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MOCKING THE FEAR OF GHOSTS IN RONSARD'S *HYMNES* (1555–56)

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Introduction

Pierre de Ronsard's poem 'Les Daimons', published in the 1555 *Hymnes*, earned its renown owing to the literary polemic between Ronsard and Bernard de Montméja, a Calvinist minister writing under the nom de plume 'B de Mont-Dieu', at the beginning of the French Wars of Religion. In Mont-Dieu's second *Response aux calomnies contenues au Discours et la Suyte du Discours sur les Miseres de ce temps*. . . (1563), Ronsard is caricatured as a poet-necromancer who summons spirits in his poems.[1] When Ronsard responds to Mont-Dieu's accusations of necromancy, in the *Responce*. . . *aux injures et calomnies, de je ne sçay quels Predicans & Ministres de Geneve* (1563), he focuses on Mont-Dieu's misinterpretation of 'Les Daimons'. By saying to the Prédicant: 'Mais davant que parler, il faut exerciser | Ton Daimon qui te faict mes Daimons despriser', Ronsard uses the word 'Daimon' antanaclastically, referring to both the spirit and the poem, to stress the miscomprehension of the Prédicant who has confused reality with fiction, religious matters with poetry, and 'daimons' with demons.[2] As we will see, Ronsard's use of the Hellenistic spelling 'daimons' is a reference to a cosmology inspired by Psellus and other classical sources. As beings holding an intermediary place between immortal deities and humans, daimons are not quite synonymous with Christian demons, but closer to familiar genii who can affect humans in positive and negative ways. Following the appropriation of the poem by Protestant readers, Ronsard replies with a burlesque episode: the exorcism of the Prédicant-werewolf.[3] Ronsard's sharp turn to a satirical use of ghosts in the *Discours des Misères de ce temps* masks the fact that ghost figures also play a humorous role in the earlier *Hymnes*, featuring in poems peppered with ironic remarks, serio-comic images, inside jokes, self-deprecation, and light-hearted caricatures. In this, the 1555–56 *Hymnes* also contrast with the later *Hymnes des Saisons* (*Nouvelles Poësies*, 1563; published after the culmination of the polemical exchange), which draw on more

[1] B. de Mont-Dieu [Bernard de Montméja], *Response aux calomnies contenues au Discours et Suyte du Discours sur les Miseres de ce temps Faits par Messire Pierre de Ronsard, jadis Poëte et maintenant Prebstre. Par B. de Mont-Dieu* in *La Polémique protestante contre Ronsard*, ed. by Jacques Pineaux, 2 vols (Paris: Didier, 1973), I, 67–96, ll. 583–616.

[2] Pierre de Ronsard, *Responce de P. de Ronsard, gentilhomme Vandomois, aux injures et calomnies, de je ne sçay quels Predicans & Ministres de Geneve*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Paul Laumonier, Raymond Lebègue, and Isidore Silver, 7 vols (Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 2015), vol. IV, tome XI, pp. 109–76, ll. 133–34. Unless otherwise stipulated, all quotations from Ronsard refer to the Laumonier edition (republished in 2015).

[3] This scene has been analysed in detail by Daniel Ménager, 'L'Exorcisme du ministre protestant dans la *Response aux injures* de Ronsard', *Albineana, Cahiers d'Aubigné*, 21 (2009), 61–73.

comical and 'romanesque' stories.[4] If Alice Vintenon has clearly laid out the humour of those *Hymnes des Saisons* and the use of comedic devices for the theatrical portrayal of burlesque Olympian gods, the comic potential of the earlier *Hymnes* of 1555–56 is rarely mentioned.[5] However, the burlesque moments of the 1563 *Discours*, such as the exorcism in the *Responce… aux injures*, render more explicit the poet's wish to create a separate and autonomous space for his fictions. The reader is thus invited to take the philosophical and scientific erudition of all the *Hymnes* with a grain of salt. This article will highlight Ronsard's implicit selection of a readership capable of appreciating the self-deprecatory undertones of his poems, a ludic quality at odds with the wider reading of the *Hymnes* by Protestant writers. In deeming the poems blasphemous, such writers ignore — wilfully or not — the poems' light-hearted depiction of demonic figures and ghosts. The article will focus in particular on the meaning of episodes of fear in the context of this elitist friendship.

How to read 'Les Hymnes'?

Ronsard's *Hymnes* consist of two books of verse aiming to celebrate God through the allegorical representation of nature's wonders, in poems that celebrate abstract notions such as Philosophy, Fortune, Death, and Eternity, with an emphasis on heavenly objects ('les Astres', 'le Ciel', for example). These poems are placed alongside 'Epistres' dedicated to grandees and protectors and some epyllia ('Hymne de Calaïs and Zethes' and 'Hymne de Pollux et de Castor'). At the intersection of Homeric and religious hymns, the poetic form seems to demand a serious reading.[6] The use of the 'vers héroïque' (the decasyllable in 1555 and the alexandrine in 1556) aligns with the encomiastic nature of hymns and the sublime register used to celebrate the mythological origin of the objects of praise. The cosmological ambition of this collection is visible in its allegorical structure, which is mimetic of the distinction between the sublunar and translunar world. In such a serious poetic endeavour, how do we account for the self-deprecation of the poet in the *Hymnes*? As we will later show in more detail, the demonic figures encountered by Ronsard in 'Les Daimons', for example, are part of a scene that is both frightening and comedic because of the hyperbolic fear of the poet. The fear of ghosts is often derided by Ronsard, as when he describes the excessive reaction of Protestant readers to mere fictions. Yet in these poems, it is the poetic persona who is subject to the fear so often mocked in others.

Critics agree that in *Les Hymnes*, when cosmology is exhibited as a source of knowledge, this is immediately challenged by Ronsard's use of the poetic form. The constant undermining of philosophical notions by inadequate metaphors acting as poetic lags and digressions has been interpreted by Anne-Pascale

[4] Nicolas Lombart refers to several critics who point out this change in register: see Nicolas Lombart, *L'Hymne dans la poésie française de la Renaissance* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018), pp. 673–75.

[5] Alice Vintenon, *La Fantaisie philosophique à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2017), pp. 455–78.

[6] See Lombart, 'Hymnodie, piété et liturgie: la permanence de l'hymnographie chrétienne', in *L'Hymne dans la poésie française*, pp. 41–120.

