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THE REAPPRAISAL OF RACINE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY FRENCH CRITICISM:

THEMES AND PERSPECTIVES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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By
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PART I

THE REAPPRAISAL:

THEMES OF RACINE CRITICISM
INTRODUCTION

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ON RACINE

Michel Butor, in a lecture entitled "Creation and Criticism," recently developed the thesis that the writing of a new book is basically an attempt to reorganize a mass of books already existing. Inspiration and creation, he maintained, come from a critical stimulus. By thus giving antecedence to the critical impulse Butor arrives at the conclusion that it is feasible to consider the effect of a set of conditions upon situations having already occurred. In terms of literature we may therefore speak of the influence of the "Nouveau roman" on Balzac.

Butor's premise is a reversal of the traditional approach to literary criticism. In addition to conceiving the work of art in its chronological progression toward a critic, we now recognize a corollary operating in the opposite direction. A reciprocal relationship, as in a dialogue, exists between the critic and his subject. Instead of exercising a unilateral influence, art now enters into a bilateral relationship with criticism.

The possibilities of this idea are being actively explored by contemporary critics and we, for our part, will put it to a test on Racine. Our purpose is to view his tragedies from the vantage point

1Delivered at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, March 20, 1968.
of the twentieth century and to determine some of the transformations imposed upon him by our contemporaries. This study will attempt to compile a selective "état présent" of Racine, based on those expressions of the critical impulse which recognize his vitality and relevance to our time.

Our project can be conceived structurally as a scheme of three concentric spheres. The inner one contains the fundamental subject, Racine's tragedies. We focus upon aspects of this nucleus through the eyes of selected readers viewing it from various angles in the second sphere. From our own points of observation in the outer sphere we observe the activities between the other two.

This geometric representation can be expressed in more traditional terms, provided care is taken to exclude notions of a scale of values and of temporal sequence between the three divisions. We might say then, that we are involved in three phases of literary activity: the work of art, criticism of that work, and finally criticism of criticism. Let us stress that in neither scheme do the three components operate separately. The last two (criticism and criticism of criticism), are concurrent extensions of the first (the work of art): they increase its frame of reference and function simultaneously with it.

The reader to whom we direct our findings is the student of French literature who is about to re-read Racine. With him in mind, we have made the assumption that, rather than to offer meanings for various elements in the tragedies, we can be of greater service by examining a more fundamental problem. Our primary questions concern attitudes and
perspectives for embarking on the creative reading of Racine. We want to know how the tragedies have been assimilated into the conceptual framework of our century; we would like some indication of their capacity for generating in reader and spectator a subjective and personal reaction; we hope to learn in what manner Racine's immediacy has been felt by particular individuals. In short, what has Racine to offer the twentieth century, and how do we reciprocate?

These problems can indeed be treated in terms of artists other than Racine. For a number of reasons however, he is a particularly suitable subject. In the course of three centuries his art has been consistently read and performed. By and large it was received favorably and recognized as the symbol of classical perfection. Even during the era of Romanticism which spanned for Racine one of those intervals which works of genius inevitably spend in the limbo of relative oblivion, the plays were at least studied in classrooms and passed on as tradition. But in spite of the critical attention lavished on them they remain among the most enigmatic of masterpieces. Although Lanson considered it a closed subject Racinian drama continues to change its mask and to require revised conjectures from the reader.

But not from all readers. Our first chapter deals with the problem of Racine's accessibility. Is there something for everyone as Sainte-Beuve asserts or is the audience limited by factors inherent in the tragedies? Are there criteria of culture, sensitivity and even age for those desiring to experience them? Do preconceptions inherited as part of the "Racine myth" interfere with creative reading of his drama?
Transformations of Racine in modern works of fiction are analyzed in the second chapter. Two selections from the pages of Gide and Proust are examined in detail, to demonstrate, in practice, the bilateral critical relationship outlined above. The opening two chapters function as a unit, first making clear the necessity for reappraisal of Racine and then, by means of precedents, showing that certain kinds of reappraisal are indeed inevitable.

In the final three chapters of Part I we reduce the scope of our field of observation to focus in turn on three themes or subjects relevant to Racine: poetry, theater and psychology. Our perspective does not change. The general questions it leads us to ask also remain the same: How has the twentieth century perceived Racine in terms of the selected themes? In what manner do contemporary readers continue to adapt and transform these themes?

Poetry and theater have an obvious priority over other themes we might have included in our selection. Whatever else Racine's works are considered to be, or not to be, it is agreed that they are first and foremost dramatic poems (or poetic dramas). Our third choice, psychology, was selected because it is for us personally, a more familiar vehicle to the essence of the plays than other ideologically oriented themes. The preference of others for ontology, sociology, biography, or other alternatives is easily justified. Any or all of them could have performed the same function in dealing with our central questions. The wish to avoid redundancy, in terms of our study
of perspectives, is one of the factors leading to the change in orientation of Part II.

Let us note that by utilizing the term "theme" we are doing so from a position in the outer spheres of the model introduced above. As critics of criticism we are observing how critics have isolated certain qualities of the plays. From the point of view of Racine one cannot speak of these topics as "themes" since the author does not write about poetry, or psychology, or Jansenism. In terms of the primary frame of reference we are dealing with inseparable elements within the synthetic unit we call the work of art (or literature). Disassembly and analysis take place in the secondary and tertiary spheres of criticism.

These structural considerations were another factor in the decision to discontinue our study along thematic lines. The matter of critical attitudes and perspectives, we reasoned, might be more profitably pursued in a modified direction. In Part II we analyze three widely discussed works of recent Racine criticism. By plotting them around a synthetic axis we are able to observe how they represent successive and complementary phases of a cycle of critical activity.

A word about the critics we question will further clarify our

3See "Introduction," Part II.
objectives. The sources are primarily men of letters conforming to a set of flexible criteria. They bring Racine into their own conceptual sphere relatively unencumbered by the myths and dogma he has accumulated in his historical transition. Their testimony verifies the fact that criticism is essentially a personal dialogue between a reader and a subject work. For them, authentic study of Racine must begin and end, not with secondary sources, but with Racine.

The critical statements quoted in Part I are selected largely from the pages of well-known writers. Much of what they say appears as relatively informal criticism. The majority are not professional critics because their major literary activities are devoted to poetry, drama, and the novel, and not to the genre of criticism. They serve our purposes in that they offer alternative views to those of formal criticism. Rather than detailed, painstaking exegeses we are given relatively spontaneous and impressionistic reactions. Instead of analysis and explication we find generalizations. Where formal criticism offers us objective explanations, the responses we have gleaned present subjective conclusions. They do not usually tell us what meanings to look for in specific plays or characters but suggest critical attitudes with which to begin reading Racine again.

No significant criteria have been found to distinguish so-called "professional critics" from "creative critics." Perhaps no need exists for these categories.4 Since Baudelaire, it has been

widely recognized that creativity and criticism, while ordinarily not as evenly balanced as in the author of Les Fleurs du mal and the Salons, are not only compatible but complementary and inseparable. That premise is reiterated by Butor⁵ and we apply it in this dissertation. A breakdown of our source material should serve as an indication:


2. Works of fiction showing direct assimilation of Racinian elements. Examples from Gide and Proust. (Ch. II).

3. Written criticism by actors and directors such as Barrault, Vilar, and others who have produced a considerable volume of commentary revealing points of view looking outward from the stage.⁶ (Ch. IV).

4. Books and articles of formal, extensive criticism. (Ch. V and Part II).

⁵ See p. 2.

⁶ This point of view will not be represented in just proportion in this study. Staged productions are simply not available to us as research material. Our observations are therefore primarily from the reader's perspective. We consider this realistic and defensible since Racine, it seems to us, is staged more often in the mind's eye of the reader than at the theater.
Up to that point in Chapter V where we concentrate on Sartre and on Mauron,\footnote{Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Etre et le Néant, Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique, (10th ed., Paris: Gallimard, 1943).} category $h$ is relegated to a secondary role. (In Part II we deal with it almost exclusively.) This accounts for the fact that Montherlant and Malraux are cited more frequently than Giraudoux and Mauriac who have authored major critical works on Racine. The choice is prompted by the consideration that a great deal of research and scholarship has already been, and continues to be, devoted to the formal criticism. In contrast, the type of commentary we refer to in items 1 to 3 has been almost totally ignored as a body of criticism. By stressing it here we hope to correct, in some measure, what we consider an imbalance in the prevalent views. Moreover, our preference is dictated by a primary goal which is to maintain Racine rather than the critics at the focal point.

That criterion has usually not had priority in previous studies whose titles point to objectives similar to those pursued here. We may list examples in two categories. On the one hand, we find extensive histories of Racine criticism which trace chronologically the fortunes of his biography and works. The second category, comprised \footnote{Charles Mauron, L'Inconscient dans l'oeuvre et la vie de Racine, (Publications des Annales de la Faculté des Lettres Aix-en-Provence, Nouvelle Série, No. 16; Gap: Editions Ophrys, 1957).}
of article^9 has the advantage of being more recent. The shorter works are somewhat more successful in concentrating attention on Racine rather than on schools of criticism, idiosyncrasies of critics, and polemic free-for-alls. Although they have on occasion been useful in pointing out paths for us to follow, they are limited in size and scope and permit only summary treatment of the subject.

Racine devant la critique française, 1839-1939, is the most recent and thorough of the histories. As such it is obliged to progress chronologically, with extensive recording of critical differences of opinion, analyzed, foot-noted, and cross-referenced. In a century of predominantly negative attitudes toward Racine this procedure documents the repetitiousness of history. In addition to our different critical orientation there is the matter of the time period under consideration. Eustis devotes only some forty pages to the years 1900-1939 and those are almost exclusively concerned with formal criticism.

One further distinction between the histories mentioned and our subject exemplifies the obsolescence of some traditional devices for classifying criticism. Twenty years ago, Eustis was able to limit his study to "la critique française." The qualification "French Criti-

^9Raymond Picard, "Racine Among Us," Yale French Studies, (No. 5 1950).


cism" in our title can no longer be defined in terms of language, education, and publication, as determined by national boundaries. Jasin­ski, born and educated abroad has taught at Harvard University as well as at the Sorbonne. Goldmann was born in Budapest, resided and studied in a number of European countries and lectures frequently in the United States, as do Barthes and Picard. Butor writes novels about America and lectures here and abroad in French and English. Many American scholars of French literature study, teach and publish in Europe. These people are not quite citizens of the world, unaffected by their national origin or educational experience. They are somehow, French. But being French, in terms of our subject, has become a cer­tain "je ne sais quoi," and that is not a reliable category for classi­fication. "French" criticism, as we use the expression in the title, refers to a body of writings about works whose ideas and techniques were formed within the national context of France.

Due to the nature of their historical and geographic orienta­tion, Eustis and the other scholars mentioned above cannot be cited among our sources. Rather, they are alternatives to the approaches and methods guiding us in this undertaking. The information, and more important, the attitudes we wish to convey, have been imparted to us by critics and teachers who, like Butor, insist on influencing Racine. The information we have utilized is documented throughout the text; the attitudes, for which explicit credit can only be accorded here, have been assimilated and appear, as they must, as our own.
CHAPTER I

RESHAPERS OF THE RACINE MYTH

The reexamination of Racine, by the very abundance and enthusiasm of what has come out of it, suggests that the literary merit of the tragedies is not the issue under debate. Interest in the topic would have dwindled long ago if the attitude of Stendahl and his contemporaries had prevailed. During the Romantic period it was widely believed that Racine, like Louis XIV, had little to offer posterity other than an historical example of qualified greatness. What is being put to the test are the previous interpretations of the tragedies and of their relationship to the author's life and environment. Moreover, the more radical scepticism is now directed at the traditionally accepted functions of Racine and, by extension, of literature. Besides seeking revised or new exegeses, answers are sought as to the role of this dramatist in school and national tradition. Does his art lend itself to the teaching of moral lessons? Is his style a model of clarity to be imitated? Does the most venerated figure of French classicism somehow represent the glory of France? The qualified negative answers which now come to mind have not always been so obvious, particularly when Racine was handed down to students rather
than read and discovered by them. The fundamental but necessary ques-
tions give rise to still another which casts doubt on the universal
accessibility of the dramatist. Was Sainte-Beuve correct when he es-
timated in *Port-Royal*, that Racine's perfection could be sensed at all
levels of comprehension; that in contrast to Shakespeare and Molière,
who must be understood completely to be appreciated, his art is graded
in such a way and is so accessible, "qu'il y en a pour chacun." Most
critics take issue with Sainte-Beuve.

Racine's plays have always been directed to an aristocracy. In
his own time the nobles and bourgeois who made up the audience recog-
nized in the proceedings on stage a portrayal of the upper strata of
the social hierarchy, often of particular individuals and situations.
More than likely, the spectator was a member of the aristocracy or in
a position to aspire to association with the elite class by whom stand-
ards were determined.

During the eighteenth century decline of classical ideals Ra-
cine was nostalgically placed upon a pedestal as the cultural repre-
sentative of the age of Louis XIV. After the Revolution, his adher-
ents engaged in a losing battle to salvage something from the de-
mocratizing path of culture which was to lead to the confusion of
superficial realism with reality and truth.

Those acclaiming Racine in the twentieth century are again an
aristocracy, differing from their predecessors in that their superior-
ity tends to be independent of political and social prestige. This is
an intellectual, cultivated elite consisting of discriminating readers. Their originality and individualism leads them in various directions but solidarity is manifest in the vigorous belligerence with which they attack the tired, superannuated attempts by teachers and politicians to transmit an academic and nationalized Racine as the symbol of classical grandeur.

It would be difficult to ascertain to what degree and in what manner the scholastic canonization and the nationalization of Racine have affected his popularity. On the one hand, some exposure to Racine is all but unavoidable in the French curriculum. On the other, since there seems to be general agreement with Maulnier's assertion that Racine can be accessible to but a small group, the effects of this forced exposure are often harmful to meaningful understanding.

The adolescent student is too immature to appreciate either the psychological complexities or the dramatic and poetic refinements. His reaction is usually boredom, hostility, tacit acceptance or, as demonstrated by a Montherlant character, false enthusiasm. Vaguely aware of his mediocrity, Auligny compensates with a show of exaltation over Racine. His appreciation, motivated by boredom and a desire to impress is in no way genuine. He proclaims as his favorite plays Bérénice, which bores him least, and Athalie, because it is con-

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sidered the masterpiece. His father, after retirement, had worked out a similar evaluation in his old school-edition of La Fontaine. Others had done it with Pascal.

Montherlant contends that a boy of fifteen is not prepared for the works of Racine: "Tout lui échappe, y compris les sentiments qu'elles expriment, dont il n'a pas l'expérience, l'amour excepté." And even love is so portrayed that he cannot identify with it.

During his own adolescence the iconoclasm that was later to be refined but not outgrown moved Montherlant to assert that Théodore de Banville was a better poet than Racine. By 1959 he had changed this rating and without attempting to classify Banville, had elevated Racine to the rank of best dramatist of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The role of the teacher and the educational system responsible for the premature introduction to Racine is therefore not disdained by Montherlant. Although only one student in a thousand will ever progress beyond the clichés of the schoolroom, the academic insistence on this writer must continue so that the one exception, having first preferred Banville, may in more mature years recognize the merits of Racine.

This exceptional student, the one in every thousand, joins the Racine elite, not as precocious youths once paid homage to Baudelaire,

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3 Montherlant adds: "Mais Pascal peut résister même à l'admiration des sots."


5 Ibid.
Rimbaud or Apollinaire, for that vengeful pleasure which is "épater les bourgeois." His commitment to a superior art form is much more likely to be motivated by a desire to separate himself from middle-class tastes and interests. The emergence of this attitude follows closely the era of Mallarmé and the Symbolists who, while embracing varying trends and individual efforts, share in the common protest against positivistic and materialistic society. The avowed aim of shrouding art, specifically poetry, in order to create a hermetic medium accessible only to sensitive men of culture, was but one early manifestation of the movement to put a barrier between the intellectually select and the masses. A distinction had to be made between art and entertainment.

A note of superiority, not without snobbishness, may thus be seen in the statements of contemporary Racine enthusiasts. The seventeenth century dramatist and the few attuned to his art are nostalgically represented as sparsely scattered beacons in an increasingly decadent society of the masses: "Dans un déclin aussi évident de la civilisation, que celui qui marque notre époque, dans une crue aussi évidente de la grossièreté, il est inévitable que Racine soit submergé peu ou prou. Mais il y a des submersions qui sont des honneurs."  

In the impelling introduction to his celebrated Racine, Thierry Maulnier goes into great detail to analyze why the French classicist is

not among the handful of supreme artists chosen by the intellectual
guides of the crowd. He does not command the awe with which Dante,
Shakespeare, Cervantes and Goethe are venerated in the adjacent coun-
tries. Maulnier however, is not anxious to acquire popular acclaim
for Racine as one of the heroes of universal literature. On the con-
trary, he cherishes his exclusiveness for himself and for kindred dis-
criminating minds. The art of Racine is of the rarest and most secret
domains of refuge and refusal ("de refuge et de refus"). Only a very
limited audience can have access to the profoundly human elements of
the tragedies:

Il faut une culture forte et complexe, l'instinct
de la qualité, la haine de toute éloquence.
Racine ne peut avoir l'audience de ceux qui
aliment trouver dans une œuvre d'art des prises
bien visibles pour l'enthousiasme. Il ne re-
cherche aucun pittoresque, il ne supporte aucune
enflure, il ne défend aucune thèse. De la part
de l'écrivain, l'homme moyen n'entend que les
appels et les avances, racolages ou coquetterie.
Or, Racine ne se soucie ni de heurter ni de
séduire. Il ne se soucie que de plaire par un
moyen qui échappe aisément au public, lorsqu'un
éclairement ingénieux ou l'obscurité, ne le lui
signalent pas: la qualité.

The effect of depth requires no philosophy on the part of the spec-
tator, realism is achieved without color, violence without physical
movement. The purity and starkness of Racine's theater are such that
its virtues are scarcely felt by a public accustomed to less subtle
enticements.

7Maulnier, Racine, p. 10.
8Ibid.
9Ibid., pp. 19-20.
The members of the Racine elite usually demonstrate more restraint than the enthusiastic Maulnier. Besides differences of opinion on matters of quality, disagreement exists as to which aspects of the drama are worthy of enduring. Montherlant's analytic approach has resulted in a refusal or inability to form a new synthesis and to acknowledge the unity of the plays. He likens the reading of Racine's poetry to a gastronomic treasure hunt:

On me dira que vingt-sept vers, dans dix ou douze pièces, c'est peu. Hélas! Mais Racine est ainsi: c'est une langouste dont il faut enlever péniblement et interminablement la carapace, qui est de taille, pour arriver ici et là à un petit brin de chair exquise.  

André Malraux, in agreement with Montherlant on this method of critical dissection adds:

Je suis d'accord sans réserves avec Montherlant, lorsqu'il parle symboliquement - de vingt-sept vers. Racine n'est pas moins anthologique que Vigny. Mais à maints égards, jusqu'à Mallarmé, toute grande poésie traditionnelle a été anthologique. Et la passion de Gide pour Racine a été renforcée par l'anthologie qu'il avait entreprise.

François Mauriac has the last word in that particular "Querelle de Racine" and reassembles into a unified context the elements isolated by anthologizing:

A cette boutade, par exemple, qu'il se trouve vingt-sept beaux vers dans Racine, et pas un de plus, je serais tenté de répondre qu'il ne se

10 Montherlant, "Racine langouste," p. 3.
trouve pas de beaux vers dans Racine, je veux dire: aucun qui puisse être détaché du contexte. Il laisse à d'autres les vers "frappés comme une médaille." Au jeu des vingt-sept beaux vers de Racine, la plupart des gens ne sauraient rien citer et nous qui aimons Racine, nous ne choisisrons pas les mêmes. "La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë" me laisse froid, et que répondre à qui m'objecterait que le "J'aimais, Seigneur, j'aimais, je voulais être aimée" de Bérénice, qui m'est si cher, est une platitude?12

The secret of Racine's poetry is that it is "la continuité rigoureuse d'une passion." Its music is composed of a small number of very ordinary words expressed simply and with clarity.

The new wave of Racine studies is unanimous in reacting against the myth which has evolved over the years. Much of the writing is thus understandably devoted to establishing a clean slate before erecting the framework for new exegeses. Those responsible for the traditional Racine are not solely pedantic critics and teachers but include the men of talent and good taste of the intervening centuries.

There is nothing perfunctory in Maulnier's remark that, "nous commençons seulement d'ouvrir les yeux sur une œuvre que nous avons toujours connue."13

In retrospect it appears that the element of truth upon which the Racine myth was founded became confused and obscured by an excessive accumulation of over-simplified dogma. Major misconceptions have resulted from the sheer quantity of Corneille-Racine "parallèles"  


13Maulnier, Racine, p. 12.

and from the tendency to telescope years in the distant past. By overlooking a whole generation, that of Quinault and Thomas Corneille, and by failing to consider the evolution in the world view of a society during three decades, Racine appeared to be the direct successor of Corneille. Thus, according to the myth, the introduction of inexorable Fate makes of Phèdre the culmination of the brilliant artistic current introduced by Le Cid and Horace. Racine's adeptness at not violating rules of versification and dramaturgy is another tenuous category of the myth. The misconception in this case results from indiscriminately placing a seventeenth century phenomenon into a twentieth century context. Such aspects of the tradition found general acceptance and continued to mislead as long as the manual of criticism remained the tempting substitute for primary sources. Therefore, the logical first step for those taking a new look at Racine was an effort to de-mythologize. It was necessary to persuade that the mass of critical and explanatory data were not only incomplete but in large measure irrelevant and wrong. The time had come for a reappraisal.

Maulnier's introduction begins typically: "Il ne convient pas de faire de Racine un symbole; le plus humain des poètes mérite mieux." 15 Indeed, while he cannot be equaled as a success of French culture, the context and the very nature of his art have been distorted by the functions assigned to it. The more quoted and quotable of Racine's verses have not rarely been utilized for their potential to

15 Maulnier, Racine, p. 9.
inspire patriotism or a code of morality. But the characters of the plays portray private, intimate situations which cannot be simply superimposed on popular realms of experience:

Généreux ou durs, perfides ou tendres, ses héros ne le sont que pour eux-mêmes et contre eux-mêmes, pour leur maîtresse ou contre leur maîtresse, pour leur ennemi ou contre leur ennemi, ils ne le sont pas pour des sujets, des concitoyens ou l'humanité future. Ils se permettent de mourir autrement qu'au service d'un progrès scientifique ou d'une classe opprimée. Ils ont des haines et des amours; ils n'ont pas de semblables.16

Nor can inferences of national grandeur be made from the portrayals of the dramatic characters:

Il n'est pas possible de draper ces personnages d'un costume national, de leur donner la chevelure, ou la carrure, ou le profil d'un peuple ou d'une race, de mettre dans leurs mains des drapeaux ou des emblèmes. Leurs lèvres sont faites pour le mensonge et l'amour, pour l'insulte et pour la plainte, non pour la harangue et la prédication.17

Montherlant's condemnation of uncritical acceptance of a tradition is more blunt and indignant. Although he accuses Maulnier of excessive enthusiasm,18 of drawing from a work inferences which are there, as well as some which are not, and should be, he also is basically proclaiming the need for a fresh evaluation of the plays:

La plupart des esprits s'asservissent d'eux-mêmes aux mots d'ordre donnés par l'opinion officielle ou par le snobisme, soit parce qu'ils n'ont pas de sens propre, soit parce que, en ayant, ils le

renient par lâcheté. Cette attitude fait la litière de tout totalitarisme. Le troupeau est là, agenouillé, attendant que les consignes lui soient données, pour penser comme il faut.  

Montherlant is here supporting a statement attributed to Malraux asserting that "les Français aiment Racine, parce qu'ils ont posé une fois pour toutes que Racine incarnait la France."  

The frequent phenomenon of an apparent attack on Racine, in reality directed at would-be Racinians is demonstrated in Malraux's answer to Montherlant. He is in general agreement but implies that the myth cannot simply be brushed aside as an entirely negative element:

... certains grands écrivains ne sont pas admis seulement pour leurs œuvres, mais pour une valeur dont les œuvres deviennent le symbole, et avec laquelle elles se confondent. Comme Rimbaud devient la révolte, non un révolté, Racine devient le classicisme, non un classique français.

Whereas all great names in the history of literature are susceptible to having their writings summarized, abbreviated, anthologized, and thus, distorted, Racine is unique among his contemporaries insofar as the actual works and the meanings which have been attributed to them have been fused:

Il "fait symbole?". Mais de quoi? De la perfection? Tantôt il semble que ce soit celle des vers, tantôt celle des pièces (ce que Montherlant appelle la mécanique). Tantôt, celle du style, au sens que l'on donne à ce mot en architecture (le peu de

19 Montherlant, "Racine langouste," p. 4.
20 Ibid., p. 3.
matière, l'ordre, etc.). Fort bien. Mais tout cela est né avec le temps. Nul, pas même Boileau, n'a admiré dans Racine vivant ces vertus symboliques. Cela va de soi? Mais on a admiré dans Corneille ce que nous y admirons! Louis XIV ce qu'il attendait de Versailles! Il est faux que Racine soit le symbole unique et nécessaire du classicisme Français...22

The commentaries cited here suggest that the first step in the reappraisal of Racine should be the separation of the writer from the myth. The tragedies are evolving phenomena which relinquish and accumulate attributes in the progression from one era to another. The study of these changes explains the so-called Racine myth and falls within the realm of the history of literature.

Another aspect of the tragedies' transformations will be the subject of our next chapter. Rather than to conceive of them as products of an evolution we will see them treated as phenomena transcending time and space, unaltered by intervening stages of transition.

\[22\text{Ibid., p. 28.}\]
CHAPTER II

TRANSFORMATIONS OF RACINE: REINVENTION AND TRANSLATION

Whatever may be said to support the theory of Racine's limited accessibility, critical and original reading is not the exclusive privilege of experts. While those engaged in pursuits of scholarship bring their erudition to bear on specific aspects of a subject, contact with an author is for most readers a more personal experience. More often than not, reading is an activity of leisure. While precision and detailed analysis are seldom the objectives on such occasions, it would be wrong to assume that the critical stimulus is therefore less active than during the sustained pursuit of a specific literary problem. The particular attributes of the less formal type of criticism are a great variety of stimuli and the free association of impressions.

Thoughts about literature usually occur out of context. A landscape, an incident, a mere word read long ago may be conjured up by a series of reflections or random events. Suddenly they acquire meaning or become meaningful for the first time. The literary stimulus prods a dormant memory of something vaguely analogous and causes it to emerge from the subconscious. For a Proust the process continues...
until the "madeleine" or another vehicle, has also become the symbol of an entire existence. The capacity to perceive such an experience in its entirety is a gift bestowed on few individuals, and it is not this type of all-inclusive recollection we are concerned with here. In most cases, remembrance occurs sporadically, in bits and pieces, and is thought of the fleeting, largely unrecorded variety. As such, it does not lend itself to scholarly literary criticism but examples are apt to be found in other modes of writing.

An illustration of the complex, meandering process of memory may be gleaned from Gide's La Porte étroite. Alissa, the heroine, describes a revelation: "Ce mot de l'Écriture que je répétais sans trop le comprendre s'est éclairé soudain pour moi: 'Malheur à l'homme qui met sa confiance dans l'homme.'"¹

Alissa had read these words on a Christmas picture which she had been keeping in her Bible since Jérôme had sent it to her, long ago, when he was eleven years old. Always under the impression that it was "une paraphrase de Corneille" she now discovers that it is part of the "IVe Cantique spirituel" of Racine which she quotes in its entirety in a letter.

The incident is of no great consequence to the story and is only one of the many strokes by which Gide develops the psychological evolution of his characters. As we utilize it here it is no more ap-

pllicable to Racine than to another. We mention it as an example of the most common manner of coming into possession of a literary inheritance.

In Alissa's case, three periods of dormant, subconscious maturation precede the climactic moments at which the experience comes to the surface of the psyche. The first, an initial exposure to the classics, probably in school, at which time the lines are linked to the Gospel, encountered still earlier in her childhood. There follows Jérome's quotation which gives them personal significance and assimilates the literary experience to the life situation. Finally, the discovery of the lines in their literary context achieves the synthesis of the real and the fictional.

The ingenuousness of Alissa's literary experience serves as an example of criticism in its purest form. Her thoughts, free from philosophical complexities and unaided by the erudition of others, are virtually lifted from the printed page and absorbed in all their simplicity into the stream of life. The temporal interval between Racine's composition of the statement and Alissa's contact with it plays no role whatever. The error of attributing it to Corneille seems to be Gide's way of emphasizing that art forms can have an existence independent of their historical context. They may be separated from their past and function in an eternal present where they retain the capacity of perpetual becoming. Alissa is thus taking possession of the statement and reinventing its meaning and its function to conform to her own, immediate situation.

