Appendix

The Odes of Malherbe Reconsidered

*Higher, Hidden Order* contains no analysis of the developmental principles operative in Malherbe's six completed odes. Hence, to assure methodological consistency between *Higher, Hidden Order* and this, its sequel, I shall now account as succinctly as possible for the explicit progression of each ode, and for its unity.

*A LA REINE SUR SA BIEN-VENÜE EN FRANCE*

Beginning logically, but soon shifting to nonconsecutive development, Malherbe's first completed ode establishes a pattern for the entire series of six.

In the first section, addressed to the people of France (or, more specifically, perhaps, to the citizens of Aix-en-Provence), the poet urges them to crown the newcomer with flowers. Simultaneously, he hopes that national grief will end and that recent civil disturbances will be suppressed (stanza 1). If these wishes are granted, he implies, there will be civil harmony, and—despite the crepe hangers—France will long endure (stanza 2). The reason for this guarded optimism is the arrival of Marie de Médicis, the unsurpassed beauty who is now the king's bride (stanza 3). Her beauty exceeds that of Venus in search of a new lover, or Aurora when she rises (stanza 4). Though supremely meritorious by birth, she is not vain; her virtues, incidentally, include eloquence and purity (stanza 5). So marvelous is she that Neptune held her captive for ten days during her transit from Florence (stanzas 6 and 7). Summing up this éloge, the poet asserts that however overblown praises of Marie may seem, they still fall short of the truth (stanza 8).

The next five stanzas depart from the logical model to present varia-
tions on a theme already announced in the first twenty verses: Marie's beneficial effects on France. They include the ending of "nos ténèbres, et nos hyvers" (v. 84), the renewal of cities, the permanent extirpation of civil strife (stanza 10), as well as the birth of a Dauphin, who, while still young, will conquer the world by force or by charm (stanzas 11 and 12). Finally, the queen will so enchant the king that he will stop risking his life—and hence the peace and stability of the nation—in battle (stanza 13).

There follows a seven-stanza digression on the king's thirst for glory, an admirable, if dangerous, trait even in one already basking in universal admiration (stanza 14). He should content himself with what he has already accomplished (and with wooing the queen) rather than tempt fate by seeking out further dangers (stanza 15). If he must congratulate himself, let it be for the pleasure that the queen gives him (stanza 16). The next three stanzas are redites of preceding material: fear that Henri's commitment to wage war personally will undo what he has achieved (stanza 17); an argument against tempting fate, with an analogy to the legend of Achilles (stanza 18); a reminder that the Parcae are fickle (stanza 19); and a concession that unconquered territory presents Henri IV with great—even irresistible—temptations; he should however, delegate the risks to others (stanza 20).

Repeating the theme already expressed in stanza 13 (that Marie's charms will keep the king at home), the poet adds that the rebels should be punished with hard labor (stanza 21). The poem ends on an evocation of those proxies (stanzas 22 and 23).

Implied metaphor unites the various segments of the poem. Throughout the text the poet compares the queen and king to such mythical couples as Peleus and Thetis or Venus and Anchises. From such a union of goddess or demigoddess and hero a son is born—Achilles in one case, Aeneas in the other. It is the son's destiny, incidentally, to outshine his father. Meanwhile the couple separates because of male pride—Anchises' indiscreet boast of having made love to Venus, and Peleus's selfish effort to prevent Thetis from rendering the infant Achilles invulnerable. If, however, the queen succeeds in cooling Henri's pride, this royal couple will not be separated by a fate angered at the king's incessant risk-taking. Thus the ode possesses iterative unity of a special sort: whereas the protagonists reenact the character and actions of a preexistent literary model, they will prove themselves superior to their predecessors in it and thereby establish a new standard of excellence. if (and only if) they reverse the tragic component of that model.

SUR L'ATTENTAT COMMIS EN LA PERSONNE DE SA MAJESTÉ LE 19 DE DÉCEMBRE 1605

Malherbe's second ode consists of four tight sequential blocks—three of them logical, one narrative. The articulations between them, however, are virtually nonexistent; and but for a shared (if at
times peripheral) anguish occasioned by the threat of civil disorder, the various parts of the poem seem unfocused.

The first block consists of stanzas 1 and 2, in which the poet rhetorically asks future generations how they will read or hear of present-day events without shame, for this age is marked by such a decline from past courage that its crimes surpass the worst ever committed in Africa.

