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RICHARD A. YOUNG

Narrative and Theatre: From Manuel Puig to Lope de Vega

Notwithstanding the deference due Diego de Velázquez and Miguel de Cervantes, it could be readily conceded to the Postmodernists of our day that art has become less about life than about the way in which art represents it. Or, if you prefer, given Postmodernism's proclivity for leaving all possibilities open, the way in which life represents art. Such a conclusion might be argued in light of recent developments in any of the contemporary arts — music, dance, painting, and architecture, for example — but a particularly strong case can be made through certain narrative forms, both verbal and visual, theatre, fiction, film and (why not?) television, too, perhaps because their diffusion to a mass audience has required conformity to the single most important rule of consumerism and the style it has engendered, namely that the marriage of illusion and reality should not only never be sundered, but include a built-in set of fully illustrated instructions showing how the union is created and sustained.

If meta-theatre and meta-fiction, born anew in recent decades, are among the products of Postmodernism at its most introspective, they have however, provided ample opportunity for writers to explore the hinterlands of the genres in which they write and for critics to re-examine the traditional forms of literature and their limitations. This activity, however, rather than clarifying our understanding of the differences among the three literary genres, has only muddled the waters further by showing the extent to which differences are frequently transcended. The Aristotelian principle for separating the genres, based on the means of delivery rather than on the character of discourse, is as attractive a criterion as ever, with relatively sound foundations on which to establish a reasonable taxonomy. However, it leaves the critic primarily concerned with the text, the structure of discourse and its contents, in a vulnerable position, made all the more precarious by advances in the semiotics of theatre.¹ This is the case for approaches to texts, such as that adopted here, founded essentially on the

1 I am thinking of developments that have led to explorations along the same vein followed by Patrice Pavis.

rhetorical dimensions of narratology developed in the light of the formalist and structuralist views of literature by, among others, Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal, and Susan Lanser.

Definitions of the genres founded on the character of the text, based, for example, on the implied rules governing production and consumption, or the particular function of language most emphasized, are fraught with difficulties. With its divisions into acts and scenes, stage directions, predominance of character discourse and attribution of discourse to speakers, the appearance of the dramatic text conforms to a fairly rigid code that is readily recognizable as such as soon as the reader takes up the book. Experience shows, however, that the predominance of dialogue alone is insufficient to classify a text as a work of theatre. Theatre not only requires a certain type of dialogue for the advancement of plot and the creation of character, but is not the only genre to make extensive use of the discourse of figures who populate the world presented through the text. Dialogue may be used just as extensively in the epic, taking this term to refer to both the classical form and its modern descendant. In certain cases, such as the dialogue novel, the reader may experience initial hesitation about the genre to which a work belongs, and, in particular instances, such as Fernando de Rojas's *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (1499), more commonly known as *La Celestina*, the use of dialogue is one among several factors that have provoked a protracted discussion about how the work should be classified. Neither the epic nor the drama reserves a particular function of language to itself (Jakobson 209-48), and neither may be separated based on criteria derived from the presence or absence of a narrative voice. Although the dramatic text may be thought of as lacking a primary narrator, this function may be implicitly subsumed by stage directions, which are conveyed in performance through means other than discourse, while, even in performance, narration may fall to the figures presented, as in the classical chorus and its more modern counterparts, or those characters who exercise a kind of intradiegetic narrative role within the drama and narrate part of the story in which they are involved. The differences between text and performance, as well as the potential for narrative in both, are no better illustrated than in the work of the modern Spanish dramatist Antonio Buero Vallejo (1916-). In his *La doble historia del Dr. Valmy* (1976), part of the work is a narrative provided by the principal character's dictation to his secretary, while in *El sueño de la razón* (1970) the representation of the last years spent in Spain by the painter Francisco de Goya requires a particular kind of stage direction and elements of dialogue in the text that disappear in performance, to be replaced by dumbshow, in order to convey a situation presented from the perspective of the deaf painter.

In contrast to the drama and the epic, the lyric, with its emphasis on the expressive function of language, of which the exploitation of tropes is a primary manifestation, would appear to be a separate category. However, the lyric is unable to present any claim to exclusivity in this regard. The figurative qualities of language may be exploited just as readily by the epic or the drama, and the characteristics of the lyric may be adopted by either in their entirety when verse is used as the medium of expression. The trope, in effect, like the story, is just one of the ways in which literature is able to organize and convey its contents. In general terms, the lyric may be distinguished by the emphasis placed on the use of tropes, at the same time as the importance of a diegetic content is reduced, but, as in the case of the drama and the epic, with the predominance of character discourse in the former and narrator discourse in the latter, it is all a matter of emphasis, subject to adjustment by any author in any particular work.

