Recent Theories of Narrative by Wallace Martin (review)

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that writers that have written of the theme from a Marxist ideology should have also been included. The remaining essays, "Lewis Carroll and Jorge Luis Borges: Mock Epic as Autobiography" and "Epic Adumbrations: Carlyle, Hardy, de Cunha and Vargas Llosa," constitute the topics discussed in this eclectic selection.

The authors chosen for this text are the best known of their respective continents and MacAdam, a perceptive, original, and well read critic, allows the reader to journey through these often unexplored literary connections. The selections in *Textual Confrontations*, however, are a collection of exclusively patriarchal texts; not only are no female authors included but they are not even mentioned as part of the Western literary traditions.

Perhaps the reviewer can only indulge in her own personal vision while confronting such a personal book. Nevertheless, *Textual Confrontations* is original, thought-provoking, and well written. I am sure it will inspire others to undergo this exciting confrontation of cultures, languages, and ways of being in the world.

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WALLACE MARTIN. *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986. 242 p.

It was natural that Anglo-American New Criticism, with its emphasis on the texture of literary expression, would focus on poetry as the most fertile corpus of examples for its theoretical and analytical interests. Although prose was not totally ignored, the bibliography of speculative and applied criticism for the period of the sway of the New Criticism certainly implies the coextensiveness of literature and poetry for this one influential critical approach. By contrast, the rise of structuralism in the sixties, with its emphasis on larger units of discourse and the overlapping of various structural systems, meant a seemingly inevitable attention to narrative as the privileged genre.

Wallace Martin's book, which it must be stated from the outset is exceptionally valuable as a reference guide for any advanced or graduate-level course involving narrative texts, is both a survey of the development of criticism on the narrative and an analysis of specific components of narrative as they have been scrutinized by recent theory. Stressing how theoretical positions represent intellectual constructs that permit a particular field of text production that we may call narrative to come into view, Martin's exposition reviews the interrelationship between narrative and other highly problematical concepts like fiction, factual writing, novel, and discourse in general. Since none of these phenomena may be intrinsically defined but rather their existence is made possible by a particular ideological frame of reference, the material Martin covers is valuable for an understanding of the various meanings of the sort of text production called narrative in Western society, especially the transition from novel as a genre based on a framing of the fictional to open-end narrative which, as literature, coincides with allegedly nonliterary forms of discourse and, beyond a cultural privileging of the literary, as a polyphonic form of discourse where the disjunction fact/fiction is no longer crucial.

Some of the most interesting parts of Martin's exposition have to do with the conventions of realism, which are often taken to be the "degree zero" of narrative/novelistic writing, and how the nonrealistic conventions of modernist and postmodernist writing have gone hand in hand with the development of specific theoretical postulates about the relationship between fiction and society. Of particular importance is the discussion of reader-based theories of narrative and how narrative is read in ways that transcend the impoverishing distinction between fact and fiction, referentiality and metafiction.

Martin includes excellent bibliographic references, along with succinct annotations. Except for the confessed avoidance of a treatment of ideological theories of the novel, Martin provides a solid introduction to the major issues of theoretical writing about narrative.

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GARY SAUL MORSON. *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in* War and Peace. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987. 322 p.

The title of Gary Saul Morson's book announces to the reader a central thesis of its author: that Tolstoy wished to say in *War and Peace* that the simple, seemingly insignificant, and scarcely noticed events in life are the only ones that can have importance. Since Tolstoy stated this controversial position clearly enough, Morson's restatement of it is not controversial. His contribution to our understanding of *War and Peace* and of its author lies instead in observations and speculations about the way Tolstoy's belief in causative minimalism shaped his ideas about history, psychology, and narrative form embodied in *War and Peace.*

Morson believes that there is in *War and Peace* a sustained attack on what he calls "semiotic totalitarianism." In using this term Morson has in mind "all models of human behavior, all 'theories of history' (or psychology) which purport to show that, behind the multiplicity of apparently accidental or random facts of historical life, there is really a set of rules, a system, or a pattern that can explain everything" (84). The received idea of what a novel should be, according to Morson, is one of the tyrannies against which Tolstoy aimed his work, which he refused to call a novel. Morson confirms the view of early critics of *War and Peace* that the work is highly idiosyncratic, and insists moreover that the idiosyncrasies were carefully planned and executed. "For Tolstoy," writes Morson, "most novels are false because they impose too much order" (143). Thus the fact *War and Peace* does not seem to have a meaningful point of beginning or ending, and that several major and minor characters disappear without leaving the reader with an understanding of their function in the novel's design, are not, in Morson's view, the incidental effects caused by the great length and complexity of the work. Rather such features of the work are to be understood as a deliberate effrontery to those who would impose their views about compositional order in the novel.

An unusual feature of Morson's book is the large amount of space devoted to Dostoevsky and to Mikhail Bakhtin's writings about Dostoevsky. Morson