Without transition of any sort, the poet then shifts to praise of Henri IV: the greatest of kings, world-famous, and deserving of worship after God Himself (stanza 3). So great is he, the poet continues, that if ineligible by birth to rule France, he would certainly have been elected to that office (stanza 4). Nevertheless his subjects are ungrateful and violent, always in revolt against him (stanza 5). As proof, one need only consider the two recent attempts on Henri IV's life (stanza 6).

Again, without ligament to the preceding material, the poet changes the subject. Apostrophizing the sun, he demands to know why it did not plunge France into darkness by returning to the eastern horizon during the most recent attentat (stanza 7). He then reproaches the sun further as ignorant, insensitive, and unfree or governed by outside forces (stanza 8). Reversing himself, the poet calls his statements irrational and admits that the assassin was too intelligent to attempt anything unless the sun had already set in the west (stanza 9).

In the third section the poet passes without warning to a narration of the Seine god's flight—and that of his nymphs—at the time of the most recent attempt on the king's life (stanza 10). Motivated by fear of civil chaos (stanza 11), they may now return, for the king is safe (stanza 12) and the traitors will be punished (stanza 13).

The final section, also unprepared, is an address to the genius presiding over France's destiny. First the poet declares that the genius's good works are unforgettable (stanza 14), especially the aid given to the king's all-too-human bodyguards, who otherwise would not have spotted the would-be assassin in time (stanza 15). He then reminds the good demon that Henri IV is indispensable to the well-being of France: as a refuge and aid to the innocent (stanza 16) and as a scourge of the guilty (stanza 17). If, therefore, the genius is to fulfill its mission, it must defend him, preserve and defend the queen (stanzas 18–19), safeguard their marriage (stanza 20), and make it fertile (stanza 21). Above all, it must enable the Dauphin to defend the realm and conquer hostile Spain within his parents' lifetime (stanza 22).

To compensate for the consecutive unity that this ode obviously lacks, Malherbe employed both implied allusion—as in the first of the six encomiastic poems—and, for the first time, a network of symbolic images. The former liken contemporary France to the mythical and violent age of iron, and the king to Zeus at war with the giants. A double, interlocking pattern is thus established to synthesize the various segments. Deeply pessimistic, however, the poet argues that only by divine intervention can the House of Navarre—here, the force of
light—mobilize itself to defeat rebellious subjects and foreign enemies (associated throughout with darkness and frenetic movement). On fulfillment of the second pattern, of course, depends reversal of the first, and a return to the age of gold.³

AU FEU ROY SUR L’HEUREUX SUCCEZ
DU VOYAGE DE SEDAN

In Malherbe’s third ode there is a group of sequential passages—both logical and narrative—linked by association in one instance and culminating in a coda. On the local level the poem tends toward consecutive unity, though overall it falls short of that condition. The first four stanzas form one discursive block, in which the poet expresses relief at the advent of peace (stanza 1), explaining that rebellious Sedan surrendered as soon as Henri IV set out to put it down (stanza 2); he then justifies the tone of stanza 1 by disclosing that a bloodbath had been expected (stanza 3), but Henri’s skill averted this (stanza 4).

A second discursive block follows, connected with the preceding segment by the association of similars. Stanzas 5–8 present a complete proportional analogy in which Henri IV is likened in his forcefulness to a rampaging river swollen with melted snow. The king, however, has two qualities not attributable to the flood: self-control (v. 54) and its corollary, a sweet-natured reaction to surrender following harsh resistance.

Stanza 9 is closural, returning with great intensity to the theme of stanza 1, which the speaker recasts as an unqualified dismissal of “vaines chimères” (v. 81), which have plagued the nation with hatred, rancor, and suspicion until Henri IV showed his strength and secured the country.

Instead of ending here, however, the poem continues, with all the prior material motivating further discursive activity. Henri, argues the poet, is superhuman (stanza 10), having averted a national tragedy (stanza 11). In addition, he is so lucid and completes his projects with such efficacy that Fortune loves to serve him and is angered when not employed by the French sovereign (stanza 12). Henri IV, therefore, should continue to act (stanza 13). The poet then conceives that the as-yet-unconceived dauphin is expected to conquer the Levant (stanza 14), but while awaiting that event, why should Henri not dispose of France’s troublesome neighbors (stanza 15)? The poet then presents three arguments in favor of immediate action. Those enemies protected by the Alps will miraculously lose their geographical shield—as soon as the mountains know that Henri has launched an attack (stanza 16). Furthermore, a generation of young soldiers are burning to win glory for their king; what a waste it would be if the king left them idle (stanza 17). Finally, the troublemaking neighbors, symbolized by their rivers, are losing their courage and have therefore become vulnerable (stanza
18). The poet then winds his argument up with a resumptive exhortation to march and win (stanza 19).

