Chapter 2
SEMIOTICS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF SEMIOTICS

Although semiotics is presently a developing field of study, it covers a wide area. It is very difficult to define, what semiotics is. For instance, Cronkhite (1968) defined that semiotics is “the study of human symbolic activity”. This definition is too broad to identify the focus of semiotics, though it is a true and acceptable definition. To understand the scope and focus of semiotics one has to study it from its origins. The two important and original contributors to the theory of semiotics are the famous Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), and the well-known American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Below are given succinct summaries of the contribution to semiotics by these two eminent scholars.

2.1.1 FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE (1857-1913)

A literary scholar and a renowned linguist from Geneva (Switzerland), Ferdinand de Saussure was a teacher of Sanskrit literature at the University of Geneva to begin with, and having been attracted by the studies in historical and comparative linguistics carried out by the young grammatiker (neo-grammarians), he focused his attention on linguistics and provided some fundamental concepts of linguistics on which European linguistics was based and developed in the course of time. His contribution may be summarized under five headings as under:

- **Langue and Parole**: Saussure proposed that language has two dimensions, namely the underlying structural totality of a given language called its ‘langue’ and an individual instance of its use which he named ‘parole’. To arrive at a comprehensive picture of the langue of a language, the linguist has to examine a large number of paroles which will enable him to arrive at valid generalizations about its langue.

- **Diachronic and Synchronic Studies**: In the study of a language, a linguist can adopt two approaches:
  a. A diachronic or historical approach, and
  b. A synchronic or descriptive approach.
Accepting the value of the historical studies as accomplished by the contemporary comparative and historical linguists, Saussure argued that synchronic or descriptive studies are also equally important. To make synchronic studies scientific, Saussure proposed two important notions which became fundamental for the progress in modern linguistics.

- **Language as a complex network of signs:** According to Saussure every human language is a wonderful combination of the relations obtaining across linguistic signs at different levels of language organization. A ‘sign’ in Saussurean exposition, is not a single entity. It is a relation between the signifier (the form that the sign takes) and the signified (the concept to which it refers) and such a relation is purely conventional and therefore, arbitrary. He designated this relational aspect between a signifier and a signified as signification.

  ![Sign Diagram](https://www.google.co.in/search?q=signifier+and+signified)

  Thus Saussure laid the foundation for Structuralism which has become a highly productive methodology for language as well as literary studies. We may say that Saussure was not only the founder of Structuralism but also the father of modern (European) linguistics.

- **Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relations:** Saussure proposed that the units in language structure at any level, i.e., phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels are related to one another either syntagmatically or paradigmatically. It is only by virtue of its relation with the remaining units at a given level, a single unit obtains meaning or value. For instance, a phoneme like /p/ in English has no independent value or meaning of its own. It acquires value only when it enters into combinations with other similar units. Thus /p/ acquires value in English in words like ‘pen’, ‘cup’, ‘separate’ etc. This kind of relation, being horizontal is called syntagmatic relation. On the other hand, units make
different sets by virtue of their grammatical status. Thus, in English for instance, nouns, pronouns, noun phrases and noun clauses can function as Subjects, Objects or Complements in sentences in English. That is, they all belong to one grammatical paradigm. So are the verbs in English. Therefore Nouns are related to one another paradigmatically by being members of one grammatical paradigm, while Verbs belong to another paradigm, that is, of verbs. This relationship, being vertical is known as paradigmatic relation. Such relations are found in all human languages.

(https://www.google.co.in/search?q=syntagmatic+and+paradigmatic)

• **Semiology:** Saussure conceived a discipline which he called “semiology’ and stated that linguistics other social sciences are only parts of this new field. Saussure, explained semiology as follows:

A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek semeion “sign”). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not exist yet, no one can say what it would be, but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts. (16)

Unfortunately Saussure did not publish any full-length book either on linguistics or semiology. His seminal notions are drawn from his lecture-notes taken by his students and junior colleagues during his life time and these lecture notes were published in book form in 1916 posthumously. From the passage quoted above, one can understand the broad range of semiology as conceived by Saussure.
2.1.2 CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE (1839-1914)

Approximately about the same time, independently, the American philosopher and logician Peirce wrote a large number of papers, most of which were not published during his life time. In fact, he used the term ‘semiotic’ originally which was later called ‘semiotics’ by his followers. Peirce offers a triadic or three-part model of the sign often popularly referred to as the semiotic triangle. It defines the sign as consisting of the representamen (the form which the sign takes, similar to Saussure’s signifier), the interpretant (not an interpreter but the sense made of the sign; signified), the object (to which the sign refers, does not feature directly in Saussure’s model). The interaction between the ‘representamen’, the ‘object’ and the ‘interpretant’ is referred to by Peirce as ‘Semiosis’ (483).