If there is one conclusion to be drawn from the preceding comments, it is that the classification of literature in accordance with the traditional genres is not a simple matter. Whatever criteria are likely to be proposed, they are just as likely to be undermined by transgressions and to be "more honour'd in the breach than the observance." Thus, for the purposes of a discussion of literature oriented towards the kind of discourse exploited by the text, rather than adhering to the concept of genres in the traditional sense, including the innumerable sub-genres into which each may be divided, it seems more appropriate to think in terms of modes or conventions, narrative or dialogic, for example, that transcend the restrictions of genre and manifest themselves in any kind of literary text. This is not to say that all efforts towards a suitable taxonomy based on other criteria should be abandoned, but to imply that a view from the perspective of discourse may be productive in other ways, including contributing to an understanding of the nature of transgression among the genres. It is, after all, the practice of exploiting the modes or conventions of discourse in varying forms that has partly led to the hybrids, the novels that have the textual configurations of theatre or the dramas that exploit narrative as their underlying principle.

To take a case in point, among the characteristics of the Spanish American novel from about the middle of this century is a degree of self-consciousness, entirely compatible with the fashion of Postmodernism, evident in the manner in which, by exploring the scope of narrative, the text is also a reflection of the nature of narrative itself. In the work of the Argentinian writer Manuel Puig (1932-1990), this pattern emerges in a tendency to establish the autonomy of the narrated world by eliminating the basic narrative voice. The quest for autonomy, at least in the Hispanic tradition, is as old as Cervantes, but in Puig's case it is also the likely consequence of an intensification of this tendency in the evolution of the novel between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where the liberation

of narration from the author continues along a logical trajectory that leads to the liberation of the character from the narrator. In one of Puig's earlier works, *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (1968), the effect is achieved through the extended use of character discourse in a variety of forms, none of which is subordinated to a primary voice. Thus the novel is a composite of different kinds of character discourse, including interior monologue, fragments from a diary, one side of a telephone conversation, and conversations among several characters conveyed without the mediation of a narrator to identify the speakers or comment on what they are saying. In later novels, *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976) and *Maldición eterna a quien lea estas páginas* (1980), in particular, the use of dialogue is extended much further.

El beso de la mujer araña is set in Buenos Aires in 1975 and centres on the relation between two men confined to the same prison cell: Luis Alberto Molina, a homosexual, sentenced to eight years for corruption of a minor, and Valentín Arregui Paz, who is awaiting trial for involvement in guerrilla activities. Although the unmediated dialogue that takes place between the two prisoners in their cell, occupying eleven of the book's sixteen chapters, as well as significant parts of two others, is the core of the work, it is not the only form of discourse contained in the text: three conversations between the prison director and Molina, who has been placed with Valentín in order to obtain information from him about the guerrilla movement, are conveyed in mediated dialogue and have the same format as a conventional theatre script; there is a transcription of one side of the director's telephone conversation with his superiors; there are copies of official records of the two prisoners and of the police report on Molina after his release from prison; and there are a number of footnotes throughout the text that focus principally on the history of scientific and pseudo-scientific enquiry into the origin and nature of homosexuality.

The amount of dialogue in *El beso de la mujer araña* is sufficient to explain the facility with which the work could be dramatised for the stage and subsequently become a successful Hollywood movie, although the producers of the latter may well have been equally impressed by the importance of film itself to the content of the story through the interaction between life and film that is maintained. If, as appears to be the case, the story is now re-cast as a musical, the sequence of metamorphoses from one genre to another will not only be complete, but will provide the possibility, along with any number of other comparisons, for a study of the different kinds of discourse required by each form of presentation. In Aristotelian terms, the stage and the film versions of *El beso de la mujer araña* undoubtedly belong to the dramatic genre, while any eventual musical would just as assuredly be placed somewhere between the dramatic and the lyric.

