

EUROPEAN BAROQUE AND DUTCH 17th CENTURY LYRIC

POETRY: PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS

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Like the term "Romanticism," the term "Baroque" has had a confused but interesting history. Its suitability has been discussed with vehemence at one time reserved exclusively for religious arguments, and the discussion is even now not quite exhausted.¹ For anyone interested in the literature of the Netherlands the question of suitability of the term Baroque has a special interest, because the period usually so designated coincides to a large degree with what the Dutch call their Golden Age. This is the period in which the great painters were active (Rembrandt, Frans Hals, Rubens, Van Dyck, Cuypers, Ruysdael); it is also the period of great commercial expansion, and the whole age has been summed up as that of Vondel, indicating that the literature of the period also shared in the Golden Age. Specifically, it is the period of the *Muiderkring*, of the great lyric poets P. C. Hooft, Constantyn Huygens, Jacob Cats and the dramatists Bredero and, of course, Vondel.

To what extent the term Baroque subsumes the flourishing of these latter authors, however, has been in dispute for many years. Seeming parallels between 17th century Dutch literature and that of other European countries which are supposed to have had a Baroque period, notably France, Germany and England (where it is called "metaphysical"), as well as Italy and Spain, are counterbalanced by obvious differences. Obviously, the problem is a thorny one with complex ramifications. No single article, let alone one which is meant as

a sketch only, can hope to do justice to it. Nor should conclusions be expected which solve all problems once and for all. The comments presented here are therefore meant only as a kind of "primer," an introduction to the question, with some suggestions in the direction of an acceptance of the term Baroque as suitable for certain works by certain authors of the Golden Age.

The literature of 17th century Holland is not everybody's favourite reading. On the contrary, apart from Vondel, little of it can nowadays be considered alive and well. The educated Dutchman will often defend the merit of Dutch literature by pointing to the achievement of Vondel, but he has rarely had the occasion to go beyond Gysbreght van Aemstel. Vondel's works in general are a closed book to him,² and most of the other authors of the period are only names to him, if they have any meaning at all.

Interestingly, the unfamiliarity of this period is one of the things which Dutch literature shared, until recently, with other European countries. We can justly speak of a virtual re-discovery of 17th century literature in all of Europe, particularly since the 1920's. Up to then, this literature had a bad reputation for being verbose, distorted, exaggerated in its use of language and imagery, and hard to understand because of its unusual constructions and encyclopedic amassing of allusions and references. Of course, there had always been more or less well-known authors, those who never fell out of favour, and whose names were never truly lost. There is Milton and Donne in England; Gryphius and Lohenstein, perhaps Hofmannswaldau and Christian Günther in Germany; and, of course, Racine and Corneille in France. But the majority of Baroque writers, and particularly those whom we may consider as the most typically Baroque, are almost unknown to the general reading public, or are not known as Baroque authors.

Precisely what is Baroque, anyway, and when did it supposedly exist?

There are two main interpretations of the word Baroque. The one, the more general one, sees it, in the words of Gerard Knuvelde, as "een algemeen verschijnsel in de evolutie der stijlen."³ ("a general phenomenon in the evolution of styles.") It is that phase which follows classicism, just as classicism follows primitivism in art:

De primitive kunst, die meer in zich heeft dan ze uitdrukt, brengt daardoor iets schuchters en bevangens mee. . . . De barok daarentegen verkondigt alles amper en breedspakig. . . . Tussen de primitive fase met haar gesluierde bedoeling, en barok met haar technische wonderen ligt de klassieke kunst: een evenwicht dat uiteraard kortsondig moet zijn.⁴

(Primitive art, which contains more than it expresses, carries with it therefore something timid and constrained. . . . Baroque, on the other hand, proclaims everything amply and elaborately. . . . Between the primitive phase with its veiled meaning, and Baroque with its technical miracles, there lies classical art: a balance which obviously must be of short duration.)

But there is also a specific definition of the Baroque:

Op één periode uit de kunstgeschiedenis . . . wordt de term barok toegepast als eigennaam: op die uitingen van barokke kunst nl. die in het midden van de renaissance ontstaan als uitdrukking van de drang naar een 'machtiger vormentaal' dan de klassieke kunst der eigenlijke Renaissance kende.⁵

(To one period in art history . . . the term Baroque is applied as a proper name: to those manifestations of Baroque art, namely, that spring up in the middle of the Renaissance, as expressions of a movement towards a "more powerful formal language" than the classical art of the actual Renaissance knew.)

In art history, the Baroque is now "recognized as the next stage of European art after the Renaissance."⁶ When used for literature, the term Baroque results from a suggestion made by the art critic Heinrich Wölfflin in his Renaissance und Barock (1888) that a transfer from the visual arts to literature might not only be possible but fruitful. This suggestion

was followed up above all by the German literary critics and scholars Fritz Strich, Oskar Walzel and Herbert Cysarz.⁷ Unfortunately, in literary history the term has remained both more controversial and more restricted in its use.

From its conception the greatest drawback of the term has been the fact that it was used by German literary critics to cover a particular period of style and expression in their own literature. It seemed to fill the need of just such a term in German literary history.⁸ The difficulty started, of course, when German scholars attempted to define corresponding periods in Europe as a whole as Baroque. Even when we leave aside the added complication that some of these scholars used the term in its wider sense, as describing all art that is not classical, there was bound to be confusion. A good example of the kind of lopsided results created by the transfer of terms from one country to another is France. France had for a long time been quite happy in calling its 17th century the century of classicism. Nevertheless, German scholars, soon after launching the term, attempted to show that there were "undercurrents" of Baroque in this period. It was only a step from there to the claim that "really" all of 17th century French literature was Baroque. Obviously, in France, where there was no need to fill a vacuum in the terminology, the term was not readily accepted. There is a Baroque movement in France, but it is of short duration, it is limited in scope, and it soon merges into classicism.

A similar problem seems to present itself when the term is transferred to Holland. In fact, however, the term did make its first non-German conquest in Holland. In 1919, F. Schmidt-Degener published a piece on "Rembrandt en Vondel" in De Gids,⁹ in which he argued that Rembrandt epitomized anti-Baroque taste, whereas Vondel functions as the typical representative of the European Baroque. By 1934, the year of publication of Heinz Haerten's Vondel und der deutsche Barock, Holland had succumbed to the use of the term. In

the words of René Wellek: "In general, seventeenth-century Dutch literature seems by the Dutch themselves to be now described as baroque."¹⁰ And yet several problems would seem to be connected with the term. The Baroque in Germany had been equated with courtly culture (especially the later Viennese Baroque); that such a movement could be possible in France seems acceptable, but how could one account for its occurrence in Holland, where a republican government existed, and where a republican outlook and sentiment dominated both social and artistic life? How could a courtly movement spring up amidst austere Calvinist virtues?