In Peirce’s own words:

A sign …. (in the form of a representamen) is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen. (228)

Peircian Semiotics is, in many respects, similar to Saussurean Semiology. Peirce, it seems, had changed his ideas and developed them in the course of time. Therefore, some confusion prevailed among his followers for some time. However the following quotation clarifies the ideas of Peirce to some extent:
Logic, in its general sense, is as I believe I have shown, only another name for *semiotic*, the quasi-necessary, or formal doctrine of signs. By describing the doctrine as “quasi-necessary”, or formal, I mean that we observe the characters of such signs as we know, and from such an observation, by a process which I will not object to naming Abstraction, we are led to statements, eminently fallible, and therefore in one sense by no means necessary, as to what must be the characters of all signs used by a “scientific” intelligence, that is to say, by an intelligence capable of learning by experience. (227)

One can note that there is a difference between Saussurean and Peircian conceptions: Saussure’s concern was the study of behaviour while that of Peirce was logic. But on a close examination it is found that this only a superficial difference because both were interested in the study of signs in general. According to Wray,

> Semiotics is the study of signs. On that and little else, all “semioticians” seem to agree. Specially it is the study of semiosis, or communication—that is, the way any sign, whether it is a traffic signal, a thermometer reading of $98.6^0$ F, poetic imagery, musical notation, a prose passage, or a wink of the eye, functions in the mind of an interpreter to convey a specific meaning in a given situation. (4)

Another scholar, Terence Hawkes, explains semiotics in the following manner:

> Human beings emerge from any account of semiotic structures as inveterate and promiscuous producers of signs… Accordingly, nothing in the human world can be merely utilitarian… All five senses, smell, touch, taste, sight can function in the process of *Semiosis*: that is, as sign-producers or sign-receivers… Conceivably, there is a *langue* of cooking of which each meal is a *parole*, and a connection with which *taste* is the sense most exploited, although *sight* and *smell* also have their role. (134).

Hawkes also adds here, the example of fashion and writing about fashion also have a *langue* and *parole* as demonstrated by Roland Barthes in his study, *Systime de la Mode.*
It can be noticed from these definitions of semiotics (or semiology) that semiotics deals with how meaning is conveyed in communication of whatever sort. Thus semiotics touches upon sociology, psychology, and pragmatics. For instance, Umberto Eco, an eminent Italian semiotician in his *A Theory of Semiotics* provided a five-page long list of items to be included in the study of semiotics (14).

According to Roman Jakobson, in general, “the basic, the primary, the most important semiotic system is language; language really is the foundation of culture”. (557)

### 2.2 DEVELOPMENTS IN SEMIOTICS

Development in semiotics has different phases and it has been multidimensional.

#### 2.2.1 STRUCTURALISM AND SEMIOTICS

As M.H. Abrams and Harpham explain:

At the end of the nineteenth century Charles Sanders Peirce, the American philosopher, proposed and described a study that he called “semiotic”, and in his *Course in General Linguistics* (1915) the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure independently proposed a science that he called “semiology”. Since then Semiotics and Semiology have become alternative names for the systematic study of signs, as these function in all areas of human experience. The consideration of Signs (conveyers of meaning) is not limited to the realm of language. The Morse Code, traffic signs and signals, and a great diversity of other human activities and productions – our body postures and gestures, the social rituals we perform, the kinds of clothes we wear, the meals we serve, the buildings we inhabit, the objects we deal with – also convey common meanings to members who participate in a particular culture, and so can be analysed as signs which function in diverse modes of signifying systems. Although the study of language (the use of specifically verbal signs) is technically regarded as only one branch of the general science of semiotics, linguistics, the highly developed science of language, in fact has for the most part supplied the basic concepts and methods that a semiotician applies to the study of non-linguistic sign systems.
C.S. Peirce distinguished three classes of signs, defined in terms of the kind of relation that exists between a signifying item and that which it signifies: (1) An *Icon* functions as a sign by means of inherent similarities, or shared features, with what it signifies; examples are the similarity of a portrait to the person it depicts, or the similarity of a map to the geographical area it stands for. (2) An *Index* is a sign which bears natural relation of cause or of effect to what it signifies; thus smoke is a sign indicating fire, a pointing weathervane indicates the direction of the wind. (3) The *symbol* (or in a less ambiguous term, the “Sign Proper”) the relation between the signifying item and what it signifies is not a natural one, but entirely a matter of social convention. The gesture of shaking hands, for example, in some cultures is a conventional sign of greeting or parting, and a red traffic light conventionally signifies “Stop!” The major and most complex example of this third type of purely conventional sign, however, are the words that constitute language.