However, the classification of Puig's original text cannot be undertaken with the same degree of assurance. While the association of the stage, film, and musical versions with the dramatic, and the last of these also with the lyric, is confidently made, even with respect to their texts alone, in view of what is known about their intended means of presentation, no comparable claim may be made for the original text. *El beso de la mujer araña*, in its original version, has many of the characteristics of drama, but was not written to be performed and is beyond the scope of conventional performance. At the same time, there is some doubt about classifying it as epic, particularly if this genre is thought of as synonymous with narrative. Since the minimal conditions for a narrative to be considered as such require the presence of a narrator who tells a story in which he may or may not figure, there must be some doubt about the status of *El beso de la mujer araña* as a narrative text. Certainly, a story is told, but it is not possible to be so sure about the presence of a narrator.

To begin with, it should be noted that one of the effects of the Aristotelian principle for the determination of genres is that the source of determination is not necessarily found entirely within the text itself, but may be derived from the author's intention or the circumstances and format of publication. If an author intends a work to be staged and a reader is aware of that intention, the step towards classification as drama has already been taken and the work will be consumed as such. In this regard, it is enough for the publisher to adopt the format of publication of a particular genre or to include the word "drama," "narrative," "poem" or a synonym of one of these terms on the title page for the reader to adopt a certain frame of mind and to approach the reading of the text from a particular perspective. In the case of *El beso de la mujer araña* the evidence is lacking that the book published under that title by Seix Barral in 1976 was ever intended to be performed. There is no list of characters, no *dramatis personae*, no division of the text into acts and scenes, and no tell-tale term on the title page. However, the book is published in Barral's series "Nueva Narrativa Hispánica" and Puig is known to be a writer of fiction. Thus, the die is cast and the reader accepts these as sufficient indication of the intention that the book is to be consumed as a narrative.

The fact that *El beso de la mujer araña* is to be consumed as a narrative raises certain immediate expectations in the reader, who automatically looks for the source of narration, as if to ensure that the minimum conditions for narrative are being met. The absence of a primary narrator, the instance to which the discourse of the two interlocutors, Molina and Valentín, might be subordinated, is evident from the first pages of the text in the use of unmediated dialogue and it is not until midway through Chapter III, some sixty pages later, when the first of the footnotes appears, that it becomes

possible to think of a hierarchically superior instance to whom the characters' discourse may be subordinated. In the case of a dramatic text, it is theoretically possible to think of a hierarchy of voices, not unlike that conventionally invoked for narrative: the real author (Lope de Vega, for example), conventionally becomes the implied author (the persona of the individual thought of as the source of a particular work, such as *Fuenteovejuna*), who is, in turn, the one who causes a primary voice to speak his own utterances (the stage directions, scant as they may be, and likely in the case of Lope's plays to be the work of later editors) or those of the characters whose story is presented. In practice, however, we tend not to think in terms of such a hierarchy for dramatic texts but, as if anticipating the performance, when the characters are realized through the actors, to give a degree of autonomy to the text and not to subordinate the discourse of the characters to a superior instance.² This is not the case with conventional narrative texts, whereby, if a given discourse cannot be attributed to the narrator, it should be possible to attribute it to a figure introduced within the narrator's discourse. In the dialogue between Molina and Valentín in *El beso de la mujer araña*, this principle is suspended, so that it is not known who is responsible for making them speak or reporting their speech. It is possible that the reader may have a silent narrator or an implied author in mind, but the presence of the latter is really only felt in the text with the appearance of the first footnotes. Only then, as the text proceeds and other forms of discourse are introduced, does it become more readily possible to bring them all under the auspices of an implied author. The primary narrator, however, remains forever silent, or forever absent.

In the preceding paragraph, when speaking of the principle of subordination of the discourse of a character to that of the narrator, the term "conventional" was intentionally applied to the narrative text in order to suggest that there is a general rule but that other possibilities could also arise. Although the principle still holds for particular narratives, it is equally true that modern narrative texts have trained the reader to contend with structures that are transgressive when viewed from the perspective of the past, but are quite common among practices prevailing in the present. For example, the modern reader is more accustomed to polyphony, to the idea that a narrative text may be composed of a number of particular narratives that are connected by the fact that they all contribute to the telling of the same story, but are unconnected by any principle of subordination that places them under the auspices of a primary narrative voice.³ In this

manner, the polyphonic text may liberate characters from a primary narrator and permit them to speak as narrators in their own right. The narrative text, in order to exist as such, still requires that narration take place and a story be told, but this activity may be fragmented among several instances and the hierarchy of voices responsible may therefore be shortened by converting the role of the primary narrator into an implied role and having it subsumed by that of the implied author.