The coda follows, articulated by a locative to the passage of praise and advice: if and when Henri defeats Milan (stanza 19), the poet will be there (stanza 20), commending the king. Typically, the final stanzas connect adulation of the king with self-adulation, but atypically, the coda proceeds in a logical manner. First, the poet argues that the king will be pleased to hear his praises sung, all the more so because it is only through poetry that man escapes mortality (stanza 21); for Henri this is particularly true: the subject of Malherbe's *éloges* will never be forgotten or disvalued (stanza 22).

Tightly argued as it may be in its various parts, the ode is not consecutively unified. It falls into three distinct sections without focus or subordination on the explicit, argumentative level. Throughout the ode, however, the poet implicitly analogizes Henri IV to Hercules and Theseus, showing that in respect to merit, the king reenacts the heroes' lives, while—free from their defects—he makes none of their fatal errors. Reinforcing this variant of iterative unity is an extensive system of dispersed symbols, similar to those found in other odes, in which the king is associated with light and elevation whereas his rivals appear on a reduced scale or under a shadow, and his enemies are cast into abysmal darkness.

A MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC DE BELLEGARDE,
GRAND ESCUYER DE FRANCE

The centerpiece of the fourth ode is a parataxis, flanked by logical developments. The formal effects of this—and the almost complete absence of transition—are entirely predictable.

The overture of the ode is unusually long, self-reflexive, and ingeniously argued. The poet reproaches himself for failing to write in praise of his celebrated patron, Bellegarde (stanza 1). The poet cannot, after all, be purer than the Muses, who decline to flatter but never let great services go unsung (stanza 2). *A fortiori*, virtue—the most valuable product of studying poetry—despises ingratitude more than any other vice; no acknowledgment of virtue, moreover, is longer loved than a pleasing poem (stanza 3). The poet closes this section of the work by swearing that his praises are unforgettable. If indeed he fails to make the world love Bellegarde's glory as much as Bellegarde loves the poet's verse, then the promise of Parnasse is illusory (stanza 4).

Without transition the poet passes to a second discursive tack: a complete proportional analogy in which he likens himself, hesitating among Bellegarde's qualities, to a man paralyzed by indecision as he tries to compose a garland in an abundant and richly varied garden (stanzas 5 and 6).

The next twelve stanzas constitute a set of variations on the theme of Bellegarde's greatness. Members of the patron's house have always held positions of responsibility (stanza 7) and their military service has
upheld the crown (stanza 8). The poet then rejects discussion of ancestry as degrading: Bellegarde shines by his own, not reflected, glory (stanza 9). Even Envy praises him (stanza 10). A great military horseman (stanza 11), Bellegarde was the handsome escort who enchanted the ravishing Marie de Médicis when she came to France from Italy (stanza 12). Even the nymphs along the way could not decide which of the two was divine (stanza 13). Then without ado the poet returns to the question of military virtue (stanza 14). Though unprecedented, Achilles' good looks and social graces would never have assured his immortality; he had to vanquish Troy singlehandedly for fame (stanzas 15 and 16). Likewise, Bellegarde earned undying renown through valor (stanza 17). The poet lauds Bellegarde's incorruptible loyalty and courage during recent upheavals (stanza 18). A proportional analogy repeats this praise (stanzas 19 and 20). The king has always had Bellegarde's help, the poet concludes (stanzas 21 and 22).

Then the poet suddenly announces that he must stop. His explanation is that to continue might anger Bellegarde (stanza 23). To close the ode, the poet expresses hope that Bellegarde will be pleased by the poem (stanza 24) and that he and his brother Termes may acquire further glory (stanzas 25 and 26).

If consecutive unity is absent from this text, the far-flung digression and the curious repetitions coalesce as the referent of a metaphor whose analogue is the Gemini: Castor and Pollux. In contrast with the protagonists of preceding odes, however, Bellegarde and Termes—though tall, handsome, and brilliant—will never equal (let alone surpass) their mythic counterparts—at least in fame. To accomplish that would require the impossible: an apotheosis. Thus perhaps did Malherbe distinguish between kings and their servants.

A LA REYNE MERE SUR LES HEUREUX
SUCCEZ DE SA REGENCE

Malherbe's briefest ode begins as a loose but fundamentally logical development. Shortly after a closural passage, however, it shifts to the associative mode, and ends with a coda.

