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THE DIALOGUE OF THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE: WORK OF ART OR INSTRUMENT OF INQUIRY?

The distinction between the "useful" and the "pleasant" was not invented for the Renaissance dialogue, nor was exhausted by it. In fact, it is a constant focus of literary scholarship, because it polarizes two principles which by definition are embodied in a literary work of art; and because from Classical times the history of literature itself, as well as the history of literary scholarship, often gains by being understood in terms of flux and reflux between these two poles. This is why a study of the Renaissance dialogue has value not only as a way of approaching a corpus of the period which is immediately felt to be both literary and yet always in some sense ideational, but also, as an exemplary study in terms of the relationship between literary discourse and discourse in general.

In French studies, it has long been taken for granted that major-literary authors are those who were thought by other major authors as being so; to wit the Pléiade school of poetry, the very definition of which varies as Ronsard himself changes the list of his distinguished disciples. In the 1930s and 1940s Sorbonne professors were still drawing their pictures of literary movements and schools straight from these appraisals of authors by their 16th century contemporaries. Thus Chamard actually expresses surprise when in the *Treize sonnets de l'honneste amour* du Bellay imitates Pontus de Tyard's *Erreurs amoureuses*. How can the "greater" imitate the "lesser" is a question which may well be asked as long as the historian does not view the period or movement he studies with renewed criteria.

Yet the question of renewed criteria is a paramount one for the progress of Renaissance studies inasmuch as old frameworks crumble under the pressure of growing amounts of information and also of a better understood interdisciplinarity. This study of the French Renaissance dialogue wishes to place itself in such a perspective and therefore to take as its corpus all French texts of the 16th century written in dialogue form.

Originally it had seemed to me that it was posible to classify French Renaissance dialogues, and Renaissance dialogues in general, into certain categories among which the purely didactic remained as a strangely stubborn residual core. At any rate the vastness of the corpus seemed to indicate that the dialogue form was a preferred form of exchange. In a way this was part of the extraordinary flowering of expository prose among the humanists and one could consider the dialogue as one

more open form of exposition, in which the dialogical form was used for no other reason than to enliven the presentation of a thought which in itself might well have been monological. Kristeller seems to endorse such an approach as he notes the "open" nature of the treatise and of the dialogue as practised by the Italian humanists. Both the treatise and the dialogue are instruments of exposition, adaptable because open-ended. For the same reason, Hugo Friedrich in his *Montaigne* associates the dialogue with the essay in their common opposition to system. Both authors help us to understand that the dialogue is a particular form of exposition; Friedrich's remarks seem to suggest, however, another factor which is worth pursuing, namely that the open-endedness of the form might be a token of genuine openness since *L'art de conférer* which is to him the linking reality between the dialogue and the essay is an art of confrontation. No one could suspect Montaigne of letting himself be permeated easily by the thought of another. "Conferénce" is a strategic and dialectical skill in which the protagonist is real by virtue of his resistance: but he is real, that is the point; and Montaigne so enjoys the prospect and the process of vanquishing his *vis-à-vis* that the subject of the debate is far less important to him than the confrontation itself: "Il me chaut peu de la matière, et me sont les opinions unes, et la victoire du sujet à peu près indifférente."[1] In the same way philosophy to Montaigne is a dialectical confrontation in which he has a tendency to enjoy the confrontation for its own sake. In fact, the entire *Apologie de Raymond Sebond* could be read as a *bataille rangée* of philosophical opinion arranged by Montaigne in order to view the mutual attrition of doctrines and systems and thus to undermine dogmaticism of any sort. But here precisely Friedrich's rapprochement between the dialogue and the essay has its limits: Montaigne after all, does not choose the dialogue form for the exposition of his thought. In the essay the "I" reigns supreme. The choice of the dialogue form, the gesture of the scriptor reaching for a genre in which varied points of view will be given if not equal at least partial representation, seems significant in itself, and the fact that so many authors reached for this form gives added weight to the phenomenon.

It is André Chastel who pinpoints the nature of the phenomenon, when he says:

> S'il est vrai que la véritable nouveauté soit l'importance attachée à l'opinion des autres, c'est-à-dire de la communication spirituelle et l'effort en ce sens, générateur d'une véritable vie civile par l'échange et la discussion libres, cette inclinaison devait conduire aux nouveaux genres, inspirés de l'antique, et que Pétrarque pratiquait déjà avec tant d'éclat...[2]

This would suggest that forms like the "discours", the epistle, and the dialogue, which in their respective ways give explicit roles to the other person, to the reality and opinions of the other, are not chosen haphazardly, but with intent; they consecrate the intervention of the other in the flow of ideas, and thrive on the Renaissance man's willingness to listen and to compose with what he has heard, as typified by Panurge's wanderings from authority to authority, with rythmic oscillation from the "yes" to the "no", in Rabelais' *Tiers Livre*. This is also congruent with Walter Ong's insistence on the dialogical nature of much Renaissance literature and philos-

[1] M. Montaigne, *Essais. Troisième livre*, éd. Garnier-Flammarion, 1969, p. 140.