The story told in *El beso de la mujer araña*, as has already been mentioned, is not derived from a single voice but is the product of various, independent discourses. However, the greater part of the story, effectively containing a number of different stories, is conveyed through the dialogue of the two prisoners, Valentín and Molina, whose conversation amounts to an act of narration. As narrators, the two characters have a varying role that changes according to what they refer to in their speech. In the first instance, they provide a continuing commentary about themselves and each other that refers to actions, thoughts and feelings experienced as they speak, from which it is possible to reconstruct the story of their daily life in the cell, both their routine activities and particular incidents of their life together. Thus, they speak of iterative events, such as the distribution of food, the provision of water, and visits to the bathroom, and they also speculate on their future after they have been released. Most attention is given, however, to immediate human needs, with the result that the relationship that evolves between the two men is conveyed principally through their discussion about food, health (physical, emotional, and mental) and the desire for companionship and compassion. Whether or not this all amounts to a narrative in any accepted definition of the word may well be disputed. Nevertheless, a story is certainly told and, what is more, is told through the discourse of Molina and Valentín who should not be thought of as figures created through another's discourse, but as narrators who engage to tell their own tale collectively in what might be considered a simultaneous narration fragmented between two speakers, taking the term simultaneous in this instance to refer to a narration that occurs at the same time as the events narrated.⁴ However, whatever doubts may linger about Molina and Valentín as the narrators of their daily life in the prison cell, no such reservations need be felt about their narratives concerning their lives before they were committed to prison, when Valentín talks about his existence as a *guerrillero* and his relation with Inés and Marta, or when Molina narrates the story of his relation with his mother and the waiter Gabriel. In these contexts, the two men acquire in turn the status of primary narrators of

2 In this respect our approach to the text differs from that of Anne Ubersfeld where the focus is on the relation between reading and performance.

3 The notion of polyphony in narrative is drawn, of course, from Mikhail Bakhtine.

4 The notion of simultaneous narrative is taken from Genette's typology derived from a comparison between the time of narration and the time of the narrated (229).

particular narratives, so that the figures they introduce, including themselves as characters of their own stories, are subordinated to their own discourse. A similar structure is created through the stories taken from films, six of them in total, all narrated by Molina to amuse himself and Valentín. They not only constitute the longest narrative components of the book but, notwithstanding certain peculiarities,⁵ allow one of the characters to emerge as a narrator in the fullest sense of the term.

From the preceding commentary there emerge two principal points. First, regardless of the fact that texts may be structured as dialogues and may therefore lack a primary voice, they have ways of constituting themselves as narratives. No one, for example, would dispute the claim that *El beso de la mujer araña* is a novel, a narrative text, even if part of the claim is derived from the tradition in which it is written, albeit a Modern, not to say Postmodernist, one. Second, characters, taking Puig's novel as a guide, may be considered as narrators in three possible ways according to the subject to which they refer: when, in the absence of a primary narrator, their discourse is the sole source of the story and they, as interlocutors in dialogue, become the tellers of a tale that occurs at the same time as their speech describes it; when they narrate the stories of their own lives; when they narrate stories in which they do not figure themselves. In view of these observations, having concluded that dialogues may be thought of as narratives under certain circumstances, it remains to be seen to what extent dramatic texts, which are traditionally in the form of the dialogue and have no apparent pretensions to narrative, nevertheless have an underlying or implied narrative origin or structure. To undertake such a task, however, seems a particularly daunting proposition that would require a more complete theoretical development than the present context will permit, as well as application to a reasonably representative corpus of texts. Since the purpose of this essay is by no means so grandiose, and is intended to provoke speculation rather than propose complex solutions, it will suffice to look at a particular example, namely the Spanish theatre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, giving special attention to *Fuenteovejuna* (1612-14), one of the best known plays of Lope de Vega.

Evidence pointing to certain types of ecclesiastical and secular performances makes it possible to make a case for the existence of a medieval theatre in Spain. However, it cannot be spoken of as a flourishing cultural activity, with characteristics in common with those of either the classical or modern genre. By any definition of the term, the theatre in Spain was born anew when the effects of the Italian Renaissance were felt most

fully in the Iberian Peninsula, at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Although it is possible to refer to performances and plays of the middle of the sixteenth century that are theatrical in every sense of the term, it was not until the time of Lope de Vega (1567-1635) that the genre became fully acclimatised. Until then, there persisted a degree of uncertainty, reflected in the subjects that were dramatised and in an element of hesitancy with respect to the notion of performance itself, as if theatre were viewed as a particular kind of narrative mode whose identity it was necessary to assert.

