
The Crisis in Narrative: Language, Tale, and Drama in the Renaissance

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The question of narrative is inseparable from the question of language. Language constitutes structure, which in turn determines the difference between events and their representation. How a tale is told or a play is presented often differs from the sequence of events. To restate this first principle of narrative in terms the Russian Formalists used and so many other narratologists recast: the story is not the plot. Before looking specifically at the books under review,¹ I hope to use *digressio* or *excursus* as a background, as Cicero and Erasmus recommend.

During the Renaissance, writers played self-consciously with this narrative principle. Rabelais, Cervantes and Shakespeare provide ample examples of this ludic attitude towards narrative. When Rabelais has Pantagruel and Panurge praise what kind of a fool Triboulet is, he does so with irony and soon has the two competing in parallel columns. This listing plays with the epistrophic "fol" at the end of each line in both columns and plays with blank spaces and the frustration of conventional grammar with its coherent sentences and the sense of a logical sequence of a tale long before Sterne did in *Tristram Shandy* (464, "le tier livre": chapitre 38). The narrative embeds within itself a satire on pedantry and illustrates through this long and ludicrous list the *reductio ad absurdum* of listing. Rabelais also represents the trial of juge Bridoye (Judge Bridlegoose), who views and reviews, reads and re-reads, thumbs over and peruses a myriad of texts, which the author lists at some length, but who decides the case by a throw of a dice (471-74, "le tier livre": chapitre 40). Perhaps, Rabelais suggests, interpretation is as arbitrary as Bridoye's judgement. Reading is like casting the dice. This attack on logic is also summed up in Bridoye's declaration of

1 Waswo, Richard. *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987. Pp. 336. Cloth US\$42.50. Cohen, Walter. *Drama of a Nation: Public Theater in Renaissance England and Spain*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985. Pp. 416. Cloth US\$44.50. Paper US\$ 14.95. Logan, George M. and Gordon Teskey, eds. *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989. Pp. 325. Cloth US\$37.50. Ekstein, Nina C. *Dramatic Narrative: Racine's Récits*. New York: Peter Lang, 1986. Pp. 229 + x. Cloth US\$31.00.

a principle of canon law: "*Semper in obscuris quod minimum est sequitur*" (470, "Le tier livre": chapitre 39). The difficulty in finding a sequence to the inconsequential is a narrative problem. Pantagruel also satirizes the idea that names can be read for prophecy, as if temporal sequence can derive from the arbitrary relation between name and the person represented. Rabelais implies that the arbitrariness of naming is related to the arbitrariness of narrative. In fact, Pantagruel's account of Pythagoras's idea of naming reduces it to absurdity while enhancing Rabelais's narrative. The digressive language and the ironic gap between the logical precision of the style and the outlandishness of the content makes the book more attractive and humorous:

Je suys tout confus en mon entendement quand je pense en l'invention admirable de Pythagoras, lequel par le nombre *par* ou *impar* des syllabes d'un chacun nom propre, exposito de quel cousté estoient les humains boyteulx, bossus, borgnes, gouteux, paralytiques, pleuritiques et aultres telz maléfices en nature: sçavoir est assignant le nombre *par* au cousté gauesche du corps, le *impar* au dextre. (640, "le quart livre": chapitre 37)

Pythagoras's interpretation of nature becomes less the music of the spheres or the microcosm reflecting the macrocosm than a kind of quack narrative about quack medicine. Even as the report may be satirizing the long tradition of medical incompetence in which cause and effect were yoked accidentally and with dire consequences, it turns from nature and the world as it becomes part of a large structure that compiles so many ludicrous instances that their sum is greater than their parts. Language and structure translate fact and observations of the world and shape them into great and improbable fictions.

Cervantes also uses narrative with canniness. One example cannot do justice to Cervantes' array of techniques, such as embedded novellas and references to print and books, but the episode of the curate and the barber (*el cura y el barbero*) in the library can call attention to the making of narrative. Besides a self-conscious satire on literary criticism and censorship at the beginning of a novel that transgresses many conventions and rules, the chapter calls attention to Cervantes' narrative technique. Near the end of the chapter and amid many other books, the author has the barber slip in a discussion of Cervantes' *La Galatea*. Like Chaucer in "The Tale of Sir Topas," Cervantes allows himself to be the butt of a joke, a humble author who has not quite mastered the art of narrative, a character whose apparently modest accomplishment only throws into relief — amid comic relief — the masterful artistry of the eponymous writer. In response to the barber, the curate criticizes this other work of Cervantes in the midst of his masterpiece:

Muchos años ha que es grande amigo mío ese Cervantes, ye sé que es más versado en desdichas que en versos. Su libro tiene algo de buena invención; propone algo, y no concluye nada: es menester esperar la segunda parte que promete, quizá con la emienda alcanzará del todo la misericordia que ahora se le niega; y entre tanto que esto se ve, tenedle recluso en vuestra posada, señor compadre. (127, "primera parte": chapitre 6)

Possibly, Cervantes is complaining that his plots are misunderstood because they are not coherent Aristotelian actions but are episodic and go nowhere. Like Rabelais, Cervantes seems to be playing with the notion of the arbitrariness of narrative and interpretation. Narratives also create illusions that do not reflect the world but that translate it. In this chapter the library contains Cervantes' book but his book also contains a library. From the outset, Cervantes provides an inset. Through allusion, the narrative creates the illusion of alternate worlds, of books behind the titles. These books, which exist in the world, are represented and misrepresented in a precarious position between the library and the fire.

At the end of Shakespeare's play, Hamlet asks Horatio to tell his story even though the audience has already witnessed it. This small incident says a great deal about the relation of narrative to drama. It calls attention to the difference between character and audience as the Danish people and Fortinbras do not, unlike the audience, know Hamlet's tale, so that Shakespeare emphasises dramatic irony and the use of allusive narrative to create the illusion of a larger world in the play. The incident combines, while it distinguishes between, showing and telling, the dramatic and the narrative. It also makes us more aware of the importance of narrative in drama, which is too often forgotten in the theatre, where actors and directors distance themselves from readers and critics while acting on their readerly and critical acumen in creating interpretations of the play and its characters. In the study a play can seem as narrative as a novel. A play is an oral and written text, for each aspect leaves its traces in the other. Drama is performative and narrative: it is a mistake, which has been made too often, to ignore the narrative nature of drama on and off the stage. Until recently, another neglected area has been the social and political dimension of narrative.

The narrative issues that the characters in Rabelais, Cervantes and Shakespeare discuss relate closely to those issues that preoccupied writers during the Renaissance. How language means, how tales unfold and how drama relates to the society that produces it are the subjects that Richard Waswo, Walter Cohen, the contributors to Logan's and Teskey's volume, and Nina Ekstein explore (see also the essays in this special issue). This response will examine their work in terms of the relation of language to narrative, narrative to society, non-dramatic to dramatic literature, and,

finally, dramatic narrative, moving chronologically as much as possible.

One reason that in our age we have become so interested in narrative is that we share with the Renaissance what in *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* Richard Waswo calls a "febrile preoccupation with language" (x). As ventriloquists, Waswo suggests, we recover through hermeneutics and the sociology of knowledge the Renaissance as it did the classical past, a recovery that displayed a wish for intimacy and an awareness of distance, as Thomas Greene has argued so effectively in *The Light in Troy*. There is, as E. H. Gombrich affirmed, no reality without interpretation, and innocent interpretation (xi). Narratives are not free of the pragmatics of the now. For both writer and audience, literary, economic, social and political imperatives do not make the narrative and the language in which it is expressed an entirely free place.