[2] *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. XVI, p. 381.

ophy. For a long time, in his view, knowledge was discourse and conversation in a very real sense; science is but the cristallization of man's dialogue with man.[3] All literary arts, according to him, that is not only drama but Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry as well (and to this we could add fiction, which so obviously takes into account a listener who is present), pertain to the oral nature of communication, in other words, emody dialogue.

> The overtones of "real" or colloquial speech, that is, of *dialogue* between persons, which 16th and 17th century poetry specializes in, give it—says Ong—its characteristic excellence. Ramist rhetoric, on the other hand, is not a dialogue rhetoric at all, and Ramist dialectic has lost all sense of Socratic dialogue and even most sense of scholastic dispute. The Ramist arts of discourse are monologue arts.[4]

This illustrates exactly the importance and the limits of our subject. It is agreed by many scholars that Renaissance man, situated as he is at the meeting point of pagan antiquity and of Christianity (a Christianity which furthermore fragments itself under his very eyes and, so to say, in his own heart and mind, and in a universe which geographically and scientifically is expanding), needs and practises an epistemology of confrontation and quite often of reconciliation of viewpoints. While it could be said that consciously or not, all acquisition of knowledge proceeds in this manner, this process is certainly more overt at the time of the Renaissance and embodies itself in the literature of the period in ways which suggest dialogue. According to Ong, the Ramist influence has much to do with the subsequent cristallization of thought into systems. Now the dialogue form is not linked in any absolute way with thought as yet not systematized; nor could it be said that an author of dialogues is *ipso facto* unsystematic; what I do hope to show, however, is that the choice of the dialogue form suggests on the part of the author a preference for exchange.

Whether or not the exchange is real, that is, whether or not his thought in fact proceeds monologically or dialogically, will only appear in the structure of the dialogue itself. In other words, there is such a thing as hidden dialogue in forms not overtly dialogical; and obversely, certain dialogues will be shown to be false dialogues. Dialogues cannot be classified *a priori* as didactic or non-didactic according to their stated objectives; they show themselves to be didactic or non-didactic according to the nature of their functioning. For example, no text could be more didactic in intent than the *Dialogue de l'orthographe et prononciation française* by Peletier du Mans. Yet the author himself insists that by dint of his choice of the dialogue form, the subject matter will not only be more palatable, but will be steeped in the reality of exchange:

> Jȩ mȩ suis tousjours attandù dȩ ferȩ trouuer meilheur cȩ quȩ j'an diroeȩ, au moyen dȩ la dispostion e traditiue quȩ j'auoeȩ a obseruer, laquelȩ si jȩ nȩ suis dȩcù, pourra donner quelquȩ lumiere, gracȩ, e honneur au suget.[5]

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[3] *Ibid.*, vol. XVIII, p. 239.

[4] W. Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1958, p. 287.

[5] *Dialogue de l'Ortografe e prononciation Francoese*, departì an deus liures par Iacques Peletier du Mans, Marnef, Poitiers 1550, réimpr. Slatkine, p. 42.

Far from being a mere vehicle, the dialogue form adds to the subject, the signifier itself assumes signification and adds something to the signified.

> I'antans la forme de Dialogue: la ou je n'introdui point personnages feins ni obscurs, mes qui sont tous de connoessance chacun an son androet pour le plus suffisant, e pour homme de plus grãd esprit: aueq léquéz j'è longuemant e familieremant frequantè, e par diuerses foes disputè la presante matiere.[6]

There appears here one of the formal characteristics of many a Renaissance dialogue: the presence of historically identifiable persons, either directly named or suggested as belonging to the author's circle of acquaintances, if not as distinct individuals, at least as recognizable types. At any rate, their historicity can be ideally or actually reconstructed. The *Dialogues* of Guy de Brués bring into play Ronsard, Baïf and two members of their entourage, Aubert and Nicot; Pontus de Tyard has Maurice Scève intervene in the *Discours du temps, de l'an et de ses parties*. This is all part of a convention which Peletier du Mans endorses here: that of the transcription, whether real or idealized, of a conversation. Verisimilitude of the mimesis is a dominant factor in the persuasiveness of the dialogue. Being carried out by a group of eminent scholars adds to the dialogue the authority of eminence and also that of consensus.