Pouey-Mounou as 'impertinence', a way to acknowledge 'l'impossibilité de cerner les êtres et les choses, de les désigner comme il conviendrait'.[7] Through this paradoxical writing, the poet exhibits his own inadequacy and the potential impossibility of making sense of the world. By celebrating the cosmos, God's creation and the superiority of the poet's lyrical voice are also glorified, while emphasizing artistic labour and acknowledging the impossibility of truly capturing the *concordia discors* of nature.[8]

As part of this mystico-poetic endeavour, the emotion of 'ferveur inquiète' comes to the fore.[9] To fuel this religious fervour, Ronsard uses the 'veil' of myths, which, by making the meaning of poems both apparently didactic and cryptic, arouses the interpretative zeal of the reader. Philip Ford's analysis is emblematic of the way critics understand Ronsard's allusive writing. Ford argues that Ronsard's symbolism is twofold: although they are at times didactic, allegories and their meaning are at other times obscured, in accordance with a mystical Neoplatonic aesthetic typical of heroic and inspired poetry that only a circle of initiates could understand.[10] Such forays into the field of religious poetry also need to be understood in the context of Ronsard's defence of a syncretic and allegorical poetry in the controversy with Théodore de Bèze over biblical and pagan poetry.[11] The poet thus asserts his position as intermediary with the divine through his inspired poetry, which oscillates between Neoplatonic symbolism and Aristotelian didactic allegories. The *Hymnes* however have hitherto been analysed as poems that resist any clear decoding in allegorical terms and thereby exhibit their status as autonomous fictions. Key to the critical consensus on this collection is the Horatian revalorizing of positive powers of imagination held by the poet-*vates*, which underpins the architecture of the *Hymnes*. And yet, as we shall see, in these poems, Ronsard's poetic persona appears fearful when faced with apparitions that are the product of the imagination.

Furthermore, although the poems display a poetic independence, they are 'attached' to specific addressees due to their encomiastic nature. In the *Hymnes*, the lyrical persona is both detached and part of the community of humankind caught between awe and uncertainty when faced with the beautiful and frightening mysteries of God's creation. In this religious ecology, patrons and protectors play a critical role: the Orphean poet sees the dynamic of the exchange of the poem-gift as consubstantial to the philosophical revelation.[12] Thus, the specificity of the

[7] Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, *L'Imaginaire cosmologique de Ronsard* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), p. 183.

[8] On *concordia discors*, see in particular Malcolm Quainton, 'The Cosmic and Social Framework', in *Ronsard's Ordered Chaos: Visions of Flux and Stability in the Poetry of Pierre de Ronsard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 7–30.

[9] See Jean Céard, '"Loüer celluy qui demeure là-haut": la forme de l'hymne ronsardien', *Renaissance et Réforme*, 11 (1987), 1–14 (p. 9).

[10] Philip Ford, *Ronsard's 'Hymnes': A Literary and Iconographical Study* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS Press, 1997), pp. 130–31.

[11] See Malcolm C. Smith, *Ronsard & Du Bellay versus Bèze: Allusiveness in Renaissance Literary Texts* (Geneva: Droz, 1995), pp. 73–77; and, from the same author, 'The Hidden Meaning of Ronsard's *Hymne de l'Hyver*', *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 22 (1974), 85–98.

[12] See John O'Brien, 'Clio's "Cabinet": Metaphorical Edifices in Ronsard's "Hymnes" of 1555–1556', *The Modern Language Review*, 81 (1986), 37–50 (p. 38).

Ronsardian hymn lies in its double object of praise: the allegorical figure of the title, and the dedicatees, who, by their exhibited concordance with the object of praise, become intercessory figures and adjuvants to the poetic endeavour.[13] The first poem of the 1555 collection, 'Hymne du treschrestien du roy de France Henri II de ce nom', is a eulogy of the king's character and military exploits against England and Charles V; it also announces the content of the *Hymnes* by giving a list of all the names of the hymns' addressees.

Rather than focusing on the role of the addressee in a vertical movement of ascension, I want now to look at the social and literary effects of the horizontal relationship between patron and poet in the 'Hymne de la Justice' and 'Les Daimons' in particular. The laborious distance between poet and poetic object is complemented by an irony that is pertinent to Ronsard's sociability and testament to his attempts to advance his position at court. In more material terms, the discordance between the hymns exhibited as ciphers potentially open to everyone and cryptic poems is meant to single out the initiated elite of the French social hierarchy. In the 'Elegie de Pierre de Ronsard à J. Grevin' (ll. 83–98) and 'Discours à Monsieur de Cheverny, Garde des Seaux de France' (ll. 1–80), Ronsard defends cryptic poetry by emphatically placing it out of reach of the 'vulgaire'.[14] The elitist vocation of poetry is directly related to a performance of exclusive sociability in which the poet tries to find his place by means of a Horatian rhetoric of self-deprecation combined with flattery.[15] The 'Hymne de la Justice' shows that the figures of the court are part of a performance of complicity, which in turn transforms the mode of understanding ghostly figures in the *Hymnes*.

The effect of this shift in perspective is most noticeable when fear is associated with ghosts and spirits, as these figures open a broader discussion on the role of fiction and imagination. I shall argue that the focus on Horatian *amicitia*, which makes an initial fear founded on inferiority transform into friendship, reflects the way the poet relates to the cosmos. My interpretation will not contradict a serious religious and cosmological reading of the *Hymnes*, but rather explores how the circulation of poetic gifts from poet to grandee also enables a light-hearted and horizontal mode of reading, where the sublime emotion of fervour is subtly deflated. This change of perspective echoes many recent studies on the multilayered interpretations of early modern emotions as a means of communication that cannot be read entirely seriously, thus nuancing ideological frameworks on passions and religion.[16] Offering productive new interpretative ways to understand a passion as multivalent as fear in early modern poetic texts is a challenge, given that

[13] See Lombart, *L'Hymne dans la poésie française*, pp. 489, 516–17.

[14] Ronsard, 'Elegie de Pierre de Ronsard à J. Grevin' and 'Discours à Monsieur de Cheverny, Garde des Seaux de France', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Laumonier, Lebègue, and Silver, vol. V, tome XIV, pp. 193–99; vol. VI, tome XVIII, pp. 96–105.

[15] See Nicolas Lombart, 'Formes et fonctions de l'autodérision chez Ronsard: le modèle horatien', in *L'Invention de la vie privée et le modèle d'Horace*, ed. by Bénédicte Delignon, Nathalie Dauvois, and Line Cottegnies (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2017), pp. 183–201.

[16] See Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', *Passions in Context*, 1 (2010), 1–32 (p. 18).

most traces of the implicit spectrum of familiarity between poets and dedicatees have been lost. In order to posit that interpersonal relationships between Ronsard and his protectors nuance the register of his religious hymns, I shall rely on many incidental remarks made by Ronsardian scholars on moments of parody in the *Hymnes* that I take to be significantly more widespread than previously acknowledged. Through a new emphasis on complicity between the patron reading the hymn and the poet, we see that religious fervour and fear of God give way to mockery of the excessive and unreasonable terror of ghosts: the poet thus becomes the epitome of Aristotelian cowardice, losing all control because of his excess of fear.[17] The poetic implications of the transformation of fervour into superstitious fear are the focal points of this article.

