elegy in France,

[1] Marot, Les Epîtres, XLVI, p. 249, ll. 157-62:

> Ulixes sage, au moins estimé tel
> Fit bien jadis refuz d'estre immortel
> Pour retorner en sa maison petite,
> Et du regret de mort se disoit quitte
> Si l'air eust pu de son pays humer
> Et veu de loing son vilage fumer.

[2] Jourda, p. 57.

[3] Cf. Alfred Roedel, Studien zu den Elegien Clement Marots, Leipzig, 1893; Ph. A. Becker, Clement Marot, sein Leben und seine Dichtung, Munich, 1926.

just as he was to write the first sonnet in French during his exile in Venice.[1] The twenty-one love poems that he published in 1533 in La Suite de l'Adolescence Clémentine were the first French specimens of the genre. They are considered to have been written between 1525 and the year of their publication. The word "élégie" appears to have been used for the first time in 1500 by Jean d'Auton in his Chronique de Louis XII.[2]

Sebillet, in his treatise of 1548, recommended the elegies of Ovid and those of Marot as examples for poets to follow:

> Or si tu requiers exemples d'Elegies, propose toy pour formulaire celles d'Ovide escrittes en sés trois livres d'Amours: ou mieus ly lés élégies de Marot . . . .[3]

How strange that Sebillet should compare Marot's elegies with Ovid's Amores! Apart from a few reminiscences which we shall soon discuss and which serve only to prove that Marot was familiar with the work of the Latin elegists, there is nothing in the elegies of 1533 that suggests Tibullus, Propertius, or Ovid. Sebillet seems to have succumbed to the traditional confusion regarding the nature of the elegy.

It is true that the twenty-one poems that constituted the

[1] The sonnet that Marot wrote to Renée de France during his exile in Venice in 1536 is considered to be the first sonnet written in French. Marot does not appear to have been aware of the aesthetic possibilities of this form, and so he wrote only four sonnets in all, of which the authenticity of one has been questioned.

[2] Cf. Robert G. Mahieu, "L'Elégie au XVIe siècle. Essai sur l'histoire du genre", Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, XLVI, 1939, pp. 145-79. Also, V.-L. Saulnier, Les Elégies de Clément Marot, p. 162.

[3] Thomas Sebillet, Art Poétique françoys, Soc. des Textes Français Modernes, Paris, Droz, 1932, p. 155.

collection of 1533 all have love as their subject. But on reading them, one has an impression of delicacy, of medieval gallantry quite remote from the passion and sensuality that characterized the Latin love elegy. Most significantly, each elegy is in the form of an epistle, in decasyllables with rimes plates, the first bearing the title "La premiere Elegie en forme d'Epistre". One begins to wonder why Marot selected the term "élégie" for such a collection. Sebillet, in any case, seems to follow Marot in defining an elegy, rather than Ovid's Amores:

> Pren donc l'élégie pour épistre Amoureuse: et la fay de vers de dis syllabes toujours: lesquelz tu ne requerras tant superstitieusement en l'épistre que tu ne la faces par fois de vers de huit, ou moindres (ces règles sont conformes à l'usage de Marot): mais en l'une et en l'autre retien la ryme platte pour plus douce et gracieuse.[1]

Sebillet's words would be completely mysterious if one assumption had not been made which seems to clarify them and which scholars have tended to accept as fact. The key to the mystery is the wide popularity of the translation which Octavian de Saint-Gelais had made of Ovid's Héroïdes in 1508. Marot was undoubtedly familiar with this translation of Ovid's work, consisting of letters in elegiac couplets written by legendary heroines of antiquity to the lovers or husbands who had abandoned them. The melancholy tone of these letters written by, among others, Dido to Aeneas, Medea to Jason, and Penelope to Ulysses--only three letters (XVI, XVIII, and XX) are the replies of the men--is associated in the letter of Sappho to Phaon (XV) with the term "elegy":

> Peut-être aussi demanderas-tu pourquoi mes vers sont alternés (en distiques), alors que je suis plus apte aux modes

[1] Sebillet, p. 156.

> lyriques. Il me faut pleurer sur mon amour: l'élégie est le chant des pleurs; aucun luth ne s'accorde avec mes larmes.[1]

These words, supposedly written by the bereaved Sappho, remind one of Sebillet's assertion that the elegy "est triste et flebile et traitte singuliérement lés passions amoureuses, lésquéles tu n'as guéres veues ni oyes vuides de pleurs et de tristesse."[2] It also suggests Peletier du Mans' curious explanation, already quoted in the previous chapter, of why love replaced death as the subject of the elegy:

> A mon avis que l'Elegie a été transférée an l'Amour, nô point comme an consideracion de joyeusete: mes plus tôt de tristece, dont les povres amoureus sont toujours pleins, ou pour le moins, par ce qu'il i à de tous deux, e du bien e de l'annui.[3]

Sebillet and Peletier du Mans seem to be echoing a passage of Marot's Fourth Elegy regarding the pains and pleasures of love, which suggest to the poet the well worn image of the thorns and the rosebush:

> Sçais tu pas bien qu'amour a de coustume
> D'entremesler ses plaisirs d'amertume,
> Ne plus ne moins comme Espines poignantes
> Sont par Nature au beau Rosier joignantes?[4]

The now accepted theory of the influence of Ovid's Héroïdes

[1] Ovide, Héroïdes, texte établi par Henri Bornecque, Paris, Soc. d'Ed. "Les Belles Lettres", 1928, p. 92:

> Forsitan et quare mea sint alterna requiras
> Carmina, cum lyricis sim magis apta modis.
> Flendus amor meus est; elegia flebile carmen;
> Non facit ad lacrimas barbitos ulla meas.

The mention of the "modes lyriques" and of the "luth" by Sappho seems to be an indirect reference to the possible origin of the word "elegos" as "flute song". (See Chapter I of this paper.)

[2] Sebillet, Art Poétique Françoys, p. 155.

[3] Jacques Peletier du Mans, L'Art Poétique (1555), Soc. d'Ed. Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1930, p. 183.

[4] Marot, Œuvres Lyriques, p. 224.

on Marot's elegies implies that Sebillet, when he suggested Ovid as a model to follow, mistakenly mentioned the Amores rather than the other work.[1]

The distinction between the "élégie" and the "épître" appears rather vague during the sixteenth century. Once again, we must consult Sebillet, who entitles Chapter VII of his treatise: "De l'Epistre, et de l'Elégie, et de leurs différences":

> Marot en ses oeuvres, ou l'Imprimeur en son nom, a distingué et mis à part les Epistres en un reng, et les élégies en un autre. Toutesfois la différence en est tant petite, qu'il t'y faut aviser de bien près pour la discerner . . . . L'epistre Françoise faite en vers, ha forme de missive envoyée à la personne absente . . . en un mot, l'Epistre Françoise n'est autre chose qu'une lettre missive mise en vers. . . . L'élégie n'est pas sugette à téle variété de suget: et n'admet pas lés différences dés matiéres et légeretés communément traittées aus épistres.[2]

In other words, the French elegy is simply a long and serious love letter in the tradition of Ovid's Héroïdes, the plaintive quality of which is due to the fact that the love which it concerns is generally unrequited.[3] In the edition of 1533, Marot took all the epîtres having love

[1] On this subject, see Christine M. Scollen, The Birth of the Elegy in France 1500-1550, Genève, Droz, 1967, pp. 13 ff. Ms. Scollen's book concerns the elegies of Marot and his followers, up to the middle of the century. She does not include either Ronsard or Louise Labé in her study. Cf. also V.-L. Saulnier, Les Elégies de Marot, pp. 101-02; Pierre Villey, Marot et Rabelais, pp. 39-40.

V.-L. Saulnier remarks that when the lady in Elégie XX declares: "Je me plains, non point comme Dido, ni comme Sapho et maintes", she is most certainly alluding to Ovid's Héroïdes.

In the words of C. A. Mayer (Clément Marot, Paris, Nizet, 1972, p. 194): "C'est bien de l'oeuvre d'Ovide, mais des Héroïdes et non pas des Amores, que dérive l'élégie française."

[2] Sebillet, p. 154.

[3] V.-L. Saulnier defines it as follows in Les Elégies de Marot, p. 100: "Une plainte d'amour, sous la forme d'une lettre adressée anonymement à la maîtresse, écrite en décasyllabes à rimes plates, dans un style élégant sans trop d'apprêt: ainsi se définit en somme l'élégie amoureuse de Marot."

as their subject and classed them separately, calling them "élégies". His innovative nature, which announces that of Ronsard and his contemporaries, caused him to return to the sources of antiquity for a term to designate his "épîtres amoureuses", even though he did not use this term in the same way as the Latin love elegists had done. Hence the ambiguity surrounding the genre.

Certain other influences have been suggested. Luigi Alamanni, the exiled Florentine poet at the court of François Ier, had published twenty-four love elegies dedicated to the King in his Opere Toscane (Lyon, 1932). The influence of Alamanni is undoubtedly a possibility. Saulnier suggests the neo-Latin poets Nicolas de Bourbon and Salmon Macrin, and also the "épîtres amoureuses" of the Rhétoriqueurs, such as "L'Epistre du bon frère qui rend les armes d'Amour à sa Seur" and "L'Epistre d'ung amant habandonné", which prepared the way for Marot's creation of the love elegy.[1]

In any case, the transition from épître to élégie is evident in

[1] Saulnier, pp. 102, 103. Christine Scollen cites "Les Epistres de l'Amant Vert" of Jean Lemaire de Belges to show the popularity of the love epistle in the early sixteenth century, due to Saint-Gelais' translation of the Héroïdes. She counts 26 printed editions of Saint-Gelais' translation during the century. As far as the neo-Latin elegy is concerned, according to Ms. Scollen, it had little or no influence on Marot since it followed the Latin elegists very closely and developed in France after, or at the same time as, Marot's elegies.

Henri Chamard (Dictionnaire des lettres françaises, 16e siècle), mentions the "Elégie, ou chanson lamentable de Vénus sur la mort du bel Adonis" of Mellin de Saint-Gelais, paraphrased from Ovid. It is a composition in quatrains in which the themes of love and death are closely intertwined. See Melin de Sainct-Gelays, Œuvres complètes, éd. revue, annotée, et publiée par Prosper Blanchemain, Paris, Bibliothèque Elzévirienne, 1873, Tome I, pp. 127-36.

an early and somewhat maligned work of Marot "L'Epistre de Maguelonne", which is actually a sort of "héroïde". Based on a medieval legend, this épître amoureuse is a lament written by Maguelonne, daughter of the King of Naples to Pierre de Provence who, under the pretext of taking her to his native land, has abandoned her in the middle of a forest. The medieval story has furnished an admirable subject for a "héroide", and the very first lines of the epistle indicate that it is to be a "plainte amoureuse":

> La plus dolente & malheureuse femme
> Qui oncq entra en l'amoureuse flamme
> De Cupido mect ceste Epistre en voye,
> Et par icelle (amy) salut t'envoye,
> Bien congnoissant que despite Fortune,
> Et non pas toy, à present me infortune;
> Car si tristesse avecques dur regret
> M'a faict jecter maint gros souspir aigret,
> Certes je sçay que d'ennuy les alarmes
> T'ont faict jecter maintesfois maintes larmes.[1]

In spite of a few absurdities, such as the heroine's relating an incident which occurred while she was asleep, or the fact that she writes to her lover without having the vaguest idea of his whereabouts, the piece is valuable from a historical point of view. Since the circumstances involved in this medieval tale are less known to readers than, for example, the story of Dido and Aeneas, the poem contains much tedious narrative. However, it certainly has all the ingredients of a love epistle, and, as such, it announces Marot's elegies.

As we have already stated, La Suite de l'Adolescence Clementine, published toward the end of 1533, contained a group of twenty-

[1] Marot, Œuvres Lyriques, p. 114.

one poems entitled "Elégies".[1] None of these poems had ever been published before, and they were the first written in the French language to bear this title. Six more poems were added to the group of elegies in the edition of Marot's collected works published by Etienne Dolet at Lyon in 1538, two of which had previously appeared as "complainctes": "Du Riche Infortuné Jacques de Beaune, seigneur de Semblançay" (1527) and "De la mort de Anne l'Hulier" (1527). Of the remaining four, one was a lament which had never before been published, entitled "De Jehan Chauvin, menestrier, qui fut noyé". The other three were love elegies: "A une Dame enfermée en une Tour pour l'amour de son Amy", "Pour Monsieur de Barroys à ma Damoyselle de Huban" and "A une qui reffusa ung present."[2] Thus, the collection of 1538 contained a total of twenty-seven elegies, twenty-four of which had love as their subject. The remaining three were laments. Once again the themes of love and death were associated in the elegy.

Saulnier retains this classification, designating the three

[1] Cf. C. A. Mayer, Bibliographie des Œuvres de Clément Marot, Genève, Droz, 1954, no. 15. What appears to have been the first edition of La Suite, published in Paris by la veuve de Pierre Roffet, does not bear a date. The date of publication is believed to be either the end of 1533 or the beginning of 1534.

[2] The re-edition of L'Adolescence Clementine followed by La Suite de l'Adolescence Clementine (Mayer, Bibliographie, nos. 63-65), published by Denis Janot in Paris in 1538, is available upon request in the Spencer Collection at the New York Public Library. Joined to it are Marot's translation of the first book of Ovid's Metamorphoses and a collection of works by Jean Marot. This edition contains twenty-one elegies, all on the subject of love. The complaintes are included in the section called "le Cymetière". It is in the edition published by Dolet at Lyon the same year (Mayer, Bibliographie, no. 70) that the editional six elegies, including three élégies déploratives, were added.

laments "élégies déploratives".[1] Mayer reclassifies them among the "Complaintes".[2] Why Marot chose in 1538 to include three complaintes among the elegies is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps he remembered that Ovid had included an elegy on the death of Tibullus in the Amores, as well as a pseudo-lament on the death of Corinna's parrot, and that Catullus had written a poem in elegiac meter on the death of his brother and a hauntingly lovely poem on the death of Lesbia's pet sparrow. Perhaps it was a return to the etymological notion that the Greek "elegos" signified "song of mourning" and that the ancient Greeks wrote epitaphs in elegiac meter. Pierre Villey suggests that it was due to Marot's closer contact with the Italian humanists toward 1538, for Italy had renewed the funereal elegy as well as the love elegy.[3] In any case, this again reflects the ambiguity which surrounded the genre.

All of Marot's elegies are long poems in the form of epistles and all are written in decasyllables with rimes plates, with the exception of the Eighteenth Elegy, which is in strophic form and is composed of a series of sizains. Also, the Twentieth Elegy, in which a woman complains of her husband's cruel treatment of her, was originally followed by a rondeau on the same subject, which C. A. Mayer has eliminated in his edition.[4] The collection presents a rather peculiar mélange of

[1] Cf. Saulnier, Les Elégies de Marot, pp. 23-45.

[2] Cf. Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, pp. 134-39; 162-64.

[3] Villey, Marot et Rabelais, p. 53.

[4] Cf. Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 263.

characteristics, the unifying elements being the epistolary form and the fact that, with few exceptions, all the poems concern unrequited love in the manner of Ovid's Héroïdes.

In the First Elegy, the speaker hesitates about whether or not to write to the woman he loves, inasmuch as all of his previous letters have remained unanswered. Despite the mannered quality of the poem, there is a certain amount of psychological realism in the writer's conflict:

> Quand j'entreprins t'escrire ceste lettre
> Avant qu'un mot à mon gré sceusse mettre,
> En cent façons elle fut commencée,
> Plustot escripte, & plustost effacée,
> Soubdain fermée, & tout soubdain desclose,
> Craignant avoir oublié quelcque chose,
> Ou d'avoir mis aulcun mot à refaire,
> Et, briefvement, je ne sçavois que faire
> De l'envoyer vers toy (mon reconfort),
> Car (pour certain) Doubte avertissoit fort
> Le mien esprit de ne la commencer,
> Ne devers toy en chemin l'advancer.[1]

Similarly, in the Seventh Elegy, the writer, also left without news of his lady love, wonders what he may have done to cause her to cease loving him.

> Qu'ay je mesfaict, dictes, ma chere Amye?
> Vostre Amour semble estre toute endormye.
> Je n'ay de vous plus lettres ne langage;
> Je n'ay de vous ung seul petit message;
> Plus ne vous voy aux lieux accoustumez.
> Sont ja estainctz vos desirs alumez,
> Qui avec moy d'un mesme feu ardoient?[2]

The Seventeenth Elegy begins on an optimistic note as the writer expresses his delight at having received a letter from the

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, pp. 211, 212.

[2] Ibid., p. 229.

woman he loves,[1] but his joy too soon turns to sorrow as he discovers that the lady wishes him to burn her letter after having read it. There follows a series of lines in which the writer expresses his conflict and hesitations, much as the doubtful writer of the First Elegy does, and here again the psychology of love is finely traced.

> Lors mes plaisirs d'augmenter prindrent cesse;
> Pensez adonc en quelle doubte & presse
> Mon coeur estoit. L'obeissance grande
> Que je vous doy brusler me la commande;
> Et le plaisir que j'ay de la garder
> Me le deffend et m'en vient retarder.
> Aulcunesfois au feu je la boutoye
> Pour la brusler, puis soubdain l'en ostoye,
> Puis l'y remis, et puis l'en recullay,
> Mais à la fin (à regret) la bruslay,
> En disant: Lettre (apres l'avoir baisée),
> Puis qu'il lui plaist, tu seras embrasée,
> Car j'ayme mieulx dueil en obeissant
> Que tout plaisir en desobeissant.
> Voyla comment pouldre & centre devint,
> L'ayse plus grand qu'à moy oncques advint.[2]

Critics have often spoken of the superficial, fleeting quality of much of Marot's love poetry. In contrast to the vibrant sensuality of the Latin love elegy, Marot paints delicate sentiments all in pastel tones.[3]

When we approach the texts of the elegies themselves, we are tempted to ask the question that Saulnier poses in the introduction to his study of Marot's elegies:

[1] "Qui eust pensé que l'on peust concepvoir
Tant de plaisir pour lettres recepvoir?"

[2] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 249.

[3] Pierre Jourda discusses this aspect of Marot, precursor of "les poètes précieux": "Toute grossiereté a disparu. A l'amour charnel . . . se substituent l'amitié amoureuse, les inclinations les plus fines et les plus mélancoliques". (p. 130)

> Les élégies sont-elles écrites par Maître Clément en son nom propre, ou bien a-t-il prêté plus d'une fois sa plume à quelque seigneur, pour écrire un mot à quelque belle? Sont-elles destinées à une, à des dames réelles, et peut-on savoir quelles dames? Voilà des énigmes. Elles ont fait couler beaucoup d'encre.[1]

The question of sincerity versus literary convention is one which has already been posed in relation to the Latin love elegists. In the case of Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus, we know that Lesbia, Cynthia and Delia did exist, and that Corinna was probably a fictional creation fashioned from Ovid's various love affairs. Even if the poets often embroidered on reality, their poems had some basis of truth and, generally, they were expressions of personal feeling, since the poets were writing in their own names and not for others. Such is not the case in Marot's elegies, even though many critics have attempted to prove that it was. In fact, since in the First Elegy the writer declares that he has been taken prisoner with the king in a foreign land, it was long believed that Marot had actually participated in the Bataille de Pavie and that he had been wounded and taken prisoner in Spain along with François Ier.[2] This reminds one of the fact that some scholars have taken Marot's satirical words quite seriously in l'Epître XXV ("Au Roy, pour avoir esté desrobé") and have searched the maps for "Clement" and "Marot" in order to determine where the poet might have built his two châteaux!

[1] Saulnier, p. 6.

[2] "Finablement, avec le Roy mon maistre
Delà les monts prisonnier se veit estre
Mon triste corps, navré, en grand' souffrance.
Quand est du cueur, long temps y a qu'en France
Ton prisonnier il est sans mesprison."

In actual fact, Marot was present at only one battle, in 1521, when he accompanied Marguerite's first husband, le duc d'Alençon, to the camp of Attigny to counteract an offensive by forces of Charles Quint. According to C. A. Mayer,[1] four manuscripts of the First Elegy bear the title "L'Epistre du chevallier pris et blecé devant Pavye faicte par Clément Marot". One manuscript indicates that Marot is writing for a chevalier by the name of Antonius Pastoureau, who has never been identified.[2]

In several instances, the poet is more obviously not expressing his own sentiments. Elégie XXII is entitled "Pour Monsueir de Barroys à ma Damoyselle de Huban". Both were apparently nobles of the court of François Ier. In Elégie IX, the following lines are most revealing:

> O Dieu du Ciel, qu'amour est forte chose!
> Sept ans y a que ma main se repose
> Sans voulenté d'escrire à nulle femme,
> M'eust elle aymé soubs tresardante flamme.[3]

It is impossible to believe that the prolific poet Marot would have made such a statement. In Elégie XVII, as in the Première Elégie, it is obviously a nobleman who is writing of his desire to transform himself into a "berger" and his too well guarded lady love into a simple "bergère" so that they can meet freely in a rustic setting reminiscent of Virgil's Eclogues.

> Ainsi estant en liberté champestre,
> La requerroys d'ung baiser. Et peult estre

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 19.

[2] Cf. Villey, p. 16.

[3] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 232. In all cases, I am using the numerical references corresponding to this edition.

Me donneroit, pour du tout m'appaiser,
Quelcque aultre don par dessus ung baiser;
Si me vauldrait l'estat de Bergerie
Plus que ma grande et noble Seigneurie.[1]

Marot cannot have been writing for himself in these cases. Whatever pretensions he may have had as official court poet of François Ier, nobility was certainly not among them.

In two elegies, the writers are obviously women. Elégie XVII is a development of the medieval theme of the loyal and disloyal lover, and Elégie XX, a letter of a woman to her mother complaining of her husband's cruelty, is reminiscent of the medieval "chanson de la mal mariée".

Many generations of scholars have been tempted to search for traces of Marot's love affairs in the Elégies.[2] When Abel Lefranc ingeniously identified the "Anne" of a number of lovely rondeaux and épigrammes as Anne d'Alençon, daughter of Charles, the illegitimate brother of Charles, duc d'Alençon, Marguerite's first husband,[3] he assigned a total of thirteen elegies to the "cycle d'Anne". Lefranc identified a remaining eight elegies with the poet's liaison with the treacherous Ysabeau, who was perhaps responsible for his stay in the Châtelet in 1526 "pour avoir mangé du lard en carême." Since the second group includes the First Elegy, we must conclude that Abel Lefranc believed that Marot was speaking in his own name in this elegy

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 253.

[2] E.g. Philipp August Becker, Clement Marots Liebeslyrik, Wien, 1917.

[3] Abel Lefranc, "Le Roman d'amour de Clément Marot", Grands Ecrivains Français de la Renaissance, Paris, Champion, 1914, pp. 1-61.

and that he had actually participated in the Bataille de Pavie.

Since no mention of a particular woman is made in any of the Elegies, Lefranc's analysis seems to us very contrived, but certainly not as indefensible as that of Luc Van Brabant.[1] Using a complicated system of astrological signs and of anagrams, much in vogue in the sixteenth century, and assuming that the young Louise Labé met the poet during his stay at Lyon in 1536, Van Brabant concludes that Marot fell in love with her and that all the poems dedicated to Anne are actually for Louise. He then proceeds to identify the subject of Marot's Sixteenth and Seventeenth Elegies as Louise Labé. Undoubtedly, this critic has found some support for his theories in Marot's enigmatic Sonnet IV, "Response à deux jeunes hommes qui escrivoyent à sa louenge".[2] However, the "Loyse" of this sonnet has never been positively identified, and in fact, the poem is of somewhat doubtful authenticity.[3]

Among other critics who have sought details of Marot's personal life in the Elegies is Lenglet-Dufresnoy,[4] who apparently originated the legend that Marot had been in love with Marguerite de Navarre. In the late nineteenth century, A. Birch-Hirschfeld and his disciple Alfred

[1] Luc Van Brabant, Louize Labé et ses aventures amoureuses avec Clément Marot et le dauphin Henry, Ed. de la Belle sans sy, Belgique, 1967.

[2] Adolescents qui la peine avez prise
De m'enrichir de loz non merité,
Pour en louant dire bien verité,
Laissez moy là et louez moy Loyse.

[3] Cf. Clément Marot, Oeuvres Diverses, éd. critique par C. A. Mayer, London, The Athlone Press, 1966, p. 48.

[4] Oeuvres de Clément Marot, La Haye, 1731.

Roedel assigned the more sensual elegies to Ysabeau and the more ethereal ones to Marguerite.[1] All of these theories have been completely discredited.

Modern critics reject the theory that any of the elegies, with the possible exception of Elégie XXIV, which may reflect the poet's feelings for Anne,[2] are more than literary creations which may or may not have as their point of departure real experiences in the life of the poet.[3]

It does seem quite probable that Elégie II ("Puys qu'il te fault desloger de ce lieu") was inspired by Anne d'Alençon in that it contains a number of allusions which coincide with those in poems dedicated to "Anne". The poet speaks of a separation which is to take place and of a liaison which has lasted a year. It is the month of May ("O moys de May, pour moy trop sec et maigre"), meaning that the relationship probably began the preceding May. Marot also alludes to the famous "alliance de pensée":

[1] Cf. Scollen, p. 43.

[2] Bien doy louer la divine puyssance
Qui de ta noble & digne cognoiscence
Nymphe de pris, m'a de grace estrené!

C. A. Mayer suggests that it is significant that this poem, written after the poet's return from exile, was never published in the sixteenth century, but appeared for the first time in the Lettres de Marguerite de Navarre, Génin, Paris, 1841. (Marot, Œuvres Lyriques, p. 21.)

[3] C. A. Mayer, ibid., writes as follows: "On accepte maintenant qu'il est oiseux de chercher la présence des maîtresses du poète dans ces textes et que les élégies ne représentent en somme qu'une tentative de poésie d'amour, poésie dans laquelle le poète, loin de nous livrer ses sentiments intimes, s'essaye au contraire à l'expression, sous une forme nouvelle, de tous le thèmes de la poésie amoureuse de l'époque."

Veu qu'en ce temps fut faicte l'alliance
Dont j'obtiendray la totalle fiance[1]

In any case, at the court of François Ier, where poetry was so much in vogue that even the King himself sent love letters in verse--des épîtres amoureuses--to his mistresses, it does seem possible that Marot wrote this épître for Anne at the time of her departure and later included it in the collection of elegies.

V.-L. Saulnier, in his thematic analysis of the elegies, interprets them as a coherent collection of poems, a "roman par lettres", letters not to one or two particular women, but to woman in general, "l'éternel féminin", and the subject of which is the course of an unhappy love affair. Accordingly, he divides the "novel" into five episodes, or cycles, and entitles them l'Oublieuse, la Rebelle, l'Intéressée, l'Empêchée ou la Trop Bien Gardée, and la Malavisée, each

[1]Cf. Rondeau XXXVI ("D'Alliance de pensée"), Epigrammes entitled "Du moys de may et d'Anne", and Rondeau XXXVII ("De sa Grand Amye"):

Dedans Paris, ville jolie,
Un jour, passant melancolie,
Je prins alliance nouvelle
A la plus gaye damoyselle
Qui soit d'icy en Italie.

D'honnesteté elle est saisie,
Et croy (selon ma fantasie)
Qu'il n'en est gueres de plus belle
Dedans Paris.

Je ne la vous nommeray mye.
Si non que c'est ma grand'amye
Car l'alliance se feit telle
Par un doulx baiser que j'eus d'elle
Sans penser aucune infamie,
Dedans Paris.

Cf. also article by Abel Lefranc (op. cit.).

corresponding to a number of elegies and each representing one of the faces of unhappy love.[1] Here we are very close to the tone of Ovid's Hēroïdes, but Saulnier's analysis, however ingenious, appears no less contrived than that of earlier critics who attempted to find in each elegy reflections of Marot's love for one particular woman. He does not seem to have completely escaped the peril which his predecessors encountered.

Let us now consider the themes or motifs which Marot may have borrowed from the Latin love elegists. They are undoubtedly very few and are limited to a fleeting image or to a few lines of text,[2] but are similar enough to the Latin sources to suggest some direct imitation. Among the more obvious ones accepted by modern critics are a reminiscence of Propertius in Elégie XIII regarding a journey that the poet intends to make as a remedy for unrequited love:

> L'esloignement que de vous je veulx faire
> N'est pour vouloir m'exempter & deffaire
> De vostre amour, encore moins du service.
> C'est pour tirer mon loyal cueur sans vice
> De feu qui l'ard par trop grand amytié.[3]

In Elégie III, in which the poet declares that even if Helen and Venus should offer themselves to him, he would refuse, preferring the woman he loves, there is perhaps a recollection of Tibullus' Elegy

[1] Saulnier, Les Elégies de Marot, pp. 52-64.

[2] Studies on Marot's possible debts to the Latin elegists have been made by Alfred Roedel (Studien zu den Elegien Clement Marots, Leipzig, 1893) and Ph. A. Becker (Clement Marot, sein Leben und seine Dichtung, Munich, 1926). Cf. also footnotes in Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, pp. 211-72.

[3] Cf. Propertius III, 21, ll. 1-4:

> Magnum iter ad doctas proficisci cogor Athenas
> ut me longa gravi solvat amore via.
> Criscit enim assidue spectanti cura puellae:
> ipse alimenta sibi maxima praebet Amor.

III, 19, vv. 13-14:

> Nunc licet e caelo mittatur amica Tibullo,
> mittetur frustra deficietque Venus.
> (Tibullus, Elegy III, 19)

> Quant est de moy, vienne Helaine ou Venus,
> Viennent vers moy m'offrir leurs corps tous nuds:
> Je leur dirai: "retirez vous, déesses,
> En meilleur lieu j'ay trouvé mes liesses."
> (Marot, Elégie III, ll. 73-76)

The lines of Elégie IV regarding the pleasures and pains of love, quoted on page 41 of this chapter, are suggestive of certain lines of the Corpus Tibullianum (III, iv, 73):

> Nescis quid sit amor, iuvenis, si ferre recusas
> immitem dominam coniugiumque ferum.

Pierre Villey draws a comparison between two lines of Marot's Elégie XII and the haunting entreaty to the doorkeeper in Ovid's Amores:

> Que pourra il faire à ses Ennemys,
> Quand il veult nuyre à ses meilleurs Amys?
> (Marot, Elégie XII, ll. 17-18)

> Quid facies hosti, qui sic excludis amantem?
> Tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram.
> (Ovid, Amores, I, 6, ll. 31-32)

In Elégie V, ll. 21-26, one finds the writer imploring the woman he loves to enjoy the present moment, a recollection of the "carpe diem" theme dear to the Roman love elegists:

> Voici les jours de l'an les plus plaisans;
> Chascun de nous est en ses jeunes ans.
> Faisons donc tant que la fleur de nostre aage
> Na suive point de tristesse l'oultrage;
> Car temps perdu & jeunesse passée
> Estre ne peult par deux fois amassée.

When, in the Fifteenth Elegy, the writer declares that his love is eternal, C. A. Mayer attributes Marot's expression to a Greek

proverb which passed into Latin and which Marot may have found in Oenone's letter to Paris in the Héroïdes:[1]

> Plustost sera Montaigne sans Vallée,
> Plustost la Mer on voirra dessalée,
> Et plustost Seine encontremont ira
> Que mon amour de toy se partira.
> (Elégie XV, ll. 35-38)

Propertius II, xv, the erotic elegy discussed in Chapter I, p. 26, contains a similar passage:

> Terra prius falso partu deludet arantis
> et citius nigros sol agitabit equos
> fluminaque ad caput incipient revocare liquores
> aridus et sicco gurgite piscis erit
> quam possim nostros alio transferre dolores.[2]

The proverb seems to have been widely adopted by sixteenth century French poets. It reappears, for example, in Les Odes Amoureuses of Olivier de Magny (XXXV) as well as in the following dizain (XVII) of Maurice Scève's Délie:

> Plus tost seront Rhosne, et Saone desjoinctz
> Que d'avec toy mon coeur se desassemble;
> Plus tost seront l'un, et l'aultre Mont joinctz,
> Qu'avecques nous aulcun discord s'assemble
> Plus tost verrons et toy, et moy ensemble
> Le Rhosne aller contremont lentement,
> Saone monter tresviolentement,
> Que ce mien feu, tant soit peu, diminue,
> Ny que ma foy descroisse aulcunement.
> Car ferme amour sans eulx est plus, que nue.

It appears to have been overlooked that Marot could have taken the expression from Propertius' Elegy I, xv:

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 244.

[2] The translation by D. Paganelli is as follows:

La terre, se moquant du cultivateur, portera des fruits inattendus; le soleil conduira de noirs coursiers; les fleuves remonteront à leur source et le poisson se trouvera à sec au fond des gouffres avant que je porte ailleurs mon amour et ses souffrances.

Multa prius: vasto labentur flumina ponto
annus et inversas duxerit ante vices
quam tua sub nostro mutetur pectore cura.[1]

Another possible imitation of Propertius which seems not to have been brought to light is the vindictive Fourteenth Elegy, in which the writer maligns his unfaithful mistress. This is the single instance in Marot's collection in which there is more than a fleeting reminiscence of the Latin poet. The very tone of Marot's poem, which suggests the violence of Propertius' bitter words to the faithless Cynthia in III, xxiv and xxv, is a contrast to the courtly grace of the other elegies.[2] Both poets express the disillusionment and anger the lover feels in discovering that his love has blinded him to the faults of a particular woman and caused him to idealize her beyond all measure.

Si ma complaincte en vengeance estoit telle
Comme tu es en abus et cautelle,
Croy que ma Plume amoureuse, & qui t'a
Tant faict d'honneur dont tresmal s'acquitta,
Croy qu'elle auroit desja jecté fumée
Du stile ardant dont elle est alumée,
Pour du tout rendre aussi noir que Charbon
Le tien bon bruit (si tu en as de bon);
Mais pas ne suis assez vindicatif
Pour ung tel cueur, si faulx et deceptif;
Et neantmoins si me fault il changer
Mon naturel pour de toy me venger,
A celle fin que mon cueur se descharge

[1] Properce, Elégies, texte établi et traduit par D. Paganelli, Paris, Soc. d'Edition "Les Belles Lettre", 1929, p. 24. Mr. Paganelli's translation of Propertius' text is as follows:
"Il se passera bien des choses; les fleuves prendront leur source dans la vaste mer et l'année aura renversé l'ordre des saisons avant qu'au fond de mon coeur je change de sentiments pour toi."

[2] Cf. ll. 51 ff: (Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 241).
Filles de bien, n'en vueillez approcher;
Fuyez d'autant comme honneur vous est cher;
Fuyez du tout, fuyez la Garse fine
Qui soubz beaulz dictz ung vray Amant affine!

Du pesant fais dont ta ruse le charge;
Aussi affin de te faire sçavoir
Qu'à trop grand tort m'as voulu decepvoir,
Veu qu'en mon cueur ta basse qualité
N'a veu qu'Amour et Liberalité.[1]

Propertius expresses a similar disillusionment in Elegy III, xxiv, ll. 1-8:

Falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae,
olim oculis nimium facta superba meis.
Noster amor talis tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes:
versibus insignem te pudet esse meis?
Mixtam te varia laudavi saepe figura
ut, quod non esses, esse putaret amor;
et color est totiens roseo collatus Eoo,
cum tibi quaesitus candor in ore foret.[2]

Both poets speak of marriage or at least, in the case of Propertius, of the intention to establish a more permanent relationship:

Car mariage en propos vins dresser,
Pour qui à moy ne te fault adresser.
(Marot, Elegy XIV, ll. 85, 86)

tu bene conveniens non sinis ire iugum
(Propertius, Elegy III, xxv, l. 8)

Finally, Marot's Fourteenth Elegy ends on the same ominous note as Propertius III, xxv: loneliness and old age will be the real instruments of the poet's vengeance.[3]

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 240.

[2] Properce, Elégies, pp. 124, 125. D. Paganelli gives the following translation: "Tu as tort, femme, d'avoir cette confiance dans ta beauté, toi qui jadis pris ta superbe dans mes yeux. C'est mon amour, Cynthia, qui fit ta réputation: as-tu honte de devoir à mes vers ta célébrité? Beauté mêlée, je t'ai vantée souvent pour donner à mon amour l'illusion de ce que tu n'étais pas; que de fois j'ai comparé tes couleurs aux roses de l'aurore, alors que l'éclat de ton visage était emprunté."

[3] Paul Laumonier discusses this theme, "l'idée que le temps est le grand vengeur des amants dédaignés" on p. 580 of Ronsard, poète lyrique. He mentions the first example in Ronsard's work, in the ode of 1550 "A Janne impitoiable". Horace has furnished the theme, a variation on the "carpe diem", which exists in the work of the neo-Latin

Donc que sera ce au temps de ta vieillesse?
Tiendras tu pas escoles de finesse?
Certes, ouy. Car Medée & Circé
Si bien que toy n'en ont l'art exercé.
Vray est qu'avant que tu soys deffinée,
Par affiner te verras affinée.
Si que desja commence à me venger,
Voyant de loing venir ton grand danger.
(Marot, Elégie XIV, ll. 63-70)

Mais quand verray que tu te passeras,
Je cesseray ceste vengeance extreme;
Car lors de toy me vengeras toymesme,
Par le regret que ton cueur esperdu
Aura d'avoir ung tel Amy perdu.
(Marot, Elégie XIV, ll. 98-102)

The Latin poet is considerably more vindictive, and his disillusionment with regard to Cynthia causes him to abandon the writing of love elegy and to turn to patriotic themes, such as the grandeur of Rome.

At te celatis aetas gravis urgeat annis
et veniat formae ruga sinistra tuae!
Vellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos,
a! speculo rugas increpitante tibi,
exclusa inque vicem fastus patiere superbos.
et quae fecisti facta queraris anus!
Has tibi fatalis cecinit mea pagina dires;
eventum formae disce timere tuae![1]

The most that can be assumed here is that Marot was quite familiar with Propertius' elegies and that he used Propertius III, xxiv and xxv as a point of departure for his own Fourteenth Elegy. His imitation pales beside the Latin poet's more personal work.

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poets, such as Jean Second. On the subject of Propertius, III, xxv, Laumonier's analysis is as follows: "C'est une violente imprécation d'amant passionné qui finit par haïr l'objet de sa passion".

[1] Properce, Elégies, p. 126. D. Paganelli translates as follows: "Mais puissent les années que tu caches s'appesantir lourdement sur toi et que ta beauté voie venir la ride sinistre. Ah! tu voudras arracher les cheveux blancs et la glace te renverra comme une injure tes rides; on ne voudra plus de toi et à ton tour, tu subiras les dédains superbes; tu te plaindras d'être traitée comme tu traitas les autres; tu seras une vieille! Voilà le sort cruel que te présage la dernière page de mon livre, page fatale. Ta beauté aura une fin; sache-le et tremble."

Marot's elegies remain "oeuvres de commande" and as such retain the artificiality of court poetry. Even here, the former rhétoriqueur has not forgotten his early teachings in the art of rhyming.[1]

In some cases it is difficult to tell whether a specific passage has been inspired by the Latin elegists or whether Marot is simply following literary tradition. Christine Scollen gives as an example Elégie VI, ll. 9 ff., in which Cupid appears to the poet in a dream. This may be a reminiscence of the Corpus Tibullianum III, iv, or else Marot could simply be following the Rhétoriqueurs, for whom the dream was a favorite literary device. Passages on the joys of country life (e.g. Elégie I, ll. 110-126) may be suggested by Tibullus, by Virgil's Eclogues, or by the medieval pastorale.

In Elégie XXI ("A une Dame enfermée en une Tour pour l'amour de son Amy"), we have a vague recollection of the Latin elegiac "puella", too severely guarded by her husband or by the inexorable doorkeeper (ianitor). The same image is to be found in Elégie XVII.[2] The conjectures are many. In any case, Pierre Villey evaluates these few motifs or phrases possibly translated from the Latin elegists and inserted in Marot's text as follows:

> Voilà de quoi prouver tout au plus que Marot avait lu Ovide, Properce, et Tibulle--nous nous en doutions--mais aussi qu'il ne leur doit nullement l'élégie.[3]

[1] Cf. ll. 67, 68:

> Vray est qu'avant que soys deffinée,
> Par affiner te verras affinée.

[2] Helas, de nuyct elle est mieulx que gardée,
Et sur le jour de cent yeux regardée.

[3] Villey, p. 52.