Ferdinand de Saussure introduced many of the terms and concepts exploited by current semioticians … Most important are the following: (1) A sign consists of two inseparable components or aspects, the *signifier* (in language, a set of speech sounds, or a marks on a page) and the *signified* (the concept, or idea, which is the meaning of the sign). (2) A verbal sign, in Saussure’s term, is “arbitrary”. That is, with the minor exception of *onomatopoeia* (words which we perceive as similar to the sounds they signify), there is no inherent or natural connection between a verbal signifier and what it signifies. (3) The identity of all elements of a language, including its words, their component speech sounds, and the concepts the words signify, are not determined by “positive qualities” or objective features in these elements themselves, but by *differences*, or a network of relationships, consisting of distinctions and oppositions from other speech sounds, other words and other signified that obtain only within a particular linguistic system. (4) The aim of linguistics, or of any other semiotic enterprise, is to regard the *parole* (a single verbal utterance, or a
particular use of a sign or set of signs) as only a manifestation of the *langue* (that is, the general system of implicit differentiation and rules of combination which underlie and make possible a particular use of signs). The focus of semiotic interest, accordingly, is not in interpreting a particular instance of signification but in establishing the general signifying system that each particular instance relies upon.

Modern semiotics, like structuralism, has developed in France under the aegis of Saussure, so that many Semioticians are also structuralists. They deal with any set of social phenomena or social productions as *texts*; that is, as constituted by self-sufficient, self-ordering, hierarchical structures of differentially determined signs, codes, and rules of combination and transformation which make significant materials ‘meaningful’ to members of a particular society who are competent in that signifying system… **Claude Levi-Strauss**, in the 1960s and later, inaugurated the application of semiotics to cultural anthropology, and also established the foundations of French structuralism in general, by using Saussure’s linguistics as a model for analyzing, in primitive societies, a great variety of phenomena and practices, which he treated as quasi-languages that manifest the structures of an underlying signifying system. These include kinship systems, totemic systems, and ways of preparing food, myths, and prelogical modes of interpreting the world. **Jacques Lacan** has applied semiotics to Freudian psychoanalysis – interpreting the unconscious, for example, as (like language) a structure of signs, … **Michel Foucault** developed a mode of semiotic analysis to deal with the changing medical interpretation of symptoms of disease; the diverse ways of indentifying, classifying, and treating insanity; and the altering conceptions of human sexuality… **Roland Barthes**, explicitly applying Saussurean principles and methods, has written semiotic analyses of the constituents and codes of the sign systems in advertisements which describe and promote women’s fashions, as well as analysis of many “bourgeois myths” about the world which, he claims, are exemplified in such social sign systems as professional wrestling matches, children’s toys, cookery and striptease … In his earlier writings Barthes was also a major exponent of *structural*
criticism, which deals with a literary text as “a second-order semiotic system”; that is, it views a literary text as employing the first-order system of language to form a secondary semiotic structure, in accordance with a specifically literary system of conventions and codes. (357-359).

Furthermore, Abrams and Harpham add that semiotic methods have been applied to study of culture, anthropology, psychoanalysis and several other areas.

Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917–1992) developed a structural version of semiotics named, "generative semiotics", trying to shift the focus of discipline from signs to systems of signification. His theories develop the ideas of Saussure, Hjelmslev, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

According to Roger Fowler

Semiology or semiotics (is) difficult to distinguish sharply from STRUCTURALISM; perhaps best seen as different focuses within one emergent and as yet unformed complex of disciplines. ‘Semiology’ is F. de Saussure’s term (1916) for a projected new science devoted to study of ‘the life of signs within society’ – ‘signs’ including non-linguistic signs. R. Barthes follows Saussure, regarding patterns of social behaviour (fashion, cooking, architecture, etc.) as ‘languages’ – communicative codes. ‘Semiotic’ is a traditional term in those branches of philosophy particularly concerned with signs (especially the work of C.S.Peirce and of Charles Morris); more recently, Margaret Mead has attached ‘semiotics’ to the study of ‘patterned communications in all modalities’: here it closely approximates ‘semiology’ (as does the French semiotique). If structuralism stresses the patterned nature of literature as a cultural institution (thus having close affinity with FORMALISM), semiology is particularly concerned with literature as code – or, in Barthes’s recent work, as a counterpoint of several codes – as an institution which transmits and formalizes meaning and values. Whether there is any essential difference of method, we must wait and see. There is as yet no large body of semiological or structural criticism. (169)
2.2.2 FORMALISM AND SEMIOTICS

According to Vitaly Kiryushchenko, the opposing extremes of Saussure’s semiology and Peirce’s semiotics are made to seem more reconcilable in the light of intellectual heritage of the Russian formalism — essentially a Saussurean-type semiotic school, which gained wide acclaim in the mid-20th century Europe, alongside the French structuralism. It is interesting to note that late formalist analysis reveals some striking similarities with Peirce’s early ideas on the nature of signs and representation, and in particular those Peirce puts forward in his “On a New List of Categories”.

Broadly speaking, a considerable number of late formalist works (and most strikingly those of Vladimir Propp, a Russian philologist, the author of the world famous monograph Morphology of the Folk Tale) clearly suggest that formalists at certain point began to realize the importance of understanding how pure structures of meaning change in the course of history, and became interested in semantic mechanisms furnishing correspondence between discourse and historical realia. For instance, Propp, in his late works, just like Peirce, stressed the strong analogy his approach had with the evolutionary interpreted natural classification. This same idea serves as a refrain which repeats itself throughout Peirce’s writings. According to late Peirce, the idea of natural classification is just one of many examples which represent continuity as relational generality. A still earlier germ of this same concept was presented by Peirce in his “On a New List of Categories” in 1868. It is in this paper that Peirce introduced the term interpretant. And it is in this paper that Peirce offered alternative, non-Hegelian interpretation of Kantian synthesis of the manifold of intuition in representing the synthesis not as a pure self-positing but as an act of continuous development addressed to possible future. Again, some of Vladimir Propp’s late papers reveal striking similarities with the early semiotic ideas presented in Peirce’s New List. To illustrate the case, it is necessary to refer in some detail to one of Propp’s works, where he explores the relationship between folklore discourses and historical reality by appealing to the problem of narrative continuity in different folklore traditions. Like the majority of other Saussure-inspired analysts, Propp applies, as an analytical tool, the notion of archetypal structures (motives, or narrative functions), which serve as a basic grammar used by any folklore tradition in creating narratives. These functions are decontextualized universals which enter any folklore
discourse as the principal building blocks of a discursive structure of any myth or fairy tale. Simply put, these are units which actually put a story together.

**Yuri Lotman** (1922–1993) was the founding member of the Tartu (or Tartu-Moscow) Semiotic School. He developed a semiotic approach to the study of culture—semiotics of culture—and established a communication model for the study of text semiotics. He also introduced the concept of the semiosphere. Among his Moscow colleagues were Vladimir Toporov, Vyacheslav Ivanov and Boris Uspensky.

**Louis Hjelmslev** (1899–1965) developed a formalist approach to Saussure's structuralist theories. His best known work is *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, which was expanded in *Résumé of the Theory of Language*, a formal development of glossematics, his scientific calculus of language. Hjelmslev's sign model is a development of Saussure's bilateral sign model. Saussure considered a sign as having two sides, signifier and signified, and also distinguished between form and substance. Hjelmslev's famously renamed signifier and signified as respectively *expression plane* and *content plane*. The combinations of the four would distinguish between *form of content*, *form of expression*, *substance of content*, and *substance of expression*. In Hjelmslev's analysis, a sign is a function between two forms, the content form and the expression form, and this is the starting point of linguistic analysis. However, every sign function is also manifested by two substances: the content substance and the expression substance. The content substance is the psychological and conceptual manifestation of the sign. The expression substance is the material substance wherein a sign is manifested. This substance can be sound, as is the case for most known languages, but it can be any material support whatsoever, for instance, hand movements, as is the case for sign languages, or distinctive marks on a suitable medium as in the many different writing systems of the world. In short, Hjelmslev was proposing an open-ended, scientific method of analysis as a new semiotics.