Ironic ghosts and complicity: the example of Charles de Lorraine

Ronsard's strategy of celebrating his patron Charles de Lorraine indissolubly links ghosts with trivial demands and humour through the use of various pastiches and parodies of Greek myths and poetic conceits. The 1555 *Hymnes*, which were dedicated to Odet de Coligny, Cardinal de Châtillon, followed in 1556 by the *Second livre des Hymnes*, dedicated to Marguerite de France, can be read in light of Ronsard's aspirational relationship with his patrons and friends. Among them features prominently the Cardinal Charles de Lorraine, dedicatee of the 'Hymne de la Justice à tresillustre et réverendissime Prince, Charles Cardinal de Lorraine' (1555) and the 'Epitre de Pierre de Ronsard à tresillustre Prince Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine' (1556). Lorraine belonged to the powerful Guise family and was of royal blood through his mother, Antoinette de Bourbon: his influence appealed to Ronsard, who was always looking for ecclesiastical benefices but also willing to cultivate relationships with protectors in different branches of noble families.

In 1555 and 1556, the attempts to win over the support of Lorraine are expressed through allegories and ghostly figures and the feelings of awe and fear that they elicit. For example, in the 1556 'Epistre' dedicated to Lorraine, Ronsard promises to celebrate the cardinal wherever he is and even after his — Ronsard's — death, ending a lyrical eulogy with the image of himself as a murmuring corpse:

> Et quand la froide mort me fera devenir
> Vain hoste du sepulchre, encore d'un murmure
> Je bruiray vostre nom dedans ma sepulture.[18]

In other poems, it is the cardinal himself who is assimilated to a ghostly allegory of Justice. The 'Hymne de la Justice' is an attempt to create an ironic complicity

[17] On the definition of fear as opposite to courage, see in particular Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), pp. 160–61 (1115b–16a).

[18] Ronsard, 'Epistre de Pierre de Ronsard, à tresillustre Prince Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine' in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Laumonier, Lebègue, and Silver, vol. III, tome VIII, pp. 328–50, ll. 359–60.

between Ronsard and the 'Prélat'.[19] The story of Justice is a synthesis of various classical representations of Justice in the myth of the five ages of man, and draws primarily on Aratus, Hesiod, and Ovid.[20] Ronsard's main addition to this myth is the final transformation of the goddess: once Justice is back on Olympus she is given her new symbolic attire (the blindfolds and the scales) while she waits until she can possess the body of the cardinal, as predicted by Themis. The description of Justice assuming the body of Lorraine thus transforms the cardinal into the living allegory of the virtue of Justice. Indeed, the poem is more intricate in its references and more daring in comparing unexpected figures than its source material. It appears as a pastiche tending towards a parody, since the allegory of Justice in her most extreme moments is transformed into a spirit closer to an Erinys or a vengeful ghost. The dedicatee of the 'Hymne', who was himself a renowned humanist, conversant with the classical ideal of Justice, would have been alert to the ironic exaggeration and distortion of the myth, which thus also reaffirms an elitist complicity between the two men.

In Ronsard's pastiche of the myth of the ages of man, the character of Justice is at the centre of the narrative and is progressively transformed by the degeneration of humanity's character. Justice begins to frequent ('hanter') the Golden Age generation of the first men who are good (ll. 59–63).[21] In Ronsard's tripartite rewriting of Justice's myth, he focuses on the different stages of the transformation that Justice undergoes. During the Golden Age, the goddess participates in the life of the city and brings people together in spaces emblematic of encounters between divinities and humans; in her positive form, she appears at a 'carrefour', the place where demonic figures of the 'Hymnes des Daimons' meet the poetic persona. After the Golden Age, respect for Justice begins to weaken and the goddess must adopt a new strategy: she does not appear during the day in plain sight but leaves the cities and only comes back after nightfall as a vengeful spirit. Her apparitions to the humans in the Silver Age manage to induce a sentiment of fear among them:

> Aussi tost que la nuict des ombres amenoit,
> Elle quittoit les boys, & pleurante venoit

[19] This poem has attracted divergent interpretations. Some critics focus on the aesthetic value of the hymn (Germaine Lafeuille, 'L'Hymne de la Justice', in *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), pp. 83–126), or on its theological import (Jean Frappier, 'L'Inspiration biblique et théologique de Ronsard dans "L'Hymne de la Justice"', in *Histoire, mythes et symboles: études de littérature française* (Geneva: Droz, 1976), pp. 261–73 (p. 268)). For Daniel Ménager, Ronsard's representation of Justice is mainly political and the goal of the hymn is to 'soumettre l'homme à une puissance qui le dépasse et qui s'incarnera dans l'institution politique elle-même'; Daniel Ménager, *Ronsard: le roi, le poète et les hommes* (Geneva: Droz, 1979), pp. 70–75 (p. 72).

[20] On Ronsard's poetic use of this myth of origins as reminder of the limitations of humankind, see Nathalie Dauvois, 'L'Invention mythologique dans les *Hymnes* de 1555–56: discours de l'origine/origine du discours', *Cahiers Textuel*, 34/44 (1985), 25–39.

[21] Ronsard, 'Hymne de la Justice à tresillustre et réverendissime Prince, Charles Cardinal de Lorraine', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Laumonier, Lebègue, and Silver, vol. III, tome VIII, pp. 47–72. In early modern French, 'hanter' does not yet have the modern meaning 'to haunt' that is associated with ghosts, although the close proximity of the verb to spirits and ghosts seems at times to hint at the modern meaning. On Montaigne's use of the word 'hanter', see Timothy Chesters, 'Plus je me hante. . .', in *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France: Walking by Night* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 247–53.

Crier sur le sommet des villes les plus hautes,
Pour effroyer le peuple, & reprendre ses fautes
Tousjours le menaçant qu'il ne la voiroit plus,
Et qu'elle s'en iroit à son Père lassus.[22]

The short narrative that precedes the iterative speech of Justice shows that she seeks to 'effroyer le peuple, & reprendre ses fautes'. The effect of her words and her 'cri' is immediate: the formulaic conclusion of her speech echoes the introduction of her words in a circular structure inspired by Homeric style. The repetition also reveals an evolution: the purpose of Justice is fulfilled since humans are afraid of her and understand the seriousness of divine justice.[23] In this passage, the allegory of Justice is transformed into a figure who, like a ghost, appears to issue divine warnings. The ghostliness of the goddess is marked by her change of dwelling: she stays in the woods ('bois') where the souls of the dead reside in the late-antique tradition.[24] During the 'plus meschant' Iron Age, Justice's feeling of outrage increases in virulence, and the description of her rage ('d'une horrible voix, hurlante s'écria') and the maledictions she issues transform her into a vengeful apparition:

Ce que voyant Justice, ardante de fureur
Contre le meschant peuple empoisonné d'erreur,
Qui, pour suyvre Discord, rompoit ses loix tranquilles,
Vint encore de nuict se planter sur les villes,
Où plus, comme devant, le peuple ne pria,
Mais d'une horrible voix, hurlante s'écria
Si effroiablement, que les murs & les places
Et les maisons trambloient de peur de ses menasses.[25]