Far more impressive is the number of borrowings from medieval literary sources. Marot, in the composition of his elegies, has drawn extensively on his medieval heritage. Ironically, the Elégies are perhaps the most medieval part of Marot's work.[1] It is true that the poet never totally detached himself from the early influence of his father and of the Rhétoriqueurs, and that all his life he continued to enjoy and use in moderation some of their technical devices, such as the "rimes équivoquées". In the elegies, however, examples of this are somewhat rare.[2] Far more evident are echoes of the Roman de la Rose and the use of medieval allegory. In Elégie I, for example, the writer, in this case the wounded chevalier, hesitates before composing a letter to the woman he loves. As in the Roman de la Rose, his psychological conflict is personified by Doubte and Ferme Amour, who alternate in advising him on whether or not he should indeed write his letter. Finally, Amour conquers Doubte, and the chevalier proceeds with his writing, telling of his war experiences, the injury to his left arm, and his imprisonment in a foreign land.[3] Such personifications appear throughout the collection. In Elégie VIII ("Dictes pourquoy vostre amytié

[1] Cf. Mayer, Clément Marot, p. 192.

[2] In Elégie XXIII, "A une qui reffusa ung present", one finds the following rhyme:

> Le prendrez vous? des que m'eustes ouy,
> Dit ne me fut le contraire d'ouy.

(Cf. also example on p. 61, n. 1.)

[3] Voyla comment Amour ferme t'excuse
De ce de quoy Doubte si fort t'accuse;
Et m'ont tenu longuement en ce poinct.
L'ung dict: escry; l'autre dict: n'escry point,
Puis l'ung m'attraict; puis l'autre me reboute;
Mais à la fin Amour a vaincu Doubte.

s'efface"), the poet's meditations on unrequited love are symbolized by such stock characters as Danger, Jalousie, Craincte, and Amour.

Elégie XI is one of the few not concerned with unrequited love. It is a charming love epistle filled with medieval touches. It is Christmas time, and the writer attempts to convince his lady that there is no more appropriate time for lovers to meet secretly than Christmas eve, "de Noel la Mynuict et la Veille". It is then that everyone will be at midnight mass, or sound asleep, and there will be no need to fear "les langues serpentines", the gossip that ordinarily is a threat to lovers. This theme of the dangers of "la mauvaise renommée", which Marot has borrowed from the common fund of medieval poetry,[1] is illustrated by three allegorical characters of the Roman de la Rose: Dangier, Maubec, and Jalousie. There is in this elegy, not without a touch of irony, a lyrical quality produced by certain techniques, subtly used, which Marot retained from his training with the Rhétoriqueurs: the use of alliteration and the rimes équivoquées:

O nuict heureuse, O doulce noire nuict,
Ta noireté aux Amans point ne nuyt.

The poet concludes the elegy with one of the few examples of muted sensuality in the collection. It is both reminiscent of the Latin love elegists and of Marot's own libertine nature, the "esprit gaulois" found in such other creations as the Epigramme "Des cinq poinctz en amours" (1527) and the blason "Du beau Tetin".

Or pour nous resjouyr,
Si vous voulez les Matines ouyr,
Là où sçavez, il n'est Chambre si bonne,

[1] Cf. Mayer, Clément Marot, Paris, Nizet, 1972, p. 191.

Ne si bon Lict que du tout n'abandonne
Pour m'y trouver; car pour final propos
Dedans ung Lict ne gist point mon repos;
Il gist en vous & en vous je le quiers;
Donnez le moy doncques, je vous requiers.

How much closer we are here to the joyous sensuality of Rabelais and of the Renaissance than to the medieval tradition of courtly love that predominates in the other elegies!

The medieval theme of "la mauvaise renommée" is also the subject of the Twelfth Elegy:

Le juste dueil remply de fascherie
Qu'eustes hersoir par le grand resverie
De l'homme vieil, ennemi de plaisir,
M'a mis au Cueur ung si grand desplaisir
Que toute nuyct repos je n'ay sceu prendre.
(ll. 1-5)

In the above poem, in which the writer commiserates with his lady, who has been maligned by an evil old man, Marot also may have been inspired by Catullus' mention of the gossip of strict old men, enemies of lovers, in his well-known poem:

Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis.[1]

The influence of Alain Chartier's La Belle Dame sans mercy is constantly felt in the theme of the loyal and disloyal lover. The letter writer of Marot's elegies is always prepared to obey and serve his lady in the tradition of "l'amour courtois". In Elégie VIII he declares:

Tousjours loyal ay esté et le suis
Il est bien vray que'ardant est mon service.

[1] Selections from Catullus, ed. by Michael Macmillan, Oxford University Press, 1949, p. 19.

The Eighteenth Elegy, in strophic form, deals with the contrast between the faithful and the faithless lover.

> A l'un (pour vray) l'aultre n'est pas esgal;
> l'un est bon fruict & l'aultre Reagal,
> Poison mortelle.
> L'un est d'esprit, l'aultre est gros animal;
> L'un parle en bien, l'aultre tousjours dit mal;
> Sa langue est telle.
> De l'ung reçoy tourment dur & rebelle,
> De l'aultre j'ay consolation belle;
> Dieu sçait combien.
> Brief, amytié n'a point peine eternelle;
> Apres le mal j'ay rencontré en elle
> Singulier bien.[1]

The expression "gros animal", which shocks contemporary ears, was perfectly acceptable in an era when Marot and Sagon insulted each other poetically with epithets such as "gros veau", or perhaps some even more defamatory term.

When the lady of the Twentieth Elegy complains to her mother of her husband's cruelty toward her, she is doing so in a manner that resembles that of the medieval "chanson de la mal mariée".

> En est il une en ceste Terre basse
> Qui en tourment de tristesse me passe,
> Ou qui en soit autant comme moy pleine?
> Faire se peult; mais je croy qu'à grand peine
> Se trouvera femme, en lieu ne saison,
> Qui de se plaindre ayt si grande raison.
> (ll. 1-6)

Another medieval influence in Marot's elegies is that of François Villon. Marot edited the works of Villon in 1533, the same year as the publication of the elegies, and he apparently felt a deep affinity with the earlier poet. He, too, had spent time in prison, much as the "gamin de Paris" had done, and the sadness which is masked by the

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 255.

apparent gaiety of Marot's épîtres is not far from the "je ris en pleurs" of Villon. Echoes of Villon are occasionally found in the elegies. Marot's dialogue with his heart in Elégie IV recalls "Le Débat du Coeur et du corps de Villon", and the following lines of the Seventeenth Elegy vaguely suggest the medieval contradiction of the ballades by Villon and Charles d'Orléans, "je meurs de soif en couste la fontaine":

> A ma grand soif la belle eau se presente,
> Et si convient que d'en boyre m'exempte.
> (ll. 29-30)

We shall have occasion to discuss another reminiscence of Villon in the brief section on the three "élégies déploratives".[1]

Still another medieval characteristic of Marot's elegies is the discussion of love, what many critics have referred to as the "casuistique amoureuse" of "métaphysique galante" that pervades them. In the tradition of the medieval "jeu parti", and certainly suggestive of Chartier's La Belle Dame sans mercy, the characters engage in seemingly endless debates on one or another aspect of love. This tends to give an air of artificiality, a calculated quality, to the elegies; they fail to move the reader emotionally, as do other, more spontaneous works of Marot. A case in point is Elégie IX, which begins as follows:

> La grand amour que mon las cueur vous porte
> Incessamment me conseille & enhorte
> Vour consoller en vostre ennuy extreme.
> Mais (tout bien veu) je treuve que moymesme
> Ay bon besoing de consolation
> Du dueil que j'ai de vostre affliction.

[1] On this subject, see Margaret Pelan, "The Influence of Villon on Clément Marot", Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune, Ed. J. Duculot, Gembloux (Belgique), 1969, Vol. II, pp. 1469-79.

In Elégie XXIII, "A une qui reffusa ung present", the poet discusses whether or not a lady should accept a present from a prospective lover, and the implications of her acceptance or refusal of the gift. A favorite expression of the poet's in such a discussion is the pretentious "ce nonobstant".[1]

Marot's elegies belong to a period which one might term "pre-Petrarchism" in France.[2] In the chapter devoted to Marot and Saint-Gelais, Joseph Vianey limits his study of the influence of Serafino dall'Aquila and Antonio Tebaldeo to Marot's épigrammes and blasons. He does not consider the elegies.[3] Supposedly, it was during his exile at Ferrare in 1535-36, two years after the publication of the elegies, that Marot became acquainted with Italian Petrarchist poetry. However, it is most likely that he was familiar with it at an earlier date, as the work of the Italian Petrarchists had already been published in France. In his article entitled "Pétrarque et Clément Marot",[4] Marcel

[1] Cf. Elégie XIII, l. 21:

Ce nonobstant vostre je demourray

and Elégie XXIII, ll. 31, 32:

Ce non obstant prendre n'exaulceray
En mon escript . . .

[2] Saulnier refers to it as such in Les Elégies de Marot, p. 98. "Au fond, l'érotique des Elégies est très caractéristique de ce qu'on aurait le droit d'appeler le pré-pétrarquisme français, dans le sillage courtois. On connaît déjà Pétrarque; on ne pétrarquise pas encore."

[3] Except to suggest that "les pièces galantes en relèvent aussi des strambottistes" (Vianey, p. 50). "Les pièces galantes" could designate the elegies. C. A. Mayer finds traces of Petrarch's Trionfi in two elegies (cf. Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, pp. 239 and 241). Jean Robertet and his son François had made verse translations of this work of Petrarch. Also, the Rhétoriqueur Jean Molinet.

[4] Marcel Françon, "Pétrarque et Clément Marot", Italica, vol. 40, March, 1963, pp. 18-21.

Françon calls attention to Epigramme LXI "A Ysabeau", in which the poet declares himself a disciple of Petrarch:

> Petrarque a bien sa maistresse nommée
> Sans amoindrir sa bonne renommée;
> Donc, si je suis son disciple estimé
> Craindre ne fault que tu en sois blasmée.

This epigram bears the date 1527. One finds in the elegies many motifs which suggest that Marot may indeed have been familiar with the work of the Italian Petrarchists at that period. Among these are the metaphor of the heart in prison,[1] the image of love as a wound,[2] the dialogue between the poet and his eye, and the comparison between the lady and the sun.[3] All these motifs recall the work of the strambottists. However, in his edition of Marot's elegies, C. A. Mayer cites the following lines of Elégie XVI as the only real example in Marot's poetry of a "concetto pétrarquiste", the metaphor of love as a flame:

[1] Cf. Elégie II, ll. 65-68:

> Ce non obstant, quand ton cueur vouldras prendre,
> Pour t'obéir, je suis prest à le rendre.
> Quand est du mien, tu le tiens enserré
> En tes Prisons, & si n'a point erré.

[2] Cf. Elégie I, ll. 159-164:

> Amour a faict de mon cueur une bute
> Et Guerre m'a navré de hacquebute.
> Le coup du bras le monstre à veue d'oeil,
> Le coup du coeur le monstre par son dueil.
> Ce nonobstant celluy du bras s'amende,
> Cellui du cueur je le te recommande.

[3] Cf. Elégie III, ll. 46 ff:

> Je lui responds: Oeil, si tu es en l'ombre,
> Ne t'esbahis, le soleil est caché,
> Et pour toy est, à plein Midy, couché;
> C'est asçavoir ceste face tant claire,
> Qui te souloit si contenter & plaire,
> Est loing de toy.

> Mais si de vous j'ay encor quelcque Lettre,
> Pour la brusler ne la fauldra que mettre
> Pres de mon Cueur; là elle trouvera
> Du feu assez, et si esprouvera
> Combien ardente est l'amoureuse flamme
> Qui mon las cueur pour voz vertus enflamme.[1]

It is the combination of medieval influences and pre-Petrarchist motifs that give the elegies an air of "préciosité" which tends to alienate the reader. In this respect, these poems are the least typical of Marot's works. Undoubtedly, it is this fact which prompted Pierre Jourda to declare:

> On ne lit presque plus ces poèmes; ils ne répondent pas au portrait classique de l'écrivain, tracé 'ne varietur' par Boileau. . . . Mais on a tort: ils sont un document psychologique au même titre que La Parfaicte Amye d'Héroet, voire, --la densité de l'art en moins, --que la Délie. On y saisit au vif un Marot qui, spontanément ou conventionellement (peu importe!), conduit un roman d'amour. . . . On reconnaîtra, malgré tout, qu'il y a, dans ces quelques poèmes, les éléments d'un joli roman d'amour, un peu superficiel, mais délicat et mélancolique. . . ."[2]

C. A. Mayer's criticism of the elegies stems from their impersonal quality, from the fact that they are largely "des poèmes de commande", and that with the possible exception of one or two, they do not reflect the poet's sentiments.

> Une poésie élégiaque impersonnelle implique contradiction; mais c'est bien là ce que Marot a essayé de faire dans ces poèmes. Il n'est guère surprenant qu'il ait échoué dans sa tentative.[3]

At one point this critic bluntly refers to the elegies as "probablement la partie la moins bonne de l'oeuvre de Marot."[4]

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 249.

[2] Jourda, p. 133.

[3] Mayer, Clément Marot, p. 196.

[4] Ibid., p. 196.

Nevertheless, the value of the elegies from a historical point of view is undeniable. Influenced by the wide popularity of Ovid's Héroïdes at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Marot created his own "épîtres amoureuses" using, in the place of Ovid's elegiac couplets, a favorite form of the Rhétoriqueurs: the decasyllable with rimes plates. Taking his themes from medieval love poetry, with which his father Jean Marot had nourished him, he called these poems by the ancient name "élégie" to distinguish them from his other epistles, which treated subjects other than love. In so doing, he set a precedent for writers of love elegies during the whole of the century.

As we have indicated, the confusion of theorists regarding this genre was due, in part, to the fact that Marot was imitating Ovid's Héroïdes, rather than the Amores. The element of sadness that characterizes the Héroïdes, which have as their subject unrequited love--as do most of Marot's elegies--is the reason why critics associated sadness with this poetic form, rather than the joy and sensuality of the Latin love elegies. The subject of death, or mourning, is totally irrelevant.

That Marot chose, in 1538, to include three "élégies déploratives" among the love elegies is simply, as we have indicated, further evidence of his hesitations in defining the genre. The "complainte" or "déploration" was a long, often allegorical lament, very popular among the Rhétoriqueurs. Interestingly enough, Sebillet, in his Art poétique françoys, classes complaintes and deplorations under the general heading "élégie". In this he is, as always, taking Marot as his example.

> Complaintes et deplorations sembleroient estre comprise soubz l'élégie, qui ne les sonderoit au vif. Car l'élégie proprement veut dire complainte. Mais les usages et différentes sortes d'icelles me contraignent t'en faire traité

> particulier: et t'aviser au reste que tu trouveras chés Marot et autres clers Poètes dés complaintes et déplorations: lés unes faites en forme d'épitaphes, comme la pluspart des épitaphes qui se font aujourd'hui: lés autres en forme d'élegie, comme celle de Marot sur la mort de Samblançay. Autres en forme d'éclogue, comme celle de Marot sur la mort de feue Madame la Régente. Autres en forme de coupletz distingués par huittains ou dizains, comme celle du dit sur la mort du feu Baron de Maleville. Autres déduittes en plus long discours, comme celles de Marot sur la mort de Robertet.[1]

One previously unpublished complainte, which was included in the elegies of 1538, is a piece entitled "De Jehan Chauvin, Menestrier, qui fut noyé". It is a gracious mythological tale inspired by the episode of Misenus in Book VI of the Aeneid. The two others, previously included in the section "Le Cymetiere", are "La Complainte sur la mort de Anne Lhuilier d'Orléans, laquelle par fortune fut bruslée dormant en son lict" and "La Complainte du riche infortuné Jacques de Beaune, seigneur de Samblançay". In the first, a piece filled with fantasy, Marot imagines that Venus, outraged because she was unable to make Anne fall in love, appealed to Vulcan to avenge her by setting fire to Anne's bed. The imagery of the concluding lines is worthy of the préciosité of the Italian petrarchists:

> Or vit son Ame, & le Corps est pery
> Par feu ardant. Mais qui de son Mary
> Eust eu alors les larmes qu'espandues
> Il a depuis, pas ne feussent perdues
> Comme elles sont, car de ses yeux sortir
> En feit assés pour ce feu amortir.[2]

The last is the elegy for Jacques de Beaune, Trésorier général du royaume, who had been accused of corruption by François Ier and his

[1] Thomas Sebillet, Art poétique françoys, Société des textes français modernes, Paris, Droz, 1932, pp. 178, 179.

[2] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 137.

mother Louise de Savoie and condemned to die on the scaffold. Many believed him innocent, and Marot's complainte is a defense of the accused, a tribute to his courage in adversity, and a meditation on the reverses of fortune. Faint traces of the Rhétoriqueurs are found in the following rhymes:

> Pres de rigueur, loing de misericorde
> Me prononça honte, misere & corde.[1]

Interestingly, a whole passage of this elegy is an imitation of the Ballade des Pendus of Marot's favorite poet François Villon:

> Je, qui avoys ferme entente et attente
> D'estre en Sepulchre honnorable estendu,
> Suis tout debout à Montfaulcon pendu.
> Là où le vent (quand est fort & nuysible)
> Mon corps agite, et quand il est paisible,
> Barbe et Cheveulx tous blancs me faict branler
> Ne plus ne moins que fueilles d'arbres en l'air.
> Mes yeux, jadis vigilans de nature,
> De vieulx Corbeaux sont devenus pasture.[2]

Henry Guy, remarking that Marot had already devoted a huitain to the subject of Jacques de Beaune, "le ferme vieillart qui sut mourir", proclaims the superiority of the epigram over the elegy:

> Elle ne vaut pas, il s'en faut, le huitain, car autre que les lieux communs y abondent, elle semble trop artificielle, et tombe dans les inconvénients du doctrinal et de la prosopopée.[3]

Another indication of the ambiguity regarding the nature of the elegy in the sixteenth century is the fact that Marot experimented somewhat with forms other than the decasyllable. The Eighteenth Elegy, as we have mentioned, is in strophic form, consisting of a series of

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 137.

[2] Ibid., pp. 137, 138.

[3] Henry Guy, Histoire de la poésie française au 16e siècle, Tome II, Paris, Champion, 1926, p. 158.

medieval sizains. Toward the end of Cantique III, "Le Dieu Gard de Marot à la Court de France", in which the poet celebrates his return from exile in 1536, we find the following lines:

> Doy je finir l'elegie presente,
> Sans que ung Dieu Gard encores je presente?[1]

Evidently there was some confusion in the poet's mind as to the distinction between the élégie and the cantique, which Mayer describes as the "genre lyrique grave".[2]

In the collection of 1533, Marot, the creator of the elegy in France, seems to have set the pattern for other elegists up to the middle of the century. The term is still somewhat vague; Charles Sainte-Marthe used it to apply to long poems of a philosophical nature. In general, however, such poets as Jean Bouchet, Charles Fontaine, and Etienne Forcadel followed Marot in making the elegy a poem on unrequited love, or occasionally a lament on death, usually in decasyllables with rimes plates, and in the form of an epistle or a monologue.[3] The influence of Petrarchism becomes more and more pronounced, although Ms. Scollen concedes that it is sometimes difficult to see where Petrarchism begins and the medieval courtly tradition ends.

On re-reading Marot's Elégies, despite their many flaws, one has an impression of delicate melancholy and courtly grace that is quite pleasing. For that reason, along with their historical significance,

[1] Marot, Oeuvres Lyriques, p. 287.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] For a discussion of the elegy between 1534 and 1550, see Christine Scollen, The Birth of the Elegy in France, op. cit., Chapters III to VI.

they should not be relegated to total neglect. Unfortunately, they have greatly suffered by comparison with the épîtres which are Marot's masterpieces. The elegies, like the Hêroïdes and many compositions of the Rhétoriqueurs modeled after them, are "des épîtres artificielles" or "des oeuvres de commande". Ovid's letters from legendary heroines of antiquity were intellectual "tours de force", not really designed to move the reader emotionally. Marot excelled in the "épître naturelle", a vehicle by which he could, being the free spirit he was, express himself directly and without constraint, whether seeking a favor or entertaining his reader with a satirical account of his own mishaps.

"La grande nouveauté de Clément Marot a été de faire de l'épître naturelle une épître vraiment personnelle."[1] The otherwise charming elegies pale beside the freshness and vigor of such creations.

Chapter III will concern an ironic aspect of the development of the love elegy as it relates to Ronsard and his contemporaries.

[1] Jean Frappier, in the introduction to Jean Lemaire de Belges, Les Epîtres de l'Amant Vert, Genève, Droz, 1948, p. xxix.

CHAPTER III

RONSARD'S EARLY ELEGIES: 1553 TO 1563

We have seen in the preceding chapter how the general uncertainty regarding the nature of the elegy had resulted, in Marot's poetry, in confusion between the elegy and the epistle. Influenced by the wide popularity of the translation which Octavian de Saint-Gelais had made in 1508 of Ovid's Héroïdes--imaginary love letters written by heroines of antiquity to their absent lovers or husbands--Marot and his followers created an elegy which was actually an "épître amoureuse". It had little to do with the Latin love elegy, a more or less erotic poem in elegiac couplets, or with the Greek models which may have preceded it. Marot's debts to Ovid were limited to the epistle form, as found in the Héroïdes, and to the fact that most of his elegies, like the letters of Ovid's legendary heroines, dealt with the theme of unrequited love. This theme was responsible for the sorrowful or plaintive tone of the poems, which was in sharp contrast to the joyous sensuality of many of the Latin love elegies, particularly Ovid's Amores. The meter of Marot's elegies was characteristically French, the decasyllable with "rimes plates", and the poems were marked by a gallantry which was very much in the medieval French courtly tradition. The title "elegy", borrowed from classical antiquity, belied their character.

The poets of the Pléiade resolved to change all of this. When the young du Bellay hastily drew up the manifesto of the new school in

1549, it was in response to Sebillet's Art poetique françoys of the previous year. Sebillet had given a muddled definition of the elegy based on the examples which he had found in Marot's work:

> L'élégie n'est pas sugette a téle variété de suget: et n'admet pas lés différences dés matiéres et légeretés communément traittées aus épistres: ains ha je ne say quoy de plus certain. Car de sa nature l'Elégie est triste et flebile: et traitte singuliérement lés passions amoureuses, lésquéles tu n'as guéres veues ni oyes vuides de pleurs et de tristesse. Et si tu me dys que lés épistres d'Ovide sont vrayes épistres tristes et amoureuses, et toutesfois n'admettent le nom d'elegie: enten que je n'exclu pas l'Amour et sés passions de l'Epistre, comme tu peus avoir entendu au commencement de ce chapitre en ce que je t'en ay dit: Mais je dy que l'Elégie traitte l'Amour et déclare sés desirs, ou plaisirs, et tristesses a celle qui en est la cause et l'obgét, mais simplement et nuément. . . . Or si tu requiers exemples d'Elégies, propose toy pour formulaire celles d'Ovide escrittes en sés trois livres d'Amours: ou mieus ly lés élégies de Marot. . . .[1]

Sebillet's preference for Marot over the poets of antiquity provoked a violent reaction among the members of the new school. Du Bellay and his colleagues, as part of their program of enrichment of the French language, advocated a return to the Latin love elegy with its wealth of mythological details, as found in the works of Tibullus and Propertius and in Ovid's Amores. They made no mention whatever of Marot as creator of the genre in France:

> Distile avecques un style coulant, et non scabreux ces pitoyables Elegies, à l'exemple d'un Ovide, d'un Tibule, et d'un Properce, y entremeslant quelquesfois de ces Fables anciennes, non petit ornement de Poesie.[2]

Once again, the use of the adjective "pitoyable" reflects the confusion

[1] Thomas Sebillet, Art Poétique Françoys, Paris, Droz, 1932, pp. 154, 155.

[2] Joachim du Bellay, La Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse, fac-similé de l'édition originale de 1549, Genève, Droz, 1950, second livre, chapitre IV.

surrounding the nature of the elegy, for du Bellay is apparently echoing the often quoted line of Ovid's elegy on the death of Tibullus

Flebilis indignos, Elegeia, solve capillos.[1]

It is this same line which provoked Sebillet's use, in his Art poétique, of the words "triste" and "flebile"[2] which, as we have seen, do not appropriately describe the majority of Latin elegies, erotic rather than plaintive poems.

In any case, it is essential to note that, for the Pléiade, Marot and his followers represented the "rymeurs" or "versificateurs"[3] whose influence was to be avoided at all costs. Just as the ode and the sonnet were to replace "rondeaux, ballades, virelais, chants royaux, chansons, et autres telles epiceries,"[4] forms generally associated with Marot and with earlier poets, the elegy as conceived by Marot was to be ignored, or at least dignified through the imitation of Latin poets and the extensive use of mythology. The program proposed by du Bellay was an impressive one.

How ironic, then, to find that du Bellay himself did not put his theory into practice! The nine elegies which he wrote in Latin and which were published in 1558 treat, in elegiac distichs, a variety of themes in the manner of the ancient Greek elegy. In a tribute to Ronsard, "Ad P. Ronsardum Lyrae Gallicae principem",[5] du Bellay addresses

[1] Ovid, Amores, III, ix, 3.

[2] Sebillet, p. 154.

[3] La Deffence, second livre, chapitre XI: ". . . comme les Latins appellent leurs mauvais poetes versificateurs".

[4] La Deffence, chapitre IV. Ultimately, Ronsard did not discard the chanson.

[5] Joachim du Bellay, Poésies françaises et latines, éd. Courbet,

his friend, in a manner reminiscent of Horace to Virgil setting out for Greece, with the words "pars animae quondam dimidiata meae".[1] An elegy entitled "Patriae Desiderium" is a wistful evocation of the poet's distant native land and so foreshadows the well-known sonnet "Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage".[2] The poems are elegies only because they are written in elegiac meter, and this is a return to the classical Greek view of the elegy as a metrical rather than a thematic notion.

It is the three elegies which du Bellay wrote in French[3] which are quite puzzling in view of the poet's theories. In contrast to those written in Latin, the three French elegies all have love as their subject. All three are written in decasyllables with "rimes plates", and all are in the form of epistles.

In the first of two elegies included in the collection Jeux Rustiques and entitled "Elégie d'amour", du Bellay writes to a lady, and in so doing, he ponders the question of whether "love at first sight" indeed exists, or whether feelings must grow with time.

> J'ay plusieurs poincts, que je pourrais induire
> A ce propos, si je voulois deduire
> Ce faict au long, et demonstrer comment

Paris, Garnier, 1918, Tome I, pp. 427-53. Of course, the very fact that du Bellay wrote such a large number of Latin verses is in itself contradictory to the theory that the French poet should write only in French.

[1] Poésies françaises et latines, p. 443.

[2] Cf. ibid., p. 446:

> Foelix, qui mores multorum vidit, & urbes,
> Sedibus & potuit consenuisse suis.

[3] Jeux Rustiques, xxi and xxxiii, and Recueil de Poésie, 2e edition, xx.

L'amour s'engendre en nous premierement,
Quelle est sa fin, son essence, et nature,
D'où vient souvent qu'on ayme à l'aventure
Un incogneu, et ne sçait on pourquoy,
Fors que lon trouve en luy je ne sçay quoy,
Qui à l'aymer par force nous incite,
Comme le fer, qui suyt la calamite.[1]

As this excerpt shows, the poem could have been written by Marot rather than du Bellay. Is it not a fine example of the "casuistique amoureuse" or "métaphysique galante" which critics have attributed to Marot's elegies? The stock allegorical characters of the Roman de la Rose are absent, and so the psychology of love appears a bit more sophisticated than in Marot's elegies. However, the medieval theme of courtly love, complete devotion of the poet to his lady, is still very much in evidence:

Je suis content d'endurer mille peines,
Milles souspirs, mille complaintes vaines,
Milles desdaings, et refus viroureux,
Si autrement on n'est point amoureux.[2]

In another poem entitled "Elégie amoureuse" and also included in Jeux Rustiques, the poem attempts to convince the lady of the extent of his love for her:

Je m'estendrois par plus longue escritture
Sur le pouvoir, sur la cause et nature,
Sur les effects et la diverse fin
De ceste amour tant humain que divin.
Mais cognoissant combien sont telles choses
Divinement en nostre esprit encloses,
Je laisseray cest argument choisie
Aux plus sçavans, et aux plus de loisir:
Me contentant seulement de vous dire
Ce que je puis de mon amour escrire

[1] Poésies françaises et latines, Vol. II, pp. 341-43.

[2] Poésies françaises et latines, Vol. II, p. 343.

Naivement, sans art et fiction,
Comme sans art est mon affection.[1]

The poem ends with an assurance of complete devotion on the part of the lover, which calls to mind Alain Chartier's La Belle dame sans mercy:

Permettez donc, je vous supply, Madame,
Permettez moy que vostre je me clame,
Que je vous ayme, et porte dans mon cueur.
Ou s'il vous plaist, pour m'user de rigueur,
Me commander, que tel je ne demeure,
Commandez moy ensemble que je meure.[2]

In a third elegy, du Bellay has even borrowed a proverb used by Marot to declare to a lady that his love is eternal. The proverb was discussed on p. 57 of Chapter II of this paper. C. A. Mayer believes that Marot found it in Oenone's letter to Paris in the Héroïdes, but a similar expression is found in Propertius I, xv, and II, xv, which may also have inspired Marot. It was apparently a commonplace expression in antiquity, which du Bellay has expanded as follows:

Plus tost les Cerfz vivront parmy les eaux,
Et les poissons, ou vivent les oizeaux:
Plus tost sera la grande mer sans voiles,
Les bois sans umbre, et le ciel sans étoiles,
Et voyra lon plus tost le monde enclos
Dedans le seing de son premier cahos,
Que pour vertu en mon coeur imprimée
Vostre vertu de moy soit moins aymée,
Ou que d'un coeur honnestement lié
L'honneste amour soit jamais oublié.[3]

Whether du Bellay borrowed the proverb from Marot, Ovid's Héroides, or Propertius, the similarity between this passage and Marot's elegy XV, ll. 35-38, is nonetheless striking.

[1] Ibid., p. 375.

[2] Ibid., p. 376.

[3] Poésies françaises et latines, Vol. I, p. 205.

Henri Chamard, in his Histoire de la Pléiade, comments on the irony of this state of affairs. Du Bellay, who in Les Regrets and Les Antiquitez de Rome was perhaps the most elegiac of all poets in the modern sense of that term, chose to express his most intimate feelings of nostalgia in the form of the sonnet rather than the elegy:

> Détail curieux: lorsqu'il se risqua par trois fois à pratiquer le genre traditionnel, ce fut pour composer en vers décasyllabes, et sans le moindre appel à la mythologie, des élégies d'amour qui étaient des épîtres, et qui discutaient, spirituellement, des questions alambiquées de métaphysique galante. En vérité, n'était-il pas piquant de voir l'ancien révolutionnaire en revenir tout uniment aux théories de Sebillet et traiter l'élégie comme un simple Marot?[1]

Although du Bellay, because of his sensitive nature, has occasionally been called a French Tibullus,[2] the sensual Latin love elegy was apparently ill-suited to him. His love poetry is characterized by a certain preciosity, whether it be the sonnets of l'Olive,[3] in which he is content to "petrarquise" in order to be fashionable and to carry out his own program of imitating the Italians and the ancients, as expressed in the Deffence, or in his three French elegies, which resemble the impersonal "élégies de commande" of Marot. Du Bellay is ill-at-ease in the love elegy. His intimate, personal poetry is not to be

[1] Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Paris, Didier, 1961, Vol. III, pp. 27, 28.

[2] Cf. Michel Dassonville, Ronsard: Etude historique et littéraire, Genève, Droz, 1968, Vol. II, p. 121. This critic adheres to the traditional connotation of the word "feminine": "Maladif et d'âme féminine, du Bellay admirait surtour l'audace, la force, la vitalité de Ronsard."

[3] The uncontested chef-d'oeuvre of the collection is the memorable sonnet "Si nostre vie est moins qu'une journée", which is a fusion of Petrarchism and Platonism.

found there, but rather, in the wistful lyricism and bitter satire of the Regrets. In these sonnets, which are elegiac without being elegies, the poet, as Joseph Vianey remarks, applies to the pain of separation from his native land, images which the Petrarchist poets had used to describe the pain of separation from a beloved.[1]

This is also the substance of a comment on du Bellay by Chamard, quoted by Robert G. Mahieu in an article on the sixteenth century elegy:

> Poète amoureux, il n'a pas eu, dans l'expression de son amour d'accents sincères, parce qu'il n'aimait pas vraiment. Aux élans de son coeur se sont substituées les mièvreries du pétrarquisme, au langage de la passion, une phraséologie conventionnelle.[2]

It is interesting to note, however, that in the second edition of his Recueil de Poésie, du Bellay published a satirical ode called "A une dame" enumerating all the excesses of Petrarchism, and which he later entitled "Contre les Pétrarquistes":

> J'ay oublié l'art de Petrarquizer,
> Je veulx d'Amour franchement deviser,
> Sans vous flatter, et sans me deguizer;
> Ceulx qui font tant de plaintes,
> N'ont pas le quart d'une vraye amitié,
> Et n'ont pas tant de peine la moitié,
> Comme leurs yeux, pour vous faire pitié,
> Jettent de larmes feintes.[3]

The poem can be compared to Ronsard's "Odelette à sa maistresse" of the Meslanges of 1555:

[1] Vianey, p. 330.

[2] Robert G. Mahieu, "L'Elégie au 16e siècle; Essai sur l'histoire du genre", Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, XLVI, 1939, pp. 166, 167.

[3] Poésies françaises et latines, Vol. II, pp. 335-41. Cf. Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Vol. I, pp. 275-79. See also Vianey (op. cit.), pp. 165-77, in which that critic shows that such anti-Petrarchist pieces were already fashionable in Italy at the time that du Bellay wrote his ode.

Je veus aymer ardentement,
Aussi veus-je qu'egallement
On m'ayme d'une amour ardente:
Toute amitié froidement lente,
Qui peut dissimuler son bien
Ou taire son mal, ne vaut rien.
Car faire en amours bonne mine,
De n'aymer point c'est le vray sine.
Les amants si frois en esté,
Admirateurs de chasteté,
Et qui morfondus petrarquisent,
Sont toujours sots . . . .[1]

The ode "Contre les Petrarquistes", as a parody of l'Olive and other Petrarchist collections,[2] is highly amusing and not without interest from a theoretical point of view since du Bellay presents a satirical catalogue of the poetic devices of that school:

Ce n'est que feu de leurs froides chaleurs,
Ce n'est qu'horreur de leurs feintes douleurs,
Ce n'est encor de leurs souspirs et pleurs,
Que vents, pluye et orages.
Et bref, ce n'est à ouir leurs chansons
De leurs amours, que flammes et glaçons,
Flesches, liens, et mille autres façons,
De semblables oultrages.

He resolves to avoid all the stylistic absurdities mentioned in the poem--the endless hyperboles, the abuse of mythology, the usual jargon--and to write in a more earthy fashion:

Mais quant à moy, qui plus terrestre suis,
Et n'ayme rien, que ce qu'aymer je puis,
Le plus subtil, qu'en amour je poursuis,
S'appelle jouissance.

In other words, du Bellay announces that he will write in the manner of the Latin love elegists but does not actually do so.[3]

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 797.

[2] Ronsard's Les Amours de Cassandre and Baïf's Les Amours de Méline, 1552. Pontus de Tyard's Les Erreurs Amoureuses, 1552.

[3] His imitations of Jean Second's Baisers are merely literary exercises.

The ode "Contre les Petrarquistes" first appeared in 1553, the year of du Bellay's departure from Rome.[1] In Les Regrets and Les Antiquitez de Rome, the poet turned away from the Petrarchism of l'Olive toward elegiac poetry--la poésie des ruines--and the satirical sonnet. Vianey attempts to show that, in these genres as well, du Bellay had Italian precursors.[2] Ronsard, while not totally abandoning the Petrarchists in La Continuation des Amours of 1555 and La Nouvelle Continuation of 1556, relied more heavily on the neo-Latin poets, particularly Marullus.

Actually, it is not very surprising that du Bellay, who was to prove himself such a clever satirist in Les Regrets, would produce the ode "Contre les Pétrarquistes." If one takes his criticism of affectation seriously, though, it is rather odd that the only elegies which he wrote were mannered poems in the style of Marot, which clearly contradicted his desire to "deviser franchement d'Amour". We can only conclude, from the few examples in his work, that the love elegy as a genre was of little interest to du Bellay and that he did not care to develop it or to practice it with any degree of originality.

Pontus de Tyard, close friend of Maurice Scève and later member of the Pléiade, followed the general trend set by Marot in making the elegy an "épître amoureuse", but in alexandrins with "rimes plates" rather than decasyllables. His "Elégie à Pierre de Ronsard"[3] describes a rejected lover's attempts to find solace for his sufferings. A

[1] It was eventually reprinted in the Divers Jeux Rustiques.

[2] Cf. Vianey, op. cit., pp. 317-60.

[3] Pontus de Tyard, Œuvres poétiques complètes, Paris, Didier, 1966, pp. 236 ff.

second rather curious elegy entitled "Elégie pour une dame enamourée d'une autre dame"[1] also has unrequited love as its theme. Ronsard later included a similar poem in his Elégies, Mascarades et Bergeries of 1565.[2]

Etienne Jodelle, dramatist and member of the Pléiade, tried his hand at the love elegy on two occasions.[3] One poem is in the form of a long epistle, the other a rather colorless monologue. Both concern the plight of the rejected lover and are "plaintes amoureuses" in the manner of Marot. The time was ripe for the creation of a more personal, more lyrical love elegy by Ronsard.

In the first posthumous edition of Ronsard's works, published in 1587, the book of Elegies was preceded by a quotation from Horace's Ars Poetica regarding the elegy[4] and by two prefaces, both of which are of interest to us.[5] The first shows the confusion which Ronsard evidently felt regarding the nature of the elegy and ends with a translation of two lines taken from Horace. The preface was discussed in Chapter I, p. 2 , of this paper, but, we take the liberty of repeating it here:

[1] Ibid., p. 246.

[2] Pierre de Ronsard, Œuvres complètes, éd. Gustave Cohen, Paris, Gallimard, 1950, Vol. II, p. 889. In all cases I am using the numerical references corresponding to this edition.

[3] Cf. Etienne Jodelle, Œuvres complètes, Paris, Gallimard, 1965, pp. 362-67.

[4] Versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,
Post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.
(Cf. Chap. I, pp. 3-5 of this paper.)

[5] Paul Laumonier, Tableau chronologique des œuvres de Ronsard, 2e édition, Paris, Hachette, 1911, pp. 69, 70. Ronsard, Tome II, p. 646.

Les Vers de l'Elegie au premier furent faits
Pour y chanter des morts les gestes & les faicts,
Joincts au son du cornet: maintenant on compose
Divers sujets en elle, & reçoit toute chose.
Amour pour y regner en a chassé la Mort.
Les vieux Grammairiens entre eux sont en discord
Qui premier l'inventa: mais leur cause plaidée
Pend au croq sous le juge, & n'est encore vuydée.[1]

In her study of Ronsard's elegies, Dora Elisabeth Frey[2] states her belief that this preface may be apocryphal, a creation of Ronsard's literary executors Jean Galland and Claude Binet, who published the first posthumous edition of his works, to which was added Binet's biography of the poet.[3] The preface, in that critic's opinion, could be an attempt on the part of Galland and Binet to justify the heterogeneous character of Ronsard's elegies, which otherwise would have been a source of embarrassment to them. The hypothesis is a clever one. However, since Ronsard himself carefully prepared the seventh complete edition of his works during the last few years of his life, it seems more likely that the preface is authentic and reflects the poet's own confusion, shortly before his death, as to the nature of the genre.

A problem confronting those who attempt a study of Ronsard's elegies is the constant process of revision, correction, and alteration to which the poet subjected his complete works. From the first edition of 1560, in four volumes, to the sixth edition of 1584 and the seventh

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 646.

[2] Dora Elisabeth Frey, Le Genre élégiaque dans l'oeuvre de Ronsard, Imprimerie Georges Thone, Liège, 1939. This study, along with Robert E. Hallowell, Ronsard and the Conventional Roman Elegy, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1954, provides much fine background material on Ronsard's elegies.

[3] Claude Binet, La Vie de P. de Ronsard (1586), éd. critique par Paul Laumonier, Paris, 1909.

edition, which he meticulously prepared just before his death, the poet was continually reclassifying and reediting his work.[1] The fate of the elegies is particularly puzzling, since these poems were continually wending their way from one section to another, and certain ones, such as the hauntingly lovely elegy to Cassandre ("L'absence, ny l'oubly, ny la course du jour"), which was included in "Le Septiesme livre des Poemes" in 1569, were mysteriously eliminated from the later editions. A study of the evolution of the elegy in Ronsard's work would require attention to this process of reclassification and to the textual variations from one edition to another. Such a study is of too broad a scope for this paper, the subject of which is not the elegy in general, but more specifically, the love elegy in the sixteenth century. For that reason, we shall first consider briefly what the elegy appears to have constituted for Ronsard, and then, in Chapter IV, concentrate more deeply on certain of his love elegies, particularly those written for Genèvre and for Isabeau de Limeuil, which are undoubtedly the most interesting for the purposes of this paper.