Richard Waswo is lucid in his discussion of the move from referential to relational semantics, the shift from words as copies of things to words as they relate to each other, and of how language constructs and transforms the world at given historical moments. Waswo locates the first important theoretical part of this move in the Renaissance and relates our interest in it to the importance in our age of Saussurian linguistics, whose semantics is relational. Michel Foucault, as Waswo says, analyses discursive practices that define the ordering of objects (20-22. Foucault 49). According to relational semantics, meaning, like narrative forms, are in language and not in the world. The difficulty in making the shift from the referential to the relational stems from the necessity that we find alternatives for the categories that language gives us to talk about language (23). This difficulty also applies to the ways we think about genre, dramatic forms and narrative, whether we think that they are, through language, a reflection of the world or a refractory negotiation with the world. In the relational model tragedy would become such a negotiation. Waswo appears correct in his identification of the lure of the referential with the magical identity of word and thing that has persisted from pre-history (25-33, see Harrison 105). Even Socrates, who is Plato's representative of reason, often moves in the dialogues from argument to myth (30). Myth is a story, a narrative. In the quest for knowledge the story returns to haunt the argument. In the twentieth century Saussure and Wittgenstein have put forth a relational semantics, the one using an economic analogy, the other a ludic analogy (41). Wittgenstein's view that language is a game made possible by rules but not always bounded by them leads to unbounded play that has implications for verbal art and its genres and narrative. There are different rules for different genres and even the rules can change.

The changing attitudes towards language during the Renaissance manifested itself in philology, historical scholarship and poetry. These

attitudes affect the assumptions of what genre and narrative are. According to Waswo, Dante assumes that his language will pass away but can reveal eternity; Shakespeare and Daniel think that their language, while recited, will preserve all that they love from the destructive forces of time; Waller presumes that the achievements of poetry would be swallowed; and Pope shares Waller's view, except he considers the achievement of poetry to be *pro tempore* (59). A more self-conscious awareness of the fragility and changeability of language may also imply a similar view of structure and genre. Increasingly, writers build into their texts this historical consciousness. Taking his cue from Foucault's *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Waswo rightly warns that as present inquirers we can observe in the past the organic causation of whatever institution, idea or form of art we prize or dislike (61, Foucault [trans. 1972] 209). Waswo proposes that the creation of new worlds in literature depends in part on changes in assumptions about how language means and a denial of the autonomy of art (71, see Hart 1988). During the Renaissance, the practice of writing is often more innovative than the theory of writing (see Waswo 81).

The increased role of rhetoric affects the thinking about meaning in the Renaissance. Lorenzo Valla, in Waswo's view, represents a new idea, that words constitute meanings, which helps in the constitution of new kinds of meaning in literature and religion (113). Although Valla and Juan Luis Vives do not follow their rhetorical view that meaning is constitutive, their observations have implications beyond the remaking of Aristotle's ten logical categories. If, as Vives says, essences are beyond our grasp, then no set of categories must be preferred to another (119). By implication, we can take Vives's view and assume that forms of narrative and genres are also heuristic and mutable rather than essential and eternal. The movement in the sixteenth century from Latin to the vernaculars, which involves the production of national literatures and translations, constitutes the beginning of the assimilation of these languages into the grammatical, syntactic, rhetorical and prosodic canons of Latin (136). Imitation of classical models in the Renaissance, Waswo says, is a mode of self-fulfillment and performance (140). Shakespeare literally creates great vernacular performances that differ from the Latin drama of the universities. In *Hamlet* the audience and Hamlet engage in life, the unceasing effort of interpretation, which leads them to apprehend the emptiness of the absence of life or the hermeneutic process. For Waswo, Shakespeare discovers something terrifying and glorious, "that language is cognitive, that semantics is epistemology, that meanings are made." Shakespeare, Hamlet, Rabelais, Montaigne and Cervantes all find this terrible discovery glorious. In Waswo's view, Hamlet wants Horatio to tell his story to maintain the flow of words in their speech community (155-56, see 178-80, 190).

The development of the vernacular languages and literatures in the Renaissance relies in part on the imitation of Greek and Latin models. In Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue* Bembo encourages the cultivation of Tuscan literature on the Latin model, and Jacques Peletier's *L'Art Poétique* advocates that poets supplement imitation of classical models with the observation or experience of nature (164, 172). In the *Poetices libri septem* Julius Caesar Scaliger differs from Aristotle and the Aristotelians because he says that all language imitates and not simply literary language and because he distinguishes language from literature by its purpose of teaching pleasurable. For Scaliger, literature becomes rhetorical because its aim is to persuade (186). The shift in semantic awareness during the Renaissance involves a tension between thinking of the relation between language and meaning as cosmetic and treating it as constitutive. This shifting awareness, according to Waswo, occurs most clearly in literature. Here, Waswo relates the creation of new forms of life to new forms of literature. He asserts that the greatest literature of the Renaissance grows self-conscious "as a structure of manufactured meanings," creating as a major theme the problematic relations between words and meanings. Genre becomes more than a lifeless formalism. Waswo's declaration is explicit and suggestive: "The alteration of semantic assumptions ultimately results in imagining new forms of life in new forms of literature — however carefully crafted their resemblance to old forms" (205, see Quint).

Especially in the Reformation, imitation of the past, pagan and Christian, constitutes more than imitation: here, we witness the fashioning of nations, literatures, churches and selves. Waswo reiterates what he thinks is the central dilemma of the Renaissance — which can be found in the works of Valla, Vives and Erasmus — the awareness of the opacity and fluidity of words frustrates the desire for a clear cognition of things (218-19). Erasmus's biblical hermeneutics differ from those of his medieval predecessors, like St. Thomas and Nicholas of Lyra, mainly on the question of narrative. Whereas, as Waswo tells us, Erasmus's medieval predecessors view the story as a series of incidents that can be selected as occasions for general discourses, Erasmus retells a story he finds. Narrative begets his narrative. Erasmus develops the motivation of characters by expanding on their feelings and situation, and thinks of the meaning of the scriptural text as what happened in it and not as what things it represents (as in medieval exegesis) (223-25).

Like Erasmus, Philip Sidney obtains from rhetoric, particularly from the Ciceronian and Horatian tradition, the view that the poet and orator persuade by moving the emotions of the audience. The reader or audience cannot be separated from the meaning of the text. In the *Apologie for Poetrie* Sidney urges the teaching of virtue as a means of engaging the reader's feelings, which constitutes the meaning of the text. Sidney prefers fiction to

philosophy and history because it can move our fallen will to moral action and perfection. The very delight of the story is, for Sidney, what instructs us by moving our wills. Sidney tells about stories that move people to noble action. Erasmus and Sidney represent the humanist and Protestant delight in the ravishment of eloquence: reading and interpreting the text inflames the soul. Waswo also includes *The Faerie Queene* as a work that illustrates affective semantics, and says that, in the letter to Raleigh, Spenser speaks about allegory as a method of achieving delight through instruction that Sidney favours. Don Quijote is, according to Waswo, the Renaissance reader because his reading inflames him to perform virtuous deeds. *Don Quijote* ridicules romances but shares with them the theme that language makes meanings, creates experience and shapes worlds. Comparing all readers to the Don, Waswo contends that "To reorient semantic assumptions, to read differently, is to re-create both ourselves and our world" (235).