In order to clarify and to distinguish these temporal concepts
from the chronologically oriented view of literature, let us consider what Alissa is not doing. She does not relate the aphorism to an historical or biographical context. An attempt is made but it is incorrect and inconsequential. The effort to recall its origin within her own and Jérôme's life is more successful, but again inconsequential. All that matters, really, is that it has been experienced by her at some time, in some way. Alissa does therefore not define the proverb in terms of time. Theological and ontological implications are not relevant to the situation. Rather than to think of her reading as a proverbial half-truth "Malheur à l'homme qui met sa confiance dans l'homme," we might say that the statement is happening to her as a revelation of a total reality.

The example from Gide illustrates a manner of adapting a literary work into the course of daily life. Let us now examine how Proust proceeds toward this type of total assimilation.

On occasion Proust's "recherche du temps perdu" is a conventional, somewhat nostalgic excursion into the past in search for beauty which the passage of time has augmented. His pleasure in seeing fifteenth century remnants of Beaune are similar to

ce bonheur à errer au milieu d'une tragédie de Racine ou d'un volume de Saint-Simon. Car ils contiennent toutes les belles formes du langage aboli, qui gardent le souvenir d'usages ou de façons de sentir qui n'existent plus, traces persistantes du passé à quoi rien du présent ne ressemble et dont le temps, en passant sur elles, a pu seul embellir encore la couleur.²

Chronology is here kept intact. In Jean Santeuil, however, the past is no longer considered a series of fixed points. Literary characters now move freely in time and space.

In A la recherche du temps perdu Racine's Phèdre is taken out of her temporal and spatial environment into the context of Proust's immediate experience. The literary creation is thus available for assimilation to subjectively analogous moments at subsequent points in time.

The phenomenon is exemplified in the pages of "Albertine disparue" when, after writing Albertine a letter informing her that his relationship with her is over (the object of the letter really being to bring her back), Marcel, hesitating and reflecting upon his decision, opens the newspaper: "... il annonçait une représentation de la Berma. Alors je me souvins de deux façons différentes dont j'avais écouté Phèdre, et ce fut maintenant d'une troisième que je pensais à la scène de la déclaration."\(^3\)

There ensues a complex reciprocal relationship of the life situation with a previous contact in literature, a relationship which must first be distinguished from the type in which a unilateral influence is exerted by one piece of literature upon a character in a later one.

The fatal embrace of Francesca da Rimini and Paolo comes as a direct result of their reading in Lancelot; Werther's last act, before

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irrevocably ending his melancholy, was to open *Emilia Galotti*; Don Quixote finds parallels to his romantic ambitions in the novels of chivalry, and *Mme Bovary* gleans some of hers from Sir Walter Scott. In each of these instances, and others we could cite, the characters in an earlier work influence those of a later one by serving as immutable models. In the transition they retain the presumed forms and functions fixed at the time of their creation: they are adapted intact without themselves undergoing a change. This, in any case, is what happens from the perspective of the characters in the later works. The reader, however, can sense that the notion of unilateral influence is illusory. In all of the examples mentioned, including *Alissa*, the protagonist influenced also imposes a meaning on the literature he is reading. The adaptation is symptomatic of the tragic flaw: the confused attempt to make reality conform to idealistic illusion. But it is the perspective of the literary character rather than the reader's that we are concerned with at the moment and to him, the influence of the earlier work appears unilateral.

By setting literary phenomenon free from the temporal and spatial confines of their origin, as in Proust, the influence of analogous literary elements become reciprocal. Change in one element will cause a corresponding change in the other. An important consequence is that the order in which they occur historically becomes irrelevant and is obliterated upon contact of the two situations.

The passage on which we now focus our attention describes the

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fusion of a set of circumstances in Phèdre with analogous situations in Proust's semi-biographical work. Phèdre's relationship in Hippolyte parallels the psychological intricacies of both the Marcel - Gilberte and the Marcel - Albertine situation.\(^5\)

Proust's analysis is presented in the manner of an "explication de texte" superimposed upon, and simultaneous with what we might call an "explication du moi." The introduction to the passage is a statement relating art to life: "Il me semblait que ce que je m'étalais souvent récité à moi-même et que j'avais écouté au théâtre, c'était l'énoncé des lois que je devais expérimenter dans ma vie." Having verified this presentiment by means of the "explication" the author concludes the passage by reiterating the same thought with more assurance. The scene from Phèdre now appears in retrospect as a sort of "prophétie des épisodes amoureux de ma propre existence." The "prophesy," by its very nature, exists equally at two temporal points which in fusing, eliminate the intervening time span. In other words, Time, measurable, chronological time, has been set aside.

The substance of the passage may be summarized by dividing it into three discernible parts, all basically concerned with the paradoxical behavior motivated by jealousy, and possessive love in other complex forms. The first deals with the termination of an attachment of which the subject is not fully aware, specifically Marcel's rela-

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\(^5\) Subsidiary parallels augment the effect sought: Swann - Odette, OEnone - Françoise.
tionship with Gilberte:

Il y a dans notre âme des choses auxquelles nous ne savons pas combien nous tenons. Ou bien si nous vivons sans elles, c'est parce que nous remettons de jour en jour, par peur d'échouer, ou de souffrir, d'entrer en leur possession. C'est ce qui m'est arrivé pour Gilberte quand j'avais cru renoncer à elle. Qu'avant le moment où nous sommes tout à fait détachés de ces choses, -- moment bien postérieur à celui où nous nous en croyions détachés, -- la jeune fille que nous aimons, par exemple, se fiance, nous sommes fous, nous ne pouvons plus supporter la vie qui nous paraissait si mélancoliquement calme.

The second situation is on the surface the opposite of the first. But since the pivotal figure is still Marcel his motivations and the emotional results for him remain virtually the same:

Ou bien si la chose est en notre possession, nous croyons qu'elle nous est à charge, que nous nous en déférons volontiers. C'est ce qui m'était arrivé pour Albertine. Mais que par un départ l'être indifférent nous soit retiré et nous ne pouvons plus vivre.

There follows the final part of our division consisting of the scene in Phèdre which combines the two corresponding situations in Marcel's experience. Phèdre, like Marcel, is not fully aware of the degree of attachment binding her to the object of desires:

Hippolyte va partir. Phèdre qui jusque-là a pris soin de s'offrir à son inimité, par scrupule, dit-elle, ou plutôt lui fait dire le poète, parce qu'elle ne voit pas à quoi elle arriverait et

6 The two situations can be conceived in combination and represented structurally by the model Gilberte -- Marcel -- Albertine. In this scheme the idea of sequence must be eliminated and Marcel becomes the nucleus of a cluster of relationships.
qu'elle ne se sent pas aimée, Phèdre n'y tient plus. Elle vient lui avouer son amour, et c'est la scène que je m'étais si souvent récitée: "On dit qu'un prompt départ vous éloigne de nous." Sans doute cette raison du départ d'Hippolyte est accessoire, peut-on penser, à côté de celle de la mort de Thésée. Et de même quand, quelques vers plus loin, Phèdre fait un instant semblant d'avoir été mal comprise: "Aurais-je perdu le soin de ma gloire," on peut croire que c'est parce que Hippolyte a repoussé sa déclaration. "Madame, oubliez-vous que Thésée est mon père, et qu'il est votre époux." Mais il n'aurait pas eu cette indignation, que, devant le bonheur atteint, Phèdre aurait pu avoir le même sentiment qu'il valait peu de chose.

But when Hippolyte responds evasively Phèdre unleashes her frustration with full force: "... elle veut que le refus vienne de lui, elle veut pousser jusqu'au bout sa chance: 'Ah! cruel, tu m'as trop entendue.'"

Marcel - Albertine, as well as Swann - Odette, are also mirrored in this same scene:

Et il n'y a pas jusqu'aux duretés qu'on m'avait racontées de Swann envers Odette, ou de moi à l'égard d'Albertine, duretés qui substituèrent à l'amour antérieur un nouvel amour, fait de pitié, d'attendrissement, de besoin d'effusion et qui ne fait que varier le premier, qui ne se trouve aussi dans cette scène: "Tu me haïssais plus, je ne t'aimais pas moins..."

The assimilation of Phèdre's situation to Marcel's (and by extension to that of Proust and then the reader) is conveyed by more than the discursive narration. Some auxiliary stylistic devices should be noted. We have already mentioned how the passage is framed by the generalizations relating art to life. 7 There is within that frame a

7See p. 30.
secondary one in the form of maxims which reinforce the feeling that the phenomenon is universal. The second sentence ("Il y a dans notre âme des choses auxquelles nous ne savons pas combien nous tenons.") corresponds to an aphoristic construction near the end of the extract: "Tant la jalousie, qui en amour équivaut à la perte de tout bonheur, est plus sensible que la perte de la réputation."

Notions of the ubiquity of the situation and of perpetual progression are also communicated by the dialectical train of thought. The thesis, Marcel - Gilberte, and the antithesis, Marcel - Albertine, merge into synthesis, Phèdre - Hippolyte. (These three phases correspond to the divisions we have imposed on the passage.) Syntactic repetition such as the "Ou bien si ..." introducing thesis and antithesis are seconded by the "C'est ce qui m'était arrivé pour..." which conclude both the Marcel - Gilberte and the Marcel - Albertine divisions.

The example from Proust, and to some extent Gide's, suggest that a work of art offers itself to a reader as a phenomenon of his own time. With its potential for inevitable adaptation it can thus be reinvented perpetually as "une œuvre de circonstance." This is not to say that the work has no historical reality and cannot function in a chronological frame of reference. The point is that it is trans-historic also: that its ways of functioning in time must be distinguished.

Our sense of history is closely linked to a chronological orientation which can hinder the rapprochement of a reader with that which
he reads. Chronology establishes between reader and subject units of distance which may be measured in eras, centuries, or artistic periods. Our conditioning to history fits out these stages with appropriate clusters of data concerning customs and events. The reader is thus removed from the work of art which is not contemporary and he encounters difficulty in discerning its potential immediacy.

Within their historical framework, artistic endeavors such as the tragedies of Racine also serve as repositories for the universal elements which cannot, by definition, remain static. The impact of these elements upon the reader is consequently always dependent on a partial detachment from history. Gide reminds us that Racine was quite aware of this notion:

Le mot de Racine a du vrai, que je lis dans la préface de Bajazet: "Les personnages tragiques doivent être regardés d'un autre oeil que nous regardons d'ordinaire les personnages que nous avons vus de près. On peut dire, ajoute-t-il, que le respect qu'on a pour le héros augmente à mesure qu'il s'éloigne de nous." ... Le choix que fait l'artiste de figures distantes de nous, vient plutôt de ce que le temps, ou quelque distance que ce soit, n'en laisse parvenir à nous qu'une image dépouillée déjà de tout ce qu'elle peut avoir d'épisodique, de bizarre et de passager, ne laisse subsister d'elle que sa part de vérité profonde sur laquelle l'art peut oeuvrer.⁸

What the dramatist seeks, continues Gide, is to create between the spectator and the characters of the play, a spatial and/or temporal alienation, what Brecht calls "Entfremdung." In this way the artist

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can achieve his objective: "nous donner son oeuvre d'art pour une oeuvre d'art, son drame pour un drame, simplement -- et non courir après une illusion de réalité qui, lors même qu'elle serait obtenue, ne servirait qu'à faire avec la réalité pléonasme ..."

In the case of Bajazet Racine could not very well have been thinking of temporal distance since the event dramatized is approximately contemporary. The distance is here geographic but the effect on the spectator is identical in that the physical setting can remain obscured and thereby bring into focus those elements which constitute the essence of the drama.

We have offered some explanations for Racine's immunity to antiquation. The tragedies successfully cross time barriers and are transformed by perpetual reinvention. What we have said also applies in theory when works of art bridge geographic boundaries. In the case of literature this change of place involves adaptation to a new linguistic medium. Unless the transition is made by the native audience along with the literary work, or the foreign audience is so to speak, naturalized, translation becomes necessary.

Although specific working practices differ, translation is characterized by the same essential relationship of work and reader as the transformations we have been discussing: to some degree, the reader-critic, or translator, must make an artistic entity conform to circumstances the author did not have in mind or could not even have foreseen. In determining which of the original elements can and/or should be preserved in the translation the adapter is operating
in the same direction as Alissa and Marcel: from his position in time and space toward what he presumes to be the original data.

But linguistic adaptation is a type of re-invention which, in the case of Racine, has been set apart. The translated tragedies are different from other forms of transformation in that they have not had much success. Racine's drama, the apogee of French classicism, has not generally found favor on foreign stages. In France, when not subject to acclaim, it was at least actively denounced and shunned. Abroad, however, the attitude has tended to be one of passive toleration. Outside France Racine is ordinarily given polite consideration as an interesting but rather inaccessible figure of the age of Louis XIV.

He has been studied abroad but almost exclusively by franco-philes and those sufficiently familiar with the French language and culture to enable them to conform to a French point of view. Many "good" translations exist, but the limitations and distortions of linguistically adapted forms do not seem to be adequately compensated by a readily discernible content, as in translations of masterpieces from other literatures. Although a Frenchman not familiar with English does not question Shakespeare's poetic virtuosity his appreciation is derived from the subject matter rather than the form. A monolingual German is indeed moved by the poetry, but it is that of Tieck, the

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9 See, for example, Racine, Phaedra and Other Plays, i.e., Iphigenia and Athaliah, trans. John Cairncross, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963).
translator. In part, no doubt, the problem is that English translations of Racine have had to concentrate on anglicizing the verse into a non-existent equivalent. They have had to recast a poetic form the very marvel of which is its perfection.

But the linguistic obstacle is not sufficient explanation. The Oresteia, Hamlet, and Faust have fared well outside their native countries although their essential poetry has had to be adapted to new linguistic conditions. In part the lack of Racine's success is due to those introducing him to foreign cultures.

Foremost among the proselytizers, Lytton Strachey's recommendation to the English-speaking uninitiated is primarily an assurance of the poetic appeal and an implicit encouragement to learn French: "His music, to ears that are attuned to hear it, comes fraught with poignancy of loveliness whose peculiar quality is shared with no other poetry in the world."\textsuperscript{10} The student seeking insight or explanatory aid is not apt to find it in such enthusiastic praise. Nor is he likely to be enlightened by hyperbole and precious metaphors:

"C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit."
The sentence is like a cavern whose mouth the careless traveller might pass by, but which opens out, to the true explorer, into vista after vista of strange recesses rich with inexhaustible gold. But, sometimes, the phrase compact as dynamite, explodes upon one with an immediate and terrific force — "C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée."\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 16.
The fallacy of this heavy emphasis on but one element, the evocative power of poetry, was apparent to Gide:

Lytton Strachey, l’admirant beaucoup, ne l’admire peut-être pas tout à fait comme il faut ... Si on ne fait point sortir la perfection de Racine, la rareté de son orchestre, tout comme celui de Mozart, peut sembler de la pauvreté. 12

Malraux implies that with Racine the transition across the Channel requires more than a translation from one language to another:

Par la façon dont cet art traite les sentiments, et par le rejet du destin, dont il ne traite pas, Racine crée une stylisation de la passion. C’est une haute forme de civilisation — une de celle que la France imposa alors à l’Europe. Et dans l’éternel dialogue Racine - Shakespeare vous sentez bien que les défenseurs de Racine opposent à leurs adversaires un état de civilisation ... C’est qu’on n’oppose pas Bérénice à Hamlet, mais un état de civilisation à un autre.13

For our purposes it suffices to limit the differences in the two "civilizations" to their respective conceptions of theater, in particular, tragedy. The divergent paths followed by Elizabethans on the one hand, and the neo-aristotelians of France on the other, lead to very different forms of drama. The future popularity of the former was made possible by an emphasis on the spectacle of exterior action and objective realism. 14 The course of history, leading to cultural

13 Malraux, "Réponse," p. 31.
14 Steiner, in The Death of Tragedy, (New York: Knopf, 1961), does not consider this an adequate explanation for Racine's lack of success abroad: "There is no less action in Britannicus, for example, than in the plays of Euripides, and no more rhetoric than in those of Schiller." (p. 48). Euripides, if not Schiller, it seems to us, may have had more exposure on foreign stages than Racine, but his success is based on greater antiquarian interest rather than on a desire to transform and reinvent his plays.
models determined by the bourgeoisie was not to favor general ac­ceptance of Racine's neo-classical conceptions. The subtlety of the interior play of forces and sentiments belongs to an artistic realm which cannot (and as many would have it, should not) find popular acclaim. Racine's audiences outside France, as within its borders must therefore also be limited to an exclusive, cultivated class who can be successfully oriented, not by being indoctrinated with second-hand assurance of the charm and power of the poetry, but by means of guidance in recognizing Racine's particular type of realism.

In addition, Racine's potential for enlightening transforma­tion might be exploited by an adjustment of the translators' basic orientation. They seem to us to have resisted the fact that they must adapt universal phenomena rather than to transpose what they assume to be historical truths. Recognizing the perspective exemplified in this chapter by Gide and Proust, and seeing its relevance to the type of transformation involved in the task of translating might be an alternative point of departure worth their exploration.

15 American playwrights and audiences are particularly unresponsive to drama abstracted from "real-life-situations." Mary McCarthy suggests that to date, O'Neill is virtually the only serious American dramatist to have had some measure of success in the deliberate effort to overcome objective realism by substituting the essence of human events in abstracted dramatic form. ("Realism in the American Theater," Harpers Magazine, (July, 1961), pp. 45-52).
The perspective of Alissa and Marcel characterizes much of the thought in the following three chapters. Our approach will now be to see how some creative men of letters in France have reacted to certain elements of Racine's plays.
CHAPTER III

RACINE'S VERSE: A SCHOOL FOR POETS

In his own commentaries Racine made virtually no reference to his poetry. He discusses historical truth, simplicity, the unities and the ignorance of his enemies. He takes for granted that the particular poetry of his characters is the one appropriate medium for conveying their drama. Critics generally agree that the poetic element in Racine resides in the conception of the tragic subject, and not as in Shakespeare, in verbal expression. The totality of the work constitutes poetry and lines taken out of their whole context retain little or nothing of their poetic significance. This commonplace applies somewhat more to dramatic than to lyric poetry and bears repetition particularly in the case of Racine. Many of the lines most often cited for their dramatic impact are those which in isolation are indistinguishable from prose if not from the prosaic.

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1. Maulnier, Racine, p. 165.
Analyses of the versification and examination of the vocabulary do not reveal significant secrets about the necessarily imprecise laws of poetry. Indeed, such studies emphasize the conclusion that what is genuinely poetic results from the immediacy of the word and from the situation to which it gives form.

Poetic adornment, imagery, periphrasis occur most frequently in the narrative passages of confidants, while the direct unadorned statement such as "Et quelquesfois aussi parle-lui de sa Mère" (Andromaque, 1118) is uttered by the major characters at climactic moments. The latter can be conceived as poetic only in the context of the dramatic situation.

Two distinct approaches to Racine's poetry are taken by the critics. In most cases the commentaries are subjective reactions to the evocative and incantatory powers of the lines. The second approach, requiring plodding application, seeks to explicate the mechanics of the work. The latter type of endeavor is by its nature limited in scope and does not always avoid the major pitfall of the explication method: the work under examination is disassembled and presented piecemeal instead of being made accessible by cautious unfolding.

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Studies by Souriau and Freudemann, valuable for their stylistic observations, fall into this category. At the other extreme, scholarship with a poet's perspective leads Guéguen to a commendable discussion of euphony in Racine but depends on such subjective and unreliable criteria as the evocative power of particular sounds and sound combinations. Cahen is more successful in relating the mechanical aspects of vocabulary and rhythm to the musical and poetic effects.

Such objective analyses can only be the product of patient and dedicated scholarship. It is therefore undertaken by academic researchers and is often the subject of doctoral dissertations. On the other hand, the commentary by established critics, particularly those who are also recognized creative writers tends to be more impressionistic. They describe the text in terms of the effect it has on them as readers or fellow authors. They recall what they have learned from Racine and how they have measured up to standards he has set. Frequently their statements are fleeting insights jotted down in note form and in mémoires. For the most part they are not especially significant

7 Erika Freudemann, Das Adjektiv und seine Ausdruckswerte im Stil Racines dargestellt in einem Stilvergleich Racine-Corneille, (Berlin: Ebering, 1911).
9 Cahen, Vocabulaire.
in themselves but their number and variety are evidence of the ubiquitous influence of Racine's work.

Established writers like Montherlant, whose respect for Racine is not without reservation, continue to find in his work some of the most fundamental secrets of craftsmanship:

...Racine ne s'inquiète nullement de répéter le même mot... On passe trente ans de sa vie d'écrivain à changer des "comme" en "ainsi que." Puis on s'aperçoit que les "Maitres" n'ont jamais eu de tels soucis, et qu'on a été bien bête...\(^{10}\)

Gide analyzes a sound pattern of a line only to find that "le charme" of the whole is not adequately explained by the parts:

...je découvre que le vers de Racine (Phèdre):
"N'était qu'un faible essai des tourments que j'endure," contient dans ses sept premières syllabes six répétitions d'un son é, presque le même, qu'il s'agit pourtant de distinguer subtilement. Le charme de la poésie classique française est fait du jeu de ces impénétrables.\(^{11}\)

While taking into account such spontaneous strokes of artistic composition we must not be misled into exaggerating the ease of Racine's working method. It takes a poet, one who has been called a modern classicist, to appreciate fully the complete command of artistic devices and the labor devoted to genuine craftsmanship:

Je suis bien sûr que j'ai célébré cette étonnante économie des moyens de l'art qui est le propre de Racine, et qui se compense d'une possession si entière du petit nombre de ces moyens qu'il se

\(^{11}\) André Gide, Journals, (10 avril, 1941).
réservé. Peu de personnes conçoivent nettement combien il faut d'imagination pour se priver d'images et pour rejoindre un idéal si dégagé... Je le [Racine] vois tout d'abord dessiner, définir, déduire enfin, d'une pensée longtemps reprise et retenue, ces périodes pures, où même la violence chante, où la passion la plus vive et la plus véritable sonne et se dore, et ne se développe jamais que dans la noblesse d'un langage qui consomme une alliance sans exemple d'analyse et d'harmonie.12

The exigencies of the genuine artistic product have nothing to do with the constraint of rules arbitrarily imposed by tradition.

Valéry, in response to a query on his diacritic use of "tiède" (ti-è-de) feels no obligation to follow versification rules of the seventeenth century. It is interesting nevertheless, that he chooses Racine for his comparison.

En somme, si j'impose ti-è-de, si quelques-uns trouvent ti-è-de plus tiè-de que tiè-de, je n'ai pas à m'inquiéter d'avoir violé la loi...

Quant aux mots en toin, sion, ssion, dont la diphtongaison...ruinerait une quantité de beaux vers (dans Racine en particulier)-il m'apparaît que cette manière de les prononcer dépend de l'allongement de la syllabe précédente...13

Valéry is here concerned with the question of rhythm with which actors and directors will deal in the following chapter. For the present, we shall limit ourselves to a few comments in regard to the basic rhythmic pattern of the alexandrine line.


Accusations of monotony and lack of realism, the contentions of the nineteenth century anti-classical reaction and of casual readers, can be dispelled by pointing out the subtle variations within the hemistich. However, the symmetry of the line to eye and ear still causes feelings of undue confinement and we find critics striving for meaningful rhythmic variety within the defined form. Claudel objects to the constraints of fixed form in French verse in general but particularly in the alexandrine line. It is for him an obstacle to the poetic and as a result he finds that real poetry is more likely to be found in the prose of Rabelais, Pascal, Bossuet, Saint Simon, Chateaubriand and Balzac than in Malherbe, Despréaux, Voltaire and even Racine. Elsewhere he questions the appropriateness of the alexandrine as a vehicle for drama:

Le vers épique, et le vers dramatique, ou le vers lyrique, à mon avis, appartiennent à deux systèmes différents. On ne peut pas employer le vers épique ou le vers alexandrin dans le drame: c'est une erreur complète à mon avis. Le vers dramatique par excellence, ou le vers lyrique, c'est l'Iambe. Tous les grands poètes dramatiques ont employé l'Iambe; que ce soient les tragiques grecs, que ce soit Shakespeare, que ce soient les grands lyriques, Pindare, etc., tous ont pour principe l'Iambe, c'est à dire la succession d'une brève et d'une longue: tic-tac, tic-tac, ou alors: tic-tic-tac, tic-tic-tac.15

The alexandrine, he contends, is for narrative exposition and


to apply it to drama is nonsense unless used by an exceptional genius like Racine whose handling of it was miraculous. 16

Claudel's suggestion that the Racinian line be subjected to scansion also occurred to Jean-Louis Barrault. In his case also the idea appears to have presented itself by coincidence although it is possible that the subject was discussed during the collaboration of the playwright and the director-actor:

Travailler simultanément à la métrique d'Eschyle (à propos de l'Œtisie) et à Bérénice est enivrant. D'une part il est permis de penser que du temps des grecs: une longue ne valait pas exactement deux brèves, que ce devait être plus subtil que cela, beaucoup moins simpliste.

D'autre part, on s'aperçoit que Racine a utilisé pour la langue française parlée l'équivalent d'une véritable métrique grâce à la manière géniale dont il sait ... éviter l'usage trop fréquent de l'émuet. 17

For Barrault, Racine is the great master of rhythm who must have utilized scansion as a means of coaching Mlle Champmeslé in the delivery of his lines:

A titre d'exemple: après un groupe de vers en dochmique, Antiochus dit:

Rome vous vit, Madame, arriver avec lui
spondee anapente anapente
ou iambique

Dans l'orient désert quel devint mon ennui
spondee anapente anapente
ou iambique

16 Ibid.

Attempts to explain the artistry of Racine are usually not as explicit as the examples cited above. Whereas these try to examine the elements which result in the final product, most critics forego the analytic approach for an impressionistic interpretation. Sainte-Beuve's well known "il rase le prose mais avec des ailes," is a figurative description of an effect of Racine's poetry on the reader rather than an objective statement of fact. It is a poetic description of poetry and as such it is revelatory rather than purely descriptive.

Critics frankly admit their inability to define the secrets of poetry. Even a Thibaudet approaches Racine with "une critique qui marche sur la pointe des pieds." Biographical and historical documentation is of little assistance: "Accumulez tous les détails que vous pourrez sur la vie la Racine, vous n'en tirerez pas l'art de faire ses vers..."

Comparisons of Racine's verse with prose on the one hand and music on the other show similarities of approach and conclusion.

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18 Ibid., p. 96.
Brémond, elaborating on Sainte-Beuve's statement goes a step farther in his reaction to the prose element: "'Il rase la prose mais avec des ailes,' dit Sainte-Beuve." But it happens that the verse skims so close to prose that it is drowned in it.  

The satirical play on words notwithstanding, Brémond admires Racine's "prose" and distinguishes it from the prosaic: "... un je ne sais quoi aussi ennemi de la platitude que de la pompe: une certain grace." 

The secret does not lie in the word itself. In answer to F. Paulhan who distinguishes words which are inherently poetic from those which are prosaic Brémond gives a lesson in relativity:

Pour nous ... il n'est pas de mots qui soient poétiques de naissance; ils le deviennent, ils peuvent tous le devenir, comme les fils du télégraphe deviennent, à proprement parler, électriques, lorsque le courant les traverse. 

Jean-Louis Barrault's notion to present Bérénice as an oratorio is not an isolated caprice. Comparisons with musical genres and still more with musical rhythms are frequent. Cocteau's simple metaphor stresses the ineffable musical quality: "C'est un mystère

\[22\] Ibid., p. 106.
\[23\] "Les mots poétiques sont surtout les mots suggestifs; les mots prosaïques seront plutôt des termes à sens précis qui prêtent peu au rêve et n'ont pas dans l'esprit de retentissement prolongé ...' by Brémond, ibid., p. 174, from Frédéric Paulhan, (Paris: Alcan, 1929).
\[24\] Ibid.
\[25\] Barrault, "Notes," p. 94.
qu'il [Racine] incarne, une musique du ciel. Mais la poigne avec laquelle il orchestre et dirige cette musique nous confond."  

Robert Kemp's review of a Phèdre performance directed by Gaston Baty makes no mention of the "celestial music" heard by Cocteau. But his matter-of-fact use of music critics' criteria tends momentarily to eliminate the distinction between tragedy and opera: "Il est vrai que la troupe de M. Baty hache, et parfois de travers, les coulées mélodiques de Racine, place des 'soupirs' au milieu d'un legato que la syntaxe indique et que la musique exige."  

Prose, the most direct and concrete form of expression, and music, the most vague and abstract, are joined in a balanced relationship in Racinian verse:

Cette réussite de la ligne qui n'est faite de rien et qui est tout, ce sens du vers qui n'est pur comme de la musique, que parce qu'il est d'abord net comme de la prose, cette draperie où se lit le mouvement le plus secret du corps... c'est l'Amour introduit comme Zadig à l'Académie du Silence, et qui pose la feuille de rose sur la coupe pleine.

The musical potentialities of language were fully exploited by Valéry who suggests that words when sung tend to lose their denotative value while in prose it is the musical quality which is weakened.

