Two themes have dominated this essay: the forms of typical lyrics composed during *le premier dix-septième siècle* and their principles of unity. By setting these themes against the broadly delineated background of earlier poetic practice, I have sought above all to enhance the clarity of my argument. Incidentally, however, my juxtapositions have suggested the basis for a new history of the French lyric between 1550 and 1630. Now, to bring the various strands of the discussion together, I shall elaborate briefly on that idea.  

From a formal viewpoint, the major poets of mid-sixteenth-century France sought primarily to invest their lyrics with a transparent consecutive unity. Thus they showed an almost invariable preference for two strictly sequential forms, the logical and the temporal. Most often, of course, they succeeded eminently well: the canons and norms of syllogistic, analogy, and induction were scrupulously observed, as were the laws of cause and effect. At times, however, tight succession was ruptured and the poetry complicated by non sequitur, diffuse polemic, self-invalidating comparison, defective induction, or disjointed narrative. In these lyrics no formal device—whether intra- or intertextual—offsets the loss of consecutive unity. Meanwhile the major poets occasionally joined their colleagues outside the mainstream and em-
ployed repetitive or associative structures, content, it would appear, with loosely descriptive or iterative results.

Undertaken during the very late sixteenth century, La Ceppède’s Théorèmes typify the second phase, in which all “irregularities” were preempted by the poem’s sequential designs both local and global. In this work didactic, rather than consecutive, unity is the poetic end, a fact which determined the selection and hierarchizing of expository structures. Specifically, the Ignatian meditative sequence is fundamental and is subserved by a temporal series whose matter is the Passion of Christ. Although a small number of the cycle’s disrupted, indeterminate and hybrid sonnets prove, on close study, to be “free-floating,” the majority contribute almost routinely to the progressive movement of the speaker’s thought and feeling or their occasions and pretexts.2

During the third and final stage, consecutive unity ceased to be the primary—or even a contributory—end of lyric form. Description, instruction, and reiteration supplanted it, but in a wholly unforeseeable way. Rather than simply substitute parataxis and association (or fable, exemplum, allegory, and parable) for the prevailing structure, Malherbe, Saint-Amant, Théophile, and others ingeniously adapted the inherited repertory. The adaptation involved two simultaneous procedures. The poet initiated (and normally completed) strict serial development, but broke it up with paratactic or associative digressions; or he omitted cause-effect links or logical markers. At the same time, he exploited dispersed symbolism or implied metaphor as integral, if inconspicuous, features of the speaker’s thought. This “submerged” action assures the poem’s nonconsecutive unity by transforming disjecta membra into elements of proof, instances of a repeating situational or episodic pattern, or aspects of a described entity or state. Concurrently with this shift of poetics, unity in purely paratactic or associative poetry was rigorized to an unprecedented degree by the use of the same devices: witness the achievements of Maynard, Sigogne, and Théophile de Viau, among others.

To transcend the limits of the foregoing schematism—that is, to produce a narrative history of French lyric forms between 1550 and 1630, will demand further study on a massive scale. The general and special poetic causes of change must be uncovered
and related. So, too, must the extrapoetic causes, whether proximate (in literary theory, for example) or remote (as in the relationship of poet to audience).\(^3\) Nor can biographical data be ignored, whenever they bear directly on the sources and origins of works. But logically prior to all historical studies (except, of course, the establishment and annotation of texts) is the understanding of these texts as artistic wholes. Such critical inquiry has long been under way for the achievements of the Pléiade and its immediate successors, as well as Jean de La Ceppède; but it has only begun for the perplexing lyrics of Malherbe and his younger contemporaries. This situation is due, as I have suggested, to a scarcity of conceptual and methodological frameworks broad enough, differential enough, and inductive enough for practical critics to proceed, sure of attaining comprehensive and rigorous results. The method just set forth and illustrated—its focus fixed on the subsumptive relations of purpose, object, manner, and means—is but one step in the required direction. Though subject, like any other approach, to refinement for greater validity or dismissal in favor of a more adequate system, mine will have served its purpose if it inclines, encourages, or provokes the reader to study the lyrics of early seventeenth-century France as, ultimately, they \textit{must} be studied: for their own sake and in their own nature.

1. See R. S. Crane, \textit{Critical and Historical Principles of Literary History}, for the criteria employed in these remarks.

2. Terence Cave has suggested to me that Du Bartas's \textit{La Sepmaine Saincte} also falls into this category, because its organization is based on the conventional procession of days.

3. See Henri Lafay, \textit{La Poésie française du premier dix-septième siècle}, for the first serious research into this area.