The semantic shift is important to philosophy, rhetoric, literature and theology. Besides Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, one of Luther's followers, considers the shift between representational and constitutive semantics. Flacius consciously regards language as semantically cosmetic and constitutive. This movement between words and things — sometimes asserting the power of words, sometimes of things — also occurs in the philosophy and rhetoric of Vives and among those who wanted to legitimize the vernaculars (235-68). Tension in writers and readers arose from this dual movement between words and things: words proliferate meanings, but things and divine ordination regulate meaning (269-71). Waswo thinks that the Renaissance discovered that meaning in language is a function of use (as exemplified in the exchange between William Fulke and Gregorie Martin), a position that Wittgenstein later demonstrates (276). The lasting revolution in Protestant hermeneutics, according to Waswo, is its redetermination of the "literal" in the temporal change of grammatical and historical meaning, the foundation of all subsequent textual interpretation, but while the interpretative practices construe meaning dynamically, the theory remains bound to an Augustinian conception of words as participating in things and thereby corresponding to them. This revolution affects the revaluation of secular and vernacular literature as well as of scripture (282-83). For Waswo, narrative is at the heart of epistemology and ontology. In Charles de Bovel's view, Adam, through God's will, becomes the progenitor of the first human language, but this narrative event signifies a free human naming of the world that God determines but fragments with the Tower of Babel. Waswo observes that

The same relation that tradition found in the story — the immemorial intuition of the potency of words as control of or congruence with things — may be accounted for by reversing it: the knowledge that yields the name becomes the name that yields the

knowledge.... [This newly defined world] would be the world of Montaigne, Hamlet, and Don Quixote, but exhilarating theatre whose pageants come to no final certainty but death. (288)

Waswo thinks that the sign/thing model of language pervades practice, especially in literature, during the Renaissance even when repudiated in various contemporary theories (289). The whole history of interpretation, as Montaigne observes, demonstrates that language is an activity (292). But learning, as R.R. Bolgar said in 1954, is not a free field but a history of society (296). The indeterminacy of the text, or the body of texts called literature, in the *nouvelle critique* of Derrida, Barthes, Kristeva, and Hillis Miller, preserves, in Waswo's view, the autonomy that formalist aesthetics and Protestant hermeneutics demands because indeterminacy implies no limits, even though there is a gesture to context (297-98). Even if the *nouvelle critique* is more irreverent towards the text than humanism and new criticism, it has not killed the concept of the autonomy of literature (298-99). Waswo suggests that two works, one arising from the linguistic analyses of the later Wittgenstein (Ellis) and the other from social analyses of European Marxism (Weimann), are suggestive because they share the view "that literary texts are simultaneously both the products and producers of the whole cultural community, past and present, in which they exist" (302). Texts are historical and formal, made in the past and read in the present. Waswo laments the mirage of textual self-autonomy in Protestant hermeneutics and modern post-romantic (or post-structuralist) formalism, because language is not a prison but "gives shape and significance to things so that they can be grasped" (305). We should recognize the multiple function of language in the worlds of discourse that Montaigne, Cervantes, Shakespeare and others create and in the human community, so that we can begin the adventure of unending discovery that only language can render articulate, or — in the final allusive words of Waswo's coda — "the buzzing world and lispings firmament" (305).

Walter Cohen's *Drama of a Nation* is about the creation of a human community within a human community, namely the public theatres in Renaissance England and Spain. In this fine study of the relation of drama to society, Cohen maintains that Spanish and English plays differ from other European drama because they synthesize native and neoclassical learned traditions. He also notes that both public theatres opened in the 1570s and were closed by governments about seventy years later (17). Here is the central hypothesis of Cohen's book:

the absolutist state, by its inherent dynamism and contradictions, first fostered and then undermined the public theater. More precisely, the similarities between Spanish and English absolutism help account for the parallels between the two dramatic traditions,

while the divergent courses of economic and religious development in England and Spain begin to explain the differences. (19-20)

The movement of *Drama of a Nation* is from the general to the specific. Cohen discusses popular and learned culture as well as ideology and dramatic form in the medieval and Renaissance theatre (ch. 1). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he argues, the transition from feudalism to capitalism lies behind the development of Renaissance drama (ch. 2). Cohen then discusses the ideological significance of the major genres in England and Spain (chs. 3-7). For instance, he examines the emergence of the public theater in which there is an opposition between the artisanal and absolutist stage, the ambiguous aristocratic implications of romantic comedy and the national history play, the social and theatrical trends during the crisis in the public theatre, the nature of aristocratic failure in satiric comedy, heroic drama (including Shakespearean tragedy), English bourgeois tragedy and the Spanish peasant play, and the supersession of the public theatre primarily in tragedy and romance but also in the religious play.

Cohen defines his methodology as eclectic Marxism and emphasizes his debt to the comparative history of Perry Anderson (20-21, see Anderson). In discussing Marxism and totalization Cohen argues for a useful relation between scholarship and theory and for a recognition of the multiple forces that help to shape theatrical and literary work and that thereby make problematic an exclusive focus on the author's intention. By examining the textual production and transmission of Shakespeare's plays, we can observe that he lived at a historical moment that was beginning to develop notions of the individual and self-conscious artistry but not in an age, such as the following periods, with a commitment to a stable text and authorial individuality (22-24). In presenting his "totalizing" methodology, even with qualifications, Cohen realizes that his move is political because he seeks to enact a paradigm shift in the study of Renaissance drama (25). This shift is part of a leftist project, which prefers "the subversive to the conformist, the popular to the learned, and, of course, the synthetic to any single alternative" (27). With Christopher Hill, Cohen thinks that the radicals of the English revolution are ahead of our positions, so that they can help us to understand and advance radicalism. Cohen has the same hope for Renaissance drama, as it be such a radical medium, which places him in the company of Jonathan Dollimore (28, see Hill, Dollimore). Cohen argues that in Renaissance theatre and society a combination of learned and popular culture made it possible to replace ruling-class views with more scope of vision and social justice (29). Shakespeare, according to Cohen, is the guarantor of high culture in the United States and needs to be decentred by placing him in the wider context of Renaissance drama (30-31). One danger in Cohen's method, as he implicitly acknowledges, is the elite's appropriation

of popular culture to reinvigorate it. Criticism that champions popular culture may be viewed as a production of the elite or may serve the purposes of the established powers.

The scope of Cohen's study is too wide to address here fully, so, as with Waswo's book, I shall concentrate on discussions that bear on the relation between genre, narrative and drama. Cohen maintains that through the assimilation of multiple cultural and dramatic traditions, the most innovative plays of the twelfth century expand the inward and outward scope of religious theatre. The dramatic form expands as the form of medieval life does. Cohen cites the episode that involves Pilate's wife in the Montecassino *Passion* play as an instance of the use of apocryphal and patristic sources and Gospel narrative (51). Like Waswo, Cohen views the use of the vernacular as a challenge to order and tradition (52f., see Waswo 134-205). Cohen emphasizes the ideology of form, especially the conflict between the drama of popular culture and the drama of hegemonic ideology, and praises the popular oppositional use of dispersal, disunity and dissemination as a critique of ruling class myths of organicism (62). An example of the potent strength and potential weakness of Cohen's "totalizing method" is the meeting of a social *aperçu* explaining a dramatic genre through gnomic utterance: "The triumph of a dictatorship that patronized both the arts and the lower classes helps explain the unusual combination of courtly and popular elements in the Florentine *sacra rappresentazione* during the age of Lorenzo il Magnifico" (67). The subversive narrative of the lower classes against feudal power takes advantage of Christ's dual nature, his Godhead and his humble human station as a carpenter, in plays such as *The Cornish Ordinalia* and the Welsh *Passion* (72-73). Cohen also argues that social criticism is the central purpose of many secular plays of the fifteenth century, especially of those espousing the views of urban dwellers threatened by feudal power. Taking up Raymond Williams's terminology, Cohen says that peasant drama and urban drama are mainly counterhegemonic while church drama is predominantly hegemonic, although all three are ambiguous (74-75, 78; see Williams).