The gradation of the howls of Justice is shown in the transition from the tremor of hearts in the Silver Age ('et leur faisoit trambler leur coeur en la poitrine') to the tremor of the places where her screams echo in the Iron Age ('les murs & les places | Et les maisons trambloient de peur').[26] The final description of Justice's howls and of the fear she triggers in people bears a strong resemblance to a passage in 'Les Daimons', in which Ronsard describes the screams of daimons who, in haunting houses and cities, 'donnent grand frayeur à ceux qui sont veillantz'.[27]

Although a legitimate, ever-growing fear seems to be the focus of this description, adding solemnity to Lorraine as the final embodiment of the

[22] Ronsard, 'Hymne de la Justice', ll. 89–94.
[23] Ronsard, 'Hymne de la Justice', ll. 105–08.
[24] Servius comments on the phrase 'in luco' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 3. 302): 'lucum ut supra diximus nunquam ponit sine religione: Nam in ipsis habitant manes piorum qui lares viales sunt' [the word 'woods', as we said before, is never used without a religious meaning. Indeed, in the woods dwell the *manes* of virtuous men who are the *lares* of public routes]; Servius, *Servii grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*, I: *Aeneidos librorum I–V commentarii*, ed. by Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 395; my translation.
[25] Ronsard, 'Hymne de la Justice', ll. 121–28.
[26] Ronsard, 'Hymne de la Justice', ll. 107, 127–28.
[27] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Laumonier, Lebègue, and Silver, vol. III, tome VIII, pp. 115–39, l. 238.

allegory of Justice, the poet plays with the inflation and deflation of this allegory as a way of showing that intense fear could be the result of an error of judgement. The exaggeration of the frightening features of the goddess of Justice need to be read in light of Ronsard's simultaneous staging of a positive complicity between himself and Lorraine, which follows in this regard the Horatian model of *amicitia*. In Horace's *Satires*, the relationship between the patron and the poet is driven by a form of honest exchange, which leads to an emulative relationship between the two men; the *Satires* stage an idealized complicity allowing the poet to praise the true virtues of his patron without falling into the trap of obsequious flattery.[28] Satire 1. 6 describes the first meeting with Maecenas and how Horace chose to speak frankly with the man who made him feel so nervous he could not speak:

> ut veni coram, singultim pauca locutus,
> infans namque pudor prohibebat plura profari,
> non ego me claro natum patre, non ego circum
> me Satureiano vectari rura caballo,
> sed quod eram narro. respondes, ut tuus est mos,
> pauca: abeo, et revocas nono post mense iubesque
> esse in amicorum numero. magnum hoc ego duco,
> quod placui tibi, qui turpi secernis honestum
> non patre praeclaro, sed vita et pectore puro.
> [On coming into your presence I said a few faltering words, for speechless shame stopped me from saying more. My tale was not that I was a famous father's son, not that I rode about my estate on a Saturian steed: I told you what I was. As is your way, you answered little and I withdrew; then, nine months later, you sent for me again and bade me join your friends. I count it a great honour that I pleased you, who discern between fair and foul, not by a father's fame, but by blamelessness of life and heart.][29]

In the 'Epistre' dedicated to Lorraine, we find for example a rewriting of the Horatian scene of the first encounter between patron and poet, a moment favoured by the gods themselves, but this pastiche is also a vivid and amusing description of the poet as a courtier frightened by the grandeur of the patron. Ronsard recounts how he met Lorraine at a dinner: after wrongly perceiving him as 'inaccessible', the poet is surprised by the 'humanité' of the cardinal, who touches him on the head as a sign of affectionate familiarity and praises the 'amitié' they formed when they both attended the Collège de Navarre in 1533, being the same age.[30] Ronsard often mentions this moment which should have connected him to Lorraine, despite the fact that the poet only spent six months in the Collège de Navarre at the age of nine and the improbability of a prince's interacting with a youth descended from the gentry on his father's side and minor nobility on his mother's. For Daniel Cuisiat, Ronsard's insistence on a possible

[28] Nicolas Lombart, 'Le Cardinal de Lorraine, "mécène" de Ronsard? De la transformation à la subversion d'un modèle horatien', *Camenae*, 17 (2015), <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr>.

[29] Horace, 'Satire I.VI', in *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), pp. 76–87 (pp. 80–81), ll. 56–64.

[30] Ronsard, 'Epistre de Pierre de Ronsard, à tresillustre Prince Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine', ll. 211–23.

connection between him and Charles de Lorraine relies on the shared humanist education of the Collèges and is meant to 'combler cette incommensurable distance sociale' that separated them.[31] Therefore, the genealogy of this friendship is an important moment in the 'Epistre' in which Ronsard negotiates the necessity of acknowledging social difference while stressing the connection between poet and patron. After this pastiche of Horace's first encounter with Maecenas (Horace, *Satires* I. 6), Ronsard explains that he made a request for patronage two or three days after this encounter, represented as a moment witnessed by the Olympian gods. The mixture of references to Apollo and descriptions of pecuniary requests shows that the purpose of the 'Epistre' is to create a comic rewriting of a trivial moment of interest-driven petition that could engender a sense of complicity between the two men. To the outsider's eye, it is a eulogy to the patronage of Lorraine, but it is also meant to amuse the cardinal through a poetic pastiche of high-brow references to a Horatian intertext, which would secure Lorraine's support better than an obsequious and emphatic eulogy. This tactic, which aims to celebrate the 'humanity' of the grandee as a higher virtue, helped the Pléiade poets find their symbolic place in the court as truthful 'friends' of princes and princesses rather than as hypocritical courtiers.

In the 'Epistre', Ronsard shows his own past perception of the cardinal as flawed, underscoring the realization that the cardinal he used to see as a venerable and distant figure is gracious towards him and even helps him at court. Both hymns dedicated to Lorraine tell a story of transformation from frightening figure to human face. As we have seen, at the end of the 'Hymne de la Justice', the allegory of Justice becomes embodied as the cardinal. Just as the final possession of the body of Lorraine by Justice rehumanizes the goddess transformed into a ghost, the shift from strict cardinal to protector in the 'Epistre' highlights the cardinal's humanity. This reversal shows the extent to which the poet's past perception of his patron was flawed. The error, based on the appearance of Lorraine alone, has a deflating effect, gesturing towards the ridiculousness of exaggerated eulogies that take initial impressions of grandeur, seriousness, and danger at face value. Similarly, in the 'Hymne de la Justice', the possibility of wrongful perception underpins the grand allegorical and metaphorical transformations of Justice — first anthropomorphized, then associated with an allegory bearing all the attributes of Justice in traditional iconography, and finally embodied in the Cardinal de Lorraine. The transformation Justice undergoes from woman-goddess in the Golden Age to vengeful apparition in the Iron Age, to statue-like allegory, and finally to benevolent 'Prélat', echoes the transformation of Lorraine in the 'Epistre'; despite his grandeur, which prompts a long description of Ronsard's self-doubt and shame for even daring to address him, the 'Prélat' is full of 'humanité' and benevolence. In the 'Hymne de la Justice', the diminishing of Justice's ferocity suggests that the fear of Justice is out of date: those who used to