### 2.2.3 FUNCTIONALISM AND SEMIOTICS

According to Theo Van Leeuwen, Functionalism has played a very important role in linguistics and semiotics, most recently under the influence of **Michael Halliday**, who distinguishes two related kinds of function:

- Function in Structure
- Function in Society (or use of language)
The term ‘structure’ in ‘function in structure’ refers to syntactic structure, which in mainstream twentieth century linguistics had usually been a matter of formal rules of ‘well-formedness’ or ‘correctness’. Halliday reinterpreted them in functional terms. So here, the ‘whole’ was not ‘society’ but the ‘clause’, or the ‘text’, and the ‘parts’ were not ‘individuals’ or ‘groups’ within society but the elements of clause or text structure. Here is an example:

[The Police]  [shot]  [the suspect]

Each of the parts of this clause— as indicated by the brackets—not only has a particular position in the clause (initial, medial, final) but also a functional role with respect to a whole. The verb form ‘shot’ functions as the process, as that what is done or happens. The role of the nominal group ‘the police’ is that of ‘actor’, or ‘doer’ of the action, and the role of the nominal group ‘the suspect’ is that of the ‘goal’, the ‘entity to which action is done’. Each part contributes to the construction of the whole, the represented action, just as, in sociological functionalism, each part of the society contributes to the ‘social organism’. The idea of the ‘function in structure’ has carried over into social semiotics.

The other aspect of Halliday’s linguistic functionalism, ‘function in society’, relates to the function of the whole to the parts. Like functionalist sociology, Halliday’s account of the function of language in society stresses that the basic needs of individuals are fulfilled by the ‘whole’ that unites individuals; in this case language has evolved to satisfy human needs, and the way it is organized is functional with respect to those needs.

Roman Jakobson’s account of the functions of language has been even more widely used in Semiotics. He organised six functions, and related them to the elements of communication:

- The referential function is oriented towards the context referred to in the act of communication, to what the message is about.

- The emotive function is oriented towards the addresser and aims at a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude towards what he is speaking about.

- The connotative function is oriented towards the addressee and similar to Halliday’s ‘regulative’ protufunction.
• The phatic function is oriented towards the channel.

• The metalingual function is oriented towards the code.

• The poetic function focuses on the message itself, and brings in an aesthetic element, not just in poetry but also in everyday language.

Thomas Sebeok identifies the sign as “one of six factors in communication which separately and together makes up the rich domain of semiotic research” (16). These factors are:

A. Message: the message is the sign.

B. Source: the sign producer is the source.

C. Destination: the sign receiver is the destination.

D. Channel: the channel is the medium through which the sign is given.

E. Code: the code is a set of rules by which the message is produced and interpreted.

F. Context: the context is the environment in which the sign is used and interpreted.

2.3 UMBERTO ECO AND THE NOTION OF ARCHETYPE

The origins of the archetypal hypothesis dates back to Plato. Plato's ideas are pure mental forms that are imprinted in the soul before it is born into the world. They are collective in the sense that they embody the fundamental characteristics of a thing rather than its specific peculiarities. In the seventeenth century, Sir Thomas Browne and Francis Bacon both employ the word 'archetype' in their writings; Browne in *The Garden of Cyrus* attempted to depict archetypes in his usage of symbolic proper-names. The concept of archetype is further developed by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. In Jung's framework, archetypes are innate, universal prototypes for ideas present in collective consciousness. A group of memories and interpretations associated with an archetype is complex (for example, earth, tree or a mother complex associated with the mother archetype). Jung treats the archetypes as psychological organs, analogous to physical ones in that both are morphological constructs that arose through evolution. At the same time, it has also been observed that evolution can itself be considered an archetypal construct. The term is also used in comparative anthropology. *The Golden Bough* written by the Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer is the first influential text dealing with
cultural mythologies. Frazer is a part of a group of comparative anthropologists who has worked extensively on archetypes. In literature, it is treated as a universal symbol, which may be a character, a theme or setting. Therefore, it has been instrumental in shaping cultural and psychological myths. But, the present study has taken the meaning of ‘archetype’ as given by Eco.

