CHAPTER -II

THE STRUCTURALIST SCHOOL AND ITS CONTRIBUTION

This module focuses on the Structuralists School and its contribution. It also gives details on Structuralism its significance and Structuralists after Saussure. It also studies Structuralism and its application in the field of Narratology.

2.0. Preliminaries

2.1. The Key Structuralists and their work

2.2. Structuralists after Saussure

2.3. Varied Concepts of Structuralism

2.4. The Significance of Structuralist Theory

2.5. Application of Structuralism in Narratology

2.0. Preliminaries:

Structuralism

Structuralism was the first school of psychology and focused on breaking down mental processes into the most basic components. Researchers tried to understand the basic elements of consciousness using a method known as introspection. Wilhelm Wundt, founder of the first psychology lab, was an advocate of this position and is often considered the founder of structuralism, despite the fact that it was his student, Edward Titchener who first coined the term to describe this school of thought. While Wundt's work helped to establish psychology as a separate science and contributed methods to experimental psychology, the structuralist school of thought did not last long beyond Titchener's death.
Criticisms of Structuralism

- By today’s scientific standards, the experimental methods used to study the structures of the mind were too subjective—the use of introspection led to a lack of reliability in results.
- Other critics argue that structuralism was too concerned with internal behaviour, which is not directly observable and cannot be accurately measured.

Strengths of Structuralism

- Structuralism is important because it is the first major school of thought in psychology.
- Structuralism also influenced experimental psychology.

Structuralist School:

A. The structuralist school began as an attempt to shore up the scientific aspects of symbolic interactionism.
B. This school focuses on the social causes and consequences of self by integrating symbolic interactionism’s focus on process and role theory’s focus on structure.

Basics of the Structuralist School:

A. Structuralists treat the self as both a social product and a social force.
B. Society provides individuals with the kinds of people to play a role by providing shared definitions of social objects.
C. There are common definitions associated with social positions, but people do not act out these roles without first personalizing them (self-role merger).

1. **Role as schema**: role-expectations we infer based on “cultural assumptions, taken-for-granted rules, and generalized procedures that underlie social life.”
2. **Role as resource:** role-expectations we infer by actually observing, reading about, or are told by people who actually occupy those positions.1

3. **Personalized role:** using roles as schemas and resources to “make a role.”

4. Personalized roles are modified as people interact with others, especially as they interact with orientational others.

**Prague School of Structuralism:**

In twentieth-century, Semiotics and Structuralism emerged simultaneously from the same source i.e. the postpositivistic paradigm initiated by Ferdinand de Saussure and Russian Formalism. The first systematic formulation of semiotic structuralism came from scholars of the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC), who are now known as the Prague school. The Prague Linguistic Circle was inaugurated in 1926 by Vilém Mathesius, director of the English seminar at Charles University, and his colleagues Roman Jakobson, Bohuslav Havránek, Bohumil Trnka, and Jan Rypka. Mathesius gave the group an organized form and a clear theoretical direction.

*Travaux du Cercle linguistique de Prague* (TCLP) contains in eight volumes (1929-39) pivotal contributions by members and “fellow travelers” in English, French, and German. In 1928, the Prague participants of the First International Congress of Linguists in The Hague drafted a program for structural linguistics with the Geneva school scholars. The *Thèses du Cercle linguistique de Prague* (vol. 1 of *Travaux*) set out not only the principles of the new linguistics but also a theory of standard and poetic language. In 1929 Jakobson coined the term “Structuralism.”

The recent resurgence of the Prague School of Structuralism occurred in a situation in which “Classical” Structuralism was taken over critically by Post-structuralism, Neo-structuralism, Deconstructionism, Post-modernism. As before, structural methodology has a contribution to make. Especially, Mukaovský’s conception of semantic gesture, dealing with the problems of an inner dynamic
meaning creating the energy of a work of art, can help in overcoming the traditional logocentrism.

2.1. The Key Structuralists and their work:

**Ferdinand de Saussure:** (November 26, 1857 – February 22, 1913) was a Swiss linguist whose ideas laid a foundation for many significant developments in linguistics in the 20th century. Saussure is widely considered the 'father' of 20th century linguistics, and his ideas have had a monumental impact on literary and cultural theory and interpretation.

**Biography:** Ferdinand de Saussure, born in Geneva in 1857, showed early signs of considerable talent and intellectual ability. It was not until 1906 that Saussure began teaching the Course of General Linguistics that would consume the greater part of his attention until his death in 1913. Saussure's most influential work, Course in General Linguistics (Cours de linguistique générale), was published posthumously in 1916 by former students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye.

**Legacy:** The impact of Saussure's ideas on the development of linguistic theory in the first half of the 20th century cannot be overstated. Two currents of thought emerged independently of each other, one in Europe, the other in America. The results of each incorporated the basic notions of Saussurian thought in forming the central tenets of structural linguistics. In Europe, the most important work was being done by the Prague School. Most notably, Nikolay Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson headed the efforts of the Prague School in setting the course of phonological theory in the decades following 1940.

**Saussure’s Basic Observations could be captured in his following views:**

1. "A sign is the basic unit of language (a given language at a given time).
2. Every language is a complete system of signs."
3. Parole (the speech of an individual) is an external manifestation of language."

4. "A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas."

5. "The connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary."

6. "In language there are only differences, and no positive terms"

7. "Speaking of linguistic law in general is like trying to pin down a ghost"

**Roman Jakobson:**

**Roman Osipovich Jakobson,** (11 October 1896 – 18 July 1982) was a Russian linguist and literary critic, associated with the Formalist school. He became one of the most influential linguists of the 20th century by pioneering the development of structural analysis of language, poetry, and art.

**Work:**

**work:** Jakobson was born to a well-to-do family in Russia of Jewish descent, and he developed a fascination with language at a very young age. As a student he was a leading figure of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and took part in Moscow's active world of avant-garde art and poetry. The linguistics of the time was overwhelmingly neogrammarian and insisted that the only scientific study of language was to study the history and development of words across time (the diachronic approach, in Saussure's terms). Jakobson, on the other hand, had come into contact with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, and developed an approach focused on the way in which language's structure served its basic function (synchronic approach) - to communicate information between speakers.

Jakobson left Prague at the start of WWII for Scandinavia, where he was associated with the Copenhagen linguistic circle, and such thinkers as Louis Hjelmslev.
**Legacy:**

Jakobson's three principal ideas in linguistics play a major role in the field to this day: linguistic typology, markedness, and linguistic universals. The three concepts are tightly intertwined: typology is the classification of languages in terms of shared grammatical features (as opposed to shared origin), markedness is (very roughly) a study of how certain forms of grammatical organization are more "natural" than others, and linguistic universals is the study of the general features of languages in the world. He also influenced Nicolas Ruwet's paradigmatic analysis.

Jakobson's work has been an influence on the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan and philosophy of Giorgio Agamben.

**Louis Pierre Althusser:**

**Louis Pierre Althusser:** (Pronunciation: altuˈseʁ) (16 October 1918 – 22 October 1990) was a Marxist philosopher. He was born in Algeria and studied at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, where he eventually became Professor of Philosophy.

Althusser was a lifelong member and sometimes strong critic of the French Communist Party. His arguments and theses were set against the threats that he saw attacking the theoretical foundations of Marxism. These included both the influence of empiricism on Marxist theory, and humanist and reformist socialist orientations which manifested as divisions in the European Communist Parties, as well as the problem of the ‘cult of personality’ and of ideology itself. Althusser is commonly referred to as a Structural Marxist, although his relationship to other schools of French structuralism is not a simple affiliation and he is critical of many aspects of structuralism.
Thought:

Althusser's earlier works include the influential volume, “Reading Capital”, which collects the work of Althusser and his students on an intensive philosophical re-reading of Karl Marx's Capital. The book reflects on the philosophical status of Marxist theory as "critique of political economy," and on its object. Several of Althusser's theoretical positions have remained very influential in Marxist philosophy.