The dual origin of Spanish Renaissance theatre from both ecclesiastical and secular sources, culminating in the *comedia* and *auto sacramental* of the seventeenth century, is revealed in the earlier phases of the development of the genre in the kind of stories enacted. Regardless of their source, the stories are essentially a given. The content of many of the secular plays, in both the comic and tragic veins, was frequently received already cast in dramatic form, thanks to the more advanced state of Italian theatre, while the religious plays, although they may have existed previously as drama, were also known to be dramatizations of well known Biblical stories and were taken from narrative forms. Indeed, the early shepherd plays written and performed to celebrate Christmas, even when liberated from an ecclesiastical context, frequently centred around a narrative rather than a re-enactment of the central event. This is the case of pieces by Juan del Encina (1468?-1530?) and Lucas Fernández (1474?-1542), while even in the work of Gil Vicente (c. 1465-1537?), where a Nativity scene is presented, considerable attention is given to description and exegesis, as may be expected of works having a significant catechetical function.⁶

From the preceding remarks it may be observed that underlying the stories presented in both the religious and secular theatre of the Spanish Renaissance are pre-existing texts, which, in the case of the religious theatre in particular are frequently in narrative form. This is not to say that the early Spanish theatre is completely lacking in anecdotal originality. The incorporation of innovative secular elements into the religious plays of the authors already mentioned is particularly noteworthy, especially in the case of Gil Vicente, and there is a degree of inventiveness in the plots of entirely secular works, such as those by Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (c.1485-c.1520), whose comedies are nevertheless a product of the Italian or Roman style and its Spanish derivatives, especially that most notable hybrid the

6 See "Egloga" II and IX (Encina 31-41, 127-38); "Egloga o farsa del nacimiento" and "Auto o farsa del nacimiento" (Fernández 121-37, 139-56); "Auto pastoril castellano," "Auto de los reyes magos," "Auto de la Sibila Casandra" (Vicente 7-24, 25-38, 43-68).

5 They are, for example, told in the present tense, as if the narrative were a commentary on the image projected onto the movie screen.

Celestina.⁷ As the theatre evolves in the course of the sixteenth century, becoming a more predominantly secular institution through the work of Lope de Rueda (1509?-65), Juan de la Cueva (1550?-1610), and ultimately, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), its content also acquires a more national character, but frequently retains its connection with an underlying text. Although both Cervantes and Juan de la Cueva also produced dramas on subjects not derived from historical sources, their most memorable works in the genre are historical: the *Numancia* (1580-87) of the former is a dramatisation of the resistance to Roman conquest and the latter's *Los siete infantes de Lara* (1579) is derived from narratives set in the time of the Christian Reconquest of Moslem Spain found in popular ballads and the medieval chronicles. In fact, the kinds of existing narrative texts used in Juan de la Cueva's historical drama established a model assiduously exploited by Lope de Vega, whose plunder of the *romances* and the *crónicas* is apparent both in the plots of his many historical plays and in the occasional direct borrowing of lines from a narrative poem. The facility with which the *romances* could be quoted is partly the consequence of the polymetric quality of the Spanish *comedia* and use of the traditional ballad form among the different metrical structures it employs, but also has something to do with the nature of the *romance* itself as a highly dramatic form of narrative in which character discourse already had a prominent role. At the same time, by taking one form of narrative text and using it as the basis for presenting the same story in a different medium, Lope and his contemporaries were perpetuating a form of literary mutation already practiced among the medieval chroniclers, who are known to have incorporated the verses of the ballads and epics into their prose histories. It therefore comes as no surprise to find that the story told in *Fuenteovejuna*, of the rebellion of a village against an oppressive feudal lord, is developed from an earlier prose narrative. Menéndez y Pelayo, while speculating on the possible existence of a version of the story in ballad form, has long since pointed out the close association between Lope's play and the *Crónica de las tres Ordenes y Cavallerías de Santiago, Calatrava y Alcántara* of 1527 by Francisco de Rades y Andrada (V 171-82). When this tendency for literary mutation, as exemplified in *Fuenteovejuna* and found in other historical plays, is extended to include hagiographical plays and plays on mythological subjects or contemporary and ancient history, Lope's *comedia* may be seen as a dramatic form in which derivation from an existing narrative text all but acquires the status of one more convention in an already highly stylized genre. This is to say that, just as the conventionalized plot and characters of the *comedia* undoubtedly created expectations with respect to the kind of

text anticipated, so, on account of the practice of dramatizing stories already known from earlier narratives, the content of the plot and the identity of the characters might also be awaited with expectations of familiarity.