[31] Daniel Cuisiat, Introduction to Charles de Lorraine, *Lettres du cardinal Charles de Lorraine (1525–1574)*, ed. by Daniel Cuisiat (Geneva: Droz, 1998), pp. 12–74 (p. 24).

fear Justice are firmly placed in the past and gently mocked. In Ronsard's poems, religious fear is undermined by his emphasis on the error of judgement. By creating analogies with the fear of ghosts, excessive flattery and fear both seem to stem from an error of judgement as in Aristotelian descriptions of fear as a cognitive appraisal of danger. This error conflates mere appearance with real danger.[32] The poet's retrospective narration of his own confusion humorously corrects this erroneous perception, akin to cowardice, and deflates similar attempts at grandiosity. This light self-mockery is a critical tool for Ronsard in poems aimed at strengthening a sense of complicity between him and his potential patron while fulfilling the expectations of court panegyrics and eulogies. A similar process features at the beginning of 'Les Daimons', which was addressed to Lancelot Carle: the poet expresses his guilt for having tarried in celebrating his protector and pretends to fear divine retribution.[33] The poetic persona's exaggerated guilt and fear of divine punishment is the opening note of a poem that revolves around the figure of a poet frightened by the daimons he portrays. These exaggerated claims of humility can thus transform the poet into a character in a comedy. Similarly to the thoroughly conventional genre of love poetry, panegyrics and hymns written for the most important figures of the court carry implicit self-deprecatory undertones that invite ironic distance. Ronsard's power resides in his ability to recreate these fears and put them at a distance.

Ronsard's description of the cosmos and attempts to mirror it (in the same way that he seeks to mirror the patron) necessitate a poetic detour in which the poet's self-deprecatory portrait runs parallel with an effort to revisit outdated concepts. The irony at the heart of this endeavour is that it aims to provoke a smile not only from the patron but also the deities celebrated; humanized by the poet, these deities would, Ronsard hopes, find amusement in his inaccurate portrayal of the world. The parallel between the affection of the patron and the good fortune the poet calls upon himself is visible in his final vows and prayers at the end of each hymn, which invariably ask for protection and favours. Ronsard's *amicitia* with the cosmos involves a reconfiguration of his own poetic persona through fear, which signals his humility but also transforms him into an object of derision in order to attract the favour of Fortune. The praise of 'gods' and 'men' are two sides of the same coin.[34] The fearful poet can better position himself as a mirror, and as inferior to the object of praise that is both the cosmos and the patron. Fear as a pathology that aims to be superseded by friendship does not undermine the authority of the poet in the way Menippean satire destabilizes the authorial figure.[35] Here, fear is a natural reaction to ghosts but can also be set in motion,

[32] On classical classifications of the passions and Aristotelian fear, see Remo Bodei, *Geometry of the Passions: Fear, Hope, Happiness. Philosophy and Political Use*, trans. by Gianpiero W. Doebler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), pp. 176–80, 183–97.

[33] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 8–12.

[34] On the 'éloge', see Véronique Denizot, *'Comme un souci aux rayons du soleil': Ronsard et l'invention poétique de la merveille (1550–1556)* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), pp. 155–56.

[35] Bernd Renner, 'From Fearsome to Fearful: Panurge's Satirical Waning', in *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), pp. 204–36.

transformed into more positive feelings: a moment of superstitious unease is a temporary situation. Fearful cowardice is lent nuance by temporal distance: the poet invites us to look back, at the level of the poem, on what is now playfully revealed to be an error of perception.

Ironic fictions and self-deprecation in 'Les Daimons'

In 'Les Daimons', fear, in its excess, is again transformed into a semi-comical reaction, underpinned by an ironic self-representation of the poetic persona that is part of a strategic display of complicity with grandees. This central hymn garnered interest both for its serious philosophical and demonological dimension, and for its first-person anecdotes. In this poem, errors of judgement, trivial details, and comedic devices give a theatrical dimension to the representation of cowardice and fear. The transition from religious fear to theatrical device reveals that the emotional response to ghosts is independent of the quest for knowledge of the nature of ghosts and daimons. By focusing on his own fearful reaction to illusions, the poet sets in motion the movement whereby superstition can be rectified through laughter.

The hymn describing the different categories of daimons ends with a famous anecdotal episode in which the poet is chased by daimons. The strangeness of this episode has been the subject of many commentaries. Basing his argument on Psellus, who explained how to chase away daimons with a show of violence, Ronsard explains how he himself escaped a group of daimons led by 'un homme qui n'avoit que les os' chasing the shade of an 'usurier'. The demonic horseman invites the poet to join him ('monter en crope'), but instead Ronsard draws his sword, causing the whole group of ghosts to vanish:

> Si fussé-je estouffé d'une crainte pressée
> Sans DIEU, qui promptement, me meit en la pensée
> De tirer mon espée, & de couper menu
> L'air tout-au-tour de moy, avecques le fer nu:
> Ce que je feis soudain, & si tost qu'ilz n'ouyrent
> Siffler l'espée en l'air, que tous s'evanouyrent
> Et plus ne les ouy, ny bruyre, ny marcher,
> Craignant paoureusement de se sentir hacher
> Et trançonner le corps, car bien qu'ilz n'ayent veines
> Ny arteres, ny nerfz, comme noz chairs humaines
> Toutefois comme nous ilz ont un sentiment,
> Car le nerf ne sent rien, c'est l'esprit seulement.[36]

This passage is bookended by a paraphrase of Psellus's method for chasing away daimons ('ils craignent les cousteaux, | Et s'enfuïent bien tost s'ilz voyent une espée'), and a scene in which daimons vanish when they hear 'siffler l'espée en l'air'.[37] The distance created by the prior announcement of a solution is

[36] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 367–78.
[37] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 341–42, 372.

strengthened by the effect of reversal in the outcome of the story. In the end, because the fearsome ghosts are more afraid than their living prey, the story ends well, in a swift reversal typical of comedies. The amorous context of the scene of apparition ('j'allois voir une maistresse', l. 348) is also an indicator that the reader should not take this scene too seriously, but rather as a mere fiction, like so many invented by Petrarchan poets.[38] Within a framework of lyric poetry consisting of invented love stories, the story of 'Les Daimons' also plays with the conventions of fiction, the lover character sharing characteristics with Fanfaron, the stock comedy type of the soldier: heavily armed ('Bien que j'eusse vestu la maille sur le dôs', l. 362; 'Dague, espée & bouclier', l. 365) yet easily frightened ('si fussé-je étouffé d'une crainte pressé', l. 367), although he claims to be very brave ('& par sur tout un cœur | Qui naturellement n'est sujet à la peur', ll. 365–66).