Althusser is also widely known as a theorist of ideology, and his best-known essay is “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation”. For Althusser, structures are both agents of repression and inevitable - it is impossible to escape ideology; to not be subjected to it.

Levels and practices:

Because of Marx's belief that the individual is a product of society, it is, in Althusser's view, pointless to try to build a social theory on a prior conception of the individual. The subject of observation is not individual human elements, but rather 'structure'. Althusser believed that both the base and the superstructure were interdependent, although he kept to the classic Marxist materialist understanding of the determination of the base 'in the last instance'. In his view all levels and practices are dependent on each other. For him this was the moment of reproduction and constituted the important role of the superstructure.

Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes: (November 12, 1915 – March 25, 1980) was a French literary critic, literary and social theorist, philosopher, and semiotician. Barthes' work extended over many fields and he influenced the development of schools of theory including structuralism, semiotics, existentialism, Marxism and post-structuralism. Barthes showed great promise as a student and spent the period from 1935 to 1939 at the Sorbonne, earning a licence in classical letters.
Unfortunately, he was also plagued by ill health throughout this period, suffering from tuberculosis that often had to be treated in the isolation of sanatoria.

**Contribution:** His life from 1939 to 1948 was largely spent obtaining a license in grammar and philology, publishing his first papers, taking part in a medical study and continuing to struggle with his health.

Barthes spent the early 60s exploring the fields of semiology and structuralism, chairing various faculty positions around France, and continuing to produce more full-length studies. Many of his works challenged traditional academic views of literary criticism and of specific, renowned figures of literature. On 25 February 1980, after leaving a lunch party held by François Mitterrand, Barthes was struck by a laundry van while walking home through the streets of Paris. He succumbed to his injuries a month later and died on 25 March.

**Works and ideas:** Barthes' earliest work was very much a reaction to the trend of existentialist philosophy that was prominent during the 1940s, specifically towards the figurehead of existentialism Jean-Paul Sartre. In his work What Is Literature? (1947) Sartre finds himself to be disenchantment with both established forms of writing, and more experimental avant-garde forms, which he feels alienate readers. Barthes’ response is to try to find what can be considered unique and original in writing. He determines in Writing Degree Zero (1953) that language and style are both matters that appeal to conventions, and are thus not purely creative. Rather, form, or what Barthes calls ‘writing’, the specific way an individual chooses to manipulate conventions of style for a desired effect, is the unique and creative act. One’s form is vulnerable to becoming a convention once it has been made available to the public. This means that being creative is an ongoing process of continual change and reaction. He saw Albert Camus’s The Stranger as an ideal example of this notion for its sincere lack of any embellishment or flair.
Semiotics and myth: Barthes' many monthly contributions that made up Mythologies (1957) would often interrogate pieces of cultural material to expose how bourgeois society used them to assert its values upon others. For instance, portrayal of wine in French society as a robust and healthy habit would be a bourgeois ideal perception contradicted by certain realities (i.e. that wine can be unhealthy and inebriating). He found semiotics, the study of signs, useful in these interrogations. Barthes explained that these bourgeois cultural myths were second-order signs, or significations. A picture of a full, dark bottle is a signifier relating to a signified: a fermented, alcoholic beverage - wine. However, the bourgeois take this signified and apply their own emphasis to it, making ‘wine’ a new signifier, this time relating to a new signified: the idea of healthy, robust, relaxing wine. Motivations for such manipulations vary from a desire to sell products to a simple desire to maintain the status quo. These insights brought Barthes very much in line with similar Marxist theory.

Structuralism and its limits:

As Barthes’ work with structuralism began to flourish around the time of his debates with Picard, his investigation of structure focused on revealing the importance of language in writing, which he felt was overlooked by old criticism. Barthes’ “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives” is concerned with examining the correspondence between the structure of a sentence and that of a larger narrative, thus allowing narrative to be viewed along linguistic lines. Barthes split this work into three hierarchical levels: ‘functions’, ‘actions’ and ‘narrative’. ‘Functions’ are the elementary pieces of a work, such as a single descriptive word that can be used to identify a character. That character would be an ‘action’, and consequently one of the elements that make up the narrative. Barthes was able to use these distinctions to evaluate how certain key ‘functions’ work in forming characters. For example key words like ‘dark’, ‘mysterious’ and ‘odd’, when integrated together, formulate a specific kind of character or ‘action’. By breaking down the work into such fundamental distinctions Barthes was able to judge the degree of realism given functions have in forming their actions and
consequently with what authenticity a narrative can be said to reflect on reality. Thus, his structuralist theorizing became another exercise in his ongoing attempts to dissect and expose the misleading mechanisms of bourgeois culture.

While Barthes found structuralism to be a useful tool and believed that discourse of literature could be formalized, he did not believe it could become a strict scientific endeavour. In the late 1960s, radical movements were taking place in literary criticism. The post-structuralist movement and the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida were testing the bounds of the structuralist theory that Barthes' work exemplified. Derrida identified the flaw of structuralism as its reliance on a transcendental signified; a symbol of constant, universal meaning would be essential as an orienting point in such a closed off system. This is to say that without some regular standard of measurement, a system of criticism that references nothing outside of the actual work itself could never prove useful. But since there are no symbols of constant and universal significance, the entire premise of structuralism as a means of evaluating writing (or anything) is hollow.

The Death of the Author:

In the wake of this trip Barthes wrote what is largely considered to be his best-known work, the essay “The Death of the Author” (1968). Barthes saw the notion of the author, or authorial authority, in the criticism of literary text as the forced projection of an ultimate meaning of the text. By imagining an ultimate intended meaning of a piece of literature one could infer an ultimate explanation for it. But Barthes points out that the great proliferation of meaning in language and the unknowable state of the author’s mind makes any such ultimate realization impossible. As such, the whole notion of the ‘knowable text’ acts as little more than another delusion of Western bourgeois culture. Indeed the idea of giving a book or poem an ultimate end coincides with the notion of making it consumable, something that can be used up and replaced in a capitalist market. “The Death of the Author” is sometimes considered to be a post-structuralist work.
Textuality and S/Z:  

Since there can be no originating anchor of meaning in the possible intentions of the author, Barthes considers what other sources of meaning or significance can be found in literature. He concludes that since meaning can’t come from the author, it must be actively created by the reader through a process of textual analysis. In his ambitious S/Z (1970), Barthes applies this notion in a massive analysis of a short story by Balzac called Sarrasine. The end result was a reading that established five major codes for determining various kinds of significance, with numerous lexias (a term created by Barthes to describe elements that can take on various meanings for various readers) throughout the text.

*(It is Ronald Barthe’s most important and certainly his most sustained critical analysis of literary text. [English Version. S/Z. trans. Richard Miller, New York; Hill and Wang, 1974])

Vladimir Propp:  

Vladimir Propp: (1897-1970) Russian folklorist, known almost entirely for his Morphology of the Folktale, but author of other works, some now translated as Theory and History of Folklore.

His Morphology of the Folk Tale was published in Russian in 1928. Although it represented a breakthrough in both folkloristics and morphology and influenced Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, it was generally unnoticed in the West until it was translated in the 1950s. His character types are used in media education and can be applied to almost any story, be it in literature, theatre, film, television series, etc.