> E puis bien porter témoignagȩ pour chacun d'eus, sans mȩ mõtrer suspect d'affection, quȩ parauanturȩ an Francȩ nȩ sȩ trouuȩront deus autres peres d'hõmȩs, qui sachȩt mieus quȩ c'ét dȩ notrȩ languȩ, ne qui l'ét mieux excercȩ, les uns d'eus par ecrit, e les autres par etudȩ, quȩ les quatrȩ quȩ j'è ici fȩt parler. Surquoe mȩ suis pensè quȩ si les propos quȩ j'è a rediger ont etè tenùz e dȩbatùz antrȩ téz personnages, jȩ nȩ doè point auoȩr dȩ hontȩ dȩ les ecrirȩ: Car l'Ecritturȩ n'à point dȩ preeminancȩ parsus la parollȩ, quãd les choses sont presupposȩs pareilhȩs. I'antans quand la parollȩ vient des hommȩs de jugȩmant e dȩ sauoer: e qui ét non seulȩmant dȩmȩnecȩ antrȩ eus, mes aussi premeditecȩ: laquelȩ etant telȩ, certeinȩmant mȩrite setrȩ misȩ par ecrit, ou bien n'à point merite du tout d'étrȩ dittȩ...[7]

De Bèze, J. Martin, Dauron and Sauvage are the participants mentioned by Peletier.

Erasmus had given the example of self-justification in regard to the use of colloquies as a form of writing; it is useful, in order to stress the importance of the dialogical phenomenon, to remember the great popularity of the *Colloquies* and at the same time the general awareness of their manysidedness. Craig Thompson writes that the colloquies were a book for all seasons; let us also say that they were a variety of things to a variety of men, particularly along the axes of the useful and of the pleasant. They were a Latin textbook along with the colloquies of Mathurin Cordier and the dialogues of Vives. That they were also a work of art sending out a variety of signals to sensitive readers was the source of many attacks upon Erasmus. He did, of course, reply that characters in a colloquy, like characters in a play, do not directly express the opinions of the author. It remains that in any given colloquy, though we easily recognize its moral orientation, no character is designated *a priori* as evil, and the opponent has much reality. Furthermore, Erasmus himself is highly con-

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[6] *L.c.*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 42–43.

scious of the increased reality of confrontation, when philosophy is literally brought down into the arena of socialized argument.

> Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven to earth; I have brought it even into games, informal conversation and drinking parties.

In saying this, Erasmus pays lip service to the criterion of usefulness. He purports to present the humorous and attractive aspect of the colloquies as sugar-coating. The colloquies are prolegomena to more serious study:

> One who instills a liking for something does much. And this little book, if taught to ingenious youth, will lead them to many more useful studies: to poetry, rhetoric, physics, ethics, and finally to matters of Christian piety. I have played the part of a fool in making myself eulogist of my own writings, but was forced to it, partly because of the villainy of slanderers, partly because of service to Christian youth, for whom we must do all we can.[8]

The *De utilitate colloquiorum* gives brief summaries of many of the colloquies, designed to show how well they conform to the criterion of usefulness.

> In the colloquy *In pursuit of benefices*, I reprove those who rush off to Rome to hunt for livings, frequently with serious loss of morals and money both; hence my remark that a priest should entertain himself with good authors rather than with a concubine,[9]

but *we* know that this is a half-hearted and transparently partial defense, because although the ultimate ethical purpose remains unquestionable, the mention of the priest's concubine is a nod of complicity to a certain readership. Again, when Erasmus says that in a *Soldier's Confession* he condemns the wicked deeds and ungodly confessions of soldiers so as to deter young men from similar behaviour, it is quite obvious that the young men may become more interested in the means of this pedagogical device than in its end, and that popularity of a quite profane nature may ensue, a tribute to the pleasant far more than to the useful. Yet it would be very wrong and completely alien to the nature of the work to claim that popularity was its sole ambition: rather, let us admit that in the author's intention, in the text itself and in full view of the ideological field surrounding the text, elements of portrayal for portrayal's sake are intermingled with an essentially ethical and pedagogical scheme.

This integration of artistic ambition and quest for truth has far more striking features in the case of the colloquies of Erasmus than that of many a French dialogue of love or philosophy; but it remains that both are congruent with Cassirer's far-reaching statement that:

> Whatever genuine content philosophy, logic, and dialectics may possess, they borrowed from "queen eloquence": "Omnia quae philosophia sibi vendicat nostra sunt," says the humanist and orator Antonio Panormita in Valla's dialogue *De voluptate*. And thus it has been said of humanism that its deepest root, and the common bond that joined all humanists, was neither individualism nor politics, neither philosophy nor common religious ideas, but simply artistic sensibility.[10]

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[8] Erasmus, *Colloquies*, ed. by C. Thompson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1965, p. 633.

[9] *L.c.*

[10] E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford 1963, p. 161.