The gradual transition from feudalism to capitalism, Cohen argues, provides the social basis for the Renaissance theatre's recovery of classical antiquity (84). For instance, Cohen avers that the national history play is a sign of bourgeois consciousness (93). When discussing Italian drama Cohen admits some connection between Counter-Reformation monarchy and the transcendentalism of pastoral tragicomedies like Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Il pastor fido* and, with Louise Clubb, observes a movement from satiric comedy to romantic comedy in the late sixteenth century (100, see Clubb, and the contributions by Elam and Dempsey to this collection). Cohen seems to imply a contradiction in regard to the *commedia dell'arte*:

it catered to the upper classes and therefore not to a commercial public theatre, but Italy was incapable of supporting such a national theatre because it was not, like Spain and England, a centralized absolutist state whose capital had a disproportionate number of wealthy citizens that could make a permanent commercial theatre viable (103-04). The best the *commedia dell'arte* could do, Cohen implies, was to cater to international upper classes, a political condition that was so important to Molière and to French drama. Except for Alexandre Hardy, whose *Scédase* is based on one of Plutarch's narratives, ignores the unities of time and place and fuses popular and learned culture and thereby resembles many English and Spanish playwrights of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the French do not develop a national theatre in this period (106). In Renaissance France, England, and Spain, all absolutist states, tragedy and much of tragicomedy and historical drama depends on the existence of a nation that an aristocracy governs and these genres concern themselves with the conduct of this class and its ability to rule. Whereas the English and Spanish plays include many popular elements and so chronicle class relations and conflict, the French neoclassical drama focuses on the aristocracy (108). The conflict between the monarchy and the nobility — which includes the nature of honour and love — becomes a central concern in Corneille and Racine. *Le Cid*, like Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy, represents the difficult relation of king to nobles as well as the modification of aristocratic notions of honour. Like Shakespeare's histories, *Horace* examines the nature of kingship and the conflict between private love and public honour. Corneille's play also represents, in Cohen's view, a reinvigorated aristocratic power (109-12). The Fronde, the last aristocratic rebellion against absolute monarchy, marks and defines the difference between the early heroic plays of Corneille and the tragedies of Racine, between a drama concerned with the politics of nobility and one treating love. Cohen's hypothesis that the presence of a female protagonist in a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century European tragedy shows a retreat from politics needs to be tested further. Such a representation might also represent a desire for change that is part of a political programme or an attempt to take into account a half of humanity. Are *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (perhaps even *Macbeth*) indications of a retreat from the political world? Cohen argues that Racine's *Athalie* and *Phèdre* provide grounds for connecting Racine's pessimism, sense of doom and tragic perspective to the crisis of the aristocracy (113-15; see Auerbach 370-94 and Stone). Although Cohen admits that neoclassical comedy accommodates popular influences more than neoclassical tragedy does, he sees even in the comedies an asymmetry. Citing Molière's *Le Tartuffe* as an example, Cohen says that the failure of farce to defeat religion leads to the use of the

monarchy as a secular *deus ex machina* — the royal intervention that clears away all difficulties (116-17; see Levin 123-25). Cohen uses a paradox worthy of Stephen Greenblatt and other new historicists — that the gaze of the monarchy is allied to that of religion while seeming to oppose it — form of absolutism (118-20; see Greenblatt esp. 65, Goldberg esp. 147-63). One of Cohen's main points is that the complete consolidation of royal power in seventeenth-century France prevents fusion of learned and popular traditions on the public stage, whereas the partial absolutism of Spain and England allows such a fusion. He also says that despite the establishment of secular professional theatre companies in England and Spain during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, a complex interaction between the learned and popular traditions occurs in English drama between 1490 and 1575 but that in Spain the theatre becomes popularized only gradually. English humanist drama represents the transition from early structures of debate to classical forms of comedy and tragedy, the borrowing from popular tradition and the concern with affairs of state (123-25; see Bevington). Spain develops early anticipations of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century heterogeneous theatre whereas England does not: Torres Naharro's *Ymenea* (ca. 1516) and Gil Vicente's *Don Duardos* (ca. 1522) anticipate the drama of Lope de Vega (130).

The common feature of English and Spanish society of the last quarter of the sixteenth century that fosters the establishment and growth of the professional public theatre is the complementary existence of internal stability and external imperialism (136). Whereas Spain was more powerful than England, England was making a transition to capitalism (143) and thus Cohen views the public theatres in Spain and England as mediations between drama and society (151). The public theatres in England were more capitalist ventures than in Spain: the English plays were becoming more secular, a prolepsis of a bourgeois future, whereas the Spanish plays grew more religious, a recollection of a feudal past (166). The ways the plays were written has as much to do with the final product or commodity as with the sources or raw materials. The "rifling" of earlier literature, Cohen says, conforms to notions of imitation in the Renaissance whereas the widespread rescripting in the public theatre derives from the tradition of the anonymous and multiple authorship, fluid texts and oral performance of the popular tradition as opposed to the originality, individuality and aesthetic unity of bourgeois art. The artisanal playwrights transfigure the popular tradition (174). Cohen seems to show an ambivalent attitude to the narrative character of Spanish drama, which he discusses in the context of the "impoverished heritage" of early Spanish theatre although he praises this drama of the *romances*. The Spanish platform stage, like its English counterpart, was well adapted for the recitation of poetry. As a substitute for

a popular dramatic tradition, the Spanish theatre used the *romance* to recreate the conditions of medieval, juglaresque performance and thereby bring the actor and the audience together. The *comedia* has, therefore, a narrative base (179).

Cohen is much concerned with the ideology of form (180-86). He first occupies himself with romantic comedy (*comedia de capa y espada* in Spain) and the national history play. That "romantic comedy and the national history play are complementary forms for expressing, enacting, and securing the successful adaptation of the aristocracy to social and political change" is Cohen's basic position (187). He also argues that dramatic form also often gives an ideological resolution to difficult social problems. Romantic comedy during the Renaissance differs from its classical antecedents in Plautus and Terence, Cohen says, because the status of women improves and slavery is absent, although some feminists, like Joan Kelly, do not think that women experience a Renaissance or a liberation in that period (187, see Kelly 33-47, but for a different view, see Jordan and Woodbridge). Renaissance comedies can suggest that married love is a positive step for men and women but can also use their endings to reassert male domination over women and aristocratic power over the bourgeoisie even while they accept change in class and gender roles. Cohen is sensitive to the ambivalent view of women and to their subordination and mistreatment during the Renaissance. He also emphasizes the way the dramatic form of romantic comedy, especially its endings, negotiates the challenge of the bourgeoisie to the aristocracy. For Cohen, pastoral represents the nobility's theatrical and literary reaction to capitalism and absolutism. He contrasts two pastoral comedies, saying that Lope's *Los donaires de Matco* (ca. 1589-90) is an intrigue whose ingenious resolution encourages irresponsibility and social compliance in people while Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1598) makes the ruling class earn its position and exercise free will, even if the ending is a more sophisticated type of repression than Lope's (188-95). In a suggestive, detailed and often implicit comparison between Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) and Gaspar de Aguiar's *El mercader amante* (ca. 1590-95), Cohen observes that these and other romantic comedies comprise a generic solution that the rise of capitalism creates. In speaking about Aguiar's multiple uses of monologues, which have many narrative qualities, Cohen repeats one of his favourite ideas, which may reveal a penchant for placing the dramatic over the narrative in the theatre and for making the theatre a more essential activity than story-telling, that the Spanish theatre had to become more attuned to popular culture to develop the "social potential of the intimacy between actor and audience" (218). This position appears to be almost a modification of an Aristotelian celebration of a community of illusion and not even a Coleridgean willing suspension of disbelief or a

Brechtian alienation-effect, because Aristotle puts the dramatic over the narrative and because Brecht celebrates estranging narrative effects as a means of engaging the critical faculty of the audience. This may be a quibble on the use of "intimacy" but needs further clarification.