Narrative Structure:  

Vladimir Propp extended the Russian Formalist approach to the study of narrative structure. Propp was able to arrive at a typology of narrative structures.
By analyzing character and action types, Propp concluded that there were 31 generic narratives in the Russian folk tale. While not all were present, he found that all the tales he had analyzed displayed the functions in unvarying sequence. After the initial situation is depicted, the tale takes the following sequence of 31 functions:

1. A member of a family leaves home (the hero is introduced);
2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero ('don't go there', 'don't do this');
3. The interdiction is violated (villain enters the tale);
4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance (either villain tries to find the children/jewels etc; or intended victim questions the villain);
5. The villain gains information about the victim;
6. The villain attempts to deceive the victim to take possession of victim or victim's belongings (trickery; villain disguised, tries to win confidence of victim);
7. Victim taken in by deception, unwittingly helping the enemy;
8. Villain causes harm/injury to family member. Alternatively, a member of family lacks something or desires something;
9. Misfortune or lack is made known;
10. Seeker agrees to, or decides upon counter-action;
11. Hero leaves home;
12. Hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc, preparing the way for his/her receiving magical agent or helper (donor);
13. Hero reacts to actions of future donor;
14. Hero acquires use of a magical agent;
15. Hero is transferred, delivered or led to whereabouts of an object of the search;
16. Hero and villain join in direct combat;
17. Hero is branded (wounded/marked, receives ring or scarf);
18. Villain is defeated;
19. Initial misfortune or lack is resolved;
20. Hero returns;
21. Hero is pursued (pursuer tries to kill, eat, undermine the hero);
22. Hero is rescued from pursuit;
23. Hero unrecognized, arrives home or in another country;
24. False hero presents unfounded claims;
25. Difficult task proposed to the hero;
26. Task is resolved;
27. Hero is recognized (by mark, brand, or thing given to him/her);
28. False hero or villain is exposed;
29. Hero is given a new appearance (is made whole, handsome, new garments etc);
30. Villain is punished;
31. Hero marries and ascends the throne (is rewarded/promoted).

More often, a function is negated twice, so that it must be repeated three times.

Characters:

He also concluded that all the characters could be resolved into only 7 broad character types in the 100 tales he analyzed:

1. The villain — struggles against the hero.
2. The donor — prepares the hero or gives the hero some magical object.
3. The (magical) helper — helps the hero in the quest.
4. The princess and her father — give the task to the hero, identifies the false hero, marries the hero, often sought for during the narrative. Propp noted that functionally, the princess and the father cannot be clearly distinguished.
5. The dispatcher — character who makes the lack known and sends the hero off.
6. The hero or victim/seeker hero — reacts to the donor, weds the princess.
7. False hero/anti-hero/usurper — takes credit for the hero’s actions or tries to marry the princess.
These roles could sometimes be distributed among various characters, as the hero kills the villain dragon, and the dragon's sisters take on the villainous role of chasing him. Conversely, one character could engage in acts as more than one role, as a father could send his son on the quest and give him a sword, acting as both dispatcher and donor.

**Michel Foucault (1926-1984)**

Michel Foucault (French pronunciation: [mîʃɛl fuko]) (15 October 1926 – 25 June 1984) was a French philosopher, historian, intellectual, critic and sociologist. He held a chair at the Collège de France with the title "History of Systems of Thought," and also taught at the University of California, Berkeley. Foucault is best known for his critical studies of social institutions, most notably psychiatry, medicine, the human sciences, and the prison system, as well as for his work on the history of human sexuality. Foucault was often associated with the structuralist movement. Foucault later distanced himself from structuralism. Though sometimes characterised as postmodernist, Foucault always rejected the post-structuralist and postmodernist labels.

**The Archaeology of Knowledge:**

Published in 1969, this volume was Foucault's main excursion into methodology, written as an appendix of sorts to Les Mots et les choses. It makes references to Anglo-American analytical philosophy, particularly speech act theory.

Foucault directs his analysis toward the "statement" (énoncé), the basic unit of discourse. "Statement" has a very special meaning in the Archaeology: it denotes that which makes propositions, utterances, or speech acts meaningful. In contrast to classic structuralists, Foucault does not believe that the meaning of semantic elements is determined prior to their articulation. In this understanding, statements themselves are not propositions, utterances, or speech acts. Rather, statements constitute a network of rules establishing what is meaningful, and these
rules are the preconditions for propositions, utterances, or speech acts to have meaning.

**Jacques Lacan:**

Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan (French pronounced [ʒak lakâ]) (April 13, 1901 – September 9, 1981) was a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, who contributed much to the literature of the fields. He gave yearly seminars, in Paris, from 1953 until 1981, influencing France's intellect in the 1960s and the 1970s, especially the ost-structuralist philosophers. His interdisciplinary work is Freudian, featuring the unconscious, the castration complex, the ego; identification; and language as subjective perception, thus, he figures in critical theory, literary studies, twentieth-century French philosophy, and clinical psychoanalysis.

**Jacques Derrida (1930-2004):**

Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher and literary critic, formulated the theories that became the basis for deconstruction, a movement that has been influential in both Europe and the United States. In contrast to the structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure and his followers, Derrida maintains that the meaning of language is elusive and hidden and that no definitive interpretation can be established for a written text. His critical method is to "deconstruct" a text by exposing the linguistic and philosophical presuppositions concealed in it.

Derrida's theories were first made public in a 1966 lecture, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." This lecture is generally accepted as the "birthday" of deconstruction. In it, Derrida, ironically, spends more time attacking and deconstruction modern theorists (i.e., structuralists) than he does the traditional ones.

Derrida's attack on all theory (whether traditional or modern) has led to a growing suspicion of (and backlash against) theory itself. Indeed, neopragmatists, such as Richard Rorty, have argued that ultimately no link exists between a critic's
theoretical stance and his actual practice, that is, the theory entails no practical consequences.

Most of Derrida's many writings have been published in English. The most accessible are:


**Julia Kristeva:**

Julia Kristeva (Bulgarian: Юлия Кръстева) (born 24th June 1941) is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, psychoanalyst, feminist, and, most recently, novelist, who has lived in France since the mid-1960s. Kristeva became influential in international critical analysis, cultural theory and feminism after publishing her first book *Semeiotikè* in 1969. Her immense body of work includes books and essays which address intertextuality, the semiotic, and abjection, in the fields of linguistics, literary theory and criticism, psychoanalysis, biography and autobiography, political and cultural analysis, art and art history. Together with Roland Barthes, Todorov, Goldmann, Gérard Genette, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Greimas, and Althusser, she stands as one of the foremost structuralists, in that time when structuralism took major place in humanities. Her works also have an important place in post-structuralist thought.

**The semiotic:**

One of Kristeva's most important propositions is the semiotic. Kristeva's use of the term 'semiotic' here should not be confused with the discipline of semiotics suggested by Ferdinand de Saussure. For Kristeva, the semiotic is closely related to the infantile pre-Oedipal referred to in the works of Freud and mainly Melanie Klein and the British Object Relation psychoanalysis, and to the Lacanian (pre-mirror stage).
Importance of Prague School:

The image of twentieth-century structuralism is incomplete both historically and theoretically without the Prague school. Prague scholars took a broad view of the tasks and methods of aesthetics and poetics and developed an epistemology that anticipates much of the poststructuralist critique:

1. **Prague Structuralism is functionalistic.** All signs, including aesthetic signs, complete certain needs of their users. The functionalism inspired by Karl Bühler (Mukarovský, Jakobson) derived the functions from the factors of the speech act, Havránek’s from the social channels of communication (see Dolezel 149-55). In functionalism the Prague theory receives a pragmatic underpinning without sacrificing to pragmatics the sign’s formal and semantic dimensions. Prague epistemology’s most prominent feature—its synthesizing character, its preferring dialectic to reductionism—can be discerned here.

