Introduction
Motivations and Models

Despite a generation of conscientious study, lyric form in the age of Malherbe remains puzzling, mystifying, even baffling. We know little more about it today than did Lanson, when—in a teleological mood—he declared some poets of the period to be precursors of classicism but others, "attardés et égarés." There are at least two explanations for this paradoxical state of affairs: the overwhelming preference of critics for integrative approaches to poetry, as well as the narrowness and atomism of many differential methods.

REFERENCE AND THE CHARACTERISTIC

The procedure of integrative criticism is threefold: first, it refers or analogizes literature to extrapoetic causes or qualities, to other arts, or to the behavioral sciences; from this synthesis it derives appropriate sets of categories, most frequently, antithetical; finally, it relates characteristic features of works and genres to the preestablished paradigm. The text is thus rediscovered in a cultural context: that of its creation or its reception. In their systematic application to the telling detail, however, the various modes of integrative criticism deemphasize the poem as a potentially complete and coherent object interesting in and for itself. This choice is defensible, of course, on grounds of intellectual economy, a virtue consonant with the methods' enviable rigor.
Integrative principles animate three of the most influential works that have dealt with French lyricism in the early seventeenth century. I refer, of course, to Odette de Mourgues’s *Metaphysical, Baroque and Précieux Poetry*, Jean Rousset’s *La Littérature de l’âge baroque en France*, and Imbrie Buffum’s *Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou*.

Fundamentally a moralist, Odette de Mourgues refers literature to a preconstructional cause—artistic sensibility. This she divides into three aspects—intellect, imagination, and emotion—whose presence and hierarchy within the text furnish grounds for discriminating between types of poems and their relative merit. Much in the spirit of F. R. Leavis, Odette de Mourgues gives highest marks to the poetry of complete, coherent sensibility and downgrades works that lack even one of the components (or that contain all in a chaotic state). When applied to selected motifs, techniques, and stylistic devices of French poetry composed between the mid sixteenth century and the late seventeenth, Odette de Mourgues’s model gives a place of honor to the metaphysical creations of Scève and La Ceppède, along with the *Adonis* of La Fontaine. Far less esteemed are the brittle exercises of pure wit penned by the *précieux*, as well as the poetry of Saint-Amant, Théophile de Viau, and others, discussed under the heading “baroque.” Her analysis of representative passages drawn from the last category points up both incompleteness and imbalance: in its visionary, absurd, and fragmented subject matter, its rational arrangement of materials, and its gratuitously playful, highly convoluted style.

Jean Rousset’s critical scope transcends the boundary of the word. For him ballet, painting, and the lyric, as well as sculpture, tragicomedy, and architecture, are analogous, even interchangeable products of successive, radically different zeitgeists. Shared by all the arts of a given period are repertories of themes, technical devices, and stylistic procedures, each implying the others, as well as the Common (if somewhat remote) Cause. His *âge baroque* is a period of profound instability in all domains, especially the moral and the psychological. Accordingly, its arts portray movement, metamorphosis, and disguise; their manner is one of ostentatious, explosive force and calculated incompleteness; and their style is studded with gorgeous, polyvalent devices, the concetto being a kind of master trope in poetry. Carefully selected
extracts from the works of Malherbe, Théophile de Viau, and Saint-Amant (among others) serve to document this thesis. Rousset admirably avoids reductionism, however, by stressing the uniqueness of each poet's oeuvre: the orotundity of Malherbe's, the apocalyptic hantise of Théophile's, and the free-wheeling fantasy of Saint-Amant's.

Imbrie Buffum also refers poetry to a succession of radically different zeitgeists; but unlike Jean Rousset, he sees the spirit generating baroque art and literature as a force of unity and coherence. Its basis is the Nicene Creed, which affirms: (1) an acceptance of God's organically unified creation, the external world, in all its richness (including the contrast between illusion and reality); (2) the importance of incarnation (e.g., the Word made Flesh), hence of metamorphosis; and (3) the meaningfulness of suffering—even in its most spectacularly horrible form, Christ's crucifixion—because of the ultimate triumph of truth. Buffum's sympathetic if fragmented reading of Saint-Amant's "libertine" poems discloses the presence of almost all eight baroque categories.