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Prose and music are at opposite poles in relation to poetry which maintains a very delicate equilibrium between the sensuous and intellectual forces of language. Art is thus reduced, for the sake of analysis, to graphic simplicity which might be rendered by the model

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prose--music
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For Valéry, the exponent of a pure poetry, Racine's art is essentially musical:

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Entre tous les poètes, Racine est celui qui s'apparente le plus directement à la musique proprement dite, - ce Racine de qui les périodes donnent si souvent l'idée des récitatifs à peine un peu moins chantants que ceux des compositions lyriques, - ce Racine de qui Lulli allait si studieusement entendre les tragédies; et des lignes, des mouvements duquel les belles formes et les purs développements de Gluck semblent des transformations immédiates.
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The traditional declamation, according to Valéry, does not do justice to the poetic qualities because the musical element is sacrificed to direct theatrical effects:

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Cette fâcheuse tradition détruit la continuité, la mélodie infinie qui se remarque si délicieusement dans Racine. Elle fait que l'artiste semble lutter contre les vers, ne les supporter qu'avec peine, les trouver à regret dans un ouvrage qui pourrait s'en passer. On les brise, on les dérobe; ou, d'autres fois, semble-t-il qu'on n'en retienne que les gênes: on accuse, on exagère les carrures, les supports de l'alexandrin, ses signes conventionnels, qui sont choses très
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30 Ibid., p. 37.
utiles à mon sens, mais qui deviennent des moyens grossiers si la diction ne les enveloppe et ne les revêt de ses grâces.\textsuperscript{31}

The actor should strive for a truer rendition by letting himself be guided by the melody of the line. He must consider the dual structure of the "phrases", their syntax and their prosody, which combine into a sonorous and spiritual substance. Rhyme and cesuras should not be observed as absolute guides:

...une création musicale ne se réduit pas à une observance, comme jadis trop de personnes l'ont cru, qui ont donné dans la sécheresse, rendu les règles absurdes et suscité en retour de terribles réactions. Mais éprouvez à loisir, écoutez jusqu'aux harmoniques les timbres de Racine, les nuances, les reflets réciproques de ses voyelles, les actes nets et purs, les liens souples de ses consonnes et de leurs ajustements.\textsuperscript{32}

The actor must learn his lines as one learns a song; first the melody and verbal sounds and eventually the meaning:

Et donc, et surtout, ne vous hâtez point d'accéder au sens. Approchez-vous de lui sans force, et comme insensiblement. N'arrivez à la tendresse, à la violence, que dans la musique et par elle. Défendez-vous longtemps de souligner les mots; il n'y a pas encore des mots, il n'y a que des syllabes et des rythmes. Demeurez dans ce pur état musical jusqu'au moment que le sens survenu peu à peu ne pourra plus nuire à la forme de la musique. Vous l'introduirez à la fin comme la suprême nuance qui transfigurera sans l'altérer votre morceau.\textsuperscript{33}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 38.
\item \textsuperscript{33}Ibid. This advice was first offered by Valéry to the cast of Bajazet directed by de Courville. It will be noted in the following chapter that the idealistic lessons of the "apôtre de la poésie pure" were considered by members of the cast to be oblivious to some practical aspects of performing a play. (Bajazet, Mise en scène et commentaire par Xavier de Courville, Collection "Mise en scène," (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1947).
Brémond's advice is similar: read the poetry for its music, without consciously attaching psychological moods to the character in question. Pleasure is derived from the sounds and the joy of hearing familiar airs. With such an approach the dramatic elements are relegated to a distant background. We can now read a Racinian tragedy as we hum a musical phrase or parts of an operatic aria:

Aussi vous conseillerais-je d'ouvrir au hasard votre Racine, d'en lire la première page venue, et de la fermer aussitôt, pressé de savouer à loisir une proie qui n'est déjà que trop lourde. Les jours où votre oreille est mal éveillée, vingt vers tout au plus; mais, d'ordinaire, trois ou quatre... Virgile, Dante, Pascal ne se lisent pas autrement.\(^3\) 

The poet-critics, without overlooking the dramatic elements, stress the incantatory powers of the poetry. The implication is that the Racinian character or the phenomenon to which his utterances give form are ritualistic. Racinian drama, regardless of original intent or intrinsic merit, either contains qualities lending themselves to the making of a tradition or it has become traditional by virtue of sustained practice. In any case, both Brémond and Valéry stress that to be effective the "pure" poetry of which they speak demands on the part of the listener an enlightened familiarity with Racine's works.

Prose writers generally stop short of such exalted appreciation of the poetic qualities. Some isolate this or that striking line apparently without considering artistic unity. For Montherlant it is absurd to call Racine the greatest lyric poet. It is not absurd to

\(^3\)Bremond, Racine et Valéry, p. 79.
say that some thirty lines by Racine are unique in French poetry for their harmony and simplicity, and are "des vers proprement 'raciniens'..."  

Others not belonging to the group expounding poetry for poetry's sake note a positive relationship between form and subject matter even when at first glance, there appears to be an inconsistency. Marcel Arland comments on the dramatic anguish of the characters and the serene harmony in which it is conveyed:

J'estime en effet que plus le désordre d'un esprit est grand, plus est profond le désordre des personnages où cet esprit se manifeste - plus grand doit être le soin avec lequel on l'exprime et plus sereine la forme où on la coule. Les vers de Racine furent-ils jamais plus harmonieux qu'en peignant les troubles de Phèdre? C'est là, à mon sens, l'un des caractères non seulement d'une école, mais du classicisme éternel.  

Most criticism, even indifferent or perfunctory in regard to the poetry of the tragedies, recognizes its inseparableness from the dramatic element. But the latter is considered dominant:

Racine, souvent dépasse par un ou deux vers isolés, les plus grands poèmes. Mais il est avant tout, comme Corneille, un homme de théâtre, prisonnier du sublime qu'il prête aux sentiments des Grands, metteur en scène de leur pompe sentimentale ou politique...  

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Racine is first and foremost a man of the theater. Not with the same versatility as Molière but no less than he. Since the tragedies are for many most accessible in printed form we need the periodic reminders that the poetry cannot be isolated from the dramatic functions:

Le culte qu'on porte à Racine flambe et fait remuer de grands ombres. Ces ombres changent les places de la louanges. Il arrive même... qu'on exalte Racine le poète et qu'on le propose aux seuls lecteurs. C'est une faute grave. Racine est aussi poète. Quel poète n'est pas poète aussi? Racine est poète parce qu'il ne peut pas ne pas être poète.38

On the basis of his own works it may be assumed that Cocteau is here speaking of Racine as well as of himself. Indeed this is one of the common traits implicit in the commentary stressed in this chapter. While our grouping divides analytic reactions from the statements characterized by impressionistic generalizations, that distinction is superficial. The critical observations correspond in that each is made in terms of the critic's experience in the art of poetry. As writers of poetry or as active readers, the questions they ask and the conclusions they reach are determined on the basis of the critics' own participation in poetic creation. Collectively they show that they are not engaged in tracing the evolution of poetry from Racine to their own efforts. Rather, their points of departure are their own experiences which are seen in retrospect as variations emanating from a common source. Racine is viewed as a sort of found-

tainhead of pure poetry. He represents fundamental and essential elements in the nature of poetry which have been adapted by the commentators. The plays are models of their craft from which they learn and by which their practices are eventually measured and explained.

To clarify their understanding of Racine's poetry critics may approach it from the points of view of musicology, phonology, or psychology. But the secret to the mystery lies in the recognition of its synthetic nature. Comprehension of the poetic essence requires not only the intellect but also the senses. Perhaps the most effective vehicle for conveying the notion of poetry is in the combination of media we call the performance.
CHAPTER IV

THE MISE EN SCENE:
ARTISTIC MEDIA IN COMBINATION

During the reading of a play the reader finds himself involved simultaneously in many phases of its creation. His analyses are directed to many points of view and he becomes in turn historian, psychologist, poet and philosopher. If he keeps in mind the basic function of the play, its performance, he can hardly avoid bestowing upon the work his talents as director. It is here that anything short of professional involvement and experience becomes hazardous. As long as the amateur restricts his directing to his private reflections or develops an aspect of the subject for scholarly purposes, the efforts can be rewarding and welcome. When, however, the would-be director presents his views in the form of advice to professional actors and directors preparing a performance, we can usually expect a certain amount of indignation and resentment or at least find them listening with a polite but deaf ear.

A case in point is Valéry's advice to the cast of Bajazet, subsequently published as De la Diction des vers.¹ For those in-

¹See pp. 50-52.
initiated into the exclusive society of pure poetry his wisdom was no doubt met by eager affirmation. However, the director, Xavier de Courville was confronted by some basic and immediate facts of theater and although in agreement in theory, he found Valéry's idealistic and well-intentioned advice impractical. First, he was preparing for an audience who, in his opinion, could not be offered "a recital of alexandrines." Second, he was in the process of working with a group of actors who, eager to master their roles as quickly as possible, frowned with understandable impatience at the poet's suggestion that they feel the melody of the poetry before actually attaining an understanding of their lines. 2

In principle, de Courville is not in disagreement with the poet: "Avant tout, Racine est poète: ne faut il pas partir de la musique, et retrouver d'abord le sens mélodique de ses vers qu'on sacrifie trop volontiers aux effets directs de la scène?" 3 His attitude is basically that of the practitioner for whom the ex cathedra pronouncements of the theoretician are untimely and cumbersome in terms of a particular situation.

Theory and practice are not generally so incompatible. The objections of those concerned with the performance, the ultimate function of the play, have to do with the tendency to confuse the


3Ibid., p. 11.
means with the end. Exegesis and explication are but steps taken
with a view to the performance. In his preface in the volumes of
the "Collection Mise en scène" the editor, P.-A. Touchard cautions
against overlooking this basic truth:

Une oeuvre dramatique ne se révèle qu'à la
scène. La seule explication littéraire est
impuissante à pénétrer un texte qui fut écrit
pour être dit, mimé, vécu selon un rythme
collectif.

If, as Descotes states, "il n'est pas aisé à un universitaire
de parler du théâtre," failure to keep the performance in view as
the ultimate objective is not the sole reason. The conditioned per­s­
spectives of a discipline present a greater obstacle. Will G.
Moore's attempt to study Molière from behind the curtain claims "to
owe more to incisive criticism of Louis Jouvet and Jacques Arnavon
than to many professors." Nevertheless it soon becomes apparent
that his approach remains that of the literary historian whose debt
is to his teachers and colleagues. The academician will have diffi­
culty changing his perspective:

Surtout lorsqu'il entreprend d'étudier autre
chose que le texte des pièces ou la personnalité
des auteurs, ou plutôt lorsqu'il entend ne pas
étudier seulement le texte des pièces et la per­
sonnalité des auteurs. Qu'il manifeste quelques
intérêts pour les réalités du théâtre, les gens
de métier seront sensibles à sa bonne volonté;
mais ils resteront persuadés que ces réalités ne
sont pour lui que "jeux de la scène".

1Maurice Descotes, Les grands rôles du théâtre de Jean Racine,
2Will G. Moore, Molière, a New Criticism, (Oxford: Clarendon
3Descotes, Les grands rôles, p. vii.
The reluctance of the "gens de métier" to accept the "universitaire" dealing in their medium is more than a matter of professional snobbery. A basic difference of orientation separates the two:

L'universitaire s'est voué à l'étude d'œuvres immortelles, au culte d'écrivains dont le prestige traverse les siècles. Du théâtre il a choisi la partie durable, solide. Le comédien, lui, est un être qui passe, qui joue son rôle pendant vingt ou trente ans. Lui disparu, il ne reste plus rien de son talent, de son génie, de son originalité véritable. Les points de vue déjà sont très différents.

Moreover, adds Descotes, the academician never really belongs; he remains an outsider in regard to the "realities" of the theater. He can reconstruct them historically but he never really lives them. He remains an observer.

If it is true that the scholar's choice is the durable, solid aspect of theater, it is not surprising to find him accused of inability to change, to adapt a work to new times. Gaston Baty laments the fact that in a radically changing world Corneille and Racine alone are doomed to immobility. If the classics are considered boring it is because they are no longer conceived in the manner in which they are to be acted. The Thursday matinée has become an extension of the course and the term "classique" has come to mean "scolaire."  

Jean-Louis Barrault, in planning the mise en scène of Phèdre gives a cursory review of artistic, moral, religious and historical

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7Ibid.
criticism and documentation and then rejects all but the most fundamental element, the text. As for the rest, "il était peut-être utile de les rappeler, ne serait-ce que pour constater qu'elles ne nous sont, techniquement, d'aucun secours." De Courville shows the same dismay with the accumulation of traditions: "Comme toute tragédie classique, celle-ci [Bajazet] ne peut véritablement reprendre vie sans se libérer du manteau de fausses traditions qui la paralyse."

Although recent literary criticism demonstrates a similar attitude of impatience with traditional interpretations it stands to reason that the director bears a special kind of pressure. Whereas the variety of aspects and approaches are infinite for the academician, the director is limited to a basic unit, the play as a whole, and his efforts must culminate in a performance of that play.

Directors have taken upon themselves the task of "réthéâtraliser le théâtre." Implicitly they agree with Jean Vilar's outspoken assertion that in today's theater the major creative role belongs to the director. Since among modern playwrights there are no poets (except Claudel), since the creation of dialogue is the only theatrical function with which dramatists deal, the director should assume the

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10 De Courville, Bajazet, p. 11.
responsibility of the "dramaturge." Vilar reserves this term for the artist fulfilling the major creative role in all phases of the play's making. For Racine, for example, who unwittingly burdened poets of posterity with an immense obstacle, in that his reputation rests on his talents as a man of letters for whom "les alentours d'une bouteille d'encre, avec ses rêveries et ses cauchemars, étaient le lieu privilégié, unique, de la création scénique." In reality we know that Racine went far beyond the printed page to infuse artistic substance and life into his plays:

Nous savons bien... que Racine dirigeait réplique par réplique, vers par vers, la rétive Champmeslé; que Racine, pour reprendre un mot du métier de régisseur, était "à l'avant-scène" et dirigeait les répétitions de ses pièces; qu'il était un admirable lecteur; qu'il pointait et - disons mieux - qu'il orchestrait ses œuvres. Et si l'histoire ne nous a pas laissé le nom du premier régisseur des tragédies qui vont d'Andromaque à Phèdre, c'est que Racine en a assumé lui-même la difficile charge.\(^{14}\)

For all his nostalgic evocation of the absolute ideals of Greek and Racinian drama, Vilar, in his long experience has encountered among playwrights obstacles other than lack of genius. Not the least of these are time and money for adequate rehearsals.\(^{15}\) A more serious impediment is that "le théâtre est un art inconnu à notre époque."\(^{16}\)

The orientation of playwrights and audiences is toward naturalistic

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\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 88.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 50.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 94.
theater; the Greek concept of the theater as a place for ritual is forgotten. This condition must be reversed: "Le théâtre n'est pas la démonstration analytique de notre condition; il est le chant dithyrambique de nos désirs profonds ou de nos railleries." If this definition has failed to become actively established it can be attributed to three major causes: the novel is the major literary medium of our time, a divorce has been effected between creators (the "dramaturges") and the art of theater, and with the exception of Claudel, "(mais est-il de notre temps?)" no important dramatic work appeared in the first half of the twentieth century.

Since 1950 these conditions have changed considerably. And Vilar, by not accepting what he considered a deplorable state of the theater has had much to do with the modifications. His devoted direction of the Théâtre National Populaire successfully restored to theater, particularly to classical theater, some of the ritualistic, popular qualities. Today most people actively involved in the production of serious drama recognize in it "a great, collective, religious phenomenon," an aspect of which Sartre became aware after writing and presenting a play in a prisoner of war camp in Germany in 1940.

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17 Ibid., pp. 96-97.
18 Ibid., pp. 103-104.
The challenge of Vilar, Barrault and other leading men of the theater lies in the adaptation of their ideals to elements which they cannot change, to particular audiences and to the capabilities of the particular cast of actors. The ability to be practical and yet faithful to the essence of the work is the measure of success:

Toujours, une loyale interprétation des classiques tendra à marier la vision d'un poète d'hier aux nouvelles et successives exigences des auditoires. Toujours, cette question d'une forme mobile dans le temps qui risque - faute de préparation et d'adaptation - de masquer l'humain et l'universel dans les grands génies. 20

The director must be guided by the necessity of proper balance between the "vision d'un poète d'hier" and the immediate practical requirements. He must consider that 'modern verse drama has been limited in power by the fact that it has been a more or less artificial graft on our stage,' 21 that this artificiality exists particularly from the perspective of the audiences who are not conditioned to enchantment by poetic sounds and rhythms. And yet, the director must also consider the opposing view as offered by T. S. Eliot: 'What we have to do is to bring poetry into the world in which the audience lives and to which it returns when it leaves the theater.' 22

The director is confronted with other such problems of choice in regard to diction, costumes and decor. Although modern technological


22 Ibid., p. 65.
devices have augmented his ability to create mood and illusion, discreet and tasteful blending of technology with the text is necessary for a meaningful theatrical achievement.

Fundamental to the creation of a performance is the concept that the mise-en-scènes, like the meanings of the texts, evolve and change: "Aussi la mise en scène d'un classique n'est-elle jamais définitive." An attempt to duplicate the original performance is doomed since virtually all elements, audience, actor, theaters, and concepts of history have evolved. Even the text cannot be read from a pure seventeenth century point of view; no more so than the French classicists were able to perceive their Greek and Roman subjects with historical accuracy. For modern directors historical truth in plays is not achieved by conforming or claiming to conform to authoritative precedents as was necessary in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; nor is it enhanced by archeologically accurate local color as attempted in the nineteenth. The truth sought by the modern director is the truth of myth, the universal human truth which suggests its spacial and temporal ubiquity by means of abstracted and obscured renderings of time and place. Thus, the antiquity (as a point in time) of Baty's Phèdre is doubly vague: he tries to evoke "une imprécise antiquité telle que l'imaginait le XVIIe siècle, telle que nous la suggèrent la peinture de Poussin et la musique de

Rameau." The costumes, "composites et incertains" complement the setting: "Toute l'attention, après le premier coup d'oeil sur la robe sombre et le diadème uni, la ceinture d'or de Phèdre, la cuirasse et le casque emplumé d'Hippolyte, restera centrée sur les âmes."

In order to involve the spectator in the interior dramatic action the physical aspects of the stage tend toward stark simplicity. In de Courville's Bajazet the unity of place is observed to the letter and yet without constraint. The scene is a secret nook of the seraglio, which serves simultaneously as Acomat's retreat, Roxanne's boudoir and Atalide's prison. Besides the columns, the stairs and a divan there are "peu d'ornements moins d'accessoires encore." Changes of scene and orientation are achieved with lighting effects on stark geometric shapes such as five symmetrically spaced columns, an octagonal bench, gilded bars. These with the items mentioned, constitute virtually all there is in decor and props.

Similarly for Barrault's Phèdre where the decorator's skill with light and shadow effects creates the two contrasting elements of the decor: light, sun and sea air varied with dark and shadowy corners along walls and arches produce the desired mood: "Dans ce pays de lumière, on cherche l'ombre; on s'y cache. Les nuits sont blanches.

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25 De Courville, Bajazet, p. 16.
Le sommeil a fui; et dans le jour les hommes errent comme des somnambules."\(^{26}\)

Barrault's instructions on lighting are detailed and explicit. The effect of intense sunlight is magnified by breaking up the beams and projecting them obliquely across the stage:

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\text{Jamais ce qu'on appelle un "plein feu" de théâtre ne donnera autant l'impression brûlante du soleil que si celui-ci perce l'atmosphère par des faisceaux lumineux serrés. La présence du soleil se manifeste avec plus de force à travers les fentes d'une persienne qu'en plein milieu d'une plaine où tout, baigné par lui, est aplati.}^{27}\]

The shadows as well must be varied and subtle in order to complement some of the major scenes with warm tonalities.

Only general recommendations are made for the decor thus illuminated. Economy is the basic guide: "Phèdre est une œuvre classique, il faut être économme. Il ne faut aucun ornement ou accessoire extérieur à l'action."\(^{28}\) The props mentioned in the text are not to encumber the stage for "Phèdre est du théâtre pur: tout doit être exprimé par l'homme, comme tout traite de l'homme et est construit pour l'homme."\(^{29}\) Venus is not to be represented by a statue (even though such a statue probably stood at the entrance of the palace), Venus is in Phèdre and in Hippolyte. Thésée's wavy hair suggests Neptune. The woods, the bows, the javelins are to be evoked by

\(^{26}\) Barrault, Phèdre, p. 36. \(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 37.
\(^{28}\) Ibid.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 38.
Théramène as Oenone must symbolize Destiny, heavy oriental perfume, pagan superstitions.

Thésée, Théramène, Oenone: Voilà le véritable décor, la "couleur locale". Sur eux jouent alternativement les ombres et les lumières. Contre eux viennent, ou s'abriter comme dans une crique, ou échouer contre un écueil, les futures victimes qui seront bientôt précipités dans la Mort.

Everything else must be invisible: "Là git toute la difficulté pour le décorateur. Rendre le cadre invisible. Murs, voûtes, colonnes, aux tonalités claires, ou mêmes blanches, opaques, blafardes."

The subtleties of such conceptions do not always have the desired impact. If theater is a ritual it can be expected that those who have practiced it consistently and with devotion will react unfavorably to radical innovations in the tradition to which they are accustomed. Barrault and his school of thought might well defend their conceptions with fundamentalist arguments but the novelty, though superficial, and viewed with open-mindedness, will not be easily appreciated by nostalgic practitioners of the cult. The excess baggage which the innovators wish to eliminate has become an integral part of the traditional format:

L'actuel décor de Phèdre rend toute interprétation vaine et impossible: les écrasantes voûtes, multipliées en fuites divergentes et dédaliques, semblent aspirer l'acteur vers l'extérieur et le disperser, au lieu de le porter vers nous. Et leur décoration, imitant les géométries des marbres de la Renaissance italienne, efface à notre regard les physionomies des personnages.

30 Ibid.
The spectator becomes as disoriented as the actor. The combat of light and shadow, the struggle between Venus and the Sun, in a word, the major theme of Phèdre, is out of focus. Beams of light are projected alternately from this or that angle but, adds Dussane, "une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps, ni deux éclairages un seul soleil."

In the matter of costumes Dussane criticized Barrault's particular production but did agree with him in principle. They should be designed with composite and indefinite artificiality in order to remove the character from a historical context into a timeless realm of art:

La ligne d'un costume peut accompagner, amplifier, ou au contraire briser, les rythmes d'un texte. Les costumes de la tragédie n'ont nul besoin d'exactitude historique, mais il faut exiger d'eux une fidélité au corps humain, dont ils doivent envelopper et révéler à la fois les lignes et les mouvements, comme le vers racinien enveloppe et révèle les mouvements secrets de l'âme et du cœur.32

While economy does not result in such austerity as the appearance of Barrault's barefoot actors, the costuming in Baty's Phèdre is designed so as not to allow the spectator's eye to concentrate on it more than is suitable. Elaborate and grandiose visual scenes are avoided particularly when it can be left to the text to conjure them

32Ibid., p. 68.
up in the mind's eye of the spectator: "Ce que dit le texte, le décor n'a pas à le redire. La Rome impériale qui surgit entre chaque vers de Britannicus, nulle toile peinte ne la rendra plus présente."33

Even for Athalie in which the Bible and original conception suggest magnificence of setting, namely the House of the Lord, LeRoy's proposed mise en scène prefers to evoke indirectly the grandeur and majesty of the temple of Salomon: "...il faut qu'il soit là et que nous sentions, intensément, sa présence."34 It must make itself felt from within the visible setting which is, in accordance with the text, "un vestibule de l'appartement du grand prêtre."

Considering the repeated allusions to Racine's musicality and analogies with musical phenomena, one would expect elaborate use of orchestral accompaniment to the plays. This is not the case. Indeed, Barrault, who "for his own satisfaction" analyzes in detail the symphonic mouvements of Phèdre uses virtually no orchestral aids in the actual production.35 De Courville makes no mention of it either for Bajazet. Baty finds that "musique de scène" usually fails to contribute to success but he attempts to maintain mood with Rameau selections played between acts.

LeRoy on the other hand, again taking into account the nature

34 LeRoy, Athalie, p. 19.
35 Barrault, Phèdre, pp. 209 ff. Musical instruments are utilized for sound effects such as the "sonnerie glorieuse" of trumpets and horns when Thésée makes his first appearance, Act III, 5.
of *Athalie*, integrates extensive voice and instrumental music into
his mise en scène. Chorales by Bach seemed exceptionally suitable to
him for the chorus.

It becomes apparent from the foregoing conceptions that the
effect toward which the director strives is anything but an imitation
of daily life. On the contrary, performer and spectator must yield
to illusion and deliberate falsity because "dans le théâtre on com­
merce par le brillant, le faux, le simulacre pour aller à une vie
intérieure."\(^{37}\) We have seen that the inanimate elements of the pro­
ductions are devised to achieve this effect and, in the preceding
chapter, the comments concerning the poetry show us that diction is
also a matter of strict stylization dictated by the verbal form, the
alexandrine.

Let us consider briefly some theatrical aspects of the alexan­
drine. Although verse forms, strictly speaking, belong under the
heading of the preceding chapter, we are reintroducing the subject
here in order to emphasize the synthetic notion of Racine's theater.
The tragedies are dramatic poems (or poetic dramas) and the two ele­
ments can be separated only provisionally. Gesture has its syntax and
meter (see p. 76 below) and it is equally necessary to consider the
theatrical qualities of a verse form.


\(^{37}\) Louis Jouvet quoted by W. C. Moore, *Racine: Britannicus*,
Even for modern Frenchmen appreciation of the alexandrine's subtleties is not acquired automatically with the heritage of the native language. Again because the rhythm is far removed from ordinary speech, understanding of the rhythmic variations must be acquired with the aid of analytic examination as well as by attentive efforts of the mind and ear. Jean-Louis Barrault's lucid and enthusiastic analysis of sounds and rhythms, though elementary, is a revealing introductory exposition. In addition to his explanations of fundamental phonetic matters and of distribution of stresses in the hemistich, Barrault differentiates three basic types of alexandrines which vary in quality according to their function.38

The first type, the "alexandrin d'action", is precise, concrete and gives an impression of sturdiness. Its principal feature is movement. It seems temporarily to awaken the characters from their quasi-dreamlike state, to infuse in them the substance of reality. Lines 561-570 and scene 6 of the second act are cited as examples of the alexandrine of action.

Related to this first type in that it pertains to the plane of reality is the "alexandrin principal" consisting of a fundamental statement of action. These lines serve as the framework for adjacent ones which modify them, but lifted from the text and listed separately they can summarize the action.39

38Barrault, Phèdre, pp. 57-61.
39For example the following lines lifted from Act I, 1:75, 76, 83, 84, 91, 92, 95.
From these two types of alexandrines which function on the plane of reality we are gradually led to the level of the "rêve-éveillé" by a third type called the period:

La qualité primordiale de la période est juste-ment une qualité impressionniste. Sa vertu est incantatoire. Par la succession choisie de syllabes et de rythmes elle a le pouvoir de "métamorphoser" l'atmosphère, de préparer le climat, d'entraîner la situation vers cette autre "réalité" bien plus réelle que la première, celle qui ne s'adresse plus à la vue mais à la "vision" ... Elle ne "dit" pas, elle "sonne". Et c'est cette sonorité qui exprime d'une manière plus frappante l'idée générale qu'elle renferme.¹⁰

Thus, in lines 9 to 14 it is the resonance of the place-names which renders the images of Théramène's itinerary.

The period, by means of its hypnotic rhythm serves as a transition toward the plane of extra-sensory vision, of delirium or hallucination expressed by the groups of lines called for "récitatif".

Like the other categories discussed, the récitatif cannot be recognized by any particular form. Barrault goes to great lengths to identify it by description of its effect. It is the phenomenon of extra-lucidity occurring when the character is near a state of ecstasy. His thoughts are expressed aloud as in a soliloque. At the time he may be involved in dialogue but although responding to the interlocutor, the lines of the récitatif evolve primarily on a separate,

¹⁰Ibid., p. 58. Barrault uses "period" to describe the musical rather than the grammatical nature of this line: "A musical structure...of two or more contrasting or complementary phases ending with a cadence." (Webster's Third New International Dictionary).
higher plane. The controversial "récit de Théramèse" is thus quite appropriate when viewed from this aspect. Phèdre's avowal, (I, 3, lines 247-316) is a further example of the récitatif.

Barrault recognizes that these categories are not so well formulated as to be the bases for rules. They are not as categorical as the variations imposed on the Spanish comedia. In these, strictly defined poetic forms correspond to subject and tone. Barrault's categories, much more impressionistic and elusive, are not based on form, strictly speaking, but on rhythm. They are valuable in distinguishing two major planes of action and in identifying levels of transition between them. An understanding of these levels reveals the wealth of variety in tone and rhythm.