Ronsard began to write elegies rather late in his career. Having practiced with much success other genres recommended in the Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse--the sonnet in the Amours of 1552, the epigram in 1553, the hymne in 1555--, the poet did

[1] Cf. Isidore Silver, éd., Les Oeuvres de Pierre de Ronsard, texte de 1587, Paris, Didier, 1966, pp. 11, 12: "En se corrigeant plus qu'aucun poète français, Ronsard a cherché inlassablement l'expression parfaite de son sentiment et de sa pensée. . . . Les grandes modifications de classement, continuellement inspirées par une féconde production, se développant à travers toutes les éditions collectives de Ronsard, sont autant de variantes architecturales d'une étude persévérante qui mènera enfin à la découverte de la 'maîtresse forme' et de l'idée maîtresse de ses Oeuvres."

not approach the elegy until a later date. It was only in 1567, in the second edition of his complete works, that Ronsard created a section entitled "Les Elégies en quatre livres".[1] He included in this section various pieces which had previously appeared with the title "élégie" and which had been scattered among his other poems, as well as six new pieces.

The very first elegies, three in number, had appeared in 1553, in the "Deuxième édition du Cinquiesme livre des Odes". The most significant for our purposes is the "Elégie en forme d'épitaphe d'Antoine Chateignier" ("Si quelquefois le dueil et les grieves tristesses").[2] Since the poem is a lament, Ronsard appears to be turning to the improbable etymology which would associate the term "elegy" with "song of mourning".[3] Since Antoine Chateignier was a love poet, the themes of love and death are again closely associated. Ronsard has, in fact, taken as his model Ovid's lament on the death of Tibullus (Amores, III, ix, 3). The beginning of Ronsard's poem is almost a translation of the first four lines of Ovid's elegy:

> Si quelquefois le dueil, et les grieves tristesses
> Ont poingt le coeur des plus grandes Déesses;
> Si quelquefois Thetis pour son fils larmoya
> Lors que Paris aux Enfers l'envoya;
> Sepulchrale Elegie, à ceste heure lamente,
> Et de grands coups ta poitrine tourmente.

[1] Cf. Laumonier, Tableau chronologique, p. 43. Also Frey, Le Genre élégiaque dans l'oeuvre de Ronsard, p. 15 and Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Vol. III, p. 30.

[2] Ronsard, éd. G. Cohen, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Tome II, p. 500.

[3] From "elegos" (lament). Cf. "Versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum" (Horace, Ars Poetica).

Ah! larmeuse Déesse, ah! vrayment or-endroit,
Tu auras nom Elegie à bon droit.[1]

As in Ovid's elegy, the central theme here is the immortality of poetry:

Les vers tant seulement peuvent frauder la mort;
Helas! ami, quel destin ou que sort,
Helas! s'opposa tant à ta gloire premiere,
Qu'avant mourir ne misses en lumiere
Tes beaux vers amoureux qui chantoyent à leur tour
Et l'amer fiel, et le doux miel d'amour?[2]

Not only has Ronsard imitated Ovid's elegy, but in an attempt to create an equivalent of the Latin elegiac couplet in French, he has alternated the decasyllable with the alexandrin, as the Roman poets alternated the pentameter with the hexameter! The effect is visual as well as auditory. Jacques Peletier was most impressed with it and, in his peculiar French prose, advised other poets to do the same:

Les Vers an l'Epitrę seront tous d'unę męmę mesurę:
A la diferencę dę l'Elegię, laquelę ję suis d'opinion
que sę facę du vęrs Dodecassilabę: c'ęt a dirę, par
Distiquęs: Quelę mę souvient an avoęr vù unę an Ronsard.[3]

Actually, the effort was short-lived. Ronsard never again attempted to associate the alexandrin and the decasyllable in imitation of the Latin distich. Another poet, Jean Doublet, published a collection of

[1] Cf. Ovid., Amores, III, ix, 1-4:

Mimnona si mater, mater ploravit Achillem
Et tangunt magnas trista fata deas,
Flebilis indignos, Elegeia, solve capillos,
A! nimis ex vero nunc tibi nomen erit.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 501. Cf. Ovid, Amores, III, ix, l. 28: *Defugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos.* (Chap. I, p. 29)

[3] Jacques Peletier du Mans, L'Art Poetique (1555), Paris, Soc. d'Ed. "Les Belles Lettres", 1930, p. 182.

elegies in 1559 in which that poet attempted to adapt the Latin distich to French verse by creating a series of "petits quatrains de vers inégaux" in rimes croisées, consisting of two decasyllables and two octosyllables. Dora Elisabeth Frey remarks that Jean Doublet's elegies are worthy of note for another reason, the fact that they form the only collection in the sixteenth century dedicated to one woman.[1] Doublet's Sibille is the counterpart of Propertius' Cynthia, Tibullus' Delia and Ovid's Corinna, but the French poet resolves not to offend the reader's modesty and to avoid "toute cete deshonneste lasciveté, laquelle usurpée impudemment par quelques antiques Elegiaques, les a rendus moins recommandables aux chastes oreilles."[2]

"L'Elégie en forme d'épitaphe d'Antoine Chateignier" is unique, not only from a metrical point of view, but also because it is the only example among Ronsard's elegies of a lament. What, then, is the nature of the others? As far as the early elegies are concerned, there is a diversity of themes which would indeed justify the words of the preface to the posthumous edition of 1587:

> maintenant on compose
> Divers sujets en elle, & reçoit toute chose.

Included in the Deuxième édition du Cinquiesme livre des Odes of 1553 was the "Elégie à Muret" ("Non, Muret, non, ce n'est pas du jourd'huy"),[3] which later found its way into the Premier Livre des

[1] Frey, op. cit., p. 11.

[2] Jean Doublet, Elégies, Paris, Cabinet du Bibliophile, 1871, p. 4.

[3] Cf. Laumonier, Tableau chronologique, p. 15.

Amours, and in which Ronsard assures the humanist and Latin poet that there is no shame in having yielded to the powers of love since Hercules himself could not resist succumbing to them. The third elegy of the collection, "A Jean de la Peruse, poète dramatique" ("Encore Dieu par sa grace n'a pas"), relates the efforts of the Pléiade to carry out its sacred mission of renewing French poetry. Other early elegies include an "Elégie à Cassandre", which appeared in Le Bocage of 1554. In this poem, Ronsard assures Cassandre that, even though Henri II has urged him to abandon lyric poetry in favor of epic and to devote his attention exclusively to La Franciade, he will nevertheless continue to honor her by writing love poems, which will be a diversion from his more serious literary efforts.

> Mon oeil, mon coeur, ma Cassandre, ma vie,
> Hé! qu'à bon droit tu dois porter d'envie
> A ce grand Roy, qui ne veut plus souffrir
> Qu'à mes chansons ton nom se vienne offrir.[1]

How often did the Latin love elegists express their discomfort at writing love poetry while their patrons were urging them to devote their time and effort to nobler pursuits, such as tragedy or epic![2] The parallel becomes more striking as Ronsard alludes to his Roman predecessors:

> Mais que me sert d'avoir tant leu Tibulle,
> Properce, Ovide, et le docte Catulle,
> Avoir tan veu Petrarque et tant noté,
> Si par un Roy le pouvoir m'est oté
> De les ensuyvre, et s'il faut que ma lyre
> Pendue au croc ne m'ose plus rien dire?
> (ll. 13-18)

[1] Ibid., p. 16; Ronsard, Tome I, p. 98. The poem was eventually placed in the Amours de Cassandre.

[2] Cf. Chapter I, p. 17, of this paper.

The exquisite line "Que pleures-tu, Cassandre, ma douce ame?" (l. 45), expresses the poet's tender reassurance that he will continue to write love poetry despite the king's wishes.[1]

Several of Ronsard's early elegies were philosophical in nature. In the third volume of the first complete edition of Oeuvres (1560) was an elegy dedicated to Robert de la Haye, conseiller du Roy en son Parlement à Paris ("Si j'estois à renaistre au ventre de ma mere").[2] The poem is a long meditation on the miseries of the human condition.

> De tous les animaux le plus lourd animal,
> C'est l'homme, le sujet d'infortune et de mal,
> Qui endure en vivant la peine que Tantale
> Là-bas endure mort dedans l'onde infernale,
> Et celle de Sisyphe, et celle d'Ixion.
> Vif, son enfer il porte, ou par ambition,
> Ou par crainte de mort qui tousjours le tourmente,
> Et plus un mal finist, et plus l'autre s'augmente.[3]

The curious "Elégie du Verre", which first appeared in Les Meslanges of 1554, further illustrates the heterogeneous character of Ronsard's early elegies. In this poem, ("Ceux que Les Soeurs aimeront plus que moy"),[4] which is dedicated to Jean Brinon, the poet gives a lyrical description of a glass which his friend has given him as a gift.

> Quant est de moy, je n'oseroy, Brinon,
> Sur mon espaule eslever ton renom
> Pour engarder que la mort ne l'enterre:
> Il me suffist si l'honneur d'un seul verre,
> Lequel tu m'as pour estreines donné,

[1] When Ronsard finally decides to take poetic leave of Cassandre, it is also in the form of an elegy, ("Cherche, Maistresse, un Poete nouveau"), a poem filled with bitter disillusionment.

[2] Laumonier, Tableau chronologique, p. 32.

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 76.

[4] Laumonier, Tableau chronologique, p. 18.

Est dignement en mes vers blasonné.
O gentil verre, oseroy-je bien dire
Combien je t'aime, et combien je t'admire?
Tu es heureux, et plus heureux celuy
Qui t'inventa pour noyer nostre ennuy![1]

Ronsard later retracted the heading "elegy" and replaced it with "discours." However, the piece most closely resembles the "blason", in which a person or object is described in detail, in a favorable or unfavorable light, and which had been carried to erotic extremes by Marot and his followers at the court of Ferrare, under the influence of the Italian strambottistes.[2]

Also among the Meslanges of 1554, and very much in the spirit of the blasons, is the "Elégie à Janet, peintre du roy":

Pein moy, Janet, pein moy, je te supplie,
Sur ce tableau les beautez de m'amie
De la façon que je te les diray.
Comme importun je ne te suppliray
D'un art menteur quelque faveur luy faire:
Il suffit bien si tu la sçais portraire
Telle qu'elle est, sans vouloir desguiser
Son naturel pour la favoriser,
Car la faveur n'est bonne que pour celles
Qui se font peindre, et qui ne sont pas belles.[3]

The poem was later transferred to the Amours de Cassandre. The artist in question is François Clouet, official court painter of Henri II and Charles IX, and son of Jean Clouet, who was also known as "Janet"; hence, the name used by Ronsard. In this elegy, the poet emulates the painter in his wealth of pictorial details, the sensuality of which recalls the

[1] Tableau chronologique, p. 18; Ronsard, Tome I, p. 887.

[2] "Les blasons anatomiques du corps féminin", which provoked the wave of "contre-blasons".

[3] Tableau chronologique, p. 17; Ronsard, Tome I, p. 105.

Latin love elegies.

> Apres fay luy sa rondelette oreille
> Petite, unie, entre blanche et vermeille,
> Qui sous le voile apparoisse à l'égal
> Que fait un lis enclos dans un crystal,
> Ou tout ainsi qu'apparoist une rose
> Tout fraischement dedans un verre enclose.

The Epilogue to the Nouvelle Continuation des Amours of 1556 is an "Elégie à son livre" ("Mon fils, si tu sçavois ce qu'on dira de toy"), in which Ronsard has adopted the Latin poets' custom of dedicating poems to their own works. The poet explains why, in turning his attentions from Cassandre "orgueilleuse et rebelle" to Marie l'Angevine, he has adopted a simpler, more direct style, "le beau stile bas". He attributes this change not only to the character of his subject, Marie d'Anjou, "la fille des champs", but also to the influence of the Latin love elegists:

> Dy luy que les amours ne se souspirent pas
> D'un vers hautement grave, ains d'un beau stile bas,
> Populaire et plaisant, ainsi qu'a fait Tibulle,
> L'ingenieux Ovide, et le docte Catulle.
> Le fils de Venus hait ces ostentations:
> Il suffist qu'on luy chante au vray ses passions,
> Sans enflure ni fard, d'un mignard et doux stile,
> Coulant d'un petit bruit, comme une eau qui distile.[1]

That Ronsard preferred the earthiness of the Roman elegists to the lofty tone of Petrarch's sonnets is reflected in the style of the "Elégie à son livre", which is also not lacking in irony:

> Repons-luy je te pri', que Petrarque sur moy
> N'avoit authorité de me donner sa loy,
> Ny a ceux qui viendroy'nt apres luy, pour les faire

[1] Tableau chronologique, p. 27. This elegy now serves as an introduction to Le Second Livre des Amours, Ronsard, Tome I, pp. 111-115. Cf. Du Bellay's ode "Contre les Pétrarquistes", p. 82 of this chapter.

Si long temps amoureux sans leur lien desfaire.
Luy-mesme ne fut tel, car à voir son escrit,
Il estoit esveillé d'un trop gentil esprit
Pour estre sot trente ans, abusant sa jeunesse
Et sa muse au giron d'une vieille maistresse:
Ou bien il jouyssoit de la Laurette, ou bien
Il estoit un grand fat d'aimer sans avoir rien.[1]

From the preceding examples, we may conclude that in the early years,[2] Ronsard hesitated in forming a notion of the elegy. Of the fifteen or so pieces which bore the title "elegy", a few were on the theme of love, but most of these approached the subject theoretically, as did the "Elégie à Muret". Furthermore, many of the early elegies had literary or philosophical themes. That Ronsard eventually no longer considered some of these poems elegies is attested by the fact that he later gave them the title "discours."[3] All of the early elegies are written in decasyllables or in alexandrins, with rimes plates, and all of them most remarkably, if not quite in the form of epistles, do contain an address. This use of the address, which will always be

[1] Ibid., p. 112.

[2] For Henri Chamard (Histoire de la Pléiade, Vol. III, pp. 26-29), this early period begins in 1553, date of publication of the first elegies, and ends in 1560 with the publication of the Première édition collective.

[3] That there exists a relationship between the "élégie" and the "discours" in Ronsard's work is indicated in several ways. Both contain an address and are written in rimes plates. The poet entitled the first two elegies to Genèvre "Discours en forme d'élégie", suggesting that he was somewhat confused about the nature of the two genres. Furthermore, two of the discours had appeared as elegies in the edition of 1560 ("L'Elégie à Guillaume des Autels" and L'Elégie à Loys des Masures"). These two poems, in which Ronsard treated for the first time the problems posed by the rise of Protestantism, foreshadow the "Discours des misères de ce temps." Interestingly, the "Hymnes" of 1555, 1556, by their form and philosophical themes, were early versions of the discours. (Cf. Chamard, T. II, pp. 356 ff.)

a characteristic of Ronsard's elegies, is most worthy of note since it connects Ronsard's elegies with the "épître".

Du Bellay, in the Deffense, had advised French poets to avoid the épître:

> Quant aux epistres, ce n'est un poeme qui puisse enrichir grandement nostre vulgaire, pource qu'elles sont volontiers de choses familieres et domestiques, si tu ne les voulois faire à l'imitation d'elegies, comme Ovide, ou sentencieuses et graves comme Horace.[1]

The "elegies" of Ovid to which du Bellay refers here are the elegiac epistles written from exile, the Tristia and Epistolae ex Ponto. The Pléiade wished, at all costs, to disregard the épître in order to avoid comparison with Marot, who had been master of the genre. In order to avoid using the term "épître", Ronsard replaced it with the term "élégie" to describe many of his early poems containing an address, and so, ironically his elegies became epistles, as were those of Marot.[2] The "Elégie sur le trépas d'Antoine Chateignier", inspired by Ovid's lament on the death of Tibullus and written in a form that imitates the Latin distich, was the only authentic elegy in the classical sense.

In neglecting the criterion of form--the elegiac couplet--which characterized the Greek and Roman elegy, Ronsard fell into a peculiar trap. His extensive reading of the Latin elegists under Dorat's instruction had convinced him that elegiac poetry was love poetry. In the previously mentioned "Elégie à Cassandre" ("Mon oeil, mon coeur, ma

[1] Du Bellay, La Deffense, chapitre IV.

[2] Cf. Frey (op. cit.), p. 22: "L'addresse à une personne plus ou moins intéressée au sujet de la pièce, et jamais au lecteur qui reste spectateur d'un commerce qui ne le regarde pas directement. . . . La désignation littéraire de ce genre de poésie est l'épître."

ma Cassandre, ma vie"), in which he assures Cassandre that he has not abandoned love poetry for epic, Ronsard alluded to the Roman elegists and to Petrarch, who had taught him to "souspirer une pleinte amoureuse".[1] Ronsard's love elegies, at the beginning, were contained within other forms. Dora Elisabeth Frey comments on this curious situation:

> En un mot, Ronsard, oubliant que la poésie élégiaque latine est une poésie en distiques, verse dans le moule du sonnet, de la chanson, de l'ode, cette matière amoureuse qui caractérise pour lui toute poésie élégiaque.[2]

At first the elegy, for Ronsard, was merely a sort of epistle on a variety of themes. The love elegy as such did not clearly emerge until 1563, in the Trois livres du Recueil des Nouvelles Poesies."[3]

Ronsard's elegies have been classified by Henri Chamard into three groups: l'élégie d'idée, l'élégie de cour, and l'élégie d'amour.[4] The first group contains virtually all the elegies which have been mentioned thus far, that is, those published between the years 1553 and 1560, which tend to be discussions in epistolary form, often on literary or philosophical themes. Even when love is the subject of these elegies, it is treated in an impersonal, didactic fashion. Occasionally it is so closely associated with a literary theme as to disquality the poem as a love elegy. Ronsard continued to practice this type of elegy in later years, so that poems such as "l'Elégie à J. Hurault, Sieur de la

[1] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 98.

[2] Frey (op. cit.), p. 19.

[3] Cf. Laumonier, Tableau chronologique, pp. 37-39.

[4] Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Tome III, p. 30.

Pitardière",[1] which first appeared among the Poèmes in the complete works of 1578, and which is clearly inspired by the "carpe diem" of Horace's odes, was eventually included in the book of elegies.

> Voicy le temps, Hurault, qui joyeux nous convie
> Par l'amour, par le vin, d'esbattre nostre vie.
> L'an reprend sa jeunesse, et nous monstre comment
> Il faut, ainsi que luy, rajeunir doucement.
> Ne vois-tu pas, Hurault, ces jeunes arondelles,
> Ces pigeons tremoussans et du bec et des ailes,
> Se baiser goulument, et de nuict et de jour
> Sur le haut d'une tour se soulasser d'amour?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Cela nous admoneste en ces mois si plaisans
> De ne frauder, Hurault, l'usufruict de nos ans.
> Voicy la Mort qui vient, la vieille rechignée,
> D'une suite de maux tousjours accompagnée.
> Il faut en despit d'elle empoigner le plaisir,
> Non en ce mois de may, où l'âge et le loisir,
> Autheurs que nostre sang autour du cueur boüillonne,
> Sang chaud qui nostre coeur au plaisir aiguillonne,
> Mais lors que soixante ans nous viendront renfermer,
> Il faut le triquetraq et les cartes aimer,
> Sans se laisser domter à la rigueur de l'âge,
> Qui nous fera là-bas faire un si long voyage,
> D'où plus on ne revient, au moins comme l'on dit:
> Si Catulle a menti, ma faulte est à credit.

As we have mentioned, the "élégie d'idée" represented an attempt on the part of Ronsard to avoid the épître, as practiced by Marot, by entitling "élégie" poems on various themes written in rimes plates and containing an address. The influence of the Latin love elegists, at least in the early years, was to be found elsewhere,--in Ronsard's odes, chansons, and sonnets. Ronsard's debt to the Roman elegists is found in all of his genres and cannot be confined to the elegies themselves.[2]

[1] Tableau chronologique, p. 63. Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 50, 51.

[2] Robert Hallowell stresses this point in Ronsard and the Conventional Roman Elegy, passim.

Of less interest than the "élégies d'idée" are the "élégies de cour",[1] which the poet himself denounced in the second of the two prefaces to the first posthumous edition of his works. Independent by nature, Ronsard found it demeaning to be obliged to "courtiser les grands". Although he did not adhere to the views which Voltaire would later express concerning "le superflu, chose très nécessaire",[2] he still was aware that a certain basic material comfort, for which he was dependent upon the Court, was necessary even to the artist. Ronsard used the elegy as a means of obtaining such favors.

The poet keenly resented the aesthetic compromise involved in such work. The members of the Court prized quantity above quality. The longer the verses dedicated to them, the wiser they considered their financial investment. This is the subject of the above-mentioned preface "Encores au Lecteur";

> Soit courte l'Elegie, en trente vers comprise,
> Ou en quarante au plus. Le fin Lecteur mesprise
> Ces discours, ces narrez aussi grands que la Mer.
> Il faut de maint rampart ta langue renfermer,
> Qui veut tousjours causer, tousjours parler et dire,
> Et reserrer ta main qui bouillonne d'escrire.[3]

The preface is followed by a passage in prose on the same subject:

> Si j'eusse composé la meilleure partie de ces élégies à ma volonté, & non par expres commandement des Rois et des Princes, j'eusse esté curieux de la breifveté: mais il a fallu satisfaire au desir de ceux qui avoient puissance sur moy, lesquels ne trouvent jamais rien de bon, ny de bien fait, s'il n'est de large

[1] Once again we are adopting Chamard's terminology.

[2] "Le Mondain".

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 647.

estendue, & comme on dit en proverbe, aussi grand que la Mer.[1]

In 1558, Ronsard had succeeded Mellin de Saint-Gelais as "poète officiel du roi". In 1565, at the request of Catherine de Médicis, Ronsard dedicated to Elisabeth d'Angleterre the section entitled "Elégies, Mascarades, et Bergerie", which was composed of rather pompous "pièces de commande", many in extravagant praise of the British queen. That Ronsard never considered these pieces authentic elegies is clear from the preface of 1587[2] and from the fact that many of them now bear the title "discours".

In contrast to the artificial elegies of the collection "Elégies, Mascarades, et Bergerie" are a few pieces which could be considered "élégies de cour" but which reflect more directly the poet's feelings. In his "Elégie au seigneur Baillon, trésorier de l'Epargne du Roi" of 1563 ("Celuy devoit mourir de l'esclat d'un tonnerre"), Ronsard treates a theme which had become commonplace among the Latin elegists: nostalgia for a mythical Golden Age before man's corruption by wealth.[3] In the case of the Latin love elegists, the theme was

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 647.

[2] Cf. Frey, Le Genre élégiaque dans l'oeuvre de Ronsard, p. 39. That critic divides Ronsard's elegies into those "à sa volonté" and "Contre sa volonté".

Also, Chamard, Tome III, p. 38: "Ronsard est souvent ingénieux dans le maniement de l'éloge, et même de la flatterie, mais on n'a jamais l'impression qu'en écrivant ses vers il ait beaucoup vibré.

Two of the elegies ("Pour vous monstrer que j'ay parfaite envie" and "Ce diamant, Maistresse, je vous donne") were eliminated from later editions.

[3] Cf. Chapter I, pp. 19 and 23 of this paper.
Ovid III, 8, ll. 35 ff:

At cum regna senex caeli Saturnus haberet,

closely linked to a complaint regarding the venality of women, who could be lured away from the poet-lover by the seduction of a "dives amator". Ronsard has treated the theme in a most original fashion. He uses as a point of departure the cliché of the corruptive powers of wealth:

> Celui devoit mourir de l'esclat d'un tonnerre,
> Qui premier descouvrit les Mines de la terre,
> Qui beche ses boyaux, & hors de ses rongnons
> Tira l'argent & l'or, deux meschans compagnons.
> . . . . . .
> Or quant à moy, Baillon, ce métal je deteste,
> Je l'abhorre & le fuy & le hay comme peste,
> Et certes à bon droit: car j'ay tousjours par luy,
> En forçant ma nature, enduré trop d'ennuy.
> Pour le penser gaigner J'ay courtizé les Princes,
> Et les grands Gouverneurs des royales provinces:
> J'ay sué, travaillé, escrit & composé
> Quatre heures en la nuict à peine ay reposé,
> Je me suis tourmenté sans nulle récompense;
> Car envers mes labeurs trop ingrate est la France.[1]

Ronsard ends his elegy with a curious ironic twist which recalls Marot addressing a humorous plea for funds to François Ier:

> Encore que je l'abjure, & l'abhorre, & le fuye,
> Si est-ce toutesfois qu'à ce coup je le prie
> De passer par tes mains pour s'en venir loger
> Chez moi que le tiendra comme un hoste estranger,
> Sans trop le caresser: car je ne fais pas conte
> D'un homme fust-il Roy quand l'Argent le surmonte:
> Il en faut seulement pour la nécessité,
> Et pour nous secourir en nostre adversité:
> Le reste est superflu, qui ne sert qu'à nous faire
> Ou proye des larrons ou fable du vulgaire.[2]

Omne lucrum tenebris alta premebat humus.

Propertius III, 13, ll. 25 ff:

Felix agrestum quondam pacata iuventus,
divitiae quorum messis et arbor erant.

Tibullus I, 1 & 3, ll. 35 ff:

Quam bene Saturno vivebant rege, priusquam
tellus in longas est patefacta vias!

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 40 and 42.

[2] Ibid., p. 42.

Mention must also be made of the elegies which Ronsard dedicated to Marie Stuart. When François II died on December 5, 1560, at the age of sixteen, Marie Stuart, who had been on the throne of France for barely a year and a half, was obliged to return to her native Scotland. This cultivated young queen who, from childhood on, was accustomed to devoting two hours of each day to her studies, had a veritable passion for literature and, in particular, the poems of Ronsard. The poet admired her greatly, and his grief at her departure from France in 1561 was genuine. Far from foreseeing the dreadful fate which awaited her in later years, Ronsard published three elegies to express his sorrow ("Bien que le trait de vostre belle face",[1] "L'Huillier, si nous perdons ceste belle Princesse",[2] and "Comme un beau pré despouillé de ses fleurs"[3]). The melancholy of these three elegies is conveyed by contrasting images of light and darkness, color and shadows, warmth and cold. The departing queen represents the light of which France is about to be deprived:

> L'Huillier, si nous perdons ceste belle Princesse,
> Qui en un corps mortel resemble une Déesse,
> Nous perdons de la Court le beau Soleil qui luit,
> Dont jamais la clarté n'a tiré vers la nuict,
> Mais tousjours, en monstrant sa splendeur coustumière,
> A fait contre le jour paroistre sa lumiere.
> Ne te souvient-il point des longues nuits d'hyver,
> Où nulle estoile au ciel ne se daigne lever,
> Mais lente et paresseuse en son lict est cachée,
> Quand Tithon en ses bras tient sa femme couchée,

[1] Ibid., p. 293. Tableau chronologique, p. 43. This poem was first published in Tome V (Les Elégies en quatre livres) of the Deuxième édition collective of 1567 and so is posterior to the two others.

[2] Ibid., p. 299. Tableau chronologique, p. 38. This elegy and the following one first appeared in the Trois Livres du Recueil des Nouvelles Poesies, 1563.

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 301.

Et le monde languist en tenebreux sejour,
En horreur et en peur, pour l'absence du jour?[1]

The feeling of attenuation produced by the disappearance of light and warmth is reinforced by a slow tempo suggested by the expressions "longues nuits d'hyver" and "lente et paresseuse" and, in this particular piece, by the use of the alexandrin. In another elegy, written in decasyllables, the image of the queen, in her white veils of mourning, walking alone in the gardens of the château de Fontainebleau, is tinged with an almost ineffable sadness:

De tel habit vous estiez accoustrée
Partant, helas! de la belle contrée
Dont aviez eu le Sceptre dans la main,
Lors que pensive, et baignant vostre sein,
Du beau crystal de vos larmes roulées,
Triste marchiez par les longues allées
Du grand jardin de ce royal chasteau
Qui prend son nom de la source d'une eau.[2]

The queen's long white veils are compared to the sails of the ship which is soon to take her from France to Scotland:

Un crespe long, subtil et delié,
Ply contre ply retors et replié,
Habit de dueil, vous sert de couverture
Depuis le chef jusques à la ceinture,
Qui s'enfle ainsi qu'un voile quand le vent
Soufle la barque, et la single en avant.[3]

Similarly, Marie Stuart is compared to a white swan, "un cygne habillé tout de blanc",[4] image of sadness and solitude. In these three elegies, the constant repetition of images suggesting the waning of light--

[1] Ibid., p. 299.

[2] Ibid., p. 294.

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 294.

[4] Ibid.

autumn, evening, withering leaves--foreshadows the languor and melancholy of Verlaine's universe, all painted in half-tones.[1]

Dora Elisabeth Frey refers to the three elegies for Marie Stuart as "les élégies ronsardiennes les plus élégiaques, tant par le fond que par la forme".[2] The theme of lost happiness--"le bonheur perdu"--makes them elegies in the modern sense of the term.

In spite of the diversity that one finds in Ronsard's elegies, it is probable that the love epistle represented for him, as it had for Marot, the authentic elegy. In the section entitled "Elégies" which was first established in the second edition of the complete works in 1567, it is the love epistle that predominates. Even the elegies addressed to women but having a literary theme, such as the previously mentioned elegy to Cassandre, were definitively excluded from the book of Elégies. Elegies to Cassandre, Marie, and Hélène in which the poet takes literary leave of these muses, were classed respectively in the first and second book of the Amours and among the Sonnets pour Hélène. The delightful "Elégie du Printemps" dedicated to Isabeau, "la soeur d'Astree",[3] and which contains a delicate comparison between the young girl and the

[1] Cf. Ronsard, Tome II, p. 302:

> Ou comme au soir la rose perd couleur,
> Et meurt seichée alors que la chaleur
> Boit son humeur qui la tenoit en vie,
> Et fueille à fueille à bas tombe fanie.

[2] Frey, p. 88.

[3] Françoise Babou de la Bourdaisière, a high-spirited lady of the Court, in whom Ronsard appears to have had more than a passing interest. She was the wife of Antoine d'Estrées; hence, the play on words which produced "Astrée", a name which Honoré d'Urfé would use in the seventeenth century as the title of his novel.

spring,[1] was included in the Sonnets et madrigals pour Astrée, rather than with the elegies. As previously mentioned, two philosophical elegies eventually found their way into the book of Discours.[2]

The elegies are scattered throughout Ronsard's work, and in general, it is those which most closely resemble love epistles which were included in the section Elégies in the edition of complete works of 1584, the last published during Ronsard's lifetime. Also included were two theoretical epistles on the subject of love, "Voicy le temps, Hurault, qui joyeux nous convie"[3] and "Je suis bruslé, Le Gast, d'une double chaleur".[4] The subject matter of these poems was probably the criterion which the poet used in determining their inclusion in the book of Elégies.[5] It is interesting to note that this section also includes three mythological tales in alexandrins with rimes plates--"Adonis", "La Mort de Narcisse", and "L'Orphée"--all of which treat the subject of love. Was this perhaps a concession to the "fables anciennes" recommended in the Deffence? The question remains unanswered.

Ronsard's elegy, at first an epistle on a variety of themes,

[1] La Rose que voicy ressemble à ceste Rose,
Le Diamant à l'autre, et la fleur à la fleur:
Le Printemps est le frère, Isabeau est la soeur.
(Ronsard, Tome I, p. 213)

[2] "A G. Des-Autels" and "A Loys des Masures".

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 50. Tableau chronologique, p. 63. This elegy was discussed on page 98 of this chapter.

[4] Ibid., p. 84. Tableau chronologique, p. 46.

[5] Cf. Frey (op. cit.), p. 45: "En général, ce sont des épîtres amoureuses proprement dites, c'est-à-dire adressées à des femmes, ou encore des pièces missives à des hommes, avec des confidences et des conseils qui en font souvent de petits "arts d'aimer."

gradually evolved into a love poem in alexandrins or decasyllables with "rimes plates" and which retained the main characteristic of the epistle form, the use of an address. In Chapter IV we shall examine more in detail some of Ronsard's love elegies.

CHAPTER IV

RONSARD'S LOVE ELEGIES

It was in 1563, in the Trois Livres du Recueil des Nouvelles Poesies, that the love elegy suddenly predominated in the work of Ronsard. That was the year of publication of two of the three elegies to Genèvre as well as a number of elegies thought to have been inspired by a lady of the court, Isabeau de La Tour d'Auvergne, demoiselle de Limeuil, lady in waiting to Catherine de Médicis. Most significant are the three devoted to Genèvre, for it is in these that one senses most clearly the influence of the Latin love elegists. Marot's elegies, despite their delicacy and courtly grace and their frequent psychological insights, had been essentially "poèmes de commande" and therefore impersonal in nature. Ronsard infused life into the elegy so that it once again became the vehicle for personal expression which it had been in the hands of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. The fact is that, just as Ronsard felt a certain kinship with Horace's epicurean temperament, he also realized that the sensuality of the Roman elegists corresponded far more closely to his own nature than did Petrarch's idealism.

The first question posed by critics concerns the identity of Genèvre, the woman so often overlooked in favor of Ronsard's more celebrated heroines,--Cassandre, Marie and Hélène.[1] The poet was careful to be as secretive as possible about her. Gustave Cohen ponders the question

[1] Cf. Pierre de Nolhac, La Vie amoureuse de Pierre de Ronsard, Paris, Flammarion, 1926, p. 73.

in his book devoted to Ronsard's life and work:

> Qui était Genèvre? On ne le sait pas au juste et on l'a identifiée successivement avec la femme de l'avocat Blaise de Vigenère (Genèvre serait alors l'anagramme, assez cruel, du nom du mari), habitant au Quai de la Tournelle, ou avec la femme d'un concierge de prison du Faubourg Saint-Marcel, près de l'actual Jardin des Plantes, ou encore, selon M. Laumonier, avec quelque jeune grisette qu'il consola de la mort de son amant.[1]

It seems most likely, from whatever information the poet does give us, that Genèvre was not a married woman, but rather that she had lived happily for six years with a refined and cultivated man whom she had deeply loved and who had died of a dreadful disease, leaving her suddenly bereft. Unlike the aristocratic and provincial Cassandre, Marie l'Angevine--"La fille des champs"--, or Hélène de Surgères--the courtly "fille d'honneur"--, Genèvre was probably a bourgeoise and a Parisian.

Genèvre differs significantly from the other women whom the poet

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> "Je réclame pour vous, Genèvre, une place de choix parmi les amoureuses de Ronsard. On vous oublie ou l'on vous méprise, auprès des trois grandes muses de son coeur. Rien n'est plus injuste. Comme Cassandre, Marie ou Hélène, vous lui avez inspiré des chansons charmantes et, si le son est différent, elles n'en complètent que mieux l'harmonie d'un beau concert."

Cf. also Henri Longnon, Pierre de Ronsard, Paris, Champion, 1912, pp. 462, 63:

> "Furetière s'est trompé quand il soutenait que Genèvre était 'une grande halebreda qui tenait le cabaret du Sabot dans le faubourg Saint-Marcel.' Quant au dire de Garnier (éd. de Ronsard par Blanchemain) qui Genèvre était une haute femme, claire, brune, mariée au concierge de la geôle de Saint-Marcel et nommée Geneviève Raut', il est en contradiction avec ce que Ronsard nous dit d'elle; elle n'était pas mariée et vivait avec son amant. Pour la même raison, elle ne peut être davantage la femme de Blaise de Vigenère, comme le pensait Colletet (Blanchemain, ibidem), qui soutenait que Genèvre n'était que l'anagramme de Vigenère. A mon avis, Genèvre était bien le nom de Genèvre, c'est un nom français d'origine celtique; c'est celui que portait, dans les romans de la Table Ronde, la reine, femme du roi Arthur, dont Lancelot du Lac fut aimé."

[1] Gustave Cohen, Ronsard, sa vie et son œuvre, Paris, Boivin & Cie., 1924, p. 213.

professes to have loved and who have inspired his most exquisite verses. The other relationships were, more or less, literary love affairs. When Ronsard, having followed the examples of Pindar and Horace in the Odes of 1550, then wished to emulate the sonnets of Petrarch in the Amours of 1552, he chose as his inspiration the lovely Cassandre Salviati, daughter of a Florentine banker, whom he had first seen at a ball at the château de Blois in April, 1545. Cassandre was only about fifteen at the time, but the sweetness of her voice,--for he had heard her sing that evening to the accompaniment of the luth,--was to remain in his memory for many years. The following year Cassandre married Jehan Peigné, seigneur de Pray, whose property was located in the valley of the Loir, just south-east of Vendôme.[1] She thus became châtelaine de Pray, and it is probable that the poet had the opportunity to see her occasionally when he revisited his native Vendômois. That the relationship ever progressed beyond that is extremely doubtful. It is more likely that Ronsard, in his sonnets, was merely following the precepts of Petrarchism, and that his literary love for Cassandre disguised real, more prosaic love affairs which he had actually had with less aristocratic women.[2]

When, in the Continuation des Amours of 1553, the poet chose to alter his style and to write in the "beau stile bas" which would approximate the simple, direct manner of the Latin elegists,[3] what more

[1] Cf. Chamard, Vol. I, pp. 255, 256.

[2] Cf. Vianey, op. cit., p. 154: "Je crois bien que la comtesse de Pré, née Cassandre Salviati, fut un prête-nom et que l'amour que le poète feignit d'éprouver pour elle, ce furent d'autres dames beaucoup plus vulgaires, qui en furent l'objet."

[3] Cf. Marius M. Piéri, Pétrarque et Ronsard, New York, Burt

appropriate muse could he adopt than a simple, country girl, Marie de Bourgueil?[1] Finally, in 1578, in order to rival Desportes, the favorite poet of Henri III, and once again to please a court enamored of Petrarchism, Ronsard chose as his inspiration a girl of refinement and culture, member of the Court and ardent Platonist, Hélène de Surgères. To attempt to trace in Ronsard's poetry his degree of involvement with each woman would, of course, be absurd and totally irrelevant to the beauty of the texts, the only reality being the poems themselves. It is generally acknowledged that the only thing in life that Ronsard loved more than love itself was literature.[2]

In the case of Genèvre, there is a certain reality, an immediacy that distinguishes her from Ronsard's other heroines and likens her, perhaps, to Propertius' Cynthia. The circumstances surrounding the poet's first glimpse of Genèvre, their subsequent first meeting and their love affair, which apparently lasted exactly a year--from July 1561 to July 1562--are related in detail in three long elegies. The first two were

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Franklin, 1968, p. 268: "Le pétrarquisme est l'art de traiter ingénieusement et avec esprit les choses du coeur, de composer des vers d'amour sans avoir d'émotion dans l'âme, de feindre la passion pour une maîtresse imaginaire, et de chanter une fiction d'intrigues amoureuses, dont les phases et les étapes sont fixes et comme établies par une tradition immuable."

[1] Cf. Raymond Lebègue, Ronsard, Paris, Hatier, 1966. The author characterizes Ronsard's relationship with Marie as "une espèce de flirt de vacances . . . qui a duré deux ou trois ans. Elle lui permettait des approches, mais pas le cinquième point."

[2] Cf. Henri Franchet, Le Poète et son oeuvre d'après Ronsard, Paris, Champion, 1923, p. 237: "Le poète, comme plus d'un peintre, s'est épris de son modèle, et s'est contenté, au moins en ce qui concerne ces trois héroines, d'un amour d'artiste, indiscret mais sans espoir. Poète, Ronsard n'aima fortement que les Muses."

published in Les Trois livres du Recueil des Nouvelles Poesies of 1563 ("Genèvre, je te prie, escoute ce discours" and "Ce me sera plaisir, Genèvre, de t'escrire").[1] The third, relating the dissolution of their liaison ("Le temps se passe, et se passant, Madame")[2] was first published in 1571, in the Troisième édition collective des Oeuvres.

Ironically, as far as form is concerned, we find Ronsard once again adhering to the practice established by Marot in 1533 and which was to prevail throughout the century; the elegy is a love epistle written in decasyllables or, more and more in Ronsard's case, in alexandrins, with "rimes plates". The difference, as we shall see, is one of style and tone.

The circumstances of the lovers' first meeting are, to say the least, bizarre. On a sultry July evening, Ronsard, having taken a swim in the Seine, perceived a lovely young blonde woman who was dancing on the river bank in order to dry herself.[3] Charmed by her grace and by the sound of her voice, he sat beside her, kissed her hand, then swiftly jumped back into the water.

> Sur la fin de Juillet que le chaud violant
> Rendoit de toutes parts le ciel estincelant,
> Un soir à mon malheur je me baignoy dans Seine,
> Où je te vy danser sur la rive prochaine
> Foulant du pied le sable, & remplissant d'amour

[1] Tableau chronologique, pp. 38, 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 47.