This consideration appears to sanction a global approach to all dialogues as texts potentially touched by this artistic sensibility and susceptible therefore of being studied both as literary works of art and as instruments of inquiry, one feature being quite often predominant over the other, but both being in all probability present in every dialogue. This is tantamount to saying that in order to do justice to the history of the Renaissance dialogue it would be useful first of all to explore its poetics; and to let formal description precede rather than follow the setting forth of the historical developments.

However, before proceeding to such a characterization which might be called synchronic, let us briefly delimit the corpus of texts which are the object of this enquiry in diachronic terms familiar to all. First, French dialogues of the Renaissance situate themselves in a classical tradition. The very habit of staging contemporaries as participants in dialogues is one which the Renaissance writer inherits from Plato or Lucian. The importance of the classical model is so great that it would not be impossible to attempt a classification of all Renaissance French dialogues in terms of the classical writers whom they imitate: philosophical dialogues such as those of Pontus de Tyard situate themselves in the Platonic tradition; satirical dialogues such as Bonaventure Des Périers' *Cymbalum mundi* find a model in Lucian, and a variety of didactic dialogues can be said to belong in some manner or other to a Ciceronian model. The philosophical dialogue consitutes in this body of texts a dominant, partially related to the vogue of Platonism and of its transformations: for example, the Ficinian doctrine, transmitted by Synphorien Champier or Pontus de Tyard, and in the case of the latter, enriched also by contact with the *Dialoghi d'amore* of Leo the Jew which Pontus de Tyard translated prior to writing his own first dialogue, *Le solitaire premier*.

This all too brief summary does not allow us to take into account the complexity of the dialogue tradition in classical antiquity, nor the vogue of the dialogue in other languages than French: the neo-Latin, the Italian, the Spanish, the English, the German, not to mention some of the Slavic languages. But if we are to take the dialogues of Plato as a prototype of the genre, we are struck by the extent to which form is dictated in them by the progression of thought. One is also struck by the fact that as in the Renaissance dialogue so in the Platonic dialogue the text purports to be and presents itself as a formalization of real exchanges. Socrates' disputes with the young men of Athens supply Plato with precise memories which enliven the text. Even when Plato deviates from the teaching of Socrates, he thinks dialectically, in the form of a process of contradiction between Socrates and his companions. Platonic thought could hardly be separated from the dialogue form, remote as it is from dogmatic affirmation, and committed as it is to seeking truth amidst contradiction, in dramatic exchange.

It would be naive to consider Plato's dialogues or indeed any dialogues as devoid of a viewpoint. No character in a dialogue, and no part of the argumentation, is foreign to the author's own concern to communicate his view. However, when he distributes rôles to contradictors or to *personae* whose views introduce variations to his, be they ever so slight, he does so in an effort to forestall the reader's objections.

This, in my view, sanctions the reality of "the other" in the dialogue and the demise of purely dogmatic affirmation. A mental confrontation has taken place between the author and another, and the dialogue embodies this confrontation. Thus in connection with Plato's own dialogues, Victor Goldschmidt writes:

> Si le dialogue, par sa composition, se distingue du manuel, il en diffère avant tout par son but. Le manuel du type courant se propose de transmettre une somme de connaissances, d'instruire le lecteur; le dialogue se fixe un sujet d'étude, non "par intérêt pour le problème donné, mais pour rendre plus dialecticien sur tous les sujets", ou encore, pour rendre "plus inventif". Le dialogue veut former plutôt qu'informer... Loin d'être un exposé dogmatique, le dialogue est l'illustration vivante d'une méthode qui cherche et qui, souvent, se cherche. Sans sa composition, le dialogue s'articule selon la progression de cette méthode et en épouse la démarche. C'est par la méthode qu'il faut expliquer la composition du dialogue ou, plus précisément, sa structure philosophique.[11]

In summary, then, the structure of Platonic thought is bound up with the dialogical form; and the Renaissance thinkers applied this knowledge to their search for truth, guided, in many cases, by Plato's own dialectical method.

The second historical determination of the Renaissance dialogue is the convention according to which the dialogue really took place, in an identifiable spot, at a given time, with historically ascertainable participants. Hirzel (*Der Dialog*, 1895) felt that this feature of the dialogue corresponds to a need, on the part of Renaissance man, to justify nature and to think in conformity with it. Thus Alberti transcribes the conversations of Ficino, Castiglione emphasizes that the conversations in the *Cortegiano* are faithful records of those which took place during the illness of the Duke of Urbino, and Brués feels the need to entrust to Ronsard himself the fate of dogmaticism.

This preference for the historically real or likely can serve as one of the touchstones of the Renaissance dialogue, in contradiction to its more allegorical forms from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, as exemplified, for instance, in the *Consolatio philosophiae* of Boethius.