2. The Prague theory of structure is located within an interdisciplinary mereology. In 1929, Jakobson already recognized the interdisciplinarity of structuralism.

3. The Prague epistemology distinguished between the activities of ordinary readers and those of expert students of literature. In a late evaluation of the structuralist position, Jakobson maintained that the poem, like a musical composition, “affords the ordinary reader the possibility of an artistic perception, but produces neither the need nor the competence to affect a scientific analysis” (Dialogues 116-17). He emphasized, however, that the student of human communication is not an engineer of signals but rather deals with cultural phenomena endowed with meaning, history, and value. Jakobson distinguished a “preliminary stage” of enquiry, where the researcher is “the most detached and external onlooker,” a “cryptanalyst,” and a stage of “internal approach,” when he or she becomes “a potential or actual partner in the exchange of verbal messages among the members of
the speech community, a passive or even active fellow member of that community” (Selected3:574). Such flexibility satisfies the diverse needs of the student of literature without confusing the practical literary activities of writing and reading with cognitive activities aimed at theoretical understanding.

4. Prague school epistemology reconciled Saussure’s opposition of synchrony and diachrony, of structural and historical study. Jakobson summed up the divergence from the father of structuralism: Saussure attempted to suppress the tie between the system of a language and its modifications by considering the system as the exclusive domain of synchrony and assigning modifications to the sphere of diachrony alone. In actuality, as indicated in the different social sciences, the concepts of a system and its change are not only compatible but indissolubly tied. (Dialogues 58)

The evolution of language is no less “systemic and goal-oriented” than its synchronic functioning. (64)

In Prague, a comprehensive theory of literary history was developed: “What most sharply distinguishes Czech structuralism from the other twentieth-century literary theories is its commitment to literary history” (Galan 2). The PLC scholars unanimously claimed that literary history has to be based on literary theory. Even so, Mukarovský’s first formulation of the principles of structuralist literary history in 1934 led to a polemic with traditionalists. In 1936, Wellek published the penetrating essay “The Theory of Literary History,” while perhaps the most significant contributions to literary history are Vodicka’s 1942 paper “Literární historie, Její problémy a úkoly” and his 1948 monograph. The PLC model of literary history was derived from the model of literary communication, with its three factors: writer, literary work and reader. Genetic history reconstructs the origins of literary works, structural history, and transformations in the “literary series”; and reception history, successive concretizations and interpretations. In accepting genetic and reception history, the Prague scholars transcended their original historical “immanentism,” recognizing that “literary works are made by
people, they are facts of social culture and exist in numerous relationships to other phenomena of cultural life”.(25)

The ‘Cercle Linguistique de Prague’ and the ‘Wiener:

It is, generally, well known that Prague and Czechoslovakia were the isles of freedom and democracy in the Central Europe during 1920s and 30s. Prague became a conglomerate of numerous traditions, cultural influences and scientific aspirations.

1. It provided a refuge to many intellectuals, a place of stopover where they could live and work. Traditions of Ernst Mach, Albert Einstein or Phillipe Frank were then still very much alive there and many Czech intellectuals commonly spoke Czech as well as German. Prague also provided home to many leading intellectuals of various branches of learning such as theoretical linguistics or electrochemistry. Czech, German, Jewish and Russian influences came all to be mingled here. On one side, there would be Franz Kafka and on the other there may be, for example, Pitrim A. Sorokin, the sociologist who later became known for his Crisis of Our Age (published in 1950).

2. In order to be able to define the place and importance of both the Prague Linguistic Circle and the Wiener Kreis on the intellectual map of the time, we have to take a look back at the cultural history. In line with the then prevailing empirical approach, linguistics in the 19th century was concerned with the sound, not the content or meaning, of the words. It was the school of ‘young grammarians’ (die Junggrammatiker) that started to address more systematically the origins and development of a language, looking at its historical aspects. Their aim was to reconstruct a presupposed ‘proto–language’. The main representative of the school of Junggrammatiker in Bohemia was Jan Gebauer (1838–1907), the author of The Historical Grammar of the Czech Language and The Dictionary of the Old Czech. Besides Gebauer there was Josef Zubaty (1855–1931), professor of
Indian studies and comparative Indo–European linguistics, who was also involved in this field.

3. Apart from this diachronic approach to the study of a language or historical linguistics there was also a synchronic approach (descriptive linguistics), entailing the study of a linguistic system in a particular state, without reference to time. The main representative of the latter approach was the world-renown Wilhelm von Humboldt. The first person, who within the Czech environment attempted to synthesize the two approaches, was Vilem Mathesius (1882–1945).

4. He was inspired by the work of his friend, the natural scientist Jaroslav Peklo. Mathesius was looking for an equivalent of the classification system employed by the natural history and, as he said, he had found it in general or theoretical linguistics. Besides the term ‘diachronic/synchronic’ Mathesius established another distinguishing term ‘static/dynamic’. Eventually, his most important work became a paper on the ‘potentiality of linguistic phenomena’, which was published in 1911 in the *Bulletin of the Royal Czech Society*. So, four years before Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Vilem Mathesius was to present these, the propositions that were to affect the course of the development of linguistics.

**Introduction of Ferdinand De Saussure to Prague:**

In 1920, Mathesius met Roman Jakobson and came into contact with another tradition. Soon, the other Russian linguists came to Prague: P.N. Bogatyrev, S.I. Kartsevsky, and N.S. Trubetskoy. Contacts were also established with the German linguists H. Becker and F. Slotty. Kartsevsky, who was a professor of Russian at Geneva the University, introduced and brought the knowledge of the work of de Saussure to Prague. These linguists were joined by B. Trnka, B. Havranek and Jan Mukarovsky (1891–1975). They wanted to establish a discussion club or a group and this came about following the lecture by Henrik Becker entitled *Der europaische Sprachgeist* on 26th October 1926, when
the Prague Linguistic Circle was born. This happened in Mathesius’s study near the present Philosophical Faculty, in a meeting attended by Mathesius, Becker, Jakobson, Trnka, Havranek and Jan Rypka (1886–1968), later a prominent orientalist. In later years there were also lectures given by Rudolph Carnap (Über die logische Syntax) on 20th May 1935 and by Edmund Husserl, who spoke on Phänomenologie und Sprachwissenschaft on 18th November of the same year. The Prague Linguistic Circle also made contributions to developing Husserl’s ideas that were inspiration behind the works of Jan Patocka and German philosopher L. Langrebe. Altogether, the Prague Linguistic Circle comprised eight Czech, five Russians, two Frenchmen, a German (H. Becker) and there was also, loosely connected with the Circle, an Englishman Simeon Potter, linguist and teacher of English at the University of Brno.

2.2. Structuralists after Saussure

Ferdinand de Saussure, (1913) a Swiss linguist whose ideas on language structure put down the groundwork for the structuralist school in linguistics and social theory. The whole line from Jakobson to Lévi-Strauss to Althusser to Foucault and Derrida trace their ideas back to Saussure’s simple idea that the meaning of a word is to be understood through its relation to other words, as opposed to the positivist line of research dominant in his day, which sought to understand language through analysis of sounds and their impact on the nervous system.