[3] Cf. Pierre Champion, Ronsard et son temps, Paris, Champion, 1925, p. 201: "De la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève au Louvre, le long de la Seine, devant le nouveau Louvre, Pierre de Ronsard dut errer bien souvent sur sa 37ème année."
Also, de Nolhac (op. cit.), p. 76: "Les bains de Seine étaient d'usage traditionnel dans le peuple parisien."

Et de ta douce voix les rives d'alentour.
Tout nud je me vins mettre avecq' ta compaignie,
Où dansant je bruslay d'une ardeur infinie,
Voyant sous la clairté brunette du Croissant,
Ton oeil brun à l'envi de l'autre apparoissant.
Là je baisay ta main pour premiere accointance,
Autrement de ton nom je n'avois cognoissance;
Puis d'un agile bond je m'eslançay dans l'eau,
Pensant qu'elle esteindroit mon premier feu nouveau.
Il advint autrement, car au milieu des ondes
Je me senti lié de tes deux tresses blondes,
Et le feu de tes yeux qui les eaux penetra,
Maugré la froide humeur dedans mon coeur entra.[1]

In despair because he knows neither the name nor the address of the woman who has inspired in him "une amoureuse fièvre" of such intensity, the poet goes home to bed. He then proceeds to describe a night of insomnia, similar to those conventionally suffered by the Latin elegiac lover:[2]

Si tost que j'eu pressé les plumes ocieuses
De mon lict parasseux, les peines soucieuses
Qu'Amour pour me livrer aguise sur sa queux,
Vindrent dedans mon coeur allumer mille feux,
Eschaufant le desir de te pouvoir cognoistre,
Et de faire de mes yeux ma douleur apparoistre.[3]

Totally unable to sleep, the poet jumps out of bed and decides to take a walk, during which he ponders the desirability of falling in

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 14.

[2] Cf. et al. Ovid, Amores, I, 2:

Esse quid hoc dicam, quod tam mihi dura videntur
Strata, neque in lecto pallia nostra sedent,
Et vacuus somno noctem, quam longa, peregi,
Lassaque versati corporis ossa dolent?

D'où vient que ma couche me semble si dure, que mes couvertures ne restent pas à leur place sur mon lit, que j'ai passé sans sommeil cette nuit, toute cette nuit, et qu'à force de me retourner mes os fatigués me font mal? (translation by Henri Bornecque)

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 14.

love again after his "unhappy experiences" with Marie and Cassandre. Philosophically, he decides to avoid the pain of all further loves, but to no avail:

> Plein de si beaux discours au logis je revins,
> Où plus fort que jamais amoureux je devins.[1]

The following evening, the poet takes another stroll and happens, by chance, to perceive Genèvre sitting on the doorstep of her house. He then finds the courage to declare his feelings for her and to offer himself as her lover, but she replies that his hopes are in vain:

> A peine avoy-je dit, quand d'un souspir profond,
> Enfant de l'estomac où les desirs se font,
> Brevement tu respons que je perdois ma peine,
> Que j'escrivois en l'eau, que je semois l'areine,
> Que la mort sommeilleuse esteignoit ton flambeau,
> Et que tous tes desirs estoyent sous le tombeau.[2]

Hearing her speak in this fashion, Ronsard sadly goes home, where he remains for four days, after which he returns to see Genèvre. All the more determined to succeed in his endeavors, he uses the following rationale:

> Plus une forte ville est difficile à prendre
> Plus apporte d'honneur à celuy qui la prend.
> Toute brave vertu sans combat ne se rend.[3]

Ronsard reproduces, with striking realism, his conversation with Genèvre during their second meeting. She asks his name and whether or not he has loved other women. The poet's answer is what his only contemporary biographer Claude Binet described as a fitting

[1] Ibid., p. 15.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 16.

[3] Ibid.

epitaph for Ronsard:

> Je suis, dis-je, Ronsard, et cela te suffise[1]

and he proceeds to tell Genèvre of his former loves, Cassandre and Marie. Now all that has changed, as he affirms in a whimsical fashion which suggests Ovid:

> Maintenant je poursuy toute amour vagabonde:
> Ores j'aime la noire, ores j'aime la blonde,
> Et sans amour certaine en mon coeur esprouver
> Je cherche ma fortune où je la puis trouver.[2]

In return for his honesty, Genèvre tearfully tells the poet of her love for a man of talent, virtue and noble character[3] and of the pleasures they shared for five years. Her description is tinged with the sensual delights so basic to the Latin love elegy and so akin to Ronsard's own nature:

> L'espace de cinq ans nous avons prins ensemble
> Les plaisirs que jeunesse en deux amans assemble,
> Et ne se peut trouver ny jeu ny passetemps
> Dont Amour n'ait rendu nos jeunes ans contens.
> Venus ne garde point tant de douces blandices,
> Tant de baisers mignards, tant d'amoureux delices,
> En ses vergers de Cypre à Mars son bien cheri,
> Soit veillant en ses bras, soit au lit endormi,
> Que mon amant et moy, esbatant nos jeunesses,
> Avons pris de plaisirs, d'esbats et de liesses.
> Seul il estoit mon coeur, seule j'estois le sien,
> Seul il estoit mon tout, seule j'estois son bien,
> Seul mon ame il estoit, seule j'estois la sienne,
> Et d'autre volonté il n'avoit que la mienne.[4]

[1] Claude Binet, La Vie de P. de Ronsard (1586), éd. critique de Paul Laumonier, Genève, 1969, p. 32.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 17.

[3] Il aimoit la vertu, il abhorroit le vice
Il aimoit tout honneste et gentil exercice,
Il jouoit à la paume, il balloit, il chantoit,
Et le luth doucement de ses doigts retentoit.

[4] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 18.

During the sixth year, the lovers' idyll is brought to a tragic end by a fatal illness, and in a series of moving images, Genèvre describes the gradual approach of death:

> Ceste cruelle Mort, franche d'affection,
> Qui jamais ne logea pitié ny passion,
> Qui n'a ny sang ny coeur ny oreille ni veue,
> Dure comme un rocher que la marine esmeue
> Bat au bord Caspien, me blessa de sa faulx,
> Plus que le trait d'Amour qui commença mes maux,
> Me rendant, comme fiere, execrable et inique,
> (Je meurs en y pensant!) mon amant hydropique.
> De jour en jour coulant sa force s'escouloit;
> Sa première beauté sans grace s'en-alloit
> Comme une jeune fleur sur la branche seichée,
> Ou la neige d'hyver du premier chaud touchée,
> Que le foible Soleil distile peu à peu,
> Ou comme fait la cire à la chaleur du feu.[1]

Genèvre's devotion to her dying lover, her care of him until the very last moment, and her inconsolable grief at his death, are described with touching realism.[2] The bits of dialogue interspersed in the narrative[3] lend an immediacy which also exists in Propertius' elegies to Cynthia, in which the reader senses Cynthia's individuality in contrast to the conventional quality of other elegiac mistresses.

Having listened patiently to Genèvre's account of what has

[1] Ronsard, p. 19, Tome II.

[2] Cf. Ibid.:

> Seule je le traitois sans secours d'estranger,
> Car sans plus de ma main vouloit boire et manger.
> Ainsi, de tristes pleurs la face ayant mouillée,
> Ny de nuict ny de jour sans estre despouillée,
> J'estois pres de son lict pour lui donner confort,
> Et pour voir si l'Amour pourroit veincre la Mort.

[3] Cf. Ibid.:

> Et me tournant les yeux me dist en telle sorte:
> 'Mon coeur, ma chere vie, appaise tes douleurs,
> Je me deuls de ton mal, et non dequoy je meurs;'

occurred nine months earlier,[1] the poet is overcome with compassion for her:

> Il n'est roche si dure,
> Qui molle ne pleurast d'une telle avanture.[2]

Ronsard's advice to Genèvre is that which he has given to all women, from the "cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse" of the ode to Cassandre, to the "cueillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie" of the sonnet for Hélène: the eternal carpe florem theme which was so central to the work of the Latin love elegists:

> Toutesfois à ton mal il faut trouver confort,
> Il faut prendre un vivant en la place d'un mort.[3]

He even suggests wryly that Genèvre's dead lover cannot possibly disapprove such a wise choice of a successor:

> Quand celui qui là-bas durement est couché
> Entendra nos amours, il n'en sera faschè,
> Car s'il faisoit au monde encor sa demeurance,
> Il me feroit peut-estre honneur et reverence.[4]

In the "Second discours de Genèvre, en forme d'élégie", ("Ce me sera plaisir, Genevre, de t'escrire"), the poet continues the narration of his love affair with Genèvre. Once again the use of the word "discours" conveys Ronsard's hesitation regarding the nature of the elegy, but the fact that he associates the elegiac form with a poem containing an address and written in rimes plates suggests that he is

[1] Or ma douleur n'est point par le temps divertie
Et neuf mois sont passez que je n'estois sortie
Du logis pour chercher quelque plaisir nouveau,
Sinon hier au soir que tu me vis sur l'eau.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 24.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 25.

following Marot's example in calling a love epistle an elegy. However, if the form is that of Marot's elegies, the content is quite different. The wealth of realistic details in Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre creates a sort of "journal intime" filled with psychological insights which are free of the allegorical symbolism (Doute, Crainte, Ferme Amour etc.) which qualified Marot's elegies as medieval. Ronsard is clearly writing in the "beau stille bas", and this, combined with the frank sensuality of these poems, gives the elegies to Genèvre the flavor of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, rather than Marot.

Ronsard experiences nights of insomnia, common to Latin elegiac lovers.[1] The details of the poet's efforts to avoid sleepless nights, of his reluctance to go to bed at all, and of his finally falling asleep in a chair so that his valets must undress him and carry him off to bed, are vividly depicted.

> Pour ne me coucher point je cherche à deviser,
> Je lis en quelque livre, ou feins de composer,
> Ou seul je me promeine et repromeine encore,
> Essayant de tromper l'ennuy qui me devore.
> A la fin, mes vallets, qui portent sur les yeux
> Et dans le nez ronflant le dormir ocieux,
> Entre-sillez du somme, ainsi me viennent dire:
> 'Monsieur, il est bien tard, un chacun se retire,
> Ja my-nuit est sonné, qu'avez-vous à gemir?
> La chandelle est faillie, il est temps de dormir!'
> Alors, importuné de leur sotte priere,
> Je laisse tout mon corps pencher en une chaire,
> Nonchallant de moy-mesme, et mes bras vainement
> Et mon chef paresseux pendant sans mouvement,
> Je suis sans mouvement, paresseux et tout lâche.
> L'un m'oste la ceinture, et l'autre me detache,

[1] Cf. Ronsard, Tome II, p. 35:

> Helas! Je ne vy pas! ou je vy tout ainsi
> Que languist en son lict un malade transi,
> Que deça, qui delà se tourne et se remue,
> Ayant dans le cerveau la fievre continue.

L'un me tire la chausse, et l'autre le pourpoint;
Ils me portent au lict, et je ne le sens point![1]

Just as in the "Elégie à Janet", the poet emulates the painter in pictorial details.[2]

Having spent a painfully restless night, the poet rises at dawn and wanders through the woods until he finds a juniper tree (un genévrier), the name of which recalls the woman he loves:

Je l'embrasse et le baise, et l'arraisonne ainsi,
Comme s'il entendoit ma peine et mon souci:
Genèvre, qui le nom de ma maistresse portes,
Au moins je te suppli' que tu me reconfortes,
Couché sous tes rameaux, puis qu'absent je ne puis
Ny baiser, ny revoir la Dame à qui je suis.[3]

To deny that Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre are tinged with a certain preciosity would be totally unjust. Passages such as the above, and descriptions which the poet gives of the process of falling in love[4] suggest the mannered quality of Marot's elegies, inspired both by the medieval courtly tradition and the Petrarchism of the Italian quattrocento. The two currents converged, for Petrarch and his followers had not been unaware of the French courtly customs of the middle ages.[5] Even the conclusion of Ronsard's second elegy to Genèvre reminds us that he is

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 35.

[2] Cf. Frey, pp. 52, 53; in which that critic compares the intimate details of this tableau to the realism of the Flemish and Dutch schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 36.

[4] Harsoir en se jouant l'enfant de Cytherée,
Faisant de tes beaux yeux une flèche acerée,
En m'ouvrant l'estomac tout le coeur m'a percé,
Et tu ne sçais, peut-estre, ainsi m'avoir blessé.

[5] Cf. Marius M. Piéri, Pétrarque et Ronsard, Burt Franklin, New York, 1968, conclusion.

still following the example of Marot's "épîtres amoureuses":

> Maistresse, en attendant le bien de te revoir,
> Pour gages de mon coeur tu pourras recevoir
> Ces vers que de sa main Amour mesme te porte:
> En escrivant de toy, mon coeur se reconforte.[1]

Still, along with the occasional hyperboles, mythological references, and conventional metaphors--love compared to a wound, a flame,[2] and so forth--there is a passion, a realism, a sensuality that makes Ronsard's love elegies far richer than those of Marot. The elegies to Genèvre convey a sense of reality that is almost documentary.

After showing, in the second elegy to Genèvre, how absence makes the heart grow fonder,[3] Ronsard traces, in the third elegy ("Le temps se passe, et se passant, Madame"), the course of the couple's love affair, its joys and its inevitable end. This is the only one of the three elegies to Genèvre written in decasyllables, and the staccato effect of the shorter line suggests finality. Also, the first four books of La Franciade were to be published the following year, in 1572, and during this period, the poet made frequent use of the decasyllable, "les vers communs". This was the traditional French meter. It had been the meter of the "chansons de geste", and for patriotic reasons, the

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 38.

[2] Et bref, me souvenant de l'extreme douceur
Qui part de tes beaux yeux dont je nourris mon coeur,
Plus mon amour s'augmente, et plus mon estincelle,
Estant loin de mon feu, s'accroist et renouvelle.

[3] Cf. Tome II, p. 37:

Soit que la volupté soit trop tost perissable,
Soit que le souvenir d'elle soit plus durable:
Bref, je ne sçay que c'est, mais certes je sçay bien
Que j'aime mieux absent qu'estant pres de mon bien.

court encouraged Ronsard to use it when he undertook his epic work. He later returned to the alexandrin, which he much preferred, to write the "Sonnets pour Hélène".[1]

In this last elegy to Genèvre, then, Ronsard returns to the narration of the love affair which, after an interval of several years, he now sees from a different perspective.[2] The poet is now somewhat detached; his point of view is almost that of an impartial onlooker. He recalls a bit wistfully the symptoms of his passion of long ago, which is now nothing more than a memory.[3] Two days after having seen Genèvre dance on the banks of the Seine, he had rushed to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the King was holding court:

> Deux jours apres que je receu la playe,
> Je cours en poste à Sainct-Germain-en-Laye
> Servir mon Roy, bien qu'Amour, plus grand roy,
> Pour le servir, m'appelast tout à soy.[4]

It is these lines which have enabled scholars to determine the probable

[1] In Ronsard, poète de l'amour, Tome III, Bruxelles, Gembloux, 1959, Fernand Desonay suggests that Ronsard tended to reserve the alexandrin for his more personal poetry, whereas the decasyllable was the meter of the "vers de circonstance".

[2] Since the first two elegies were published in 1563, and the third to Genèvre did not appear until 1571, an interval of several years had elapsed. (Cf. Tableau chronologique, pp. 38, 39, and 47.) All three poems, however, are recollections of past events.

[3] Cf. Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 88, 89:

> Ore ma face honteuse palissoit,
> Puis rougissoit; ma voix mal prononcée
> De longs soupirs estoit entre-cassée.
> De mes propos je n'achevois le quart,
> Comme un resveur qui songe en autre part.

[4] Ibid., p. 89.

dates of Ronsard's liaison with Genèvre, 1561 to 1562.[1]

The poet describes, with keen psychological insight, the tedious journey that separates one who is in love from the object of his affection.[2] He recalls, somewhat wryly, the state of mental confusion which caused him to forget, much to the amusement of Charles IX, the lines of poetry which he was to read aloud:

> Là j'oubliay toute ma Poesie,
> Jà je perdy raison et fantaisie,
> Car ne pouvant, ainsi que je voulois,
> Chanter mes vers aux oreilles des rois,
> Comme affollé d'une fièvre trop folle,
> Je perdy coeur, langue, esprit et parolle,
> Si que mon Prince en riant cognut bien,
> A signes tels que je n'estois plus mien.[3]

At dawn the poet, who is again afflicted with insomnia, leaves Saint-Germain, and the imagery suggests the earlier elegy in which the lonely queen Marie Stuart wandered in the gardens of Fontainebleau:

> Mais, me tuant de mon propre couteau,
> J'erre tout seul dans le parc du chasteau,
> Pensant, resvant à ce gentil visage,
> Dont maugré moy j'avois au coeur l'image.[4]

In contrast to the seemingly endless journey to Saint-Germain, the return trip to Paris, and to Genèvre, appears brief to the eager poet-lover, who returns "au grand galop":

[1] Cf. Henri Longnon, Pierre de Ronsard, Paris, Champion, 1912, p. 278, footnote:

> Ronsard dit qu'il a rencontré Genèvre un soir de juillet . . . Or parmi les années qui ont précédé 1564, date de publication des élégies à Genèvre, ce n'est qu'en 1561 que le roi s'est trouvé à Saint-Germain en juillet."

[2] Un beau sentier me sembloit une ornière,
Une fontaine une creuse riviere.

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 90.

[4] Ibid.

Et Amour fist ma course si agile,
Que j'arrivay comme un songe à la ville.[1]

A year of happiness followed, filled with the sensuous delights which characterized the Latin love elegy. Ronsard's eroticism is in the spirit of Augustan Rome, and quite remote from the gallant pre-Petrarchism of Marot's elegies.

Comme au printemps on voit une belle ente
S'essencier en la nouvelle plante
Et de deux corps par un accord commun
Se joindre ensemble et se coller en un,
Ainsi tous deux n'estions que mesme chose:
Vostre ame estoit dedans la mienne enclose,
La mienne estoit en la vostre, et nos corps,
Par sympathie et semblables accords,
N'estoient plus qu'un, si bien que vous, Madame,
Et moy n'estions qu'un seul corps et qu'une ame,
Ayant communs et pensers et desirs.[2]

The colorful bouquet which Genèvre prepares for the return of her lover in the evening recalls the freshness of Ronsard's evocation of dawn in one of his most enchanting sonnets dedicated to Marie.[3]

[1] Ibid., p. 92.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 93, 94.
Cf. Pierre de Nolhac, La vie amoureuse de Pierre de Ronsard, Paris, Flammarion, 1926, pp. 74, 75: "La figure de Genèvre a pour nous l'attrait d'être saisissable. Ronsard n'a rien célé des détails d'une liaison plébéienne. . . . Il y montre une sincérité entière et un caractère humain qui nous touche. Elle est contée en ce recueil des Elégies, où il faut entendre le genre élégiaque au sens d'Ovide, de Tibulle, et de Properce. Ces maîtres de la passion sensuelle furent de tous temps familiers à Ronsard et correspondent beaucoup mieux que Pétrarque à son goût des réalités de l'amour et à sa façon de le sentir."
Cf. also Henri Longnon, pp. 378, 379: "La liaison qui l'attacha, en 1561 et 1562, à la blonde Genèvre fut dans cette poursuite" (des amours libres, 'ores j'aime la noire, ores j'aime la blonde'). "Et cependant, près de cette femme si facilement amoureuse et si caressante, pour la première fois de sa vie il fut pleinement heureux."

[3] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 128:

Marie, levez-vous, ma jeune paresseuse:
Ja la gaye alouette au ciel a fredonné,
Et ja le rossignol doucement jargonné,
Dessus l'espine assis, sa complainte amoureuse.

Quand le printemps poussoit l'herbe nouvelle,
Qui de couleurs se faisoit aussi belle
Qu'est la couleur d'un gaillard papegay,
Bleu, pers, gris, jaune, incarnat et verd-gay,
Dés le matin, avant que les avettes
Eussent succé la douceur des fleurettes
Qui embasmoient les jardins d'environ,
Vous amassiez dedans vostre giron,
Comme une fleur entre les fleurs assise,
La couleur jaune, incarnate et la grise,
Tantost la rousse à la blanche, et aussi
Le rouge oeillet au jaunissant soulci,
La pasquerette aux petites pensées.[1]

That Ronsard "sings the sensual pleasures and pains of love"[2] in the manner of the Roman elegists is nowhere more apparent than in the episode with Genèvre:

D'une main blanche à presser bien sutille
Vous m'accolliez, et en cent et cent lieux,
Vous me baisiez et la bouche et les yeux
De vostre langue à baiser bien apprise.
Tantost fronciez les plis de ma chemise,
A chaque ply me baisant ou mordant
D'un petit trait mon front de vostre dent;
Tantost friziez de vostre main vermeille
Mes blonds cheveux à l'entour de l'oreille,
Ou me pinsiez, chatouilliez, et j'estois
Si hors de moy que rien je ne sentois,
Mort de plaisir, tant le plaisir extréme
Avoit perdu ma raison et moy-mesme.[3]

There is, in Ronsard's poetry, the constant awareness that all happiness is ephemeral. Pleasure, beauty, and love are all temporary states which, at any moment, threaten to leave us, and it is the consciousness of this fact that makes Ronsard an elegiac poet in the modern sense of that term. After a year's time, the lovers separate,

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 94.

[2] Robert Hallowell uses this expression in the conclusion to his work on Ronsard and the Roman elegy. (op. cit.)

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 94, 95.

without bitterness, "à l'amiable":

> Mais ce plaisir que j'allois recevant,
> En peu de jours se perdit comme vent.[1]

Both go their separate ways, perhaps out of eventual boredom, perhaps to seek other loves. The poet does not quite know the reasons for the separation,[2] but most likely it is due to the disappointments inherent in all love affairs, to the inevitable whims of human nature:

> Ainsi Amour, de toutes choses maistre,
> Ainsi le Ciel et la saison des temps,
> Furent et sont et seront inconstans.[3]

The third elegy for Genèvre ends philosophically, on a note of resignation, and if the poet experiences some resentment, it is muted in the last line:

> Rien n'est si sot qu'une vieille amitié.

Taken as a whole, the three elegies for Genèvre are unique among Ronsard's love elegies. Their spontaneity, the wealth of intimate descriptive details and vivid bits of dialogue liken them to a "récit" or drama, the substance of which is an actual experience.[4] Ronsard uses the form introduced by Marot--the epistle in alexandrins

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 95.

[2] Cf. Ibid.:

> Fust que le Ciel le commandast ainsi,
> Fust vostre faute ou fust la mienne aussi,
> Fust par malheur ou par cas d'aventure,
> Fust que chacun ensuivant sa nature
> Par trop encline aux nouvelles amours.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Cf. Mahieu, op. cit., p. 162: "Ce qui fait la valeur de cette élégie à notre avis, c'est qu'ici le poète lyrique est doublé d'un poète dramatique. Derrière ce pittoresque savoureux se cache tout le drame humain avec son mélange de tragique et de comique."

or decasyllables with "rimes plates". He makes use of certain conventional themes of love literature--the sorrows and sufferings endured by the lover, the parallels with mythological tales, the commonplace imagery of love as a wound or a flame--and yet these three love elegies are the most personal ones which Ronsard created. While they most clearly reflect the poet's nature, they are also the closest in spirit to the Latin love elegies, for Ronsard surely had as much affinity with Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid as he did with Horace.[1]

In his thematic analysis of Ronsard's works, André Gendre[2] asserts, in the chapter entitled "Le sens du désir ronsardien", that the current running through all of Ronsard's poetry is a quest, the goal of which is the total possession of the desired woman. In this respect, the elegies to Genèvre represent the complete fulfillment of the poet, for unlike Ronsard's better known heroines--Cassandre, Marie, Hélène--Genèvre represents, however temporarily, the woman whom the poet has actually possessed.

The elegies for Isabeau de la Tour pale somewhat beside the three for Genèvre. Nevertheless, they are worthy of some attention.

[1] Cf. Raymond Lebègue, Ronsard, Paris, Hatier, 1966, p. 149: "Il fut moins un amant fidèlement passionné qu'un homme toujours prêt à s'enflammer comme 'soulfre et salpestre'. . . . Dans sa vie amoureuse, l'épisode qui convint le mieux à son tempérament, ce fut sa 'passade' avec Genèvre."
Gustave Cohen (Ronsard, sa vie et son oeuvre, Paris, Boivin & Cie., 1924) writes of the "légimité du plaisir" and the confidence in nature as a guide, a lesson which the Renaissance--from Jean de Meung to Rabelais and Ronsard--was eager to learn from antiquity.

[2] André Gendre, Ronsard, poéte de la conquête amoureuse, Neuchatel, La Baconnière, 1970, pp. 41 ff. "L'unique nécessaire dans la poésie amoureuse de Ronsard, c'est l'étreinte totale . . . Ronsard vise toujours le point final de la conquête."

Quite the opposite of Genèvre, Isabeau de la Tour d'Auvergne, demoiselle de Limeuil, was of very noble ancestry. She was reputedly the most beautiful "fille d'honneur" of Catherine de Médicis. She was the mistress of the Prince de Condé, by whom she had a child,[1] and later became Madame Sardini by her marriage to a wealthy Italian banker.

Ronsard was supposedly included among the lovers of "La Belle aux multiples amants",[2] and it is for her that he wrote a lovely chanson filled with the imagery of youth and springtime and in which the poet compares the lady's charms to the delights of the new season:

Quand ce beau Printemps je voy
    J'apperçoy
Rajeunir la terre et l'onde,
Et il me semble que le jour,
    Et l'amour,
Comme enfans naissent au monde.

. . . . . .

Je sens en ce mois si beau
    Le flambeau
D'Amour qui m'eschaufe l'ame,
Y voyant de tous costez
    Les beautez
Qu'il emprunte de ma Dame.

Quand je voy tant de couleurs
    Et de fleurs
Qui esmaillent un rivage,

[1] Isabeau's name first appeared in a sonnet-dédicace in the Trois livres du Recueil des Nouvelles poésies of 1563. (Cf. Tableau chronologique, p. 37.)

Cf. Laumonier, op. cit., p. 211: "Son charme puissant ne fut pas étranger à la paix d'Amboise, et la reine mère s'en servit pour tenir en laisse à la cour le sensuel prince Louis de Condé, qui en 1563 et 64 n'hésita pas à sacrifier à l'amour l'intérêt de ses coreligionnaires."

Fernand Desonay (op. cit.) writes of her "grace piquante" and "son esprit de repartie". (Ronsard, poète de l'amour, Livre II, p. 201.

[2] Frey, op. cit., p. 47.

Je pense voir le beau teint
    Qui est peint
Si vermeil en son visage.

. . . . . .

Pour effacer mon esmoy,
    Baise moy,
Rebaise moy, ma Deesse!
Ne laissons passer en vain
    Si soudain
Les ans de nostre jeunesse.[1]

Although she is never mentioned specifically, Isabeau de Limeuil is thought to have been the inspiration for several love elegies which appeared in Les Trois Livres du Recueil des Nouvelles Poesies of 1563, the same year as the above chanson and the first two elegies to Genèvre.[2] In contrast to those for Genèvre, the elegies for Isabeau, however beautiful, are marked by a preciosity that qualifies them as court

[1] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 169. Cf. Tableau chronologique, p. 38. Also, Laumonier, Ronsard lyrique, p. 211; De Nolhac, op. cit., pp. 129 ff.

We have taken the liberty of quoting only a few selected verses of this chanson which Fernand Desonay (Livre II, p. 208) calls a "véritable reverdie." Paul Laumonier was also struck by its resemblance to the "chants de mai" or "reverdies" composed by the troubadours and trouvères when the arrival of spring coincided with a reawakening of love. Cf. Ronsard lyrique, p. 495: "On y retrouve ce double enthousiasme, érotique et printanier, qui caractérise presque toutes leurs oeuvres lyriques."

One of the factors that make this poem so exquisitely effective is the meter, 7-3-7-7-3-7, which is also that of a lovely ode by Ronsard:

Bel aubepin, fleurissant,
    Verdissant
Le long de ce beau rivage,
Tu es vestu jusqu'au bas
    Des long bras
D'une lambrunche sauvage.
(Tome I, p. 560)

The graceful meter of the two poems foreshadows Verlaine's "impair".

[2] Cf. Tableau chronologique, pp. 37-39.

elegies.[1] We cannot be sure whether Ronsard was writing in his own name or whether these are, in fact, "élégies de commande" written by Ronsard for Condé, Brantôme, or another, but the second assumption is the more probable one. Isabeau de la Tour, the courtesan, was a perfect muse for the "élégie de commande".

The predominance of "concetti pétrarquistes"--metaphors, allegories, jeux de mots, hyperboles--all suggest that, in the elegies to Isabeau, Ronsard is following convention rather than the dictates of his own nature. Nevertheless, if Ronsard never wrote books of elegies dedicated to one particular woman, as did Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, his three elegies to Genèvre and the group probably inspired by Isabeau do somewhat recall that Roman practice.

[1] Cf. Frey, p. 34: . . . "Bien des élégies à la volonté de Ronsard ont été composées sur commande. C'est le cas probablement des élégies pour Isabeau, qui sont des plus belles. Le fait de la commande n'exclut pas chez le poète une volonté esthétique précise."

That critic writes on p. 48 of her study: "Poète courtisan, Ronsard se devait de chanter une dame de la Cour en un hommage qui valait pour toutes. Ses amours pour Genèvre étant peu faites pour satisfaire le goût de plus en plus précieux qui régnait au Louvre, Ronsard chante Isabeau, qui plaisait d'ailleurs à ses yeux et le ravissait par son intelligence. . . . Qu'il ait été pris au jeu, cela nous paraît probable. Il ne devait certes pas s'imposer beaucoup de contrainte pour chanter la plus belle fille de l'escadron volant, et il finit par s'enflammer à ses propres vers. . . . Peu à peu on est venu à refuser toute valeur personnelle aux élégies à Isabeau."

Paul Laumonier believed that there was a certain amount of sincerity in Ronsard's love poems addressed to Isabeau, while Fernand Desonay holds the opposite view (Ronsard, poète de l'amour, Livre II, p. 205): "Mon sentiment très net rencontre ici l'opinion de Roger Sorg: rien dans la suite des pièces dont Isabeau est la dédicataire ou l'inspiratrice ne permet de croire que Ronsard l'aurait célébrée pour son propre compte."

Henri Chamard (Histoire de la Pléiade, Vol. III, p. 31) seemed to adhere to the theory that Ronsard was a very real rival of Condé: "S'il apparaît que le poète, ardemment amoureux, sollicite beaucoup, on ne voit pas qu'il ait beaucoup reçu. Certes, il multiplie les plaintes et les prières, les hommages pleins de ferveur, les déclarations enflammées."

In contrast to the elegies for Genèvre, those for Isabeau de la Tour contain few memories or references to precise events. The day-to-day realism of the elegies to Genèvre, the vividness of detail, has given way to a pale gallantry that recalls Marot's elegies. These are "plaintes amoureuses", epistles written by a suitor to his lady, expressing the pains of unrequited love and utilizing all the "poncifs" of the love poetry of the period. The common thread running through them is the theme of the unhappy lover whose lady rejects him in favor of more noble suitors and, in this, they recall certain of Marot's elegies which were once thought to have been inspired by Anne d'Alençon. Ultimately, behind Ronsard's elegies to Isabeau lie Ovid's Héroïdes.

The seemingly endless discussions of one or another aspect of love--the "casuistique amoureuse" which is so much a part of court poetry--betray Ronsard's desire to please his public. The conventional images of the heart in prison, of love as a wound or a fire that consumes, of the cruel mistress and of the suffering lover, all these reflect the point at which Italian Petrarchist poetry rejoins the French medieval courtly tradition.[1] Ronsard's elegies to Isabeau, like Marot's elegies, although sometimes rich in psychological insight and often aesthetically lovely, are fine examples of preciosity.

Elégie II, which first appeared in Les Trois Livres du Recueil

[1] Cf. Laumonier, p. 714, who begins by quoting a certain medieval scholar: "Quand La Fontaine a retrouvé chez Boccace des sujets qui étaient originairement français, il n'a fait que reprendre notre bien." Laumonier continues: "On peut en dire autant de Ronsard . . . chantant la nature extérieure, le printemps, la femme, l'amour, la vie heureuse. Quand il a retrouvé chez Pétrarque, Bembo, l'Arioste, Sannazar, des thèmes lyriques d'origine provençale ou française, il n'a fait que reprendre un bien national qu'ils nous avaient emprunté."

des Nouvelles Poesies of 1563, along with the first two elegies to Genèvre, establishes the tone of the "plainte amoureuse en forme d'épître":

> Hier, quand bouche à bouche, assis aupres de vous,
> Je contemplois vos yeux si cruels et si dous,
> Dont Amour fist le coup qui me rend fantastique,
> Vous demandiez pourquoy j'estois melancolique,
> Et que toutes les fois que me verriez ainsi,
> Vouliez sçavoir le mal qui causoit mon souci.
> Or, à fin qu'une fois pour toutes je vous die
> La seule occasion de telle maladie,
> Lisez ces vers, Madame, et vous verrez comment,
> Et pourquoy je me deuls d'amour incessamment.[1]

Would Pierre de Ronsard, who celebrated with such relish the pagan joys of life and love, be likely to write in such a fashion if, as in the sonnets of 1552, he were not yielding to the literary preferences of his public?

The psychological conflict of the lover torn between hope and despair which Marot had portrayed allegorically by two characters of Le Roman de la Rose,--Doubte and Ferme Amour, or Craincte and Esperance,--is here treated in a more abstract and sophisticated way, but the essence is the same:

> Quand Phebus au matin vient esclairer au monde,
> Tirant dehors la mer sa belle tresse blonde,
> Deux hostes differents, l'esperance et la peur,
> Comme mes ennemis se campent en mon coeur:
> L'une me veut mener au lieu de mon martyre,
> Me presse de la suivre, et l'autre m'en retire.
> Je sens par leur discord deux effets dedans moy,
> Maintenant le plaisir, et maintenant l'esmoy;
> En si divers combas tous les jours je travaille,
> Et si ne puis gaigner ny perdre la bataille.[2]

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 11; Tableau chronologique, p. 38.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 12, 13.

As in Marot's lovely but well-worn image of the thorns and the rosebush,[1] love is here depicted as necessarily involving suffering:

> Or, comme le Printemps porte tousjours les fleurs,
> L'Esté de sa nature ameine les chaleurs,
> Automne les raisins, et l'Hyver la froidure,
> Ainsi Amour cruel apporte de nature
> Dans le coeur de l'Amant le soin et la douleur,
> La tristesse, l'ennuy, les pleurs et le malheur,
> La crainte, le soupçon, les soucis et la peine,
> Passions dont mon ame est pour vous toute pleine;
> Puis donc vous demandez, me voyant amoureux,
> La cause qui me fait si triste et langoureux![2]

Elégie III contains a passage describing the solitary lover wandering through the woods, lines reminiscent of Propertius' words to Cynthia in Elegy I, xviii,[3] and foreshadowing the Romantic tradition, from Rousseau onward, by which Nature reflects and harmonizes with the poet's most intimate feelings:

> O quantefois depuis vostre ennuyeux depart,
> Solitaire et pensif, ay-je seul à l'escart
> Erré par les rochers! et quantefois aux plaines
> Et aux sablons deserts ay-je conté mes peines,
> Et l'envieux regret que j'ay de ne revoir
> Vostre face qui peut les rochers esmouvoir![4]

[1] Marot, Elégie IV, Œuvres Lyriques, p. 224. Cf. Chapter II, p. 41, of this paper.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 13.

[3] Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querent,
et vacuum zephyri possident aura nemus.
Hic licet occultos proferre impune dolores,
si modo sola queant saxa tenere fidem.

D. Paganelli (Soc. d'Ed. "Les Belles Lettres", 1929, op. cit.) translates as follows: "Ici assurément les lieux sont déserts et silencieux et propices aux plaintes; personne dans ces bocages, rien que le souffle du zéphyr. Ici l'on peut impunément étaler ses souffrances cachées, s'il est vrai que des rochers solitaires ne sauraient être indiscrets". Cf. Chapter I, page 26, of this paper. Cf. also the role of nature as confidant in Lamartine's "Le Lac".

[4] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 38. Actually, the theme of nature

Ronsard then turns to a commonplace of Petrarchist poetry, the comparison of the lady and the sunlight:

> Ainsi, faute de voir vostre belle lumière,
> Qui estoit de mes yeux la clarté coustumiere,
> J'erre seul egaré, car mon oeil ne cognoist
> Autre jour que celuy qui de vous apparoist.[1]

The preciosity of the final image supports the assumption that Ronsard is indeed writing "des vers de commande" in the elegies for Isabeau and that, in this, he is following Marot's example of the "épître amoureuse":

> Et recevez en gré ceste lettre qui vole
> Vers vous pour un adieu, en lieu de la parole
> Qui ne vous peut, helas! en partant de ce lieu,
> Ainsi qu'elle devoit, dire humblement adieu.[2]

The inevitable comparisons and metaphors of the love poetry of the period abound in the elegies to Isabeau, and in many cases they are the same as those found in the sonnets of the Amours. The "martyre amoureux", the metaphor of love as a wound or a prison, the image of the poet's heart which now dwells within his lady or vice versa, the

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associated with the lover's despair is also a "lieu-commun" of Petrarchist poetry. (Cf. Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Tome I, pp. 264, 265). Chamard cites as an example Ronsard's sonnet (Tome I, p. 29, Amours de Cassandre) which is based on an Italian model and which ends with the much celebrated tercets:

> Puis qu'au partir, rongé de soin et d'ire,
> A ce bel oeil Adieu je n'ay sceu dire,
> Qui pres et loin me detient en esmoy,
> Je vous supply, Ciel, air, vents, monts et plaines,
> Taillis, forests, rivages et fontaines,
> Antres, prez, fleurs, dites-le luy pour moy.

On pp. 152, 153 of Le Pétrarquisme en France au 16e siècle, Vianey gives the translation of the poem by Astemio Bevilacqua which Ronsard adapted to French with such success that his exquisite sonnet eclipsed the Italian original.

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 38.

[2] Ibid., p. 39.

contrasting elements of fire and water,--all these hyperboles were already present in the strambotti of Serafino and Tebaldeo, poets of the quattrocento, and were adopted by Ronsard and his contemporaries.[1]

In the tradition of Propertius and Petrarch, the speaker in this group of elegies delights in his suffering and, in almost masochistic fashion, cherishes the pleasure which it gives him:

> Or, dés le jour que la belle lumiere
> De vos yeux prist mon ame prisonniere,
> Je n'ay voulu pour hoste recevoir
> Nulle esperance, et n'en veux point avoir,
> Bien que flatteuse à toute heure elle essaye
> De soulager ma prison et ma playe,
> Me promettant de me faire jouyr
> De liberté; mais je ne veux l'ouyr
> Ny luy donner dedans mon coeur passage,
> De peur, helas! que mon penser volage
> Ne m'asseurast de me faire partir
> De la prison d'où je ne veux sortir![2]

Similar references to the bittersweet quality of love are found in the sonnets:

> Non, ce n'est point une peine qu'aymer:
> C'est un beau mal, et son feu doux-amer
> Plus doucement qu'amerement nous brule.[3]

It is in this same tradition that we find in Elégie VII the lovely comparison between the lover and the "pyralide":

> Dans les fourneaux de Cypre, où le metal liquide
> Se coule à la chaleur, se voit la Pyralide,
> Animal nay de feu, qui se nourrist au feu.
> Le feu lui est son bien, son plaisir et son jeu,
> Sa naissance est le feu, le brazier est sa vie,
> Et le feu seulement est toute son envie.[4]

[1] Cf. Vianey, op. cit., pp. 32-37.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 43.

[3] Ibid., Tome I, Amours de Cassandre, p. 29.

[4] Ibid., Tome II, p. 48.

In Elégie IX, it is the salamandre, mythical creature which lives by fire and a favorite image of the Italian Petrarchists,[1] which evokes the poet's sweet agony:

> Je suis la salemandre, et ne suis à mon aise
> Si mon coeur n'est tousjours au milieu d'une braise.[2]

The abuse of mythological references, another characteristic of Petrarchist poetry, but one which appealed to Ronsard's love of erudition, is found both in the sonnets and the elegies to Isabeau. It is not that such references are absent from the elegies to Genèvre which, as we have seen, are also tinged with preciosity, but there they tend to shock less, since they exist side by side with realistic descriptive details and bits of dialogue. Frey refers to this characteristic of the elegies to Genèvre, somewhat amusingly, as "une préciosité vécue".[3] In the elegies to Isabeau, the number of mythological references is far greater.