Of course, Baroque splendour is not necessarily tied to courtly culture. There is ostentatiousness in the Netherlands, but it is civic, military and nationalistic, it is an expression of the sense of community, of the larger organisms of church and state, and it is intended to show that worldly success comes to those who are willing to live the life of the righteous. The nationalistic manifestations in Dutch public life were always related, in the 17th century, to the idea of the Dutch as God's chosen people. Hence, one of the major characteristics of the Baroque, the monumental, could nevertheless find expression in the Netherlands.

A similar problem concerns the question of religion, of great importance since so much of Baroque literature consists of religious poetry and plays. In Germany, the greatest exponents of the Baroque are primarily Protestant, whereas France was at the time at least officially almost exclusively Roman Catholic. There have been attempts, in later scholarship, to equate Baroque with the Counter-Reformation,¹¹ which might work well if applied to architecture (Bernini, for example); but this emphasis on Catholic Baroque would then exclude most of the German poets of this period. More to the point for our discussion is the religious contrast between France and Holland. If the overwhelming majority of French poets are at least nominally Catholic, Dutch poets are often, though with notable exceptions, as Knuvelde

points out,¹² Calvinist, or at least Protestant. True, the force of doctrine is so strong in both countries that some parallels might establish themselves almost despite the differences, and yet one would expect the two countries to deviate considerably in their religious poetry.

More technical questions also compound the problem. Exactly what period are we talking about? Imbrie Buffum, speaking of France, places the age of Baroque between 1570 and 1650.¹³ J. M. Cohen sets the beginning date approximately at 1585 in France and Italy, and in Germany at 1610.¹⁴ Around 1650, both Buffum and Cohen agree, its hold on France weakens and classicism triumphs, but in Germany the Baroque continues under the influence of the Thirty-Years' War (1618-1648) until much later. Christian Günther, for instance, only died in 1723. The flowering of Dutch literature takes place from about 1610 on, and also continues until quite late. Knuvelde speaks of three generations, 1605-1647 (the death of P. C. Hooft); 1647-1669, and a third generation leading into the 18th century, with the death of Jan Luyken in 1712 as the extreme limit. Clearly, from these dates it is hard to arrive at a homogenous historical picture. France's civil wars (1562-1594), the source of inspiration for Agrippa d'Aubigné's cycle of poems Les Tragiques, antedate by far the German civil wars. At that time, France had already settled into a period of relative stability under Louis XIV. The Netherlands, although it had achieved a measure of stability within its borders by 1648, was involved in a series of wars until 1713 (the Treaty of Utrecht).

If the periodization problem, and with it the problem of historico-political context, significantly complicates the concept of a European Baroque, the problem of existing terminology at the time of the re-invention of the term Baroque is of equal magnitude, though this is of course less of a problem in Germany. In France, literary scholarship had conveniently ignored the existence of any style

but the classical. If we were to accept Odette de Mourgues' suggestion, French 17th century styles ought to be divided into metaphysical, Baroque, précieux and neo-classical.¹⁵ De Mourgues and Buffum exclude neo-classicism from Baroque, but Helmut Hatzfeld¹⁶ has claimed it in its entirety for the Baroque.

In Holland, different styles have also been discerned in literary tradition. There is the Amsterdam School, centre of activity from about 1590 to 1640; a Renaissance school merging with the Muider Circle, whose greatest exponents are Hooft (1581-1647) and Bredero (1585-1618); and finally the Golden Age with as its greatest representative Joost van den Vondel. Clearly, these periodizations, too, are a major obstacle in pinpointing an exact period as being that of the European Baroque.

But we need not proceed along these lines. A much more fruitful way of looking at the concept of Baroque is to seek for common thematic and stylistic elements which would bind these various literatures together into a common Lebensgefühl (feeling about life). It is along these lines that J. M. Cohen, in his Baroque Lyric, proposes to "examine the attitude of the lyrical poets of the age to a particular topic or commonplace in the manner practised by the great German critic Ernst Robert Curtius in his Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter."¹⁷ Cohen considers such categories as "sacred and profane," "Love," "gardens and landscapes," and "desert and charnel house." Similarly, Imbrie Buffum proposes categories such as "moral purpose, emphasis and exaggerations; horror, incarceration; theatricality and illusion; contrast and surprise; movement and metamorphosis; organic unity and acceptance of life."¹⁸ Odette de Mourgues, on the other hand, distinguishes the mystical, the apocalyptic, and the macabre.

In our case, it is interesting to see how Knuvelde has characterized the Baroque:

[de] voorkeur gaat uit naar de meer imposante uitingen die op indrukwekkende wijze tot het gevoel spraken. Processies, machtige liturgische oefeningen met veel en overweldigende muziek, imposante bouwerken, systematisch doordachte barokke stedenaanleg, schilderwerken waarop enorm veel te zien is. . . . De barokke kunstenaar is prachtlievend; hij zoekt het verhevene, waardige, het feestelijke of tragische, altijd het monumentale, dikwijls het theatrale.¹⁹

(. . . preference is given to the more imposing expressions which spoke in an impressive manner to the emotions. Processions, powerful liturgical exercises with a lot of overpowering music, imposing architecture, systematically considered city planning, painting in which an enormous amount of things can be seen. . . . The Baroque artist is ostentatious; he seeks the lofty, the dignified, the festive or the tragic, always the monumental, often theatricality.)

Later on, he emphasizes Baroque sensuality ("zinnelijkheid om niet te zeggen sensualiteit" [sensuousness, not to say sensuality]) and speaks of a central idea of the Baroque, the antithesis. He explains these aspects psychologically: "De barokkunstenaar is . . . een door heftige levensdrang bewogene" (The baroque artist is a person moved by a vehement lust for life), and characterizes the whole movement as dynamic and centrifugal.²⁰ The fundamental characteristics are of course expressed also in the stylistic means at the disposal of the Baroque artist:

. . . effectvolle klankexpressie, gedragen ritmen, suggestief-sprekende woorden, vaak hyperbolische beeldspraak, forse, zwaar geladen, maar ook door parallelie opvallende analytische zinsstructuren, exclamaties en retorische vragen, woordspelingen, paradoxen zijn de voornaamste kenmerken van de stijl der barokdichters.²¹

(. . . effectful sound-expression, lofty rhythms, suggestive-expressive words, often hyperbolic imagery, robust, heavily-laden analytic sentence structures, also striking through parallelism, exclamations and rhetorical questions, word-plays, paradoxes are the most important characteristics of the style of Baroque poets.)

For Knuvelde, in any case, Baroque exists in Dutch literature, not as a separate school but as an element mixing with others: "In diverse auteurs vindt men barokinvloeden, verschillende werken groeien, mentaal en vormelijk, op uit de voedingsboden van de barok."²² (In several authors one can find Baroque influences, several works spring up, mentally and formally, from the matrix of the Baroque.)

It is with these comments in mind, that I propose to look at a number of lyric poems of 17th century Holland which seem to me to fit within the context of Baroque as defined (both flexibly and generously) by Cohen, Buffum, de Mourgues and Knuvelde. Both theme and context will be examined, to show how these poems are Baroque, and what parallels can be established with the European Baroque, which I have limited here to poetry of France and Germany as point of reference.