Nothing could be more dogmatic than to dismiss integrative criticism as irrelevant to the formal study of the early seventeenth-century French lyric. Beyond the invaluable service of relating the poems to their cultural matrix, the integrative critics have raised most of the questions that now preoccupy their more literal-minded counterparts. Indeed the principal themes of formal analysis in this specialty are, and will long remain, the nature of arational structures in the poetic corpus (first noted by Odette de Mourgues), the function of disguised elements of form and style (identified by Jean Rousset), and the dimensions of organic unity (intuited by Imbrie Buffum). Inevitably, however, when questions posed in one critical language are answered in another, the import and purport of key terms undergo important modifications, as the next pages will show.

A LITERALISM OF THE IMAGINATION

Differential criticism addresses the literary work fundamentally in its own nature, not by analogy (or with reference) to extrapoetic qualities, activities, or fields of inquiry. (When such disciplines as psychology, rhetoric, or iconology must be brought into the discussion, they play the ancillary role of eluci-
The general categories of differential criticism are, of course, those of the work itself: end or purpose; object or form (i.e., action and its analogues); manner or techniques of representation; and means or language (diction, figures, prosody). Individual critics may choose to dwell—more or less exhaustively—on one or any combination of these categories, recognizing that incompleteness presents the danger of reductionism. So, too, may the critic discuss the chosen aspects atomistically—as constituents and devices—or synthetically—as factors in the work’s unity. In the very brief survey to follow, I shall pass from the most nearly complete and synthetic studies to the narrowest and most atomistic.

Lowry Nelson’s comparative essay Baroque Lyric Poetry examines two aspects of form as they occur in a variety of typical lyrics: first, the rhetorical situation—or the relationship between speaker and audience; and second, the time patterns, seen as contexts of stability, change, and repetition. From this it follows that Nelson focuses on the techniques of dramatic monologue and such stylistic devices as manipulated verb tenses, exclamations, questions, and asyndeton. In Nelson’s system the end of the poem’s form is unity, conceived in sequential terms—that is, as the product of evolving relationships between rhetorical numbers, tied to the passage from point to point along one or more temporal continua, whether narrative, conversational, or circular. In the longer lyrics of Saint-Amant, Théophile, and even Malherbe, Nelson perceives “a tendency to emphasize performing aspects: characterization of the speaker and gradual [evolution of his viewpoint]” in addition to a sense of relative and manipulatable time.⁴

Considerably less broad in scope than Nelson’s study are those that have pointed to the relationship of motif and style as a basis for characterizing early seventeenth-century French lyricism. Typical are two essays collected in John C. Lapp’s final volume, The Brazen Tower, and my 1972 monograph on Malherbe.⁵ Lapp, having borrowed the notion of sunken imagery from a Columbia thesis by Henry Wells entitled Poetic Imagery, comments on passages of poems by La Fontaine and Tristan L’Hermite as he seeks to describe the interplay between veiled mythic references and elements of the speaker’s mental or verbal activity. In Higher, Hidden Order I argued for a coherence arising from the synthesis
of *topoi*, among other formal constituents, and the speaker's explicit and implied analogical reasonings—particularly when the latter involve allusion to myth or literature.

The narrowest and most atomistic studies have dealt *in vacuo* with devices of language. Of these, the most celebrated and useful is René Fromilhague's *Malherbe: Technique et création poétique*, which systematized our understanding of the poet's versification and thereby provided a basis for critical reexamination of his art, as well as its influence. Equally rigorous, and almost as exhaustive, Fernand Hallyn's *Formes métaphoriques dans la poésie lyrique de l'âge baroque en France* is a linguistic taxonomy that leaves unanswered only certain questions raised in my own monograph—no doubt because allusive metaphors are not consistently expressed as blunt verbal analogies. John Pederson's thesis, *Images et figures dans la poésie française de l'âge baroque*, renders a similar service of classification, but on a poet-by-poet basis and with the results eclectically related to notions of period style developed by Wölflin and his followers.

Pederson's eclecticism is not an isolated instance. The recent contributions of Susan Tiefenbrun and Francis L. Lawrence have opened a richly promising perspective where integrative methods, based on structuralism and semiology, clearly subserve the differential ends of formal description.

**SOME INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND A MODUS OPERANDI**

In this essay I shall explore a differential line of inquiry, probing representative lyric texts to ascertain whether or not they are unified and—if they prove to be—then how, and to what degree? By unity I refer to the text's principle of singleness, completeness, and integration. I shall assume throughout the essay that there are at least four types of unity and that within a given work two or more may coexist if hierarchized—that is, if a clear distinction is drawn between the fundamental type and any others that are contributory.