In Elégie V, the lover accuses his lady of having charmed him "ainsi qu'une Meduse", and his terror that she will not love him in

[1] Cf. Vianey, op. cit., p. 34.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 52. Ronsard uses the same image in the sonnets, e.g., in XXXII of Le Second Livre des Amours (Amours de Marie), Ronsard Tome I, p. 136, Tableau chronologique, p. 18:

> De la nature un coeur je n'ay receu,
> Ainçois plustost, pour se nourrir en feu,
> En lieu de luy j'ay une Salemandre.

Cf. Frey, op. cit., p. 49: "Nous nous sommes amusé à dresser la liste des différents thèmes traités dans les sonnets et dans les élégies: elle est pareille pour les deux genres. Les motifs d'abord concentrés dans les sonnets viennent se répandre dans les longues suites d'alexandrins qui sont baptisés élégies, élargissement qui accuse davantage la tendance de toute la poésie amoureuse du 16e siècle vers le style précieux."

[3] Frey, op. cit., p. 53.

return renders him as senseless as a rock, suggesting a comparison with Sipyle, the rock into which Niobé was supposedly transformed. In Elégie VI, he compares himself to Tantalus, "qui meurs de soif en l'onde". By a complicated association of ideas, the social inequality between him and his lady suggests the origins of the human race and the fact that, in the beginning, all human beings were equal. This notion conjures up the image of Deucalion and Pyrrha in Ovid's Metamorphoses and the subsequent corruption of the world by Pandora:

> Quand Pyrrhe et son mary peuploient les vuides terres,
> Ruant parmy les champs les semences des pierres,
> Peres du genre humain, les cailloux qu'ils jettoient,
> En dignité pareille egalement estoient.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Maudits soient les presens dont la tasse feconde
> De la belle Pandore a remply tout le monde.[1]

On occasion, Ronsard's use of mythology in the elegies tends to overwhelm the reader. It makes these poems seem stilted and artificial, qualities which are not in keeping with a love lyric.

We have seen how the "casuistique amoureuse", as critics have often referred to one ingredient of Marot's love elegies, is prominent in the elegies to Isabeau. In both cases there are seemingly endless discussions of love in which the poet seems to describe and analyze his sentiments and psychological conflicts "ad infinitem". A few details suggest further similarities between Marot's elegies and Ronsard's elegies to Isabeau.

Elégie IX, in which a warrior writes to his lady, recalls Marot's first elegy, in which a soldier writes of having been wounded

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 45.

in the Bataille de Pavie and taken prisoner with the King in a foreign country.[1] Ronsard begins as follows:

> Bien que l'obeyssance et l'amour que je doy
> Au service de Dieu, de l'Eglise et du Roy,
> Me retiennent au camp au milieu des alarmes,
> Animé d'un courage aussi fort que les armes,
> Si est-ce que le trait qui sortit de vos yeux
> Pour me blesser le coeur, m'accompagne en tous lieux;
> Tousjours il me combat, et la douce memoire
> De vos perfections lui donne la victoire.[2]

The inevitable comparisons between lover and soldier--the "amator" and "miles" of Latin love elegies--and between the prisoner of war and the prisoner of love, are common to both poems. As Marot was writing for a soldier by the name of Antonius Pastoreau, who has never been adequately identified, Ronsard is obviously writing for someone other than himself. Critics have generally agreed that the elegy was inspired by Isabeau, but have been at odds as far as the identity of the speaker is concerned. For Marcel Raymond it was Brantôme; for Paul Laumonier, Louis de Condé.[3] The lover speaks of two rivals, two noblemen, to whom he neverthess considers himself superior in loyalty and devotion:

> Je sçay que vos grandeurs, vos biens et vos honneurs
> Ont le service acquis de deux braves seigneurs,
> Grans de race et de biens, de qui la renommee
> Reluist comme une estoille, à mi-nuict allumée,
> . . . . . .
> Tant soyent-ils amoureux, je passe leur amour.[4]

It seems improbable that the Prince de Condé would have addressed

[1] Cf. Chapter II, p. 49, of this paper.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 51.

[3] Cf. Desonay, Vol. II, p. 217.

[4] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 53.

Isabeau in this fashion.[1] Perhaps the mysterious lover in question is neither Brantôme nor Condé, but rather, a person of lesser stature.

The writer in Elégie IX is aware that his social status is far inferior to that of his lady, but his utter devotion compensates for this inequality:

> Et bref, vous me serez ou gracieuse ou brave,
> Maugré vostre rigueur je seray vostre esclave
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Je vous aimeray tant, et vous serviray tant,
> Je seray si loyal, si ferme et si constant,
> Que vostre coeur veincu, bien que cruel et rude,
> M'ostera quelque jour le joug de servitude.[2]

Ronsard is obviously making use of one of the commonplace themes of medieval love lyric, the complete subservience of lover to lady, that found its expression in such works as the previously mentioned La Belle Dame Sans Mercy of Alain Chartier.[3]

This theme pervades the cycle of elegies generally attributed to Isabeau de Limeuil. It was also present in some of Marot's elegies, in which the notion of "aymer trop haut" led some critics to believe that certain elegies had been written by the poet to Anne d'Alençon,

[1] Fernand Desonay, op. cit., p. 218, remarks that the following lines are revealing:

> Je ne leur cede en rien, ou soit pour faire armer,
> Les galeres bien loin sur les flots de la mer,
> Soit pour combatre en terre . . ."

"Or chacun sait que Brantôme se piquait volontiers de ses talents de navigateur."

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 55.

[3] Cf. Desonay, op. cit., Tome II, p. 216: "Certes, l'insistance qui est mise sur l'humble condition du 'serviteur' amoureux est un des poncifs de la lyrique courtoise."

illegitimate niece of Marguerite de Navarre. In Elégie XXII ("Comme un guerrier refroidi de prouesse"), which again develops the parallel between soldier and lover, the unhappy suitor speaks of the inequality between his social position and that of his lady:

> Je sçay combien ceste heureuse naissance
> Qui vous honore, est haute de puissance.
> Je cognois trop, et de la vient mon mal,
> Qu'à vostre sang le mien n'est pas egal.[1]

As the lady is in love with a nobleman, the speaker attempts to convince her that a gentleman of lesser rank is often more faithful and devoted: "Tousjours l'amour d'un prince nous deçoit." To stress his point, he uses the example of gods and goddesses who have left the heavens to love mortals, precisely the image that Marot uses in one of his elegies.

> Au temps passé les Deesses plus grandes,
> Quittant des Dieux les immortelles bandes,
> Ont bien choisi çà-bas pour serviteurs,
> Non pas des rois, mais de simples pasteurs,
> Et Jupiter, plein d'amoureuses flames,
> Laissant Junon, a bien aimé nos femmes,
> Car volontiers Amour et Majesté
> En mesme lieu n'ont jamais habité.[2]

> Aussi jadiz deesses adourees
> D'hommes mortelz se sont enamourées.
> Le jeune Athis feust aymé de Cibelle,
> Endymion, de Diane la belle;
> Pour Adonis, Venus tant s'abbayssa
> Que les hauts cieux pour la terre layssa.[3]
>
> (Marot, Elégie XXIV)

This similarity does not necessarily suggest that Ronsard was paraphrasing Marot's elegy, although he was probably acquainted with

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 103; Tableau chronologique, p. 44.

[2] Ibid., p. 104.

[3] Marot, Œuvres lyriques, p. 270.

it, but merely that both were using a commonplace theme of courtly love lyric, the idealization, or in the case of Petrarch, the deification of woman. This attitude, in its most extreme form, is reflected in the cult of the Virgin Mary. The poet's obsession with his lady's superior social status is an outgrowth of it.

The elegies for Isabeau de Limeuil reflect "l'esprit courtois"[1] as it is found in Ronsard's poetry alongside "l'esprit gaulois".[2] These elegies, although they are among Ronsard's loveliest, lack the freshness and spontaneity of the elegies to Genèvre. As in Marot's elegies, the poet is using his talent to serve the needs or wishes of others. In this capacity of court poet, he summons all the commonplace literary themes and techniques of the period, particularly the legacy of the Petrarchists, so amusingly satirized in du Bellay's ode "Contre les Pétrarquistes". Once again we are faced with an impersonal sort of lyricism which, as C. A. Mayer remarked in his criticism of Marot's elegies,[3] implies a contradiction. The fact that, of the ten elegies which may be attributed to Isabeau, five are written in decasyllables,[4]

[1] Cf. Chamard, Les Origines de la poesie française de la Renaissance, p. 85: "C'est que l'esprit courtois s'est propagé du Moyen Age à la Renaissance de deux manières: directement, par les poètes français du XVe siècle, et notamment Alain Chartier; indirectement, par Pétrarque et les Italiens pétrarquistes, héritiers eux-mêmes de nos vieux trouvères courtois."

[2] Ibid., p. 62: "Nos poètes de la Pléiade ont trouvé chez les anciens, principalement chez les élégiaques latins, ce sens aigu de la volupté. Mais ce goût libidineux . . . s'allie parfaitement avec les écarts de l'esprit gaulois,--et justement, nous saisissons ici le point précis où la gauloiserie se rencontre avec la sensualité paienne et se fond avec elle. . . ."

[3] Cf. Chapter II, p. 69, of this paper.

[4] V, XI, XVII, XIX, and XXII.

is worthy of note. Ronsard tended more and more to reserve that meter, rather than the more personal alexandrin, for his "oeuvres de commande." Poems in epistle form, in alexandrins or decasyllables, and courtly in tone, the elegies for Isabeau are closest in spirit to Marot's elegies.

There is a sharp contrast between the elegies to Isabeau and three erotic elegies of the collection. Elégies XIII ("Nous fismes un contract ensemble l'autre jour") and XIV ("Sans âme, sans esprit, sans pouls et sans haleine"), which first appeared in the Sixième édition collective of 1584,[1] are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the etherial Petrarchist poems. Both are adaptations in alexandrins of "baisers" by Jean Second. Laumonier suggests that they had actually been written ten years earlier in honor of Hélène. We do know that Mlle. de Surgères had been offended by certain rather explicit poems addressed to her by Ronsard and asked that they not be included among the Sonnets pour Hélène.[2] In the Thirteenth Elegy, Ronsard captures the voluptuous quality of the poetry of Jean Second, disciple of Catullus,

[1] Cf. Tableau chronologique, p. 67.

[2] Cf. Laumonier, Ronsard lyrique, p. 264. See also Ronsard's letter to Monsieur de Sainte-Marthe, written before the publication of the Sonnets pour Hélène and in which the poet writes, with much resentment, of an effort on the part of Mlle. de Surgères to intervene in the publication of the poems addressed to her. (Ronsard, Tome II, p. 1047).

The only elegy which has been retained in the Sonnets pour Hélène ("Six ans estoient coulez, et la septiesme année") is a rather chaste one in which the poet protests: "Que pour aymer beaucoup j'ay peu de recompense". He takes leave of Hélène in the following manner:

> Ne pensez plus, Hélène, en vos laqs me tenir.
> La raison m'en delivre, et vostre rigueur dure,
> Puis qu'il faut que mon age obeysse à Nature.
> (Ronsard, Tome I, p. 277)

and here he seems far more comfortable than in the Petrarchist poems dedicated to Isabeau.[1]

> Nous fismes un contract ensemble l'autre jour,
> Que tu me donnerois mille baisers d'amour,
> Colombins, tourterins, à lévres demi-closes,
> A souspirs souspirans la mesme odeur des roses,
> A langue serpentine, à tremblotants regars,
> De pareille façon que Venus baise Mars,
> Quand il se pasme d'aise au sein de sa maistresse.[2]

This is a rather fanciful imitation of Jean Second's sixth "baiser", the first four lines of which are as follows:

> De meliore nota bis basia mille paciscens,
> Basia mille dedi, basia mille tuli
> Explesti numerum, fateor, jucunda Neaera;
> Expleri numero sed nequit ullus amor.[3]

Ronsard has even succeeded, by the use of words such as "colombins", "tourterins", "tremblotant", "soupirs soupirants", in creating the musicality and tenderness which characterized the works of the neo-Latin poet. In the case of Jean Second, the technique involved the use of diminutives[4] ("medullulas tenellas," "turgidulis labris," "puellulae"

[1] Cf. Laumonier, Ronsard Lyrique, p. 507: ". . . ce sont des envolées qui ne durent pas, et vite, abondonnant 'ce fol penser', ce vague mélange d'idéalisme grec et de christianisme, qui lui vient de Pétrarque, il redescent sur terre avec les poètes érotiques latins et leurs imitateurs des XVe et XVIe siècles, Pontano, l'Arioste, Jean Second, et tutti quanti."

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 74.

[3] Cf. Jean Second, Le Livre des baisers, Amiens, Librairie Edgar Malfère, 1922, pp. 48-51. Thierry Sandre translates as follows:

> Deux mille baisers, et des meilleurs, tel était notre pacte.
> J'ai donné mille baisers, j'ai reçu mille baisers.
> Le compte est satisfait, je l'avoue, charmante Neère, mais
> le compte n'est jamais satisfaisant pour l'amour.

[4] See the preface to Jean Second's Baisers et élégies, avec le texte latin, éd. P.-F. Tissot, Paris, 1806, pp. xx, xxi, for the

etc.) and in the constant repetition of liquid consonants--particularly "l" and "m"--which, in the Latin language, is a direct consequence of this.

One can quote any number of passages illustrating this tendency. The beginning of Basium IV is a case in point:

> Non dat basia, dat Neaera nectar,
> Dat rores animae suaveolentes,
> Dat nardumque, thymumque, cynnamumque,
> Et mel . . ."[1]

Such was the exquisite delicacy of Jean Second. His life was brief, like that of the Latin love elegists, since he succumbed in 1536 to an

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problem the translator faces in attempting to render such diminutives in French.

Actually, Baïf succeeded quite well in this, particularly in his adaptation of Jean Second's Baiser XII (cf. J. Second, Le Livre des baisers (op. cit.), p. 155:

> Quid vultus removetis hinc pudicos,
> Matronaeque puellulaeque castae?
> (Jean Second)

> Pourquoi, chastes femmelettes,
> Pourquoi, craintives fillettes,
> Vous reculez-vous ainsi
> De ces baiserets ici?
> (J.-A. de Baïf)

[1] Baïf also produced an adaptation of this "baiser" in the languorous rhythm 7-3-7-7-3-7 used by Ronsard in an ode and a chanson. The result is somewhat mannered, but the musicality of the piece announces Verlaine. I quote only the third stanza (J. Second, Le Livre des baisers, op. cit., pp. 147, 148):

> La douceur qui en dégoutte,
> o je goûte
> Plus douce qu'autre liqueur.
> Et cette manne divine,
> Nectarine,
> Me chatouille jusqu'au coeur.

A charming ode of Ronsard to Cassandre (see Tableau chronologique, p. 2) is also partly an imitation of this "baiser":

> Ma Dame ne donne pas
> Des baisers, mais des appas

illness which he had contracted in Spain in the service of Charles-Quint. He was not yet twenty-five. If any French poet possessed this magical quality of using words lovingly, caressingly, it was surely Ronsard.

The last few lines of Elégie XIII follow quite faithfully the end of Second's sixth "baiser", but Ronsard has even added to the eroticism of his model:

> Tu ne devrois conter les biens que je reçoy,
> Non plus que moy, les maux que je souffre pour toy,
> Car ce n'est la raison de donner par mesure
> Tes baisers, quand des maux innombrables j'endure.
> Donne moy donc au lict, ensemble bien unis,
> Des baisers infinis pour des maux infinis.[1]

Similarly, Elégie XIV is an imitation of Jean Second's Baiser XIII:

> Sans ame, sans esprit, sans pouls et sans haleine,
> Je n'avois ny tendon, ny artere, ny veine,

> Qui seuls nourrissent mon ame,
> Les biens dont les Dieux sont sous,
> Du Nectar, du sucre dous,
> De la cannelle et du bâme,
> Du thym, du lis, de la rose
> Entre ses lévres esclose
> Fleurante en toutes saisons,
> Et du miel tel qu'en Hymette
> La desrobe-fleur avette
> Remplit ses douces maisons.
> (Ronsard, Tome I, p. 442)

[1] Cf. Jean Second, Le Livre des baisers, (op. cit.), pp. 50, 51:

> Si numeras lacrymas, numeros licet oscula; sed si
> Non numeras lacrymas, oscula ne numeres.
> Et mihi da, miseri solatia vana doloris,
> Innumera innumeris basia pro lacrymis.

The editor's translation is as follows:

> Si tu comptes mes larmes, tu as le droit de compter tes baisers; mais, si tu ne comptes pas mes larmes, ne compte pas tes baisers.
> Et donne-moi, pour guérir et tromper le chagrin qui m'afflige, innombrables contre innombrables, tes baisers contre mes larmes.

Qui dissoute ne fust du combat amoureux.
Mes yeux estoyent couverts d'un voile tenebreux,
Mes oreilles tintoyent, et ma langue seichée
Estoit à mon palais de chaleur attachée.
(Ronsard, Elégie XIV, ll. 1-6)
Tome II, p. 75.

Languidus e dulci certamine, vita, jacebam
Exanimis, fusa per tua colla manu.

Omnis in arenti consumptus spiritus ore,
Flamine non potera cor recreare novo.
(Jean Second, Basium XIII, ll. 1-4)

Both poets evoke the lower depths with the usual mythological details:

J'avois devant les yeux ce royaume funeste
Qui jamais ne jouist de la clairté celeste,
Royaume que Pluton pour partage a voulu,
Et du vieillard Caron le bateau vermoulu.
(Ronsard, ll. 9-12)
Tome II, p. 75

Jam Styx ante oculos, et regna carentia sole,
Luridaque annosi cymba Carontis erat.
(Jean Second, ll. 5, 6)

In each case it is one kiss which revives the lover:[1]

Baiser, vivifiant, nourricier de mon ame,
Dont l'alme, douce, humide et restaurante flame
Esloigna de mes yeux mon trespas et ma nuict,
Et feit que le bateau du vieillard qui conduit
Les ames des amans à la rive amoureuse,
S'en alla sans passer la mienne langoureuse.
(Ronsard, ll. 17-22)

[1] Ronsard also seems to have used this "baiser" of Jean Second as a point of departure for a chanson which originally appeared in the "Sonnets pour Hélène" and is now included in the "Amours Diverses" ("Plus estroit que la vigne à l'ormeau se marie"). Cf. Ronsard, Tome I, p. 294:

Puis appuyant ton sein sur le mien qui se pâme,
Pour mon mal appaiser,
Serre plus fort mon col, et me redonne l'âme
Par l'esprit d'un baiser.

Cum tu, suaviolum educens pulmonis ab imo,
Afflasti siccis irriguum labiis:

Suaviolum Stygia quod me de valle reduxit,
Et iussit vacua currere nave senem.
(Jean Second, ll. 7-10)

The two poets explore the dark parallel between death and ecstasy. Ronsard, however, goes one step further in suggesting the brevity of all pleasure and the philosophical implications of this, a subject treated by Propertius in Elegy II, xv.[1] It is a theme which is closely related to the "carpe diem" and, as such, is the basis of the whole elegiac tradition.

En ce temps faisons trêve, espargnons nostre vie,
De peur que mal-armez de la Philosophie,
Nous ne sentions soudain, ou apres a loisir,
Que tousjours la douleur voisine le plaisir.
(Ronsard, ll. 29-32)
Elégie XIV

Ergo, age, labra meis innecte tenacia labris,
Assidueque duos spiritus unus alat:

Donec, inexpleti post taedia sera furoris,
Unica de gemino corpora vita fluet.[2]
(Jean Second, ll. 19-22)
Basium XIII

The influence of Jean Second is felt elsewhere in Ronsard's work. Moreover, other poets of the Pléiade--Belleau and Baïf--imitated the Baisers. Even the usually chaste du Bellay wrote two "baysers",

[1] Dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus amore:
Nox tibi longa venit; nec reditura dies.
(ll. 23, 24)

Cf. Chapter I, p. 26, of this paper.

[2] Editor's translation in J. Second, Le Livre des baisers, op. cit.: "A toi donc! Fixe solidement tes lèvres sur mes lèvres. Il faut sans relâche que ta seule âme en nourrisse deux. Ainsi, lorsque notre passion inassouvie sera, mais tard, venue à satiété, d'un seul et même coup la vie s'échappera de nos deux corps unis."

which he included in his collection of Jeux Rustiques.[1]

The eroticism of Elégies XIII and XIV is echoed in Elégie XXIII ("Pour vous aimer, Maistresse, je me tue"),[2] which was first published in the Septième Livre des poemes of 1569. The poem, again in the spirit of the Latin and neo-Latin love elegies, is obviously intended for a married woman who has thus far ignored the poet's advances but whom he is determined to seduce. His arguments become more and more pressing, and he reminds the lady, in the words of Paul Laumonier, "d'une façon très peu platonique", of the myth of the Androgyne.[3] Nothing could be more remote from the ethereal elegies to Isabeau than the realism of these earthy verses:

> Il faut s'aimer d'une amour mutuelle,
> Non par la bouche, et non par la mammelle,
> Non par les yeux: ce ne sont instrumens
> Propres assez pour nos rassemblemens,
> Mais pour se joindre, il faut, à l'avanture,
> Remettre en un les outils de Nature.[4]

Here, again, the sensuality of the Latin love elegists rejoined the traditional French "esprit gaulois", as well as the erotic element found in Italian Petrarchist poetry, as in the "strambotti lascivi" of Olympo de Sassoferrato which inspired Marot's creation of the blasons.

We have seen how Ronsard made frequent use of the elegy to evoke a past love affair or to take poetic leave of a literary muse. That the genre was somehow associated in his mind with nostalgia is evident from

[1] Poésies françaises et latines, éd. Courbet, Vol. II, pp. 348-50.

[2] Tableau chronologique, p. 46.

[3] Laumonier, Ronsard Lyrique, p. 552.

[4] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 106.

this fact. "La Troisième pour Genèvre" ("Le temps se passe, et se passant, Madame"), in which the poet recalls, after a period of time, the year of happiness that the lovers had shared and the ultimate separation, is a case in point. The last line of the poem,--"Rien n'est si sot qu'une vieille amitié",--lends an air of finality. The affair has ended, and although the poet may look back upon it with a certain nostalgia, it will not furnish the subject of any future literary works.

When, in the Oeuvres Complètes of 1560, Ronsard published a bitter elegy to Cassandre ("Cherche, Maistresse, un Poete nouveau"),[1] eight years had passed since the Amours de Cassandre. The disillusioned poet appears to be leaving her definitively as his muse in favor of the more amenable Marie and thereby ushering in a simpler, more direct style, "le beau stille bas". The last lines of the elegy are both wistful and philosophical:

> Or quant à moy je pense avoir perdue
> En te servant ma jeunesse espandue
> Deçà, delà, dedans ce livre ici.
> Je voy ma faute et la prens à merci,
> Comme celuy qui sçait que nostre vie
> N'est rien que vent, que songe et que folie.[2]

Interestingly, nine years later Ronsard once more returned to his literary love for Cassandre. Le Septiesme Livre des Poemes of 1569 included a delicate elegy in which the poet recalls, with much tenderness, his first vision of the young girl some twenty-five years before, during a ball at the château de Blois. It appears that Ronsard

[1] Tableau chronologique, p. 30. The first line originally read: "Cherche, Cassandre, un poete nouveau". The elegy served as a conclusion to the Premier livre des Amours in the edition of 1560.

[2] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 298.

who, by 1569, had acquired four priories in the Vendôme region,[1] had many opportunities to return to his native province. It was probably during one or more of these visits that he again saw Cassandre, "la châtelaine de Pray." She was by now more or less middle-aged, the future great-grandmother of Alfred de Musset, and the aunt of Diane de Talcy, who would be loved by Agrippa d'Aubigné.

It is April, the month in which the poet first saw Cassandre many years before and, with exquisite sadness, the poet realizes that his love for her has, in fact, not faded with time.

> L'absence, ny l'oubly, ny la course du jour
> N'ont effacé le nom, les graces ny l'amour
> Qu'au coeur je m'imprimay dés ma jeunesse tendre,
> Fait nouveau serviteur de toy, belle Cassandre,
> Qui me fus autrefois plus chere que mes yeux,
> Que mon sang, que ma vie, et que seule en tous lieux
> Pour sujet eternel ma Muse avoit choisie,
> A fin de te chanter par longue poesie.[2]

In a series of moving alexandrins, the poet indicates how the passing years have not, in the least, altered his love. Rather, as is so often the case, memory and time have reinforced it so that the present has ceased to exist and only the first, and somewhat idealized vision remains:

> Et si l'âge, qui rompt et murs et forteresses,
> En coulant a perdu un peu de noz jeunesses,
> Cassandre, c'est tout un! car je n'ay pas esgard
> A ce qui est present, mais au premier regard,
> Au trait qui me navra de ta grâce enfantine,
> Qu'encores tout sanglant je sens en la poitrine.[3]

[1] Le prieuré de Saint-Cosme, près de Tours, en 1565; "une prébende canoniale" at Saint Martin de Tours, en 1566; le prieuré de Croixval, en Vendômois, en 1566; en 1569, le prieuré de Saint-Guingalois, à Château-du-Loir. Cf. Lebègue, op. cit., p. 117 and the chapter entitled "Ronsard et sa province".

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 906.

[3] Ibid., p. 907. In Ronsard poète de l'amour (Bruxelles,

For reasons which remain a mystery to us, Ronsard eliminated this poem in 1584 from the complete edition of his works.

We have seen how the second elegy to Cassandre ("Cherche, Maistresse, un Poete nouveau") which concluded the first book of the "Amours" in the Première Edition Collective of 1560, was Ronsard's farewell to the inspiration of his first works.[1] The poet also wrote a farewell elegy to Marie, and it was this poem which ended the second book of the "Amours" in the same edition. There was a certain symmetry in the "Amours de Cassandre" and the "Amours de Marie" in that first complete edition of 1560 in that each of the two books was concluded by an elegy.

In the complete works of 1560, Ronsard also included a long poem in the manner of Theocritus and Virgil, consisting of 346 alexandrins and entitled "Le Voyage de Tours ou les amoureux Thoinet et Perrot" which he characterized as a "chant pastoral".[2] This long

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Gembloux, 1959) Vol. III, p. 120, Fernand Desonay writes of this elegy: "Cette admirable pièce . . . respire l'âcre tourment d'un passé vécu, d'un passé qu'il serait d'ailleurs vain de prétendre ressusciter de ses cendres. Nous sommes ici dans le registre de l'emotion personnelle, sans qu'il soit besoin, pourtant, d'imaginer un retour de flamme du Ronsard quinquagénaire vers une Cassandre qui ne devait pas être loin de la quarantaine."

[1] The first elegy to Cassandre, the previously discussed "Mon oeil, mon coeur, ma Cassandre, ma vie", had appeared in Le Bocage of 1554. It was in this poem that Ronsard stated his intention not to abandon lyric poetry for epic.

[2] Cf. Alice Hulubei, L'Eglogue en France au XVIe siècle, Paris, Droz, 1938, p. 10: "Sand doute, d'accord avec Ronsard, Belleau note en 1560 la définition suivante du chant pastoral: "Ce petit poesme ('Le Voyage de Tours') est intitulé chant pastoral; & difere de l'eglogue, d'autant que l'eglogue a la façon de Theocrite, est breve & courte, ou les pasteurs ordinairement parlent & contre-respondent en vers alternatifs, & le champ pastoral est plus long &

poem in alexandrins, in which a bit of reality is much embroidered with fiction, serves as an epilogue to Ronsard's literary love affair with Marie. The circumstances, as the poet relates them, are as follows. In April of the year which is probably 1560,[1] Thoinet (Baïf) "passant par Vandomois", took his friend Perrot (Ronsard) to a wedding ceremony which was held near Tours. The bride was none other than a cousin of Marion (Marie), and it is there that Perrot would once again see his Marion and Thoinet his Francine (Françoise de Gennes). Just how Marie Dupin and Françoise de Gennes, members of the "bonne bourgeoisie" of Poitiers, happened to attend the same wedding remains somewhat of a mystery, but we must accept the details which Ronsard gives us, even though they are most likely rooted in fantasy rather than reality. Five years had passed since Ronsard's "Continuation des Amours", and for two years Baïf had thought himself cured of his passion for Francine.[2]

The two friends leave in the direction of the Forêt de Gastine, and after a long trip on foot, finally arrive at "Sainct Cosmes pres Tours", where the wedding is already in progress. Thoinet and Perrot ask Francine and Marion to dance, and each of the two young men begins to reminisce. Thoinet recalls his first glimpse of Francine, in April, six years before, and his unrequited love for her. His remarks on the resistance of memories to the effect of time foreshadow the elegy to

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presque se suit tousjours d'un propos continué." Mme. Hulubei adds: "La différence entre les deux espèces du même genre viendrait des dimensions et du dosage dans l'emploi du dialogue et du discours indirect."

[1] Cf. Chamard, Tome II, p. 169.

[2] Cf. Hulubei, op. cit., p. 370.

Cassandre ("L'absence, ny l'oubly, ny la course du jour") of 1569:

> Six ans sont ja passez, toutefois dans l'oreille
> J'entens encor' le son de ta voix nompareille,
> Qui ma gaigne le coeur, et me souviens encor
> De ta vermeille bouche et de tes cheveux d'or,
> De ta main, de tes yeux, et si le temps qui passe
> A depuis desrobé quelque peu de leur grace,
> Helas! je ne suis moins de leurs graces ravy
> Que je fus sur le Clain, le jour que je te vy
> Surpasser en beauté toutes les pastourelles
> Que les jeunes pasteurs estimoyent les plus belles.
> Car je n'ay pas esgard à cela que tu es
> Mais à ce que tu fus, tant les amoureux traits
> Te graverent en moy, voire de telle sorte
> Que telle que tu fus telle au sang je te porte.[1]

Francine remains unaffected by Thoinet's declarations of love, and even laughs when he dramatically threatens to cast himself "à corps perdu" into the Loire. The unhappy Thoinet, overcome with her cruelty,

> se pasma sur l'herbe
> Presque transi de voir sa dame si superbe.

Unfortunately, Perrot does not fare better, for just as he is about to address Marion in a similar way, he catches sight of her mother, who has come to fetch her by boat. He is left all alone on the river bank to watch the boat fade into the distance and to wish Marion a safe return to shore. The poet's "amoureuse rêverie"[2] ends with the hope that Marie will leave her native Anjou to live with him in Vendômois, or if she prefers, he will become "anjevin" and enjoy with her the pleasures of a simple country life. Always preoccupied with literature, even more than love, Ronsard manages to include, rather amusingly, an allusion to his "beau stille bas":

[1] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 142.

[2] The words are Henri Chamard's in l'Histoire de la Pléiade, Tome II, p. 170.

Et pour mieux te flechir, les hauts vers que j'avois
En ma langue traduit du Pindare Gregois
Humble, je veux redire en un chant plus facile,
Sur le doux chalumeau du pasteur de Sicile.[1]

If we have devoted more space than might be expected to "Le Voyage de Tours", it is because that poem leads so naturally to "L'Elégie à Marie." Shortly after he wrote "Le Voyage de Tours", an indignant Ronsard discovered that his Marie had fallen in love with "ce sot de jeune homme" whom she eventually married, and he dedicated a farewell elegy to her. However, in the elegy to Marie, as in the first two for Cassandre and in many of the poet's other early elegies, Ronsard's preoccupation is mainly literary.

Ma seconde ame, à fin que le siecle advenir
De nos jeunes amours se puisse souvenir,
Et que vostre beauté que j'ay longtemps aimée,
Ne se perde au tombeau, par les ans consumee,
Sans laisser quelque marque apres elle de soy,
Je vous consacre ici le plus gaillard de moy,
L'esprit de mon esprit qui vous fera revivre
Ou long temps ou jamais par l'âge de ce livre.[2]

This pretentious elegy forms a curious contrast to the delightful chansons in which Ronsard, imitating Marullus and other neo-Latin poets, had used the tender "stille bas" in honor of "la fille des champs".[3] Ronsard's main concern is the immortality of poetry, and he

[1] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 147.

[2] Ibid., p. 175. Tableau chronologique, p. 31. The first line originally read: "Marie, à celle fin que le siecle advenir."

[3] Cf., et. al.:

Ma maistresse est toute angelette,
Ma toute rose nouvelette,
Toute mon gracieux orgueil,
Toute ma petite brunette,
Toute ma douce mignonnette,
Toute mon coeur, toute mon oeil.
Ronsard, Tome I, p. 127.

finds the "stille haut" more appropriate to this subject matter. His purely literary preoccupation does not, however, exclude some lovely, tender verses:

> O ma belle Angevine, ô ma douce Marie,
> Mon oeil, mon coeur, mon sang, mon esprit et ma vie.[1]

To immortalize the idyll of Bourgueil, the poet dreams of constructing a temple, in the antique manner, on the banks of the Loire:

> Si j'estois un grand Roy, pour eternel exemple
> De fidelle amitié, je bastirois un temple
> Desur le bord de Loire, et ce temple auroit nom
> Le temple de Ronsard et de sa Marion.[2]

The love affair with Marie and its aftermath, as imagined in "Le Voyage de Tours", are now nothing more than a memory to be kept alive for posterity by means of a monument, which in this case is Ronsard's poetry:

> Or il en adviendra ce que le Ciel voudra,
> Si est-ce que ce Livre immortel apprendra
> Aux hommes et au temps et à la renommée
> Que je vous ay six ans plus que mon coeur aimée.[3]

The theme of the immortality of poetry is one which the Latin love elegists had bequeathed to the Renaissance. It was the subject of Ovid's lament on the death of Tibullus and of Ronsard's imitation of that

[1] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 175.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 178.
Cf. Desonay, op. cit., Tome II, p. 177 and 178: "Toute l'élégie respire le désir d'éternité dont se gonfle le coeur du poète lyrique, sauvé par le livre de la précarité propre aux amours mortelles."
That critic describes Ronsard's "Elégie à Marie" as follows: "La très littéraire conclusion d'une aventure amoureuse qu'il est temps de colorer de tous les prestiges auxquels lui donnent droit le recul du temps et l'interprétation sub specie aeternitatis."

elegy. The theme is closely linked to the "carpe diem-carpe florem", another legacy of the Roman poets of the Augustan era.

As Robert Hallowell takes pains to stress, Ronsard's debt to the Roman elegists is not confined to the elegies themselves, but is found in the odes, the sonnets, and other genres as well.[1] Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid were enjoying a revival of interest in sixteenth century France after having been eclipsed during the middle ages. Although Ovid's Metamorphoses had been studied by medieval scholars, the Amores had been totally ignored. Dr. Hallowell dates the first printed edition of Propertius and Tibullus in France as 1472, two years after the introduction of printing. Although many editions of the work of the Latin love elegists existed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, there were no translations of Propertius or Tibullus into French, a fact which that critic attributes to obscurities in the texts and the consequent difficulty involved in translating them.

What, principally, Ronsard seems to have taken from Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid--as well as Catullus, his Renaissance disciple Jean Second and other neo-Latin poets--is the climate of much of his poetry. The eroticism of the Latin love elegists blended well with his own nature, as did Horace's celebration of the pagan joys of life.[2] One is reminded of the series of Horatian odes, many of which are veritable drinking songs:

[1] Cf. Robert Hallowell, Ronsard and the Conventional Roman Elegy, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1954.

[2] Cf. Raymond Lebègue, Ronsard l'homme et l'oeuvre, Paris, Boivin & Cie., 1950, p. 26: "Quant à l'épicurisme voluptueux et légèrement mélancolique d'Horace, il s'accordait parfaitement avec le tempérament sensuel de Ronsard."

Fay rafraischir mon vin de sorte
Qu'il passe en froideur un glaçon:
Fay venir Janne, qu'elle apporte
Son luth pour dire une chanson:
Nous ballerons tous trois au son;
Et dy à Barbe qu'elle vienne,
Les cheveux tors à la façon
d'une follastre Italienne.[1]

The epicurean Ronsard, reclining under a shady tree in the Forêt de Gastine, is a recurring image. Weary of studying, he finds that it is time to "refraischir la bouteille" and, relaxing on a river bank or in the cool forest, enjoy his picnic lunch: "des abricôs, des pompons, des artichôs, des fraises, et de la crême."

Apres l'estude, il faut qu'on lave
L'esprit ja morne et perissant
D'un vin de reserve, en la cave
Par trois ans au fust languissant.[2]

The pleasures of wine, food and love were closely intermingled as ways of coping with mortality and the existential anguish with which we all must live.

Ronsard's natural tendency to savor the momentary pleasures of life was reinforced by his consciousness of man's destiny and of the sadness of the human condition. Four centuries later, Beckett would proclaim:

Elles accouchent à cheval sur une tombe,
le jour brille un instant, puis c'est
la nuit à nouveau.[3]

Ronsard's existential anguish may have been equally intense. The

[1] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 445.

[2] Ibid., p. 446. In Les Origines de la poesie française de la Renaissance, Chamard stresses that "la bonne chère" and "le bon vin" were an integral part of the "esprit gaulois" which extended from the middle ages into the Renaissance (pp. 46 ff.).

[3] En Attendant Godot, Acte II.

future is uncertain, and the meaning of existence lies beyond human comprehension. Given the brevity of life, Horace had offered the following advice:

Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.[1]

Along with the Latin poet, Ronsard would willingly ignore the gnawing consciousness of his own mortality and lie in the shade of a cool forest or perhaps on the bank of a stream, with his bottle of wine "bien rafraichi". Even for the erudite Ronsard, the delights of learning are secondary to the delights of living:

J'ay l'esprit tout ennuyé
D'avoir trop estudié
Les Phenomenes d'Arate:
Il est temps que je m'esbate,
Et que j'aille aux champs jouer
Bons Dieux! qui voudroit louer
Ceux qui collez sus un livre
N'ont jamais soucy de vivre?[2]

However, even at the most carefree and joyous moments, the approach of old age remains a hidden threat:

Ores que je suis dispos,
Je veux rire sans repos,
De peur que la maladie
Un de ces jours ne me die:
'Je t'ay maintenant veincu,
Meurs, galland, c'est trop vescu.[3]

Horace's "carpe diem" furnished one way of coping with the constant passing of time. If each second lived brings us closer to the reality of impending death, it is wisest, says the epicurean philosopher, to enjoy the present moment without concern for the future. In the case

[1] Horace, Odes and Epodes, ed. Charles E. Bennett, New York, Allyn and Bacon, 1955, p. 11.

[2] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 455.

[3] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 455.

of Ronsard and the Roman elegists, this attitude was expanded to include the "carpe florem". The invitation to enjoy the physical pleasures of love, while still young, was another way to conquer time. The years pass, and a woman's beauty fades as does that of a rose in the space of one day:

> C'estoit pour m'enseigner qu'il faut dés la jeunesse,
> Comme d'un unsufruit, prendre son passetemps,
> Que pas à pas nous suit l'importune vieillesse,
> Et qu'Amour et les fleurs ne durent qu'un Printemps.[1]

The inherent sadness of the human condition is expressed in a variety of ways throughout Ronsard's work. In Elegy XIV, a previously discussed imitation of Jean Second, Ronsard concludes an erotic elegy with a reflection on the ephemeral quality of pleasure:

> Que tousjours la douleur voisine le plaisir.[2]

This is precisely the conclusion that Propertius had drawn in Elegy II, xv, a poem describing a night of love with Cynthia:

> Dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus amore:
> nox tibi longa venit, nec reditura dies.[3]

A lovely sonnet of La Continuation des Amours of 1555 which, for reasons unknown, Ronsard later excluded from his complete works, is tinged with the same melancholy. The poet here develops the familiar parallel of the woman and the flower:

> Je vous envoye un bouquet que ma main
> Vient de trier de ces fleurs épanies;
> Qui ne les eust à ce vespre cueillies,

[1] Ibid., p. 234. J. Vianey, in quoting this passage, stresses the importance of the "carpe florem" theme in the work of the Italian Petrarchist poets Tebaldeo and Serafino dall'Aquila (Le Pétrarquisme en France au 16e siècle, pp. 261, 262.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 75. Cf. p. 145 of this chapter.

[3] D. Paganelli translates as follows: "Tant que le destin nous le permet, que nos yeux se rassasient d'amour. Voici venir la longue nuit et le jour sans lendemain." Cf. Chapter I, p. 26 , of this paper.