The Baroque of Europe was a period in which external forces triggered an intensification of speculation on life and death. Historic upheavals, cataclysms such as devastating wars coupled with great social conflicts and the deterioration of those elements and institutions which make for a stable society--all these make for a period of heightened insecurity and a consciousness of flux and change. In periods of chaos, man is forced to re-examine his own position in the world, his fragility and accidental nature. It is at such times also that man must come to terms with the concepts of time and eternity, which lie at the basis of his very existence. The Baroque was just such a period.

In most poetic expressions of the Baroque there is a basic feeling of insecurity, born of an age of struggle. To Baroque man the universe itself seems out of tune, and the comfortable, balanced world of preceding centuries displaced by fundamental questioning about the world, man, and above all about the relationship between man and God. Man's life is seen as fragile, short, brutish and miserable.

Was sind wir Menschen doch? (What are we humans?) asks the poet Andreas Gryphius, and he answers:

Ein Wohnhaus grimmer Schmerzen,
Ein Ball des falschen Glücks, ein Irrlicht dieser Zeit,
Ein Schauplatz herber Angst, besetzt mit scharfem Leid,
Ein bald verschmeltzter Schnee und abgebrannte Kerzen.
("Menschliches Elend")²³

(A house of raging pain,
A plaything of inconstant happiness, a will-o-the-wisp
of this time,
A theatre of bitter fear, occupied with sharp suffering,
Snow that is soon melted, and burnt-out candles.
(["Human misery"])

This feeling is echoed by the French poet Jean de Sponde:

Tout s'enfle contre moi, tout m'assaut, tout me tente,
Et le monde et la chair et l'ange révolté,
Dont l'onde, dont l'effort, dont le charme inventé
Et m'abîme, Seigneur, et m'ébranle et m'enchanter.

In both these poems man is prey to forces that seem to overwhelm him. Anxiety is conveyed not only by the theme of the poems, but also by their treatment. In Sponde we note the ternary rhythm, the repetition of "tout" and of "et." Such a style is dramatic, even theatrical. A similar treatment may be observed in Gryphius' "An die Welt" (To the World):

Mein oft bestürmtes Schiff, der grimmen Winde Spiel,
Der frechen Wellen Ball, das schier die Flut getrennet,
Das wie ein schneller Pfeil nach seinem Ziele rennet,
Kommt vor der Zeit an Port, den meine Seele will.

(My often battered ship, the plaything of the raging winds,
The playball of the waves which has almost been torn
apart by the flood, and
Which, like a speeding arrow, runs towards its goal,
Arrives in its harbour, which my soul desires, before
its appointed time.)

Man on the sea of life, a commonplace, has here been transformed by subjecting it to great movement, and by adding to it a sense of urgency and directness. In the tercets of this poem the solution is found, as in Sponde, in union with God. But the solution is not the result of logic or reason, but of a faith born out of despair.

In Dutch poetry, too, we find an awareness of the problematic nature of man, though the sense of despair that pervades the poems we just discussed is largely counter-balanced by the strong conviction that there is an afterlife, and that the righteous person will attain it. This greater confidence is perhaps due to the fact that the United Netherlands were at least nominally a theocracy, so that there was less of a cleavage between the spiritual and the secular, and between the leaders of the church and their flock. A strong faith in the life after death is in any case pervasive in much of the Dutch lyric poetry of this period. But of course this has the effect of making life here on earth appear as pitiful and worthless. This can be seen in Jan Vos' poem "Op het overlijden van Cornelia Hinlopen" (On the death of Cornelia Hinlopen), in which the poet contrasts the life that the little child might have had here on earth with the life she now has in the hereafter:

Zij walgt von 't aardrijk, want ellendigheid en 't leven
Zijn zusters die gelijk ter wereld zijn gebracht.
Men schreit hier tweemaal als men eenmaal heeft gelacht.

(She loathes this earth, for misery and life
Are sisters, born simultaneously.
One cries twice here, when one has smiled once.)

In heaven, the girl enjoys beauty of which we can scarcely form an idea:

Hier gaat ze langs een vloer van diamanten stralen,
Van paarden, van turkoois, van sterren, zon en maan.
Men hult haar met een krans van onverwelkbare blaân.
Haar palmtak zou zij voor geen gouden rijksstaf geven.

(Here she goes along a floor of diamond rays,
of pearls, of turquoise, sun and moon and stars.
She's clothed there with a wreath of unfading leaves.
Her palmbranch she would not exchange for a golden sceptre.)

In "Kinder-Moort" (Child-Murder), Revijs sees the world as a "tranendal" (a vale of tears). Against this he holds up eternal life as a state of perpetual bliss. The children who were murdered by Herod in Bethlehem lost nothing in dying:

Sy gingen haestelijck int leven door den doot,
 Gerucket onverwacht wt hares moeders schoot,
 Gedragen inden schoot van haren liefsten Vader.

(They went swiftly into life through death,
 Torn unexpectedly from the mother's lap
 Carried into the lap of their most loving father.)

The constant references to the afterlife makes life itself appear, by comparison, worth leaving behind. On the other hand, however, eternal life might be considered to make life on earth valuable. This is the paradox of Revius' poem "Leven" (Life), which is based on Christian orthodoxy:

Dit leven is al veel (wanneerment wel betracht)
 Om datmen seker hoopt en veylichlijck verwacht
 Wel levende alhier, hiernamaels 't eewich leven.

(This life is already much [if you consider it carefully]
 Because one hopes securely and expects safely
 When living well here, to inherit the life hereafter.)

A basic ambivalence about earthly life ensues, and nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the rejection of opulence and sensual beauty, to which even the Calvinist poet feels attracted. The same Revius who described the world, in "Kinder-Moort," as a vale of tears can take immense pleasure in describing the pomp and circumstance of military might. In his poem "Opweckinge," ("Resurrection") he celebrates the victories of the men who were sent by God to come to the defense of the chosen people of the Republic against its aggressors. The end of the poem is an apotheosis in which the justified praise for men who fought in the cause of God almost becomes an excuse for indulging in praise of military glory for its own sake.

Nevertheless, Baroque man seldom lost sight of the fact that all splendour and glory is perhaps nothing more than a dream and an illusion. Jan Hermansz Krul, in "'s Werelts Ydelheden," ("The World's Vanities") writes:

Die de werelt wel in siet,
 Ach die sal te recht bespeuren,
 Dat sijn vreugde geeft verdriet,
 En sijn wellust niet dan treuren.
 Wat de werelt stelt te veuren,
 Dat is wellust, werelts pracht,
 Aerdsche vreugde, dertel leven
 Dees sal ons de werelt geven,
 Dit ist dat de werelt acht.

(He who considers the world well,
 Oh, he will notice correctly
 That his happiness gives pain
 And his lust nothing but regret.
 What the world represents
 Is lust, worldly splendour,
 Earthly pleasure, frivolous life,
 This the world will give us,
 This is what the world respects.)