While still a student, Saussure established his reputation with a brilliant contribution to comparative linguistics, Memoir on the Original System of Vowels in the Indo-European Languages. In it, he explained how vowel alternations in Indo-European languages take place. Though he wrote no other book, he was enormously influential as a teacher, lecturing at the École des Hautes Études in Paris from 1881 to 1891 and as professor of Indo-European linguistics and Sanskrit (1901-13) and of general linguistics (1907-13) at the University of Geneva. His name is best known, however, for the Course in
General Linguistics, a reconstruction of his lecture notes and other materials by two of his students.

**Language must be considered a social Phenomenon:**

Saussure contended that language must be considered a social phenomenon, a structured system that can be viewed synchronically and diachronically (in the course of time) but he insisted that the methodology of each approach is distinct and mutually exclusive. He also introduced two terms that have become common currency in linguistics - “parole,” the speech of the individual person, and “langue,” the systematic, structured language (such as English) existing at a given time within a given society. These are ideas are usually regarded as starting point of Structuralism in Linguistics.

**Structuralism: Saussure**

The two central dichotomies that capture best the fundamental changes of direction in the development of 20\textsuperscript{th} century linguistics as opposed to linguistics in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century are synchrony – diachrony and language system – language use. The 19\textsuperscript{th} century was the century of historical linguistics. Linguistic research was characterized by the search for regularities and laws in language change, the search for genetic links between languages (key words: family trees, Indo-European), and the reconstruction of older language periods and languages in historical-comparative linguistics (or: comparative philology) by means of comparing with each other younger language periods and languages for which written data material was available.

The 20\textsuperscript{th} century, on the other hand, is the century of synchrony. This is certainly the most important aspect of the paradigm shift, which affected linguistics in the decades after 1900, a paradigm shift which is inseparably linked to the name of Ferdinand de Saussure, the famous Swiss linguist who taught at the University of Geneva a century ago. Saussure, founder of modern linguistics, to say more precisely, the founder of Structuralism. Saussure’s lecture materials and
the lecture notes taken by his disciples and were not published until after his death (1913). This book includes the thorough discussions of numerous ideas concerning a new approach to the study of language.

Besides the all-important separation of synchrony and diachrony, and the call for the primacy of synchrony, this set of ideas includes, above all, the call for a kind of linguistics which solely concentrates on language as a closed system in which all elements are linked to one another, and in which the value (valeur) of every single element is defined by its place in the system alone. For example, the Simple Past in English (she worked) has a different status than its counterpart in German, the preterit (Präteritum), because it contrasts both with the Past Progressive (she was working) and the Present Perfect (she has worked). German grammar does not only lack a counterpart of the English progressive form; Präteritum (sie arbeitete) and Perfekt (sie hat gearbeitet) are in most contexts interchangeable without a difference in meaning. The different status of Simple Past and Präteritum within the grammars of English and German, respectively, thus partly results from the value of the Present Perfect in the English tense system in contrast to the value of the Perfekt in the German tense system. The view that every linguistic sign is part of the system and has no existence outside of it is an important reason for the structuralist position that every language system needs to be considered by itself. According to Saussure, linguistics should solely be concerned with the systematic regularities of the abstract language system, which is shared by all members of a speech community (langue), and not with its concrete use by the individual (parole). What stands at the centre of structuralist linguistics is the determination and description of the individual elements of this system (on all structural levels: sounds, words and their components, sentences and their constituents), and the relationships existing between them on each of these levels. Within any system, there are two basic types of relationships between linguistic units, which have to be distinguished: relationships of choice or interchangeability on the vertical axis (paradigmatic relationships), and relationships of “chain” or combination on the horizontal axis (syntagmatic relationships). A paradigmatic relationship holds
between the initial sounds of ban, can, Dan, fan, tan and van, whereas the relationship between any of these sounds and the two following sounds is a syntagmatic one.

**Status of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)**

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is generally regarded as one of the formulators of structuralism. He viewed language as a system of signs that define one another through their relations rather than through their meanings. He distinguished sharply between the system of language (la langue) and its actual use (la parole), as well as between the historic study of language (diachronic) and its contemporary state (synchronic). After Saussure's death some of his students published their collated notes as his famous *Course in General Linguistics* (1916; Eng. trans., 1966).

He inspired for modern structuralism through his posthumous *Course in General Linguistics*, which sought to complement historical, diachronic linguistics with a cross-sectional, static or synchronic linguistics.

**According to Saussure, no ready-made ideas exist before words.**

1. A word or sign does not unite a thing with a name, but a concept (signified) with a sound-image (signifier).
2. The relationship between signified/signifier is arbitrary: if it were not, the world would have only one language.
3. Neither Platonic forms nor transcendent truths lurk behind the words (signs) we use; they are merely arbitrary, man-made concepts.
4. Signs have no meaning at all apart from the system; their meaning emerges out of the differences that set them apart from other signs within the overarching system (or structure).
5. Indeed, even such a simple sign as the word c-a-t is made meaningful only by the fact that it is not b-a-t or c-a-n.
It would be misleading to suggest that the inquiry into the form and function of Natural Language is a phenomenon unique to the Late Twentieth Century. Indeed, form and meaning have been two of the central objects of study in philosophy since its beginnings in early metaphysics. There is, however, a special flavour to the assumptions and goals of twentieth century linguistics that differentiates it from previous inquiry. The birth of (modern) linguistics has traditionally been credited to Ferdinand de Saussure and his students in Geneva at the turn of the century. The critical insight attributed to Saussure is that "The sole object of study in linguistics is the normal, regular existence of a language already established." Recall that Saussure takes language, "considered in itself and for its own sake", to be the "only true object of study in linguistics." The linguistic sign is a useful device in the explanation of language, but it does not represent the totality of language, the object of study. Since an "individual, acting alone, is incapable of establishing a value", there should be some larger system to which linguistic signs belong. Additionally, that system should contain all of the basic sound-meaning pairings contained in the language. As Saussure puts it "the linguistic sign itself, as the link uniting the two constituent elements, likewise has counterparts. These are the other signs of the language." In modern parlance, this larger system would be roughly equivalent to the "lexicon". We take this larger structure, then, to be a set of relations between signs, which is to say: a set of [relations between [relations of [relations [...?]]]].-coming soon to a homepage near you - for an attempted composite image of the system to this point).

After Saussure's work was rediscovered in the 1960's, there was an explosion of interest in theories of difference and formal "textual analysis", and not just of language, but of entire social systems. Today, we think nothing of referring to movies, sports events or psychological interactions as "texts" to be read.

One of the main critiques of Saussure's flavour of structuralism was that it was too closed off to social change. Because he was a big old Commie, Mikael Bakhtin was obsessed with using Saussure's methods to illuminate the "dialectical
struggles" within words. In ‘Marxism and the Philosophy of Language’, he argued that language happens primarily through of a "clash of social forces" between people who use words. To study the changes in signs, and to chart those changes, is to study the class struggles of society itself.

It is from Bakhtin that Michel Foucault draws the very useful notion of "normative language". "Normative" is a fancy way of saying, "Words that have become naturalized over time, and thus hide their power base. For instance, (to take Foucault's famous example) "Sanity" is equated with a particular brand of culturally sanctioned behaviour. Over time, the term "sane" is normalized, and becomes synonymous with "the natural state." Insanity", on the other hand, shifts in meaning from "un-sane" to "un-natural."

In her book, 'Epistemology of the Closet', Eve Segwick makes a similar claim about the term "homosexual", arguing that "natural" heterosexuality is an impossible idea without the creation of an "unnatural" sexuality--homosexuality. In truth, sanity and insanity, as well as hetero and homosexuality, "mean" nothing outside their cultural exchange values--which is to say their differences.

These examples are up to demonstrate that structuralism is alive and well in contemporary thought. Indeed, you really can't engage in post-structuralist critique without resorting to structuralism at some point. As, Jennifer says: "Can't go over it. Can't go under it. Gotta go through it."