In the first stanza the poet exhorts Fame to sing Marie's praises everywhere. His reasons appear in two parataxes which follow. Comprising stanzas 2 and 3, the first set of variations focuses on grounds for fear at the beginning of the regency: the murder of Henri IV and the resultant threat of civil disorder with grave international effects. The second set of variations (stanzas 4 and 5) shows that those fears were not realized: there has been internal calm for almost four months and a crucial military victory at Juliers. Transition from the subsection on fear to that on happier realities is assured by the logical marker "toutesfois." In a final set of variations (stanzas 6 and 7) the poet argues that Marie's brilliant administrative record entitles her to apotheosis and control over the rising and setting of the sun. The sense of closure is very strong in these lines thanks to the device of "coming
full circle.” The “miracles” of her regency (v. 54) have placed Marie on an equal footing with her husband, “de qui la gloire / Fut un merveille à nos yeux” (vv. 11–12, emphasis mine). The appearance of a “Demon” (v. 62), analogous to “Fame” (v. 1), whose office it is to disseminate knowledge of the queen’s deeds (vv. 62 ff) reinforces this effect.

Rather than end—and attain consecutive unity—at line 70, the ode continues, with the principle of suggestion governing the passage from one part to another. The eighth stanza initially expresses concern that good fortune will not continue, and closes on a distinct note of fear: chance may indeed reverse the happy trend completely. Though stanza 8 does contain one logical marker, “Mais si . . . ” (v. 77), the transition from stanza 7 is due mainly to the continuity of verbal action (an address to Marie, begun in stanza 6). From anxiety about reversal, the poet passes associatively in stanza 9 to the means of avoiding it. He recommends ending violence and finding better uses for French vaillance. The theme of ill will, which appears at the end of the ninth stanza, prompts the general observation of stanza 10: that internal discord is the downfall of states. By negative suggestion, strife recalls peace; hence stanza 11, where the poet evokes the abundance, happiness, and political stability resulting from political calm and order. This mental and verbal careening ends with a prediction of popular obedience and safety as the prelude to a new age of gold (stanza 12).

The last three stanzas close the second part of the ode with the promise that if successful, Marie will receive the Muses’ praise. The poet’s work in this calling is, of course, acknowledged as unsurpassed; he is, in fact, ranked among the “trois ou quatre seulement” (v. 148) whose encomiastic creations will last forever. The device of “coming full circle” occurs again, serving to link the coda not only with stanzas of the second movement but also with those of the first. Thus reappear terms or images pertaining to royal or heroic headgear, such as couronne (v. 145, cf. vv. 44 and 109); time and eternity (v. 150, cf. vv. 57 and 118–20); elevation (v. 131, cf. vv. 39–40, 47, and 115), and the miraculous (v. 129, cf. vv. 12 and 54), as well as supernatural beings like the muses who publicize human success (v. 121, cf. vv. 1 and 62).

That the ode lacks consecutive unity is clear enough: it falls into two distinct sections, one complete, single, and logically integrated, the other dispersed and associative. The coda may yoke the two parts together but it cannot make them cohere. That is the function of the allusive metaphor in which the speaker systematically likens Marie to Semiramis and the spatial vocabulary in whose terms he defines Marie’s role as guide, hierarchizer, suppressor of evil, and repressor of inappropriate conduct. The result, again, is an iterative unity, for Marie recapitulates (to her greater glory) the grandes lignes of the Assyrian queen’s biography and, in a new setting, reenacts her political rôle.
Malherbe's sixth and final ode closely resembles the fifth—discursive at first but after a closural passage shifting to a series of disgressions, some associative, others paratactic.

The first ten quatrains are fundamentally logical. The poet urges the king to destroy the rebels (stanzas 1 and 2 and the final lines of 3), then justifies his exhortation (stanzas 3–7) before repeating the plea and giving a final assurance that Louis XIII is as strong as the Protestants are weak. Within this argumentative framework, however, the poet liberally employs parataxis to drive his imperatives home and to martial his supporting evidence. Stanzas 1 and 2 (as well as the last two verses of stanza 3) are virtually synonymous, a set of variations on the theme of Louis as Hercules the Hydra-Slayer. The first two verses of stanza 3 and the next four quatrains present a rationale for action. The parts, which could be arranged in any order or replaced by similars, stress the rebels' faults and misdeeds: "infidelle malice" (v. 9), a century-long history of "brutales manies" (v. 15), the unsurpassed "inhumanité" they manifest today (v. 19), and their devastating effect on the economy (vv. 21–24), in addition to a uniquely repugnant fusion of civil and religious impiety (vv. 25–28). In stanza 8 the imperatives of stanzas 1, 2, and 3 are repeated four times (in three cases without conjunction). The Protestants' weakness is then portrayed in a series of variations on the theme of précautions inutiles: their complex and laborious efforts at defense will be futile, because the king's "cause est la cause de Dieu" (v. 38).