Cohen thinks that the fallacy of the history play is to suppose that politics is all and to play down the role in the nation of the social relations between the aristocracy and other classes. The history plays represent at once the reactionary interests of the monarchy and the popular right to judge the political role of the ruling class (220-21). Unlike most Renaissance history plays, those of Marlowe and Lope represent interclass issues and appeal to twentieth-century critics (223). For Marlowe, according to Cohen, English history is a tragedy of individual suffering, so that in *Edward II* (1592) he makes private public issues and thereby provides a critique of the absolutist, corporist and nationalist norms of the genre. Marlowe eliminates from his sources the stress on the economic crisis and the people's hardships under Edward's rule: this playwright demystifies but does not offer a positive alternative (238-39). In discussing Lope's *La vida y muerte del rey Bamba* (1597-98) Cohen reveals that he considers structural unity to be a usual quality of a good play and implies that narrative can be a reluctant matter in the making of drama: "The untidiness of a chronicle play is often a sign of the dramatist's inability to transmute the recalcitrant material of history, or rather of historical sources, into a form suitable for theatrical performance" (240). Cohen also accepts the traditional practice of finding the possible intentions of a playwright by comparing his version with his narrative sources, except that he is concerned with Marxist interests in incoherence and ideological contradiction. *Bamba* is a critique of the nobility that is anachronistic but imaginatively plausible. Even the differences in metre represent class differences and echo narrative forms. Bamba's soliloquy before he learns from the aristocrats of his new position takes the form of a *canción*, which was traditionally employed in pastoral eclogue and which here echoes the theme of *menosprecio de corte* and Horace's *Beatus ille*. In this scene the nobles speak in native *redondillas*, thereby reversing social and metrical relations, and, in the rest of the play, Lope maintains no distinction between Bamba and the nobles. In *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (pub. 1609), Lope's major theoretical statement and defence of his dramatic practice, he asserts that stories require *romances*. The *romance* passages often involve third-person narratives of events in the recent past or in the future. The characters come onstage to present their information in these narratives. Even though Cohen usually champions popular drama over the use of narrative in plays, he gives credit to a technique that depends more on an internal fictional audience rather than on the audience of the public theatre. Cohen gives credit because of the

affinities of these third-person narratives with Shakespeare's technique: both, Cohen implies, represent an illusionary show of verisimilitude even though the English downstage monologue and the report in the *romances* appear natural to the dramatic situation. Lope's switch to *romances* is usually his only means in a scene of showing metrical variation, so that the verse form indicates change and interruption — a kind of technical thematization I would suggest. Cohen does not find the *romances* in *Bamba* as self-consciously performative as the English play within the play but suggests that their apparent awkwardness will disappear if we understand that their primary intended audience is the people in the audience and not the fictional characters in the play. These narratives of the future in Lope's play serve, in Cohen's view, the popular national culture and historical consciousness of Renaissance Spain (240-52).

Shifting his attention from English and Spanish drama of the sixteenth century to that of the seventeenth century, Cohen says that after the closing of the public theatres in these countries in the late 1590s, they reopen under closer royal control. In the first half of the seventeenth century both public theatres experience a crisis in which there is a movement away from outdoor popular performances to indoor productions before the upper classes in private theatres or at court. The actors abandon the popular audience and not the other way around (265, 275). Although Cohen documents and illustrates copiously his provocative study, some of his assertions seem difficult to prove and thus to adopt. For instance, he claims that the classicist movement in Renaissance comedy is related dialectically to the approximation in Europe to the material conditions of antiquity (293). The vastness and complexity of history and society make them so hard to relate to literary and theatrical texts that, as Cohen admits in various places in his book, the scope of this useful enterprise can lead to loose ends, speculations and dead ends. Does the relation of Jonson's dramatic satire to Shakespeare's romantic comedy approximate that of the non-dramatic satire of Horace and Juvenal to the plays of Plautus and Terence? The analogy is partly instructive but perhaps as much for the ways the two periods diverge as for the manner in which they meet. The defence of popular culture and of the public theatre in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, which Cohen suggests, is one such divergence. Another example of difference would be the understanding of fetishism that Cohen attributes to Jonson, which, he says, was possible for only a brief historical moment. Cohen acknowledges the contradiction between classicism and anti-classicism in Jonson (298-300). If in Cohen's estimation satiric comedy reverses the norms of romantic comedy, so-called serious drama undercuts the assumptions of the national history play (301). In discussing the reversal of history play to tragedy Cohen discusses various playwrights, including Shakespeare and Castro. Cohen

argues that Castro's *Las mocedades del Cid* (ca. 1612-15) is much indebted to the *romances* and thus to a popular conception of national history. Both Spanish heroic drama and Shakespearean tragedy, Cohen says, possess interclass perspectives. He also thinks that the fullest use of popular culture on the Spanish stage happens in peasant honour drama, a genre for which English bourgeois tragedy is an analogue because of the fundamental role of *romances* in them (314-15). Cohen concludes that Shakespearean tragedy and the Spanish peasant play represent formal resolutions of social conflicts that are dramatic realizations of the public theatre's inherent contradiction between artisanal base and absolutist superstructure. He provides a detailed comparative analysis of *Fuente Ovejuna* and *King Lear* to support this and related claims and observes that both plays alter their sources to change the ideological import of their endings. Through a royal pardon and by the innovation of making the evil overlord an illegal and unsuccessful rebel against the crown, Lope's play contains the peasant insurgency within the conservative royal order. Shakespeare takes an untragic tale and turns it into radical tragedy without any satisfactory social and political resolution. The failure of the aristocracy is the topic of this penultimate phase of Cohen's argument, whereas the last phase demonstrates the irrelevance of that class to politics altogether (323, 342-43).

Forms of tragedy and tragicomedy that indicate the passing of the public theatre and aristocratic irrelevance constitute the last subjects of Cohen's inquiry (357-404). Intrigue tragedy — mainly satiric in England and predominantly heroic and romantic in Spain — marks that political marginality (358). Cohen's quotation of Captain Belgrade's proto-marxian speech at 3.3.84-90 of Philip Massinger's *The Unnatural Combat* (1624-25) shows a strong instance of a challenge to, or indictment of, the aristocracy despite its containment in this aristocratic play (360). Intrigue tragedy, the true home of the baroque, involves a narrowing of national perspective, which, in Cohen's view, includes the accordance of a prominent role to women. Religious tragedy represents a complex exception to the narrowing of focus (374, 383-84). In the pastoral tragicomic romances (which Cohen shortens to romance) of Shakespeare and Calderón family and nation are reconciled after long periods of suffering (385f; see Hart 1989). Cohen says that tragedy has enjoyed greater prestige than romance since the Renaissance but that Marxism has waged that human history will or might have the structure of romance and that precisely because of its utopianism, as opposed to a prehistory of class society, romance may offer a legitimate vision of an authentic history. He also supports his hope with Northrop Frye's observation on aristocratic projection and proletarian elements in romance (391, see Frye 1957, 186). For Cohen, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is part of a creative art that explores utopian possibilities that Marxism

explores; the visions of intrigue tragedy and romance make way, positively and negatively, for the future; paradoxically, the public theatre intimates solutions to the conflicts determining its own supersession (404). The last analogy for Cohen resides in the need to unite popular and learned culture in Renaissance drama and a similar desire among American Marxist academics to connect in their work with a larger political and social movement for reform (406).

The utopian nature of romance is one of the subjects of *Unfolded Tales: Essays on Renaissance Romance*, edited by George Logan and Gordon Teskey and including, most appropriately, a Foreword by Northrop Frye. Romance, Frye says, dominates the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in English literature — it takes over Sidney's *Arcadia*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Shakespeare's last period — even though this genre was scorned for its extravagance, neglect of the unities, incredible characters and actions, and attention to "nature" (ix). This collection on romance is vast and varied, so that I want to limit my discussion to its implications for comparative literature and to its observations on the nature of narrative and dramatic narrative.

Although romance usually indicates an opposition between classical and romantic values, in the Renaissance, as Teskey notes in his Introduction, a symbiotic relation develops between episodic narratives of love and adventure and classical kinds of literature such as tragedy, epic and comedy (1). Teskey also reminds us that because the heroic poem originates in the romance, Renaissance epic poets generally assume that it is in danger of lapsing back into romantic ethical and aesthetic form. Owing to the more ample imaginative scope and more immediate and visible delight of romance, the Renaissance epic poet, as Tasso says, must use the narrative machinery of "romantic" delight like the rapid variations of episodes and the many supernatural marvels. The epic must draw upon the connection between *eros* and *heros*. Epic needs romance, whose change and disorder enables and endangers it. Teskey aptly observes that Renaissance romance, which eschews narrative invention and borrows from Hellenistic and medieval sources, is important as an experimental formal and stylistic medium in which Elizabethan drama reaches maturity (4-7). Admitting there can be sophisticated *naïve romances* and *naïve sophisticated romances*, Teskey makes the useful distinction that the former refers to a narrative foundation in oral recitations of the exploits of heroes, folk tales, and sagas, whereas the latter includes self-conscious literary structures that are sometimes built on the former's base. The revival of tragedy by Shakespeare depends on the narrative roots of folk tale and romance motifs as much as on classical form, but some works, like *The Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare's romances, are romantic and include hardy parasitical classical strains (8-9). As Teskey

implies, the narrative experimentation of *The Winter's Tale* and the *in medias res* of Prospero's narrative to Miranda of the time before the tempest in Shakespeare's eponymous play represent important examples of the relation between romantic and classical values, the narrative and the dramatic (10).