Marguerite de Navarre's *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* could be construed as allegorical insofar as the soul of the authoress' dead niece, Charlotte, is made to carry messages about the fate of the soul after death, and the need for redemption. Yet it is far more fruitful to treat it as an inner dialogue between two aspects of the authoress' self and therefore a gradual process of inner persuasion; the two persons are conflicting projections of the self but their confrontation is most real, and the struggle between bereavement and trust in the beyond has the density of the real. Furthermore Marguerite alludes to events, and particularly details of the child's death, which are quite realistic: for example, the fact that she died in pain. It is only gradually that Marguerite gives her assent to the primacy of the eternal; her spontaneous reaction is to hope for an encounter with the soul of the child in heaven:

> Et mettray peine bien fort de mériter
> Pour devant Dieu vous aller voir ma Dame.[12]

[11] V. Goldschmidt, *Les Dialogues de Platon*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1947, p. 2–3.

[12] Marguerite de Navarre, *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, publié par P. Jourda, Champion, Paris 1926. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

The anger of "l'âme de Mme Charlotte" reveals the emotional reality of Marguerite's earthly attachments; and also of the temptation to believe in personal merit as a means of salvation. Charlotte answers vehemently:

Si possible estoit de me irriter
Et que fusse possible de despit
Vostre ignorer m'y pourrait inciter
Ne connaissez-vous que avez mot dit?
Car en vous n'est mettre fin à la guerre
De vos péchés, si Dieu n'y met respit.

One of the last terrestrial links Marguerite is ready to abandon is love of human beings in their human condition:

N'oseray avoir affection
A mes amis, veu que tant il commande
Que l'un en l'autre ayons dilection?

Again the answer aims at a new step in the direction of detachment; human beings must be loved as Christians, inasmuch as they are Christians, through God; or again, through God, regardless whether they are personal friends or enemies. The grace of God is sufficient to fill the poet's heart:

On ne quiert rien, que estre bien en sa grace
On n'a plaisir que a sentir son amour;
Tout est pour luy, quoi que l'on die ou fasse.

On the whole it might be said, then that the second characteristic of the Renaissance dialogue—its naturalness—can have other sources than identification of characters with actually existing characters; for instance, as in this case, an inner confrontation between two attitudes of the author.

This is closely related to a third feature of the Renaissance dialogue, in French more particularly, and one to which we have already referred, namely, the socio-historical and the epistomological situation which makes dialogical exchange a privileged mode of the quest for truth. One might venture to say that the Renaissance man, in general, thinks dialogically. Though he is, at times, starkly aware of his individuality (as in the case of Luther) he must be for that very reason aware of the existence of others and of their viewpoints. Friends meet to exchange views and are in the vast majority of the dialogues genuinely eager to hear the views of others. This would not be congruent with a situation where a universal *philosophia perennis* dominated the entire intellectual scene; but such is precisely not the case: Kristeller, Cassirer, Weisinger and many others insist on the philosophical pluralism of the Renaissance. In this respect, Pontus de Tyard, at the beginning of the *Premier curieux*, is characteristically humble. Far from wishing to impose a doctrine of his own concerning the origins and nature of the Universe, he will review the opinions of others in the compilation style usual in his time, and considers himself as an intermediary.

N'y a secte de philosophie, qui n'ait estendue la plus belle partie de ses recherches entour les substances et causes mondaines. En la consideration desquelles m'estant quelquesfois delec-

> té... je n'ay voulu refuser à mes François en ce discours, partie du fruict que j'y avois fait pour en descouvrir le chemin à quelque autre studieux et diligent, ou pour m'occasionner par cy-après une autre edition, en telle polissure que je la pourray redresser avec l'aage, s'il m'est commodément allongé. Esperant qu'en ceste-cy la perspicacité des meilleurs jugemens me sera gracieuse, la doctrine des plus sçavans me sera favorable, et la curiosité des plus studieux me sçaura gré du labeur employé. Pource que d'autant qu'un subjet est eslevé et remply de difficulté grande d'autant legierement sont excusables ceux, desquels en le traitant, la volonté bien inclinée ne rencontre heureusement, et d'autant aussi plus louable ceux, qui en quelque partie, sinon en tout, auront exclarci la cognoissance de tant merveillable diversité.[13]

This receptiveness may be partly a function of the respect of Renaissance authors for ancient authors; the psychological conditioning of accepting the views of another is not untransferable to contemporaries. Another reason for openness is the courtly practice of polite conversation, exemplified not only on dialogue texts proper but in prose stories linked by dialogue such as the *Heptameron*. Finally it seems that authors of dialogues consciously refrain from identifying with one character or another; this may be partly for reasons of theological safety, as when Pontus de Tyard shares himself, so to say, between the boldness of his Curieux and the respectability of his Hieronime.