Then by double association the poet passes to praise of Richelieu, whose name is rimed with that of the diety (vv. 38 and 40) and who, appropriately enough, is the king's main support here below. The prelate's qualities are catalogued, like the misdeeds of the Protestants, in random order: committed to spreading Louis's grandeur (stanza 11), he is single-minded (stanza 12), sharp of perception and intellect, as well as magnanimous, bold, and skillful (stanza 13). The next quatrains close the Richelieu digression with a removal of earlier commands and a pointe (that nothing less than a man of Richelieu's stature would adequately reward the king's piety). Characteristically, however, Malherbe uses the closural passage to link the digression with the preceding materials, stating that with Richelieu's aid, Louis need not delay his anti-Protestant initiative (vv. 59–60).

By an associative leap from one cause (Richelieu) to a similar the poet now presents a vision of victory personified. The opening stanzas in this section (16–18) describe the goddess—her place and dress (v. 63), her speech inviting the king to march (vv. 66–68), her bearing and confidence (vv. 69–72). By a second associative shift (from present and future historical situations to similars in classical myth) the poet compares Louis to Zeus and the Protestants to the giants who besieged
Olympus. Thanks to Victory, the giants failed (so, too, will the Protestants) and Zeus triumphed (as will Louis). The poet then imagines in stanzas 23 to 25 that the Protestants have drawn the same analogy. Recognizing their fate they should surrender, and their English allies flee, knowing the punishments that may await them if they resist. Neptune will aid Louis in his military effort (stanzas 26-28). In a return to logical order the poet then enumerates the direct effect of victory: greater respect for the French the world over (stanza 29).

The next ten stanzas represent another departure from the general drift of the ode. There the poet expresses his personal regret that, being old, he cannot collaborate materially in the triumph (stanza 30). He will, therefore, miss the incomparable honor of dying in the king’s service (stanzas 31 and 32). From an emphatic repetition of his melancholy (stanzas 33-35), he passes by the opposition of mind and body to confidence in his power to serve Louis as a poet (stanza 35). There follow four stanzas of variations on the theme of the poet’s incomparable gifts, which, divinely acquired at birth and still valid, permit him to weave a laurel wreath of words for the sovereign. The final stanza, which returns to the idea of international fame (originating in the Richelieu digression and continued in the Victory digression), brings the poem almost full circle.

Like the fifth ode, the sixth is devoid of consecutive unity. My analysis of the imagery shows, however, that the scattered fragments of Malherbe’s address to the king are drawn into a coherent totality. First the interests of the crown are consistently and pervasively associated with light, elevation, order, and then plenum; by contrast, the interests of his adversaries are associated with darkness, abasement of the lofty, emergence of what ought to lie hidden, and the emptying of what should remain full, as well as the imposition of limits on that which should be infinite. Second, the king appears—in quite similar terms—as a dependent: first, on Richelieu’s lucidity and moral stature, which will enable Louis to preside over an orderly and prosperous realm; and second, on Malherbe’s poetic illumination and creative vigor, which will assure his attainment of worldwide, eternal fame as a personage of encomiastic literature. In short, Malherbe pulls the various fragments of the lyric together as aspects of the king’s being and becoming, potentiality and actuality. Alone among the six poems, the final ode attains descriptive unity.

From the foregoing it is now clear that the six odes of Malherbe include disrupted and diffused sequences but attain iterative or descriptive unity, thanks to implied metaphor or dispersed symbolism. (What distinguishes the Malherbian ode from its competitors, it appears, is the extreme rigor of certain logical passages, found most frequently at the beginning of the text.) Far from being formally unique or even extraordinary, then, Malherbe’s odes may stand as specimens of early seventeenth-century French poetic.
1. All citations of the odes refer to Malherbe, *Oeuvres poétiques*, ed. Fromilhague and Lebègue.


3. Ibid., pp. 45-50.

4. Ibid., pp. 58-63.

5. Ibid., pp. 63-67.

6. Ibid., pp. 77-80.

7. Ibid., pp. 80-82.

8. Ibid., pp. 88-90.

9. Ibid., pp. 90-93.

10. Ibid., pp. 101-7.
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