But he warns us:

Armen mensch! wat gaed u aen,
 Dat ghy, soo verdooft van sinnen,
 Mooght nae werelts vreughde staen?
 Aerdsche schoonheydt soo beminnen?

(Poor man! What are you up to,
 That, so led astray by the senses,
 You pursue the pleasures of the world?
 And love worldly beauty so?)

The world is negated because of the fickleness of fate, because the wheel of fortune turns incessantly, and above all because of the futility of human values in the face of the ultimate end: death. To be sure, Revius may consider the world to be a road to God, but is the intrinsic value of life not denied?

The rejection of the world, an obviously popular theme, can be given a very Baroque treatment. We see this in W. G. van Foquenbroch's poem "Gedachten over 't onbestendig Geluk," ("Thoughts on the Inconstancy of Happiness") and in Adriaan Poirter's "Myn oogen zyn te kleyn"; ("My eyes are too small"):

Myn oogen zyn te kleyn
 Om nats genug te geven,
 Myn oogen zyn te droogh
 Voor sulck een ydel leven:

Ach had ick een rivier
 Die stroom op stroomen gaf!
 Ick spoelde my, mijn hert,
 Myn bliende wulpsheyt af.

(My eyes are too small
 To give enough wetness,
 My eyes are too dry
 For such a vain life.

Oh, if only I had a river
 That gave flood upon flood!
 I would wash, my heart
 Away my blind sensuality.

An even more Baroque style is reached in Vondel's "Opdracht aan Eusebia," ("Dedication to Eusebia") an extremely negative description of man's earthly existence. Here, the emphasis on concrete images is almost obsessive, the antitheses are constant, the contrast between man's life on earth and his true purpose and divine spark are worked out in detail:

Wat is ons vlees, dat toch in't graf moet rotten?
 Wat is het lijf, vermast van snode pracht?
 Der wormen spijs, en voedsel voor de motten;
 Een hindernis van't geen God dierbaarst acht:
 Dat's 't wezen uit zijn aangezicht gesneden
 De hemelse en in klei gevangen ziel . . .

(What is our flesh, which must rot in the grave?
 What is the body, deprived of its bold splendour?
 The banquet of the worms, and food for moths;
 An obstacle against that which God considers most
 cherishable:

That is the being made in his image
 The heavenly soul, imprisoned in clay . . .)

It is when topics like that of the contrast between world and the hereafter become subject to the kind of treatment that Vondel gives it, that parallels between Dutch and European Baroque become evident. The stylistic devices employed are closely related: the temper of the times dictated such a treatment. Individual poets turned to similar elements to express their emotions and frustrations in similar form.

This is clear also from the treatment of another universal theme, death. The Baroque attitude towards death is, like that towards life, ambiguous, because the Christian creed has always been so. Death can be positively interpreted, because eternal life should follow. Thus, Andreas Gryphius can enjoy the Easter celebrations as the victory of Christ over death, in "Auf das Fest des auferstehenden Erlösers oder heiligen Ostertag" ("On the Feast of the Risen Redeemer, or Holy Easter"):

Grab, Siegel, Hut und Stein, wälz ab die grosse Last
 Vons Herzens Tür! Bind auf das Schweisstuch, das mich
 fasst;

Damit ich sehe, wie der Tod im Sieg verschlungen.

(Grave, seal, cover and stone, roll away the great burden
from the heart's door! Untie the sweat cloth that binds me;
So that I may see, how death has been swallowed up in
victory.)

But the same author can contemplate, or rather, in true Baroque fashion, "experience" death's horrors in "Gedanken: Ueber den Kirchhof und Ruhestätte der Verstorbenen" ("Thoughts about the cemetery and resting place of the dead"):

Der Därmer Wust reisst durch die Haut,
So von den Maden ganz durchbissen;
Ich schau die Därmer, -- ach mir graut! --
In Eiter, Blut und Wasser fliessen.

(The mess of entrails pierces through the skin,
Eaten away completely by maggots,
I see the entrails -- oh, I shudder --
Turning into pus, blood and water.)

For the mystic German poet, Angelus Silesius, death does not exist, but for most poets fascination with death, even a morbid preoccupation with it, is evident.

In this respect, Holland gives us some striking examples. Jeremias de Decker's poem "Aan mijn Sterfdag" ("To my Dying Day") is at first sight not as Baroque a poem as those just quoted, because it seems too well organized, too cerebral. The imagery, too, is rather more controlled than usual. Yet, in spirit as well as in the use of certain rhetorical devices, it is a Baroque poem:

Dag, die mij eens van zon versteken zult en dag,
Dag, die mij binnen 't graf, dag, die mij eeuwig buiten
De ruime wereld zult, de schone tempel sluiten . . .
Hoe spoedt gij herwaarts aan, doch als op wollen voeten!

(Day, which will one day deprive me of sun and day,
Day, which will entomb me, day, which will shut me out
eternally

From the wide world, the beautiful temple . . .
How do you hasten towards me, but as if on woollen feet.)

The interruption of the first line after the first word conveys a sense of breathlessness; the frequent repetition of the word "dag," which is the subject of the poem, the enjambement of the "buiten/ de ruime wereld," and the interjection "de schone tempel" before the verb "sluiten" are features of the disjointed, involved style of much of the Baroque. Finally, the

narrowing and expanding of time in the last two tercets is dramatic:

Gij zult, gij zult misschien mij in dit jaar ontmoeten,
Misschien in deze maand, in deze week misschien.

En kleef ik, dwaze, nog zo vast aan mijn gebreken,
En leef ik nog zo los, alsof ik nog veel weken,
Nog vele maanden zou, nog vele jaren zien?

(You will, you will perhaps encounter me this year,
Perhaps this month, this week perhaps.

And I cling, fool, still so to my faults,
And I live still so loosely, as if I still will see many
weeks,

Still many months, still years?)

Like death, time is a universal theme of all ages, styles and countries. If we are to speak of a specifically Baroque treatment of time, we must therefore not simply seek for the presence of time, we must look for a particular attitude towards it. Here, we can make one remark immediately. The gentle, nostalgic mood associated with the theme of the passing of time, the familiar "ubi sunt" has been replaced by a sense of urgency, an obsessive awareness of flux and change. Two examples demonstrate this, one by Sponde, the other by the Dutch poet Jan Luyken. First, the poem by Sponde, Sonnet V of the Sonnets de la Mort:

Hélas! comptez vos jours! Les jours qui sont passés
Sont déjà morts pour vous, ceux qui viennent encore
Mourront tous sur le point de leur naissante aurore,
Et moitié de la vie est moitié du décès.

We see again the repetitions ("jours"), the opposition "déjà . . . encore," and the antithesis "Moitié de la vie . . . moitié du décès." In the subsequent description of the futile efforts of man the style becomes theatrical:

Ce coeur outrecuidé que votre bras implore,
Cet indomptable bras que votre coeur adore,
La mort les met en gêne et leur fait le procès.