A fourth and last remark concerning a possible historical grouping of French dialogues is that the dialogue appears to fill a certain gap in the spectrum of literary genres, somewhere between the drama and the treatise; and that it fills the corresponding literary need. In certain cases it is really difficult to distinguish between dialogue and play. Pierre du Val's *Dialogue du contemnement de la mort* is part of his mystical drama and the dialogue takes place between strongly allegorical characters. There is no intellectual action. The only value is the exposition by the "Discret", the "Indiscret" and Love of the mystical doctrine of the Spirit, the incorporeal Word, which is the sole—and intangible—meeting-ground of the Church. The "Discret" is the mouthpiece of the author and expresses a doctrine of moral perfection on earth culminating in liberation by death and based on a doctrine of detached love which gives reality and meaning to the world. The piece can only end monologically:

> Qui veult sçavoir mon nom, par excellence
> Je suys Amour parfaict, pudicq et saint,
> Qui, de mon bras, sans quelque violence
> La cruaulté des elementz retrainct;
> C'est moy, c'est moy qui fiére guerre vaincq
> Et qui pour bien mectz la paix sur les champs.[14]

Theatre, then, has to be given a very extended meaning to apply to such a text. On the other hand, with Lucian and his Renaissance imitators, dialogue is akin to the theatre... starting with Lucian himself, who gloried in having revitalized the dialogue and made it theatrical.

> When I took charge of it, he says, it was viewed by the world as someone (an old man) whose interminable discussions had soured his temper and exhausted his vitality. His labours

[13] Pontus de Tyard, *Premier curieux*, [in:] *The Universe of Pontus de Tyard*, ed. by J. Lapp, Cornell University Press, 1950, p. 2—3.

[14] P. du Val, *Théâtre mystique*, ed. E. Picot, Damascène Morgand, Paris 1882, p. 131.

> entitled him to respect, but he lacked in pleasant qualities which might have made him popular. My first step was to teach him to evolve upon the ground common to all men, and the next step was to make him presentable by giving him a bath. Finally, I gave him as companion comedy, thus ensuring him the confidence of his listeners who thus far would rather have grasped in their hands a hedgehog than to venture into the thorny presence of the dialogue.

Another statement by Lucian is even more explicit about the disparity between the dialogue and comedy.

> For one thing, there was no great original connexion or friendship between Dialogue and Comedy; the former was a stay-at-home, spending his time in solitude, or at most taking a stroll with a few intimates, whereas Comedy put herself in the hands of Dionysus, haunted the theatre, frolicked in company, laughed and mocked and tripped it to the flute when she saw good; nay, she would mount her anapaests, as likely as not, and pelt the friends of Dialogue with nicknames—doctrinaires, airy metaphysicians, and the like. The thing she loved of all else was to chaff them and drench them in holiday impertinence, exhibit them treading on air and arguing with the clouds, or measuring the jump of a flea, as a type of their ethereal refinements. But Dialogue continued his deep speculations upon Nature and Virtue, till, as the musicians say, the interval between them was two full octaves, from the highest to the lowest note. This ill-assorted pair it is that we have dared to unite and harmonize—reluctant and ill-disposed for reconciliation.[15]

Let us note Lucian glories precisely in this *mésalliance*, which elsewhere he calls a forced and hybrid union. The dialogue as he conceives it is like "bones wrapped in fat, comic laughter in philosophic solemnity".[16] Among the classical writers he doubtlessly presents the boldest admixture of the "useful" and the "pleasant", whose appeal to the reader rests precisely on its boldness. Furthermore, it should be remembered that comedy itself was expected (whether in Classical times or during the Renaissance) to convey a moral lesson: between comedy and the treatise the difference in tone is more striking than the difference in intent. Lucian's *Dialogues* as well as those of his Renaissance followers (e.g., Erasmus or Bonaventure des Périers) are short pieces concentrating on the satire of one evil, and in which characterization is never developed beyond the usefulness of the character in the demonstration. We are therefore dealing with a corpus of texts (which for the purposes of this article we have limited to the French Renaissance) having in common the intention of inquiring into a complex problem to which at least two solutions, and sometimes a variety of solutions, can be given. Characters represent various solutions and oppose arguments to those solutions they do not themselves propose. In certain dialogues there are lesser characters whose function (as with the "confidents" in Racine's tragedies) elicit the thoughts of the major characters. Thus truth is born in collaboration.

In seeking to situate the dialogue correctly *vis-à-vis* the monological discourse or treatise on the one hand and theatre on the other, we must remember that titles can be misleading. The *Farce des Théologastres* (c. 1530) could, as a confrontation of ideas on faith and scripture between the Sorbonne and the Evangéliques, be regarded as an allegorical dialogue. On the other hand, the *Dialogue du Maheustre*

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[15] *The Double Indictment*, [in:] Lucian, *Works*, transl. by A.M. Harmer, vol. III, London 1913, p. 149.