Cheutes à terre elles fussent demain.
Cela vous soit un exemple certain,
Que vos beautez, bien qu'elles soient fleuries,
En peu de tems cherront toutes fletries,
Et, comme fleurs, periront tout soudain.
Le tems s'en va, le tems s'en va, ma Dame,
Las! le tems non, mais nous nous en allons,
Et tost serons estendus sous la lame,
Et des amours, desquelles nous parlons,
Quand serons morts, n'en sera plus nouvelle;
Pource aimez moy, cependant qu'estes belle.[1]

The poet did retain among the elegies a piece which is less effective, but which also reproduces the theme of "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose":

J'ay ce matin amassé de ma main
Ce beau bouquet digne de vostre sein,
Si un bouquet, tant soit digne, merite
Toucher le sein d'une telle Charite,
Dont la jeunesse enfante mille fleurs,
Mille beautez, sujet de mes douleurs.[2]

Ronsard again develops the parallel between the woman and the bouquet

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 814. Surely the best-known example is the following ode:

Mignonne, allons voir si la rose
Qui ce matin avoit desclose
Sa robe de pourpre au Soleil,
A point perdu ceste vesprée
Les plis de sa robe pourprée,
Et son teint au vostre pareil.
Las! voyez comme en peu d'espace,
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place
Las! Las! ses beautez laissé cheoir!

O vrayment marastre Nature,
Puis qu'une telle fleur ne dure
Que du matin jusques au soir!
Donc, si vous me croyez, mignonne,
Tandis que vostre âge fleuronne
En sa plus verte nouveauté,
Cueillez, cueillez vostre jeunesse
Comme à ceste fleur la vieillesse
Fera ternir vostre beauté.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 63.

of flowers, and the conclusion is once more the "carpe florem", but far less eloquently expressed than in the ode or the sonnet:

> Donq' ce-pendant que vostre age fleuronne
> Et que Venus de ses dons vous couronne,
> Si m'en croyez, ne laissez perdre un jour
> Sans folastrer ou manier l'amour,
> Pour n'avoir point regret en la vieillesse
> D'avoir perdue en vain vostre jeunesse.[1]

Our inability to "veincre le temps emplumé"[2] is dramatized in one of Ronsard's last sonnets, published posthumously, and which clearly recalls the macabre realism of Villon's "Ballade de la belle Heaulmière":

> Je n'ay plus que les os, un squelette je semble,
> Decharné, denervé, demusclé, depoulpé,
> Que le trait de la Mort sans pardon a frappé:
> Je n'ose voir mes bras que de peur je ne tremble.[3]

Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid were constantly urging their ladies not to delay in savoring the fruits of life. Beauty and youth are ephemeral. The flower that fades between dawn and sunset is

[1] Ibid., p. 64. The rhythm of the "cueillez, cueillez vostre jeunesse" of the lovely ode to Cassandre ("Mignonne, alons voir si la rose") suggests the same urgency as "Le tems s'en va, le tems s'en va, ma Dame". The elegy is pretentious and stilted and far less moving, since such devices as repetition are absent.

Another well-known example of this motif is the "Cueillez dés aujourdhuy les roses de la vie", which Ronsard addressed to Hélène in the sonnet "Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir à la chandelle." In Ronsard poète lyrique (op. cit., pp. 578-91), Paul Laumonier traces this commonplace theme, the "argument ad feminam", in the work of the Alexandrian poets, the Latin love elegists, the neo-Latin and Italian poets including Laurent de Médicis and Politien. According to this critic, the air was saturated with it at the time that Ronsard was writing. The theme was implicit in the Roman de la Rose and the works of Villon, and had by this time become a universal and popular idea. Cf. p. 589: "Ronsard paraît alors dans le champ de roses, où languissent à ses yeux tant de fleurs mortes, mais où survit impérissable le vieux symbole, si vieux que son origine se perd dans la nuit des temps."

[2] Ronsard, Tome I, p. 545.

[3] Ibid., Tome II, p. 634.

a recurrent image. Catullus had given a somber warning to Lesbia:

> Soles occidere et redire possunt:
> nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux;
> nox est perpetua una dormienda.[1]

It was echoed by Propertius in Elegy II, xv,[2] and is a haunting leitmotiv in the work of Ronsard as well as in that of the Roman elegists.

The realization of the constant passing of time is at the basis of Ronsard's epicureanism, which can be traced all the way back to Mimnermus, the mythical father of the love elegy, by way of Anacreon, Epicurus, the Alexandrian poets, Horace, and the Latin love elegists. The contrast between the brevity of human life and the eternal quality of nature is suggested by a magnificently constructed ode which foreshadows Lamartine's Méditations. The poem deserves to be quoted in its entirety, but the first two verses establish the theme:

> Quand je suis vingt ou trente mois
> Sans retourner en Vandomois,
> Plein de pensées vagabondes,
> Plein d'un remors et d'un souci,
> Aux rochers je me plains ainsi,
> Aux bois, aux antres et aux ondes.
> Rochers, bien que soyez âgez
> De trois mil ans, vous ne changez
> Jamais ny d'estat ny de forme;
> Mais tousjours ma jeunesse fuit,
> Et la vieillesse qui me suit,
> De jeune en vieillard me transforme.[3]

Savoring the pleasures of life and love--the "carpe diem" and "carpe florem"--is only a temporary way of coping with mortality. Literature provides the only real salvation. The Latin love elegists

[1] Catullus, Carmen V: "Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus."

[2] "Forsitan includet crastina fata dies." "Peut-être que demain clora notre destin". (transl. by D. Paganelli.)

[3] Ronsard, Tome I, pp. 544,545.

constantly predicted immortality to their ladies.[1] Ovid had treated the theme of the immortality of poetry in his lament on the death of Tibullus,[2] and Ronsard had imitated this elegy in the previously discussed "Epitaphe d'Anthoine Chasteignier":

> Par les vers animez leur vive renommée
> Ne se voit point des siecles consommée.
> Les vers tant seulement peuvent frauder la mort;
> Helas! ami, quel destin ou quel sort,
> Helas! s'opposa tant à ta gloire premiere,
> Qu'avant mourir ne misses en lumiere
> Tes beaux vers amoureux qui chantoyent à leur tour
> Et l'amer fiel, et le doux miel d'amour?[3]

One imagines Hélène, now an old woman, sitting by the fire and spinning by candlelight, reciting with much wonder the immortal verses which Ronsard has long ago written in her honor. In his farewell elegy of 1560 to Cassandre ("Cherche, Maistresse, un Poete nouveau"), the poet compared his first muse's fame to that of Tibullus' Delia and Petrarch's Laura:

> Si nostre Empire avoit jadis esté
> Par nos François aussi avant planté
> Que le Romain, tu serois autant leue
> Que si Tibull' t'avoit pour sienne esleue:
> Et neantmoins tu te dois contenter
> De voir ton nom par la France chanter,
> Autant que Laure en Tuscan anoblie,
> Se voit chanter par la belle Italie.[4]

[1] Ovid ends Book III of his Amores as follows:

> Inbelles elegi, genialis Musa, valete,
> Post mea mansurum fata superstes opus.
>
> Molles élégies, et vous Muse badine, adieu;
> adieu, recueil, qui continueras à vivre après ma mort.
> (Translation by Henri Bornecque, op. cit., p. 101).

[2] "Defugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos". Cf. Chapter I, p. 29, of this paper.

[3] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 501.

[4] Ibid., Tome I, p. 297.

Similarly, in the very literary "Elégie à Marie", which was previously discussed, Ronsard speaks of Marie's beauty as remaining intact throughout the ages:

> Ceux qui liront les vers que j'ay chantez pour vous
> D'un stile varié entre l'aigre et le dous
> Selon les passions que vous m'avez données,
> Vous tiendront pour Deesse, et tant plus les années
> En volant s'enfuiront, et plus vostre beauté
> Contre l'âge croistra vieille en sa nouveauté.[1]

This is quite in accord with Ronsard's conception of the sanctity of poetry as expressed in his "Abbregé de l'art poetique françois" of 1565, in which the poet assumes the role of high priest, much as he would centuries later for Baudelaire:

> Car le Poesie n'estoit au premier age qu'une
> Theologie allegoricque, pour faire entrer au
> cerveau des hommes grossiers, par fables
> plaisantes et colorées, les secrets qu'ils
> ne pouvaient comprendre, quand trop ouvertement
> on descouvroit la verité.[2]

We have seen that the influence of the Latin love elegists is felt throughout Ronsard's poetry and not just in the elegies themselves. Ronsard's frequently erotic subject matter, his epicurean tendencies and his emphasis on the immortality of literature reflect the poets of the Augustan era. In addition, there are many references throughout Ronsard's work to "Tibulle, Properce, Ovide, et le docte Catulle" as well as translations and imitations of the Roman elegists. One example among the elegies is an obvious imitation of Propertius' III, xxi ("Magnum iter ad doctas proficisci cogor Athenas"), in which the poet resolves to make a long journey as a cure for the pains of unrequited

[1] Ibid., p. 175.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 996.

love:

> Un long voyage ou un courroux, ma dame,
> Ou le temps seul pourront m'oster de l'ame
> La sotte ardeur qui vient de vostre feu,
> Puis qu'autrement mes amis ne l'ont peu,
> M'admonnestant d'un conseil salutaire,
> Que je cognois et que je ne puis faire.[1]

The tone is satirical, and Ronsard characteristically uses the decasyllable rather than the alexandrin, which he appears to have reserved for his more personal poems.

In his study on Ronsard and the Roman elegy, Robert Hallowell mentions a chanson, "Je suis amoureux en deux lieux",[2] which is partly inspired by Ovid.[3] In the last chapter, we considered the "Elégie en forme d'epitaphe d'Anthoine Chasteigner", an imitation of Ovid's elegy III, ix, on the death of Tibullus, in which Ronsard even attempted to simulate the elegiac couplet by pairing an alexandrin and a decasyllable. Mention has also been made of the "Elégie au sieur Baillon, trésorier de l'Epargne du Roy" in which Ronsard treats the commonplace theme of a mythical Golden Age, and which is a parody of the Latin elegists, particularly Tibullus. There are many such textual imitations of the Latin elegists in Ronsard's work.

Furthermore, certain conventional Roman elegiac themes--the anguish caused by unrequited love, the metaphor of love as a wound or

[1] Ibid., Tome I, p. 292; Tableau chronologique, p. 61.

[2] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 876.

[3] Amores, II, x:

> Tu mihi, tu certe, memini, Graecine, negabas
> Uno posse aliquem tempore amare duas.

an incurable illness, as a poison or a fire that consumes--these were all common to the Petrarchist poets as well as to the Latin love elegists. When they do appear in Ronsard's poems, we are sometimes hard put to determine whether the poet was following the Latin elegists or the later source, or perhaps both. The relationship between Petrarch and Propertius will be further explored in Chapter V in connection with Louise Labé's elegies. In any case, whatever model he may have used, Ronsard had the faculty of remaining distinctly himself.

Ronsard's principal debt to the Latin love elegists is probably to be found in his insistance upon the fragility of youth and beauty and in his confidence in the immortality of literature. Furthermore, it is the predominance of these themes throughout Ronsard's work, and not in the elegies alone, that characterizes him as an elegiac poet in the modern sense of that term. At the basis of all Ronsard's poetry is the haunting awareness of life's brevity. Because of the constant passage of time, there can be no happiness which is not mingled with sadness. Each moment lived brings us closer to our fate. Even in the moments of greatest joy there is the realization, as in a Watteau painting, that everything will soon end, for all pleasure, and human life itself, is only a temporary state.

D. E. Frey devotes the whole second part of her study of Ronsard's elegies to Ronsard as an elegiac poet.[1] The subject is beyond

[1] Cf. Frey (op. cit.), pp. 63-113. That critic discusses, among other topics, Ronsard's elegiac style, which she considers a link between the sixteenth-century elegy and the modern elegy. Included are devices such as slowness of tempo ("lignes sinueuses, mouvements arrondis"), constant repetitions which tend toward monotony, the abundance of liquid and nasal sounds, all of which create a climate of languor and melancholy.

the scope of this paper. For that critic, the elegiac mood has much to do with the contrast between dream and reality, with a feeling of lost happiness which originated with the fall of man, "le paradis perdu" of Pascal's dispossessed king.

> L'esprit élégiaque a perdu le sentiment de l'unité de la vie. Il éprouve à chaque instant la divergence qui existe entre la réalité et l'idée, entre la vie et le rêve. Pour lui, la vie est donc contraire au rêve, contraire au bonheur: la vie est la souffrance. S'il ne portait pas en soi l'image du bonheur, il ne souffrirait pas de la réalité de la vie: il souffre parce qu'il a gardé le souvenir du bonheur.[1]

Among the Latin elegists, Tibullus would undoubtedly be the most elegiac in the modern sense. Obsessed by a vision of peace and tranquility in the countryside with his Delia and by the nostalgia of a mythical Golden Age, he experienced most keenly the contrast between dream and reality.[2] It is that very contrast which lends pathos and charm to Tibullus' elegies. The delicious dream of rustic happiness fades; the pain of reality intrudes. Tibullus' elegies could be described as poems of dream and disillusionment.

Among Ronsard's elegies, the most elegiac in the modern sense would be the three devoted to Marie Stuart's departure from France, which were briefly discussed in Chapter III of this paper. Another "elegiac elegy"[3] was a very personal poem published in 1584 concerning the destruction of Ronsard's beloved Forêt de Gastine. The poet ultimately retained this piece in the book of Elegies.

[1] Frey, op. cit., p. 64.

[2] Cf. Tibullus I, i, ii, iii, v, and vi.

[3] D. E. Frey uses the designation "les élégies élégiaques" as sub-heading for Chapter II of her study, "L'Inspiration élégiaque dans les élégies", pp. 83-102.

Escoute, bucheron, arreste un peu le bras!
Ce ne sont pas des bois que tu jettes à bas:
Ne vois-tu pas le sang, lequel degoute à force
Des Numphes qui vivoyent dessous la dure escorce?
Sacrilege meurdrier, si on pend un voleur
Pour piller un butin de bien peu de valeur,
Combien de feux, de fers, de morts, et de destresses
Merites-tu, méchant, pour tuer des Déesses?[1]

The slow, steady movement of the alexandrin evokes the blows of the woodcutter's inexorable axe. For Ronsard, steeped as he was in the paganism of antiquity, the forest had provided not only a cool, refreshing place to relax and dream in his youth. It was also spiritually alive, inhabited by deities which had been his muses. The contrast between past and present, between dream and reality, awakens the poet's nostalgia:

Adieu, vieille forest, le jouet de Zephyre,
Où premier j'accorday les langues de ma lyre,
Où premier j'entendi les fleches resonner
D'Apollon, qui me vint tout le coeur estonner;
Où premier admirant la belle Calliope,
Je devins amoureux de sa neuvaine trope,
Quand sa main sur le front cent roses ma jetta,
Et de son propre laict Euterpe m'allaita.[2]

Ronsard concludes the elegy in a philosophical vein, with a bit of Lucretian materialism:

La matière demeure, et la forme se perd.

D. E. Frey calls attention to the fact that this elegy is preceded by a little-known satirical preface which begins as follows:

Quiconque aura premier la main embesongnée
A te couper, forest, d'une dure congnée,
Qu'il puisse s'enferrer de son propre baston,
Et sente en l'estomac la faim d'Erisichthon,

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, pp. 116, 117; Tableau chronologique, p. 67.

[2] Ibid., p. 117.

> Qui coupa de Cerés le chesne venerable,
> Et qui gourmand de tout, de tout insatiable,
> Les boeufs et les moutons de sa mere esgorgea,
> Puis, pressé de la faim, soy-mesme se mangea.[1]

She then draws the parallel between the modern elegy and the satire:

> L'élégie et la satire sont pareilles en ceci qu'elles réalisent la dualité de la vie réelle et de l'idée. Tandis que l'esprit élégiaque regrette l'idéal, l'esprit satirique se révolte contre la réalité. L'objet de l'élégie est le bonheur idéal, celui de la satire est le malheur réel.[2]

That critic calls attention to the fact that all of Ronsard's satirical pieces in decasyllables or alexandrins with rimes plates are entitled "élégies".[3] The link between satire and elegy seems to us justifiable and is, of course, particularly applicable to the sonnets of the Regrets.

In the early years, Ronsard appears to have been confused about the nature of the elegy and therefore gave this title to a variety of poems in epistolary form, with rimes plates, many of which had literary or philosophical themes. Although the poet continued this practice to some extent in later years, the predominance of love elegies in the collection of 1563 indicates that, as time passed, he considered the elegy more and more a love lyric, as the Latin love elegists had done. All of Ronsard's elegies contain an address since, in order to avoid comparison with Marot and to follow the plan proposed by the Deffence, he tended to call his epistles "élégies". Ironically, the poet fell into

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 116.

[2] Frey, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

[3] Cf. "L'Elégie au sieur Baillon, trésorier de l'Espergne du Roy", a satire on gold, and an elegy "en forme d'invective" ("Pource, mignon, que tu es jeune et beau"), a satire of a young courtier who dared to make fun of Ronsard's verses.

a peculiar predicament since his love elegies are really, after all, "épîtres amoureuses" in the manner of Marot. In fact, the whole group of elegies thought to have been written for Isabeau de Limeuil and inspired to a great extent by the Petrarchists, are ethereal discussions of the psychology of love which clearly recall Marot's elegies. The three elegies for Genèvre are perhaps Ronsard's most unique contribution to the sixteenth century love elegy since they combine the sensuality of the Latin love elegies with the epistle form inaugurated by Marot. In general, the influence of the Latin love elegists--mainly the choice of erotic subject matter, the "carpe diem" and "carpe florem" themes, and the theme of the immortality of poetry--is found throughout Ronsard's work and is not limited to the elegies themselves.

As far as versification is concerned, Ronsard introduced the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes into the elegy. This is a stylistic device which the poet himself advocated in his Abbregé de l'Art Poetique françois of 1565:

> Apres, à mon imitation, tu feras tes vers masculins et foeminins tant qu'il te sera possible, pour estre plus propres à la musique et accord des instrumens, en faveur desquels il semble que la Poesie soit née, car la Poésie sans les instrumens, ou sans la grace d'une seule ou plusieurs voix, n'est nullement agreable, non plus que les instrumens sans estre animez de la melodie d'une plaisante voix. Si de fortune tu as composé les deux premiers vers masculins, tu feras les deux autres feminins, et paracheveras de mesme mesure le reste de ton Elegie ou Chanson, afin que les musiciens les puissent plus facilement accorder.[1]

The gradual predominance of the alexandrin in the love elegy must also be attributed to Ronsard.

Ronsard's young rival at the court of Henri III, Philippe

[1] Ronsard, Tome II, p. 997.

Desportes, followed his predecessor's example in making the elegy a long love poem in alexandrins "à rimes plates et alternées."[1] This fashionable court poet wrote only "élégies de commande" which lack the lyricism and spontaneity of Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre. However, his two books of elegies, published from 1573 to 1583, are not without interest since they furnish a wealth of details on various members of the court.[2] To compensate for his lack of originality Desportes has, on occasion, borrowed extensively from Tibullus and Ovid. Although they are not without literary merit, Desportes' elegies remain command pieces and are therefore of little importance in the history of the love elegy.

In order to find anything comparable to Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre, one must leave the court and enter an entirely different milieu. In Lyon in 1555, eight years before the appearance of Ronsard's first love elegies, Louise Labé published a slim volume of verse which included twenty-four sonnets and three elegies. The French love elegy reached a new level of refinement in the work of Louise Labé. The three elegies written by this fascinating and controversial woman will be the subject of the next chapter.

[1] Cf. Jacques Lavaud, Un poète de cour au temps des derniers Valois, Philippe Desportes (1546-1606), Paris, Droz, 1936, passim.

[2] Ibid., p. 137: "Les élégies comprennent en effet la meilleure partie des grandes compositions de commande de notre poète. C'est dans ce livre que nous trouverons sa véritable signification en tant de poète de cour."

CHAPTER V

THE ELEGIES OF LOUISE LABÉ

It is difficult to discuss Louise Labé's poetry without describing, however briefly, the city of Lyon in the sixteenth century. So completely did the poet consider herself a product of her milieu that she referred to herself as "Louize Labé Lionnoize" and even chose to sign her works in this fashion.[1] There is no indication that she ever left the city of Lyon, except to retreat occasionally to her country home at Parcieu en Dombes. While others traveled to Italy, eager to absorb the artistic and intellectual ideals of the Italian Renaissance, Louise Labé remained in her native city. Nevertheless, she lived at a time when Lyon, largely because of its geographical location, was enjoying its finest hour. Material prosperity, as well as its proximity to Italy and to the excitement generated there by the recent cultural explosion, had made of Lyon an intellectual capital rivaling, or perhaps even surpassing Paris.[2] If the poet herself never

[1] The frontispiece of the original edition of 1555 is reproduced in Gérard Guillot, Louise Labé, Ecrivains d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, Paris, Ed. Pierre Seghers, 1962, opposite page 19, and in Fernand Zamaron, Louise Labé, Dame de Franchise, Paris, Nizet, 1968, opposite page 88.

[2] Cf. Joseph Aynard, Les Poètes lyonnais précurseurs de la Pléiade (réimpression de l'édition de Paris, 1924), Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1969, introduction: "M. Brunetière a écrit ("Revue des Deux Mondes", 15 déc., 1900): "On exagérait à peine si l'on disait de la ville de Lyon qu'elle était vraiment alors, pour la seconde fois dans l'histoire, autant ou plus que Paris même, la capitale intellectuelle et poétique de France."

went to Italy, we may say that Italy, in a sense, came to her doorstep. Because she was "lionnoize", Louise Labé, although she remained distinctly French, was deeply tinged with the spirit of the Italian Renaissance, as would soon be all of France.[1]

We may ask what factors contributed to the extraordinary prominence of Lyon in the first half of the sixteenth century.[2] First and foremost, its central location at the intersection of the Rhône and Saône Rivers made it very accessible to Italian exiles from Florence, Venice and Genoa.[3] Dorothy O'Connor indicates that there were already a number of wealthy Italians residing in Lyon in the fourteenth century. This number had greatly increased during the following century. Well before the wars of 1494, the first expeditions of Charles VIII in Italy, which are generally thought to mark the beginning of Italian influence in France, "le nombre de banquiers, d'artistes, d'imprimeurs, de graveurs, de marchands et de diplomates italiens à Lyon est très

[1] A modern critic, Gérard Guillot (Louise Labé et son œuvre, Paris, Ecrivains d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, éd. Pierre Seghers, 1962) suggests that the poet's life coincided with the cultural life of Lyon. She was born in the 1520's when the city was gaining prominence as a commercial and intellectual center. When she died at Parcieu in 1566, Lyon was being ravaged by religious wars and by the plague and would never regain its former status. Cf. p. 48: "Elle ne survivra pas à ce qui la fit taire--l'intolérance des huguenots et des pieux catholiques ni aux malheurs de sa ville. Lyon et Louise Labé sont morts dans la solitude et l'abandon."

[2] It appears that the city had played an important role after the Roman conquest of Gaul. Cf. Nouveau Petit Larousse (1970): "Fondée sur la colline de Fourvière en 43 av. J.-C., la colonie romaine de Lugdunum devint vite la cité la plus prospère de la Gaule, celle où le christianisme s'implanta dès le IIe s. apr. J.-C."

[3] Cf. E. M. Cox, "Notes, Critical and Bibliographical, on Louise Labé", The Library, Third Series, No. 24, Vol. VI, Oct. 1915, pp. 293-307.

grand."[1] That critic stresses the importance of the "foires de Lyon", established in the fifteenth century by Charles VII.[2] These fairs, which took place three times a year--at Easter, in July, and in December --had as their purpose to stimulate the economy and to attract foreign visitors to the city. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, Lyon had become a commercial center and an exceedingly cosmopolitan city. Two prominent Italian banking families--the Medici and the Strozzi--established branches there.[3] The "foires de Lyon" had given an impetus to the silk industry, which was beginning to flourish, and the city was bustling with merchants from Italy, Germany, and Flanders.[4] In the streets, Italian was spoken almost as often as French.[5]

François Ier had a particular affection for Lyon and often held court there for several weeks at a time, transforming the city into a second capital. The King and Marguerite d'Angoulême did much to propagate the spirit of the Italian Renaissance in Lyon. The number of Italian poets, painters and sculptors established there began to increase at a rapid pace. When Henri II and Catherine de Médicis made

[1] Dorothy O'Connor, Louise Labé, sa vie et son oeuvre, Paris, Les Presses Françaises, 1926, pp. 15, 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 11.

[3] John Heard, "Louise Labé, La Belle Cordière de Lyon", Poet Lore, Vol. XLII, Boston, The Gorham Press, 1933.

[4] Cf. O'Connor, op. cit., p. 34.

[5] Cf. Yvonne Girault, Louise Labé, Lausanne, Editions Rencontre, 1966, p. 32: "Dans les rues de la ville, on parle italien autant que français, sans compter l'espagnol et le flamand des marchands, pour ne rien dire du latin et du grec des humanistes. A Lyon, comme à Rome, les mendiants apprennent à soliciter l'aumône dans toutes les langues."

their elaborate entrance into the city in 1548, Maurice Scève was in charge of organizing the festivities, and the Queen was evidently enchanted by "la Florence française" and felt very much at home there.[1]

Certainly the most exciting event in the literary history of Lyon, and of France as a whole, was the introduction of printing in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Lyon was the second city, after Paris, to witness the establishment of the printing press.[2] Not only did this provide a further link between Lyon and Italy, since many Italian publishers settled in Lyon and vice versa, but it also made Louise Labé's native city a mecca for poets and scholars. Italian publishing houses produced copies of works by Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other favorite authors. Castiglione's Il Cortigiano was published in 1528, and the French translation, Le Courtisan, appeared in 1537.[3] Most important of all, since Lyon was far from the Sorbonne and from the censorship which that institution imposed, the city became a haven for writers who might have been considered "d'avant-garde". Under the pseudonym Alcofribas Nasier, an anagram, Rabelais published his Pantagruel in Lyon in 1532 and his Gargantua in 1534. Two editions of Marot's L'Adolescence Clementine were published in Lyon in 1534 and 1535. Marot's L'Enfer appeared there in 1542 and 1548 and Les Trente Psalmes

[1] Cf. O'Connor, pp. 31, 32.

[2] Dorothy O'Connor furnishes the following dates: Paris 1469; Lyon 1473; Toulouse 1476; Angers 1477; Chablis 1478; Poitiers 1479. (Op. cit., p. 20). In her elaborately documented study of Louise Labé's life and work, that critic includes an alphabetical "list générale des imprimeurs et libraires de Lyon aux XVe et XVIe siècles".

[3] Cf. Jean Larnac, Louise Labé, La Belle Cordière de Lyon, Paris, Firmin-Didot & Cie., 1934.

de David in 1549.[1] In the early sixteenth century, about four hundred publishing houses had been established in Lyon.[2] The Renaissance martyr and humanist, Etienne Dolet, a printer and one of the most colorful figures of the period, lived and worked in that city. Such was the dynamic intellectual milieu which produced our poet.

The life of Louise Labé is more mysterious and controversial than the history of the elegy itself. So few facts are known that a legend has arisen which has preoccupied scholars since the late nineteenth century.[3] Unfortunately, the question of whether or not Louise Labé was a courtesan has been the subject of far too much research. The matter has assumed so great an importance that many critics have limited their study to that question alone and have given little or no attention to the works of a poet who, in the words of one biographer, created "les plus beaux chants passionnés de notre langue".[4] Unfortunately, Dorothy O'Connor, in her classic study of Louise Labé's life and works, has not departed completely from that tradition.[5] That critic,

[1] O'Connor, p. 35.

[2] Guillot, op. cit.

[3] Cf. Jean Larnac (op. cit., p. 106): "On discute, depuis quatre siècles, afin de savoir si Louise fut une courtisane. Les ouvrages récents ne manquent pas, pour ou contre cette affirmation. Charles Boy qui, à la fin du siècle dernier, s'était mis en tête d'éclairer la vie de notre héroine, avait vigoureusement repoussé tous les assauts menés contre ses bonnes moeurs. Vingt ans plus tard, hélas, un candidat au doctorat, Albert Baur, déclarait sans ambages que Louise était une courtisane."

[4] Girault, p. 82.

[5] O'Connor, op. cit., avant-propos: "J'ai désiré avant tout présenter l'histoire de mon héroine d'une façon vraiment scientifique. Dès maintenant je veux dire que j'attache beaucoup moins d'importance qu'on ne l'a fait jusqu'ici à la question, tant de fois débattue, des moeurs

whose purpose is to present a "scientific" study of the poet in a manner unlike that of her predecessors, has collected all the documents supposedly pertaining to Louise Labé's private life and has arranged them in two columns: "Témoignages tendant à montrer que Louise était courtisane" and "Qu'elle ne l'était pas".[1] The preponderance of "documents" in the left-handed column has led the critic to conclude that Louise Labé was undoubtedly a "courtesan". O'Connor uses that term in the sense of a woman of refinement and culture who granted sexual favors in return for money. Far from being "une coureuse de rues", O'Connor assures us, Louise Labé was a member of that intriguing class of women who, far more respected by society than their less educated and supposedly more respectable contemporaries, were best represented by the "hetaerae" of ancient Greece or the "cortigiane oneste" of Renaissance Italy.[2] Among the latter, were such celebrated women as the poets Veronica Franco and Tullia d'Aragona, and Vittoria Colonna, who was the companion of Michelangelo and a close friend of Marguerite d'Angoulême, sister of François Ier. This type of woman was also sketched in the "docta puella" of the Latin love elegists, as represented by Propertius' Cynthia.

The "documents" which have given rise to the legend of "Louise Labé courtisane"[3] are, to say the least, suspicious. It would be unwise

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de Louise Labé. Nous vivons à une époque qui a su séparer la cause de la poésie de celle du poète."

[1] Ibid., pp. 185-89.

[2] Ibid., pp. 85, 86. Jean Larnac, writing in the 1930's, a decade after O'Connor, also arrives at the conclusion that Louise Labé was a "cortigiana onesta".

[3] Because she was the wife of Ennemond Perrin, a reasonably

and unnecessary to refer to them all in a chapter devoted to the poet's elegies.[1] To give the reader a notion of their absurdity, we shall include a small number of examples here.

In 1557, two years after the publication of Louise Labé's works, an anonymous popular song appeared--"La chanson nouvelle de la Belle Cordière de Lyon"--which referred to the poet in the crudest and most defamatory terms.[2] Calvin, in a theological treatise of 1561, referred to the poet as a "plebeia meretrix", but we must bear in mind that the pamphlet in question was directed against a priest, Gabriel de Saconay, author of much propaganda against the Reformation, and that Calvin was never quite favorable to the city of Lyon, a stronghold of Catholicism.

After her death, Louise Labé was treated most unkindly by historians. Claude de Rubys, who had known her personally, referred to her as a "courtisane publique" and as "l'une des plus insignes

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prosperous ropemaker, Louise Labé is traditionally referred to as "La Belle Cordière". According to Gérard Guillot (op. cit., p. 102), "il était de coutume de surnommer la femme à partir de la profession du mari et ceci sans intention péjoratif."

[1] Cf. O'Connor, p. 185; Larnac, pp. 195, 196. Also, Alfred Cartier, "Louise Labé: Le Procès Yvard à Genève et le Philosophe de Court par Philibert de Vienne", Revue des livres anciens, Paris, 1917, Tome 2, pp. 321-32.

[2] Dorothy O'Connor quotes two verses of this song (op. cit., p. 187):

> Il y vint un Advocat
> Las, qui venoit de Fourvière
> Luy montra tant de ducats:
> Mais ils ne lui coustoient guere.
>
> Approchez-vous, Advocat,
> S'a dit la dame gorrière,
> Prenons nous deux nos esbats,
> Car l'on bassine nos draps.

The entire song is quoted by Larnac, pp. 168-70.

courtisanes de son temps".[1] Antoine du Verdier, seigneur de Vauprivas, writing in 1585, described as follows the way in which Louise Labé entertained guests:

> Elle recevoit gracieusement en sa maison seigneurs, gentilshommes, & autres personnes de merite avec entretien de devis et discours, Musique tant à la voix qu'aux instrumens où elle estoit fort duicte,[2] lecture de bons livres latins & vulgaires Italiens & Espaignols dont son cabinet estoit copieusement garni, collation d'exquises confitures, enfin leur communiquoit privement les pieces plus secretes qu'elle eust, & pour dire en un mot faisoit part de son corps à ceux qui fonçoyent:[3] non toutesfois à tous, quelque argent que ceux là luy eussent voulu donner. Elle ayma les sçavans hommes sur tous, les favorisant de telle sorte que ceux de sa cognoisance avoient la meilleure part en sa bonne grace. . . .[4]

Unfortunately, it is this passage by du Verdier that Pierre Bayle chose to include in his Dictionnaire historique et critique under the heading "Labé (Loyse), Courtisane Lionnoise". Louise Labé's poetry itself was apparently of little or no interest to Bayle. He evaluates her contribution to literature in the words of du Verdier:

> Cette femme faisoit en même tems deshonneur aux Lettres et honneur: elle les deshonoroit puis qu'étant Auteur elle menoit une vie de courtisane: & elle les honoroit, puis que les savans étoient mieux reçus chez elle sans rien paier, que les ignorans prêts à lui compter une bonne somme.[5]

[1] Privilèges, Franchises et Immunitez, Lyon, 1573, and Histoire véritable de la ville de Lyon, 1604. The very same gentleman manages to malign the reputedly chaste Pernette du Guillet whose poems were published posthumously in 1545. De Rubys writes that Pernette du Guillet "insigne courtisane . . . servoit de monture à un Abbé et à ses moines." (Cf. Verdun L. Saulnier, "Etude sur Pernette du Guillet, Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance, Tome IV, Paris, Droz, 1944, pp. 7-119.

[2] Instruite.

[3] Fournissaient des fonds, payaient.

[4] La Bibliothèque d'Antoine du Verdier, seigneur de Vauprivas, Lyon, 1585, p. 822. Quoted by Jean Larnac, op. cit., p. 110.

[5] Pierre Bayle, Dictionnaire historique et critique, 5e éd. revue, corrigée et augmentée par M. Des Maizeaux, Amsterdam, 1734.

The inclusion of this passage in Bayle's Dictionnaire casts aspersions not only on Louise Labé, but on du Verdier, whose crudeness enabled him to write the passage, and on Bayle himself who, in this case, shows a singular lack of discrimination by quoting it!

Compared to the unflattering judgments of historians regarding Louise Labé, the positive remarks are disarmingly few.[1] We have no intention of becoming involved in the controversy which, however interesting it may be from a historical point of view, has no relationship whatever to Louise Labé's poetry, which is the matter at hand. We do wish to call attention to the fact that, for those of us privileged to read her work in the latter half of the twentieth century, Louise Labé assumes a particular importance, both as a poet and as a woman. She lived at a time when, in literary circles, two contrasting currents--feminism and anti-feminism--were equally strong. "La querelle des femmes", as one commonly calls that proliferation of feminist and anti-feminist literature in France during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, originated in the medieval opposition between "l'esprit courtois" and "l'esprit gaulois".

The two currents, which had found their expression in the twelfth century in the "romans de chevalerie" of Chrétien de Troyes and in the fabliaux, reappeared in the thirteenth century in the two parts of the Roman de la Rose, in the courtly idealism of Guillaume de Lorris and the cynical materialism of Jean de Meung.[2] The dispute culminated in 1542

[1] Cf. O'Connor, pp. 185-89.

[2] A detailed discussion of the "querelle des femmes" is found in Abel Lefranc's article "Le Tiers Livre du Pantagruel et la Querelle des Femmes". Grands Ecrivains Français de la Renaissance, Paris, Champion, 1914.

in the appearance of a neo-Platonic work, Antoine Héroet's La Parfaicte Amye, published in Lyon, in which the author presented theories similar to those of Bembo. According to these views, feminine beauty is a reflection of the Ideal, a spark of the divine and immortal Beauty. This work provoked a cynical anti-feminist work, L'Amye de Court (Paris, 1543) by a Norman poet, La Borderie, and then a counter-reply, La Contre-Amye de Court by Charles Fontaine, published in Lyon in 1543.[1] Even Rabelais did not refrain from taking part in the discussion. In his Tiers Livre (1546), forty of the total fifty-two chapters are devoted to the question of whether or not Panurge should marry and, if so, what fate marriage would reserve him.[2]

In any case, if woman's place in society was not exactly the issue being discussed, at least the subject of women was very much in vogue in the mid-sixteenth century. In addition, the Renaissance in France witnessed the rise of the literary "salon", both in Paris and in cities such as Toulouse, Lyon, and Montpellier.[3] The art of conversation was developing.[4] The intellectual and cultural ideals of the period were such that groups of scholars and poets began to meet and

[1] Ibid., p. 282.

[2] Cf. Ibid., p. 289: ". . . pas un écrivain ayant agi ou produit entre 1540 et 1555 n'est resté étranger à la querelle des femmes." M. A. Screech does not agree that the question of feminism and anti-feminism is the central theme of Rabelais' Tiers Livre. In his article entitled "Aspects of Rabelais' Christian Comedy" (London, 1967), he suggests that the question of whether or not Panurge should marry is "symbolic of wider human dilemmas."

[3] Cf. Abel Lefranc, La Vie quotidienne au temps de la Renaissance, Paris, Hachette, 1938.

[4] Cf., et. al., the exchange of ideas in Marguerite d'Angoulême's L'Heptaméron.

discuss literary and philosophical questions.[1] The meetings at the home of the jurist André Tiraqueau[2] at Fontenay-le-Comte, which the cordeliers François Rabelais and Pierre Amy attended toward 1522 were early examples of this trend. Some years later, Louise Labé would hold a primitive form of the literary salon in her home in Lyon.

Very much as in Augustan Rome, women had begun to assume a prominent role in Renaissance social circles. In the more elegant and refined society which was developing, particularly under the influence of Renaissance Italy, women became a major influence.

> Tout le monde sentait alors, les partisans des idées traditionnelles comme les adeptes des conceptions nouvelles introduites par le mouvement intellectuel de la Renaissance, que les données du problème féminin étaient notablement modifiées. La femme tendait à jouer un rôle social de plus en plus grand; sa place n'était plus seulement au foyer; elle n'avait plus pour unique mission de vaquer aux soins du ménage, mais visait à se rapprocher de l'homme.[3]

It was this social evolution which, so to speak, produced Louise Labé. The date of her birth has never been discovered but appears to lie somewhere between 1520 and 1523. Gérard Guillot adopts April 1522 as the likely date,[4] just two years before the birth of Ronsard.

[1] Lefranc, La Vie quotidienne au temps de la Renaissance, p. 61: "A Lyon, dès 1530 et spécialement aux alentours de 1537 et 1538, apparaissent plusieurs centres intellectuels fort actifs. A divers titres, Maurice Scève y fait figure de chef des écrivains et des hommes de science, si nombreux, on le sait, dans la seconde ville de France."

[2] Author of the militant antifeminist work De Legibus Connubialibus, exposing the theory that women are by nature inferior to men.

[3] Lefranc, La Vie quotidienne au temps de la Renaissance, p. 82. Lefranc cites as examples of influential women in the sixteenth century, among others, Marguerite d'Angoulême, Anne de Bretagne, Marguerite d'Autriche, Louise de Savoie, Renée de France, Diane de Poitiers, and Catherine de Médicis--or outside the nobility, Louise Labé, Jeanne Gaillarde, Claudine and Jeanne Scève, Pernette du Guillet, Hélisenne de Crenne.

[4] Guillot, op. cit., p. 97.

Daughter of a well-to-do ropemaker, she belonged to the prosperous middle-class which dominated Lyon in the sixteenth century.[1] According to tradition, Louise Labé's father provided her with a broad education which was very different from that of the average French girl of the period, an education "à la mode d'Italie".[2] Italian girls in the sixteenth century were learning Latin and Greek. They studied music, an art to which our poet was particularly devoted, as indicated by the dedicatory epistle to her works.[3] Many of her contemporaries wrote poems in praise of the musical talents of "la Dame au lut".[4] More often than not, Italian girls of the period engaged in sports and physical exercises, including horseback riding, as did the young men. In addition to sewing, embroidery, tapestry weaving, dancing, and other pursuits generally considered "feminine", Louise Labé studied Latin. Although

[1] Her father, Pierre Charly (or Charlin or Charlieu--all three spellings appear in documents of the period), was married three times. As Fernand Zamaron amusingly indicates, his wives were named Guillermette, Etiennette, and Antoinette (Louise Labé, Dame de Franchise, p. 14). It was by the first two marriages, to wealthy widows, that Pierre Charly established himself financially. His first wife Guillermette was the widow of a wealthy "cordier" Jacques Humbert, dit Labé, and so Pierre, in taking charge of the business, annexed the name "Labé" to his own. Louise was most probably the daughter of Etiennette Compagnon, Pierre's second wife. Ironically then, the name by which Louise was known--"Labé"--was neither that of her father nor that of her husband.

[2] O'Connor, pp. 53-55. Cf. p. 54: "Les idées venues d'Italie enseignaient à traiter la femme à peu près en égale de l'homme. Donc Pierre Labé accorda à sa fille une éducation virile comme celle d'une jeune Italienne de son époque." Also, John Heard, "Louise Labé, La Belle Cordière de Lyon", Poet Lore, Vol. XLII, Boston, The Gorham Press, 1933, p. 153: "The Italians felt that women were rather like men and treated them accordingly."