God will, in the end, demand an account of our lives, and the poet concludes therefore with a warning, which again takes up the element of time:

Une heure vous attend, un moment vous épie,
 Bourreaux dénaturés de votre propre vie,
 Qui vit avec la peine et meurt sans le repos!

Jan Luyken's poem "Wat is 't leven" ("What is life") is also concerned with the progress of time. The poet considers life's span from a vantage point:

Dit oogenblik of Punt, terug gekeeken;
 Weg is de tyd van dertig, veertig jaar,
 Gelyk een pyl, of wind voorby gestreeken,
 En als een droom, of 't nooit geweest en waar . . .

(This moment or point, looking back;
 Gone is the time of thirty, forty years,
 Like an arrow, or wind wafted past,
 Like a dream, as if it had never been.)

Clearly, the mood is calmer here than in Sponde, but the image of the arrow gives some sense of speed. It is interesting to note that the image of the arrow also appears in Chr. Fr.

Hunold's poem "Ueber die Zeit" ("About time"):

Ein Pfeil geht zwar geschwind, die Luft saust schnell vorbei,
 Die Wolken laufen sehr, der Blitz fährt in die Eichen,
 Sprich, ob was Schnellers noch, als seine Strahlen sei!
 Blitz, Pfeil, Luft, Wolken sind der Zeit nicht zu vergleichen.

(An arrow goes, to be sure, quickly, and air flashes by fast,
 The clouds are fast, lightning strikes the oaks,
 Say, whether something is faster than its rays!
 Lightning, arrow, air, clouds cannot be compared to time.)

There can be no doubt that much of the preoccupation with time, with the shortness of life, with the imminence of death, is inspired by the violent nature of the times in which these poems were written. Echoes of contemporary events themselves can be found particularly in French and German poetry. Poems such as Gryphius' "Schluss des 1648. Jahres" ("The end of the year 1648") and "An einen unschuldigen Leidenden" ("To an innocent sufferer") are almost indulgent in their description of the more sordid aspects of this world. The latter poem's catalogue of torture weapons, used in the "holy" wars between Catholics and Protestants, strikes us as verging on bad taste:

Ein Brandpfahl und ein Rad, Pech, Folter, Blei und Zangen,
 Strick, Messer, Hacken, Beil, ein Holzstoss und ein
 Schwert
 Und siedend Ol und Blei, ein Spiess, ein glühend Pferd
 Sind den'n nicht schrecklich, die, was schrecklich, nicht
 begangen.

(A stake and a wheel, tar, rack, lead and thongs,
Gallows, knife, hoe, ax, woodpile and a sword
And boiling oil and lead, a lance, a glowing horse
Are not terrifying to those who have not committed
terrible things.)

The concern with pain, horror and cruelty is almost obsessive. Similarly, the collection of poems by Agrippa d'Aubigné, Les Tragiques, is filled with the description of the sufferings of the martyrs.

Although Holland did not have civil wars on the scale of those in France and Germany, Dutch poetry of the times echoes some of the violence that was nevertheless inherent in Dutch society. Most of the elements of civil war were there in 1619, during the trial and execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, and again in 1672 with the mob's murder of the De Witt brothers. Reinder P. Meijer writes:

. . . the seventeenth century was a period remarkable for its wars and unrest. During the truce [between Spain and the Republic] the country seemed to explode within and at one stage came dangerously close to civil war over issues of internal politics and religion. The trial and execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, one of the ablest Dutch statesmen and architect of the truce, is an indication of the seriousness and the bitterness of the conflict.²⁴

External wars were fought in 1652-54, 1658, 1665-67, 1672-87 and 1688-1697. Meijer concludes:

In other words, for more than half the century the Netherlands were on a war footing with one or more other countries, and one is tempted to ask what was so golden about all this.²⁵

Two "political" poems might suffice to show how actual events are reflected in the poetry of the time. In his poem

"Jaargetijde van Wijlen de Heer Johan van Oldenbarnevelt," ("Anniversary of the late Johan van Oldenbarnevelt") Vondel deals with the execution of the eminent statesman. In presenting van Oldenbarnevelt as a martyr, Vondel contrasts his calm and dignified behaviour with the dealings of the Synod:

De basterdvierschaar dan, na 't schoppen van 's volks
Vaders,
Geschandvlekt als verraders,
Verwijst onz' Bestevaâr, met afgeleefde strot,

Te verven 't Hofschavot.
 Geduldig stapt hij, met zijn stoksken, naar het ende
 Van doorgesolde ellende,
 Van last en barenswee, o bank des doods, o zand!
 Waartoe verzijlt ons land?

(The bastard four then, tainted as traitors,
 After having kicked the father of the people,
 Dictate our beloved father, with tired neck
 To paint the gallows of the court.
 Patiently, with his little cane,
 He walks towards the end of the misery he has suffered,
 The end of burden and travail, o bank of death, o sand!
 Whither is our country drifting?)

The key to the poet's treatment of the subject is dramaticality. Vondel, who obviously admired Oldenbarnevelt, presents him as he would have presented him on stage. This, too, is Baroque, and time and again specific devices are chosen with the intention of creating a mood of suspense, or tension, which involves the reader emotionally. Vondel's poem on the escape of Hugo de Groot from the Loevestein castle, where he had been incarcerated, opens with an atmosphere of suspense that immediately captures the imagination:

Gewelt van wallen, dubbele gracht,
 Ontruste honden, wacht by wacht,
 Beslage poorten, ysre boomen,
 Geknars van slotwerck, breede stroomen,
 En d'onvermurwde kastelein
 Versekerden, op Loevestein,
 Den Grooten Huigen, buiten duchten
 Van in der eeuwigheit t' ontvlughten.

(Power of walls, double moat,
 Restless dogs, guard upon guard,
 Studded gates, iron barriers,
 Creaking of locks, wide streams
 And the adamant landlord
 Guaranteed, at Loevestein castle,
 Without fear, that Hugo de Groot
 Would not in eternity escape.)

The catalogue of measures designed to prevent the prisoner's escape, the addition of auditive elements (the "ontruste honden" and "geknars van slotwerck") set the mood; the hyperbole "in der eeuwigheit" sums up the utter impossibility of escape, which took place nevertheless.

Something similar happens in Vondel's "Stedekroon van Frederick Henrick" ("Crown of Cities of Frederick Henrick"):

Die bange nacht doen Alexanders dolck
Sich dronken soop in lecker burgerbloed,
En grimmigh borst wt d'onderaerdsche kolck,
Gelijck een slang getrapt van vyands voet
De lucht besmet en beemd en waterval
Met pest en blaeu vergift en groene gal:

Die nacht gedenckt . . .

(That fearful night, when Alexander's dagger
Drank itself full with tasty burgher's blood,
And grimly burst forth from the subterranean vortex
like a snake, which, stepped on by the enemy's foot,
Poisons the air and meadow and waterfall
With plague and blue poison and green gall

Remember that night . . .)