By unity most critics understand *consecutive* unity, which results when parts of an action (or its analogue in the lyric) are ordered and articulated by a principle of rigorous sequence. One such principle is causality, according to whose laws circumstantial and psychological probabilities or moral necessities are established at the beginning of a lyric (or a large-scale plot), elaborated
in the middle and fulfilled at the end. Another principle of rigorous sequence is discursive logic, which dictates that the conclusion of a syllogism come after the premises as well as "follow from" them; that the evidence of an induction precede the inferred generality; and that the referent of a metaphor appear before the analogue. The third principle is tradition or custom, which sets alphabetical, numerical, and ritual order as well as their imitations in literature.

There are also three types of nonconsecutive unity. The first of these is descriptive, arising when the parts of a work (an anatomy, for example) are selected to exhibit various aspects of a state or substance and are arranged as variations on a theme or by the principle of suggestion. The second type of nonconsecutive unity is iterative, attributable to a series of similar scenes or episodes, usually with different personages and little or no causal linkage among successive segments. Finally there is the didactic unity of allegory, exemplum, parable, or fable. Here every element of character, situation, or action is a deductive, inductive, or analogical proof of a thesis.

My first operation in both parts of this essay is to test each poem's explicit developmental structure for the presence or absence of unity in any of the senses just described. As Odette de Mourgues has already noted, however, most poems of this period will offer problems: indeterminate or unpredictable progression in some cases and rupture of consecutive movement in others. Wherever narration, reasoning, or fulfillment of a conventional series is broken up, consecutive unity, of course, is forfeited. It does not follow, however, that the poem is ipso facto a worthless chaos. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to wonder how one could test Imbrie Buffum's notion of organic unity in poems such as these. The answer lies, I believe, in extending the idea of lyric activity. As speech or scene independent of a larger cause-effect structure, the lyric represents states or processes in the speaker's character or thought. Among the thought processes, of course, are symboling and analogizing, both of which may be more or less explicit or complete. If less so, they may involve at least two devices: the scattering of related but partial and suggestive terms throughout the discourse or (in the case of metaphor only) the modeling of situation, character, or action on the motifs of pre-existent literary materials. By subsumption, such symbols and
metaphors (which Jean Rousset might classify as a rhetoric of disguise) could well have a compensatory effect on the unity of a poem whose other lines of development have been disrupted.

As my second operation in the chapters of part 1, therefore, I shall test disrupted poems for the presence or absence of compensatory devices and—if any are found—I shall attempt to discover their precise impact on the poem's form. Dealing in part 2 with poems that, though indeterminate in progression, already possess iterative or descriptive unity, I shall perform the same test to ascertain if dispersed symbolism or implicit analogical activity adds a further dimension to their coherence.

A final note on organization. Within each part of this essay, I arrange the poems by type of developmental structure. Within each chapter I outline the characteristics of the structure and provide evidence for a broad contrast between its uses by mid- to late-sixteenth-century poets and those of the early seventeenth century. My Afterword synthesizes and draws tentative conclusions from that contrast. There is also an Appendix, which corrects my earlier study of the Malherbian ode in the light of the present findings.


2. The pluralistic categories employed in the discussion to follow are derived from R. S. Crane, "The Multiplicity of Critical Languages," in *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*, pp. 3-38, and Elder Olson, "An Outline of Poetic Theory," in his *On Value Judgments in the Arts and Other Essays*, pp. 268-74. Regrettably, Wayne C. Booth's *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) appeared too late for me to incorporate its invaluable findings into my "metacritical" framework. For a sound, up-to-date treatment of many points raised in the following discussion, see Robert Nicollich, "The Baroque Dilemma." This article supplements and in large measure supersedes René Wellek's studies of the baroque and its scholars in *Concepts of Criticism*. For a critique of the poetry-painting analogy, see my "Malherbe and the Mannerist Hypothesis."

3. A comparative study, the book also addresses the poetry of Sidney and Donne.


8. The position developed here represents an adaptation of concepts contained in several theoretical statements by Elder Olson—*Tragedy and the Theory of Drama*, especially pp. 41–48; "The Lyric," in his *On Value Judgments in the Arts and Other Essays*, pp. 212–19; and *The Poetry of Dylan Thomas*—as well as Bernard Weinberg's *The Limits of Symbolism* and Cleanth Brooks's *The Well Wrought Urn*. These notions have been conjoined with (and refined by) concepts borrowed from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's *Poetic Closure*; "A Topography of Allusion," an unpublished lecture by Allan H. Pasco; and, of course, the treatment of allusive metaphor in my *Higher, Hidden Order*. 
PART ONE
BEYOND DISRUPTION