From a strictly narratological point of view, the principle invoked above is related to the basic distinction between story and discourse whereby the latter is a textualization of the former in any of an infinite number of ways. At the same time, it suggests, albeit tentatively, that the derivation of a play from an existing narrative implies the elaboration of an intertextual relationship allowing the play to be perceived as a projection from a context to which the dialogue of the characters may therefore be implicitly subordinated. In some instances, however, the insertion of the play within a narrative frame is made more explicit through the use of a prologue which provides the equivalent of a basic narrative voice. Among the clearest and most complicated examples of this practice in Hispanic theatre is the combination provided by the first two eclogues of Juan del Encina, which also have the distinction of being the works with which the new theatre in Spain is initiated.

The two eclogues, first published in Juan del Encina's *Cancionero* (Salamanca, 1496), (see n. 6), provide an example of two kinds of prologue. The first, placed at the beginning of *Egloga I* and presumably intended for the reader, is written in prose and contains a brief account of the occasion and circumstances of performance, as well as an introduction to the characters and a summary of their dialogue. A similar paragraph occurs at the beginning of *Egloga II*, in which it is also specified that two of the characters appeared in *Egloga I* and that both eclogues were performed on the same occasion. Prologues of this kind are not found in the later *comedia*, perhaps, in the case of Lope de Vega, in any event, because plays were not written with publication in mind, but they were a common practice throughout the sixteenth century before his time. The 1588 edition of Juan de la Cueva's *Los siete infantes de Lara*, for example, in addition to a summary of content before each act, is also preceded by a paragraph entitled "Argumento de la tragedia" that is followed by a brief reference to the occasion of first performance in Seville in 1579 (69-70).

The second kind of prologue referred to above in connection with Juan del Encina's two eclogues was intended for the audience and is a more integral part of the dramatic text. In fact, the characteristics of Encina's first eclogue make it appear to be a kind of prologue to the second. As pastoral disguises for the author and his companion, the two characters of *Egloga I*, Juan and Mateo, not only allow the poet Encina to pay the necessary tribute to his patron, but also embody the principle of the transformation of an actor into a character that is carried one stage further in *Egloga II*. There, the two original shepherds are joined by two others, Lucas and Marco, so

that all four of them then represent the shepherds of the night of the first Christmas as well as the four Evangelists who wrote their story and therefore have the appropriate authority to describe and discuss the events of that night. The use of pastoral disguise as a cloak for writers of both the Old and New Testaments, confirming observations made above about the narrative form that underlies the dramatic text, is common in the religious theatre of the sixteenth century. In the secular theatre, however, the example provided by the work of Bartolomé de Torres Naharro is more representative. The plays published in his *Propalladia*, which first appeared in Naples, in 1517, all include a prologue entitled *Introito y argumento*, each of which is a monologue addressed directly to the audience, spoken in the rustic language of a shepherd, and including topical commentary as well as a summary of the story of the play. Use of the prologue as a curtain-raiser undoubtedly derives from Roman comedy, of which there are additional traces evident in Torres Naharro, but, by affirming the nature of theatre as illusion, it has an effect similar to that created by the relationship between Encina's first two eclogues. In the case of Torres Naharro, through his description of the content of the plot, the speaker of the prologue effectively reduces the autonomy of the play and the discourse of the characters by allowing them to be seen as a projection or elaboration of a story he has already narrated, a structure that once again raises the question of the underlying narrative text, at the same time as it is akin to that implied by the subordination of character discourse to that of a primary narrator in a conventional narrative.

