THE KNOT OF ARTIFICE

A Poetic
of the French Lyric
in the Early 17th Century

DAVID LEE RUBIN
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By David Lee Rubin

French lyric poetry of the early seventeenth century has long enjoyed a dubious reputation for disunity and disorder. Even its apologists and popularizers—who, in the main, view it from perspectives appropriated from other arts or from extrapoetic disciplines—reluctantly admit or inadvertently confirm that it is an art of incoherence or, at best, of fragmentation. The Knot of Artifice examines critically this widespread conviction, finds it reductive, and proposes an alternative based on a mode of analysis that is differential, inductive, holistic, and, above all else, formal.

Proceeding from the assumption that a given lyric may involve a multiplicity of mental and verbal activities (some of them fundamental, others contributory, and still others derivative), Professor Rubin contends that local disruptions and discontinuities may, under close scrutiny, prove to be integral parts of tightly constructed wholes. He assumes, furthermore, that unity need not be sequential or consecutive, and that description, iteration, and proof may be principles of singleness, completeness, and coherence of form.

In the book's five chapters, Professor Rubin examines six apparently disunified poems that are typical of the period's lyric output, among them Malherbe's Prière pour le Roy allant en Limozin, Saint-Amant's Le Mauvais Logement, Théophile de Viau's Le Matin, and Maynard's Ode ("Alcipe, reviens dans nos bois"). He argues that by exploiting implied analogy, these poets often drew the fragments of narrations, arguments, and conventional series together into wholes that describe states, assert the recurrence of patterns, or develop proofs by indirection, and maintains that certain nonconsecutive forms—those that advance by repetition or association—gained

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IN MEMORIAM

Bernard Weinberg

'skillful guide in poetic ground'