The ironic distance of this self-characterization is revealed by the poet's identification with a literary topos; he recognizes that he has taken 'tout ce que prent un amant, que la Lune | conduit seul de nuict, pour chercher sa fortune'.[39] The requirement that one should be armed when walking by night to reach one's lady is more of a theatrical trope than a poetic one: the whole situation echoes dramatic love scenes in comedies. Even the fight against the daimons could carry a slightly ironic tone as Ronsard describes himself battling against air in a parody of an epic fight, which can be traced back to the *Aeneid* and its catabasis.[40] The fear ('Une tremblante peur me courut par les ôs', l. 361) of ghosts is deconstructed as an ambivalent literary topos through the staging of a poetic persona of comedy. Fear is both thrilling in its effects as well as amusing and comedic when considered as the illusory cause of such great emotional disturbance.

The episode of the 'chasse diabolique' (ll. 349–82) is, as Timothy Chesters reminds us, at the crossroads of different genres: inspired by Marsilio Ficino's version of Psellus, it is based on the medieval theme of Hellequin's Hunt, but also gestures towards love poems more focused on images, loss, and deprivation.[41] In addition to these references, this passage can be read in the framework of an early modern dramatic tradition that allowed for a comic treatment of ghostly apparitions.[42] Erasmus's colloquy, 'The Exorcism', was certainly inspired by Plautus's play *Mostellaria*, in which the slave Tranio tries to drive Theopropides from his own house by using the pretext of a ghostly apparition. Provoking fear in overly superstitious characters was a topos of comedies but also of fables and dialogues.

[38] During the sixteenth century, it was an accepted convention that the love experiences that lyric poets celebrated in their sonnets were invented. On Ronsard's invented relationships, see Richard Griffiths, 'Humor and Complicity in Ronsard's "Continuation des Amours"', in *The Equilibrium of Wit: Essays for Odette de Mourgues*, ed. by Peter Bayley and Dorothy Gabe Coleman (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1982), pp. 41–56.

[39] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 363–64.

[40] See Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France*, pp. 197–99.

[41] Chesters, 'Violence "Outre le Loir": Ghostly Ronsard', in *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France*, pp. 194–204. See also, by the same author, 'Un nouveau regard sur Ronsard et Psellos', in *Fictions du diable: les traités démonologiques de saint Augustin à Léo Taxil*, ed. by Françoise Lavocat, Pierre Kapitaniak, and Marianne Closson (Geneva: Droz, 2007), pp. 131–52.

[42] Fear as device in comedy is discussed for example by James Fitzmaurice, 'Fear of the Supernatural as a "Pleasante and Merry Humour" in Two of Newcastle's Comedies', in *Fear and Its Representations*, ed. by Scott and Kosso, pp. 189–205.

By making fun of his own fears, the poet tips the world of 'Les Daimons' into comedy. Likewise in the 'Hymne de la Justice': fear is associated with the outdated world of Hellequin's Hunt, which appears to be easily dissipated upon the poet's intervention. By framing these apparitions with explanations of how to make them vanish and with constant emphasis on their falseness, the poet renders fear comedic. Ronsard here defends the enjoyment of literary fears, easily dispelled by self-reflexive remarks, contrary to terrors that threaten us with paralysis, acedia, or even loss of the self. In this scene, the poet seems to emphasize that in order to get rid of daimons, one needs to match the turbulence they create, and ironically highlights the contiguity between them and humans. Indeed, although this passage discusses the use of weapons to dispel daimons, lines 376–77 suggest a similarity between humans and daimons who interact with each other through the intermediary faculty of the imagination. Despite differences in the materiality of their of bodies and the time they take to heal, for humans and daimons alike pain is only experienced in 'esprit'. This embodied 'esprit' refers to this intermediary faculty that is alimented by blood and can carry the imaginations created by the faculty of fantasy. This comedic scene, where the poet meets with Hellequin's Hunt, can be read as a personification and dramatization of the role of passions within the theatre of the mind. If the crossroads where Ronsard meets the 'chasse diabolique' is a site of 'turbulence' in the 'zone médiane', to use Terence Cave's words, in his study of early modern texts that map the field of erudite knowledge of the supernatural,[43] the bed becomes another space that interiorizes the comedy of human efforts to fend off frightening imaginations.

After a description of the intermediary realm where daimons dwell and the various forms daimons can take, the hymn focuses on how the 'vaines feintes' of the daimons affect human hearts. Ronsard describes the ambivalent role of the imagination in witnessing demonic apparitions or illusions in these terms:

> Car ainsi que l'Air prend & reçoit à-lentour
> Toute forme & couleur, ce pendant qu'il est jour,
> Puis les rebaille à ceux qui de nature peuvent
> En eux les reçevoir, & qui propres se treuvent:
> Tout ainsi les Daimons font leurs masqueures voir
> A nostre fantasie, apte à les recevoir:
> Puis nostre fantasie à l'Esprit les r'apporte
> En la mesme façon & de la mesme sorte
> Qu'elle les imagine, ou dormant, ou veillant.[44]

The 'masqueures' are described as cloudlike transformations of the demons' 'corps léger'.[45] Although the poet uses what appears to be a didactic metaphor, the process which ties together demon and 'fantasie' remains vague: we

[43] Terence Cave, 'Ronsard: une démonologie à la première personne', in *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Geneva: Droz, 1999), pp. 93–98 (p. 93).

[44] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 121–29.

[45] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', l. 77. See Ford, *Ronsard's 'Hymnes'*, pp. 138–39, for a discussion of Ronsard drawing inspiration from Proclus's conception of demonic bodies.

understand that the demon creates an illusion that affects the imagination, which then transmits images to the 'esprit'. In turn, the 'esprit' carries the impressions of the imaginative faculty to the soul. While exhibiting his sources (especially Psellus), Ronsard deploys reformulations and juxtapositions of images in order to obscure this meaning rather than illuminate it, as the poem seems to imply that demons could adjust their 'masqueures' to correspond to the singularity of their victim's imaginative faculty.[46] The paradoxes in Ronsard's definition of daimons have already been noted by numerous scholars, with Pouey-Mounou summarizing the 'définition impossible' of the daimons in Ronsard's *Hymnes*.[47] I argue that, in reality, this passage is not supposed to explain the list of nightmares: the length of the description of fear (fifteen lines) compared to the falsely didactic explanation of the role of the imagination (nine lines) is indicative of the poet's interests, which lie mainly with the effects of the illusions rather than their causes.

After this discussion, Ronsard describes the main effect of the vision of demonic bodies as fear — an extreme emotion capable of paralysing those who witness the terrifying apparitions:

> Et lors une grand'peur va noz coeurs assailant,
> Le poil nous dresse au chef, & du front goutte-à-goutte
> Jusques à noz talons la sueur nous degoutte.
> Si nous sommes au lict, n'osons lever les bras,
> Ny tant soit peu tourner le corps entre les draps:
> Adoncq' nous est advis que nous voyons noz peres
> Morts dedans un linçeuil, & noz defunctes meres
> Parler à nous la nuict, & que voyons dans l'eau
> Quelcun de noz amys perir dans un bateau:
> Il semble qu'un grand ours tout affamé nous mange,
> Ou que seul nous errons dans un desert estrange
> Au milieu des lyons, ou qu'au bois un volleur
> Nous met, pour nostre argent, la dague dans le cœur.[48]

These diverse dream visions have one thing in common: they are all linked to death, whether they involve visions of the dead or dying, or an experience of death or mortal danger. This exemplifies Jean Delumeau's idea that fear in the early modern period is mainly linked to the fear of death and the doctrine of salvation.[49] The dream visions mentioned above closely resemble many apparitions that feature in Ronsard's previous poems: from the father and mother to whom he refers in the 1554 'Prosopopée de Louis de Ronsard', to the bear and lion — inspired by Psellus — which echo many of the similes with wild beasts in the *Amours*. According to Germaine Lafeuille, the 'volleur' is a direct reference to

[46] This point has been the object of some debate. For Lafeuille, it is only possible to say that the daimon has an effect on the human *fantaisie*; Lafeuille, *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, pp. 147–50.