Although prologues of one kind or another continued to appear in the Spanish theatre of the sixteenth century, they are not a feature of the *comedia* and one would be hard pressed to find an example in Lope. The well developed figure of the prologue, combining with that of the chorus, such as in Shakespeare's Gower in *Pericles* or his chorus in *Henry V*, where a more truly narratorial figure is developed, is an avenue that remains essentially unexplored in early Spanish theatre. Aside from the influence of particular traditions in either religious or secular plays, the presence of a prologue and the questions that it raises about the autonomy of the story re-enacted may well reflect some hesitation with respect to the dramatic form. By Lope's time, this has certainly disappeared, but in the endings to his plays he nevertheless preserves vestigial traces of those earlier addresses to an audience. At the end of *Fuenteovejuna*, for example, occur the following two lines, spoken by Frondoso: "Y aquí, discreto senado, / *Fuenteovejuna da fin*" (Vega Carpio I 855). In other plays he is considerably less laconic, as in *Las bizzarrías de Belisa*, where the following lines are spoken by one of the characters:

BELISA: Senado ilustre: el poeta,
que ya las Musas dejaba,

con deseo de serviros
volvió esta vez a llamarlas
para que no le olvidéis.
Y aquí la comedia acaba. (Vega Carpio II 1705)

The effect, although it occurs after the fact rather than before it, is similar to that obtained by the prologue, given that the voice responsible for these lines, while belonging in performance to the actor who performed the role, is no longer that of the character. It belongs to a figure able to comment on the world presented by the *comedia* from a position outside of it. Thus, in the light of these comments, the characters of the play and their discourse are reduced to the status of elements within the discourse of another, identified in this case as the poet.

Aside from concluding remarks intended to signify the end of a play, the narrative activity of the characters of a typical *comedia* does not transcend their own world. Conforming to this pattern, *Fuenteovejuna* may be taken as a representative example of a *comedia* with characters that contribute to the telling of the story of which they are part, but from within, without fulfilling any apparent meta-narrative role. Their roles as narrators are not unlike those already described in connection with Molina and Valenti in Puig's novel. In the first instance, the task of conveying the unfolding story is shared by the characters, whose discourse, enunciated in reference to their present situation, amounts to a form of simultaneous narration, in which the notion of simultaneity encompasses the event and the discourse that describes it. The majority of the scenes in the play are based on exchanges of discourse of this kind. A few of these, scenes three and four of the first act, for example, are more thematic in nature and do not advance the action of the play, but are important indicators for the interpretation of plot and the creation of character.⁸ Most scenes, however, are dramatic, in the sense that they cause movement to occur and are frequently based on confrontation among characters. They have the kind of dialogue which results in the reputation generally attributed to the *comedia* as a form of theatre in which action is paramount.

The other two types of narrative alluded to in discussion of *El beso de la mujer araña* were distinguished on the basis of the story to which the narrators referred, either events belonging to their own past or to a story from which they are essentially absent. *Fuenteovejuna* contains sporadic

8 The two scenes in question deal with the satisfaction felt by characters with their social station, honesty, and the existence of true love. In some respects, they are comic interludes based on verbal jousting, but they serve the important function of airing questions of social and natural order. The numbering of the scenes here and in subsequent references follows that adopted in the edition cited.

reference by characters to their immediate past or the past of others, but there is little sustained first person narrative. Personal retrospection of the kind that Genette would refer to as "external analepsis" is limited in the play and is mostly confined to the early scenes, as, for example when Laurencia includes in her conversation with Pascuala a brief account of the Comendador's pursuit of her (I iii). The equivalent of "internal analepsis", retrospection encompassing events that have occurred within the time frame of the play, is more frequent, as when the judge returns to Fernando's court (III xiv) and relates the outcome of his enquiry in *Fuenteovejuna*, or in the wedding scene (II xvi) when Mengo recalls the lashing he received from the Comendador's men and the musicians sing of the tyrant's unsuccessful pursuit of Laurencia.

Narration of the past in *Fuenteovejuna* somewhat overlaps, however, with the third of the categories identified in *El beso de la mujer araña*, namely specific engagement in storytelling. This is not to say that any of the characters in Lope's play engage in narrative for its own sake or that the play incorporates the narration of stories based on events unrelated to the plot developed in the play itself, but there are occasions when characters identify themselves as narrators and their discourse is cast in the verse form traditionally associated with narrative. As Lope writes in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, concerning the uses of the different forms of versification in the *comedia*, "[l]as relaciones piden los romances" (Vega Carpio II 879). *Fuenteovejuna* has six of them, all relatively extended pieces of past narrative, and only one of them, the Comendador's address to the Maestre de Calatrava in the second scene of the play, covers events external to the chronology of incidents unfolding in the *comedia*. The remainder, all internal, include two accounts of the first battle for Ciudad Real (I v & I ix), Cimbrano's narration of Fernando's subsequent siege of the city (II vi), the account of the death of the Comendador given by Flores to the King (III xi), and Laurencia's tirade before the town council (III iii), of which a significant part is her indictment of the men of the village for their cowardice. Moreover, all six of these monologues, with the exception of Cimbrano's narration are prefaced by the speaker's intention to narrate a story, as when the Comendador announces to the Maestre, "Estad atento, y sabréis / la obligación que tenéis" (I ii), or when Flores begins his narrative of the capture of Ciudad Real with the question, "¿Quién lo dirá como yo / siendo mis ojos testigos?" (I v).