The contributors to *Unfolded Tales* provide suggestive views of narrative. Judith H. Anderson concludes that throughout *The Faerie Queene* Edmund Spenser seeks truth and inspiration "in the cumulative expression of the inward mind inscribed in the human past and present in human records, in human words and texts, from the beginning" (31). Alastair Fowler asserts that Spenser is original in his use of names in his romance and his eclogue, whose speakers are not named after those in Theocritus, Virgil, Sanazaro and Googe (32-33). As Renaissance theorists insist that the epic include other genres, Fowler expects the heterogeneous names in *The Faerie Queene* (34). He also considers Spenser's catalogue of rivers to be almost pure poetry because it puts aside narrative and propositional communication (42). This quest for pure lyricism is suspect — Fowler himself understands the implicit problem that apt naming can be essentialist — but I imagine that it is the kind of sound poetry and vowel music that Ezra Pound sought in Spenser for himself and for T.S. Eliot. (47-8). Among other things, naming contributes music and allusion to epic catalogues and complicates the texture and narrative power of an epic. Robert B. Heilman explores the relation between euphuistic style to narrative design in Robert Greene's romance, *The Card of Fancy* (*Card of Fancie*, 1584), and finds that both exhibit symmetry (55-56). The speeches of Greene's characters remind Heilman "of the *tirades* in French classical drama and English heroic drama, but there is little or no infusion of the stichomythy that gives variety, for instance, in Racine" (57). Romance, according to Heilman, suggests escape from the patterns of everyday life whereas euphuism imposes rigorous patterns that insist on the unavoidable modelling of life. Heilman sees this tension as a manifestation of a larger one — that between romantic and classical impulses (62-63). He follows the euphuistic style to Samuel Johnson's romance, *Rasselas* (1759), and says that Greene and Emily Brontë share a combination of a seemingly rationalistic style with a romantic matter, although their romance is different because of the greater role of subjectivity in her work (64-73). W.W. Barker also discusses Greene's romances but more strictly in terms of narrative. The late Robert Greene, according to Barker, moves in his narrative from monologic discourse to dialogic discourse, from (in this micro narratorial translation of Baxtin's macro historical position) the formal dialectic of the early romances to the random collections of episodes, documents or poems in the later romances (74-75). Barker says that in *The Card of Fancy* the formulaic pattern of the double seal becoming one relates to the complications and resolutions in Greek new

comedy and the drama of Terence and Plautus (76-77). Set speeches, monologues in direct discourse, in limited forms expressed in deliberative rhetoric take up almost two-thirds of this romance (79-80). Greene's *Menaphon*, Barker says, represents a greater variety of styles and voices and a greater intricacy in characterization and narrative form, and *Never Too Late* shows a rejection of the closure of Greene's earlier works and is more open and dialogical (84, 88). Barker says that Greene's style in the romances becomes increasingly heterogeneous, full of characteristic voices, and thus dramatic, so that this stylistic change might reflect Greene's other vocation, that of playwright. This dramatic quality (even in its content) appears especially in *Groats-worth of Witte*, where Greene breaks off the traditional romance and, as a penitent prodigal, becomes part of the narrative (92-94).

The next group of essays in *Unfolded Tales* considers the sources and historical themes in Shakespeare's and Spenser's romances. A. Kent Heatt says that besides displaying affective lyricism, *Cymbeline* represents a contrary tendency — historicism — which reveals two developing entities: Britain and empire (117). Heatt concludes "that the degree of historical specificity in *Cymbeline*, like that in the early histories, related in Shakespeare's mind to a sonnet sequence in which Spenser, led by Du Bellay, had demonstrated that history and politics can be made lyrical" (118). As suggestive as the desire for the lyrical may be, it can indicate a problematic and potentially dangerous desire for purity, atemporality and apoliticism. Carol V. Kaske asserts that in Book 1 of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser crosses medieval romance with moral and philosophical allegory. She examines a source — Stephen Hawes's *The Example of Vertue* — that Spenser never acknowledged as he did Tasso in 1 Proem 1.9 (121-22). Spenser's use of Hawes indicates, for Kaske, an active and adversarial example of imitation (136). In *The Shepheardes Calender*, Donald Cheney argues, Spenser merges the traditions of classical pastoral (such as Virgil's *Eclogues*) and calendar or almanac (such as Ovid's *Fasti* and the *Kalender and Compost of Shepherdes*) and thereby encloses his linear argument in a circular framework that implies renewal and return (138, 158-61). Thomas P. Roche goes in search of Spenser's muse: he tries to decide whether Clio or Calliope is the chief among the nine muses that Hesiod names (in the *Theogony* Hesiod gives the nod to Calliope as do Macrobius, Martinius Capella, and Fulgentius, but Homer, Empedocles and Theocritus all have different views of the muses) (166-68). Roche says that Spenser imitates Virgil in making Calliope the chief muse of his epic or heroic poem but also brings in Clio, the muse of history, for the historical world of Britain and, more specifically, of the Tudors (183-84). Spenser, in Roche's view, yearns beyond the inspiration of the classical muses to invocations to be fulfilled in the *Fowre Hymnes*, the last of which is *An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* (186-87). Like Heatt but only

more extensively, Patricia Parker discusses the relation between romance and empire in *Cymbeline*. Parker maintains that at the end of Shakespeare's play the older generation, represented by Cymbeline, yields to Rome in a gesture that recalls the *pax Augusta* that the labours of Virgil's Aeneas achieved, but Iachimo, a repentant Italian, pays tribute to Posthumus, the British "Aeneas," and thereby reverses the British king's submission to imperial Rome (191). In addition to the general signification of *translatio imperii*, she finds specific implications in the identification of Posthumus with Aeneas (193). Like the *Aeneid*, *Cymbeline* represents matters beyond the grasp of the characters, at least temporarily. Book 3 of the *Aeneid* tells about the westering journey and is full of prophecies barely comprehended or misunderstood until later. Similarly, Posthumus receives a tablet (left by Jupiter) with a riddling text, which sets out the future. The imperial design must unfold in the dilation of the epic and dramatic narratives (195). Parker traces in *Cymbeline*, a late romance and Shakespeare's last Roman plot, a pattern of allusion to the *Aeneid* and the context of the *translatio* of empire. Within this larger history, the ending appears "to be a recursive movement in which the already self-conscious Hesperia of Britain, successor to Rome, voluntarily cedes its victory over the Romans in a historically regressive act of tribute to it" (203, see Frye 1965, 88). The anachronism, Parker argues, serves the historical purpose of the play — the revision of empire in the complex relation between, and conflation of, the Augustan and the Jacobean *pax* (204-07).

The last group of essays concentrates on discourse and imagery in Spenser and on the relation between romance and gender in Mary Wroth. Setting up a discussion of discourse in *The Faerie Queene*, Harry Berger, Jr. finds useful Catherine Belsey's position that ideology is the way people live and represent their lives to themselves and, following Keir Elam, uses Wittgenstein's concept of language-game, in which language is an activity and a form or part of life (209-10, see Wittgenstein, Belsey, and Elam). For Berger, discourse is a pattern of language and of motivation deduced from it, and the psychological orientation assumes Berger's Lacanian approach to literary discourses (212). To define *discourse*, Berger combines Frye's notion of "kidnapped romance," when romance formulas are used to reflect various ascendant social or religious ideals, with Fredric Jameson's "collective narrative fancy" (236-37, see Frye 1957: 168, Jameson 107-15). Berger's multiplicitous essay makes many interesting points, especially in regard to Book 3, which represents the legend of Britomart or chastity. I want to call attention to two points. Tropologies of traditional discourses, Berger says, are literary and cultural practices that represent and organize relations between genders and generations as power struggles, so that he adopts Foucault's terminology — *discursive regimes* — to describe this phenomenon.