[3] Joseph Aynard, Les Poètes lyonnais précurseurs de la Pléiade, (Réimpression de l'édition de Paris, 1924), Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1969, p. 158.

[4] Cf. O'Connor, p. 55.

she perhaps never learned Greek--at least, there is no indication that she ever did--, she mastered Italian to the point of being able to compose a sonnet in that language.[1] She also acquired equestrian skills, which prompted du Verdier to remark: "Elle picquoit fort bien un cheval, à raison de quoy les gentilshommes qui avoient accès chez elle, l'apeloyent le capitaine Loys."[2]

The poet herself was proud of her accomplishments and wrote of them in her Third Elegy:

> Pour bien savoir avec l'esguille peindre
> J'eusse entrepris la renommee esteindre
> De celle là, qui plus docte que sage,
> Avec Pallas comparoit son ouvrage.
> Qui m'ust vù lors en armes fiere aller,
> Porter la lance et bois faire voler,
> Le devoir faire en l'estour furieus,
> Piquer, volter le cheval glorieux,
> Pour Bradamante, ou la haute Marphise,[3]
> Seur de Roger, il m'ust, possible prise.[4]

Although Pierre Charly occupied a place of importance in the community of Lyon,[5] it is generally agreed that he was illiterate, since an official document of the period reveals that he was able to sign his name only with a mark resembling a heart "which enclosed his badly scrawled initials, the "c" of which is written backwards."[6]

[1] Louise Labé's First Sonnet ("Non havria Ulysse o qualunq' altro mai") is written in Italian.

[2] La Bibliothèque d'Antoine du Verdier, Lyon, 1585, p. 822.

[3] Characters in Ariosto's Orlando Furioso.

[4] Aynard, op. cit., p. 256.

[5] Cf. O'Connor, p. 46 (quoting Charles Boy, "La Belle Cordière de Lyon" dans Monde Lyonnais, déc. 1880): "Il était devenu courrier de la Trinité, confrère du Saint-Esprit, collecteur des aumônes de l'hôpital, et enfin maître des métiers pour les marchands de chanvre."

[6] Kenneth Varty, "The Life and Legend of Louise Labé", Nottingham Mediaeval Studies, Vol. III, 1959, p. 85.

For that reason, it seems unlikely that he would have provided for his daughter the sort of education which many critics have likened to that which Rabelais recommended for Pantagruel. It is also somewhat unlikely that, as some historians have suggested, she was given private instruction at an early age by Maurice Scève.[1] The simplicity, directness, and frank sensuality of Louise Labé's poems is a direct contrast to Scève's obscure symbolism.

The manner in which Louise Labé received her education--whether it was provided by her father, as Dorothy O'Connor has suggested, or acquired later in life through her own efforts--is actually of little importance as far as the texts are concerned. It is interesting to note that, despite her cultural accomplishments, which were far superior to those of the typical middle-class French woman of the period, Louise Labé married, at an undetermined date, an uneducated but fairly well-to-do "cordier" by the name of Ennemond Perrin, who was about twenty years her senior. It was evidently a marriage of convenience, and since he had inherited a house "à l'angle de la rue Confort"[2] with a garden behind it, Ennemond Perrin was probably able to provide his wife with a certain amount of material comfort. In any case, she was never obliged

[1] Cf. Larnac, p. 27. That critic goes to the extent of recreating an imaginery scene in a tavern in which Pierre Charly would meet Rabelais and present to him his radical ideas on the education of women! Cf. p. 35: "Ainsi partagé entre les idées à la mode et la tradition gauloise--une tradition que Rabelais soutenait de toute son autorité--le maître cordier vécut désormais dans l'inquiétude."

[2] As indicated by a map of the city of Lyon which dates from the years 1545-1550, the street was re-named "rue Belle Cordière" during the poet's lifetime. (Cf. Larnac, p. 148; Guillot, p. 34). According to Yvonne Girault (op. cit., p. 111), "Le jardin de la Belle Cordière devint une des merveilles de Lyon."

to solicit funds from members of the court, as were Ronsard and other poets who wrote a number of command pieces, and that is one reason why all her work is so distinctly personal.[1] Ennemond Perrin, although he was probably unable to share his wife's intellectual interests, apparently left her a good deal of freedom.[2] She entertained many of the principal literary figures of the period, who either were residents of Lyon or who visited the city on their way to and from Italy. It is almost certain that she had met Clément Marot, who was in Lyon in 1536--when he formally renounced religious "heresy"--and then again in 1537, 1538, and 1541.[3] Maurice Scève, Pontus de Tyard, Olivier de Magny, Jean-Antoine de Baïf, Antoine du Moulin, Jacques Peletier du Mans, Antoine Fumée, Charles Fontaine, and possibly Luigi Alamanni, the exiled Florentine poet who had published his Opere Toscane in Lyon in 1531, were acquainted with Louise Labé. Most of these paid tribute to her under more or less disguised names, in "Les Escriz de divers poètes à la louenge de L.L.L." This was a series of twenty-four laudatory poems which,

[1] It also suggests that Louise Labé had no reason whatever to lead the life of a "courtesan".

[2] Cf. Georges Tricou, "Louise Labé et sa famille", Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance, Tome V, Paris, Droz, 1944, p. 97: "Le mariage lui donne la liberté à laquelle aspiraient tant de femmes, liberté impossible à trouver dans le célibat."

[3] Cf. O'Connor, p. 52. That critic agrees with Luc Van Brabant that the "Loyse" of Marot's sonnet (see Chapter II, p. 52 , of this paper), is Louise Labé, who would have been about nineteen years old when Marot visited Lyon for the last time. Strangely enough, a line of the sonnet in question, "Laissez-moi la et louez-moi Loyse", is reechoed in an anonymous poem of the "Louenges" entitled "Estreines, A Dame Louize Labé" (Cf. Zamaron, p. 136):

> Louize ha tant ce qu'en toutes on prise,
> Que je ne puis que Louize ne loue,
> Et si ne puis assez louer Louize.

following a custom of the period, the poet included in the volume of her works, where they occupied as many as fifty pages.[1]

It was in July 1555 that the first edition of Louise Labé's works was published by Jean de Tournes. The following year two more editions appeared, "revues et corrigées par ladite Dame". The volume contained both verse and prose. It began with a dedicatory epistle "à A.M.C.D.B.", initials which, mysterious though they may appear, simply mean "à Mademoiselle Clémence de Bourges". Clémence de Bourges, who has been described by the historian du Verdier as "la perle des demoiselles lyonnaises"[2] was the daughter of Claude de Bourges, Lieutenant Général du Piémont and, though several years younger, was a close friend of Louise Labé. The "épître dédicatoire" addressed to her by the poet is a veritable feminist manifesto. Louise Labé urges the women of Lyon, represented here by Clémence de Bourges, to take advantage of the opportunities offered them by the Renaissance to enrich themselves culturally and to compete with men in the literary sphere.

> Estant le tems venu, Madamoiselle, que les severes loix des hommes n'empeschent plus les femmes de s'apliquer aus sciences et disciplines: il me semble que celles qui ont la commodité, doivent employer cette honneste liberté que notre sexe ha autrefois tant desiree, à icelles aprendre: et montrer aus hommes le tort qu'ils nous faisoient en nous privant du bien et de l'honneur qui nous en pouvoit venir.[3]

In addition to enjoying the contentment and personal satisfaction

[1] Cf. O'Connor, pp. 161-74: "Les Poèmes de Louise Labé". The poems were written in a variety of languages--French, Italian, Latin and Greek. Initials and anagrams were much in vogue at that period, Louise Labé's anagram being "Belle à soy".

[2] Cf. O'Connor, p. 87.

[3] Aynard, p. 158.

which result from study,[1] the poet adds, women may also serve as an intellectual stimulus for men:

> Je ne puis faire autre chose que prier les vertueuses Dames d'eslever un peu leurs esprits dessus leurs quenoilles et fuseaux, et s'employer à faire entendre au monde que si nous ne sommes faites pour commander, si ne devons nous estre desdaignées pour compagnes tant en afaires domestiques que publiques, de ceus qui gouvernent et se font obéir. Et outre la reputacion que notre sexe en recevra nous aurons valù au publiq, que les hommes mettront plus de peine et d'estude aus sciences vertueuses, de peur qu'ils n'ayent honte de voir preceder celles, desquelles ils ont prestendu estre tousjours supérieurs quasi en tout.[2]

How revolutionary these ideas must have seemed in the mid-sixteenth century![3]

In addition to the "épître dédicatoire", the edition of 1555 contained one other piece of prose, a delightful dialogue vaguely inspired by the medieval "débat". Le Debat de Folie et d'Amour par Louize Labé Lionnoize is a mythological work on the subject of love, filled with charm and fantasy, and based on a totally original idea.[4] In this

[1] "Mais l'honneur que la science nous procurera sera entierement notre: et ne nous pourra estre oté, ne par finesse de larron, ne force d'ennemis, ne longueur du temps."

[2] Aynard, p. 158.

[3] Similar notions had been expressed in the editor's preface to Pernette du Guillet's poems, published after her death in 1545. Cf. Aynard, p. 67: "Elle (Louise Labé) se rattache curieusement à ce mouvement 'féministe' que nous avons vu esquissé dans la préface d'Antoine du Moulin à Pernette du Guillet, et qu'on pourrait étudier dans le livre de François de Billon (Le Fort inexpugnable de l'honneur du sexe femenin, 1555, a key pro-feminist work in the "querelle des femmes") et dans celui de Guillaume Postel." (Les très merveilleuses victoires des Femmes du nouveau monde et comment elles doivent le monde commander. . . , 1553).

[4] The notion of a dispute between Amour and Folie in which Folie blinds Amour and is then sentenced by Jupiter to accompany the god of love everywhere and to serve as his guide seems to have been created by Louise Labé. La Fontaine used it as his inspiration for his fable "L'Amour et la Folie". It is, however, probable that Louise Labé had read Erasmus' Eloge de la Folie in a French translation which appeared

work Apollo, the "attorney" chosen to defend the cause of Love, speaks of the origin of poetry:

> Mais qui fait tant de Poetes au monde en toutes langues? N'est-ce pas amour? lequel semble estre le suget, duquel tous Poetes veulent parler. Et qui me fait attribuer la Poesie à Amour: ou dire, pour le moins, qu'elle est bien aydee et entretenue par son moyen? C'est qu'incontinent que les hommes commencent à aymer, ils escrivent vers.[1]

In fact, all of Louise Labé's poetry--her three elegies and twenty-four sonnets--have love as their subject. In the words of Yvonne Girault, "Elle n'écrivit pas une ligne qui ne traitât d'amour."[2]

From a historical point of view, and in and of themselves, the three elegies are of much interest, Here, as in the case of Ronsard, du Bellay, Pontus de Tyard, and others who practiced that genre in sixteenth century France, we find the poet adhering to the form introduced by Marot in La Suite de l'Adolescence Clementine of 1533. The alternance of masculine and feminine rhymes is not yet "de rigueur", as it would be for the Pléiade. Louise Labé's elegies, like those of Marot, are long poems[3] in decasyllables with "rimes plates", and it is fascinating to note that all three are in the form of epistles![4] It is

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in Paris in 1520 (cf. O'Connor, p. 111) and that she was influenced by it only in the creation of her characters. Thomas Fortini, the Florentine lawyer who was Louise Labé's companion in the years before her death and in whose home she composed her will in April 1565, "estant au lit malade", probably furnished certain legal details for the speeches by Apollo and Mercury.

[1] Aynard, pp. 205, 206.

[2] Girault, op. cit., p. 121.

[3] The longest of the three, the First Elegy, consists of 117 lines.

[4] In the "Privilège du Roy" which was included in the editions of 1556, the elegies are, in fact, qualified as "Odes & Epitres".

obvious that Louise Labé was familiar with Marot's work. Not only had she probably met the older poet personally during one of the four stops which he made in Lyon,[1] but she also had ample opportunity to read and reread his love elegies, which had appeared twelve years before the publication of her own. The First and Third elegies, then, are addressed to the ladies of Lyon.[2] The Second is addressed to a lover, whom the poet calls simply "Ami".[3]

As far as content is concerned, we find a curious fusion of what we have already encountered in the work of Marot and of Ronsard. It is significant, however, that Louise Labé could not have been acquainted with Ronsard's love elegies. In Chapter IV, we specified 1563 as the year when the love elegy first appeared in Ronsard's work. This was eight years after the publication of Louise Labé's poems, and since the first two elegies to Genèvre were not written until shortly before their publication,[4] Louise Labé could have known nothing of them. Her only probable model, then, is Marot, for although she undoubtedly knew

[1] As we have seen Marot was in Lyon as late as 1541 (O'Connor, p. 50), when Louise Labé was approximately nineteen years old, if we accept the date of birth which Gérard Guillot assigns to her (Guillot, p. 97).

[2]
> . . . Dames, qui les lirez,
> Des mes regrets avec moy soupirez.
> (Première Elégie)
>
> Quand vous lirez, ô Dames Lionnoises,
> Ces miens escrits pleins d'amoureuses noises.
> (Troisième Elégie)

[3]
> D'un tel vouloir le serf point ne desire
> La liberté, ou son port le navire,
> Comme j'atens, helas! de jour en jour
> De toy, Ami, le gracieus retour.
> (Deuxième Elégie)

[4] Critics have assigned the dates July 1561 to July 1562 to Ronsard's liaison with Genèvre (cf. Chapter IV, p. 110, of this paper).

Latin,[1] whether or not she was familiar with the love elegies of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid remains a matter of conjecture. In any case, the use of the epistle form strongly suggests the influence of Marot. Gérard Guillot indicates, as other possible sources, Luigi Alammani's Oeuvres Toscanes, two volumes of elegies and other love poems which the exiled Florentine poet had published in Latin in Lyon in 1532-1533, and especially Ovid's Metamorphoses and Héroïdes in their Lyonnese editions of 1508, 1523, 1526, 1528, 1529, and 1536.[2]

Of particular interest is the fact that Louise Labé's elegies retain the plaintive quality which characterized Marot's work, and ultimately Ovid's Héroïdes, and which was related to the theme of unrequited love. At the same time, they anticipate Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre in their simplicity, their sensuality, and particularly in their autobiographical quality. Like the elegies to Genèvre, Louise Labé's three elegies, with their wealth of realistic details, have the flavor of a "journal intime".

It has been impossible to determine the exact date of composition of the elegies. In the opinion of Dorothy O'Connor, they were

[1] Antoine du Verdier (cf. page of this chapter) writes of the "bons livres latins et vulgaires Italiens et Espaignols dont son cabinet estoit copieusement garni". Dorothy O'Connor (op. cit., pp. 107 ff) is of the opinion that if the poet probably did not know Greek, since she almost never uses words of Greek origin, it is almost certain that she knew some Latin. She may have read the work of the Latin love elegists in the original version. Christine Scollen (The Birth of the Elegy in France, p. 37) indicates that there was no attempt to translate a whole book of Ovid's Amores in the first half of the sixteenth century as Octavien de Saint-Gelais had translated the Héroïdes. According to Robert Hallowell (Ronsard and the Conventional Roman Elegy), there were no translations of Tibullus and Propertius into French in the sixteenth century because of defects and omissions in the manuscripts.

[2] Guillot, p. 68.

written at a later date than were most of the sonnets, for which they serve as an introduction and, to some extent, an apology.[1] It is apparently for that reason that they were placed before the sonnets in the collection. The sonnets were youthful works representing the poet's "folle jeunesse", and she hesitated to present them to her readers without first requesting their indulgence:

> Quand vous lirez, ô Dames Lionnoises,
> Ces miens escrits pleins d'amoureuses noises,
> Quand mes regrets, ennuis, despits et larmes
> M'orrez chanter en pitoyables carmes,
> Ne veuillez pas condamner ma simplesse,
> Et jeune erreur de ma fole jeunesse,
> Si c'est erreur . . .[2]

The poet immediately establishes the theme, not only of her elegies, but of her sonnets as well: the eternal pain and anguish of love. The expression "pitoyables carmes" recalls "ces pitoyables élégies" which du Bellay, in the Deffence,[3] recommended as models for

[1] Cf. O'Connor, pp. 135-37. That critic assigns the following dates to the Elegies. The Third Elegy would be the first in chronological order. In it, the poet declares:

> Je n'avois vû encore seize Hivers
> Lors que j'entray en ces ennuis divers:
> Et jà voici le treizième esté
> Que mon coeur fut par amour arresté.

She is, therefore, twenty-nine years old at the time, and since she was born between 1520 and 1522, this elegy would have been written in about 1550. The Second Elegy, which was probably addressed to Olivier de Magny, would not have been written before 1554 or 1555, since Magny probably did not arrive in Lyon until late 1554. O'Connor considers the First Elegy to have been written last, just before the publication of the poet's works in 1555. We shall follow this order in our study.

[2] Aynard, p. 255. (Third Elegy)

[3] Cf. Chapter I, page 4. Also Ovid, Amores, II, ix, 3:

> Flebilis indignos, Elegeia, solve capillos

and Sebillet, Art Poétique Françoys:

> Car de sa nature l'Elégie est triste et flebile:
> et traitte singulièrement lés passions amoureuses . . .

French poets to follow. Furthermore, by her conception of the elegy as a "plainte amoureuse", Louise Labé remains quite within the tradition established by Marot, at the source of which lie Ovid's Héroïdes. But how charmingly candid is her admission: "Si c'est erreur"! She has discarded the "casuistique amoureuse", the artificiality of Marot's elegies, and replaced it with a sincerity which is entirely new. With utmost frankness, she poses a question:

> . . . mais qui dessous les Cieus
> Se peut vanter de n'estre vicieus?[1]

Having mentioned the most common vices--envy, malice, greed[2]--she continues as follows:

> Mais si en moy rien y ha d'imparfait
> Qu'on blame Amour: c'est lui seul qui l'a fait.
> Sur mon verd aage en ses laqs il me prit,
> Lors qu'exerçois mon corps et mon esprit
> En mile et mile euvres ingenieuses,
> Qu'en peu de tems me rendit ennuieuses.[3]

These lines and the ones which immediately follow, as well as a long allegorical poem of the "Louenges"[4] gave rise in the nineteenth century to a strange legend. According to this legend, the young Louise Labé, infatuated with the Dauphin, the future Henri II, followed him to

[1] Aynard, p. 255.

[2] It is possible that when the poet declares:

> A faire gain jamais ne me soumis

that she is replying to accusations of avarice unjustly made against her. In Le Philosophe de Court (Lyon, 1547), Philibert de Vienne had written: "La Cordière de Lyon est trop plus honorable, qui quelque affection de gaigner quelle ayt, ne semble rien moins à ses serviteurs que avaricieuse". (Cf. O'Connor, p. 185).

[3] Aynard, p. 256.

[4] Cf. O'Connor, page 69, footnote 1.

Perpignan and participated in the French campaign against the Spanish there in 1542![1] Luc Van Brabant, again using his complex system of anagrams, has taken many pains to attempt to prove that this is the case.[2] Did not Antoine du Verdier write that she was known as "Capitaine Loys"?[3] In a passage of the Third Elegy which we have already had occasion to quote,[4] the poet herself describes her military prowess:

> Qui m'ust vù lors en armes fiere aller,
> Porter la lance et bois faire voler,
> Le devoir faire en l'estour furieus,
> Piquer, volter le cheval glorieus,
> Pour Bradamante, ou la haute Marphise,
> Seur de Roger, il m'ust, possible, prise.[5]

Many historians have followed tradition in identifying the "blond chief couronné" of Sonnet X with the Dauphin Henri.[6] Modern critics have tended to reject this theory which is, to say the least, fanciful. It is now generally agreed that Louise Labé's first love

[1] Fernand Zamaron (Louise Labé, Dame de Franchise, op. cit.) mentions Turquéty (Bulletin de Bibliophile, 1860), who established the link between Louise Labé and Olivier de Magny, and Prosper Blanchemain ("Poètes et amoureuses du XVIe siècle", Paris, 1877), who first suggested that the poet, enamored of Henri II, might have taken part in the siege of Perpignan.

[2] Luc Van Brabant, Louize Labé et ses aventures amoureuses avec Clément Marot et le dauphin Henry, Ed. de la Belle sans sy, Belgique, 1967.

[3] Cf. p. 182 of this chapter.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Aynard, p. 256.

[6] Quand j'aperçoy ton blond chef couronné
D'un laurier verd, faire un lut si bien pleindre,
Que tu pourrois à te suivre contreindre
Arbres et rocs . . .

The tradition apparently originated with Prosper Blanchemain, (Cf.n. 1, this page). Actually, the description suggests a poet rather than a soldier.

cannot be identified and that, rather than follow the Dauphin to Perpignan, she probably took part in a tournament held in Lyon and may have fallen in love with one of the departing soldiers.[1] In any case, of what importance are such conjectures when, as we have already remarked in connection with Ronsard, the only reality is the beauty of the texts themselves?

The poet continues to relate, with fantasy and charm, the episode of her first love affair. The personification of Amour and the mischievous personality which she attributes to him are an echo of her Debat de Folie et d'Amour:

> Mais quoy? Amour ne peut longuement voir
> Mon coeur n'aymant que Mars et le savoir:
> Et ne voulant donner autre souci,
> En souriant; il me disoit ainsi:
> Tu penses donq, ô Lionnoise Dame,
> Pouvoir fuir par ce moyen ma flame!
> Mais non feras, j'ay subjugué les Dieus
> Es bas Enfers, en la Mer et es Cieux.
> Ainsi parloit. Et tout eschaufé d'ire
> Hors de sa trousse une sagette il tire,
> Et decochant de son extreme force,
> Droit la tira contre ma tendre escorce:
> Foible harnois, pour bien couvrir le coeur,
> Contre l'Archer qui tousjours est vainqueur.[2]

The poet then experiences the sleepless nights and lack of appetite common to Latin elegiac lovers. Ronsard would suffer a similar fate when he would fall in love with Genèvre.

> La bresche faite, entre Amour en la place,
> Dont le repos premierement il chasse.

[1] Cf. Zamaron, p. 32. A long, allegorical poem of the "Escriz de divers poètes à la louenge de Louize Labé Lionnoize" revealed the existence of an "homme de guerre" whom the young Louise Labé had loved (cf. O'Connor, pp. 47 ff.).

[2] Aynard, pp. 256, 257.

Et de travail qui me donne sans cesse,
Boire, manger, et dormir ne me laisse.[1]

Louise Labé expresses the same relentless anguish of love in Sonnet IX, in which there is a curious fusion of sensuality,-the desire for physical possession,--and neo-Platonic idealism,--the longing for a higher Good:

Tout aussi tot que je commence à prendre
Dens le mol lit le repos desiré,
Mon triste esprit hors de moy retiré
S'en va vers toy incontinent se rendre.

Lors m'est avis que dedens mon sein tendre
Je tiens le bien, où j'ay tant aspiré,
Et pour lequel j'ay si haut souspiré,
Que de sanglots ay souvent cuidé fendre.

O dous sommeil, ô nuit à moy heureuse!
Plaisant repos, plein de tranquilité,
Continuez toutes les nuiz mon songe:

Et si jamais ma povre ame amoureuse
Ne doit avoir de bien en verité,
Faites au moins qu'elle en ait en mensonge.[2]

Like Propertius,[3] Louise Labé portrays love as a torturous fire, an illness, a madness which enslaves and grows worse with time:

Le tems met fin aus fonteines humides:
Il ne pardonne aux braves Colisees,
Il met à fin les viles plus prisees,
Finir aussi il ha accoutumé.

[1] Ibid., p. 257.

[2] In Labé, Louise, Sonnets, introd. and commentaries by Peter Sharratt, Austin, Edinburgh Bilingual Library, Univ. of Texas Press, 1972, the editor remarks (p. 16) that love, for Louise Labé, is essentially pagan love, the Greek "eros": "The sensuality of Louise is one with her spirituality; body and soul, spirit and flesh, are not for her, as for the medieval mystics, contrasting entities, but, according to the spirit of the Renaissance, aspects of one and the same reality."

[3] Cf. Propertius, I, i, 7:

Et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno

Le feu d'Amour tant soit il allumé:
Mais las! en moy il semble qu'il augmente
Avec le tems, et que plus me tourmente.[1]

In Sonnet VIII, the poet again expresses the intense suffering caused by her passion, but here she does so by a series of contrasts, or antitheses, which have the flavor of Italian Petrarchist poetry:

Je vis, je meurs: je me brule et me noye.
J'ay chaut estreme en endurant froidure:
La vie m'est et trop molle et trop dure.
J'ay grans ennuis entremeslez de joye:

Tour à un coup je ris et je larmoye,
Et en plaisir maint grief tourment j'endure:
Mon bien s'en va, et à jamais il dure:
Tour en un coup je seiche et je verdoye.

Ainsi Amour inconstamment me meine:
Et quand je pense avoir plus de douleur,
Sans y penser je me treuve hors de peine.

Puis quand je croy ma joye estre certeine,
Et estre au haut de mon desiré heur,
Il me remet en mon premier malheur.[2]

The elegy ends with the poet's plea that her lover may share her unremitting passion, for knowing that he does will surely allay her suffering. The passage moves the reader with its disarming simplicity:

Fay que celui que j'estime mon tout,
Qui seul me peut faire plorer et rire,
Et pour lequel si souvent je soupire,
Sente en ses os, en son sang, en son ame,
Ou plus ardente, ou bien egale flame.
Alors ton faix plus aisé me sera,
Quand avec moy quelcun le portera.[3]

In this Third Elegy which, as Dorothy O'Connor suggests, may

[1] Aynard, p. 258. (Third Elegy)

[2] Ibid., p. 267. Peter Sharratt (op. cit.) remarks that after the very conventional quatrains, the sonnet develops in an original way in the tercets.

[3] Aynard, pp. 258, 259. (Third Elegy)

well have been written before the two others, Louise Labé makes an apology for passion. She describes the relentless love which she experienced as an adolescent:

> Je n'avois vù encore seize Hivers
> Lors que j'entray en ces ennuis divers.[1]

Now, at the time of writing, the poet is apparently twenty-nine, but her passion has not abated:

> Et jà voici le treizième esté
> Que mon coeur fut par amour arresté.[2]

As we have seen, there is quite a bit of narrative in the poem, allusions to the poet's education, to her equestrian skills, and to the process of falling in love. This aspect of the elegy places it far from Marot's "métaphysique galante". Instead, the poem announces Ronsard's more realistic and earthy elegies to Genèvre. Unlike Ronsard, however, Louise Labé gives no descriptive details of her lover. He remains anonymous, but of what importance is that? The poet is, in the words of Fernand Zamaron, "une amoureuse née".[3]

The Second Elegy is more clearly associated with the poet Olivier de Magny, although this has not been established beyond any doubt. O'Connor assigns the elegy the date 1554, or 1555, for Magny did not arrive in Lyon until 1554.[4] As secretary to the diplomat Jean d'Avanson, Ambassadeur du Roi auprès du Pape, Olivier de Magny was to

[1] Ibid., p. 258.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Fernand Zamaron, Louise Labé, Dame de Franchise, op. cit., p. 22.

[4] O'Connor, p. 77, gives the end of 1554 as the probable date of Magny's arrival. This was based on the old style calendar by which the year began at Easter.

play a role similar to that of du Bellay vis-à-vis the Cardinal Jean du Bellay. The two poets, disillusioned by their life in the Italian capital, occasionally treated the same themes in satirical sonnets. For that reason, certain poems of Magny's Souspirs (1557) bear a resemblance to sonnets of du Bellay's Regrets, although Magny's poems are of far lesser quality.[1]

That there was probably an intimate relationship between Olivier de Magny and Louise Labé is revealed by certain texts.[2]

First of all, Magny did contribute to the "Escriz de divers poetes à la louenge de Louise Labé Lionnoize"[3] a fact which really indicates nothing more than that the two poets knew each other. Far more revealing is a series of Odes (XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII) on the theme "les douleurs de l'absence" which Magny is thought to have composed for Louise Labé in 1555, after having left her in order to accompany Jean d'Avanson to Rome.[4] It is in that year, just before the

[1] On this subject, cf. Henri Weber, La Création poétique au 16e siècle en France, Paris, Nizet, 1956, pp. 443 ff.

[2] It was Bréghot du Lut (Œuvres de Louise Labé, Lyon, 1824, pp. 207 ff.) who first suspected the liaison. Other critics have since developed his point of view so that it is now, more or less, accepted as fact.

[3] O'Connor (p. 74) attributes three pieces of that group to Olivier de Magny: "L'Epitre à ses amis des gracieusetez de D.L.L.", "Des beautez de D.L.L.", and "L'Ode en faveur de Dame Louize Labé à son bon Signeur". (Cf. Zamaron, pp. 138-140; 143). The first of these mysteriously reappeared in Baïf's Les Amours de Francine (1555). "L'Ode en faveur de Dame Louize Labé à son bon Signeur" is a rather lascivious piece in which the poet describes, to the last detail, the physical charms of his mistress. The poem bears the signature "D.M." and is attributable to De Magny (cf. O'Connor, p. 164). One cannot be sure whether such a poem is significant as far as the poets' relationship is concerned, or whether Magny is simply imitating the "blason" as did Ronsard in his description of Cassandre in "L'Elégie à Janet"(cf. Chapter III, page 93, of this paper).

[4] Cf. Olivier de Magny, Les Odes amoureuses de 1559, avec une

publication of her poems, that Louise Labé may have revised them to take account of her relationship with Magny. Only that could explain any reflection of him in her earlier poetry, since both the "épître dédicatoire" and the "Privilège du Roy" indicated that Louise Labé's poems had circulated in manuscript form long before their publication in 1555.

One finds certain correspondences in the work of the two poets. The first two quatrains of Louise Labé's Sonnet II reappear word for word in the fifty-fifth sonnet of Magny's Souspirs.

> O beaus yeus bruns, ô regards destournez,
> O chaus soupirs, ô larmes espandues,
> O noires nuits vainement atendues,
> O jours luisans vainement retournez.
>
> O tristes pleins, ô desirs obstinez,
> O tems perdu, ô peines despendues,
> O mile morts en mile rets tendues,
> O pire maus contre moy destinez.[1]

The following question obviously arises: which of the two poets is the author of these verses? Were they the result of a sort of collaboration? Some evidence would suggest that Louise Labé was probably the author. Olivier de Magny's Souspirs were published in 1557, two years after Louise Labé's works. Also, the Lyonnese poet's technique is, in general, a remarkably original one. She almost never borrows whole passages word for word from Italian or other sources, as

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introduction par Mark S. Whitney, Genève, Librairie Droz, 1964, pp. 49-57.

[1] Aynard, p. 261. The first tercet suggests once again Louise Labé's ability to proceed from a traditional Petrarchist beginning (the use of repetition and apostrophe) to strikingly original verses. Magny's sonnets do not reveal such a tendency. The first tercet of Louise Labé's Sonnet II reads as follows:

> O ris, ô front, cheveus, bras, mains et doits
> O lut pleintif, viole, archet et vois:
> Tant de flambeaus pour ardre une femelle!

it was fashionable to do at that time. On the other hand, Magny was a notorious plagiarist.[1] It is not certain, however, that this was merely a case of plagiarism. O'Connor theorizes that it simply serves to prove further that a personal relationship existed between the two poets.[2]

The situation is clearer in the case of Louise Labé's Third Sonnet.[3] A similar one is found among Magny's Souspirs (LXVI), but in this case the two poets are using a common source, a sonnet by Sannazar. Louise Labé's version, however, is an adaptation, whereas Magny's is an almost literal translation.

The last significant bit of evidence that the subject of Louise Labé's Second Elegy may be Olivier de Magny is an extremely distasteful ode which the latter poet wrote entitled "A Sire Aymon".[4] "Aymon" being a deformation of "Ennemond", the poet's sole purpose is to make fun of Louise Labé's husband, Ennemond Perrin, whom he portrays as concentrating too much on his ropemaking and too little on his wife.[5] Magny, of

[1] In Olivier de Magny, Les Odes amoureuses de 1559 avec une introduction par Mark S. Whitney (op. cit.), the editor refers to Magny as "un poète imitateur écrivant à une époque où on préconisait l'imitation." Fernand Zamaron (op. cit., pp. 139, 140) indicates that Magny "adopted" about fifty of Petrarch's sonnets which he translated almost word for word.

[2] O'Connor, p. 74.

[3] O longs désirs, O esperances vaines,
Tristes soupirs et larmes coutumiers
A engendrer de moy maintes rivieres,
Dont mes deus yeus sont sources et fontaines.

Cf. O'Connor, pp. 142-45.

[4] Magny, Les Odes amoureuses, op. cit., pp. 132-36.

[5] Le bon sire Aymon se reculle,
Trop plus ententif au long tour
De ses cordes, qu'à mon amour.

course, takes the utmost advantage of the husband's absence. That he should boast of the fact in his poetry does not speak very well for his character. Interestingly enough, in his introduction to Magny's Odes, Mark S. Whitney calls attention to the fact that examples of this type of mockery are found in the work of the Latin love elegists.[1] He suggests, among other possible sources, "la description du vieux mari impotent et sot" in Catullus XVII and "la description de la maison du mari complaisant" in Ovid's Amores, III, iv, ll. 43-48. Also mentioned is a passage of Tibullus I, vi, to which we have already had occasion to refer in Chapter I, page 22, and which deals with a woman's art of deceiving her husband. Even in the cruel and unpleasant ode "A Sire Aymon", Olivier de Magny remains faithful to his literary sources.

Apparently, after leaving Lyon for Rome in 1555, Magny proceeded to enjoy the pleasures which the Italian capital offered him. His role as secretary to a diplomat disappointed him; other aspects of his life in Rome did not. In any case, he wrote a series of odes on the theme "d'aymer en plusieurs lieux" and in which he is evidently inspired by Ovid's Amores.[2] Magny reveals a frivolous nature similar to that of Ovid in his Ode XI, in which he specifically mentions a "Loyse":

> Pource qu'en ceste Amour diversement escripte
> Je parle ore avec Anne, ore avec Marguerite,
> Magdaleine, & Loyse, on me pourroit blasmer
> D'aymer en trop de lieux pour bien me faire aymer.

[1] Magny, Les Odes amoureuses, op. cit.

[2] Cf. Amores, II, x, 1-4, in which Ovid declares that he loves two women at the same time. Also II, iv, in which the Latin poet writes that he loves all types of women equally.

. . . . . .

La Nature m'a faict, & la Nature est belle
Pour la diversité que nous voions en elle:
Je suis donq' naturel, & ma felicité
En matiere d'amour c'est la diversité.[1]

It is generally acknowledged that Olivier de Magny is the subject of Louise Labé's Second Elegy.[2] The matter is, in our opinion, not essential except to point up a striking difference in character between the two poets. Louise Labé's Second Elegy is a cry of anguish. It is the letter of an abandoned woman to the lover who has rejected her, and in that respect, it is in the tradition of Ovid's Héroïdes. Still, the essentially personal quality of this poem and the depth of feeling which it conveys--"la voix pure et nue du coeur"[3]--are quite unique.

D'un tel vouloir le serf point ne desire
La liberté, ou son port le navire,
Comme j'attends, helas, de jour en jour
De toy, Ami, le gracieus retour.[4]

The urgency of the poet's desire is conveyed by her sudden anger and by the repetition of the word "cruel":

Cruel, Cruel, qui te faisoit promettre
Ton brief retour en ta premiere lettre?

[1] Magny, Odes amoureuses, p. 38.

[2] Cf. O'Connor, p. 79: "Quant aux sentiments éprouvés de son côté par Louise, une lecture attentive de ses poèmes, surtout sa deuxième élégie, nous rend impossible de rejeter comme une 'aimable fantaisie" . . . l'idée qu'elle fut éprise de Magny."

[3] Expression of Yvonne Girault, op. cit., p. 154.

[4] Louise Labé conveys the same naïve longing for the return of a beloved in her Sonnet XV ("Pour le retour du Soleil honorer"), which ends with the following lines:

Fay mon Soleil devers moy retourner,
Et tu verras s'il ne me rend plus belle.

As tu si peu de memoire de moy,
Que de m'avoir si tot rompu la foy?
Comment ose tu ainsi abuser celle
Qui de tout tems t'a esté si fidelle?[1]

Suddenly, a suspicion arises in the mind of the poet. We follow the flow of her thoughts as she oscillates between anger and tenderness, between anguish and reassurance:

Or' que tu es aupres de ce rivage
Du Pau cornu,[2] peut estre ton courage
S'est embrasé d'une nouvelle flame,
En me changeant pour prendre une autre Dame.
. . . . . .
Ores je croy, vù notre amour passee,
Qu'impossible est, que tu m'aies laissee:
Et de nouvel ta foy je me fiance,
Et plus qu'humeine estime ta confiance.[3]

The Second Elegy is filled with psychological realism. Unable to accept the idea that her lover has abandoned her, the poet is at no loss to find excuses for his silence. There is a profoundly human quality in the following lines, in which the writer gropes for reassurance:

Tu es, peut-estre, en chemin inconnu
Outre ton gré malade retenu.
Je croy que non: car tant suis coutumiere
De faire aux Dieus pour ta santé priere,
Que plus cruels que tigres ils seroient,
Quand maladie ils te prochasseroient:
Bien que ta fole et volage inconstance
Meriteroit avoir quelque soufrance.[4]

More in a desperate effort to find inner peace than to convince her lover, the poet alludes to her fame, which extends beyond the boundaries of France. Then, with the inconsistency which characterizes

[1] Aynard, p. 252. (Second Elegy)

[2] Magny was, in fact, in Italy at the time.

[3] Aynard, p. 252.

[4] Aynard, p. 252. (Second Elegy)

passion, she once again succumbs to tender longing:

> Non seulement en France suis flatee,
> Et beaucoup plus, que ne veus, exaltee.
> La terre aussi que Calpe et Pyrenee
> Avec la mer tiennent environnee,
> Du large Rhin les roulantes areines,
> Le beau pais auquel or' te promeines,
> Ont entendu (tu me l'as fait à croire)
> Que gens d'esprit me donnent quelque gloire.
> Goute le bien que tant d'hommes desirent:
> Demeure au but où tant d'autres aspirent:
> Et crois qu'ailleurs n'en auras une telle.
> Je ne dy pas qu'elle ne soit plus belle:
> Mais que jamais femme ne t'aymera,
> Ne plus que moy d'honneur te portera.
> Maints grans signeurs à mon amour pretendent,
> Et à me plaire et servir prets se rendent
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Et neanmoins, tant peu je m'en soucie,
> Que seulement ne les en remercie:
> Tu es tout seul, tout mon mal et mon bien:
> Avec toy tout, et sans toy je n'ay rien.[1]

The simplicity of Louise Labé's elegies is disarming. Here, the elegy is a "plainte d'amour" in the manner of Marot, but this poet has freed it from the "casuistique amoureuse", the preciosity which characterizes Marot's elegies and Ronsard's elegies to Isabeau de Limeuil. The "concetti pétrarquistes" are relatively infrequent. Aside from an occasional reference to love as a flame,--which was part of the conventional imagery of the period,[2]--artificiality has been stripped away, leaving a pure expression of passion and longing.

The First Elegy is an apology of love, and as such, it serves

[1] Ibid., pp. 253, 254.

[2] Only the conclusion is distinctly Petrarchist in flavor. The poet envisions an epitaph which would read as follows:

> Par toy, amy, tant vesqui enflammee,
> Qu'en languissant par feu suis consumee,
> Qui couve encore sous ma cendre embrazee
> Si ne la rens de tes pleurs apaizee.

as an introduction to the sonnets. It is an epistle addressed to the ladies of Lyon, as is the Third Elegy. In the First Elegy, the poet evokes two instances of unhappy love: her first love affair, when, according to the Third Elegy, she was not yet sixteen, and the present one, which so closely resembles it.[1] Twice she has been abandoned.[2]

> Au tems qu'Amour, d'hommes et Dieus vainqueur
> Faisoit bruler de sa flamme mon coeur,
> En embrassant de sa cruelle rage
> Mon sang, mes os, mon esprit et courage:
> Encore lors je n'avois la puissance
> De lamenter ma peine et ma souffrance.
> Encor Phebus, ami des Lauriers vers,
> N'avoit permis que je fisse des vers:
> Mais meintenant que sa fureur divine
> Remplit d'ardeur ma hardie poitrine,
> Chanter me fait, non les bruians tonnerres
> De Jupiter, ou les cruelles guerres,
> Dont trouble Mars, quand il veut, l'Univers.
> Il m'a donné la lyre, qui les vers
> Souloit chanter de l'Amour Lesbienne:
> Et à ce coup pleurera de la mienne.
> O dous archet, adouci moy la voix,
> Qui pourroit fendre et aigrir quelquefois,
> En recitant tant d'ennuis et douleurs
> Tant de despits fortunes et malheurs.[3]

In alluding to Sappho, abandoned by Phaon, Louise Labé is

[1] As we have already indicated (p.192), allusions to the first episode have given rise to the legend that Louise Labé was in love with the future Henri II. An allegorical poem of the "Louenges" referred to an "homme de guerre" with whom Louise had fallen in love. Actually, it is impossible to identify Louise Labé's first love. The second, to which she also refers in this elegy, was perhaps Magny.