Dramaticality is achieved by adjectives ("bang," "grimmigh," "onderaerdsch"), by personification (the "dolck [die] sich droncken soop"), by similes ("gelijck een slang") and by mixing, in the description of the serpent, words pertaining to different senses: the serpent not only putrifies the air by smell, but also by "pest" and "gal" in vivid colours.

Since the climate of the age is one of drama and excitement, poetry itself is dramatic, turbulent and violent. Rhetorical devices such as invocations and exclamations are frequent. The sounds and smells of the world are described with great immediacy. The physical world is shown to contain great tensions and stress. Man is a pawn in a struggle between gigantic forces; the political and social life of Baroque man is often violent, and the individual himself, as an actor on the stage of the world, has more often than not a violent character.

But the sense of drama is not restricted to the social and political sphere. Even when the Baroque poet reflects on his spiritual life, his statements are dramatic and rhetorical, and they show the same underlying tensions as in his statements on the here-and-now.

The Baroque artist knows that man lives from instant to instant, without guarantee of duration, as by a miracle. And of course it is a miracle which sustains him, namely God's grace. In view of the violent nature of the world, of the inexorable passing of time, of the certainty of death and, consequently, the futility of human endeavour, the Baroque poet has recourse to two basic modes of life: one which stresses the moment, the enjoyment of life from instant to instant (the slogan here is "carpe diem," enjoy the day), or one which seeks to go beyond the immediate, to achieve a realm in which the vulnerable individual can be saved. In the latter case, one can, like some mystics, attempt a union with God here on earth, as Angelus Silesius preaches, or one can direct one's effort towards the hereafter, when the soul will be united with God. In either case, the religious individual relies on God's help to achieve his goal. Without God's help, he is null, and must perish. This explains the urgent tone in which the Baroque poet addresses God. An excellent example is Paul Fleming's poem "An meinen Erlöser" ("To my Redeemer"):

Erhöre meine Not, du aller Not Erlöser!
 Hilf, Helfer aller Welt, hilf mir auch, der ich mir
 Selbsselbst nicht helfen kann! Ich suche Trost bei dir
 Herr, du hast Rat und Tat. Dich preisen deine Lehrer . . .
 (Listen to my need, redeemer of all distress!
 Help, Helper of the whole world, help me also, who
 Cannot help himself! I seek consolation with you
 Lord, you have advice and power. You are praised by
 your teachers . . .)

A feeling of drowning is conveyed by the repetition of the words "Hilf," "Helfer" and "Not," and by the inner rhyme "Rat" and "Tat," as well as by the division of the lines in small units. In the last tercet of the poem a calmer mood is achieved by juxtaposing Christ's and the poet's death:

Dein Tod hat meinen Tod, du Todes Tod, getötet.
 (Your death has killed my death, You Death of Death.)

The intricate word-play, which critics might consider precious, is again typical of the Baroque.

There are elements which unite religious poetry in all of Europe. Be they Protestant or Catholic, the poets of the Baroque are more concerned with an emotional approach to religion than with dogma or strictly intellectual questions. Even "metaphysical" poets such as the Frenchman Sponde or the English John Donne show tremendous passion in their poetry. German and Dutch poetry is surprisingly close to French, though religion ought to divide rather than unite them.

The role of the emotions explains, for example, the preference for the theme of Christ's crucifixion. Take, for instance, the poem by De Decker, "Christus gekruyst" ("Christ crucified"). The blow by blow account of Christ's sufferings is accompanied by the poet's commentaries of a purely emotional nature:

Ik hoor de spijckeren met ysselijcke slagen
 Door hout en handen jagen:
 't Geklop gaet overhand;
 De wreedheyd treft by beurt dan d'een dan d'ander' hand.
 Nu salse gaen aen 't hout de teere voeten hechten:
 Daer smijtse door den rechten,
 Daer door den slincken heen;
 Amy! wat slaen is dat! dat knerst door vleesch en been.
 (I hear the nails with frightful blows
 Piercing through skin and hands;
 The knocking alternates
 Cruelty striking in turn now the one, now the other hand.
 Now they are going to attach the tender feet to the wood;
 There they drive through the right
 And now through the left foot;
 Ah, what a beating that is! That goes through flesh and
 blood.)

But the audience (the reader) is also invited to participate in the drama:

Ongoddelijk gebroed, dit pak von pijn te dragen
 Is thans sijn welbehagen;
 Ia weet dat hem de pijn,
 Die ghy aen hem verdient, meer druks doet als de zijn'.
 Hy bid hier niet alleen dat God u wil vergeven
 Den hoon aen hem bedreven,
 Maer bovendien hy pleyt
 Voor u, en schuyft uw schuld op uw' onwetenheyd.

(Ungodly brood, to bear the load of pain
 Is now his pleasure;
 Yes, know that he's oppressed
 More by the pain that you deserve than by his own.
 Here he prays not only that God will forgive you
 The scorn you did to him;
 But also he pleads
 For you and puts the blame on your ignorance.)

De Decker shows here one of the features which Lowry Nelson emphasizes as peculiar to the Baroque, namely the sense of personal involvement created, once again, by dramaticality. The same applies to De Decker's poem "Christus Gegeesselt, Bespogen, Bespot," ("Christ flogged, spat upon and mocked") and Revius' "Hy droech onse Smerten" ("He bore our Sufferings"):

T'en zijn de Joden niet, Heer Jesu, die u cruysten,
 Noch die verradelijck u togen voort gericht,
 Noch die versmadelijck u spogen int gesicht,

Ick bent, O Heer, ick bent die u dit heb gedaen,
 Ick ben den swaren boom die u had overlaen,
 Ick ben de taeye streng daermee ghy ginct gebonden,
 De nagel, en de speer, de geessel die u sloech . . .

(It is not the Jews, Lord Jesus, who crucified you,
 Who summoned you treacherously before the court,
 Or spat mockingly in your face,

It is I, Oh Lord, It is I who did this,
 I am the heavy cross that crushes you,
 I am the tough cord with which you are tied,
 The nail, the spear, the scourge that beat you . . .)

Other examples of this theme, and of the treatment given by De Decker and Revius are Heiman Dullaert's "Christus Stervende" ("Christ Dying"), and in France, Jean de la Ceppède's Sonnets LXVII ("O Royauté tragique! ô vestement infâme!") and LXX ("Voici l'Homme. O mes yeux, quel objet déplorable!") of the second Livre de Théorèmes. Though relatively more rare in Germany than in France or Holland, this theme has a worthy representative in Paul Gerhardt's "An das Angesicht des Herrn Jesu" ("To the Countenance of the Lord Jesus").

Fascination with Christ's suffering is often fascination with suffering as such, the reflection of an age of extreme and widespread violence. This can be seen in the charnel-house poetry of Gryphius and D'Aubigné. For Holland, a typical example is Jan Vos' poem to the painter H. S., whom Vos accuses of not having painted Christ's suffering realistically enough:

Dit lichaam is geheel mismaakt,
Omdat het niet geheel mismaakt is . . .