Demands on the actor who must put all this into practice extend far beyond ordinary requirements of competence. Indeed, directors require him to become poet, musician and visionary. He must be sensitive to the symmetry of the alexandrin and not confuse it with monotony. To be avoided is the "cadence uniforme qu'entraîne l'automatisme de la césure." Too often, adds Dullin, "les acteurs déclament tous les poètes de la même façon. Villon, Corneille, Racine

Los décimas son buenas para quejas;
El soneto está bien en los que aguardan;
Aunque en octavos luzen por extremo.
Son los tercetos para cosas graves,
Y para las de amor las rodondillas.

Lope de Vega, Arte Nuevo de hacer comédias en este tiempo, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1856), v. 38, p. 232.

Hugo, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Apollinaire, Valéry embouchent la même trompette héroique."

In addition to a feeling for music a technical knowledge of composition is imperative. Barrault asserts that "trop souvent l'acteur nie la vertu des gammes."\(^3\) When LeRoy refers to "cette admirable symphonie verbale"\(^1\) he must be taken literally.

Whereas poetry, music, and a degree of self-hypnotism are ordinarily considered peripheral to the actors art, it would seem that in his creation of a racinian role he would at least need no drastically new perspective on gesture. But again, as in all other aspects of the production, direct imitation of the "real life" situation gives way to highly stylized artistic movement.

Barrault's ideas on gesture follow the same sort of reasoning which formed his conception of the verbal form and its delivery. That is, we are not dealing with ordinary speech but with the alexandrine which is based on number. Similarly, the sequence of events is not ordinary. It consists of shortcuts by which actions are filtered and purified, in a word, "crystallized." They form a pure geometric figure. The actor who obeys the requirements of measure and design in regard to diction must also conform to them in his gestures. These must be in harmony with the lines he is speaking. Otherwise, transi-

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\(^3\)Barrault, Phédre, p. 46.
\(^1\)LeRoy, Athalie, p. 75.
\(^4\)Barrault, Phédre, pp. 67-70.
tion from gesture to sound becomes impossible and the synthesis of what is seen and what is heard cannot be accomplished. The theatrical phenomenon would give way to confusion and incongruity.

The language of gesture has its syntax and meter. In Racine's plays it must be strictly calculated, regulated and assimilated to the rhythm of the vocal form. As the iambic meter imitates the two phases of the heartbeat (systole-diastole) and the breathing cycle (inhalation-exhalation), so the basic rhythm of the gesture is built on a two-phase cycle (contraction-relaxation). The gesture does not duplicate what is spoken; it completes it. It is a silent language which reveals what the spoken word attempts subconsciously to keep secret or to dissimulate.

In the writings of Jean-Louis Barrault and other men of theater less prolific than he, one motif dominates ideas on the performance of a classical play: the attempt to impart a notion of theater which sets it apart from so-called real life. There is a strong didactic, proselytizing note conveying a desire to liberate the theater from audiences and actors who "cherchant à faire triompher le naturel, là où devrait triompher l'art ..." Beauty, they argue, results from striving to imitate nature with artificial means. 

The relatively widespread acceptance of this concept, particu-

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 Barrault, Phèdre, p. 68.
larly since about the middle of this century, is a major factor in
the new directions taken in theater. One result is a rapproche-
ment of classical theater and serious drama of recent times. It is
not simple coincidence that Sartre discovers a striking similarity
between Brecht's Shakespearian theater of revolutionary negation and
the tragedies of Racine. Both are concerned with the portrayal
of Truth rather than realism and with the effects of remoteness in
time and space. In a definition which takes classicism out of its
historical context, Ionesco would seem to make the rapprochement com-
plete: "Finalement, je suis pour le classicisme: c'est cela,
I' avant-garde. Découvertes d'archetypes oubliés, immuables, re-
nouvelés dans l'expression: tout vrai créateur est classique..."

The "creative artist" as Vilar insisted, is not necessarily
the writer who creates a new play "in a new way". It may be the di-
rector or the actor who gives new expression to an old play. Accep-
tance or lack of it is not the major criterion in evaluating the cre-
ative effort. Continuity of the quest for artistic truth, asserts
Montherlant in more cynical words, assumes survival of the work:

Quand Bérénice, naguère, fut joué dans l'absurde
mise en scène de Baty, je fus de ceux qui ap-
prouvèrent cette entreprise. Elle était absurde,
mais elle provoquait indignation, discussions,
"papiers"...Durant deux mois on s'occupait dans

50 See pp. 61-63.
Experimentation on stage constitutes the ultimate expression of Racine's transformations. It is here that a proving ground is furnished where the director tests theories and impressions that have been stated abstractly on paper. "Réthéâtraliser" involves a type of adaptation distinct from those discussed in preceding chapters. The unit is a play, not an aspect of a play or of a group of plays. The sole function of that play is a performance which, once presented, is a fait accompli and not subject to revision.

In the case of a classical play the many elements to be coordinated by a director are multiplied by extrinsic attributes which a tradition of performances has attached to it. He must decide how to integrate the essence of a tragedy with its historical reality and convey the result to an unusually heterogeneous audience. The range of expectations with regard to traditional ingredients and interpretations of essential elements, complicated by degree of initiation, makes the audience of a Racine tragedy a particularly demanding group of spectators.

In addition, we have mentioned some of the considerations imposed on the director by modern technology. The impact of new knowl-

51 Montherlant, Notes, pp. 13-14.
edge and techniques, already evident, is but a hint of performances of the future. To mention only the potential of electronic media (cinema, television, radio) evokes predictions of awesome changes to be applied in theater as in other domains. The relationships between performer and perceiver have already been affected in multiple ways and we can expect acceleration of the experimental "coups d'erreur" by which Racine survives.
CHAPTER V

PSYCHOLOGY: RACINE OR FREUD?

The development of the science of psychology and the popularization and indiscriminate extensions of the term into contemporary speech cause a certain ambiguity when we attempt to psychoanalyze Racine and his works. "Psychology" now conjures up such connotations as abnormality, the subconscious, clinical analysis, and psycho-therapy, all of which have relevance only if we divorce Racine's tragedies from their temporal context and study them exclusively in the light of our own time. In terms of the seventeenth century there is no concern with remedies and cures which would enable the characters to "adjust to life." Their behavior diverges from the ordinary insofar as it is manifested at a moment of high emotional intensity and consequently with loss of rational control. The situations are unique but entirely "normal" and human.

It is nonetheless unavoidable for modern readers, conditioned as we are to the methods of psychoanalysis, to seek out behavior patterns and to describe them by means of familiar clinical labels borrowed from the case studies of psychologists and sociologists. By
and large such analyses tend to be superficial and pseudo-scientific. When undertaken in depth and with competence, they do indeed further our understanding of Racine but it is a matter of debate whether such explanations add to the esthetic rewards which, in the final analysis, depend on a degree of mystery and recognition by instinct. This is not to say that the line separating scientific from artistic creativity is fixed, or that the two are mutually exclusive. An ordered scheme of a series of tragedies, such as the one upon which Mauron bases his investigation of the subconscious in Racine,\(^1\) has a justifiable claim to beauty. We shall deal with Mauron's study later in this chapter but will first proceed on the premise that the more apt sources of pleasure for one contemplating an artistic phenomenon are the enigmatic movements of the heart and instinctive emotional empathy. OEdipus, after all, existed in all his intricacy long before becoming the subject of scientific investigation, and great writers have been psychoanalyzing unwittingly in much the same way that M. Jourdain speaks prose. Psychoanalysts simply deal in scientific fashion with the same universal material which writers mold into literary art.

There is some validity in Raymond Picard's assertion that "modern psychology consists of little more than an unenlightened exploitation of Racinian psychology."\(^2\) Montherlant assumes a more

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moderate position. He takes into account technological progress since the seventeenth century but finds that "psychology" has not by any means replaced the "investigation du coeur humain." The latter has advanced with the help of instruments more subtle than those available to classicists but in the major plays it remains worthy of interest.\(^3\)

Thierry Maulnier, also circumventing the technical term, writes of "connaissance des coeurs." \(^4\) "Psychology" thus divested of its scientific and pseudo-scientific connotations refers, when applied to Racine, to his understanding and insight into the human heart and to his talent for rendering dramatically the play of deep psychological forces.

Paul Claudel makes an analogy which hints at the direction to be taken by science-oriented critics dealing in literary criticism. He compares Racine to nuclear scientists who seek "la découverte, pas de l'atome, de l'imperceptible atome, mais du noyau, comme ils disent, de cet atome... C'est cette espèce de noyau du coeur humain qui a fasciné Jean Racine..." Claudel certainly has no pretensions of being scientific as the "comme ils disent" clearly reveals. Nevertheless, his allusion serves notice that when dealing with human emotions the scientific analogy must inevitably cede to less finite, less con-

\(^3\)Montherlant, "Montherlant devant Racine."
\(^4\)Maulnier, Racine, ch. VIII.
clusive means of revealing human phenomena. Sooner or later the scientific formulae become inadequate and the analyst, like the artist, is obliged to resort to the imperfect, ambiguous abstractions of language.

Racine, by controlling the emotional vicissitudes of his heroes within the symmetry of the dramatic form, allows no action and no utterance which might be psychologically unfounded and not in character. Yet the impact of the basically human element is conveyed undiminished: "La virtuosité de Racine fait, que dans la fatalité géométrique de l'action, pas plus que dans l'abstraction intellectualiste des thèmes, il ne sacrifie ou n'appauvrit l'humain." 6

Indeed, one aspect of the tragedies which may be justifiably singled out for its impact and appeal in our century is the laying bare of the human spirit in its most fundamental state. During the tragic moment in Racinian drama the human essence breaks through the cover of exterior realistic adornments which divert us from constant confrontation with the ever-existing tragic moment, delay the inevitable realization of our tragic fate, and attenuate its intensity. This sort of realism is a matter of inner action conveyed artistically by isolated individuals in particular predicaments. Gide distinguishes it from the realistic rendering of external manifestations of a social situation. The novel, according to Gide, strives in the direction of the latter, that is, for "le naturel" on a sociological level. It

6 Maulnier, Racine, p. 182.
should, and could imitate classical tragedy by directing concentra-
tion toward a deeper level of human nature and thus get at the par-
ticular and fundamental situation:

Le seul progrès que [le roman] envisage, c'est
de se rapprocher encore plus du naturel. Il n'a
jamais connu, le roman, cette "formidable érosion
des contours," dont parle Nietzsche, et ce volon-
taire écartement de la vie, qui permirent le style,
aux œuvres des dramaturges grecs par exemple, ou
aux tragédies du XVIIe siècle français. Connaissiez-
vous rien de plus parfait et de plus profondément
humain que ces œuvres? Mais précisément, cela
n'est humain que profondément; cela ne se pique pas
de le paraître, ou du moins de paraître réel. Cela
demeure une œuvre d'art...?

Gide cites a specific scene from Mithridate but the example is
analogous to virtually any scene in the pages of Racine:

Parfois il me paraît que je n'admire en lit-
térature rien tant que, par exemple dans Racine,
la discussion entre Mithridate et ses fils; où
l'on sait parfaitement bien que jamais un père et
des fils n'ont pu parler de la sorte, et où néan-
moins (et je devrais dire: d'autant plus) tous les
pères et tous les fils peuvent se reconnaître. En
localisant et en spécifiant, l'on restreint. Il
n'y a de vérité psychologique que partielle, il
est vrai; mais il n'y a d'art que général. Tout
le problème est là, précisément; exprimer le
général par le particulier; faire exprimer par le
particulier le général...

- Et bien! Je voudrais un roman qui serait à la
fois aussi vrai, et aussi éloigné de la réalité,
 aussi particulier et aussi général à la fois,
aussi humain et aussi fictif qu'Athalie, que Tar-
tuffe ou que Cinna.  

7 André Gide, Les Faux-monnayeurs, (Paris: Gallimard, 1925),
pp. 236-237.
8 Ibid., pp. 237-238.
The nature and function of what Giraudoux calls Racine's "réalité morale" is often obscured by assuming that basic standards change according to social class. Montherlant, while stretching the point considerably, at the same time implies that the emotions in question also transcend sociological boundaries:

On est consterné quand on voit tel dramaturge de Versailles avoir besoin de s'inspirer de pas moins de quatre auteurs (Sapho, Théocrite, Euripide, Virgile) pour décrire le sentiment de l'amour (chez Phèdre), que toute femme de chambre ressent spontanément, sans devoir s'inspirer de personne.  

Gide, as if in response to Montherlant's iconoclasm, gives a positive explanation. He makes an analogy between a seventeenth and a nineteenth century naturalism, a naturalism which may exist beneath the surface of external environment and behavior:

Racine ne méritait pas tant d'honneurs s'il n'avait pas compris, tout aussi que Baudelaire, l'ineffable ressource qu'offrent à l'artiste les régions basses, sauvages, fiévreuses et non-nettoyées d'un Creste ou d'une Hermione, d'une Phèdre ou d'un Bajazet -- et que les hautes régions sont les pauvres.  

We have seen in Chapter II how Proust makes a direct artistic application of psychology he observes in the pages of Racine. In the analogy of the couples Phèdre - Hippolyte and Marcel - Albertine, Proust shows the similarities between the anguished acts of Phèdre and the handling of his own cause with Albertine. The incident in

Phèdre, constituting the "prophétie des épisodes amoureux de ma propre existence," launches Proust on an analytical examination which searches between the lines and discerns qualifications, reservations and, in this case, contradictions to the literal words uttered. The awkward reverse psychology of Marcel and Phèdre, the puerile maneuvers of these desperate lovers and the rapid fluctuations which constantly change the form of love are not always discernible in the analyses of formal criticism. We are accustomed to seeing love defined and classified, distinguished from infatuation, hate, pride and jealousy, and projected upon a scheme like that of Stendhal's De l'amour, which will remain codified and static. Love as a dynamic, fluctuating, elusive and utterly confusing force, as Proust discerns it in Racine, has been given little critical attention. Proust's Charlus, in a conversation concerning Racine, makes reference to this often noted but relatively unexplored realm: "Les démarcations trop étroites que nous tracions autour de l'amour viennent seulement de notre grand ignorance de la vie."

Perhaps this ignorance can be diminished. In the pages which follow we will examine what progress is possible by cautious application of techniques of non-literary disciplines to such enigmatic problems as Hermoine's "Ah! ne puis-je savoir si j'aime ou si je hais?" (1. 1396, V, 1) which, it is agreed, could have been said by Néron, Polinice, Roxane and many other Racinian characters.

In the preceding critical comments one can detect a certain
effort to forego technical analysis and to express literary criticism in the language of literature. The reactions all indicate a resistance to scientific categorization of the behavior observable in the dramatic characters. In part this determination is motivated by a reluctance to deal with a work of art outside the temporal framework in which it was created. Related to that critical scruple is an unwillingness to translate art into scientific analogues, particularly those of relatively new disciplines, like psychology, which have been popularized and over-simplified. The critic seems to be held back as if in fear of distorting his subject by dissecting it into its components or by transposing it into forms appearing anachronistic and thus incongruous.

A degree of reactionary purism usually plays a role in positive literary criticism. The subject is treated with a certain veneration and the critic responds to the exigency demanding that he be true to the work under investigation by keeping intact its form and function. Such scholarly scruples indicate an attitude rather than merely a definable set of rules and are brought to bear on the equally elusive concept we might call the spirit of the work. Inevitably, however, the experience of the critic's life and times impose themselves and he must determine how and to what degree the work under scrutiny appears as a synthesis of his own disparate perspectives. The topic of critical perspectives will be treated extensively in Part II. It imposes itself in this chapter (along with other problems to be dealt with in
the next section), because the varied and elusive conception of psy-
chology, more than the other themes discussed so far, require con-
sideration of the critic's relationship to his subject.

Let us not be misled by the varying modes of psychology.
Whether we say that Phèdre is possessed by Venus or refer to her
nymphomaniacal tendencies is primarily a matter of notation. It has
been suggested that rational psychology also constitutes a body of
myths. 12 This or that complex is another version of the monsters
of mythology. The furies and the "persecution complex" are descrip-
tive terms belonging to vaguely defined bodies of belief in which
they function metaphorically. The more modern of the two concepts
appears in forms more easily recognizable in terms of our experience
but the significant difference remains chronological. The adaptation
of mythological terms to psychological classification is not acciden-
tal. Freud discovered that his paradigms existed in synthesized form
wherever a civilization left behind the description of behavior we
call myths.

The persistent insistence of critics to avoid scientific ana-
logues by excluding the word "psychology" and its technical attributes
resulted in part from the failure of nineteenth century positivists
and their successors to come up with answers, or, for that matter,
questions, which might shed new light on literature. Recourse to ex-
pressions such as "connaissance des coeurs" (Maulnier) or "la logique

12 George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, (New York: Knopf, 1961),
p. 90.
"du coeur" (Pommier) which, from today's perspective, must be considered circumlocutions of "psychology," indicates an effort to avoid the pitfalls of technical approaches to literature. Among the dangers is the necessity of removing, at least provisionally, the literary work from its literary context and viewing it as a phenomenon of the discipline or technology in question. This separation of the work of art is, of course, a perfectly valid critical activity when this is the clear objective of the researcher.

Sartre, speaking technically as a philosopher, considers the psychoanalysis of literature fundamentally an ontological matter. In his view, empirical psychology has failed because it attempts to explain behavior by means of linear projections of tendencies, or desires. For the existentialist psychologist these tendencies are not to be considered as separate psychic entities residing in the conscience. Each one is in and of itself the totality of the conscience and is manifested in its entirety, for those able to interpret it, in mime, a gesture, or an utterance.

An additional false premise of the empirical psychologist, in part a consequence of the first, is to deem psychological research as complete when a collection of tendencies has been assembled, their sequence laid out, and some of their relationships established. Sartre

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13 Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Etre et le Néant, pp. 643 ff.
concentrates his criticism on an example from Paul Bourget writing on Flaubert:

"Flaubert] paraît avoir connu comme état normal, dans sa première jeunesse, une exaltation continue et de sa force invincible... L'effervescence de son jeune sang se tourna donc en passion littéraire, ainsi qu'il arrive vers la dix-huitième année aux âmes précoces qui trouvent dans l'énergie du style ou les intensités d'une fiction de quoi tromper le besoin d'agir beaucoup ou de trop sentir, qui les tourmente."15

Let us make two notations. One, that while Sartre is dealing specifically with biography, this type of interpretation applies equally to psychoanalysis of the literary work, considered either in relation to its author or as a unit studied independently of the mind which created it. Second, if we have retained the Flaubert example and for the present do not adapt its mode of thought to Racine, it is precisely because the statement as cited is so general that, as it stands, it could easily refer to Racine and to many other writers. This is the weakness which incurs Sartre's disapproval of so-called psychology:

Le fait à expliquer -- qui est ici les dispositions littéraires du jeune Flaubert -- se résoud en une combinaison de désirs typiques et abstraits tels qu'on les rencontre chez "l'adolescent en général". Ce qui est concret ici c'est seulement leur combinaison; en eux-mêmes ils ne sont que schèmes. L'abstrait est donc, par hypothèse, antérieur au concret et le concret n'est que l'intersection de schèmes universels.16

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14Sartre's underlining here and below.
15Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, p. 614; from Paul Bourget, Essais de psychologie contemporaine.
16Ibid.
In addition to the absurdity, in terms of logic, of the principle underlying it, the example chosen fails to explain wherein lies the individuality of the "pro-jet" under consideration: "Que le besoin de trop sentir -- schème universel -- se trompe et se canalise en devenant besoin d'écrire, ce n'est pas l'explication de la 'vocation' de Flaubert: c'est ce qu'il faudrait expliquer au contraire."\(^{17}\)

Confusion as to what it is that requires explanation has been evident in Racine studies as elsewhere. Jansenist ideology, the rules of the three unities and of French prosody, writes Sartre in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, neither explain the work of art nor the act of its creation. These factors are simply parts of the "situation" imposed on Racine by history. He in turn begins from them to "reinvent" a new, Racinian work of art. The really significant questions asked by the critic should first apply directly to the individual being studied.\(^{19}\)

(Qu'est-ce que la littérature?, 184-185). Thus, in the Flaubert example Bourget, rather than to be satisfied with generalizations and clichés, should have been looking for specific information:

Pourquoi l'ambition et le sentiment de sa force produisent-ils chez Flaubert de l'exaltation plutôt qu'une attente tranquille ou qu'une impatience sombre? Pourquoi cette exaltation se spécifie-t-elle en besoin de trop agir et de trop sentir? Ou plutôt que vient faire ce besoin apparu soudain, par une génération spontanée, à la fin du paragraphe. Et pourquoi au lieu de chercher à s'assouvir dans des actes de violence, dans

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\(^{17}\)Ibid.

\(^{18}\)Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, Collection Idées, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).

\(^{19}\)Ibid., pp. 184-185.
des fugues, des aventures amoureuses ou dans la débauche, choisit-il précisément de se satisfaire symboliquement? Et pourquoi cette satisfaction symbolique, qui pourrait d'ailleurs ne pas ressortir à l'ordre artistique (il y a aussi le mysticisme, par exemple), se trouve-t-elle dans l'écriture, plutôt que dans la peinture ou la musique. "J'aurais pu, écrit quelque part Flaubert, être un grand acteur." Pourquoi n'a-t-il pas tenté de l'être?20

And yet, although we have understood nothing of the genesis of Flaubert's tendencies and although no attempt has been made to distinguish general phenomena from particular manifestations of these in regard to an individual, this, to the consternation of Sartre, passes as psychology. Our summary suffices to reveal that Sartre considers the premises and directions of the type psychology described as inadequate if not futile. The remedy suggested by existentialist psychology involves as a starting premise that the linear conception of cause-effect relationships be rejected and a conceptual scheme of totalities substituted:

Le principe de cette psychanalyse est que l'homme est une totalité et non une collection; qu'en conséquence, il s'exprime tout entier dans la plus insignificante et la plus superficielle de ses conduites -- autrement dit, qu'il n'est pas un goût, un tic, un acte humain qui ne soit révélateur.21

Proceeding on that principle, the function of psychoanalysis is to figure out ("déchiffrer") empirical behavior, to lay bare and to fix conceptually the revelations inherent in every activity. Using

20 Sartre, L'Etre et le Néant, p. 645.
21 Ibid., p. 656.
experience as a point of departure, the direction of the analysis is toward the fundamental, pre-ontological comprehension man has of his humanness. Every individual has, a priori, the potential to capture, or recapture, the deeper meaning revealed by exteriorized manifestations of fundamental psychological conditions.

In theory and practice few similarities exist between existen­
tialist psychology and the applied empirical psychology exemplified by Bourget. On the other hand, psychoanalysis according to Freud and his disciples is more closely related to what Sartre has in mind. Some subtle, and, in terms of our study, minor differences are pointed out by Sartre, such as the distinction between conscience and understanding ("conscience et connaissance")\(^{22}\) but discussion of these would take us too far beyond the boundaries of our topic.

We have been diverted somewhat from the immediate subject of our study because like Sartre, and for some of the same reasons, we find treatment of psychology unsatisfactory in many of its applications to literature. The pertinent questions are often not asked. Or the critic imposes a technical generalization of his own era upon the subject at hand. As a result the object of study is sometimes lifted out of the context the author had in mind and reappears in a frame of reference not readily accessible to the reader lacking a particular kind of erudition. Speaking of the dramatists of the 1940's Sartre

\(^{22}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 658.$
explains why the detachment from the "situation" causes them to bypass psychology as a significant dramatic device:

For us psychology is the most abstract of sciences because it studies the workings of our passions without plunging them back into their true human surroundings, without their background of religious and moral values, the taboos and commandments of society, the conflicts of nations and classes, of rights of wills, of actions.23

But whereas dramatists might shy away from abstractions, critics must sooner or later come to grips with them. The most valuable example for us of such an undertaking is Mauron's detailed investigation of the subconscious element in Racine. *L'Inconscient dans l'oeuvre et la vie de Racine* represents the most comprehensive attempt to arrive at a workable synthesis of psychoanalysis and literary criticism. A scrupulous scientist and an intelligent and sensitive reader, Mauron avoids the dangers imposed upon would-be psychocritics by the confining specialization of their training. His purpose is not that of the medically oriented researcher who utilizes data, in this case the literary work, to arrive at conclusions concerning the psyche of the individual who created it. On the other hand, Mauron's scientific sophistication enables him to avoid the poorly defined, intuitive generalizations of the critic applying amateur psychology. Such vague notions as a writer's "temperament" are replaced by the more meaningful concept of a largely subconscious but analyzable psychic structure.

The ultimate purpose of Mauron's analysis is to arrive at some conclusions concerning "la psychologie de la création." In this quest, the creator, in theory at least, functions in a dual role. Pertinent biographical factors, reasonably well documented, are brought to bear on the artistic creation as parallels to literary elements. A second role is based on the conception of the author as a hypothetical entity from which the work is generated. His biographical reality is over-shadowed by his existence as an abstract creative force. He is the source from which plays emanate, much like dreams, which are also phenomena bringing to the surface and translating the forms of the subconscious. Dream and work of art belong to similar orders of psychological activity and their interpretation must be undertaken in similar ways:

... les mécanismes de ces transferts affectifs sont certainement ceux du "travail de rêve": déplacement, condensation, symbolisme, etc. Les mouvements de la libido se font partout selon les mêmes lois. L'œuvre est pourtant d'un autre ordre que le rêve. Les mécanismes n'y jouent pas aveuglement; ils sont coordonnés, puis intégrés. C'est que l'artiste, par tâtonnements intuitifs mais volontaires, cherche à révéler cet inconscient qu'il ignore. Il ne lui donne pas ce nom, ni aucun autre. Mais il le cherche, et la révélation qu'il en fait, convenablement traduite dans notre langue, correspond à une véritable auto-diagnostique.\(^{24}\)

Racine's total production of tragedies is seen by Mauron as a compendium of consistently repeated patterns revealing fundamental

\(^{24}\)Mauron, L'Inconscient, p. 39.
myths in the subconscious of the author. Having established the basic schemata, Mauron then analyzes their modulations as they manifest themselves in individual plays or from one group of tragedies to another. The central event around which the major schema forms is "the return of the Father." In the four plays preceding Mithridate (Andromaque, Britannicus, Bérénice, Bajazet) the father figure plays a major role. The details worked out by subjecting this pattern to rigorous Freudian analysis bring forth subconscious preoccupations in the author's mind and translate them into rationally comprehensive language.

There is no doubt that Mauron has clarified aspects of Racine's work and with cogent presentation and practice of his method (to which we cannot hope to do justice here) has opened many avenues for further research. Most significant perhaps, his search for subconscious geneses is a significant advance in "la psychologie de la création." Nevertheless, a major difficulty persists for which blame rests on the specialized training of scholars. The reader trained in traditional approaches to literary criticism is seldom equipped to understand the theories and data supporting Freudian symbolism. We are asked to accept at face value that when Phèdre takes from Hippolyte the sword given him by Thésée, she is symbolically engaging in castration and incest. Such liberal application of Freudian psychology, while not out of the ordinary nowadays, and no longer causing embarrassment (unless it be subconsciously), is seldom fully comprehended.
Removed from its context the Freudian interpretation is presented as a simplistic analogy of overt behavior and sub-conscious motivation. The supporting data which make plausible the connection between a psychological impulse and the symbolism which expresses it are somehow to be taken for granted.

The psychology of literature, like other types of literary criticism can benefit from a variety of ideological approaches. Traditional as well as newer critical tools and principles (which do not long remain new), continue to ask basic questions and to invite constructive scepticism. Maulnier's poetic insights into "la connaissance du coeur," the logic of Sartre's ontology, and the refined scientific techniques exhibited by Mauron, all of them admittedly partial and viewed from different perspectives, constantly increase and renew the pleasures of literary study.

With this chapter we have by no means exhausted even the major Racinian themes. A great deal of commentary may be collected on the question of Racine's Jansenism, on his concept of the human condition and on the always fruitful Corneille - Racine parallel in the twentieth century. By not devoting separate chapters to these topics it may appear that we have truncated too abruptly this section of our study. But the change in direction taken in the following pages has imposed itself during the whole of Part I and also in the course of

See Bibliography: Bénichou, Butor, Giraudoux, Goldmann, Mauriac, Nelson, Pommier, et al.
considering precisely such topics as Jansenism and the human condition, where the critic's own view refuses to be isolated from that of his subject. This has been most apparent in the present chapter. While our objective will still be to extract what is significant in Racine, the emphasis will no longer be on what it is that the critic is looking for in Racine. Henceforth, we will take a closer look at the critic as intermediary and will inquire into the perspectives and attitudes from which he may examine works of art.
PART II

THE REAPPRAISAL:

PERSPECTIVES OF RACINE CRITICISM
INTRODUCTION

FORMATS OF CLASSIFICATION FOR RACINE CRITICISM

The preceding pages have dealt with Racinian themes which are of greatest interest to twentieth century critics. We have identified them and have examined the manner in which they are assimilated into the conceptual sphere of twentieth century experience. In the course of our investigation it has become increasingly clear that our sources talk about the same themes as earlier critics. In addition to the subjects discussed in the preceding chapters, the religious implications of the tragedies are sought with an enormous diversity of conclusions. The Catholicism seen by Mauriac\(^1\) appears in sharp contrast to Butor's contention that the drama is blasphemous and to Goldmann's treatment of Jansenism as a secular, social concept. The search for Racine's sources continues but whereas Knight\(^3\) looked for

the specific influences of Hellenism, Barthes traced situations in the plays to archetypal origins. The choices of subjects have undergone no substantial change. The modifications which did come into focus were largely a matter of relationships between critics and their subjects. Different attitudes and perspectives led to different approaches. In view of this development it is clear that a continued delineation of themes would turn into a project of diminishing returns. More rewarding ideas may come to light if we take a closer look at the fundamental relationships of Racine critics to their subject.