These tropologies dominate the literary culture that Spenser wishes to rewrite and the rhetorical culture of his readers for, to, about and against whom he writes. According to Berger, "Book III enacts its own submission to those discursive regimes, shows itself not only wary of but also diverted by their literary blandishments, dramatizes their resistance *and* its own to the project of expropriating their language in the service of a 'purer' discourse of love" (250, see 249). The second point relates to Berger's comments on the way Spenser uses the narrator "to dramatize the limits, contradictions, evasions, and self-deceptions inscribed in the different literary versions of the traditional discourse of gender" (255). Berger calls the narrator the first reader and interpreter of the poem and suggests that his interpretation, which is noticeably inadequate and conventional, "drives the wedge deeper between the radically revisionary discourse of Spenserian romance and the maze of interpenetrating discourses it revises" (256). The very failure of narrator to persuade, says Berger, shows us how not to read *The Faerie Queene* and thus opens up another manner of reading it. Maureen Quilligan also examines gender in romance. She discusses the first prose fiction published by a woman in English, Mary Wroth's *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (1621), in part a rewrite of a revision of *Arcadia*, the romance by her uncle, Philip Sidney, as well as a rescripting of some of Spenser (258-63, for other early works by women, see Elizabeth Carey and Aemilia Lanyer in Travitsky; see also Beilin). Wroth, says Quilligan, offers a unique point of view on the stage convention of male cross-dressing (264-65). Quilligan connects the erotic choice Mary (Sidney) Wroth made in her life — she refused to be a commodity traded between men — with her writing, which the Sidney family made possible for its female members (274). In *Urania*, Wroth represents the traffic in women in the seventeenth century, but in Pamphilia, she portrays an autonomous author who wins that status at the expense of social movement. Wroth also returns to the emphasis on the brother-sister tie in romance, showing how difficult and unstable that relation is rather than stressing the sameness between male and female siblings and thereby reflecting her own position in her family (280). In a discussion of caves and labyrinths in *The Faerie Queene* William Blissett says that Spenser represents such spaces more often than do Homer, Ovid, Ariosto, Tasso, and Virgil, although not with more emphasis in this last instance (299). The general, but not exclusive, pattern of these images that Blissett observes in Spenser's poem is a negative use in the first books, an equivoise in the middle books and a positive use in the later books (300-11). Blissett makes a number of perceptive comments, for instance when he points out that in the middle books Spenser often reminds the reader of Tasso's characters, incidents and tone and, throughout, of Ariosto's style of narrative (306).

Unfolded Tales demonstrates how one genre, romance, in its narrative and dramatic forms suggests the intricate relation between, and refraction of, classicism and popular culture. Narrative can be as innovative as theatre in the Renaissance's revival of antiquity, so that this volume provides an alternative view to Cohen's celebration of popular drama. In tragicomedy or dramatic romance we can observe a productive relation between narrative and drama. As Heilman suggests, the speeches in Greene's *The Card of Fancy* remind him of the *tirades* of French classical drama but do not take advantage of the stichomythia as does Racine, to whom we now turn.

In considering Nina Ekstein's *Dramatic Narrative: Racine's Récits* our emphasis shifts from romantic values to classical values. Ekstein's study concentrates on a subject dear to scholars in the French tradition but, until recently, strange to those in the English tradition — narrative in the drama. She focuses on what is one of the central issues of this special or topical issue. Although, she says, narrative occurs in theatre in many places and times, in seventeenth-century France theatrical narrative most attracts attention, enters into the discussions of dramatic theorists and comes to be strictly codified (1-2). Ekstein's definition is instructive and apt but is focused too much on French neo-classical drama:

Dramatic narrative, or to use the technical term, "récit," is traditionally understood to be a long, ornate set piece (like a monologue or tirade) presenting events which, because of the classical unities of time and place as well as considerations of *vraisemblance* and *bien-séance*, could not be represented onstage. Typically, in the classical theater, a play contains between one and five such "récits," generally in the first and last acts. (2)

We owe a debt to the French critical tradition that discusses dramatic narrative as something desirable and worthy as opposed to criticism of English literature that has, until recently, found narrative in drama to be a poor substitute or a technical embarrassment. The criticism in English of plays like *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* is just beginning to be sympathetic to the role of dramatic narrative. The French theoretical and narrative model of narrative is useful but not always translatable into the other dramatic traditions of the Renaissance.

Ekstein supplements the traditional French notion of the *récit* with narratological theory. She gives three criteria in her new definition of this term, which I abbreviate as follows: there must be at least two events expressed as inflected verbs in independent clauses; the events must form a chronological sequence marked explicitly by verb tense or adverbs or implicitly through context or meaning; the events must be connected and form an important whole (3). Aware of the complexity of the task of defining *récits*, Ekstein uses this working definition to widen its purview

beyond set pieces to short passages, so that narrative occurs more often in drama than was traditionally thought. She remarks on the large number of *récits* in Racine's theatre and is particularly interested in measuring the complexity by examining the shift between chronological events or temporal junctures (3-4). Even minimal *récits*, which involve only two chronological events, may be significant, and half of the dramatic narratives in Racine's theatre are of this type (4-5).

The role of narrative in theatre is ambivalent even in the Greek and French traditions and probably arises from the ancient distinction between diegesis and mimesis. Aristotle says that a tragedy should take the form of action and not narrative, but the messengers use narrative effectively in Greek tragedy. Racine uses *récits* extensively but in the "Première préface" to *Britannicus* says that narrative should only be used when action cannot be (5). Corneille is even more adamant in his theory against the use of *récits*, but, he, too, uses them in practice (5-6). Citing critics like Cesare Segre and Pierre Guiraud, Ekstein summarizes the traditional position on the relation between drama and narrative: whereas theatre involves presence and action, narrative involves absence, distance and described action and not action itself (6, see Segre and Guiraud). Ekstein rightly points out that the stage is a place of representation, and not presentation, and implies that language constitutes a primary form of action in the theatre. Both the language of drama and narrative are neither purely mimetic nor diageitic. Both place relative emphasis on the events or situation respectively, but usually both display simultaneously this dual function (6-7). One distinction that Ekstein maintains is that the narrator in fiction can be covert whereas on the stage he or she is visible and audible, so that the act of narrating on the stage is a dramatic act similar to any verbal act in the theatre (7). She relates *récits* in the theatre to what Genette calls metadiegetical *récits* — narratives that one character tells another within a larger narrative (8, see Genette). In the theatre there is no direct link between the implied author and implied audience as there is in narrative. Ekstein uses Segre's model of the stage axis, in which characters communicate onstage, and the spectator axis, in which the author communicates to the audience through the dramatic medium (8-9, Segre, see Elam).

The function of the *récit* in the French neo-classical theatre is to give the dramatist scope to represent the action in a situation where dramatic conventions — *vraisemblance*, the *bien-séances*, and the unities of time and place — limit what can be represented onstage (11). The function of many of Racine's *récits* are informative and relate secondary actions, actions that could have been represented onstage and events that classical unities and conventions keep from the stage. This last type serves what Ekstein calls a conventional-informative function, and about two-thirds of Racine's famous

récits comprise part of this group. Conventional-informative *récits* may be subdivided into two categories: expositions *récits* and off-stage action *récits* (including denouements) (12-13). The exposition *récit* recalls predramatic events. Racine attempts to integrate them into his tragedies, but their extended length, Ekstein suggests, implies that the playwright calls attention to their presence and thematizes the past, a central element in Racine's tragic universe (15). Each of Racine's plays contains *récits* reporting off-stage action, ranging from the report of a conversation in *Athalie* (5.1.1541-48) to the epic narrative of Mithridate's final battle (1558-1638) and of Hippolyte's death in *Phèdre* (5.6.1493-1592). The deaths of Racine's protagonists usually occur off-stage and are reported by secondary characters, so that, as Roland Barthes observes, the characters experience difficulty in crossing the boundaries of their tragic world from the inside to the outside (15-16, see Barthes, and Morrison's essay in this collection). In addition, the *récits* are also performative, for they can also be ornamental, emotive and designed to elicit a reaction from the addressee onstage (20-21).