Claude Levi-Strauss:

Claude Levi-Strauss (1910): Anthropologist, for many years Professor at the College de France and the key figure in establishing structuralism in France. For an introduction see Edmund Leach, *Levi-Strauss* and on this website the essay on *The Way of the Masks*.

Claude Levi-Strauss was a popular French anthropologist most well known for his development of structural anthropology. He was born on November 28, 1908 in Belgium as the son of an artist, and a member of an intellectual French
Jewish family. Levi-Strauss studied at the University of Paris. From 1935-9 he was Professor at the University of Sao Paulo making several expeditions to central Brazil. Between 1942-1945, he was Professor at the New School for Social Research. In 1950 he became Director of Studies at the Ecole Practique des Hautes Etudes. In 1959 Levi-Strauss assumed the Chair of Social Anthropology at the College de France. His books include *The Raw and the Cooked*, *The Savage Mind*, *Structural Anthropology* and *Totemism*.

Some reasons for his extreme popularity are identified in his rejection of history and humanism, in his refusal to see Western civilization as privileged and unique, in his emphasis on form over content and in his insistence that the savage mind is equal to the civilized mind. Levi-Strauss appeals to the deepest feelings among the alienated intellectuals of our society.

Levi-Strauss did a plethora of things in his life including studying Law and Philosophy both of which bored him. He also did considerable reading among literary masterpieces, and was deeply immersed in classical and contemporary music. His three "mistresses" in life were said to be Marxism, psychoanalysis and geology, but anthropology gave the scholar the opportunity to come into contact with the lives of men of different cultures, rather than just Western cultures. His belief that the characteristics of man are everywhere identical was found after countless travels to Brazil and visits to North and South American Indian tribes. In fact, Levi-Strauss spent more than half his 59 years studying the behaviour of the North and South American Indian tribes. The method he used to study the social organization of these tribes is called structuralism. "Structuralism," says Levi-Strauss, "is the search for unsuspected harmonies..."

**Claude Levi-Strauss: As a Leading French Philosopher and his acceptance of structuralism as a method in the social sciences and humanities:**

Claude Levi-Strauss, a leading French philosopher, social theorist and anthropologist, is associated with the development of structuralism as a method in both the social sciences and humanities. Aside from a period spent teaching in
Brazil before World War II and a few years as an academic and diplomat in the United States during and after the war, Levi-Strauss has lived and taught in France. His researches have focused on the massive amount of ethnological materials collected by field-workers worldwide.

In the tradition of 19th- and early-20th-century French sociology (which included anthropology), pioneered by such figures as Emile Durkheim, Levi-Strauss is a theorizer on a grand scale. By developing a sophisticated means of analyzing the cultural artifacts of preindustrial, nonliterate peoples, he has sought to discover underlying structures of thought that characterize not only so-called primitive societies -- the anthropologist's specialty - but also the formal structures of human mentality generally.

Levi-Strauss derived his structuralist method from structural linguistics. Considering the perspective of structural linguistics appropriate for culture and thought, as well as for language, he attempted to demonstrate that the cultural features of tribal societies were assemblages of codes, in turn reflecting certain universal principles of human thought.

Levi-Strauss's first major work was *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949; Eng. trans., 1962), but his career project has been the structural study of mythology, realized in *Mythologiques* (4 vols., 1964-71; Eng. trans., 1970-81).

Unlike previous analysts of myth, Levi-Strauss holds that meaning does not reside in the intrinsic significance or symbolism of a particular element in a mythical story. Rather, a myth's meaning is hidden in the underlying relationships of all its elements, which can be discovered only through structuralist analysis.

As Levi-Strauss's works became available in English in the 1960s, his structuralist method gained popularity in the United States in such fields as sociology, architecture, literature, and art, as well as anthropology.
His writings include:

- *Tristes Tropiques* (1955; Eng. trans., 1964);
- *Structural Anthropology* (1958; Eng. trans. in 2 vols., 1963 and 1976);
- *The Savage Mind* (1962; Eng. trans., 1966);

**Levi-Strauss and his Contribution:**

Levi-Strauss derived structuralism from a school of linguistics whose focus was not on the meaning of the word, but the patterns that the words form. Levi-Strauss's contribution gave us a theory of how the human mind works. Man passes from a natural to a cultural state as he uses language, learns to cook, etc... Structuralism considers that in the passage from natural to cultural, man obeys laws he does not invent it's a mechanism of the human brain. Levi-Strauss views man not as a privileged inhabitant of the universe, but as a passing species, which will leave only a few faint traces of its passage when it becomes extinct.

Levi Strauss is also known for his structural analysis of mythology. He was interested in explaining why myths from different cultures from around the globe seem so similar. He answers this question not by the content of myths, but by their structure. To make this argument Levi-Strauss insists that myth is a language because myth has to be told in order to exist. A myth is almost always set some time long ago, with a timeless story. He says myth is actually on a more complex level than language. Myth shares with language the following characteristics:

1. It's made of units that are put together according to certain rules.
2. These units form relationships with each other, based on opposites, which provide the basis of the structure.

He concludes that the structural method of myth analysis brings order out of a mess. It provides a means to account for widespread variations on a basic myth structure, and is logical and scientific. This was important for the scientist in
Levi-Strauss. He says that repetition, in myth as in oral literature, is necessary to reveal the structure of the myth. Because of this need for repetition, the myth is told in layer after layer. However, the layers aren't the same, and it's eventually shown that the myth "grows" as it is told, but the structure of the myth does not grow.

2.3. The Scope of Structuralism:

Introduction:

Structuralism is not just limited to or about language and literature. When Saussure's work was 'co-opted' in the 1950s by the people we now call structuralists, their feeling was that Saussure's model of how language works was 'transferable', and would also explain how all-signifying systems work. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss applied the structuralist outlook to the interpretation of myth. He suggested that the individual tale (the parole) from a cycle of myths did not have a separate and inherent meaning but could only be understood by considering its position in the whole cycle (the langue) and the similarities and difference between that tale and others in the sequence.

Thus in interpreting the Oedipus myth, he placed the individual story of Oedipus within the context of the whole cycle of tales connected with the city of Thebes. He then began to see repeated motifs and contrasts, and he used these as the basis of his interpretation. On this method the story and the cycle it is part of are reconstituted in terms of basic oppositions: animal/human, relation/stranger, husband/son and so on. Concrete details from the story are seen in the context of a larger structure, and the larger structure is then seen as an overall network of basic 'dyadic pairs' which have obvious symbolic, thematic, and archetypal resonance (like the contrast between art and life, male and female, town and country, telling and showing, etc., as in the 'worked example' later).

This is the typical structuralist process of moving from the particular to the general, placing the individual work within a wider structural context. The wider
structure might also be found in, for instance, the whole corpus of an author's work; or in the genre conventions of writing about that particular topic (for instance, discussing Dickens's novel *Hard Times* in terms of its deviations from novelistic conventions and into those of other more popular genres, like melodrama or the ballad); or in the identification of sets of underlying fundamental 'dyads'. A signifying system in this sense is a very wide concept: it means any organised and structured set of signs, which carries cultural meanings. Included in this category would be such diverse phenomena as: works of literature, tribal rituals (a degree ceremony, say, or a rain dance), fashions (in clothing, food, 'life-style', etc.), the styling of cars, or the contents of advertisements. For the structuralist, the culture we are part of can be 'read' like a language, using these principles, since culture is made up of many structural networks which carry significance and can be shown to operate in a systematic way. These networks operate through 'codes' as a system of signs; they can make statements, just as language does, and they can be read or decoded by the structuralist or semiotician.