An important and pre-eminent scholar who has made significant contributions to semiotics is the Italian thinker, novelist and critic, Umberto Eco. In the words of David Lodge and Nigel Wood:

Umberto Eco (b.1929) was born in Alexandria, Italy, and studied at the University of Turin. He has taught at universities in Turin, Milan, Florence and Bologna, and is a frequent academic visitor to the United States. In 1981, he achieved international fame with his novel, *The Name of the Rose*, which was both a bestseller and literary success. Before that he established himself as an authority in the field of semiotics, cultural studies and literary theory, with such publications as *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976) [First published in Italy in 1975] and *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (1981) [1979].

Semiotics is the general science of signs of which linguistics, according to Saussure… is a subdivision. One consequence of this way of looking at language has been to encourage comparative study of literary and visual media, especially in the area of narrative. Another has been to break down the traditional prejudice of the custodians of ‘high culture’ against the products of popular or mass culture. These tendencies are exhibited very clearly in Eco’s work, which is notable for its broad range of illustration and eclectic methodology. He is as interested in the semiotics of blue jeans or the Superman story as in the dense polysemy of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, and this, combined with a lively, witty style makes him one of the most accessible critics in the structural tradition.

In ‘Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage’ he turns his attention on one of the popular classics of Hollywood cinema, reading off its multiple meanings in a manner reminiscent of Roland
Barthes… In the famous Humphrey Bogart-Ingrid Bergman movie, Eco suggests filmic archetypes (or clichés, as a more elitist critic might call them) are multiplied to the point where they begin to ‘talk about themselves’ and generate an intoxicating excess of signification. This process, by which kitch, in its reception by a finely attuned audience, can allegedly achieve something approximating the sublimity of classic art, is a recurrent theme and subject of controversy in discussions of postmodernism. (411)

In this essay, “Casablanca: Cult Movies and Inter-Textual Collage” first published in 1984 and reprinted in Modern Criticism and Theory (second edition, edited by David Lodge and Nigel Wood, Indian print, 2014) Eco analyses the Hollywood film Casablanca and proves that it is a cult movie. In this essay, Eco begins by explaining what a cult object stands for. To quote Eco:

According to traditional standards in aesthetics, Casablanca is not a work of art, if such an expression still has a meaning. In any case, if the films of Dreyer, Eisenstein or Autonomi are works of art, Casablanca represents a very modest aesthetic achievement. It is a hodgepodge of sensational scenes strung together implausibly, its characters are psychologically incredible, its actors act in a mannered way. Nevertheless, it is a great example of cinematic discourse, a palimset for future students of twentieth century religiosity, a paramount laboratory for semiotic research into textual strategies. Moreover it has become a cult movie. (412)

He adds the requirements of a cult object as follows:

The work must be loved, obviously, but this is not enough. It must provide a completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the fan’s private sectarian world, a world about which one can make up quizzes and play trivia games so that the adepts of the sect recognize through each other a shared expertise. (Ibid).

In this context, Eco observes that literary works can also be cult objects. In his words:

Curiously enough, a book can also inspire a cult even though it is a great work of art: both The Three Musketeers and The Divine Comedy
rank among the cult books; and there are more trivia games among the fans of Dante than among fans of Dumas. I suspect that a cult movie, on the contrary, must display some organic imperfections. It seems that the boastful *Rio Bravo* is a cult movie and the great *Stagecoach* is not. (413)

Further, justifying that imperfections ought to be a part of a cult movie or book, Eco points out:

Thus one is tempted to read *Casablanca* as T.S. Eliot read *Hamlet*, attributing its fascination not to the fact that it was a successful work (actually he considered it one of Shakespeare’s less fortunate efforts) but to the imperfection of its composition. He viewed *Hamlet* as the result of an unsuccessful fusion of several earlier versions of the story, and so the puzzling ambiguity of the main character was due to the author’s difficulty in putting together different topoi. So both public and critics find *Hamlet* beautiful because it is interesting, but believe it is interesting because it is beautiful. (415)

Against this backdrop, Eco examines the first twenty minutes of the film as a sequence of twenty-four (24) archetypes.