[47] Pouey-Mounou, *L'Imaginaire cosmologique de Ronsard*, pp. 201–04.

[48] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 130–42.

[49] Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident, XIV^e–XVIII^e siècles: une cité assiégée* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), and Jean Delumeau, *Le Péché et la peur: la culpabilisation en Occident (XIII^e–XVIII^e siècles)* (Paris: Fayard, 1983).

the figure of the 'larron' in Sonnets 3, 4, and 113 of *Les Amours de Cassandre*.[50] As for the illusion of the friend dying in a boat: prior to the striking apparition of the drowned sailors seen by Francus in the *Franciade*, images of drowning are already recurrent in the *Amours*. Nevertheless, it is possible that the image is a more precise reference to the 1560 'Ode de la Paix' in which Andromaque kills herself because she believed that her son had drowned.[51] As in many of Ronsard's poems, ghosts are only one type of apparition or illusion, and can belong to a broader category of apparitions — such as nightmares in this instance. The similarities between these different figures are testament to an assimilation between ghosts, allegories, and gods often found in Ronsard's poems. In the address to the reader that precedes the *Franciade*, Ronsard considers all apparitions in the epic to be 'feintes', including dreams, ghosts, and visitations by gods.[52] In 'Les Daimons', if the identity of the apparition is not always the same, the mode of apparition and the effects on the witnesses — mainly the feeling of terror — are.

To understand the striking symptomology of these night terrors, it is customary to turn to Psellus. 'Les Daimons' is a close imitation of Psellus's Greek dialogue on daimons, known as *De daemonibus* in the Latin translation by Ficino, which was published in the 1497 *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum, etc.*[53] When it comes to the effects of daimons on the human mind, Psellus does not expand on the symptoms of fear. Yet there is a passage that also mentions a bed, and which might have inspired Ronsard: in this account a woman is possessed by a daimon after giving birth; on returning to her senses, she explains her experience through indirect reported speech:

> Tum illa respondit se vidisse daemonum visum tenebrosum et simile mulieri passos habenti crines in se irruere. Unde antequam ipsa lectum ingrederetur extimuisse. Quod vero deinceps secutum est minime persensisse.
>
> [She answered that she saw a dark daimon who looked like a dishevelled woman and who swooped down on her. She said that in her terror she rushed to her bed but that she had no recollection of what happened after that.][54]

The rushed movement followed by an unconscious immobility contrasts with Ronsard's representation of a prolonged moment in which fear prevents conscious subjects from moving in bed. Furthermore, in 'Les Daimons', the fear induced by daimons is notable for its triviality and for the description of bodily symptoms. These border on comedy and allow for a shift 'de l'illusion à la terrestre réalité'.[55]

[50] Lafeuille, *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, p. 150.

[51] Ronsard, 'Ode de la Paix', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Prosper Blanchemain, 7 vols, (Paris: Pierre Jannet, 1857), II, 23–40, ll. 157–86.

[52] Ronsard, 'Au lecteur' in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Laumonier, Lebègue, and Silver, vol. V, tome XVI, pp. 3–12 (p. 10).

[53] Psellus, *De daemonibus*, in Iamblichus and others, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum etc.*, trans. and ed. by Marsilio Ficino (Venice: Aldus Manutio, 1497), fols Nr–N7r. In 1576, Pierre Moreau published a translation in French, *Traicté par dialogue de l'energie ou operation des diables* (Paris: Gilles Chaudière, 1576), prefaced by the Franciscan François de Feu-Ardent. See Chesters, *Ghost Stories in Late Renaissance France*, pp. 180–82.

[54] Psellus, *De daemonibus*, trans. by Ficino, fol. N3v; my translation.

[55] Lafeuille, *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, p. 151.

Building on 'la trivialité du détail' through reference to humans afraid to raise their arms, the comic potential of this scene unfolds.[56] The first description of 'grand'peur' relies on the classical trope of fear making one's hair stand up on end ('le poil nous dresse au chef'), but also emphasizes the role of sweat in an unusually vivid image. In Psellus, fear is characterized by a sudden pallor, in a famous discussion of the changes of shape and colour of demonic bodies.[57] While sweat as a symptom of fear is not uncommon, its overabundance and the detailed image of beads of sweat dripping from the head to the feet trivializes the feeling of fear. The absence of any mention of heat or cold is also telling; the poet chooses to focus on physical symptoms rather than their physical causes. However, by failing to mention the general state created by fear, the body appears in a fragmented and comical form of dereliction. The moment 'au lict' is even more explicitly comedic: 'les bras' and 'le corps' are not physically petrified by fear but simply reflect the power of an interiorized fear ('nous [. . .] n'osons'). The setting of the scene, marked by the evocation of the 'draps', contrasts comically with the 'linçeuil' of 'noz peres', and seems to differentiate this fear of ghostly daimons from the tragi-epic aesthetic. The ironic self-portrayal of the poet also corresponds to a moment of interiorization of what Cave calls the 'pathologie cosmique' embodied by the daimons.[58]

In 'Les Daimons', descriptions of the symptoms of fear are usually interpreted as a marker of the authenticity of a witness's testimony. Far from strengthening the scientific content of this poem, such testimonies can create a 'zone médiane', transforming the poem into one of the 'textes troublés' identified in Cave's study.[59] The intimacy of the scene in bed also gestures towards an account in the first person. And yet, by using the first-person plural, the poet creates a double distancing effect: for the readers who recognized the references to his previous works, the use of 'nous' exposes the fictionality of such accounts, which are not specific to the poetic persona but are rather recurring literary topoi. The juxtaposition of these extremely diverse dream visions and, by synecdoche, of the genres of the poems in which they feature, puts them all in the same group and reduces them to mere illusions. Cave offers a persuasive interpretation of the effect produced by the introduction of the first-person singular 'qui prend en charge la croyance aux daimons (et les moyens de s'en défendre)' in a scientific poem, and in a similar way I would argue that the 'turbulence' created by the use of the first-person plural stems from this generic hesitation between personal testimony and the collection of topoi.[60] The tonality is also a form of 'trouble': by describing fear

[56] Lafeuille, *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, p. 151.