**Can Fashion be a Language?**

*Fashion*, for instance, can be 'read' like a language. Separate items or features are added up into a complete 'outfit' or 'look' with complex grammatical rules of combination: we don't wear an evening dress and carpet slippers: we don't come to lectures in military uniform, etc. Likewise, each component sign derives its meaning from a structural context. Of course, many fashions in clothing depend on breaking such rules in a 'knowing' way, but the 'statement' made by such rule-breaks (for instance, making outer garments which look like undergarments, or cutting expensive fabrics in an apparently rough way) depends upon the prior existence of the 'rule' or convention which is being conspicuously flouted. In the fashion world today, for instance, (late 1994) the combination of such features as exposed seams, crumpled-looking fabrics, and garments which are too big or too small for the wearer signifies the fashion known (confusingly, in this context) as deconstruction. Take any one of these features out of the context
of all the rest, however, and they will merely signify that you have your jacket on inside out or don't believe in ironing. Again, these individual items have their place in an overall structure, and the structure is of greater significance than the individual item. The other major figure in the early phase of structuralism was Roland Barthes, who applied the structuralist method to the general field of modern culture. He examined modern France (of the 1950s) from the standpoint of a cultural anthropologist in a little book called *Mythologies*, which he published in France in 1957. This looked at a host of items which had never before been subjected to intellectual analysis, such as: the difference between boxing and wrestling; the significance of eating steak and chips; the styling of the Citroën car; the cinema image of Greta Garbo's face; a magazine photograph of an Algerian soldier saluting the French flag. Each of these items he placed within a wider structure of values, beliefs, and symbols as the key to understanding it. Thus, boxing is seen as a sport concerned with repression and endurance, as distinct from wrestling, where pain is flamboyantly displayed. Boxers do not cry out in pain when hit, the rules cannot be disregarded at any point during the bout, and the boxer fights as himself, not in the elaborate guise of a make-believe villain or hero.

By contrast, wrestlers grunt and snarl with aggression, stage elaborate displays of agony or triumph, and fight as exaggerated, larger than life villains or super-heroes.

Clearly, these two sports have quite different functions within society: boxing enacts the stoical endurance, which is sometimes necessary in life, while wrestling dramatises ultimate struggles and conflicts between good and evil. Barthes's approach here, then, is that of the classic structuralist: the individual item is 'structuralised', or 'contextualised by structure', and in the process of doing this layers of sig[n]ificance are revealed.

Roland Barthes in these early years also made specific examinations of aspects of literature, and by the 1970s, structuralism was attracting widespread
attention in Paris and worldwide. A number of English and American academics spent time in Paris in the 1970s taking courses under the leading structuralist figures (and these included Colin MacCabe) and came back to Britain and the USA fired up to teach similar ideas and approaches here.

**What structuralist critics do?**

1. They analyse (mainly) prose narratives, relating the text to some larger containing structure, such as:
   
   a. the conventions of a particular literary genre, or
   b. a network of intertextual connections, or
   c. a projected model of an underlying universal narrative structure, or
   d. a notion of narrative as a complex of recurrent patterns or motifs.

2. They interpret literature in terms of a range of underlying parallels with the structures of language, as described by modern linguistics. For instance, the notion of the 'my theme', posited by Lévi-Strauss, denoting the minimal units of narrative 'sense', is formed on the analogy of the morpheme, which, in linguistics, is the smallest unit of grammatical sense. An example of a morpheme is the 'ed' added to a verb to denote the past tense.

3. They apply the concept of systematic patterning and structuring to the whole field of Western culture, and across cultures, treating as 'systems of signs' anything from Ancient Greek myths to brands of soap powder.

**Structuralist Criticism: Examples**

If you base these examples on the methods of literary analysis described and demonstrated in Barthes's book *S/Z*, published in 1970. It is about a story 'Sarrasine'. Barthes's method of analysis is to divide the story into 561 'lexies', or units of meaning, which he then classifies using five 'codes', seeing these as the basic underlying structures of all narratives. So in terms of our opening statement about structuralism (that it aims to understand the individual item by placing it in the context of the larger structure to which it belongs) the individual item here is
this particular story, and the larger structure is the system of codes, which Barthes sees as generating all possible actual narratives, just as the grammatical structures of a language can be seen as generating all possible sentences which can be written or spoken in it. But there is a difficulty in taking as an example of structuralism material from a text by Barthes published in 1970, since 1970 comes within what is usually considered to be Barthes's post-structuralist phase, always said to begin (as in this book) with his 1968 essay 'The Death of the Author'. My reasons for nevertheless regarding *S/Z* as primarily a structuralist text are, firstly, to do with precedent and established custom: it is treated as such, for instance, in many of the best known books on structuralism (such as Terence Hawkes's *Structuralism and Semiotics*, Robert Scholes's *Structuralism in Literature*, and Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*). A second reason is that while *S/Z* clearly contains many elements which subvert the confident positivism of structuralism, it is nevertheless essentially structuralist in its attempt to reduce the immense complexity and diversity possible in fiction to the operation of five codes, however tongue-in-cheek the exercise may be taken to be. The truth, really, is that the book sits on the fence between structuralism and post-structuralism: the 561 lexies and the five codes are linked in spirit to the 'high' structuralism of Barthes's 1968 essay 'Analysing Narrative Structures', while the ninety-three interspersed digressions, with their much more free-wheeling comments on narrative, anticipate the 'full' post-structuralism of his 1973 book *The Pleasure of the Text*.

**The five codes identified by Barthes in *S/Z* are:**

1. **The proairetic code** This code provides indications of actions. ("The ship sailed at midnight" 'They began again', etc.)
2. **The hermeneutic code** This code poses questions or enigmas, which provide narrative suspense. (For instance, the sentence 'He knocked on a certain door in the neighbourhood of Pell Street' makes the reader wonder who lived there, what kind of neighbourhood it was, and so on).
3. **The cultural code** This code contains references out beyond the text to what is regarded as common knowledge. (For example, the sentence 'Agent
Angelis was the kind of man who sometimes arrives at work in odd socks' evokes a pre-existing image in the reader's mind of the kind of man this is - a stereotype of bungling incompetence, perhaps, contrasting that with the image of brisk efficiency contained in the notion of an 'agent').

4. The semic code This is also called the connotative code. It is linked to theme, and this code when organised around a particular proper name constitutes a 'character'. Its operation is demonstrated in the second example, below.

5. The symbolic code this code is also linked to theme, but on a larger scale, so to speak. It consists of contrasts and pairings related to the most basic binary polarities - male and female, night and day, good and evil, life and art, and so on.

These are the structures of contrasted elements which structuralists see as fundamental to the human way of perceiving and organising reality. As the last two codes have generated the greatest difficulty (especially in distinguishing one from the other) we use each in turn as the basis of an example, beginning with the symbolic code, which we will illustrate in use as the organising principle for the interpretation of an entire tale, the story being 'The oval portrait', by the early nineteenth-century American writer Edgar Allan Poe, an author who has received considerable attention from both structuralists and post-structuralists. In terms of the 'What structuralists do' list of activities above, this is an example of category, treating narrative structure as a complex of recurrent patterns and motifs.