(This body is completely deformed
Because it is not completely deformed . . .)

Realism, which often goes so far as deliberately insisting on cruelty and suffering, is clearly a factor which unites the European Baroque and 17th century Holland.

Another favourite subject of Baroque religious poetry is the Last Judgement. Again, it is one of those themes inspired not only by religious motivations, but also (and perhaps primarily) by the Baroque temper itself. It feeds on the taste for the colossal, the catastrophic, the disproportionate and the hyper-dramatic. We can see the taste for mass-scenes, the taste for the colossal already at work in Revius' poem to Gustavus Adolphus, the ally who came to the rescue of the Protestants during the Thirty Years' War. We can also see it in some of the mythological writings of Malherbe, such as the description of the capture of the fortress of La Rochelle by Louis XIII.²⁶ But truly gigantic proportions are reached in the Last Judgement scenes by D'Aubigné in "Le Jugement," in Les Tragiques (lines 291-663) and in De Decker's "Jongste Dag" ("The Last Judgement"), which deserves quoting in its entirety:

De Wereld staat in vier, de beide polen roken,
De Hemel zweet van angst, de woeste golven koken,
De stromen drogen uit, het aardrijk al verschrikt,
Berst bevende vaneen, de sterren moe geblikt
Staan doof en zonder glans; de Rechter in de wolken
Roept al de wereld t'saam, daagt allerhande volken,
Slaat Wet en Weet-boek op, wijst streng den zondaar aan
Daar wat hem stond te doen, hier wat hij heeft gedaan;

Laat zich van genen schijn verblinden noch verdoven,
 Zier scepter aan noch schup, ziet hutten aan noch hoven,
 Maar keurende na 't hert elks uiterlijke daad
 Zegt tot de Schapen, komt! zegt tot de Bokken, gaat.

(The world is burning, both poles are smoking,
 The heavens sweat with fear, the wild waves boil,
 The streams dry up, the whole world is shaken
 And splits open, the stars, tired from looking,
 Stand mute and without shine; the Judge in the clouds
 Calls the whole world together, summons all kinds of

nations

Opens the book of Law and Knowledge, points out severely
 to the sinner

What he had to do, and what he has done;

He does not let himself be blinded nor benumbed by
 illusions,

Neither takes account of sceptre nor spade, sees neither
 huts nor palaces,

But, judging external deeds by the heart's intention,
 Says to the sheep, come; to the goats, go.)

Drama, emotional appeal and bombastic description go into this genre. In the light of the belief at the time that the world was soon to come to an end, poetry dealing with the Last Judgement effectively translates the fears and nightmares of Baroque man. Living on a thin crust over a volcano, he was threatened by forces of the world as well as those of the Devil. The Last Judgement was also a suitable symbol for the violent and cataclysmic events that seemed to be overtaking the individual as well as his society.

Violence even spills over into love poetry. A striking case of this can be seen in Agrippa d'Aubigné's poem "Hécatombe à Diane" (Sonnet VIII of Le Printemps):

Ouy, mais ainsi qu'on voit en la guerre civile
 Les débats des plus grands, du foible et du vainquer
 De leur douteux combat laisser tout le malheur
 Au corps mort du pais, aux cendres d'une ville,
 Je suis le champ sanglant où la fureur hostile
 Vomit le meurtre rouge, et la scytique horreur
 Qui saccage le sang, richesse de mon coeur,
 Et en se débattant font leur terre sterile.
 Amour, fortune, hélas! appeisez tant de traicts . . .

The familiar Petrarchan conceit of the lover suffering because of his beloved, has been stretched to the limit; the con-

flicting passions in the lover's heart are treated with the same seriousness, and thereby raised to the same level of importance, as the catastrophic events of the civil war. Characteristic for the Baroque is the use of contrast and antithesis. Further intensification is reached by the metaphor "Je suis le champ sanglant," and Baroque is also the use of the verb "vomir" (nowadays in bad taste) and the use of "scytique" to qualify "horreur."

Of the same type is d'Aubigné's Sonnet XIV of the same cycle, in which he compares himself with a dying soldier:

Je vis un jour un soldat terrassé
Blessé à mort de la main ennemie . . .

"Ha, di-je alors, pareille est ma blessure . . ."

The comparison almost turns grotesque in its insistence on physical details. The balance inherent in a Petrarchan poem is destroyed, and the metaphor becomes a personal experience. This can also be seen in Jean de Sponde's poem "Je sens dedans mon âme une guerre civile." D'Aubigné and Sponde belong to the category of tortured lovers, and in this they are joined by the German poet Hofmannswaldau, who in "Ich bin verletzt durch deinen Augenstrahl" ("I am wounded by your glance") treats falling in love as a kind of physical torture. In this category of lovers belongs also Georg Rudolf Weckherlin who, in "Ihr Herz ist gefroren" ("Her heart is frozen") bitterly denounces the insensitivity of his mistress, who holds his heart captive. More problematic is Weckherlin's "Die Liebe ist Leben und Tod" ("Love is life and death"), in which the play on love, life and death is intended to show the lover's dependence on the beloved. Love, built on beauty and youth, has no stability because both must perish with time. The poem hinges on the constant comparison between the woman's present beauty and her eventual decay and destruction. A similar treatment of this theme can be found in Hofmannswaldau's "Vergänglichkeit der Schönheit" ("Transitoriness of beauty"):

Es wird der bleiche Tod meiner kalten Hand
Die Lesbie mit der Zeit unde deine Brüste streichen . . .

(The pale death of my cold hand
Will in time touch you, Lesbia, and your breasts . . .)

Against this idea of death waiting in the wings to destroy whatever is beautiful and worthy of praise, the poet can often do little but to stress the enjoyment of the moment. Here, too, Hofmannswaldau gives a good example of the theme of "carpe diem":

Ach was wollt ihr trüben Sinnen
Doch beginnen!
Traurig sein hebt keine Not. ("Ermahnung zur Vergnügen")

(Oh, you troubled senses,
What do you want?
To be sad does not alleviate sorrow!) ("Reminder to be happy")

Love poetry in Holland deviates significantly from both that of France and of Germany in that it takes a very conventional form. Love poetry follows the tradition of P. C. Hooft, and, even further back, the Renaissance and the Rederijkers. Quantitatively, too, it is far less significant in Holland than in France and Germany. The Petrarchan apparatus survives intact, but (with a few exceptions) without true inspiration. Sometimes, however, a playful element is introduced into this conventional poetry, as for example in Lukas Schermer's "Klinkgedicht op Amaril" ("Ode to Amaril"), in which the last lines "take back" the poem's statements:

Ik toetste maar uw trou, dien vinde ik zonder vlek,
Gy kunt uw brandt op myn albaste kaaken blussen.
Neen, sprach hy, Amaril, ik scheer met u de Gek.

(I only tested your loyalty, which I find without blemish.
You can extinguish the fire on my alabaster cheeks.
No, he said, Amaril, I only jested with you.)