In discussing narrative components, Ekstein examines structure and asserts that dramatic narrative resembles "natural" narrative because it occurs in the context of a dialogue (35). She then looks at chronology in terms of plot and fabula and says that in most of Racine's *récits* the order of presentation of events is the same as their "natural sequence" because the *récits* tend to be short and include few events, thereby restricting the possibilities for anachronous sequences, and because the addressee needs a certain straightforwardness to make sense of the events (39). The *récit* in the theatre always saves time and relies on summary and ellipsis, which Racine achieves with a variety of pace and rhythm (42-43). The use of the historic present and present in Racine's *récits* links the diegetic universe, which represents the past, with present onstage action (49-50). Ekstein turns to rhetorical devices, saying that the primary aims of rhetorical techniques are to embellish or camouflage the *récits*. In *Bérénice*, for instance, Titus tells a monologue-*récit* couched in questions (51). Unlike some of the inveterate storytellers in Molière and Corneille, most of Racine's characters are not compulsive tale-tellers, though most are narrators of *récits* (52). Major characters generally play a significant role in the events they recount, whereas secondary characters do not (54). How involved the narrator is in his or her narrative is connected with focalization, the perspective in narrative. Most *récits* present events from the point of view of one character (internal focalization) or describe external appearances or actions (external focalization) or do both (57). The narrative voice can be enriched and made more dramatic by incorporating the speech of others. Direct and indirect discourse widen the world onstage by "translating" the words of those off-stage (62). Ekstein also notes that the addressee frequently plays an active

dramatic role in the context of the *récits* and sometimes within the dramatic narratives themselves (often through interruption) (62-4, 67). She examines in some detail the structure of Hermione's *récit* to Pyrrhus in *Andromaque* (4.5.1357-68) (67).

When talking about themes and subjects, Ekstein reiterates the thematization of the *récits*, which, by virtue of their chronological nature, cannot help but represent the past to the present. Each of Racine's plays involves a progression from the predramatic to the intradramatic past (71). The narratives of Hermione and others treat the theme of love in *Andromaque*; the main subject in *Britannicus* is the conflict between Neron and Agrippine in the predramatic and intradramatic pasts; two of the three stories in *Bérénice* concentrate on love while the third focuses on the predramatic past; *Bajazet* presents, in narrative form, two love stories; the major theme of *Mithridate* is the past; the primary subject of *Iphigénie* is Agamemnon's need to placate the gods and to be given the winds to take his fleet to Troy; Oenone's responsibility and role is the only theme that often recurs in *Phèdre*; in *Esther* Racine explores two aspects of the past — God's power and miracles and the Jew's betrayal of God; the main narrative subject of *Athalie* is Joas' past; the most recurring subject in *La Thébaïde* and *Alexandre* is combat (77-84). The two most common themes in Racine's *récits* are the past and love (85). Another aspect of narrative is the story-making itself a subject. Story-telling can be a self-conscious activity in Racine's plays. For instance, the word *récit* occurs twenty-two times in Racine's dramatic universe (86).

Ekstein proceeds to examine the scope of Racine's *récits* — function, structure and thematics — through a detailed analysis of a number of examples (89). She seems to be breaking new ground when she discusses Agrippine's *récit* (the longest in Racine) at 4.2.1117-1222 of *Britannicus*, a dramatic narrative that has been relatively neglected (92-98). Nor does she shy away from the most famous of Racine's dramatic narratives: the "récit de Théramène" (111-21). All of Ekstein's examples so far derive from the tragedies, so that she decides to discuss at length the *récits* in Racine's comedy, *Les Plaideurs*, and does so with reference to the comedies by Molière, Corneille, and Rotrou (121-37). She concludes that *récits* occur less often in comedy than in tragedy because comedy does not usually need to narrate a predramatic past involving a complex legend or myth. Exposition *récits* are thus less numerous and intricate in comedy than in tragedy (123). Off-stage action *récits* are also more rare in comedy (125). The subject matter is often more restricted in comedy, for instance, the eight *récits* in *Les Plaideurs* discuss one subject — the judicial world (126). Repetition creates a narrative unity. In the chronology of Racine's comedy linear and temporal connections appear to be absent (127). The extreme shifts in pacing call

attention to the narrative in this play and the generous use of the historic present (unlike in tragedy) overdramatizes trivial subjects for comic effect (131-2). Although similar to the interaction between narrator and addressee in the tragedies, that relation in *Les Plaideurs* is exaggerated to focus attention on the addressee and the comic effect rather than on the content of the narrative. The present moment of narration is more important than the past of the narrated in comedy. The distortion of some aspect of narrative context creates comic effects (133-37).

In her Conclusion Ekstein considers the application of her model to drama of other periods. She reminds us of the attack on *récits* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in works such as Victor Hugo's "Préface" to *Cromwell*. In the twentieth century, however, *récits* play a prominent role in the theatre of Giraudoux, Anouilh, Sartre, Genet, Beckett, and Ionesco. Ekstein tests her assertion with an analysis of Beckett's *Fin de partie* (139-49). She adds three useful appendices to her study — a definition of narrative; an index of *récits* in Racine's theatre; and an index of the *récits* in comedies by Corneille, Rotrou and Molière — as well as an informative bibliography.

The questions of language, of the relation between society and drama, of genre (in this case romance), and of the connection between narrative and drama are as refractory in the Renaissance as they are now. One thread that I have tried to keep before us when discussing these important problems has been narrative. And narrative is a particularly social language when it appears on the stage. We can observe homologies and analogies everywhere, but it should be increasingly apparent that in this great age of linguistic ferment and social and political upheaval — the Renaissance — drama and narrative have at least as much in common as a hawk and a handsaw and represent motives more mixed than metaphors.

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Annotated Bibliography of Narrative Theory and Renaissance Drama

I. AN OPENING REMARK

"Il ne faut pas mêler les genres." In his essay "La loi du genre," Jacques Derrida will already have warned us in a narrative story intended only for a dramatic oral delivery, but ultimately written down, and moreover translated, that texts have a way of jumping genre boundaries. He argues that the strong imperative to generic purity is typical of a certain modern wish to control through taxonomy the modes of reading and writing literature. There are periods, however, which antedate even Derrida's examples, in which invalidly and unhelpfully rigid and limiting lines of quarantine are made to operate. And yet, such periods might, for example, still recognize Aristotle's insistence upon the primacy of narrative plot, or *muthos*, in the construction of a successful tragedy or occupy themselves with the extent to which narrative and syntagmatic structures constrain and provoke the reactions of a dramatic audience. An attempt to categorize too strictly in such periods what is included in, or excluded from, a particular genre seems especially problematic. It is thus not a surprising realization, although certainly one of great importance to contemporary literary theory, that the possibilities of a narratological methodology as an entrance into Renaissance dramatic texts are very great. Current deployments of narrative theory in the field of Renaissance studies are thus both appropriate and striking, particularly in the last ten years as the work of continental European narratologists joins that of the more accessible texts by scholars writing in English and French.

Properly and etymologically speaking, narratology or narrative theory, must necessarily suggest a theoretical analytic for tracing and describing particular narratives and narrative strategies quite generally. From the first appearance of *Communications* 8 in 1966, and at least throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s, these terms and their exemplifying critical texts largely limited themselves to the novelistic genre, particularly to the more provocative novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is thus in treatments of Flaubert, Joyce, and Dostoevskij, for example, that the initial groundworks are laid. To imply, however, that there has been an organic and