We have selected three among the many critics who have made exciting and significant contributions to Racine studies during the past decade. They are chosen on the basis of the predominant perspective from which they view their subject: Roland Barthes, who develops his analysis from a position inside the world of the Racinean character; Lucien Goldmann whose point of observation fluctuates between the inner and outer realms of the work under scrutiny; both are viewed in contrast to the more traditional, outside perspective of René Jasinski. Each will be examined on his own terms with a minimum of cross-reference. A final chapter will compare the three critics and establish their functional relationship.

A second objective in this section of the dissertation is the consideration of "perspective" as a criterion for classifying criti-

\footnote{See Bibliography, Jasinski, Goldmann, Barthes.}
cism. This aspect of our project, not anticipated originally, grew in part out of the confusion and inadequacy characteristic of existing systems of classification. Barthes and Goldmann, for instance, belong to the so-called school of "la Nouvelle Critique" and are admittedly structuralist critics. Yet their fundamental similarities are so insignificant and the differences so telling that they cannot be grouped together meaningfully under any label now in use. In contrast, Jasinski would presumably be identified as an exponent of "traditional" criticism in spite of the basic similarity between his and Goldmann's dialectics. We will examine below the validity of such categories as they apply to the three critics in question. But first let us anticipate two possible objections to the modification of our original schema.

By moving from the thematic format of Part I to a structural pattern based on the critics' perspectives we are, in a sense, shifting emphasis from Racine's dramatic works to the genre of criticism. The original statement of purpose is not thereby dismissed. The major objective is still to elucidate Racine who remains the center of attention within a sphere of reference enlarged in this section of our study.

The order chosen for the two parts of our project attempts to reflect the inductive process of critical examination. The reverse sequence, by beginning from the larger, more general framework would have imposed a deductive procedure on the reading of the two parts.
In moving from a discussion of significant themes in Racine's tragedies to the topic of perspectives for perceiving these themes we are reflecting the direction of our own thought sequence. More important, we are conveying with our format the patterns of critical investigation of the critics utilized as sources. The inductive process moves through three overlapping stages: from observation of the work ensue principles concerning critical method used in the observation; these in turn are extended into universal methodologies or attitudes pertaining to literary criticism in general. Obviously, no thought process can be as simple as that statement of theory nor can the three phases be categorically separated in practice. But the divisions and their order are nevertheless discernible.

The preceding chapters indicate that a work of literary art cannot function as a fixed, isolated entity. It asks eventually to be considered in its dynamic relationship to a reader. To inquire what a work is about becomes inadequate without the corollary question asking how it gets its meaning; in other words what activity occurs between critic and subject.

Although for the critics we will be treating, and for us, the central subject is Racine, the critical theories and methods applied evolve inevitably beyond the immediate focal point. Invariably they become systematized and tend to be presented increasingly for their own sake as tools of insight and exegesis. In each case the critic proceeds from the subject which generated his activity to conscious con-
sideration of that activity and hence to its extension as a universal device for the approach to all literature.

By operating simultaneously on the multiple levels of literary subject, criticism and criticism of criticism, the critics are engaging in progressive degrees of abstraction. However, they (and this dissertation) are thereby not being diverted from the announced subject. Nor is it sheer coincidence that Racine be so consistently chosen as the sample subject of critical experimentation, or, to state it more accurately, that critical experimentation should be imposed by a study of Racine. His power of attraction endures because he best represents the idea of a "transparence classique," because as the creator of "un art inégalé de la disponibilité" he continues to lure the critical prospector with assurance of literary treasure.

Objections may also be raised by what may seem like another contradiction of our earlier statement of purpose. We are referring to our dependence on "creative" and "professional" as categories of criticism. As with other schemes of classification now in practice we accept them with reluctance and have endeavored to exercise caution by utilizing them only where they offer at least a degree of reliability for establishing groupings. If we are now gradually rejecting critical categories presently in use, the reason is that they have become even less suitable for plotting criticism of recent years.

\[6\] Ibid., p. 11.
Until "la Nouvelle critique" assumed the proportions of a movement there was practical value in retaining the distinction between the "creative" and the "professional critics." Up to that point, we are still in general agreement with Anna Balakian who reiterates a hypothesis upon which this study was originally based:

But while the critic strives to be recognized as a creative artist, so far the creative writers themselves have best succeeded in originating new critical dimensions and in revising periodically the hierarchy of our literary values. In this guise it is not the professional critics nor the editors of literary journals, but Gide, Valéry, Breton, and Sartre who loom large as directors of the French critical conscience of the twentieth century. 7

In the context of that paragraph we concur with the writer; in terms of more recent criticism we find that the "creative" - "professional" distinction becomes exceedingly blurred. The simple explanation is that most of it is both written by university professors and is "creative" in every sense of that term.

Critics of criticism utilize other criteria of classification, most of them marked by obsolescence. Let us deal briefly with two of these. The one, based on biographical categories of classification has fallen into disuse. The other, ideological criticism, very much in


We also take issue with the value judgment based on "success" as that term is used by Professor Balakian. The "creative" critics relative success is attributable in part to extrinsic factors such as wider distribution. Intrinsic merits of a critical work, available to a restricted group of specialists, receive a great deal less consideration.
practice, nevertheless defies classification.

One difficulty with categories based on this or that dominant character trait of Racine as seen by the critic is that, all too often, these traits were considered to be mutually exclusive. It was implied that a choice was called for between "Racine tendre" and "Racine fauve," between the artist and the courtier. Lately it is recognized that Racine combined extremes of artistic dedication and ambitious opportunism, that he was probably gentle as well as cruel and that these extremes are not necessarily incompatible. Still to be explored is the concept of negative correlation: that a kind and humane Racine would necessarily be capable of cruelty in proportion to his gentleness; that if Néron is a projection of Racine's character, so, inevitably, is Julie.

Ideological criticism brings about conundrums of a different sort to replace those created by biographically oriented examination of literature. Here the critic concentrates on a trait or theme in the works of Racine and pursues his analysis along lines of specialized techniques associated with an academic discipline or a philosophical ideology. Thus, for René Wellek, any attempt to write the history of French criticism in the twentieth century will involve classifying the 'isms' represented. The critic of criticism wishing to establish

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some order must begin by charting a variety of overlapping ideologies such as Marxist existentialism, Bergsonism, Roman Catholicism, Bergsonian Catholicism, structuralism, psycho-criticism, etc. The random enumeration of "isms" is indicative of the diversity of material and its eclectic combinations. The impracticality of Wel-lek's suggestion is even more obvious when we consider that the diversity is self-perpetuating and that the ideologies multiply and undergo mutations at a progressively increasing rate. Literary criticism aside, one can observe in the academic world that such disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and philosophy are changing so rapidly as a result of internal evolution and cross-cultural influences that they no longer serve as fully reliable descriptions of the activities of their practitioners.

While critics of criticism have been hard put, as we shall see, to identify strains of ideological criticism, their efforts in that direction have had far-reaching results. In dealing with an expanded critical spectrum they have shifted emphasis from the immediate Racinian aspect under consideration by a critic to the conceptual sphere in which the criticism is undertaken. The frame of reference thus includes both author and critic; it now encompasses the historical past within the critical present. This development (about which we will have more to say) brings about even greater diversity and indicates clearly that a work of criticism is a partial and aspectual reaction to

10 Ibid., p. 47.
a work of art. The critic's quest for the exclusive, definitive study, once a prevalent and feasible objective, remains only as an attitude seeping through here and there between protestations of scholarly humility and tolerance for other responsible points of view.

One other organizational device utilized by critics of criticism should be mentioned, if only to emphasize the absence of an efficacious scheme of classification. We are referring to chronological groupings which seem to be universally accepted even when their only function is as strictly formal as the back and front covers of a book. Such is the unfortunate designation "la Nouvelle critique," with its inherent obsolescence, which seems as if chosen in desperation. The label has virtually no descriptive capacity. It groups critics of a certain period, say 1955 to 1970, into a temporal category and suggests that criticism shares with other phenomena of its time certain analogous tendencies.

A case in point is Laurent LeSage's sampler. Having rejected nationality, profession and methodology as possible categories of classification he manages to deduce only the most vague and general characteristics suggesting relationships among the members of the "Nouveaux critiques" group:

On the basis of the nature of their work it has not been possible to discern quite different groups among the New Critics. Indeed it is not possible to define by description the group as a whole, except in general terms of what they are not.

LeSage, New French Criticism.
or profess they are not. We know them as students of the creative processes of an author, interested particularly in the spontaneous and unconscious function of those processes as they manifest themselves in an author's work.  

At best they are unified by their originality and diversity:

We know that they rely heavily upon their own intuition, which, since they have, along with a superior culture, brilliantly original minds and great powers of imagination, produces a type of criticism which is itself creative. We know that they are not content with simple scholarship, biographical work, or any criticism which does not involve the intimate elaboration of a literary work within the creative faculties.

Such generalizations, LeSage realizes, cannot define a group of critics. They tell us little and fail to distinguish this from most other groups of critics. In dealing with the problem of classification, LeSage, it seems to us, is correct in rejecting categories offering false promise of reliability. Alternative systems, however, fail to produce better results for him because he is caught in the chronological frame of reference of "la Nouvelle critique." The outcome is a listing of critics bound together by mutual general qualities and by the fact that they happen to be writing at the same time. Although they are far more significant than the similarities, no pattern, not even a general one, is given to classify the differences.

It is our contention that criticism of criticism as a genre may be clarified and enriched, and that, by application of structural categories to critical works, much of the confusion mentioned above

\[\text{12}^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{p. 21.}\]
\[\text{13}^{\text{Ibid.}}.\]
may be mitigated. By utilizing what we shall call "perspective" as
the fundamental element in determining the nature of criticism we
can avoid taking for granted that critics participating in a period
of time may be effectively identified in terms of that time. We have
seen that, all too often, as in the case of "la Nouvelle critique,"
"the tangle of individual similarities and differences is too great."14
The confusion is lessened if, provisionally, we remove the critical
activity from its temporal domain and if, in addition, and again
provisionally, we view it apart from constantly changing thematic and
ideological criteria. Instead, we shall identify it first of all in
terms of stable, atemporal categories of structure.

"Perspective," as we conceive it here, refers to the description,
in spatial terms, of the initial relationship between the critic
and his subject. He views it either from without, from within or
alternates between these two points of observation.

Let us elaborate on this intentionally simplistic statement of
our concept. It refers to a point of departure for critical activity
which is independent of the artificial and elusive boundaries in-
evitably imposed by historical, geographic and philosophical group-
ings. It is familiar in that it imitates creative activity having oc-
curred at other levels, be it in a novel or in criticism of that novel.
Finally, it makes subordinate but does not exclude, consideration of
period, nationality, profession, theme, method, ideology, etc. These

14 Ibid., p. 20.
are secondary categories. They are aspects focused upon from the initial perspective and are useful in ascertaining the nature of individual works rather than identifying groups of significant size.

Our perspectual model bears a resemblance to Jean Starobinski's analysis of "le regard critique." A combination of what he calls "le regard surplombant" and intimate participation in the work constitute the critic's activity:

La critique complète n'est peut être ni celle qui vise à la totalité (comme le fait le regard surplombant), ni celle qui vise à l'intimité (comme le fait l'intuition identifiante); c'est un regard qui sait exiger tour à tour le surplomb et l'intimité, sachant par avance que la vérité n'est ni dans l'une ni dans l'autre tentative, mais dans le mouvement qui va inlassablement de l'une à l'autre. Il ne faut refuser ni le vertige de la distance, ni celui de la proximité: il faut désirer ce double excès où le regard est chaque fois près de perdre tout pouvoir.16

Starobinski describes a process: the critical activity from the first reading of a work of art to the final formulation of a work of criticism. There is no suggestion of method, as Starobinski is quick to add. The critical effort is highly subjective and at its best even motivated by gratuitous stimuli directed from the work of art to the "surprised viewer:"

Mais peut-être aussi la critique a-t-elle tort de vouloir à ce point régler l'exercice de son propre regard. Mieux vaut, en mainte circonstance, s'oublier soi-même et se laisser surprendre. En récompense, je sentirai, dans l'œuvre, naître un regard qui se dirige vers moi: ce regard n'est

16 Ibid., p. 28.
pas un reflet de mon interrogation. C'est une conscience étrangère, radicalement autre, qui me cherche, qui me fixe, et qui me demande de répondre. Je me sens exposé à cette question qui vient ainsi à ma rencontre. L'oeuvre m'interroge. Avant de parler pour mon compte, je dois prêter ma propre voix à cette étrange puissance qui m'interpelle; or, si docile que je sois, je risque toujours de lui préférer les musiques rassurantes que j'invente.  

Our "inside" and "outside" perspectives, corresponding to the "regard surplombant" and the "intimité" of Starobinski, are conceived with a purpose very different from his. In the first place, Starobinski's aim is to describe a general pattern of critical reading. Our purpose is to isolate discernible differences within this pattern for the purpose of classification. Our immediate interest is methodological. Rather than to describe the whole critical process, our concept of perspective attempts to fix a methodological point of departure. There is no thought of formulating a complete and rigid method. Like Starobinski we are averse to regulating critical exercise. But by suggesting "perspective" as an initial factor to be determined in critical procedure we think we have isolated an element offering significant advantages:

1. The three types of perspectives (inside, outside, or alternating) are universally applicable.

2. They are entirely free of a priori connotations of value.

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17Ibid.
3. They do not preclude any method or point of view in subsequent steps of the critical process.

4. They have the capacity to communicate directly and unequivocally a meaningful element of all criticism.

One other distinction between Starobinski's description and our analysis requires comment. It will be obvious that Starobinski's manner of giving form to critical activity is itself an endeavor in literary art. Suggestive and original images such as "le regard surplombant" are synthetic and revelatory. Our effort is analytic. We reduce and simplify. The diagrams and the graphic terminology, i.e. "inside" and "outside" perspective, are devoid of poetic force. And yet the artistic criticism of Starobinski and others studied here, particularly Barthes, share with our study a fundamental characteristic. All are engaged in a process of translating literary works into different forms in order to make them more comprehensible or comprehensible in additional ways. Reduction to line patterns can achieve this end as well as metaphoric recasting. 18

Other basic schemes of criticism, for defining and classifying it, resemble our process of understanding. An awareness of the state of confusion of prevailing formats have led students of the literary arts to formulate their remedies. Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism 19

18 In Part II, Ch. IV our discussion of the cycle of critical activity will elaborate on this comparison.

is an attempt to work out a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles, and techniques of literary criticism." We need not make an extensive comparison of "his" system with the plan we offer. However, its genesis bears an interesting resemblance to that of the section being introduced here, and we shall utilize it in order to reiterate and to clarify how we perceive our subject. The book "forced itself" on the author. After the completion of a study on William Blake, Frye set out to apply the principles of literary symbolism and Biblical typology, learned from Blake, to Spenser's Faerie Queene. But his subject was reluctant to yield to the intended manner of dealing with it: "The introduction to Spenser became an introduction to the theory of allegory, and that theory obstinately adhered to a much larger theoretical structure." This expansion of the frame of reference is approximately what happened in the course of the present study. But our interpretation of the turn of events differs from that of Frye.

In his view "the theoretical and practical aspects of the task he had begun completely separated," and a book on pure theory was the result. We prefer to regard the modification of the subject not as a separation but as an extension, so that simultaneous treatment of theory and practice are not precluded. As we see it, the "separation" is artificial. The divisions of a subject into separate

\[20\text{Ibid., p. 3.}\]
\[21\text{Ibid., p. vii.}\]
books or, in our case, parts of books, is a requirement of form dictated by the nature of our medium rather than by the subject. If instead of pages of prose, we visualize, graphically, the model of three concentric spheres (work of art, criticism, criticism of criticism), or imagine a comparable representation for Frye's "theoretical and practical aspects" the whole of the parts and what connects them can be viewed simultaneously. That is how the relationship of Part I with what follows must be envisioned.

We shall conclude this exposition of our plans with one further comparison. The term "perspective" calls to mind the theory of "perspectivism" mentioned in Theory of Literature. Although our ideas and objectives are very different from those of Wellek, in spite of the similarity of terms, a comparison can further clarify what we have in mind.

"Perspectivism" is primarily an attempt to find a compromise for the opposed theories of "historicism" and "critical relativism." For the perspectivist a work of literary art cannot be conceived exclusively in terms of the time of its creation and the intentions of its author as absolutism would have it. The argument of the relativists is not adequate either. In their view, each age is "a self-contained unity...incommensurate with any other." There would thus exist a total discontinuity in the history of poetry. "Perspectivism"

22See Part I, Introduction, p. 3.
24Ibid., p. 32.
supersedes and harmonizes "the unsound thesis of absolutism and the equally unsound antithesis of relativism...in a new synthesis which makes the scale of values itself dynamic, but does not surrender it as such."  This is accomplished by referring a work of art to the values of its own time and to those of all subsequent periods. In the process, "perspectivism" takes into account both the eternal quality of a work of art and its historical nature: it preserves a certain identity and at the same time passes through a process of traceable development. "'Perspectivism' means that we recognize that there is one poetry, one literature, comparable in all ages, developing, changing, full of possibilities."

Although there are points of disagreement, our concept of "perspective" differs from Wellek's primarily in purpose. "Perspectivism" outlines a comprehensive theory of literature whereas our more limited objective is to identify a methodological point of departure for the reader-critic. On that basis we justify the elimination, provisional to be sure, of established systems of values. We do not take issue with the insistence, in Wellek's theory, on discernible values as referents for judgment. This matter simply does not fall within the range of our thesis.

Let us also note that Wellek's perspectives are historically oriented. The different points of view from which the object is viewed are points in time. Our emphasis is on subject-object rela-
tionships removed from chronological time. We perceive and describe in optical terms to be taken more literally than a "viewing" of historical evolution of literature and literary studies. Understanding our thesis depends on actually visualizing the geometric figures to which we reduce mental activity.

In comparison to Wellek's comprehensive structure of literature the process we are plotting concentrates on a more fundamental level of individual behavior. In his scheme literary history is dynamic in that it follows progressive movement of a work of art through time, whereas literary criticism is "primarily static in approach,"\(^{27}\) in that it presumably arrests the work temporarily for purposes of evaluation. For us, the bilateral relationship of reader and work of art generates an activity characterized by constant movement and change. Upon contact with a reader a work is inevitably transformed and is therefore inherently dynamic. If criticism were not dynamic, as Wellek implies, we would have to conclude that history could then not show progression and change either. This is why literary history is for us a sub-category of literary criticism rather than an alternative but equal frame of reference of literature. We see the critical impulse as primary in literary activity.

The two largest sections in *Theory of Literature* are classified respectively under "The Extrinsic Approach to the Study of Litera-

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 30. We quibble with this contradiction in terms only to point out that Wellek is not actually visualizing the figures and motions of his schemata.
ture" and "Intrinsic Study of Literature." These categories bear little resemblance to what we have in mind with "inside" and "outside" perspectives. "Extrinsic approach" refers to ways of studying literary material by means of knowledge not inherently a part of literature. The study of biography, psychology, and society, applied to literature, are among the approaches. "Intrinsic study" describes the examination of literature conducted with the tools and measures of literature itself: rhythm, meter, style, image, genre, etc. In contrast, "inside" and "outside" perspectives mark the predominant point of view from which a critic observes his subject, irrespective of his devices and norms. Barthes, for instance, will describe in anthropological and psychological terms what he perceives from his inside perspective.

Because Racine is treated in terms of his relationships to critics his name will not be mentioned as frequently in the following pages as would be the case if biographical elements were the referents. But if it is useful to reveal Racine by studying his family background, his character and his education, it is equally practical to examine those influences by which posterity transform him; if a type of understanding can come from contemplating the site of his birthplace or of Port-Royal then the domain of criticism in which he continues to live today can also yield practical insights directly pertinent to the topic "Racine."

With the exception of the fixed point of departure our analyses
follow no pre-established pattern. Like Starobinski, we are aware of the "regard" directed from work to reader. We recognize a "conscience étrangère...qui me cherche, qui me fixe, et qui me demande de répondre."\(^{28}\) We have allowed our pre-conceptions, both approving and hostile, to be subdued or revised by letting the critic suggest the salient features of his approach to Racine. It remains to be seen whether we have been excessively docile insofar as we have come to regard three very different critics with appreciation and enthusiasm.

\(^{28}\) Starobinski, *L'œil vivant*, p. 28.
A random glance at the titles of recent scholarly publications reveals an enormous variety of approaches to the study and enjoyment of literature. Responsible innovation in criticism meets with general approval and the resultant diversification stands as an accepted attribute of scholarship. By contrast, an altogether different picture emerges from the vestiges of restricted concepts of literary investigation enduring in classroom texts and lectures. On that level of the academic hierarchy, the study of literary history, as the fundamental prerequisite for the understanding and appreciation of literature, remains a largely unchallenged critical premise. Indeed, literary history and literary criticism are sometimes treated as though synonymous.¹ In this chapter we refer to scholars

¹The survey course, as a basic unit of literary education, and the chronologically organized anthology which is its basic tool may lead to misconceptions about the nature and function of literature. Analogies of literary bits and pieces to relevant historical phenomena cannot alone produce valid, holistic miniatures of literary activity. Such analogies can result only in partial and aspectual first stages toward more comprehensive structures.
who go to no such extreme. Their analyses do however reflect the assumption that the historical background of a work of art stands as the primary unit of a comprehensive critical structure.

As a consequence of this often unquestioned premise literary history can, and indeed did, come to be taken for granted as the foundation for studied appreciation of literature. When challenged by exponents of alternative approaches like those of "new" criticism it tends to be rejected summarily as obsolescent or irrelevant to authentic reading. The opposing positions are not necessarily at one extreme or the other, but literary history, for its practitioners and for those who reject it, in whole or in part, has become somewhat routine in its procedures. Its familiarity has caused it to be passed over as a subject of analysis. But when Monsieur Jourdain is confronted by poetry as an alternative means of expression he becomes aware of prose and the necessity to make distinctions between the two modes. In this chapter, in view of the vigorous discussion of differing critical concepts now prevalent we feel obliged to re-examine the activity called literary history. To this end, we shall formulate a scheme which will then lend itself to comparison with those of alternative critical approaches to be treated in subsequent chapters.

In our study of René Jasinski's Vers le vrai Racine, much of the structure is so familiar as to seem self-evident. However, the obvious is here used to serve as a point of reference for the less familiar schemata of criticism to be dealt with later. In turn, the
less conventional structures bring into relief elements of established procedures which might otherwise be neglected.

Jasinski, from a point of observation outside his subject scans a chronological line spanning the career of Racine from its beginning to the retreat after Phèdre. A period of approximately fifteen years is divided into chapters examining consecutively the years relevant to each play: Chapter IV, "D'Alexandre à Andromaque," Chapter V, "Andromaque," Chapter VI, "D'Andromaque aux Plaideurs." The evolution of the dramatic works is consistently traced along lines of this basic pattern.

Jasinski correlates three types of phenomena: Racine's personal and professional life, conditions of his environment, and his drama. In the over-all view "le vrai Racine" of the equivocal title is a synthesis of these three sets of factors. Within that scheme there is also a sub-structure in which the third of these elements, the drama, functions as the synthesis of the other two: the works of art are conditioned by the interaction of factors in Racine's personal life with phenomena of his socio-historical situation.  

The actual process of synthesis is not of immediate interest in the two bulky volumes of Vers le vrai Racine, nor does Jasinski claim to give due consideration to all the ingredients active in the "extraordinaire alchimie" producing the dramatic masterpieces. The

2 References in this chapter are to Vers le vrai Racine unless otherwise indicated.
critic limits himself to identifying and describing two interacting cycles of phenomena: the socio-political situations affecting Racine and the relevant factors of his personal life. The unique and lasting fascination of Racine's plays is formed out of

*ceste perpetuelle synthése du monde intérieur avec le monde contemporain, tous deux fécondés l'un par l'autre avant de s'intégrer à une histoire plus ou moins reculée qui les enrichit encore en les grandissant, de s'élever enfin aux thèmes éternels et de s'idéaliser dans la beauté pure.)*

In Jasinski's dialectical approach a considerable role is admittedly given to conjectures varying in degree of objectivity. They range from deductions based on facts, reasonably well documented, to intuitive insights which are cautiously passed on as such for the reader's consideration. Two factors support even the boldest of the conjectural assertions. First, those parallels linking "création poétique" to "réalité vivante" which can be demonstrated by documentary evidence have been collected in such abundance that it is reasonable to assume extensions of the analogies. The hypothesis that Henriette de France was incorporated into the character of Andromaque cannot be convincingly demonstrated in terms of evidence which applies directly. The theory is however supported by the fact that a recurrent pattern of such assimilations exists and can be effectively

*Jasinski makes clear that the order of these two factors, "le monde intérieur" and "le monde contemporain," depends on their relative importance which varies with circumstances and subject. These are, moreover, not the only factors: historical elements, literary reminiscences and others, not considered, also have their functions in the complex creative process.*
documented in a great number of cases. In the study of Bérénice, for example, Jasinski establishes a high degree of probability for the parallels between the heroic images of Titus and Louis XIV, both as rulers and as lovers. The other factor lending weight to the more conjectural theories is closely related to the first. Although Jasinski never goes to the extreme of claiming that the tragedies are conceived like romans-à-clef, he is convinced that the seventeenth century vogue of literary allusions to actual persons and situations can be profitably explored in the study of Racine's plays.

It becomes apparent that in order to understand Jasinski's method we must examine the relationship between factual data and conjectures. How does the critic synthesize available facts with hypothetical complements added by him? In what manner does he manipulate these elements to give comprehensive form to an historical phenomenon? A summary of the chapters pertaining to the Andromaque period will enable us to proceed to an examination of Jasinski's critical activity.

The years during which Racine is concerned with Andromaque mark a very definite phase in his career as well as in his emotional life. It is a confident play, following the successful performance of Alexandre, a triumph augmented by the controversy it generated. The

Jasinski considers the seventeenth century artistic disguises of actuality a development evolving from medieval allegory. In his view, literary history has not been aware of the extent of cryptography. It is interesting to note that Jasinski is here close to Barthes' preoccupation with semiotics.
choice of subject which, if not entirely "anti-cornélien," as Jasinski suggests, is certainly independent of Corneille's concepts of tragedy, demonstrates the self-assurance with which Racine set forth in new directions. Two incidents of this period are indicative of a sense of independence and confidence: the abrupt and unconventional transfer of Alexandre to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, constituting a betrayal of Molière, and the bitter dissension with Nicole and Port-Royal. Both episodes pertain primarily to Racine's career.

The treatment of another event of consequence during these years presents an opportunity to note an aspect of Jasinski's dialectical method. The liaison with the actress Marquise Du Parc concerns Racine's professional as well as his private life. Considerable data are available for the documentation of the professional dossier. On the other hand, the record of the emotional vicissitudes are of course less readily available and Jasinski looks to the play for reflections of biographical fact.

Within the context of literary history the work of art, as it is here used by the critic, must be considered a secondary or indirect source of information. As such, many critics deem it unreliable or irrelevant. We cannot adequately discuss this controversy in the summary at hand but mention must be made of the undeniable virtuosity with which Jasinski exercises his method. The correspondence between the wooing of Marquise Du Parc and the fictitious situations in Andromaque are persuasive by sheer quantity. Qualitatively, Jasinski is most con-
vincing when, for lack of historical documents, he compensates with perspicacious and subtle psychological insights which translate the "secrets échos" of the poetry into biographical probabilities:

Il se peut même qu'un vers donne le dernier mot de ce caractère attirant et irritant, de la Du Parc dont Racine a dû scruter passionnément les profondeurs:

"Incapable toujours d'aime et de haïr", (v. 1439) constate Cléone. Pour une part au moins, n'est-ce pas la clef de l'énigme? A travers la diplomatie d'Andromaque, Racine - mutatis mutandis - ne laisse-t-il pas deviner ce fond de froideur, cet égoïsme inquiet, et finalement cette difficulté à aimer qui caractérise toute séduction à la fois voulue et retenue, engageante mais aussi retractée, experte surtout à se dérober: d'où s'expliqueraient, un peu comme pour Célimène devant Alceste, les déconcertantes sécheresses de la Du Parc. (v. I, p. 186).

Jasinski must here take into account the many secondary sources dealing with the controversial topic of Andromaque's "coquetterie."

