other – “a set of categories located entirely within the formal mode, because it is the one that most directly determines the specific structure and effect of the plays.”

Subsequent chapters analyse and illustrate these new formal categories. Each chapter opens with a discussion of the category, and illustrates its range through a variety of examples and several full-dress plot analyses. We go from “Direct Contrast Plots” (as in *The Changeling*), to “Three-Level Hierarchies” (as in *1 Henry IV*), to “Clown Subplots: Foil, Parody, Magic” (as in *Faustus*), and end with “Equivalence Plots” (as in *Troilus and Cressida*). Another chapter, rather too ambitiously titled “The Limits of Multiplicity,” treats *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *Bartholomew Fair* as the most complex instances of multiple plot drama; and a final chapter, “Beyond the Categories,” briefly considers multiple plotting from historical and generic perspectives, suggesting further directions for critical inquiry.

One suspects that after a general agreement on the importance of its subject, the brilliance of some of its analyses and the usefulness of its taxonomy, reactions to the book will be almost as multiple as its subject. The “Chicago School,” like the “New Criticism,” still raises many hackles. On the whole I think the favourable opinions will be nearer the mark. *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* is unfailingly intelligent. It is compendious and laborious in the good senses those words had in the Renaissance. The distinctions between foil and parody are acute; the insights we get into the ethical problems raised, say, by *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, show how far one can go in clarifying the thought of a play by attending to its construction. But at some points the book seems less rewarding. Not all plays “imitate actions.” Or, putting the case in “Chicago” terms, not all plays have plot as their “prime part” or “organising principle.” In some, plot is a secondary consideration, a trellis on which ambience or idea flourish. The difficulty with the metaphor hidden under the terms “construction” and “structure” is that it occasionally misleads, prompting us to attend too much to plot when plot is not primary. I suspect that readers will find the treatment of *Troilus and Cressida* less satisfactory than the splendid discussion of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* precisely because the idea or ethos of some plays, rather than “their specific structure,” determines their effect on us. The two parts of *Henry IV* might well have been given less cursory treatment, if only to contrast plays with similar “plots” but dissimilar emphases on “plot” as an organizer and unifier of the plays’ materials. One feels that anatomy has – though at a very few points – been taken for the whole of medicine. Yet perhaps such objections and an occasional reaction against the thinness of some of the analyses are only signs of how well the book otherwise manages its narrowness of focus and breadth of example.

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Sylvia D. Feldman. *The Morality-Patterned Comedy of the Renaissance*. The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1970. Pp. 1-165. 18 Dutch Guilders.

Despite its title, this study deals only with plays of the English Renaissance. Its hypothesis is “that a category of Renaissance drama exists which has not yet been recognized. Its purpose is to isolate and describe the characteristics of that category: the morality-patterned

comedy.” (p. 13) According to Dr. Feldman such comedy is characterized by four elements: by an overt didacticism, teaching the behaviour necessary for spiritual salvation; by a grouping of characters into three main classes – mankind figures, virtues, and vices – which are presented realistically not allegorically; by a common “action,” presenting “the conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil for the possession of the body and soul of a typical Christian” (p. 44); and by a seven-stage structure in which “the Vices are introduced; the Mankind figure is introduced in a state of virtue; he is tempted and falls; his life in sin is shown; he is tempted to despair of mercy; he repents, that is, his faith in divine grace is restored, he is contrite, he confesses his sins, and he usually does penance; finally, he is forgiven.” (p. 14) This structure, Dr. Feldman argues, is more important for understanding morality plays than the use of allegory; and though in its later manifestations it is “particularized” to plots about realistic people in non-universal situations, with the concern for salvation increasingly equated with worldly prosperity and the seven-stage structure truncated, it can provide a key for the interpretation of some seventeen major comedies of the Elizabethan-Jacobean period.

There is a basis of good sense in this argument – the morality structure certainly did offer one pattern for Elizabethan comedy – but the study has several major weaknesses. In the first place, the association of morality structure with Elizabethan comedy is already more widely accepted than Professor Feldman would have us believe – a glance at her bibliography shows far too heavy a reliance on critics as dated as Ten Brink, Schelling, Gayley, Courthope, or Boas (and in a work of advanced scholarship one does not expect credit to be given to the “College Outline” *Guide to English Literature from Beowulf through Chaucer and Medieval Drama*). Her concentration on morality structure to the exclusion of allegory is arguably more original, but her analysis of particular morality plays and interludes is run of the mill, with no new insights, while any definition of “moral interlude” which excludes the work of Bate, Wager, Fulwell, Lupton, and Pickering is surely too tendentious.

The argument that *How A Man May Chuse A Good Wife from A Bad* belongs to a unique category because it has differences from *As You Like It* (= romantic comedy), *All Fools* and *The Supposes* (= Latin situation comedy) *Volpone* (= comedy of intrigue), and *A King and No King* (= tragicomedy) is unconvincing because the exempla are arbitrarily chosen and, anyway, negative comparisons cannot logically be used to prove a positive. Most damaging, however, is the fact that, when Dr. Feldman gets down to using her formula to explicate particular comedies, it provides no critical illumination but, on the contrary, distorts the plays badly. To give one example: she interprets *The Dutch Courtesan* as a simple morality balance of Malheureux (mankind figure) between Franceschina (the Vice) and Freevill (the Virtue), with no recognition of the moral ambiguity of Freevill himself, particularly as he is paralleled by Cockledemoy in the subplot (which Dr. Feldman does not mention), and no discussion of the Montaigne-inspired libertinism of Crispinella.

The whole approach is far too insensitively schematic, in fact. Dr. Feldman seems to care more about her formula than about the plays which are its Aristotelian justification. At best, she is reductive; at worst, she totally distorts. It comes as no surprise to find that the study was her dissertation. It shows a knowledge of the period and has a nucleus of truth, but it is neither original enough nor sound enough to have been worth publishing. It is also very repetitive.

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