An archetype, according to Eco, in this context, indicates:

A pre-established and frequently reappearing narrative situation, cited or in some way recycled by innumerable other texts and provoking in the addressee a sort of intense emotion accompanied by the vague feeling of a déjà vu, (something already seen) that everybody yearns to see it again. (414)

The following are the first two archetypes in Eco’s analysis of the film:

- First, **African music**, then the **Marseillaise**. Two different genres are evoked.

- Third genre, **the globe**; **Newsreel**. The voice even suggests the news report. Fourth genre: the **odyssey of refugees**. Fifth genre: **Casablanca and Lisbon** are, traditionally **hauts lieux** [favourite places] for international intrigues. Thus in two minutes five genres are evoked. (416)
However, Eco does not claim any universality for his notion of archetype or that his partial analysis of the film into twenty-four (24) archetypes is final, it is only a sample analysis and requires a complete reconstruction of its deep textual structure (Ibid). He leaves it to future teams of researchers. Next he examines the rest of the film in terms of two symphonic elaborations and observes that in view of the triangular unhappy love affairs, “The whole story is a virile affair, a dance of seduction between Male Heroes” (419).

The editors, Lodge and Wood explain the story of *Casablanca* in a footnote as follows:

The action of *Casablanca* (made in 1942, directed by Michael Curtiz) takes place early in the Second World War, when Morocco was controlled by the Vichy French government. The American Rick (Humphrey Bogart) runs a café-night club in Casablanca which is a place of passage for refugees trying to get exit visas to the United States usually by bribing the Perfect of Police, Renault. A Czech Resistance leader, Victor Laszlo, turns up with his wife, Isle (Ingrid Bergman) who had a love affair with Rick in Paris just before the German occupation, when she believed her husband to be dead. On discovering that he was alive, she parted from Rick without explanation. Bitterly hurt by this experience, Rick is at first hostile to Isle in Casablanca, but on learning the truth, and that she still loves him, chivalrously helps her and Laszlo to escape the clutches of the Gestapo Chief Strasser, at considerable risk to himself. In the final sequence, Rick and the implausibly reformed Renault go off to join the Free French. (412)

An earlier work of Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976) is a landmark in the history of semiotics. In this work Eco summarizes the essence of his eight-year long research into semiotics. Among other things, in this book Eco draws a distinction between *communication, signification* and *code*. As for communication and signification, as Michael Caesar, summarizes, according to Eco:

A *process of communication* is defined as the passage of a signal from a source (via a transmitter, along a channel) to a destination. In the case of communication between two machines, what is happening is the passage of information, but not signification (81)
On the other hand,

When the destination is a human being, described here as ‘addressee’, regardless of whether the source or transmitter is human and provided that the signal is not just a stimulus but arouses an interpretative response in the addressee, we have a process of signification. (Ibid)

Here Eco gives the example of salivation of Pavlov’s dog. The salivation on the part of the dog would be a sign rather than a conditioned reflex, if the animal could reverse the process, salivate and make the conditioned scientist ring the bell. That is, the process of signification is made possible by the existence of a code.

A code is a system of signification in so far as it couples present entities with absent units (Ibid)

Therefore, Eco concludes:

A signification system is thus an autonomous semiotic construct that has an abstract mode of existence independent of any possible communication act it makes possible; every act of communication to or between human beings (excluding stimuli) presupposes a signification system as its necessary condition. It is, in conclusion, possible to have a semiotics of signification independently of a semiotics of communication, but not vice versa.

Thus, Eco’s work *A Theory of Semiotics*, according Caesar, has a humanistic cast. In this context Eco also makes a distinction between sign and sign-function, because semiotic operations give rise not to isolated signs, but messages and texts (83)

Eco asserts that signs are never stable and that a sign is only its signifying form. Signs are iconic and therefore may be conventional but not arbitrary. A sign is not a symbol because it is neither a fixed physical entity, nor a fixed semiotic entity because it derives from two different systems, viz. form and substance and from two different planes, namely expression and content on the basis of a coding correlation. Hence Eco maintains that, in fact, there are no signs, but only sign-functions. A code provides merely rules for generation of signs. That is;

- a code establishes the correlation of an expression plane (in its purely formal and systematic aspect) with a content plane (in its purely formal and systematic aspect)
• a sign-function establishes the correlation of an abstract element of the expression system with an abstract element of the content system;

• in this way a code establishes general types, therefore producing the rule which generates concrete token, i.e., signs such as usually appear in communicative processes. (50)

2.4 ROLAND BARTHES AND THE SEMIOTIC CODES

Coming to textual analysis, there are no fully-fledged instances which can be taken for granted. There are only peace-meal textual analyses based on semiotic theory, for example, by Umberto Eco (1976) and Roland Barthes (Lodge 1988).