[2] Cf. Jean Larnac, op. cit., p. 141: "Car Louise n'aurait pas composé de vers et ne nous aurait pas transmis l'image d'une grande amoureuse si les circonstances ne l'avaient séparée des hommes qu'elle aimait."

[3] Aynard, p. 247. Louise Labé has occasionally been called "la Sappho française". An ode in Greek of the "Escriz de divers poètes à sa louenge" compared her to Sappho (cf. Zamaron, pp. 127, 128). Cf. also Girault, p. 22: "Les vers de 'la Sappho française' nous sont arrivés tout brûlants après quatre siècles."

indirectly referring to Ovid's Héroïdes. In the poet's opinion, all that really matters is the ability to translate one's feelings into verse. The fact that she was incapable of recording her feelings in writing at the age of sixteen somehow negates them, inasmuch as they could not be transmitted to posterity.

> Encore lors je n'avois la puissance
> De lamenter ma peine et ma souffrance.[1]

This theme reappears elsewhere in the poet's work. In her dedicatory epistle to Mademoiselle Clémence de Bourges, Louise Labé extols the art of writing:

> Car le passé nous resjouit, et sert plus que le present, mais les plaisirs de sentimens se perdent incontinent, et ne reviennent jamais, et en est quelquefois la memoire autant facheuse, comme les actes ont esté delectables. Davantage les autres voluptez sont telles, que quelque souvenir qui en vienne, si ne nous peut il remettre en telle disposicion que nous estions: et quelque imaginacion forte que nous imprimions en la teste, si connoissons nous bien que ce n'est qu'une ombre du passé qui nous abuse et trompe. Mais quant il avient que mettons par escrit nos concepcions, combien que puis apres notre cerveau coure par une infinité d'afaires et incessamment remue, si est ce que long tems apres reprenans nos escrits, nous revenons au mesme point, et à la mesme disposicion où nous estions. Lors nous redouble notre aisle, car nous retrouvons le plaisir passé qu'avons ù ou en la matiere dont nous escrivions, ou en l'intelligence des sciences où lors estions adonnez.[2]

Writing enables us to relive our experiences in a manner which, as Joseph Aynard suggests, anticipates Proust's theory of voluntary and involuntary memory.[3] The poet's view of poetry as a "raison d'être", as a means of reinforcing and enriching experiences, is further expressed in the Fourteenth Sonnet, which is among Louise Labé's loveliest:

[1] Aynard, p. 247. (First Elegy)

[2] Aynard, pp. 159, 160.

[3] Ibid., p. 66.

Tant que mes yeus pourront larmes espandre,
A l'heur passé avec toy regretter:
Et qu'aus sanglots et soupirs resister
Pourra ma voix, et un peu faire entendre:

Tant que ma main pourra les cordes tendre
Du mignart Lut, pour tes graces chanter:
Tant que l'esprit se voudra contenter
De ne vouloir rien fors que toy comprendre:

Je ne souhaitte encore point mourir.
Mais quand mes yeus je sentiray tarir,
Ma voix cassee, et ma main impuissante,

Et mon esprit en ce mortel sejour
Ne pouvant plus montrer signe d'amante:
Priray la Mort noircir mon plus cler jour.[1]

The torments of love which the poet suffers at the time of writing her First Elegy recall, in all its vividness, a similar experience of years past. At that time, she was unable to communicate her anguish, since her talents as a writer had not yet matured.

Je sen desja un piteus souvenir,
Qui me contreint la larme à l'oeil venir.
Il m'est avis que je sen les alarmes,
Que premiers j'u d'Amour, je voy les armes,
Dont il s'arma en venant m'assaillir.[2]

Like Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre, those of Louise Labé are not totally free of "préciosité". The recurrent love imagery--les flèches, les flammes, les plaies, le soleil, les rivieres et les fontaines--were all part of the common stock of the Petrarchists, and it would be quite strange if Louise Labé, living and working in a city steeped in Italianism, never made use of them.[3] She does so to some extent in the elegies,

[1] Aynard, p. 273.

[2] Ibid., p. 248.

[3] It was the excessive use of such imagery that provoked du Bellay's ode "Contre les pétrarquistes" in 1553, two years before the publication of Louise Labé's poetry (cf. Chapter III, page 82, of this paper.)

and even more so in the sonnets. Their appearance in the texts is, however, overshadowed by a sincerity that was rare in the sixteenth century. In 1549, six years before the appearance of Louise Labé's works, du Bellay recommended to French poets the art of imitation. After that, originality was given little value, and plagiarism was not only tolerated, but even advocated. At such a time, Louise Labé dared to be original.

In the First Elegy, she continues the narration of her early experiences:

> Et me moquant, et voyant l'un aymer,
> L'autre bruler et d'Amour consommer:
> En voyant tant de larmes espandues,
> Tant de soupirs et prières perdues,
> Je n'aperçu que soudain me vint prendre
> Le mesme mal que je soulois reprendre:
> Qui me persa d'une telle furie,
> Qu'encor n'en suis apres long tems guerie.[1]

The poet then returns to the apology, or defense of love, which we have already encountered in the Third Elegy:[2]

> . . . Dames, qui les lirez,
> De mes regrets avec moy soupirez.

[1] This passage, too, has given rise to much speculation. The allegorical poem of the "Louenges" to which we have already had occasion to refer (Cf. O'Connor, p. 69, footnote) made mention of a "bon poète rommain" who had loved Louise Labé but whom she had rejected. Cupid to avenge this poet, made her fall in love with an "homme de guerre". Luc Van Brabant did not hesitate to identify the "bon poète romain" with Clément Marot, basing his argument partly on the thesis that Marot was a "poète romant" because he wrote in "langue romane" (French) rather than in Latin! (Luc Van Brabant, Louize Labé et ses aventures amoureuses avec Clément Marot et le dauphin Henry, Belgique, Ed. de la Belle sans sy, 1967).

[2] It also appears in the Twenth-fourth Sonnet:

> Ne reprenez, Dames, si j'ay aymé:
> Si j'ay senti mile torches ardantes,
> Mille travaus, mile douleurs mordantes:
> Si en pleurant, j'ay mon tems consumé. . . .

Possible, un jour je feray le semblable,
Et ayderay votre voix pitoyable
A vos travaux et peines raconter,
Au tems perdu vainement lamenter.

. . . . . .

N'estimez point que l'on doive blamer
Celles qu'a fait Cupidon enflamer.
Autres que nous, nonobstant leur hautesse,
Ont enduré l'amoureuse rudesse.[1]

The poet's choice of Semiramis as an example lends a very personal touch considering what we know of her own interest in horsemanship and military matters:

. . . Royne de Babylone
Où est ton coeur qui es combaz resonne?
Qu'est devenu ce fer et cet escu,
Dont tu rendois le plus brave veincu?

. . . . . .

T'a pù si tot ton coeur viril corrompre,
Que le plaisir d'armes plus ne te touche:
Mais seulement languis en une couche?[2]

The elegy ends with the portrait of a pitiful old woman who, having scorned love in her youth, now suffers the pangs of passion. She tries frantically to restore the beauty with which she once attracted potential lovers, but all is in vain. Time has avenged the admirers whom she once rejected.[3] Here, as in the Debat de Folie et d'Amour,

[1] Aynard, pp. 248, 249. (First Elegy). O'Connor remarks that the device of imploring the pity and pardon of one's readers can be traced to Petrarch (op. cit., p. 150).

[2] Ibid., pp. 249, 250. As in the Third Eeegy, the example of a strong, warlike woman recalls the Orlando Furioso (Bradamante, Marphise).

[3] This is also the theme of Marot's Elegy XIV and of Propertius III, xxv. (Cf. Chapter II, page 58, of this paper). The old woman, as depicted in Louise Labé's First Elegy, fulfills Propertius' dark prophecy to the faithless Cynthia in III, xxv:

Vellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos,
a! speculo rugas increpitante tibi,

Louise Labé reveals her keen powers of observation:

> Alors de fard et eau continuelle
> Elle essayoit se faire venir belle,
> Voulant chasser le ridé labourage,
> Que l'aage avoit gravé sur son visage.
> Sur son chef gris elle avoit empruntee
> Quelque perruque, et assez mal antee:
> Et plus estoit à son gré bien fardee,
> De son Ami moins estoit regardee:
> Lequel ailleurs fuiant n'en tenoit conte,
> Tant lui sembloit laide, et avoir grand'honte
> D'estre aymé d'elle. Ainsi la povre vieille
> Recevoit bien pareille pour pareille.
> De maints en vain un temps fut reclamee,
> Ores qu'elle ayme, elle n'est point aymee.[1]

It is now time to conclude our study of Louise Labé's elegies. Basically, as we have seen, the poet from Lyon followed the pattern set by Marot in La Suite de l'Adolescence Clementine of 1533. Her elegies, like those of Marot, are long epistles on the subject of love. The plaintive quality of these elegies results from the fact that the poet, like the women of Ovid's Héroïdes, has been abandoned by her lover. The use of the long decasyllabic poem which French poets had always practiced and which dates, actually, from the "chansons de geste", is also common to Marot, as well as to du Bellay, Ronsard, Pontus de Tyard and others who wrote love elegies in the sixteenth century. Here, however, the similarity to Marot's elegies ends.

> exclusa inque vicem fastus patiare superbos
> et quae fecisti facta queraris anus!
> Has tibi fatalis cecinit mea pagina diras.

Ah! tu voudras arracher les cheveux blancs et la glace te renverra comme une injure tes rides; on ne voudra plus de toi, et, à ton tour, tu subiras les dédains superbes; tu te plaindras d'être traitée comme tu traitas les autres; tu seras une vieille! Voilà le sort cruel que te présage la dernière page de mon livre, page fatale.

(translation by D. Paganelli)

[1] Aynard, pp. 250, 251. (First Elegy)

Louise Labé does not engage in the intricate discussions of love--the "métaphysique galante" which characterized Marot's elegies, and which was present in the work of other love elegists of the period, including Ronsard's elegies to Isabeau de Limeuil. In a sense, Louise Labé rescued the elegy which, bogged down by an enormous number of Petrarchist images and the artificial quality which resulted from them, was in danger of becoming a dead form. As Ronsard would later do in the case of Genèvre, she infused life into the elegy. Louise Labé's use of realistic details--the description of her education in the Third Elegy and of the process of falling in love in the First Elegy--makes her poems seem quite spontaneous and totally sincere. Sincerity was, in fact, the quality lacking in the work of her predecessors.

Louise Labé's Second Elegy is a veritable "cri du coeur" in which the reader can follow and share every nuance of feeling, every torturous suspicion of the abandoned lover. Among sixteenth century French love elegies, only Ronsard's three elegies to Genèvre are comparable in their journalistic quality, their spontaneity, and their realism. They, too, form a "roman d'amour". Moreover, Louise Labé, we must remember, published her three elegies eight years before Ronsard wrote his first elegies to Genèvre.

Albert-Marie Schmidt, in discussing what critics generally refer to as "l'école lyonnaise", suggests that the distinguishing characteristic of the Lyonnese poets is their personalism.[1] He envisages an

[1] Albert-Marie Schmidt, Etudes sur le seizième siècle, Ed. Albin Michel, Paris, 1967, pp. 192, 193. That critic explains the term "littérature personnelle" as follows: "Non pas une littérature subjective, mais une littérature personnelle. L'expression de leur personne, c'est-à-dire de leur individualité propre."

anthology which would be entitled, not Les Poètes lyonnais, précurseurs de la Pléiade, which suggests a false relationship, but rather, Les Poètes lyonnais, inventeurs de la littérature personnelle. In fact, there is no poetry more distinctly "personal" than Louise Labé's. To suggest that she was in any way a "disciple" of Maurice Scève falsifies the issue. Although Scève has occasionally been viewed as a forerunner of Mallarmé and other nineteenth century Symbolists, his hermetic Délie, not to mention le Microcosme, is scarcely read at all today except by a handful of well-intentioned scholars. Scève's obscurity and his excessive reliance on the work of the Petrarchists give his work a curious, dated quality which is unappealing to the majority of readers. By contrast, Louise Labé's elegies and sonnets are as fresh, as moving, and as relevant today as they were four centuries ago.[1]

We would expect to find a strong Italian influence in the work of a Lyonnese poet, and such is certainly the case in the poems of Louise Labé. Nevertheless, unlike most of her contemporaries, she does not "petrarquise".[2] While most of the poets of her time quote extensively

[1] It was our original intention to include Pernette du Guillet in the present study. In The Birth of the Elegy in France, Christine Scollen mentions that certain of Pernette du Guillet's poems were given the title "élégie", probably by the editor Antoine du Moulin, when they were published after the poet's death in 1545. For that critic, it is significant that the editor classified as elegies poems of at least thirty lines with love as their subject, written in decasyllables with "rimes plates". In his "Etude sur Pernette du Guillet", V.-L. Saulnier lists the five poems which the editors designated as elegies. We have found these to be somewhat heterogeneous in character, and since Pernette du Guillet rarely gave a title to her poems, there is no indication that she herself regarded these five as elegies. They deserve to be studied in and of themselves.

[2] Dorothy O'Connor stresses this point on pp. 145, 146: "Son maître fut, en matière de poésie, non pas les poètes pétrarquisants, mais Pétrarque lui-même. . . . Louise doit beaucoup à Pétrarque, bien qu'elle lui prenne textuellement et littéralement très peu. Elle lui doit d'abord une partie de l'inspiration de son oeuvre.

from Petrarchist sources, she almost never does so,[1] and she is content to use an occasional image or motif which has the flavor of Petrarchist poetry but which had become part of the basic vocabulary of love lyric. We have seen evidence of this in the elegies, where the "flammes", "flèches", "larmes", "soupirs", "plaies", "soleils", and the usual mythological references (Amours, Mars etc.) are a fairly common occurrence. They were also present, to a certain extent, in Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre. At the same time, Louise Labé's conception of love, like that of Ronsard, has much in common with that of the Latin love elegists. It is far more earthy, more sensual, and in a sense, more realistic than that of Petrarch.[2]

There is an affinity in temperament between Ronsard and Louise Labé in that both desire, first and foremost, the complete physical possession of the loved one. The difference lies in the fact that Ronsard rejects Petrarch as being inimical to his nature;[3] Louise Labé does not. For Ronsard, eroticism is an end in itself; for Louise Labé it is a point of departure. There is, in Louise Labé's poems, a peculiar mélange of sensuality and the neo-Platonic idealism which is found in the poems of Petrarch. This fusion of physical and spiritual love is rather clearly indicated in the Ninth Sonnet, which was quoted in its

[1] The adaptation of the sonnet by Sannazar (III) appears to be the one exception.

[2] Cf. Gérard Guillot, op. cit., p. 83: "On juge combien l'amour plus charnel, plus 'terre à terre' de Louise Labé poursuit une fin moins spiritualiste, moins métaphysique, mais plus physique: la possession réelle de l'être aimé."

[3] Cf. "L'Elégie à son Livre" (Ronsard, Tome I, p. 111) and Chapter III of this paper.

entirety on page 194 of this chapter. The Platonic element is also found in Sonnet VII which, once again, begins rather conventionally and proceeds toward more originality.[1]

> On voit mourir toute chose animee,
> Lors que du corps l'ame sutile part:
> Je suis le corps, toy la meilleure part:
> Où es tu donq, ô ame bien aymee?
>
> Ne me laissez par si long tems pamee,
> Pour me sauver apres viendrois trop tard.
> Las, ne mets point ton corps en ce hazart:
> Rens lui sa part et moitié estimee.
>
> Mais fais, Ami, que ne soit dangereuse
> Cette rencontre et revue amoureuse,
> L'accompagnant, non de severité,
>
> Non de rigueur: mais de grace amiable,
> Qui doucement me rende ta beauté,
> Jadis cruelle, à present favorable.[2]

We are struck by the fact that Louise Labé, on whom the influence of Petrarch was quite profound, was also inadvertently following Propertius. Petrarch's conception of love as necessarily involving suffering and torture is quite in the tradition of the Latin elegist. We have had occasion to see how this aspect of Propertius' thought is revealed in his very first elegy, in which he introduces the theme of the unrelenting "furor".[3] That Petrarch, as a classical scholar, was familiar with the work of Propertius, is quite certain.[4] Pierre de

[1] Cf. Peter Sharratt's commentary, op. cit., pp. 60 ff.

[2] Aynard, p. 266.

[3] Cf. Chapter I, pp. 25 ff.

[4] Cf. Maud F. Jerrold, Francesco Petrarca, Poet and Humanist, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1909, p. 59: "His poetical library was more unique than his historical one. For, besides Virgil, he seems to have possessed Horace, Ovid, Catullus and Propertius, the last two being very little known."

Nolhac gives the following opinion:

> En tout cas, Pétrarque avait lu Properce, et nous allons voir qu'il le connaissait beaucoup mieux qu'on n'a pu le croire. . . . Enfin, s'il ne cite pas directement Properce dans ses oeuvres, comme il fait de tant d'autres poètes, il se retrouve que ses manuscrits portent la trace de la lecture la plus directe. . . . A notre examen de la question vient d'être ajoutée la plus heureuse et la plus concluante recherche dans les oeuvres poétiques latines de Pétrarque. Un délicat connaisseur de Properce n'y a pas relevé moins de quatorze imitations ou réminiscences, presque toutes dans l'Africa. Ce ne sont que des mots ou des images, empruntés par la mémoire plus que par la volonté, mais qui n'en prouvent que mieux à quel point l'amant la Laure était familier avec les élégies de l'amant de Cynthie.[1]

The seemingly endless emotional anguish of the lover, which translates itself into physical symptoms, was very much a part of Propertius' elegies and is echoed in Petrarch's sonnets. We have chosen to quote one piece here, Sonnet CXXXIV of the Canzoniere, which illustrates this tendency, using a series of antitheses so abused by Petrarch's followers:

> Pace non trovo, e non ò da far guerra;
> E temo e spero; e ardo, e son un ghiaccio;
> E volo sopra 'l cielo, e giaccio in terra;
> E nulla stringo, e tutto 'l mondo abbraccio.
>
> Tal m'a in pregion che non m'apre né serra;
> Né per suo mi riten, né scioglie il laccio;
> E non m'ancide Amore, e non mi sferra;
> Né mi vuol vivo, né mi trae d'impaccio.
>
> Veggio senza occhi, e non ò lingua e grido;
> E bramo di perir, e cheggio aita;
> E ò in odio me stesso, e amo altrui.
>
> Pascomi di dolor, piangendo rido;
> Egualmente mi spiace morte e vita.
> In questo stato son, donna, per vui.[2]

[1] Pierre de Nolhac, Pétrarque et l'humanisme, Paris, Champion, 1907, pp. 170-72.

[2] Francesco Petrarca, Le Rime, con saggio introduttivo e commento di Nicola Zingarelli, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1963, pp. 790, 791.

Perhaps the relationship between Petrarch and Propertius merits further study. In any case, if Louise Labé was not directly familiar with the work of the Latin love elegist--and, actually, there is some indication that she was[1]--his influence may nonetheless have passed into her elegies indirectly through Petrarch.

From our study of Louise Labé's elegies, a portrait emerges of a strangely modern poet and woman. At the turn of the century, Emile Faguet gave to the term elegy its broadest definition: "l'expression des sentiments les plus intimes."[2] When Louise Labé, in her First Elegy, states her intention,--"lamenter ma peine et ma souffrance",--she is indicating that hers will be a very "personal" type of poetry. We have seen in Chapter II how, in the case of Marot, the notion of an impersonal elegy, written merely as a command piece, was a contradiction in terms. For the Latin love elegists, this poetic form had been used, most definitely, as an expression of personal feeling. By basing her elegies on personal experience and by keeping them relatively free of the rhetoric of the Petrarchists, Louise Labé paved the way for future elegists. It is tempting to imagine Ronsard reading them, with much pleasure, at some time between the years 1555 and 1563, but all that is mere conjecture.

Last, but certainly not least, Louise Labé's acceptance of herself as a woman is totally modern. Not only are the poet's feminist

[1] Cf. the portrait of the old woman at the end of the First Elegy, which bears a marked resemblance to Propertius III, xxv. The same theme --time will avenge the rejected lover--does appear in Marot's Fourteenth Elegy, with which Louise Labé was obviously familiar.

[2] Emile Faguet, Histoire de la littérature française depuis les origines jusqu'à la fin du 16e siècle, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1901, p. 409.

views expressed in her "épître dédicatoire"; they are also implicit throughout her poetry. In the Third Elegy, in which she implores the women of Lyon not to condemn her for the errors of her "fole jeunesse, si c'est erreur", she is, as a woman, claiming her right to passion and sexual fulfillment on the same level as a man. The same may be said of the Eighteenth Sonnet, which has been considered her most "libertine":

> Baise m'encor, rebaise moy et baise:
> Donne m'en un de tes plus savoureus,
> Donne m'en un de tes plus amoureus:
> 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 heureus
> Jouissons nous l'un de l'autre à notre aise.
>
> Lors double vie à chacun en suivra.
> Chacun en soy et son ami vivra.
> Permets m'Amour penser quelque folie:
>
> Tousjours suis mal, vivant discrettement,
> Et ne me puis donner contentement,
> Si hors de moy ne fay quelque saillie.[1]

Here, our poet is taking as her inspiration Jean Second and, ultimately, Catullus. As we have seen, two of Ronsard's elegies are virtual adaptations of "baisers" by Jean Second, and other poets of the period, including du Bellay, also imitated them.[2] That a woman should choose to do so in the first half of the sixteenth century was, no doubt, surprising, and to some, perhaps a bit shocking. Gérard Guillot, writing

[1] Aynard, p. 277. O'Connor (p. 146) remarks that even in this most erotic of sonnets, there are traces of Platonism in the first tercet, in the notion of two souls becoming one by the spiritual bond which unites them.

[2] Cf. Chapter IV, pp. 140 ff.

in the 1950's, treats this aspect of the question:

> Elle est femme. Elle assume son corps et son sexe, la totalité de son être. . . . S'accepter, se vouloir, s'édifier, c'est lutter contre ce qui est donné et établi. Or ce qui est donné et établi, c'est une société organisée par l'homme, au service de ses intérêts et de ses plaisirs. Une societé où la subordination de la femme ne serait pas seulement momentanée et amoureuse, mais permanente. . . . Louise Labé, nous ne prétendions pas qu'elle fût la seule, mais elle incarnera le type, refusa en tant de femme de s'insérer dans un tel ensemble.[1]

Now, four centuries later, society is really only beginning to come to grips with such problems. Is this not conceivably the key to historians' unflattering view of the poet who, liberating herself from the influence of others and creating a love lyric that is eternally fresh, represents "la Renaissance dans ce qu'elle a de plus pur comme forme"?[2]

[1] Guillot, pp. 88 ff.

[2] Expression of Joseph Aynard, Les Poètes lyonnais précurseurs de la Pléiade, op. cit., p. 78.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted, in the preceding chapters, to trace the development of the love elegy in sixteenth century France as reflected in the works of Marot, Ronsard and Louise Labé. In so doing, we have had occasion to consider the influence of the ancient elegy--particularly the Latin love elegy--on the work of our three Renaissance poets. We have seen that the confusion regarding the nature of the elegy, which was echoed in the various "arts poétiques" of the period, was due, in part, to a false etymology of the term. The notion that the genre derived from a "song of mourning" is belied by the fact that most of the elegies of antiquity were not laments. The ancient Greek elegy appears to have been a poem on a variety of themes, of which the lament for the dead was only one example. The elegy was characterized neither by its tone nor its subject matter, but rather by its meter, the hauntingly musical elegiac couplet, which consisted of a hexameter followed by a pentameter.

Because the elegiac couplet, or distich, was particularly suitable to the expression of personal feeling, the "poetae novi" of Rome in the first century B.C.--Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid--adapted it to Latin and used it in their love elegies. Profiting from the leisurely climate brought about by the "pax augusta", these poets produced generally erotic love poems which adhered to a certain number of "canons" or conventions. The more relaxed moral code which these poems represented was reflected in Ovid's Ars Amatoria, which contributed to the poet's

banishment from Rome by Augustus in A.D. 8.

The Latin love elegy appears to have been a distinctly Roman creation. Since no fragments of Hellenistic love elegies now exist, we cannot be sure whether or not the Latin love elegists were following Greek models. The fact that their forerunner Catullus, an enthusiastic student of Alexandrian poetry, wrote erotic epigrams in elegiac meter suggests that Callimachus' erotic epigrams may provide the link between Greek and Latin elegy. It is also significant that Propertius makes several references to the Alexandrian poets and, on one occasion, even proclaims himself the Roman Callimachus (IV, i, 64). Rather than imitating actual models, the Latin elegists were probably inspired by the Alexandrian attitude toward poetry, by which the poet, no longer a divine interpreter of eternal truths, was humanized, so to speak, and freed to express his own feelings and to describe his own experiences.

The Latin love elegy was, then, subjective poetry of an erotic nature written in elegiac meter. However, the fact that Ovid included in his Amores one lament--his moving elegy on the death of Tibullus--as well as a pseudo-lament on the death of Corinna's parrot--is further evidence of the confusion regarding the nature of the genre. That Ovid's Tristia and Epistolae ex Ponto, sorrowful epistles in which the exiled poet pleads for clemency, were also written in elegiac couplets, suggests that the Latin elegy was, above all, poetry of a personal, or subjective, nature as opposed to the impersonal epic.

Sixteen centuries later, in France, the elegy reappeared. In the Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse of 1549, Du Bellay advocated a revival of certain classical genres, including the elegy.

The treatise was a militant reaction to Sebillet's defense of Marot in his Art poétique françoys of the previous year. Ironically Marot, who was viewed by Du Bellay, Ronsard, and other members of the new school as a perpetuator of tradition and a devotee of medieval forms, had already introduced the elegy in France sixteen years earlier. His Suite de l'Adolescence Clementine of 1533 had included a section of twenty-one love elegies. That Marot chose, in the edition of 1538, to include three laments among his love elegies is further indication of the ambiguity surrounding the genre. Although Marot adopted the classical term "élégie" as a title for the poems of 1533, they bore little resemblance to the sensual Latin love elegies. Marot's "élégies" were mannered poems, generally on the theme of unrequited love. Since they were largely command pieces, written in the name of others, they were, with all the contradictions that the term implies, "impersonal love elegies". Furthermore, they were marked by a preciosity which may be qualified as either medieval or pre-Petrarchist, since one current flowed into the other.

Most remarkably, Marot's elegies, which were written in decasyllables with "rimes plates", a favorite form of the Rhétoriqueurs, were all in the form of epistles. The key to the mystery lies in the fact that Marot took as his model, not Ovid's Amores, but rather the Héroïdes, imaginary letters of legendary heroines of antiquity to the lovers or husbands who had abandoned them. Marot's elegies appear to have begun a trend which lasted throughout the sixteenth century. After their publication, the conception of the elegy as a "plainte amoureuse en forme d'épître" became firmly established. In this respect,

Marot remains a pivotal figure in the development of the Renaissance love elegy.

When we approached the work of Ronsard, we found further confusion and contradictions. In the Deffence of 1549, the poets of the Pléiade had resolved to model their elegies after those of Ovid, Tibullus and Propertius. However, in the same manifesto, Du Bellay had advised French poets to avoid practicing the "épître". The Pléiade wished, at all costs, to disregard the epistle in order to avoid comparison with Marot, who had excelled in that particular genre. In order to avoid using the term "épître", Ronsard took many of his early poems written in decasyllables with "rimes plates" and containing an address and entitled them "élégies". Ironically, then, although Ronsard was determined not to take Marot as a model, his elegies nonetheless became epistles, like those of his predecessor! The one obvious exception is Ronsard's "Elégie sur le trépas d'Antoine Chateignier", which is a direct imitation of Ovid's lament on the death of Tibullus. Here, we find the Renaissance poet attempting to adapt the Latin elegiac distich to French by alternating the alexandrin and the decasyllable, as the Latin poets had alternated the hexameter and the pentameter. Ronsard's early elegies--those published between 1553 and 1563--consisted of poems in decasyllables or alexandrins with "rimes plates", all of which contained an address and therefore would qualify as epistles. That Ronsard hesitated in forming a notion of the genre is indicated by the fact that his early elegies were somewhat heterogeneous in nature. Many of them had literary or philosophical themes. Even when love was the subject, it was treated in a didactic or theoretical fashion so that none of the early

elegies could be characterized as love poems.

The love elegy as such did not emerge in Ronsard's work until 1563. Even then, it appeared to follow two different paths. The series of elegies generally attributed to Isabeau de Limeuil are pale, ethereal poems dominated by "concetti pétrarquistes" and in which the concept of love is clearly, as it had been for Petrarch, an outgrowth of the medieval courtly tradition. These poems, which are impersonal in nature, resemble a sophisticated form of Marot's elegies.

Ronsard appears far more at ease in the three elegies for Genèvre, in which he opts for the "beau stile bas" of "Les Amours de Marie", a style which approximates the simple, direct manner of the Latin love elegists. In these three elegies, the poet describes, in almost documentary fashion, the details of an intense personal experience. He sings of the "pleasures and pains of love" in a frankly sensual and realistic manner which recalls Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Yet, even though he here abandons the "métaphysique galante", the endless theoretical discussions of love which characterized Marot's elegies and his own series to Isabeau de Limeuil, Ronsard is still adhering somewhat to the model inaugurated by Marot in that all three elegies to Genèvre are in the form of epistles and are written either in alexandrins or in decasyllables with "rimes plates". The fact that Ronsard included in the section of his complete works entitled "Elégies" only poems on the subject of love indicates that, as time passed, he considered the elegy more and more a love lyric, as the Latin love elegists had done.

Louise Labé, in the three elegies which she published in Lyon in

1555, anticipated Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre. Louise Labé also used the long epistle form in decasyllables which had been introduced by Marot, and her elegies, particularly the second one addressed to a lover whom she calls simply "Ami", may be described as "plaintes amoureuses" in that they deal with the theme of unrequited love. It is almost certain that Louise Labé was well acquainted with Marot's elegies and that she had perhaps even met the poet himself during one of his four visits to Lyon. She uses much of the conventional love imagery of the period which had been popularized by Petrarch's followers and had become part of the "common stock" of love lyric. Even Ronsard's elegies to Genèvre are not totally free of it. Yet Louise Labé's work, in its wealth of realistic details, its documentary quality, its spontaneity, and its more sensual approach to love, had the flavor of direct personal experience. Louise Labé and Ronsard, in the Genèvre elegies, directed the genre away from Marot's impersonal elegy and back toward the direct expression of personal feeling which had characterized the work of the Latin love elegists.

We have noted that, in the case of Ronsard, the influence of the Latin love elegists is felt throughout the poet's entire works and is not confined to the elegies themselves. The question of what is, or is not, "elegiac" is an exceedingly complex one which goes far beyond the scope of this paper. Yet we have remarked, in Chapter IV, that Ronsard is a singularly modern elegiac poet and that the quality of being "elegiac" has much to do with the haunting awareness of life's brevity. Because all happiness, and life itself, is ephemeral, there can be no joy that is not mingled with sadness. Each moment lived brings us

closer to our destiny. The insistence upon the fragility of youth and beauty was one of Ronsard's debts to Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, who were repeatedly urging their ladies not to delay in savoring the fruits of life. The "carpe florem" was implicit, as well as explicit, in the Latin love elegies. Life is brief, and we are only a spark between two eternities. Our only means of coping with mortality lie in the fullest enjoyment of the present moment, here represented by eroticism and sensual pleasure, or far more lastingly, in the immortality conferred by literature. The poems themselves attest to the survival of Lesbia, Delia, Cynthia, and Corinna, and of the poets who celebrated them.

The epicurean theme is far older than Epicurus, perhaps reaching back to the dawn of human consciousness.[1] We have seen in Chapter I how the very first elegist, Mimnermus of Colophon, writing in the seventh century B.C., was particularly preoccupied by the delights of youth and by the impending threat of old age.[2] For the Roman poets of the Augustan Age, Mimnermus was, quite significantly, the mythical father of the love elegy.

Of the three Latin love elegists, Tibullus was perhaps the most distinctly "elegiac", in that he was, above all, concerned with the contrasts between dream and reality, with nostalgia for what was, in the past, or for what might have been, as opposed to the disappointments inherent in real life experiences. Tibullus' view of humanity as having fallen from a previously happier state, the mythical Golden Age to which

[1] Cf. Chapter I, p. 20, and the quotation from Paul Laumonier, Ronsard, poète lyrique (footnote 3).

[2] Cf. Chapter I, p. 8.

all the Latin love elegists allude is, in its wistfulness, very much in the elegiac tradition.

We have considered in Chapter IV how Ronsard's urgent desire to savor the momentary pleasures of life was reinforced by his constant awareness of the human condition. Given life's brevity, happiness threatens to fade at any moment. Nowhere is the urgency to enjoy the fleeting moment more intense than in the "nunc est bibendum" of Ronsard's Horatian odes and in the "carpe florem" by which the poet, in the manner of the Latin love elegists, urges Cassandre, Marie, and Hélène, and even the more earthy Genèvre, not to delay in enjoying the pleasures of youth, beauty, and of course, love. "Cueillez les roses de la vie" is a constant leitmotif throughout Ronsard's poetry and is not limited to the elegies as such.

Of all of Ronsard's elegies, the three written for Marie Stuart, which are not love elegies but which betray intense feeling on the part of the poet and are therefore far more than command pieces, are perhaps the most "elegiac".[1] Here the vision of the departing queen walking alone in the gardens of Fontainebleau is imbued with nostalgia and melancholy. The poems concern the contrast between present reality and dreams of a happier past, a theme much explored by Tibullus. They are meditations on the uncertainties of human existence, in which the slow tempo of the alexandrin and the images of autumn, evening, and withering leaves suggest the ephemeral nature of life itself. In the elegies to Marie Stuart, Ronsard anticipated all the "poésie d'automne" which, in later centuries, would be labeled "elegiac".

[1] Cf. Chapter III, pp. 102 ff.

As far as form is concerned, the elegy emerged from the sixteenth century still adhering to the pattern which had been set by Marot in 1533.[1] It remained basically a long epistle with "rimes plates" on the subject of love. The epistle form, as well as the concept of the "plainte amoureuse", indicated the far-reaching influence of Ovid's Héroïdes, which Octavien de Saint-Gelais had translated in 1508 and which Marot had taken as his model. In later years the elegy would become more flexible in respect to both form and content.

It is interesting to note that, in the seventeenth century, La Fontaine produced five elegies, all of which still conformed to the pattern established by Marot. La Fontaine's "Élégie pour M. F." ("L'Élégie aux Numphes de Vaux") of 1662 concerns the disgrace and imprisonment of his protector Fouquet.[2] As a long meditation on the reverses of fortune, it recalls Marot's "élégie déplorative" for Jacques de Beaune, seigneur de Samblançay,[3] and reflects genuine emotion on the part of the poet. La Fontaine's remaining four elegies are epistles on the theme of unrequited love and are addressed to a lady called "Clymène",[4] a name which the poet had used as a title of a comedy which appeared the same year (1671). Although the four love elegies have unrequited love as their theme, they are a bit flippant and satirical in tone. Moreover, they are marked by a "préciosité galante" which is one

[1] Cf. Christine M. Scollen, The Birth of the Elegy in France, pp. 147-152.

[2] La Fontaine, Oeuvres diverses, texte établi et annoté par Pierre Clarac, Paris, Gallimard, 1958, pp. 528, 529.

[3] Cf. Chapter II, pp. 71, 72.

[4] La Fontaine, Oeuvres diverses, pp. 601-09.

characteristic of the period. The first elegy contains allusions to the conventional elements of Latin love elegy, including the absent husband and the barking dog, who betrays the arrival of the lover. One senses that these are impersonal literary exercises and that La Fontaine is, within the established framework of the love elegy, satirizing that poetical genre, which he, in fact, does with much charm.

The fate of the elegy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been studied in detail in a work by Henri Potez.[1] Taking as his point of departure the "élégies antiques" of André Chénier and the erotic elegies of Parny and Bertin, that critic finely traces the evolution of the genre up until the moment when it loses itself in "le vaste Océan dy lyrisme romantique".[2]

Included in the study by Potez is a rather long section on Millevoye who, for that critic, marks the transition from Parny to Lamartine. Millevoye wrote a very respectable treatise on the history of the elegy.[3] Among Millevoye's elegies "La Chute des feuilles" and "Le Poète mourant" illustrate that "poésie d'automne", poetry of

[1] Henri Potez, L'Élégie en France avant le Romantisme (de Parny à Lamartine) 1778-1820. Réimpression de l'édition de Paris, 1898. Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1970.

[2] Ibid., p. x.

[3] "Sur l'Élégie". Charles Hubert Millevoye, Oeuvres complètes, Paris, Ladvocat, 1822, Vol. I, pp. 3-49. The poet remarks on p. 35: "Si beaucoup de poèmes prennent le titre d'Élégies sans en avoir le caractère, beaucoup aussi, sans en porter le titre, sont des Élégies véritables: les exemples s'offrent en foule dans la Bérénice du tendre Racine."

Millevoye also states, regarding the elegy (pp. 19 ff): "Elle se plaît surtout au souvenir de ce qui n'est plus. . . . Je ne sais de quel compositeur on a dit: 'Sa musique était douce et triste à la fois comme le souvenir du bonheur passé, ce qui me semble merveilleusement applicable à l'Élégie."

sadness and solitude which is the modern elegy.[1]

In 1819, a year before the appearance of Lamartine's Méditations, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, who had a strong sentimental attachment to Lyon,[2] or rather to the Lyonnais, and who even wrote a poem to Louise Labé,[3] published a series of elegies, the majority of which were love poems. The elegies, which convey the pain caused by the absence of a loved one, whether it be a lover who has departed or a child who has died, are languorous and melancholy in nature. It is now neither the form nor the content which defines the genre "elegy", but rather, the tone.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, François Coppée, a Parisian poet somewhat influenced by Baudelaire, expressed the ephemeral quality of happiness in a series of pale, melancholy, and dreamlike poems, which were also tinged with eroticism.[4] Les Intimités are miniature love elegies, autumn or twilight poems painted in half-tones.

In the same tradition are the elegies of Francis Jammes, which appeared in 1898-1900.[5] In these elegies, each fleeting instant--the

[1] Cf. Potez, L'Elégie en France avant le Romantisme, p. 470, who describes the latter poem as "des vers frêles, délicats et doucement éclairés d'une lumière pâle, comme un sourire de malade".

[2] Cf. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Oeuvres poétiques, édition complète établie et commentée par M. Bertrand, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1973. The poet, who spent a total of ten years in Lyon, "exécrait cette ville fangeuse et noire" (p. 360) but wrote in May 1838: "J'ai trop souffert de Lyon et à Lyon pour ne pas y demeurer attachée par le coeur." (Cf. Oeuvres poétiques, p. 361.)

[3] Ibid., pp. 228-30:

> Et tu chantas l'amour! ce fut ta destinée,
> Belle! et femme! et naïve, et du monde étonnée. . . .

[4] François Coppée, Poésies 1864-1869, Paris, Alphonse Lemerre, 1878.

[5] Francis Jammes, Élégies et autres vers, choisis et préfacés par Philippe Jaccottet, Lausanne, Mermod, 1946.

fading of summer, the withering of flowers, the decline of youth, the disappearance of love--increases the poet's anguish, an anguish which ultimately yields to calm resignation. Once again, we see the extent to which Ronsard, throughout his work, was an elegiac poet in the modern sense of that term. The constant awareness of impending death, of the fragility of human life, which characterized the elegies of Mimnermus, of which mere fragments survive, and was a haunting leitmotif in the poetry of Ronsard, is ever present in the modern elegy. Amid the contradictions and mysteries which mark the history of the genre, this provides one unifying factor. For that reason, we can think of no more fitting way to conclude our study of the sixteenth century love elegy than with the following quotation from Francis Jammes:

> Je ne sais pas pourquoi j'ai traversé la vie,
> ni pourquoi, aujourd'hui, après ces grands ennuis,
> je resonge à des soirs d'amour cachés de pluie.
>
> Mon enfance est là-bas dans un petit parterre,
> ma jeunesse un amour d'automne gris et vert,
> et le reste sera l'yeuse du cimetière.[1]

[1] Francis Jammes, "Élégie deuxième", Élégies et autres vers, p. 21.

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