[57] Psellus, *De daemonibus*, trans. by Ficino, fol. N4r: 'Quemadmodum nobis expavescentibus genae pallescunt, verecundia vero affectis rubescunt. Anima prout sic aut afficitur passiones ejusmodi in corpus similiter traducente eadem ratione de daemonibus est putandum' [For example, our cheeks turn pale when we are afraid, but blush when we are affected by a sense of modesty. Depending on the affections experienced, the soul reflects them in the body. The same must be thought of daimons]; my translation.

[58] Cave, *Pré-histoires*, p. 93.

[59] Cave, *Pré-histoires*, pp. 93–98. On sincerity, see Roger Parisot, 'Ronsard et les Daimons', *Recueil*, 32 (1994), 28–44.

[60] Cave, *Pré-histoires*, p. 95.

and frightening visions in a vivid and trivial fashion, the poem gestures as much towards belief as towards doubt and irony. By referencing superstition rather than knowledge, the poet creates a space where poetic invention and imagination become crucial to dispel illusions.

The dissolution of a realistic persona experiencing dream visions and the physicality of the symptoms of fear carry ironic undertones. The fact that fear takes over the discussion of demonic bodies can thus lead us to nuance Ronsard's demonological ambitions in this poem. Like the nightmares that appear in the intimate space of the bed, the description of an imaginative faculty, 'apte à [. . .] recevoir' the daimons' creations, highlights that we are our own worst enemies: both the bed and the inner faculty of the imagination are invaded by figures that threaten the distinction between the interior and exterior worlds. The originality in this Ronsardian fear lies in the immersive description of inner nightmares and the ironic distance afforded by fear's comical traits. Ronsard thus dramatizes the interaction between different epic 'daimons' that become characters of the mind's inner theatre.

The conclusion of the passage on nightmares that make us sweat in terror takes up a familiar formulaic phrase from epic: 'Et tout soudain en rien elles s'évanouissent'.[61] This sudden disappearance echoes the vanishing of Ronsardian decoy figures made of clouds. These decoys, named 'idoles', are inspired by fake figures created by gods, as in *Aeneid* II when Turnus follows a decoy of Aeneas made of clouds. By reframing this theme of epic disillusionment, the 'vanishing' of the nightmares suggests an interiorization of the epic 'idoles' through a new emphasis on their effects rather than their appearance. The remark on how easy it is to recognize daimons illustrates the movement of interiorization of epic material:

> Souvent à-l'improveu on les voit apparoistre
> Tellement qu'on les peut bien aisément cognoistre,
> Comme Achille cogneut Minerve qui le print
> Par les cheveux derriere, & son courroux retint.[62]

This Homeric scene (*Iliad* I. 194–95) became topical in Apuleius's *De Deo Socratis* II. 5: the simile of Minerva's gesture assimilates nightmarish sensations with the divine entity, which inspires Socrates (*δαιμόνιον* in Greek, and not *δαῖμων*), later transformed into a form of familiar *genius*. The reference to Athena would be incongruous if it were not motivated by the Greek play on words that illustrates the fight between daimons and *δαιμόνιον*. In Ronsard's poem, this analogy, which is at once epic and trivial, starts with an emphasis on the suddenness of apparitions matched with the recognition of what they are: the rhyme between 'apparoistre' and 'cognoistre' is very clear in this regard. The epic apparition of the goddess — invisible to everyone but Achilles — is also a metaphor of psychological restraint: the gesture of pulling Achilles's hair back is the literal image of the interior genius

[61] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', l. 148.
[62] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', ll. 143–46.

that forces the hero to rein in his anger. These lines take the form of a meditation on the verb 'prendre'. The apparition of Athena, mediated by its echo of Socrates's genius, is a sign of the workings of interior faculties: Achilles is held back but he also has some hold (through knowledge) on what is immobilizing him. The formulaic verses that describe the sudden vanishing of the daimons into thin air reveal that we were looking at false things, given the daimons cannot maintain their 'prise figure' for long.[63] This establishes a contrast between the hold that the genius has on our mind and the fleeting hold daimons have over their own bodies. This reassuring analogy dramatizes this series of reversals, and inflects the tonality of the scene of nightmares, by demonstrating that the extreme terror provoked by these images issues only from ourselves. The theatrical stage of the world inhabited by the daimons is thus an allegory of the struggle of inner faculties where the daimon (*δαῖμων*) takes on the illusionistic properties of the epic *εἰ'δωλον* before it vanishes. By indirectly summoning this *δαιμόνιον* as internal protector who can reshape fears, and by playing on Greek words, Ronsard displays the poetic powers of fiction that can be inflated and deflated at his all-powerful behest. The bed becomes the stage of a comedy where the 'masqueures' of 'les daimons' assault a first-person-plural 'nous' who is saved by the intervention of the poetic imagination, which, like the daimons, can reshape figures from Greek epic at will. This trivialized allegory captures the daimons and reshapes them into an innocuous *idole* that vanishes into the air.

The comedic vein of the *Hymnes* relies on ghosts to create bonds of complicity between the poetic persona and the dedicatees of various poems deliberately in order to undermine the fearful reverence for apparitions. In a sense, Mont-Dieu and other Protestant readers were right to sense a potential for blasphemy in the *Hymnes*: the transgressive potential derives not from an unorthodox ideology, but rather from the subtle trivialization of demonological matters. Yet, by using self-deprecatory anecdotes, the poet avoids accusations of elitism and includes himself in the comedy of fearful humans. At the same time, the humanist blend of references creates a separate readership and a complicity between Ronsard and his dedicatees, which mirrors a mode of being in the cosmos. Moments of fear and self-deprecation are necessary in order to position the poet as the humble inferior of other objects of praise, including allegories, patrons, and the natural and supernatural worlds.

As an oblique consequence of the comedic vein, this collection places emphasis on the psychosomatic effects of apparitions, rather than on their evanescent presence, a shift that can also be found in later demonological writings. Fear and the effects of the senses on the imagination are, indeed, at the heart of Pierre Le Loyer's definition of spectres: 'Spectre est une imagination d'une substance sans corps qui se presente sensiblement aux hommes contre l'ordre de nature, & leur donne frayeur.'[64] Ronsard's poems, by showing fear through an ironic lens, point

[63] Ronsard, 'Les Daimons', l. 152.

[64] Pierre Le Loyer, *Quatre livres des spectres ou apparitions et visions d'esprits, anges et demons se monstrans sensiblement aux hommes*, 4 vols in 1 (Angers: G. Nepveu, 1586), I, 1.

to the poetic pleasure of reading and representing ghosts rather than demonstrating technical knowledge of them. The self-reflexivity of the poem 'Les Daimons', which deliberately parodies other poetic genres, is meant to enhance the thrill of hearing anecdotes about daimons and ghosts. By introducing himself and his patrons in poems that feature terrifying apparitions, Ronsard defends the powers of poetry and the immersive and dissociative nature of ghost narratives: imagining oneself subjected to an intense fear of ghosts, and smiling at this terror, can be a powerful source of delight.