A succinct and sensitive note adequately summarizes an important theme in Racine scholarship:

Nous n'entendons pas qu'Andromaque soit à proprement parler coquette. Il faut même écarter cette "coquetterie vertueuse" qui depuis Geoffroy et Nisard fournit matière à tant de dissertations scolaires. D. Mornet a parfaitement montré qu'il s'agit d'une adresse légitime: diplomatie de grande dame rompue aux intrigues de cour et qui négocie finement en des conjectures délicates (L'Andromaque de Racine, p. 256 sqq.). L'art de Racine est ici, croyons nous, d'épurer la coquetterie et de la transposer sur le plan d'une humanité beaucoup plus haute. Mais même cette diplomatie ne va pas sans complexités. (v. I, p. 186, n. 2).

In the translation from life to fiction, from experienced emo-
tions to dramatic art, intricate changes occur. The two terminals are never identical. Marquise - Andromaque is a complex synthesis combining elements of each. Racine - Pyrrhus is modified by influences from Homer and Vergil as well as by Racine - Oreste, a figure living the melancholy, somber side of the author. In the hypothetical genesis of Andromaque Hermione is also a synthetic creation evolving from a number of Racine's romantic experiences:

Hermione, en réunissant deux modèles, en y mêlant des traits de Marquise progressivement plus nombreux, aurait permis l'équilibre des personnages et la parfaite unification de l'intrigue, sa complexité même servant en quelque sorte de charnière entre des séries primitivement plus séparées. (v. I, p. 211).

The allusions to contemporary court life are less significant in Andromaque than in La Thébaïde and Alexandre and subsequently in Britannicus and Bérénice where direct analogies are established between the characters of the play and Louis XIV and his entourage. It is suggested, nevertheless, that the situation confronting Andromaque shows many similarities to that of Henriette de France:


Jasinski concludes that while Henriette was not the original model for

5 Marquise Du Parc and Armande Béjart, Molière's wife.
Andromaque, her story was made known to Racine and incorporated by him into the play:

Mais qu'après coup, et peut-être dès le cours de l'élaboration, Racine ait perçu ou même suggéré quelques affinités; qu'ensuite, faisant sa cour à Madame, il ait discrètement appuyé quelques rappels et qu'enfin celle-ci, émue, charmée, lui ait fourni des précisions complémentaires; que pour elle il ait en particulier dévié d'une adroite flatterie un récit immortel entre tous, et qu'elle ait patronné plus ou moins Andromaque précisément parce que la pièce, ainsi infléchie, touchait en elle des fibres secrètes, le processus ne paraît pas invraisemblable. (v. I, p. 221).

In the case of Andromaque it is thus primarily to the personal history of Racine that Jasinski traces the literary allusions. For other plays the predominant prototypes are to be found in persons and situations which, while they also belong into a picture of Racine's life, are not really intrinsic biographical factors. In other words, the socio-political conditions exist independently of Racine while they on the other hand, are frequently incorporated into the plays. A case in point is Bérénice where events concerning Louis XIV are transformed by artistic adaptation.

In the opinion of Jasinski, the heroic qualities of Titus are intended to reflect the greatness of the French monarch and to add to his "gloire." In part the objective was to create an antidote to the unfortunate and, for Jasinski, unjustifiable identification of Néron as a representation of the young French king. In terms of these allusions Bérénice is thus the sequel to Britannicus and the comparative sketches of Titus and Louis now juxtapose positive qualities. Both
heroes are courageous princes distinguished by brilliant military victories. Titus' exploits against Judea have their counterparts in Louis' show of leadership against the enemy in Flanders and in Franche-Comté. Moreover, these ideal sovereigns are not merely conquerors. Their valor in battle is balanced by benevolence in domestic affairs. Titus' concern for the well-being of his people is analogous to reform instituted by Louis in agriculture, commerce and public works. The Ordonance civile or Code Louis (1667) was the first stage of judicial reforms which not only simplified and coordinated procedure but tried thereby to make it more humane. (v. I, p. 389).

The perfect sovereigns were also perfect lovers. The larger portion of Jasinski's chapter on Bérénice relates the love element of the play to cycles of romantic attachments in the life of Louis XIV. There are reminiscences of his relationships with Henriette d'Angleterre and with Louise de La Vallière who, after some nine years as the favorite resigned herself to being succeeded by Mme de Montespan. However, the play's conflict of love incompatible with the duties of royalty had a striking real-life counterpart in Louis' love for Mazarin's niece, Marie Mancini. The five years during which Louis oscillated between his emotional convictions and the conflict—

6 "Je revins triomphant. Mais le sang et les larmes ne me suffisaient pas pour mériter ses vœux. J'entrepris le bonheur de mille malheureux. On vit de toutes parts mes bontés se répandre:" (Bérénice, 512-515)
ing obligations imposed from without by his ministers finally end in
1661 with the marriage of Marie Mancini, about a year after the king's
obligatory marriage to María Teresa.

The models for Bérénice and Titus are not exclusively from the
socio-political domain. There are also parallels in Racine's per-
sonal life. The decision to break off the liaison with Marquise Du
Parc was dictated in part by professional considerations. Her overt
infidelities and the stigma attached to the acting profession might
have appeared as an obstacle to Racine's vocational ambitions. It is
plausible that in renouncing love for the sake of his career Racine
was confronted by the same dilemma as Titus-Louis.

In our summaries of Jasinski's treatment of the Andromaque
period, 1664-1667, and of Bérénice we have indicated the nature of
the data used in his study and the manner in which it is applied.
Let us now take a closer, analytic look at how Jasinski, as literary
historian, relates biographical-historical fact and conjecture to the
work of art.

The approach is dialectical. The historian isolates related
phenomena having occurred during an interval in the past. That in-
terval may be relatively brief like a day of birth, or it may be a
period of years such as 1664-1667, or it may include a whole genera-
tion. By reconstructing the phenomena in detail and examining points
of correspondence the disparate elements shed light upon each other.
They also interpenetrate and merge into syntheses. The process is
familiar enough and, when based on concrete documentary evidence, tends to present tangible and convincing results. It thus seems indisputable that a correspondence between Racine's relationship with the actress Du Parc and the play Andromaque can be demonstrated.

Some details of the two sets of data are difficult to establish. Complications arise when, for lack of first-hand documents, the scholar uses information which has been changed in form and content. The accounts provided by Louis Racine must therefore be evaluated in terms of his filial bias. Jasinski accepts, rejects or modifies this biographer's assertions in the light of other evidence. Vers le vrai Racine is diametrically opposed to Louis Racine's contention that "il [Jean Racine] n'a jamais connu par expérience ces troubles et ces transports qu'il a si bien dépeints." In general, Jasinski regards with appropriate scepticism this respectful son who was only seven years old at the time of his father's death and who, even in the opinion of his older brother, Jean-Baptiste, was misled by distorted secondary sources.

As we have mentioned, a more important source of information for Jasinski, when first-hand evidence is not available, is the play itself. The artistic products then become for him historical documents which offer parallels to known factors in Racine's private life and in the society of his day. Line by line, the text of Andro-

7 Quoted from Mesnard, "Collection des Grands Ecrivains," v. I, p. 258.
magne is collated with actual life situations. It reproduces Racine's courtship of the actress (including her relationships with other suitors such as Corneille) and captures character traits of all the alleged real-life models. The lines verify, to a degree, the events reconstructed from other sources and these in turn shed new light on the play.

Although it is not our purpose here to attack or defend this method, let us say in passing that Jasinski's analyses are plausible and presented with full awareness of their conjectural nature. The element we wish to scrutinize is his critical perspective. Of particular interest is the fact that his position of observation relative to his subject undergoes a change as he proceeds from study of first-hand, concrete fact to consideration of more abstract data.

Keeping in mind that Jasinski's initial and dominant perspective is directed from a point located outside his subject, we note that his position shifts progressively inward when dealing with other than concrete and factual data. His description of the psychological behavior of the characters is nothing other than the critic's identifying with them in terms of his own time and experience. The identification involves a total change of perspective in that the temporal and spatial positions of the critic merge with those of his

8 We are not suggesting that Jasinski's "own experience" need involve active participation. We have in mind the process of observing directly, psychological situations and emotional vicissitudes which are assimilated to one's sphere of experience. Experience in this sense enables Jasinski to identify from within Andromaque's "coquetterie" (v. I, p. 186) or Phèdre's incest and its possible parallel in Racine's personal experience (v. II, pp. 456-457). The finesse demonstrated by Jasinski in these matters reveal understanding based on more than documentary and statistical information.
subject. Jasinski's intuitive reaction requires that the seventeenth century models abandon their finite, historical reality and assume universal, archetypal proportions. The critic's perspective when sounding the "secret échos" of the poetry is thus from the inside. It contrasts with and supplements the partially obscured view from the outside.

In the case of Bérénice Jasinski presents striking evidence to show that Marie Mancini is the major prototype of the heroine. But the validity of the argument would diminish if we did not assume, with Jasinski, that the play is primarily about the conflicting demands imposed on Titus by his constant love for a woman and by his sense of duty to his people. If however, we favor the interpretation which sees Titus' love for Bérénice as fading and being replaced by new ambitions, either romantic or professional, then Louise de La Vallière and Marquise Du Parc would assume greater importance in the genesis of the play. The interpretation upon which Jasinski bases his analogies are choices made, with a degree of subjectivity, from the inside perspective.

Ironically, Jasinski seems to be unaware of his fluctuating perspective. While admitting his use of conjecture for filling inevitable slots of uncertainty he cautions, from the outset, against "des essais, si pénétrants soient-ils, qui accomodent les auteurs au goût du jour." (v. I, p. ix). In his determination to maintain an outside perspective (as well as in the unwitting but unavoidable
shifts) Jasinski is typical of many literary historians. Their orientation follows from the concept of history as phenomena of the past to be examined diachronically. That these past phenomena have a causal relationship to the present and future is considered self-evident but lies outside the immediate sphere of interest of the historian. (In our study of Lucien Goldmann we shall see that a synchronically oriented concept of history is also feasible and creates a change in perspective.) For the moment it may be asserted that other literary historians, like Jasinski, unless specifically engaged in popularization, have been averse to producing studies which might come under the heading of "essais...qui accomodent les auteurs au goût du jours." They are concerned with events at particular points abstracted on temporal and spatial lines. The universality of these events, their atemporal, ubiquitous reality, is not for them to consider within the framework of their literary histories.

In a brief discussion of some other historical treatments of Racine it will be noted that the predominance of an outside perspective is a common characteristic of the diverse undertakings now classified as literary history. It will also become apparent that perspective, while constituting a primary determinant for the critical approach, does not in any manner restrict subsequent steps of the critic's procedure.

The diversity of studies in literary history has produced infinite variety, less in conclusions reached than in the patterns used
to reach them. A comparison of Jasinski to Pommier\(^9\) shows that they begin from the same perspective and ask the same basic questions. The aspects upon which they concentrate are different. Pommier too is interested in the genesis of the tragedies but rather than seeking his analogies in biography and social environment, as Jasinski does, he concentrates on Racine's literary sources. The inside perspective is here operative when Pommier reconstructs the writing of the play by actually imagining himself participating in the artistic creation of plays like *Phèdre*. Placing himself into Racine's historical situation (reconstructed from the outside perspective) Pommier approximates the choosing and rejecting of ideas, the resistance of the subject, the resources of his genius, and the availability of models in literature and in life. Admittedly, the reconstruction of Racine's mental processes is conjectural and subjective.\(^{10}\)

Bénichou\(^{11}\) concentrates on still others of the infinite number of aspects which can be viewed from either perspective. His scope is broader in that his synchronism is the seventeenth century but ultimately within the larger temporal context comprised of medieval and modern times.\(^{12}\) As for Jasinski and Pommier, the perspectives fluctu-

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\(^{10}\) Ibid., pp. 181-182.


\(^{12}\) We are here close to Goldmann's concept as described in the following chapter.
ate. Tracing the evolving moral codes of "le grand siècle" involves the correlating of socio-historical factors, observed from outside, with psychological reactions from within the text of the play. The change in the concept of tragedy which Racine instituted with _Andromaque_ is above all a revolution in the psychology of love: the heroic ideal and gallantry are rejected in favor of a naturalistic concept of human emotions. And interpretation of these emotions is arrived at subjectively, that is, from the inside perspective. The psychology imposed on the dramatic character is that of the critic. In Racine's case in particular the spectator must supply the interpretation. This appears clear if we accept the essence of the axiomatic Corneille-Racine comparison which Bénichou quotes from Vauvenargues: "[les personnages de Corneille] parlent afin de se faire connaître; [les personnages de Racine] se font connaître parce qu'ils parlent."¹³

In each case, Jasinski, Pommier, Bénichou,¹¹ we are dealing with a mode of literary history, that is, with a treatment of the past in which literary works are examined as significant historical documents. In each case it is also apparent that the critic is not fully aware of the subjectivity involved in dealing with this particular type of "document."

¹³ Bénichou, Morales, p. 114. Quoted from Vauvenargues, Réflexions critiques sur quelques poètes, V, VI.

¹¹ For another description and contrast between these works, see Hugh Davidson, "Yet another View of French Classicism," Bucknell Review, XIII, (March, 1965), pp. 55-57.
That the critic may look upon literary works primarily, or even exclusively, as phenomena abstracted in a past, follows in no way from the nature of history as a scholarly discipline. Yet it is a fact that a considerable number of literary historians are reluctant to accept other approaches to criticism or even alternative concepts of history. This exclusiveness, usually manifested as an attitude rather than as explicit dogma, brings about controversies leading to designations of groups of critics along political lines. "Traditional" critics, while accepting in theory that criticism is always partial and aspectual, continue to regard innovation with scepticism and sometimes, with hostility. Raymond Picard's attitude is most explicit in his allusions to Goldmann, Mauron and Jasinski:

...je n'ai tiré aucun fruit de plusieurs gros ouvrages de ces dernières années, dont la démarche est diverse, mais qui ont ceci de commun que Racine, pour eux, est seulement un prétexte à constructions ingénieuses et le plus souvent systématiques: sur le plan de l'étude positive de la carrière ils n'apportent rien. Mais ils expriment de façon révélatrice le désarroi de notre temps, et ils manifestent d'une manière pathétique le complexe d'infériorité des études littéraires devant les autres disciplines auxquelles ils voudraient emprunter leur méthode: l'un est marxiste, mais d'un marxisme que ne reconnaissent pas les marxistes; l'autre s'aventure dans une psychanalyse, que toutefois les psychanalystes réprouvent; un troisième prend le dehors de l'histoire, mais oublie les critères exigeants de la vérité pour s'abandonner aux facilités de la fabulation, et aboutit à une sorte de roman historique, que condamnent évidemment les historiens.

Picard condemns his fellow critics for diverging from the presumably established lines of their disciplines and for reflecting a pluralism and flux of which "le désarroi" is bound to be an element.

Pommier and Jasinski are less reactionary than Picard. Nevertheless, their protestations of tolerance toward other concepts of criticism are not corroborated in practice. The outside perspective and the diachronic approach remain necessary restrictions: "en sachant ce que Racine a fait, on comprendra mieux ce qu'il a écrit." Jasinski states this concept more dogmatically: "...ne faut-il pas...savoir ce que Racine a voulu faire, avant de chercher comment il l'a fait?" (v. I, p. xvii). In each case the stress is on the progressive steps in which an author did something and not on how it is done. The distinction is important in that emphasis on the latter eliminates chronological distance between subject and critic and leads to a complete change in perspective: the subject work and the critic act reciprocally from within an atemporal structure. Moreover, whether or not the critic is aware of it, this inside perspective is always operative in some measure insofar as a complete divorce from one's own era is impossible. Literary historians tend to ignore this axiom or to resist it.

Ironically, among the most inspired and stimulating pages of Vers le vrai Racine are those where, unwittingly, Jasinski adopts the perspectives and approaches of the "new" school. The contradiction

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16 Pommier, Aspects, p. xix.
of theory and practice lead to what seems to us a fortunate blend of inside and outside perspectives. Jasinski seems almost to be lured step by step into paradoxical procedures. Although "l'histoire littéraire n'est pas une science," (v. I, p. ix), he proceeds scientifically, or at least systematically, on the basis of established facts. When these are lacking "l'histoire littéraire admet nécessairement les conjectures." (v. I, p. x). He resorts to "suggestions," "intuitions vives," and hypotheses. Sometimes "la vérité se devine." (v. I, p. 175). The pattern of the recurrent shift in perspective is indicated by such interjections as: "Ces quelques précisions sont à retenir. Mais il faut aller plus loin, questionner le texte et ses secrets échos." (v. I, p. 182). And yet, while consistently following this procedure, Jasinski seems unaware of the extent to which he imposes upon his subject his personal preoccupations and those of his own time. Without detriment to his study, in our opinion, he is himself guilty of the confusion against which he cautions:

...ne confondons pas la sociologie des textes et des thèmes, leur réfraction dans les consciences, et la vérité historique. Autre chose est la substance que nous tirons des œuvres selon nos idées pour notre propre enrichissement intérieur, et la connaissance objective que nous entendons établir. (v. I, p. xiv).

*Vers le vrai Racine* is a positive contribution to literary criticism, however one may define that concept. On the other hand, its references to methodology, constituting criticism of criticism, make us finally aware of discrepancies between theory and practice.
A small but fundamental modification to the way Jasinski interprets the functioning of his own work can resolve the conflict.

Implicit in Jasinski's warning against critics who "accomodent les auteurs au goût du jour" is a conception of unilateral activity from a critic to a fixed entity in the past. If we modify this structure by acknowledging the work of art as a dynamic complex of energies it becomes apparent that the activity between critic and subject is bilateral. Contrary to Jasinski's own conception of his relationship to his subject this is, in fact, what takes place in Vers le vrai Racine.

In the following chapter our examination of Goldmann's dialectics will reveal a greater awareness of critical perspectives and bilateral activity.
Lucien Goldmann presents a striking example of the diversity of influences currently widening the spectrum of literary criticism. Born in Rumania in 1913, he studied law and letters at the universities of Bucharest, Vienna, Zurich and Paris.¹ The fact that he is presently professor of sociology, philosophy and literature at the Ecole Pratique de Hautes Etudes demonstrates that he crosses academic as well as national boundaries. His diverse training prepared him for the thorough and concentrated application of Marxian dialectics to French literary criticism. His contribution comes at a time when Marx is no longer accepted or rejected merely on the basis of political persuasion, when, even where he is not yet received as academically respectable or valid, he has in fact become an academic subject. Goldmann's criticism, although slightly tinted by political implications, is in essence apolitical. He identifies himself in numerous ways, as a Marxist critic, as an "historien sociologue," and as a genetic

¹Le Sage, New French Criticism, p. 87.
structuralist. All these designations, as we shall see, are indicative of the sustained and multi-leveled dialectic pervading Goldmann's criticism.

In the present chapter we shall examine this dialectic in terms of its perspectives and procedural structures. In general, our analysis moves from Goldmann's theories to their applications. The division is however, not clear-cut. Our analysis fluctuates between exegesis of Racine and self-exegesis of Goldmann, between the subject and the method of handling it. The simultaneous working out of subject and methodology (to which we add references to our own procedure) conveys a basic element of Goldmann's own plan of organization.

Our major references are determined by the subject of this dissertation. *Le Dieu Caché* (1955) and *Jean Racine, dramaturge* (1956) are relatively early works of which many aspects, especially methodological ones have been revised. Indeed, progressive refining of ideas and methods is evident in the course of the two works mentioned. In terms of our general subject, Racine, and the subject of this section, critical perspectives, these two books constitute (in accordance with Goldmann's criteria) "œuvres valables et cohérentes."

In *Le Dieu caché* Goldmann attempts to demonstrate that the *Pensées* of Pascal and Racine's plays can be profitably examined in the light of materialistic and dialectical analysis. More specifically, these works are studied in their relationship to the Weltanschauung of Jansenism. *Jean Racine, dramaturge*, which we shall deal with in
detail, omits discussion of Pascal and summarizes the other subjects of the previous work.

Before proceeding with analysis of Goldmann's dialectical criticism let us briefly clarify the way in which we use the terms "dialectic" and the plural form, "dialectics." The latter refers specifically to dialectical reasoning according to Marx. Since, however, it is the purpose of this analysis to reduce the thought processes of Goldmann to fundamental patterns, the more general, inclusive meaning of the singular, "dialectic" is usually the more apt term.²

Keeping in mind that our concept of perspective is a fixed point of departure for critical investigation, we note that a dialectician focuses on more than one object within the initial frame of reference. The two objects, contrasting but related, may be regarded as a thesis and an antithesis which function as a paradox.

Now there are two ways of conceiving paradox. We can consider it in its dynamic context or isolate it from that context as a static entity. Its dynamic nature is derived, on the one hand from an awareness of a relationship of the two "contradictory" elements before they are separated from their respective paradigms.³ On the other, there

²**dialectic:** the theory and practice of weighing and reconciling juxtaposed of contradictory arguments for the purpose of arriving at truth especially through discussion and debate.

³**Thésée and Hippolyte are compatible parts of a unit as father and son, king and prince, or as heroic figures. They are separated and become two conflicting elements in a paradox when seen through Phèdre's eyes.**
is also implicit in the concept of paradox the activity which will reconcile the two elements. Conceived as dynamic it thus has the temporal dimensions of past, present and future. Definitions of "dialectic" and a study of their application by Goldmann show that, in the final analysis, the dynamic concept of paradox is in fact the dominant one.

However, for purposes of analysis it is useful to remove a concept from its temporal and spatial context in order to examine it at close range. We must thus also look at paradox, which for us corresponds to "perspective," as a static element. Having done so we can then replace it into its context and there observe its dynamic functioning.

Goldmann himself makes little mention of the term paradox. When he does, as in the first chapter of Jean Racine, dramaturge, he is dealing with an element temporarily isolated from a larger totality and using the term in its static sense. Critics and reviewers however tend to identify as paradoxes, fixed and unreconciled, the many contrasting, compound concepts which in Goldmann's mind are anticipated syntheses. He views them within the context of the dynamic cycle and thus does not refer to them as paradox. "Le Dieu caché," (simultaneously absent and present), "structure et genèse," "le tout et les parties," in and of themselves paradoxical, are for Goldmann never entirely separated from the dialectic cycle of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. His basic orientation, as in the definitions
of "dialectic," is dynamic, even when concentrated examination of a part necessitates its temporary separation from the whole.

We emphasize the distinction between these two concepts of paradox because in our effort to describe elements of Goldmann's criticism we, in turn, risk obscuring the total dynamic context. Nevertheless, it is essential to focus on fixed points of his analyses from which we may then follow the progression of his reasoning. Beginning at points of paradox we shall look at various facets of Goldmann's dialectic.

'Science de la littérature.'

In view of his training in sociology and his application of scientific procedures and ideals to philosophy and literature, Goldmann's avowed positivism invites comparison with that of Taine. Indeed, the two men share similar temperaments and ideals while their differences are largely matters of degree and detail. Goldmann's positivism is more moderate, a scholarly attitude rather than an increasingly pedantic doctrine. Unlike Taine, who approached the study of human phenomena "comme un naturaliste devant la métamorphose d'un insecte," Goldmann recognizes fundamental distinctions between physical and human sciences. The latter cannot function without considering subjective criteria such as value judgments. 4 Moreover, there exists in the various human sciences considerable disparity in the degree of

validity accorded scientific procedures. In literature, which Goldmann treats scientifically, the relative lack of objectivity and precision is suggested, with intentional irony, by the expression 'science de la littérature.' The paradox is only apparent. The two elements are irreconcilable only if understood as opposite extremes:

...il n'y a aucune contradiction à refuser le scientisme et à préconiser en même temps une science positive, historique et sociologique, des faits humains, opposée à la speculation et à l'essayisme.

"Le tout et les parties."

Goldmann's structures show the functional relationships between a society and its literature. More specifically, the works under discussion juxtapose the tragic vision of Jansenism with the manifestation of that vision in the writings of Pascal and Racine. There are thus two sets of phenomena. For each of these the critic attempts to find a unit which is sufficiently comprehensive to supply reliable data and yet not so general as to become unwieldy. It must be at a point between "le tout et les parties:"

...bien qu'on ne puisse jamais arriver à une totalité qui ne soit elle-même élément ou partie, le problème de la méthode en sciences humaines est celui du découpage du donné empirique en totalités relatives suffisamment autonomes pour servir de cadre à un travail scientifique.

5 Lucien Goldmann, Jean Racine, pp. 10-11.
6 Ibid., p. 9.
7 Ibid., p. 21.
The basic literary unit is composed of those parts of a writer's total production which may be qualified as "oeuvres valables et cohérentes." Goldmann recognizes that the choices involved in the composition of such a unit are, to a degree, fortuitous and arbitrary. His decisions are nevertheless controlled by empirical factors. Alexandre and La Thébide are virtually eliminated from consideration, as works which do not measure up to standards of coherence and validity within the totality of Racine's artistic production.  

For the social set of phenomena the rationale in choosing a basic working unit is predictable. Goldmann, the social scientist will reject the writer as an individual: statistics based on one example have little scientific validity, particularly, when that individual is a creative genius. For Goldmann, as Marxist, the social class is the most practical unit in which to discern the social conscience.

Two fundamental units of traditional criticism, biography and the single work, are thus rejected by Goldmann as major elements on which to base his "structures significatives." Both are considered valid sources of data but their examination can be only an auxiliary procedure. The individual work must be studied within the larger structure of a writer's whole production; the author, on the other

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8 Ibid., p. 15.
hand, is regarded as a functional element within a social unit.

The paradoxical groupings of the previous paragraphs are characteristic of the perpetual oscillation between the parts and the whole, which must clarify each other. The individual and the group, 'la science de la littérature,' the whole and the parts, are examples which refer primarily to methodology. Before proceeding with analyses of paradox as applied specifically to Racine and his plays let us briefly examine it at a more abstract level by considering Goldmann's professional orientation.

The "historien-sociologue."

As an "historien-sociologue" Goldmann participates in two closely related fields of learning which in practice have taken such divergent paths that their common interests are often not fully recognized. Fundamentally, it is the purpose of each to study social phenomena but the divergence ensues from contrasting initial perspectives. Generally speaking, the historian views his subject diachronically from outside while the sociologist tends to observe a synchronism from within.

The sociologist proceeds by forming a question in terms of the present which he then applies to a point in time. In practice this point is almost invariably the present in which the sociologist participates. His field of observation is a synchronism which he

9 Ibid.
10 Theoretically the sociologist may apply his question to a point in the past but his activity is then usually regarded as history.
looks at from its center. Concepts of history, even in our simplified
scheme, fall into two categories. To some, history is the compilation
of past phenomena and their interpretation in terms of the past.
Graphically speaking, the historian, from a point depicting the
present, looks back at a series of points on a line representing
chronological evolution.

The other concept of history, to which Goldmann subscribes, is
a systematic study of the past but with the additional function of
establishing its relevance to the future. History in that sense has
the three temporal dimensions. Here, the dialectic operates in two
ways. First, in that past and present are synthesized into future;
second, from an entirely different aspect, history and sociology are
assimilated into "history" as it is understood by the dialectician.
Goldmann's fluctuating temporal perspectives, his references to the
seventeenth century in terms of problems cast into twentieth century
form can thus be regarded as a process of synthesizing.

The genetic structuralist.

The reasons for Goldmann's preference, in recent publications,
for the designation "genetic structuralist" should not be sought in
his writings. The change is better explained by evolving directions
in scholarship. The segmentation of traditional fields of learning
has resulted in abstruse and at the same time, overlapping concepts
of their areas of interest.11 The dialectic concept of history,

11 In addition to "historiens-sociologues," we are thinking
of political scientists, psycho-linguists, psycho-critics, etc.
which is increasingly accepted, includes sociology. By describing their specialty in terms of perspectives and methods scholars can often identify their work with greater accuracy and directness. For Goldmann, the term "genetic structuralist" has superior descriptive capacity but is in many ways synonymous with "historien-sociologue." Even the order and correspondence of the paradoxical elements are matched in the two expressions. The structuralist establishes relationships between the parts of a synchronism. The adjective "genetic" suggests a diachronic approach. The relationships of the links in a chain of synchronisms is thus studied diachronically but will culminate in their assimilation into a total synchronism. 12

In devoting a relatively large segment of this chapter to critical perspectives and methodology we are remaining within the scope of this part of our study. Moreover, we have not given undue space to our summary of the theoretical and technical aspects of Goldmann's criticism. Within each of his works there occurs a constant alternating between the subject at hand and the method being

12"...L'hypothèse structuraliste génétique dont un des principes fondamentaux est l'affirmation que tout comportement humain a un caractère de structure significative que le chercheur doit mettre en lumière. Dans cette perspective l'étude positive de tout comportement humain réside précisément dans l'effort pour rendre sa signification accessible par la mise en lumière des traits généraux d'une structure partielle, laquelle ne saurait être comprise que dans la mesure où elle est elle-même insérée dans l'étude génétique d'une structure plus vaste dont la genèse peut seule éclairer la plupart des problèmes que le chercheur avait été amené à se poser au commencement de son travail. Il va de soi que l'étude de cette structure plus vaste exigerait à son tour son insertion dans une autre structure relative qui l'embrasserait et ainsi de suite." From: Entretiens sur les notions de Genèse et de Structure, sous la direction de M. de Gandillac, L. Goldmann, J. Piaget, (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1965), p. 8.
used to elucidate it. This tendency is especially apparent in Le Dieu caché which, in addition to the subject of the title, elaborates at length on underlying philosophical postulates and on techniques of applying them. This content-form relationship is presented as part of the progression toward synthesis:

Il nous paraît en effet certain que la méthode se trouve uniquement dans la recherche même, et que celle-ci ne saurait être valable et fructueuse que dans la mesure où elle prend progressivement conscience de la nature de sa propre démarche et des conditions qui lui permettent de progresser.13

Goldmann's concern with method adds a quality to his writing which is quite in keeping with the emphasis on discussion and debate as vehicles of dialectical thought.14 Perhaps because Le Dieu caché was offered as a doctoral dissertation, indeed a most controversial one, Goldmann's references to method ring with a tone of debate suggesting verbal polemics. Sometimes parrying expressed objections, sometimes anticipating disagreement, Goldmann applies his vigorous temperament in defense and attack. But although the two subjects, content and form, are integrated, they are not, judging by reviewers' reactions, successfully assimilated. Most readers welcome the stimulus promised by the method but tend to reject the conclusions derived from Goldmann's particular applications in Le Dieu caché and Jean Racine, dramaturge.