[16] *L.c.*

et du Manant which, towards the end of the century, discusses the respective merits of the monarchists and of the Holy League, has theatrical features.

It could be said, in summary, that while the dialogue does not become objectified at the level of action, it nevertheless differs from straight expository prose by its interpersonal character. There is no action, yet something does happen. The function of action is replaced by that of argumentation. This is what must be further probed in order to answer our initial question: can the dialogue, in addition to its quest for truth, be a literary work of art? Its "literariness" as opposed to that of a monological discourse, can be said to rest upon the successful interaction of three elements: the author's message, the configuration and interplay of characters through whom the message is refracted and conveyed, and the reader's understanding of the *resultant* of this interplay. Together, this set of factors could be described as the "actantial" structure of the dialogue.

The study of this structure is one way of providing precise reasons for the assertion that certain Renaissance dialogues are works of art as well as instruments of inquiry. The filtering of the message through a more or less complex network of oppositions and transformations by diverse characters creates the time-space medium of the dialogue and gives the text as signifier a reality of its own which reinforces that of the signified. The *Cymbalum mundi* of Bonaventure Des Périers, for instance, shows that not only does the organization of the signifier assume signification, but that the signified itself is conveyed to the reader in a less unilinear way than would be the case in a treatise. For example, the reader, whatever his convictions, must face in the most concrete way the foolishness of the theologians in the second Dialogue. Nor can he confide in the absolute wisdom of Mercury; in fact, although Mercury and Trigabus are (to use Propp's terminology) "adjuvants" in regard to the message, while the three dogmaticists are "opposants", there is no indication that the former will provide a perfect, ready-made form of belief. In fact, the prankish characterization of both Mercury and Trigabus has brought upon Des Périers accusations of scandalous impiousness, quite in line with Lucian, his model. One element remains strangely intact: it is the philosopher's stone, master symbol of the second Dialogue. Among the "actants" of this dialogue it occupies a place similar to that of the Book in the first Dialogue, Love in the third and the Word in the fourth. Could it be, then, that no character, nor even Mercury, is in complete possession of the truth in its pristine entirety? The fragmentation of truth, so visible on the side of the "opposants" such as the three foolish theologians, is not even quite absent on the side of the "adjuvants." No medium but that of the dialogue could so actively and so briefly convey the human reality of broken truth.

Another set of elements upon which a study of the Renaissance dialogue as a literary phenomenon can be based resides in the type of argumentation used. In a previous article[17] I attempted a classification of French Renaissance dialogues according to the classical author followed by the French writer; basically the corpus

[17] E. Kushner, *Réflexions sur le dialogue en France au XVIe siècle*, „Revue des Sciences Humaines", Fasc. 148, octobre–decembre 1972.

appears to divide itself into philosophical dialogues in the Platonic tradition, satirical dialogues following Lucian, and a variety of "didactic" dialogues of which it could be said that their chief model was Cicero. In addition a category which might be called that of the dialogues of imagination grouped texts of poetry and prose whose form was in some manner responsive or antiphonic. The chief disadvantage of such a classification is its pragmatic character. On the one hand, it is anhistorical inasmuch as it separates from one another texts which, historically, group themselves according to situation but stem from different models. Thus Pontus de Tyard's *Solitaire premier* and Le Caron's *Ronsard ou la poésie* are united both by model and by circumstance. On the other hand, Bonaventure des Periers' *Cymbalum mundi* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* can be said in the light of recent reappraisals of Bonaventure des Périers' thought to be comparable in inspiration, though they follow widely divergent literary models. Another disadvantage of the classification by the model followed is the strange residual position of the "didactic" dialogue within it. For the will to teach is built into every dialogue and not only into those which give the *impression* to be didactically oriented. Thus the "literariness" of the dialogue is bound up, less with the didactic intent or the thematic content, than with its internal organization and with the tension and complexity of the process of give-and-take and of contradiction. Thus, it becomes possible to reunite all texts written in dialogue form as exteriorizations of the dialogical function,[18] in which the structure itself is significant. Classification can then rest upon the type of structure, and more particularly, the type of argumentation used.

In this respect, it could be said that two models are particularly predominant: the Platonic dialogue, in which the argumentation, through a process of contradiction, ends in consensus; and the polemical dialogue (often inspired by Lucian, and often satirical in tone) which works through clashes of the opponent's viewpoint. The two models are also differently structured with respect to the relationships of the discussants among themselves. The *Solitaire premier* of Pontus de Tyard provides an example of intricate harmony: the Solitaire and Pasithée are (like Philo and Sofia in the *Dialoghi d'amore* of Leo the Jew) teacher and disciple, lover and beloved; and it might also be surmised that together they symbolize the collaboration of poetry and music. The conversation as it develops unfolds a picture of the fundamental unity of all disciplines in the encyclopaedia of knowledge; underlying this is a vision of cosmic harmony.