More serious poetry, exceptional in its sincerity of tone, can of course be found in Huygens' "Op de dood van Sterre" ("On the death of Sterre"), in which he seems to attempt to rival his great predecessor Hooft.

In general, it may be said that in the austere, Calvinist society of Holland love poetry, and certainly the love poetry associated with hedonism and escapism, could not find ex-

pression to the same degree as in (courtly) France, where it had a very long and highly sophisticated tradition (Ronsard, Du Bellay).

The importance of tradition can also be seen in the case of poetry dealing with nature. In French descriptive poetry there is an obvious effort to continue the tradition of Ronsard, who propagated certain distortions, exaggerations and eccentricities. Even satire and the burlesque enter into French nature poetry. D. B. Wilson, however, makes the point that French Baroque "is not only a matter of what might be called surface eccentricities. It involves a whole view of the universe."²⁷ The key element is the "dominant desire to describe a universe in a state of flux."²⁸ This flux accounts for the sudden distortions of vision in certain French nature poems. The French poetic Baroque landscape is an assemblage of curiously disparate elements, almost "Romantic," often verging on the decadent. This is particularly the case with Saint-Amant.

In Germany, on the other hand, nature is usually nothing more than a convenient backdrop. In J. Chr. Günther's "An seine Leonore" ("To his Leonore") the roots of the trees described in the introductory stanza serve as a convenient allegorical element pointing to the poet's own faithfulness. In his poem "An Doris" ("To Doris"), nature is used merely as a kind of stage setting.

Dutch nature poetry shows very much the same attitude towards nature as the German. Nature is a backdrop for man, who is always the principal actor. In Vondel's "Aan de Beek" ("To the stream") the stream is called upon to sing a song for Kataryn; in "Bede aan het Westewindeke" ("Request to the Westwind") the wind is to blow mildly, bringing blossoms, because of the poet's imminent marriage. A charming picture is drawn in Vondel's "Wiltzangh" ("Song in nature") where nature is contrasted with the city, more specifically Amsterdam. None of the poems mentioned, however, show

typically Baroque elements. On the contrary, they are products of precise observation and do not have recourse to striking images, surprising metaphors and other such stylistic devices that are typically Baroque. Even De Decker's "Lentelied" ("Song of Spring") gives a very balanced vision of nature's awakening, in contrast with his religious poetry. The very structure, its regular stanzas of four lines with regular rhythm, makes it a non-Baroque poem.

In general then, poetry in which nature plays a role seems more conventional in Germany and Holland than in France. In the former, nature is secondary to the point of being often little else than a way of opening a poem, of creating a mood, of drawing comparisons, or of illustrating a moral.

From our survey in four fields of poetry--the poetry that makes a statement about man, that speaks about man and God, of man and woman and of man and nature--what conclusions can we reach as to the existence of a Baroque in Holland?

Clearly, the picture which emerges is not homogeneous. Yet, even from this impressionistic overview some striking characteristics can be listed as common to the Dutch and the European Baroque. The temper of the times is the same: it is one of movement, drama, violence and insecurity. There are those authors who seek escape, others suffer to the full extent. The Christian paradox of life through death is very much exploited, particularly in poets such as Revius and De Decker. Religion is intensely experienced, though some themes are at least partially dictated by the mood of the times, such as the crucifixion and the Last Judgement. Religion, though in practice divided into sects, remains within one superstructure, and both Catholics and Protestants experience life in the same manner. The bond between man and woman is problematic in this world of flux, in which everything must decay and die, even beauty. This is more intensely experienced in Germany than in France and Holland. Perhaps

Holland does not share the fascination with physical beauty because of a rather more austere creed, or perhaps because of the innate practicality and seriousness of the Dutch people. By not insisting on the obsessive nature of love, however, the Dutch also avoid the excesses that are often associated with this.

Finally, the poetry of nature is clearly subordinate in Holland to the role man plays in the natural setting. Descriptive poetry is not the experimental genre that it is in France.

Despite some fairly obvious differences, therefore, it can be said that Holland shares to a large extent in the movement of the European Baroque.

Notes

¹Cf. Rene Wellek, Concepts of Criticism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 69-127.

²Cf. Paul van Aken, Letterwijs, Letterwijzer: Een Overzicht van de nederlandse literatuur (Brussel: Manteau, 1979), p. 41: "Vondel is, als zoveel anderen, het slachtoffer van zijn eigen grootheid: iedereen kent hem, men leest hem dus niet meer." (Vondel, like many others, is the victim of his own greatness: everyone knows him, therefore nobody reads him any more.)

³Gerard Knuvelde, Handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse letterkunde ('s Hertogenbosch: L. C. Malmberg, 1958), vol. 2, p. 85.

⁴Schmidt-Degener, quoted in Knuvelde, p. 85.

⁵Knuvelde, p. 85.

⁶Wellek, p. 71.

⁷Fritz Strich, "Der lyrische Stil des 17. Jahrhunderts," in Abhandlungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Festschrift für Franz Muncker (München, 1916), pp. 21-53; Herbert Cysarz, Deutsche Barocklyrik (Leipzig, 1924); Oskar Walzel, "Shakespeares dramatische Bauformen," in Jahrbuch der Shakespearegesellschaft, 52 (1916), pp. 3-35.

⁸The designations "first and second Silesian Schools," used up till then, were clearly inadequate.

⁹Nr. 83 (1919), pp. 222-275.

¹⁰Wellek, p. 81.

¹¹Knuvelde rejects this notion; in his opinion, Counter-Reformation Baroque is only one aspect of the Baroque (p. 86).

¹²Neither the greatest poet, greatest painter nor philosopher (Vondel, Rembrandt, Hugo de Groot) were within the Calvinist orthodox tradition, Knuvelde points out (pp. 92-93).

¹³Imbrie Buffum, Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

¹⁴J. M. Cohen, The Baroque Lyric (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1963).

¹⁵Odette de Mourgues, Metaphysical, baroque and précieux Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953).

¹⁶Cf. Wellek, p. 78.

¹⁷Cohen, pp. 14-15.

¹⁸Buffum, p. ix.

¹⁹Knuvelde, pp. 88-89.

²⁰Knuvelde, p. 87.

²¹Knuvelde, p. 90.

²²Knuvelde, p. 90.

²³Many of the poems discussed here can be found in the following anthologies:

E. Hederer (ed.), Deutsche Dichtung des Barock (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1968);

M. Allem (ed.), Anthologie poétique française: XVIIe Siècle (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1965);

V. Van Vriesland (ed.), Spiegel van de Nederlandse Poezie (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1939, 1979), vol. 1. For others, consult individual authors' complete works.

²⁴Reinder P. Meijer, Literature of the Low Countries: A Short History of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and Belgium (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1971; New and revised edition The Hague & Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 105.

²⁵Meijer, p. 106.

²⁶Cf. Cohen, p. 139.

²⁷D. B. Wilson, Descriptive Poetry in France from Blason to Baroque (New York: Manchester University Press/Barnes and Noble, 1967), p. 221.

²⁸Wilson, p. 222.