13 Goldmann, Le Dieu caché, p. 7.
14 For complete statement see p. 143, note 2.
We have so far been concerned with the element of method which we have extracted from its context. It is hoped that the general perspectives and directions will now serve as a frame of reference as we examine their application to Racine. For our analysis we have selected Jean Racine, dramaturge which has the advantage of concentrating exclusively on our subject. Less detailed than Le Dieu caché which it summarizes, it has also reduced references to methodological matters. Published a year after the larger work, it is a more confident piece of criticism.

Chapter I, "Structure de la tragédie racinienne," is a synchronic analysis of Racine's plays. The characters and their relationships are classified in categories and sub-categories according to sharply defined paradigms. The plays fall into two major groups on the basis of a provisional working definition. This is Goldmann's first step in the working out of a precise and scientific terminology. Andromaque (with some qualifications), Britannicus, Bérénice and Phèdre are tragedies in that they present conflicts which are "nécessairement insolubles." Bajazet, Mithridate, Iphigénie, Esther and Athalie are "drames" in that

...les conflits sont ou résolus (tout au moins sur le plan moral) ou insolubles par suite de l'intervention d'un facteur qui - selon les lois constitutives de l'univers de la pièce - aurait pu ne pas intervenir.\textsuperscript{15} (p. 13).\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15}La Thébaïde and Alexandre are not considered. Lacking esthetic value (internal coherence), as defined by Goldmann, they are not "valables" as parts of the total work of Racine. (p. 86).

\textsuperscript{16}References in this chapter are to Jean Racine, dramaturge, unless otherwise indicated.
The first group, the "tragédies" is the essential one from which Goldmann will deduce his concept of the tragic vision. Plays of the "drame" category will be useful for contrast and, more important, to explain directions in the evolution of Racine's vision of the world.

The distinction between "tragique" and "dramatique" is extended to the level of the individual "tragédie." Junie, Titus, Bérénice, Phèdre and to a degree, Andromaque, are "héros tragiques." The other characters are "dramatiques" in that they function according to the definition of the "drame." (p. 13). The tragic hero is caught between two conflicting entities which, from his perspective, are irreconcilable. On one side he is confronted by "le monde." This is the world of "personnages dramatiques," a realm of practical values, of psychological conflicts and of compromise. The tragic hero is alienated from this world because he operates in a contrasting realm of absolute moral values. Awareness of this moral absolute is conveyed to him by the element which imposes demands on him from the direction opposite that of "le monde." For Goldmann, this element is the third and most important character of tragedy which he calls "Dieu." It is a concept signifying transcendence or "la fatalité" and does not refer to the God of any particular religion.

17 Eríphile qualifies as "tragic" but since her role is peripheral she has no influence on the closed and "coherent" world constituted by the other characters.

18 We will use the terms "tragic" and "tragedy" in Goldmann's restricted sense.
The tragic element arises from the paradoxical relationship of God to the tragic hero: he is simultaneously absent and present, a hidden God. Those of the world evade the paradox. They eliminate or live outside the concept of divinity or they adapt to a life in the presence of God and under his protection. Only the tragic hero suffers the agony imposed by constant awareness of his simultaneous absence and presence.

A further breakdown based on the manner in which God's absence is revealed to the hero results in two types of tragedies: "avec péripétie et reconnaissance" or "sans péripétie ni reconnaissance." Phèdre belongs to the former group. The heroine thinks she can live until, at the end, the gods dispel the illusion and reveal her fault and its consequences. The gods of the second category, from the very beginning, make known to Junie, Titus and Andromaque the nature of the divine exigencies and the impossibility of realizing them. For these tragic figures the deity plays the role of spectator. In Phèdre the gods act as avengers. In either role some common traits remain constant:

Mais dans un cas comme dans l'autre, le Dieu tragique reste un Dieu dur et implacable, un Dieu dont la sentence ignore toute motivation et toute explication, un Dieu qui ne connaît ni pardon, ni mansuétude, qui juge uniquement l'acte - lorsque celui-ci a touché, ne serait-ce que de très loin et d'une manière fugitive, l'essence - et non l'homme, sa vie, son intention; un Dieu aussi qui ignore le monde inessentiel, trop peu réel, trop transparent pour arrêter son regard. (p. 19).
As the intermediary figure flanked on one side by a world without the God he alone remembers, and on the other by a God who has left and forgotten the world, the tragic hero can be active in the universe either by refusing existence or by living under a provisional illusion. But his dilemma makes it impossible for him to live authentically. The world demands a choice between two opposite extremes. The gods forbid choice and require reconciliation ("réunion") of these extremes, which is impossible. The world offers either Astyanax or Hector for Andromaque, either roman law or marriage to Bérénice for Titus, either love or "gloire" for Phèdre. For the gods the choosing constitutes an infraction against essence and against the absurd exigency of coordinating irreconcilable parts into a harmonious whole.

To the audience the resolution of the hero's conflict comes with his "conversion." This is for Goldmann the climactic moment at which the hero finds his essence in an abrupt break with the world. The spectator observes it in the transition

...du néant à l'être, de l'erreur à la vérité; d'une vie intra-mondaine, sans Dieu, dominée par les délectations égoïstes et criminelles, parce que partielles, de la passion et de l'ambition, à la conscience claire de la morale nouvelle, dominée par l'exigence de réunion des contraires, de totalité, à la conscience que la vie authentique est une vie sous le regard du dieu réel et absent en face du monde vain et manifeste; que l'unique liberté de l'homme réside dans le choix qu'il doit faire, et qu'il ne peut pas éviter, entre le néant et l'être, entre la vie apparente dans le monde et la vie réelle dans l'éternité. (p. 23).
The irony of this conversion is that, rather than resolve the tragic conflict by means of a mystic union with the divine, it brings only augmented consciousness of the hero's solitude:

Cette "conversion," cette prise de conscience qui sépare l'homme du monde, ne crée pas pour autant un lien manifeste et sensible, une véritable communauté entre lui et la divinité. Au contraire, la même conscience de l'exigence ir-rémissible de valeurs absolues qui rend inconcevable tout lien entre lui et le monde, le rend aussi parfaitement conscient de ses propres limites et de la distance infinie qui le sépare encore de la divinité. (p. 24).

Goldmann's analysis in Chapter I is up to this point largely a philosophic structure of ethical values and relationships. Problems of composition and matters pertaining to theater as a genre receive a minimum of detailed treatment. The word "dramaturge" in the title is somewhat misleading as only a few pages are concerned with the manner whereby ontological concepts are cast into the mold of a play for presentation on a stage. Of the problems of composition, dialogue receives some consideration. How can three hours of dialogue convey the hero's absolute solitude and his alienation from the world and the divine? Racine had three alternatives:

1. Dialogue between characters representing the world:
   - Pyrrhus - Oreste, Oreste - Hermione, Néron - Agrippine, Néron - Britannicus.

3. "Dialogue solitaire" in which the hero speaks to a god who does not answer and whose attention is not assured. (p. 26).

Isolated from the context of the complete book, Chapter I describes from a perspective inside the realm of Racine's plays, the synchronism of the tragic moment. The chapter as well as the structure it examines are separated from the respective larger totalities of which they are a part. They function in space but are static in that there is no temporal dimension. In the following two chapters Goldmann's perspective will change as he develops the social structure analogous to the dramatic structure of the opening chapter.

Goldmann next distinguishes between two versions of Jansenism corresponding point by point to the two types of Racinian plays. The moderates ("centristes"), represented by Arnauld and Nicole, conform to a world view which coincides with that of the "drames." The tragedies, on the other hand correspond to the principles of the extremist current which Goldmann documents with the writings of Martin de Barcos, abbé de St. Cyran.

The two currents concur on many points. For neither are there nuances between good and evil nor a transition from one to the other. Arnauld and Barcos agree that the world is evil and the triumph of good and justice cannot occur before the final judgment. Our acts are good if carried out for the love of God and evil if motivated by love of man and the world.
The major difference seems, on the surface, a matter of degree. For Barcos the evil of the world and the darkness resulting from God's concealment are total and absolute. For the moderates they are not. But as is generally true in movements of resistance and opposition, the differences in degree of two divergent currents become differences in kind. For the moderates, compromise allows subordination of means to the objective. For the extremist, operating on an ethical basis, the means must be pure. All compromise is rejected. The refusal to subordinate the means to the end precludes all hope of worldly success. The extremist thus refuses both the world as a place to live and life as a duration. His retreat from worldly time, founded on theological conviction, corresponds exactly to the atemporal nature of the tragic moment in its dramatic manifestation. Only the act of the present moment, immediate and total, is of significance.

Goldmann concludes Chapter II with remarks on the relationship between the world view of a social group and its expression in contemporary forms of literature, art and philosophy:

Loin d'être un reflet passif le penseur et l'écrivain, en transposant la doctrine et vision du monde d'un mouvement en langage conceptuel ou imaginatif, poussent au contraire doctrine et visions du monde à leur dernières limites, à leur cohérence extrême, à une cohérence qu'elles n'atteignent peut-être jamais chez les autres tenants du mouvement. Cela suppose bien entendu une indépendance assez prononcée à l'égard de celui-ci. (pp. 57-58).
In the case of Racine this independence was particularly necessary because "le jansénisme qui concevait la vie comme un spectacle sous le regard de la divinité, refusait toute transposition de ce spectacle en langage scénique et théâtral,... (p. 58).

Chapter III establishes some hypothetical relationships between the collective tragic vision of the Jansenists and that of Racine seen in terms of his temperament and life experience. Persistent influence of Port-Royal, especially during the formative years, constitutes, according to Goldmann, the most important element in the genesis of every play. In the case of the tragedies of refusal (Andromaque, 1667 to Bérénice, 1670) the extremist vision of the world seems to be unrelated to the composition which occurs at the same time as Racine's break with Port-Royal. But Goldmann gives evidence that Racine's arguments against Nicole correspond not only in temperament to Barcos' extremism but also utilize the same line of reasoning. The explanation to the apparent contradiction is suggested by the hypothesis that Racine acted as a "renégat à mauvaise conscience" qui compense ou, si l'on veut, "sublime" ses scrupules et son désir de pureté inassouvi dans la vie réelle en imaginant un univers analogue à celui qu'il n'a pas su créer dans la réalité. (p. 62).

The emotional involvement with Port-Royal, still intense during this period was to be attenuated during the following years of the "drames." Bajazet, 1672, Mithridate, 1673, Iphigénie, 1674, reflect Racine's concern with worldly ambitions, the decline of the extremist
current and the period of truce known as "la Paix de l'Église. The "dramas" in turn, together with elements from the "tragédies sans péripétie ni reconnaissance" lead progressively to Phèdre, the tragedy "avec péripétie et reconnaissance."

In a sense, the final chapter, "L'Evolution du théâtre racinien," although it makes up half the book, can be considered a conclusion. The chapter heading also summarizes the subject of the book more accurately than the rather vague, if not misleading Jean Racine, dramaturge. In addition, the final chapter is also the last phase of Goldmann's methodological sequence. The literary element (ch. I) and the historical-biographical counterparts (chs. II, III) are here synthesized in varying proportions but always in strict accordance with one of Goldmann's fundamental hypotheses:

Plus l'univers d'une oeuvre littéraire est cohérent plus la relation entre cet univers et la forme dans laquelle il est exprimé est nécessaire, plus aussi l'œuvre est à la fois esthétiquement valable et facile à analyser en elle-même, en dehors de toute référence psychologique et biographique. (p. 85).

According to this formula, the tragedies, especially Phèdre, may be understood without reference to biographical data. The "coherent" work is primary for the critic but it may well be utilized to shed light on biography. In contrast, when dealing with the "dramas," the critic depends increasingly on secondary sources of information:

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19 The second element, "dramaturge," is in fact usually ignored in references to this work.
critique doit faire d'autant plus appel à la biographie et à la psychologie que l'oeuvre a un caractère plus éclectique, intelligible seulement à partir des contingences de la vie de l'écrivain." (p. 86).

Goldmann's perspective is directly affected by whether or not his immediate subject is "cohérent." When examined individually, the various chapters of Jean Racine show an oscillation between the inside and outside point of observation. In Chapter I the structure of Racine's works was determined synchronically from within the world of his plays. The following two chapters view them from an external point of observation and delineate diachronically a sequence of pertinent phenomena concerning first, a social group, the Jansenists (ch. II), and then, Racine as an element of that collective entity (ch. III). The final chapter then combines systematically the various perspectives the critic takes of his subject.

The impression of internal fluctuating from one point of observation to another is dispelled, however, if we consider the dominant perspective of Goldmann's Weltanschauung: the view from within the totality to which the parts, in various stages of disassembly, are subordinate. The parts, be they chapter, book, or collected works are, in the final analysis, never considered in isolation from the larger unit of which they are a part. This accounts for the concept of pro-
gression in the Hegelian (and Marxian) dialectic. 20

The last page of Jean Racine, dramaturge illustrates Goldmann's concept of Racine's place in the evolution toward the "absolute idea." Racine is linked to Pascal, Goethe, Kant, who like him, belong to a humanistic and classical tradition which Marxian thought and proletarian literature express and prolong in our times. (p. 1147).

Goldmann predicts that he will be reproached for attempting "d'annexer Racine à une idéologie." (p. 1147). It is only with the verb "annexer" as used here that we take issue. "Include" or "assimilate," it seems to us, would have been more apt. In terms of the dialectical world view Racine would by definition be an integral part of the classical and humanistic tradition. This must be kept in mind when confronted by the accusation that Goldmann imposes his Marxian brand of twentieth century existentialism upon the seventeenth century. For Goldmann, the work of art undergoes a metamorphosis. A process of continuous and cumulative synthesis absorbs genetic antecedents by assimilating them; it does not nullify them. The fact that we can think of the past only "dans les catégories du XXe siècle" (p. 1147), suggests that the critic's re-creation of a

20 dialectic: ... in Hegelianism: a logical development progressing from less to more comprehensive levels that on its subjective side is the passage of thought from a thesis through an antithesis to a synthesis that in turn becomes a thesis for further progressions ultimately culminating in the absolute idea and on its objective side is an analogous development in the process of history and the cosmos. (Webster's Third International Dictionary).
subject is mimetic but cannot be an exact copy. The details of Goldmann's reconstruction and their interpretation are thus open to question. His procedure however, is entirely appropriate and necessary within the dynamic structure of his dialectic.

For Roland Barthes, the subject of the following chapter, some of Goldmann's conclusions are premises from which his study is launched. Criticism conceived as mimesis, the partial and aspectual nature of critical activity, are assumptions on which Barthes will base demonstrations of new potentials for literary criticism.
CHAPTER III

PERSPECTIVE OF RACINIAN ANTHROPOLOGY: ROLAND BARTHES,
"L'HOMME RACINIEN"

In view of the fact that Roland Barthes is at the center of the debate which is the major literary topic of this decade, let us clarify from the outset what we hope to accomplish in this chapter. It should first be pointed out that the controversy is not of primary interest here. To anyone familiar with the issues there is the obvious implication in the present study that our sympathies are with Barthes, "la Nouvelle critique," and the Moderns, and that, by and large, we do not agree with the objections leveled at them by Picard, "traditional" criticism, and the Ancients. Having said that much we will forego an elaborate defense of Barthes (which usually involves an attack on the opposition) as well as a review and analysis of the well-documented "querelle." Our main objective is to describe what


Relatively unbiased accounts of the controversy have not come to our attention. An evaluation explicitly favoring Barthes and New
Barthes observes from an inside perspective in the essay "L'Homme racinien." While we do not adhere to it as consistently, we have adopted that critic's relationship to his subject and have, so to speak, placed ourselves in the midst of the Barthian world to observe from there what takes place around us.

If we were to choose the most distinguishing characteristic of Barthes' Racine criticism the word "disponibilité" would best convey what we have in mind. That quality which so aptly describes open-mindedness amenable to originality emerges in Barthes' writings as a general attitude amply supported by specific statements of principle. Moreover, in the case of Racine, the obvious and simple fact that three hundred years of criticism have yielded countless variations in critical reactions stress the desirability, if not the absolute necessity, for "disponibilité" on the part of the critic. If only for that reason, one can presume that variety in the results offered by critics is the product of a pluralistic body of critical approaches.

Criticism may be found in Serge Doubrovski, Pourquoi la Nouvelle critique, (Paris: Mercure de France, 1966). The principles of the other point of view are developed in a work on hermeneutic theory in which no direct reference is made to the specific quarrel in question: Eric D. Hirsch, Jr., Validity in Interpretation, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967). This study is suggested precisely because it deals with the problems on the basis of principle and ideology without the express grinding of personal axes.

2 "L'Homme racinien" is the first and by far the longest of three essays collected in Sur Racine. All three were previously published under separate cover. Absence in this chapter of explicit reference to "Dire Racine," and "Histoire ou littérature?" causes no undue distortion of context.
The theory which explains this observation for Barthes involves a dualistic conception of the work of art. It is first a finite and fixed object. But in addition, in the process of transmission, it manifests itself as dynamic and changing. It is perceived as if through prisms of time and space and what appears is a refraction of the original. Its very essence, for the beholder, is a potential to radiate an elusive but real meaning, a "sens tremblé." The critic is responsible for apprehending these "vibrations" and moulding them into a comprehensible form. His function as the intermediary between the work of art and his own reader is to make an assertion in response to the question which the artist has left suspended by his creation. In view of the critic's personal experience and moment his answer can only be partial and ephemeral:

Cette disponibilité n'est pas une vertu mineure; elle est bien au contraire l'être même de la littérature, porté à son paroxysme. Ecrire, c'est ébranler le sens du monde, y disposer une interrogation indirecte, à laquelle l'écrivain, par un dernier suspens, s'abstient de répondre. La réponse, c'est chacun de nous qui la donne, y apportant son histoire, son langage, sa liberté; mais comme histoire, langage et liberté changent infiniment, la réponse du monde à l'écrivain est infinie... (p. 11).3

"Disponibilité" thus entails for the critic the responsibility of re-creating the work on his terms. Theoretically, the author of the work in question and the critic engaged in reacting to it are in-
volved in equally creative endeavors. Their functions are distin-
guished in that the former asks and alludes, the latter offers an
answer and asserts.

The existentialist ethic of freedom (implicit in "disponibilité") and responsibility leads Barthes to a type of "engagement" which the existentialist lexicon can no longer describe adequately. The moral attitude of "commitment" and the spatial relationship described by "involvement" may perhaps be summarized by the term "immersion."

Barthes' locus operandi is from within the world of the species anthropologically labeled "homo racinianus:" "Je me suis placé dans le monde tragique de Racine et j'ai tenté d'en décrire la population." (p. 9). From this point of reference, at the center of activity, Barthes acts as an observer who records the data and impressions which will describe general patterns of behavior. No pre-established values nor biographical and historical references are considered. The only a priori assumption is that there are discoverable patterns.

The map of the two-dimensional Racinian world which Barthes renders as perceived from its hub is reminiscent of primitive cartography. The range of lateral observation is limited and detail becomes hazy at the periphery. At the horizon the vision of the eye is impeded. The mind, however, continues to be active after the sense of sight has exhausted its capacity. It is as if mental energy were

\footnote{Two such references do appear, one parenthetical, the other in a footnote.}
accumulated in the course of observation. When perception is blocked at the lateral extremes of the field of vision, this energy is deflected in another direction. In more conventional terms we would say that when observation of objective phenomena is impeded, the faculty of imagination takes over. Elementary terms of physics and description by vectors help to show that Barthes' thought progresses from the physical world to metaphysical extensions in certain directions and according to a regulated pattern. Thus, the physical geography of the Mediterranean locations in which the tragedies were set consist of "terres arides, resserrées entre la mer et le désert ..." (p. 15). Nothing can be perceived beyond the sea and the desert, but the observer, blocked at the lateral extremes, pausing only for a comma, directs his search along a new, metaphysical axis: "...la mer et le désert, l'ombre et le soleil porté à l'état absolu." By means of the metaphor Barthes extends the physical structure of the Racinian world along a metaphysical third dimension.

This dimension contributes an element of depth both literary and graphic, literal and figurative. We shall take it up again later but mention it here in order to compensate for its absence in the analyses of the following paragraphs. In these we shall isolate some elements of the anthropological "langages" with which Barthes describes the relationships within the Racinian world. It must be stressed here that, while the approaches to his subject are adopted from geography, sociology, physics, linguistics, etc., the accommodation of literary matters to these fields of learning is a means to an end.
In Barthes' terms the means are vehicles, or "langages," by which are expressed the multiple meanings inherent in "la parole," or literal manifestation of words. As we shall see, the ultimate frame of reference of "l'Homme racinien" is literary and discussion concerning the "langages," outside the context of "la parole," can be but a provisional device for analysis.

The geographic rendition is fundamentally two-dimensional. On this plane a basic tri-partite structure characterizes the separate domains within the Racinian world. The three areas of the Mediterranean locations ("terres arides, mer, désert) have approximate counterparts in the social geography in which the tragedies take place.

That microcosm is in turn divided into three graphically distinct parts disposed serially and related by function.

The arrangement consists of the "Anti-Chambre" flanked by "La Chambre" and "le Monde Extérieur." The first of these, literally the waiting-room, is the part of the stage seen by the spectator. It is the pivotal area, a communications center which relates simultaneously to the two contiguous areas. This is where the tragic figure "parle ses raisons," where his fate is suspended in uncertainty between "La Chambre," residence of "le pouvoir," which remains silent and hidden to him, and on the opposite side by "le Monde Extérieur." The latter, the area of real action and happening, is in turn delineated into three categories: it is the place of death, escape and the event.

Such a diagrammatic plotting takes other forms in "l'Homme racinien." The fundamental relationship of protagonist and antagonist
in the general schema of the tragic world is posited as a type of double equation:

"A a tout pouvoir sur B
A aime B qui ne l'aime pas."  (p. 35).

The first part of the question describes a formal relationship which is invariable in the tragic situation. In each tragedy there is a major couple, sometimes supplemented by episodic couples, representing an affiliation based on authority: Creon - Antigone, Pyrrhus - Andromaque, Agamemnon - Iphigénie, etc. The second proposition, which must be understood as an extension of the first, is subject to variation: it is not certain that Titus loves Bérénice nor can we imply without qualification (as Barthes does) that Bérénice and Iphigénie do not love their respective counterparts, Titus and Agamemnon.

The equation, which is reminiscent of a treatise on physics rather than of literary criticism, is one of the ways Barthes engages in reductionism. Another is the nomenclature of grammar used in various degrees of abstraction. Racine's choice of pronouns and the way they function are clues suggesting the alienation of the tragic figure: the pronoun conveys the anonymity the hero imposes on a world by which, in his "panique du 'qu'en dira-t-on,'" he feels threatened. Frequent indefinites, "on, ils, chacun," and the absence of "nous," indicate a correspondence of grammatical and dramatic relationships. (pp. 45-46). More abstract, but still indica-
tive of this approach, are metaphoric extensions of the grammatical structure:

"La mort est ici un nom, la partie d'une grammaire, le terme d'une contestation. Très souvent, la mort n'est qu'une façon d'indiquer l'état absolu d'un sentiment, une sorte de superlatif destiné à signifier un comble, un verbe de forfanterie." (p. 40).

The concepts and language of grammatical analysis are then another of the means by which meanings can be extracted from the literary work of art. Instead of "langages" we might also think of these means, quite literally, as tools, and of the work of art as an intricate machine often seen in operation but unfamiliar as to its inner works. Barthes disassembles Racinian tragedy as one would such a mechanism, lays bare and identifies the shell or housing, the moving components, and the connecting parts. The moving elements can be expected to function in proportion to each other. The classic "péripétie," for instance, is literally a reversal ("revirement") in that a condition is balanced by one diametrically opposite and equal. The design of the reversal is precise in its symmetry. It is "precisely" at the moment Agamemnon condemns his daughter that she is rejoicing in praise of his virtues; "precisely" when Eriphile learns of her birth she must die. Examples abound. (pp. 50-54).

We have noted how Barthes divides his field of perception spatially. Keeping in mind his position of observation at the center of the drama, one finds that temporal relationships conform to the same general outline and limits. The area of the "Anti-Chambre,"
the place of tragedy, corresponds to the moment of tragic climax. Time and space merge because all vectors in Racinian drama converge on the tragic figure. For example, a disparity exists between the event occurring and continuing in the "exterior" area, and the finite, arrested version of that event reaching the "Anti-Chambre." There results an Einsteinian time-space concept in which the distance that the message must travel between the outside realm and the area of the waiting-room becomes simultaneously the time of that message. This explains the hero's uncertainty: he never knows whether the event reported is the same as the event produced. 5

For Barthes, looking outward from the hub inside the world of Racine's tragic characters, time cannot be perceived linearly: it is not progressive and maturative. The form of the tragic moment (which the five acts of a tragedy dramatize) must be illustrated, like the spatial concepts, in circular patterns. The past is contained within the present as within a shell. Similarly the future, which is a projection of the past. Oracles and dreams are repetitions of past phenomena extended into the future. Athalie's dream, in terms of the drama, is a premonition; mythically speaking it is retrospective, recalling her first meeting with the child Joas. (p. 29). In order to understand the family tree of a Racinian character as seen from within the play, we must therefore picture a cross-section of the

5Mais, comme vous savez, malgré ma diligence,
Un long chemin sépare et le camp et Byzance;
Mille obstacles divers m'ont même traversé,
Et je puis ignorer tout ce qui s'est passé. (Bajazet, 11.
25-28).
trunk with its repetitious concentric rings. The side-view, with branches and twigs extended linearly, represents the historical perspective perceived from without. For homo-racinianus the tragic moment is thus a total and immediate present: "ce qui a été est. (p. 48).

In the examples of the preceding paragraphs one can discern two ways of ordering the data observed in the Racinian synchronism. One system examines the components of the disassembled object (the work of art) in terms of their similarities and differences within the same class, or paradigm. Father, deity, tyrant, lover, etc. are associated within a class of figures but the variables affecting each member of that group determine his very significance within the paradigm. Along a second line, the parts are disposed according to their functional relationship to the other parts of the structure: the father figure is bound to his offspring and interacts with him (or her) according to regulated patterns. This syntactic relationship is of course geared to the paradigmatic order and a variable in one will affect the other. The second part of l'Homme racinien" takes into account the variables as they affect the plays individually and interprets them on the basis of the master pattern worked out previously from the larger sample of all eleven tragedies.

These procedures for delineating the anthropology of the Racinian world do not, however, give the complete picture of the mode of thought Barthes calls "l'activité structuraliste." 6 Disassembly

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of the object of study and classification of the parts are supplemented by an exercise called re-composition.

The result produced by this last mental operation is not a replica of the item the structuralist critic began with. Since he is expressly engaged in the creation of a simulacrum, the object reconstructed cannot be an exact copy of its model. A change occurs in the progression from disassembly to re-composition: in the interval between these two moments of the structuralist activity a new element is introduced which will make the simulacrum intelligible. That addition is the re-creator's intellect which he imposes on the original object.

Since the data available for Barthes' Racinian anthropology consists of literary utterances (not totems, painted urns, or non-literary verbal messages on tablets), the new element assimilated during re-composition will ultimately also be literary in nature. The imagery of literature is the principal ingredient introduced by Barthes to make his simulacrum intelligible. An example chosen at random (virtually any paragraph would do) illustrates Barthes' literary imagination reacting to Racine's symbolic language with simile, metaphor, and other forms of figurative description: "Cette alliance terrible [between God and man], c'est la fidélité. Le héros éprouve à l'égard du Père l'horreur même d'un engluelement: il est retenu dans sa propre antériorité comme dans une masse possessive qui l'étouffe." (p. 56).

The two-dimensional plane on which we plotted paradigmatic and
syntactic relationships is thus extended in a third dimension. Barthes calls it a "relation symbolique." It is this set of associations, inherent in the literary nature of the object, which maintain the simulacrum within the domain of literature. For if it were Barthes' practice to isolate the other two sets of relationships (as we have done here for purposes of analysis), they could be given comprehensible form by solely non-literary and even non-verbal means such as pictures, graphs or three-dimensional objects. Without the symbolic order, Barthes' criticism would be limited to an exercise in scientism. In effect, the structural process requires a study of man from the point of view of the sciences and other areas extrinsic to literature, so that the work of art may be returned enriched to the realm of literary phenomena.