Some of the analyses are mainly based on the structualist approach. Structuralists like Todorov and Medvedev tried to discover the general principles underlying the production of narrative or fiction. Their search was to find out the ‘grammar’ of the narrative. That is, they were attempting to identify the langue of fiction by studying the structures of different narratives which are the paroles of narrative. Therefore, much of what goes under the name of semiotic analysis of fiction overlaps with structural analysis.

For lack of a generally accepted model of semiotic analysis of fiction in English, the present author has taken the levels or codes as illustrated by Roland Barthes in his analysis of a French novelette, “Sarrasine” in his S/Z (1970/1974 in English). These codes or levels of analysis proposed and illustrated by Barthes are as follows. The examples are provided by the present author.

• **The Semic Code** which depicts a signified through some signifiers.

  *e.g.* In that hot sun, there is a sound of the tapping of a walking stick on the desolate street. Coupled with that, there is the noise made by old and worn out shoes interspersed with cough. The walking stick came slowly and stopped in front of a small thatched house. Hearing the sound, a small girl came out of the house and watched carefully to know who had come. It was no other than her grandfather. His name was Johnson.

  In the above example, grandfather(Johnson) is the signified and a walking stick, the noise made by old and worn out shoes interspersed with cough are some signifiers which depicts that signified.
• **The Hermeneutic Code** which introduces a secret and reveals or conceals it.

*e.g.* Eliza saw that her boy friend, Peter, was keeping a book with a photograph inserted amidst its pages, in the drawer. She had a doubt whether it was the picture of a boy or a girl. A suspicion arose in her whether Peter had fallen in love with another girl. She was prompted to open the drawer and see the photograph. But her good manners prevented her from doing so. As she was vacillating in a dilemma like this, Peter had returned and pulled out the drawer, took the book and walked out. Eliza also followed him fast. But Peter stopped at the gate, looked back, smiled at her, closed the gate and disappeared.

In the above example, the Hermeneutic code is the secret about the photograph.

• **The Proairetic or Narrative Code** which links different actions, behaviours and episodes by adopting a sequential order among them.

*e.g.* This may be called the Narrative Code because in this code different episodes, behaviours, and their sequence are linked to one another as if glued. A number of novels, short stories can be taken as examples for this code. This code will be called *The Narrative Code* in this work, for reasons of simplicity.

• **The Symbolic Code** which describes opposites without any compromise.

*e.g.* It this code there is a description of mutually contradicting matters. For instance, there is no scope for equality between a rich man and a poor man in society. But both are human beings. The feeling of superiority in the rich person and that of inferiority in the poor man will always be there in a fixed manner internally. May be the former delivers public speeches on equality and the latter talks disparagingly about the rich people in the presence of his colleagues but when they meet face-to-face personally, the inequality projects itself in some form or the other.

In the above example, the Symbolic code is the contradiction between the rich and the poor.

• **The Cultural Code** which includes descriptions of society and culture. This code comprises narration or accounts related to social and cultural situations.

*e.g.* The shehnai was sounding. Vedic chants were clearly audible. Children
were shouting, running and playing amidst the ruffling of silk sarees, floral fragrances, scent of perfumes and sprays. Youthful feminine beauty was dancing in the form of long frocks and gowns being chased by bee-like looks of young boys – Sankar was overwhelmed by this ambience.

The description above clearly depicts the situation of a Hindu marriage in India and portrays the behaviour of relatives, women, elders, girls, children and young males in such a situation. This code reveals the culture and social behaviour of people who belong to a particular religious group or community.

According to Barthes, in a narrative text, there will be different levels or codes as illustrated above and when different codes come into contact with one another in the narrative process, there is friction between them and from this friction generates the ‘significance’ of that particular narrative text. Barthes goes to the extent of equating the experience of this unique textual meaning or ‘significance’ on the part of the reader to “jouassance” (or sexual pleasure). It is noteworthy that Barthes’s concept of ‘significance’ comes very close to the concept of ‘Rasa’ or Experience of Rasa proposed by Indian aestheticians (e.g. Natyasastram by Sage Bharatha)

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