On the other hand, satirical and polemical dialogues provide examples of opposition and disruption among the characters themselves and the arguments they oppose to one another. We have already mentioned the *Cymbalum mundi* in which the underlying vision is one of confusion and unhappiness for man in the universe; hence a correspondence between the three basic elements: argumentation, relationships among the characters, and world vision.

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[18] We are dealing, for purposes of establishment of the corpus, only with texts written entirely in dialogue form.

Thus, Renaissance dialogues provide us with many examples of formalized conversations which, because of their cohesive structure, can also be regarded as literary works of art.

DIALOG FRANCUSKIEGO RENESANSU: DZIEŁO SZTUKI CZY NARZĘDZIE INFORMACJI?

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą opisania, w miarę dokładnie, struktury francuskich dialogów z okresu renesansu. W tym celu omawia się tu przede wszystkim rolę, funkcję oraz ilościową objętość tekstów dialogowych, a wniosek, jaki stąd wypływa, brzmi: jeżeli prawdą jest, że formy literackie odpowiadają realiom społecznym (nie na powierzchownie ustalonych zasadach, ale w sposób złożony, który wymaga dokładnych studiów), to dialog istotnie pełni w renesansie funkcję odpowiadającą potrzebie podważenia narzuconych, zintegrowanych poglądów na życie oraz przedyskutowania alternatyw i wymiany idei. Nie wolno nam jednak mylić otwartości wątku dialogu z otwartością dyskusji: stopnia realnej otwartości, zwanego dzisiaj „dialogicznością" (*dialogicité*), nie da się wywieść — jeżeli nie chcemy popełnić anachronizmu — z analizy samych tekstów i z obserwacji, które tu można poczynić na temat obecności i roli „innego" (interlokutora) w wywodzie autora.

Sami autorzy znajdowali często w różnicy między przyjemnym a pożytecznym wystarczający powód do wprowadzenia dialogu — pierwiastek dramatyczny, sprawiający wrażenie naturalności, co przykuwa uwagę czytelnika. Ale czy tym samym jesteśmy już przekonani o *dialogicité* dialogu, czy też bierzemy te zabiegi za konwencje ukrywające monolog dyskursywny? By odpowiedzieć na te pytania, zbadano główne cechy dialogu z okresu renesansu:

1. ich klasyczne pierwowzory, szczególnie teksty Platona, Cycerona i Lukiana, z których każdy daje początek tradycji budowania dialogu;

2. warunek wiarygodności i sposoby jej osiągnięcia: dające się zidentyfikować miejsce spotkania, potwierdzeni przez historię lub przynajmniej prawdopodobni uczestnicy itd.;

3. wspólne poszukiwanie prawdy, różne od średniowiecznej dysputy (*disputatio*); autor — za pośrednictwem dwóch lub trzech postaci — bada rozłożenie prawdy na wiele alternatyw; tu raczej rezultat samego posunięcia, a nie pojedyncze stanowisko, stanowi przesłanie dla czytelnika;

4. funkcję dialogu w formach, które się mieszczą między dramatem a traktatem, przy czym dialog ów ma być złożonym modelem ekspozycji zaplanowanej jako międzyosobowa wymiana informacji. Tę właśnie funkcję, powołując się na koncepcję Greimasa, nazywamy „aktancjalną".

Zarówno struktura aktancjalna, jak i sposób argumentacji (który dla dialogu jest tym, czym akcja dla utworu narracyjnego) są bardzo odmiennie wykorzystane u Platona i Lukiana. *Solitaire premier* Pontusa de Tyard jest przykładem aktancjalnej harmonii w docieraniu do prawdy — w odróżnieniu od zunifikowanego, Platońskiego poglądu na świat. *Cymbalum mundi* Bonawentury Des Périers stanowi, przeciwnie, model satyryczny, w którym postacie dzielą się na „zwolenników" i „przeciwników" w czterech podstawowych symbolach poszukiwania zawartych w czterech dialogach.

Wynika z tego, że renesansowe dialogi można uznać za przedmiot poetyki i analizować je jako dyskurs literacki niezależnie od tego, czy przedtem uważano je za formy „literackie", „dydaktyczne" czy „filozoficzne". „Literackość" dialogu renesansowego wywodzi się z jego wewnętrznej organizacji, której zbadanie każe przywrócić jedność tego rodzaju tekstom.

Przełożył *Edward Szynal*