"L'Homme racinien" is therefore a literary simulacrum. But is it literary criticism? Are the images in the example cited above, and others more obscure, volatile, and unconventional, not properly classified under "creative" writing rather than with criticism? Barthes' answer is that the critical and creative ("poétique") functions act simultaneously and in unison in a universal literary language he calls "l'écriture." A dichotomy between the two is simply not a valid criterion for defining the critic's role. "L'Homme racinien" is literary criticism insofar as it produces one of the potential meanings of the

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8 Roland Barthes, Critique et vérité, (pp. 45-46).
art object. Its relationship to the primary object, Racine's tragedies, is that of a meaning to a form.

The manner in which Barthes' critical-poetic thought is rendered as "écriture" on the printed page shows certain peculiarities. Claude Lévi-Strauss explains that when the object of a written study is conceived as a synchronism it is desirable to achieve in the reader some sense of simultaneity. What is required therefore, is an organization which steers a middle course between logical thought and intuitive esthetic perception. The occasional impression of simultaneity would, of course, be an illusion, since the reader would still be tied to the order of the narrative. Yet some devices overcome in part the linear and piece-meal effects of chapter division, pagination, and punctuation. In "l'Homme racinien" chapter partitions are replaced by subject headings designating relatively small units of the narrative. These titles serve as summaries and transitional aids to the reader. Traditional chapter divisions, in this particular work, would have served no appropriate function, unless it be as pausing places at distant intervals.

In the matter of punctuation, the extensive use of colons impart a sense of continuity of a thought unit and of the multi-leveled

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9Ibid., pp. 63-64. A hypothetical field of learning Barthes calls "la science de la littérature," modeled on structural linguistics, would study the conditions engendering variations in meanings. (pp. 56ff.).

structure of that thought. The long sentences in which colons often mark transitions between three or four elements may progress from the general to the specific: "Telle est la relation d'autorité: une véritable fonction: le tyran et le sujet sont attachés l'un à l'autre, il tirent leur être de leur situation par rapport à l'autre." (p. 38). Other such constructions consist of analogies in series but without progression: "C'est pourquoi la division lui [the tragic victim] permet aussi de vivre: elle est le prix payé pour se maintenir: le schisme est ici l'expression ambiguë du mal et du remède." (p. 47).

These formal devices are appropriate vehicles for Barthes' patterns of thought, patterns his readers must recognize and imitate if they hope to obtain positive reactions. To Barthes, it should be recalled, structuralism is a mode of thought, not a school or movement of literature. Nor is there an exclusive structuralist system or method of criticism. In that mode of mental activity logic and discursive reasoning characterize the procedures involved in disassembly ("découpage") and arrangement ("agencement"). In the phase of re-composition, it is intuition and imagination which shape the product and are required to be active in its perception. In other words, re-composition involves associations made by the mind for which a logical sequence is not readily discernible. The transitions are omitted and must be supplied by the reader.

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12 Barthes makes no clear-cut distinctions between the three operations. In practice they function simultaneously and are mutually dependent.
The metaphor, the aphorism, and other forms of generalization are of this order and constitute the essence of the re-composed simulacrum. All of them convey impressions of immediacy, simultaneity, and totality. This is also the aspect of Barthes' work for which he has been most severely taken to task by critics who, unwilling or unable to accept basic premises, accuse him of pedantry and obscurantism.

Reading Barthes on his own terms requires acceptance of the postulate that criticism is mimetic. The critic imitates but inevitably alters his source. "L'Homme racinien" is an essay, a trying out of a meaning for Racine's tragedies. It can only be a variation on themes of Racine. It is one artistic effort in an endless line of simulacra of which Barthes' reader will experience the next version.

Another premise is the acceptance of the aphorism, or rather, the aphoristic way of thinking. The aphorism is a generalization which under certain conditions has revelatory potential. It differs from the statement of fact which explains by objectively delineating a part of something. The aphorism acts like an electric charge which sets in motion a chain reaction of insights. In this respect Barthes is again imitating his source: a Racinian line isolated from its context is, more often than not, neutral prose. But with appropriate contextual conditions the reader experiences a powerful shock or burst of mental
energy. The experience is immediate and total; awareness of time and space are eliminated.

The aphorism is a half-truth the communicative value of which depends on its capacity to reverberate within the psyche. The hypothetical other half of that truth is irrelevant at the instant of the aphorism. The statement of fact may have a higher degree of reality since it considers the exceptions to the generalizations, that is, all parts of the paradigm. It is important to recognize that in spite of these differences, aphorism and statement of fact operate simultaneously and are neither mutually exclusive nor incompatible.

We have seen that in the contexts of Barthes' essays the aphoristic element is not used as exclusively as in primitive works of art like the Bible where the appeal is not primarily to logical reasoning, nor is it a sign as purely graphic and inclusive as the medieval emblem. It is integrated with discursive prose, governed by a narrative ordered rationally. Barthes' art thus intentionally combines intuition and reason and, for those properly attuned, represents a synthesis of these human faculties of perception and comprehension.

We dwell upon this quality of Barthes' criticism because it represents that aspect of his writing which reviewers and critics have been slow to examine adequately. Raymond Picard, who considers

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"Racine élimine le temps, il l'empêche de travailler à l'intérieur de l'oeuvre. La passion de Phèdre ne se développe pas, elle éclate; elle n'a plus à se former ou à mûrir, elle est parvenue au plus haut degré de sa maturation;..." Jean Rousset, La littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le paon, (Paris: José Corti, 1953), Ch. 9. Quoted in French Classicism, A Critical Miscellany, Jules Brody, ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 162.
Sur Racine a dangerous book, completely rejects the metaphor as a valid form of expression for criticism:

"M. Barthes, condamné à ne pas parler des choses, est voué, on a déjà pu le constater, à une sorte de critique métaphorique - avec toute l'indécision que cela comporte, la relation entre l'objet et la métaphore qui la qualifie étant multiple et floue."

If we remove the invective from the first phrase it is likely that Barthes would agree with him.

By directing his virulence toward isolated statements Picard distorts the factual context and ignores the perceptual framework. Although he intends irony, his allusion to the reader's obligation, to choose among the parts of Barthes' essays those to which he can react, may be taken quite literally: "Toutes ces affirmations sont évidemment à prendre ou à laisser."

Our brief involvement in "la querelle" in these last paragraphs is not dictated by a spirit of polemics. It is however necessary to point out that there are respected Racine scholars who do not accept the role of the appraiser as we have found it in examining "the reappraisal of Racine." But rather than to prolong explicit participation in the debate let us now apply positively the attitude of "disponibilité" we admire in Barthes. And rather than a discussion of pros and cons we shall attempt a demonstration of some thought processes

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15 Ibid., p. 30.
we have described. Some of the "disassembled" pieces of our analysis in these chapters will first be subjected to an "agencement."

In addition, we shall consider the spectrum of Racine criticism as a paradigm and also as a syntactic unit the parts of which function in a complementary relationship.
CHAPTER IV

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JASINSKI, GOLDMANN AND BARTHES:
A CYCLE OF CRITICAL ACTIVITY

Concentration on but three of the critics having contributed significantly to our understanding of Racine has enabled us to scrutinize some of the attitudes prevailing in contemporary criticism and to chart the activities by which critics relate to the work of art under investigation. In this chapter it will be our purpose to determine how the respective activities of Jasinski, Goldmann and Barthes behave in relation to each other.

The three critics can be compared in terms of a variety of criteria. By juxtaposing them within various groupings we can first of all bring into relief some of the characteristics already discerned. In addition, these models will enable us to consider possible bases for classification and eventually to reveal why the order chosen for the preceding chapters seems to us to reflect a significant pattern.

Let us eliminate from the start a scheme of classification based on chronological order of publication. Since the works dealt
with were published within a five-year period\(^1\) such an organization has no value. Moreover, in view of overlapping concepts of criticism, even an extension of the intervals between publishing dates would serve no purpose: assigning the works in question to generations of criticism would be as arbitrary as the alphabetical order into which Le Sage places eighteen "Nouveaux critiques."\(^2\) Such a chronological extension did come under consideration in the early stages of this study. It seemed reasonable to proceed from Jasinski, the most traditional and familiar of the three, toward Barthes, the most radical and obscure, with Goldmann as a sort of transition. This is indeed the order finally selected although for entirely different reasons. The superficial appearances upon which the initial premise was based was not substantiated by closer investigation. In fact, we shall see that the early hypothesis was in a sense inverted, so that Barthes turns out to be the most accessible and Jasinski the most elusive to analysis.

Other groupings, composed by pairing the three critics in various ways, had to be rejected. Jasinski and Goldmann are both dialecticians and both use historical-biographical analogies. But in spite of these tempting common elements their objectives and the procedures contingent on them are worlds apart. The differences are in-

\(^1\)Goldmann's Jean Racine, dramaturge, 1956; Jasinski's Vers le vrai Racine, 1958; Barthes' "L'Homme racinien," 1960.
\(^2\)Le Sage, New French Criticism; see Part II, Ch. I, p. 8.
finitely more significant. Jasinski's goal is to add to a total image of "le vrai Racine," to contribute to our knowledge of the life and works of an individual. Goldmann's central frame of reference is the world view of a social class as reflected by Racine's works, a view which he conceives ultimately as a part of a universal human condition. The difference in conception is manifested in the manner in which the two critics apply the dialectical method. Jasinski confines his dialectic to a single cycle of thesis, antithesis and synthesis; Goldmann works within a vaster, more complex system of progressive cycles.

Barthes and Goldmann are distinct from Jasinski in that they call themselves "structuralists." Here again differences outweigh similarities. The only criteria by which they might be meaningfully grouped as structuralists are that they both utilize techniques of the social sciences and are oriented synchronically. On the basis of scientific reliability Barthes thus considers Goldmann's frame of reference more valid than Jasinski's. In taking the latter to task he postulates that a relationship between a work of art and its author cannot be achieved without a psychology, and this psychology, inevitably chosen by the critic, is unreliable in the scientific pursuit of history. Historical investigation, according to Barthes, must be placed on the level of institutions, not individuals: "L'histoire de la littérature n'est possible que si elle se fait sociologique." 

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3 Barthes, "Histoire ou littérature?", p. 156.
History is not, however, the aspect, or "signifié," Barthes deals with and in spite of mutual positivistic concerns he approaches his subject from a supra-historical pole opposite that eventually attained by Goldmann and proceeds from there in opposite directions.

Goldmann operates within an expanding sociological synchronism. It spreads outward as a constantly dilating present, as if absorbing time. Propelled centrifugally, it reaches out to annex successive layers of history into its atemporal domain. In the final scheme, Racine is grouped in a grand synchronism of human ideals alongside Pascal, Goethe, Kant and the great representatives of classical literature. The large model places Racine among the great representatives of a human and classical tradition which Marxian thought and proletarian literature express in our time and prolong for times to come. In this manner the future is also enveloped in the total synchronism. The model is that of the sociological moment to which the literary work has a metonymical relationship.

If we reduce Barthes' structure to diagrammatic form (see p. 187) the result is Goldmann's scheme in reverse, turned inside out.

Barthes begins from the anthropological synchronism of "homo racini-

\(^4\) Goldmann, Jean Racine, p. 147. On the last page, Goldmann's conclusion seems to lapse into sententiousness and grandiloquence inconsistent with the rigorously "scientific" handling of the preceding pages. But while tone and style are reminiscent of Marxian propaganda, what is pertinent to our analysis is to note that Goldmann, even when directly concentrating on the parts of the total structure, is always perceiving from within this absolute, inclusive frame of reference.
anus" and moves inward toward a microcosm. His analysis, projected centripetally, progressively reduces a variety of complicated psychological situations in the plays to common, archetypal models. The relationships between characters in Racinian theater can be understood in terms of the social structure of the prehistoric "primitive horde." In the social and psychological composition making up the "tribe" of Racinian characters the Father appears as the fundamental figure.

The structural comparison of Barthes and Goldmann is limited to a two-dimensional plane. But as we have observed, Barthes proceeds from there along an additional axis into the third dimension of metaphor. This metaphoric dimension is also an important distinction between Barthes and Jasinski and can be illustrated by their differing preoccupation with signs. Jasinski suggests that scholars have not sufficiently explored the possibilities of cryptographic investigation into Racine’s plays. He thus translates dramatic roles and situations into hypothetical counterparts. The fictional manifestation and its real-life model are related as similes. In Barthes’ semiotics, on the other hand, the sign is a symbol, in the poetic sense. Whereas the cryptographic sign is a denotative substitution of one thing for another and can be defined and reconverted, the symbol, by exposing

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6 Ibid., pp. 48-50.
7 This dimension is not represented in the diagram.
8 See Part II, Ch. II, p.
Diagrammatic Representation of Goldmann and Barthes Synchronisms

Goldmann: Inner circle circumscribes the socio-dramatic world view of the "tragédie" and the Jansenist extremists. Successive circles represent periods of history, past and future, enclosed by outer circle representing Goldmann's ultimate synthesis.

Barthes: Dark circle marks boundaries of the world of "homo racinianus." Outer circle encloses "le monde extérieur." Inner circles represent progressively reduced psychological complexes leading to archetypal nucleus (innermost circle).

Arrows indicate direction of vision.

the connotative levels of subjective phenomena, becomes the stimulus of an infinite number of contingent symbols.

To illustrate, the Racinian character is for Barthes not a "personnage" playing the role of an individual but rather a "figure" with a function in the structure of tragedy. For Jasinski, Thésée
is an adaptation combining specific events befalling Duke de Bouillon, Louis XIV, as well as Racine. In Barthes' scheme he assumes the function of Father and evokes a chain of images which cannot be contained in a simple analogy. The Father is master, tyrant, and divinity and his counterparts, son, slave, victim, and creature, are bound with him into an essential relationship of conflict with infinite manifestations.  

The manner in which Barthes and Jasinski resort to psychological explanation would seem at first glance to present a basis of comparison. Again, it soon becomes evident that the similarities are deceptive. Jasinski illustrates with psychological insight inspired by personal experience and introspection. Barthes, on the other hand, proceeds systematically on the basis of psycho-analytic theory. Jasinski presents fascinating revelations as hypotheses; Barthes translates scientifically conceived hypothesis into metaphoric approximations.

It becomes apparent that no meaningful sequence for the three critics in question can be established on the basis of theme or ideology, nor can we place them at distinguishable points of a line representing the evolution of literary criticism. The order decided upon does nevertheless suggest a progression. If we put aside the linear concept of chronologically categorized schools of criticism and posit instead a cyclical progression independent of temporal evolution, the

three works in question can be meaningfully conceived as three distinct but complementary phases of a cycle of critical activity. Let us clarify by considering these phases, first, in their reverse order, beginning with Barthes.

"L'Homme racinien" represents the culminating phase of the critical cycle. While passing through this segment the concept of criticism merges in perspective and structure with that of the primary literary source. (The latter, for lack of a better name is usually designated "the work of art" or "the creative work" in order to distinguish it from criticism.) If we compare "L'Homme racinien" to a play of Racine we note that in terms of the structural relationship between writer and subject Barthes' work is similar to a creation like Phèdre. Racine's masterpiece is, after all, a creative response to the reading of Euripides and Seneca, compounded by and assimilated to other experiences.

(It is not our intention to relegate Barthes to a genre other than criticism nor to make of Racine a literary critic. We do wish to suggest that structure and form are not the criteria upon which to base the distinction between the two genres. Phèdre is not a work of criticism although drama, in the form of parody, satire and in theoretical works like those of Diderot, is classified without hesitation under the heading of literary criticism. Although some of Racine's plays are, at least in part, direct critical reactions to Corneille and other dramatists, they differ from Le Père de famille and from Molière's
l'Impromptu de Versailles in that literary criticism is not their primary purpose. To be classified as criticism a work should therefore be a reaction to and about antecedent literary creation: the predominant subject and function, and not the form or structure, determine whether or not a work is to be designated criticism.

Barthes' position in the cycle, the proximity of "l'Homme racinien" to the concept of "creative literature" is the direct result of his point of departure. We have designated this initial orientation as "inside perspective" and we have observed that he maintains it consistently. In so doing, he achieves fulfillment of the criterion he refers to as "immanence" and thus becomes distinct from his fellow critics who operate at less advanced stages of the cycle. By whatever genre it might be claimed, "l'Homme racinien" is a self-contained and self-sufficient work. It has the quality of "immanence" and satisfies as well Goldmann's standards for "cohérence." While the terms are not synonymous\(^{10}\) they both refer to an artistic unit which may be perceived comprehensively within its own boundaries.

If we thus postulate that "l'Homme racinien" is the culmination of a cycle of activity, then Vers le vrai Racine and Jean Racine, dramaturge may be conceived as representative of preceding phases upon

\(^{10}\) For Barthes the concept of "immanence" is absolute. Every work of art is subject to analysis within its own boundaries. (Barthes, "Les deux critiques," pp. 250-251.) Goldmann's concept of "cohérence" is relative. Racine's "tragédies" are coherent units, comprehensible within themselves; the "dramés," on the other hand, become comprehensible only within a larger "cohérent" context including phenomena outside their immediate domaine. See Part II, Ch. :II, pp. 160-161.
which Barthes' structure is contingent. Jasinski and Goldmann demonstrate the critical process in two successive stages of dissimilation, in progress toward the degree of assimilation which we have discerned in Barthes' work.

Each of the two dialecticians is, in fact, working on two subjects. Both describe and analyze what is to be perceived from the inside perspective, Goldmann in sociological terms, Jasinski in terms of psychology. Each one also operates from a perspective outside the immediate limits of the work in order to clarify it by analogy with related, extrinsic phenomena. The dual focus does eventually merge into synthesis. The point is, however, that Jean Racine, dramaturge and Vers le vrai Racine considered as dynamic processes or activities (rather than as finite and static entities) proceed over most of the course of their development along two dissimilar lines.

In Goldmann's case, the dual threads are consistently linked by reminders of the inclusive synchronism constituting the over-all conception of the work. References to his methodology in the course of the study explain the relationship of the parts under investigation to the larger frame of reference of the whole. Racine and Martin de Barcos, we are reminded periodically, are representative parts of a seventeenth century view of the world, and that view is in turn a reflection of a universal world view relevant in all centuries. Thus, although the subject is provisionally divided into dissimilar parts, the reader keeps in mind that this device is a means to a clearly
conceived synthesis. The progression from dissimilation to assimilation is explicit.

This is not the situation in Vers le vrai Racine where the historical data and analysis do not actually integrate with the psychological revelations supposedly based on them. The connections uniting the historical with the psychological are superficial or lacking entirely and fail to make the relationship clear. Jasinski, it seems to us, is writing two books. He is engaged in a concept of criticism which prompts Barthes' question: "Histoire ou littérature?" The essay under this title challenges scholars to define and limit their critical endeavors and, particularly, to avoid confusion of structures.

There remains another contingent phase in the cycle which we can illustrate by means of the present study. It is our contention that the initial reaction to a work of art occurs within the boundaries of that work. Preceding the phase of dissimilation by the critic (Jasinski), the subject is considered in its assimilated state from an inside perspective. This phase is evident in its simplest form in numerous examples of spontaneous, impressionistic criticism cited in Part I of this study. It is more sustained in the commentaries of actors and directors for whom the play, and only the play, is the thing of immediate significance. Finally, this stage of the cycle characterizes this dissertation which, by and large, maintains a perspective from within the synchronism treated, first making observations along
the paradigmatic axis of Racinian themes and subsequently along the syntactic axis of phases of criticism. 11

The position of this dissertation in the cycle is adjacent to the phase we have demonstrated with Barthes' "L'Homme racinien." Both are dealing with a subject as an assimilated entity from an inside perspective. However, the interval between them is that of the complete cycle, which we can now summarize.

With the subject work as a point of departure let us envision a progression of contingent phases succeeding each other in a clockwise direction. A dynamic relationship having been initiated upon contact between the subject work and the critic there occurs in the first phase an activity whereby the critic perceives the structural relationship between himself and the subject in its assimilated form. In the second phase the critic expands his focus beyond the boundaries of the immediate subject in order to clarify it by means of analogous and related phenomena. The extrinsic material requires a course of investigation separated from the primary line of inquiry which concentrates on intrinsic observation of the work of art. This is the stage of dissimilation illustrated by our analysis of Jasinski. In

11 The fact that we are involved in criticism of criticism rather than in direct criticism invites two qualifications: a) Some references are made to analogous material not strictly within the boundaries of our immediate subject but these are peripheral and usually serve introductory functions. b) The fact that our field of reference is extended by the addition of criticism of criticism is not relevant here. The range of the subject matter is made broader and it is not so concentrated as it would be if we were looking only at the work of art or at criticism of that work. But the relative position from which we observe is not affected by the expansion of the subject.
the third phase, represented by Goldmann's Jean Racine, we are still confronted by a critical study proceeding along two dissimilar lines. However, interior conjunctive elements and the comprehensiveness of the total vision indicate progression toward eventual synthesis and assimilation. These are the points of departure for Barthes. Having established the anthropological composition of the plays in their assimilated state, he extends his findings metaphorically. The metaphor is thus the medium of transition whereby the work of criticism merges with the collective genres of so-called "creative" literature. Here the cycle of critical activity can begin anew.

Obviously, the phases of this simplified cycle overlap and are subject to endless variations. Our purpose is not to establish a rigid pattern of analysis and classification. Rather, we wish to suggest some attitudes in regard to criticism. First of all, the cyclical analysis demonstrates the complementary nature of all critical structures. Second, the model removes types of critical activity from a cumbersome value system on the basis of which criticism is judged according to its fundamental structure rather than on the thoroughness and talent of its execution.

The schema presented here is conducive to constructive criticism, entered upon with sympathy. Barthes takes long strides in that direction. He finds positive value in all responsible and discriminating criticism. This includes Vers le vrai Racine which, nevertheless, he repeatedly takes to task for its confusion of history and literature.12

In Jasinski's work he attacks with convincing results an incoherence which he does not consider acceptable. While he recognizes that all critical endeavors can be but a part of a larger critical entity, he judges that part as a finite unit on the basis of coherence. Indeed, Jasinski presents his study in this way.

Our cyclical analysis suggests experimentation with additional criteria for the evaluation of a critical work. If it is true that a piece of criticism is partial in relation to a larger unit of criticism, can we not assume that it is also partial in relation to its own ultimate conception? Can we not, in addition to considering a work of criticism as a finite component of a larger whole, also view it as part of a dynamic process evolving toward its own perfection? Acceptance of the assumption that a book of criticism is a fragment of a process as well as a part of a quantitative whole opens paths from which to approach not only criticism but literature in general. Can we not better get at the essence of a work by asking not only what it has been and what it is, but also what it is becoming?

We would eliminate degree of definitiveness as an obligatory criterion for qualitative evaluation, at least provisionally. Conditioned as we are to discovering rationally comprehensible systems, definitions and orders, this criterion would not long remain absent from our standards of judgment. But the provisional freedom of the "table rase," by not limiting the directions in which the perfection is to be pursued, will lead to new and exciting concepts of criticism and creativity.
CONCLUSION

The pattern through which we have traced critical activity illustrates, in structural terms, a truism consistently implied by the data: art is dynamic and self-perpetuating. The very diversity and abundance of reactions to Racine preclude the notion that criticism can be terminal. As we have observed, the accumulated writings inspired by the tragedies have augmented the need for continued sifting and evaluation.

The comments cited in the course of this study should be envisioned in the context of a cyclical progression. They constitute not only the conclusions based on having read Racine but function at the same time as preliminary considerations to guide the next reading. "L'art n'a pas de passif." The dynamism of the artistic creation, its capacity to regenerate itself, are the only tangible measures of its worth.

We thus conclude, as it were, at the beginning. The material utilized and the form in which we have set it in motion are intended as an introduction to those reading or re-reading Racine. The sensi-

1Malraux, "Réponse," p. 25.
tive and intelligent readers whom we have quoted should be looked to as examples. Their specific interpretations, it seems to us, are of secondary interest. But let us look closely at what happens when they confront their subject. It appears to us that they write with a special sort of excitement. Racine revisited results in more than the pleasure derived from having satisfied nostalgia. Our critics' tone reveals enthusiasm and exultation of the kind obtained from discovery. It is as if each return to Racine were a first encounter or the source of an original solution to a problem having lingered in the mind. The critical relationships we have examined are thus the salient introductory devices offered for the reader's recognition and adaptation.

It should now be clear that the term "reappraisal" in our title refers to the process of evaluation rather than to a status resulting from that process. Indeed, Racine criticism of the twentieth century is characterized by the growing awareness among critics that fixed, literal meanings for works of art cannot be established. They recognize that the symbolic content is refracted through the ephemeral, volatile consciousness of societies and individuals. Consistent variation in interpretation is evidence that the symbol speaks a plural language ("une langue plurielle"). Realizing that fact, it follows

2Roland Barthes, Critique et Vérité, pp. 49-56.
that critics turn increasingly to examining the instrument of interpretation, that is, the particular languages they themselves apply in the process of reappraisal.

Racine, it turns out, is the artist who, more than any other in French literature, imposes on his readers the need to observe their own thought processes when they come into contact with his plays. The fact is concealed when some of the impressionistic comments of Part I, regarding specific Racinian themes, are read separately. Considered together, however, the variety of reactions in that section of this study makes it clear that the critic's subjective faculties have a function at least as significant as Racine's. It follows that the more closely a critic examines Racine, the more his attention will be focused on the nature of his own participation in the creation, or re-creation, of the work of art.

Although Jasinski, Goldmann, and Barthes were not specifically selected to verify that preliminary conclusion, it is supported by the more extensive studies examined in Part II. The criticism is here more sustained than in the samples of the first section and, in that respect, each of the critical works analyzed in detail corresponds to the whole of Part I. Prolonged investigation of a subject, for us, and for Jasinski, Goldmann, and Barthes, while uncovering additional data, entails another consequence which is particularly characteristic of Racine studies of recent years: criticism becomes increasingly self-conscious and introspective. This does not mean that the original
subject is put aside while the critic proceeds with self-examination. On the contrary, the subject is absorbed by the critic, assimilated by him and analyzed as a functional component in his creative, critical activity.

The emphasis has been on the reciprocity of influence between the work of art and the reader-critic. On occasion the impression may arise that we equate creativity with pure subjectivity. In our eagerness to counteract the bland acceptance often accorded the opinions of others we may seem to have overstated our case. The subjective element is indeed essential to creation but it does not exist independently of the common funds of knowledge and traditional ways of dealing with them. It is rather the ingredient added to conventional ideas when these are assimilated by an individual. The learning and experience supporting the quotations we have used are proof that the individuality we advocate stops short of license. Works of art, including the art of criticism, are there to be identified with, to offer their capacities for insights into the self. By the same token, they are themselves dependent on the reader's willingness to react authentically: "C'est le moi qui fait l'éternelle fécondité des classiques, le moi connu, le moi compris, le moi dépassé."³

must include in its argument a statement, if only implicit, concerning itself. We have called attention to the fact that the substance of this project has been selective and integrated into our conceptual sphere. In the process of analyzing critical perspectives of others we have been aware of and have alluded to our own. Moreover, by serving as an example of the first phase of the cycle of critical activity, this undertaking is itself a functional component in the process it examines.

The impressions we derive from the tragedies have evolved from those experienced by the first audiences. Our views are compounded of the author's intentions, of reactions by subsequent societies, and of what we ourselves may have attributed to or dismissed from prevailing concepts of Racine's work. For a given critic, one of these temporal moments is usually the predominant frame of reference. By stressing the latter, that of Racine's actuality, we hope to have increased awareness of our active role in the transformations of Racine.

Implicit in Butor's allusion to the influence of Proust on Montaigne (p. 2), is that of the reader on what he reads, of the perceiver on what is perceived. The goal of criticism thus cannot be the final interpretation of a work of art. To define it once and for all would be to close it. The critic's function is to regenerate and to perpetuate. His contribution complements the work of art in that it alters contours, modifies directions and, by providing an enlarged base of reference, stimulates still further expansion.
To explain qualities and trends in the Racine criticism of recent years we have examined at close range select but representative examples of works playing a role in the reappraisal of the tragedies. The intent was to get at general notions through concentration on specific studies rather than by compiling a comprehensive catalogue of critical endeavors. For this reason explicit reference to many pertinent works of major significance has been excluded. The impressive quantity of Racine criticism may therefore not be reflected adequately. Moreover, some major contributions to the reappraisal, while not mentioned, were instrumental in formulating our conclusions. In order to compensate for the exclusions we will first list, alongside works cited in this study, others not mentioned but constituting equally significant parts of our basic working bibliography. A second list will be limited to works cited from which we have used information pertaining to specific parts of this study.

I


II


———. "Racine et la 'Nouvelle Critique,'" Revue des sciences humaines, No. 117, (janv.-mars 1965), pp. 29-49.