The romances narrated in *Fuenteovejuna* undoubtedly meet the very useful purpose of extending the scope of the play by permitting the inclusion in the story of events that, for all manner of reasons, could not be easily represented in performance. Although this fact alone is sufficient to highlight the importance of narrative to theatre, it should also be noted that

the inclusion of the romances is far from gratuitous. They do not serve only to enhance the content, since the very act of narration itself is part of the plot and one of the means of advancing it. Four of the six narratives are exhortations, intended to move the listener to action. The Comendador's address to the Maestre, for example, is both a recent history of the *Order of Calatrava* and the war in Castille and a plea to him to ally himself with Juana and Alonso of Portugal against the Catholic Kings, thereby precipitating the political subplot of the *comedia*. By the same token, Laurencia's incitement of the men of her village to action leads to the death of the Comendador and the climax of the entire sequence of events developed in the play. In both cases, the narratives highlight the fact that drama, especially when looked at as text, is as much about what is said as about what is done.

To view Lope's play as a composite of narratives is to view it no differently from Puig's novel and to point to the fundamental similarity among all literary texts that lies beneath certain intentions and surface differences. An analysis of the two works, undertaken from the point of view of the structure of the stories they present, using a method developed either from the functional model derived from Propp and Bremond or from the actantial model proposed by Greimas, would not lead to significantly different conclusions about the general relation between the two works or among works of literature overall. This is not to say that *Fuenteovejuna* and *El beso de la mujer araña* are comparable works. They are evidently quite different and there is no connection between them except of the most superficial kind. Yet, although a consideration of both works with respect to the similarity of the narrative strategies they use while inscribing themselves in different literary genres is a helpful, even illuminating, approach, there is also a certain irony in the comparison between them that results. If, as is the case, the core of Puig's novel is the meta-fictional device in which figures in a story are given to telling stories while telling the story of which they are part, there is cause to wonder what there is to the Postmodernist endeavour in this aspect of its creative vein that makes it differ from the narrative conventions implemented by the theatre and practiced by Lope in one of his *comedias*.

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NOTES, DOCUMENTS AND REVIEW ARTICLES

Form and Transformation in Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser

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For such poets as Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser, and Milton who understood themselves to be "Poets, even as Prophets, each with each/Connecting in a mighty scheme of truth," the concept of *imitatio* is not only a pedagogical tool and a literary technique, but also and preeminently a principle of order containing implications for the interpretation of history and a conception of the self.¹ In his reading of Virgil the Renaissance poet found the paradigm of a maker concerned with history and man's nature as a moral and historical being. Indeed, epic, as Andrew Fichtel has said, "is built to evoke man's struggle to orient himself in time" (98).

In the Christian "scheme of truth," both the individual life and history possess a different closure from that imagined by the classical poet. *The Aeneid* concludes with the death of Turnus, but does not show us the foundations of the city of Rome. For the poet of the Christian Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the "end" is known, though it is yet to come; the individual life is not ended, but changed; and the end of history itself is the beginning of a New Kingdom. This sense of time's momentousness is reflected in the structure of narrative: "sequence links narrative to history since both move through time" (Bloomfield 107).

In a chronological framework, the terms "epic" and "romance" apply to a clearly sensed distinction between early and high medieval narrative. The heroic age is reflected in the epic action of war; the chivalric, by the love intrigues that supplement those of combat, and by the element of mystery or the marvelous. The two forms are distinguished more objectively and intrinsically in the structural and theoretical approach delineated by Morton Bloomfield who characterizes the motivation of epic episodes as "rational," that is, properly motivated *from within the narrative*:

Behind epic is the notion of following a pattern, serving one's destiny (overtly or covertly presented), and making use of all the clues and advantages the world offers us. The basic notion is serving and doing one's duty, not worshipping or wondering.

1 Thomas M. Greene defines the multi-valence of the idea and practice of *imitatio* in *The Light in Troy*.