2. 4. The Significance of Structuralist Theory

Introduction:

Were we to comprise the leading idea of present-day science in its most various manifestations, we could hardly find a more appropriate designation than structuralism. Any set of phenomena examined by contemporary science is treated not as a mechanical agglomeration but as a structural whole, and the basic task is to reveal the inner, whether static or developmental, laws of this system.
For Mukarovský, structuralism was "an epistemological stance," the manner by which concepts are formed and put into operation: "The conceptual system of every particular discipline is a web of internal correlations. Every concept is determined by all the others and in turn determines them. Thus a concept is defined unequivocally by the place it occupies in its conceptual system rather than by the enumeration of its contents" (Kapitoly 1:13). Interdisciplinarity requires that aesthetics and poetics keep in touch with the advancement of human and social sciences: Mukarovský examined the links between structuralism and Jan Smuts's "biological holism" Trnka pointed to Russell's relational logic as one of the inspirations of structuralism.

At the turn of the century, many advances in science were occurring due to a fundamental concept that philosophers of science refer to as "elementism". Elementism refers to the conception of complex phenomena in terms of basic parts or elements. This conception of science was leading to many important discoveries with important applications in areas such as the biological sciences in the late 1800s. It was at this time that, what most psychologists acknowledge as, the first "school of psychology" began. In 1879 Wilhelm Wundt began the first psychological laboratory in Leipzig, Germany. The school of psychology that Wundt began and championed all his life is referred to as "structuralism". For this reason, Wundt is often referred to as the father of structuralism.

Structuralism can be defined as psychology as the study of the elements of consciousness. The idea is that conscious experience can be broken down into basic conscious elements, much as a physical phenomenon can be viewed as consisting of chemical structures that can in turn be broken down into basic elements. In fact, much of the research conducted in Wundt's laboratory consisted of cataloging these basic conscious elements. In order to reduce a normal conscious experience into basic elements, structuralism relied on a method called introspection. For example, one of Wundt's research assistants might describe an object such as an apple in terms of the basic perceptions it invoked (e.g., "cold", "crisp", and "sweet"). An important principal of introspection is that any given
conscious experience must be described in its most basic terms, so that a researcher could not describe some experience or object as itself, such as describing an apple as an apple. Such a mistake is a major introspection faux pas and is referred to as the "stimulus error". Through introspection experiments, Wundt began to catalogue a large number of basic conscious elements, which could hypothetically be combined to describe all human experiences.

**Assumptions of Structuralist Theory:**

1. The first thing to notice is that, according to structuralist theory, meaning is not a private experience, as Husserl thought, but the **product of a shared system of signification**. A text is to be understood as a **construct** to be analysed and explained scientifically in terms of the **deep-structure** of the system itself. For many structuralists, this "deep-structure" is universal and innate.

2. One should make it clear at the back of his mind that literature is not only the work of art but there are several forms like; painting, sculpture, music etc. apart from literature. And structuralism can be applied to all these forms.

3. If we consider the application of structuralism to art and extend the monetary analogy, we can think of paintings as comprised of many languages or sets of conventions that play a role in the exchange of signs. For example, the language of western academic painting can be contrasted with the language of African sculpture or Japanese brush painting. Just as one word in the English language is paired with a concept, so a visual image, icon, or symbol is paired with a concept or idea that it is said to "express". Such a study of signs in the most general sense, whether visual or verbal, is called **Semiotics**. In the West, art schools are the institutions that have the function of passing on these visual conventions.
4. Second we should note that in structuralism, the individual is more a product of the system than a producer of it. Language precedes us. It is the medium of thought and human expression. Thus, it provides us with the structure that we use to conceptualize our own experience.

5. And third, since language is arbitrary, there is no natural bond between words and things, there can be no privileged connection between language and reality. In this sense, reality is also produced by language. Thus, structuralism can be understood as a form of idealism.

It should be cleared from what we've just said that structuralism undermines the claim of empiricism that what is real is what we experience. It can also be seen as an affront to common sense, esp. to the notion that a text has a meaning that is, for all intents and purposes, straightforward. This conflict with common sense, however, can be favourably compared with other historical conflicts (e.g. Copernicus' heliocentric system). In other words, things are not always what they seem. Thus, the idealist claim of structuralism can be understood in the following way: Reality and our conception of it are "discontinuous".

This view has important implications, as we shall see below. According to structuralist theory, a text or utterance has a "meaning", but its meaning is determined not by the psychological state or "intention" of the speaker, but by the deep-structure of the language system in which it occurs. In this way, the subject (individual or "author") is effectively killed off and replaced by language itself as an autonomous system of rules. Thus, structuralism has been characterized as antihumanistic in its claim that meaning is not identical with the inner psychological experience of the speaker. It removes the human subject from its central position in the production of meaning much as Copernicus removed (de-centered) the Earth from its position at the centre of the solar system. And since language pre-exists us, it is not we who speak, as Heidegger was to say, but "language speaks us"
From Pre-Structuralism to Structuralism to Post-Structuralism and Structuralism to Post-Structuralism:

The shift from a pre-structuralist to a structuralist theory of language and the implications drawn from it by poststructuralists is represented in the following diagrams:

A. Pre-structuralist theory assumes that there is an intimate connection between material objects in the world and the languages that we use to talk about those objects and their interrelations.

B. As we saw above, Saussure puts this connection between the material object and the word in brackets, i.e. he sets it aside in order to study the very structure of language. Thus,

According to Saussure's structuralist theory of language, the meaning of a term (a word or expression) does not begin and end with the speaker's experience or intention (as it does in Husserl's theory). The act of speaking and intending presupposes a language already in place and upon which the speaker must rely in order to say anything at all. Concepts or meanings are picked out (signified) because of the differences in the network of words (sound- or graphic-images) that make up the language (langue). Thus each word-each structural element of the language-finds its own relative position or node within the network of differences.

In other words, the meaning of a particular term in a language is due to its relative difference from all other terms in the language. A signified, i.e. a concept or idea, is properly understood in terms of its position relative to the differences among a range of other signifiers (words with different positions in the network (langue) and, hence, different meanings).

C. Poststructuralist theory denies the distinction between signifier and signified. According to the poststructuralist, concepts are nothing more than words. Thus, signifiers are words that refer to other words and never
reach out to material objects and their interrelations. To indicate this shift in theory, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida introduces the word "différance" to indicate the relation between signifiers as one of difference and deferral.

If a word's meaning is solely the result of its difference from other words, then the meaning (the concept or signified) is not an additional thing "present" in the sign itself. On the contrary, "meaning" (if it can be called that at all) is the ever-moving play of difference from signifier to signifier; a slipping from word to word in which each word retains relations to ("traces" of) the words that differ from it.

Thus, according to poststructuralists such as Derrida, the specification of meaning is an infinite and endless process! Meaning, to some extent, always escapes one's grasp—it is always just out of reach, ungrounded, with no origin in the intention of the speaker, contrary to what Husserl thought. In other words, when a speaker uses certain words ("This is a pear"), then according to the theory she does not have a nonlinguistic object or concept in mind—there is no additional thing or "object" outside of the language (i.e. no "meaning") that could be transmitted or made "present" to her listener or reader. There is nothing there in her speech but language, i.e. a network of signification.

Thus, "meaning" is the result of a play of différance—a movement, which brings about both difference and deferral. (It may help here to bring in the traditional distinction between the denotation and the connotation of a term. The connotation may be thought of as the aura of suggestion, the echo or trace of other words to which it is related by such things as association, common usage, similarity, etc. The denotation, the relation (reference) between the word and the actual thing denoted by the word, from structuralism on, is bracketed and never brought back. Its absence, however, leaves its own "traces" in the form of problems for a poststructuralist theory of language.)
So the poststructuralist draws the following consequences from the study of language:

1. Meaning is never fully present in any one signifier, but is infinitely deferred or suspended.
2. Meaning is contextual, i.e. affected by related words.
3. There is always an excess of meaning.

But there is another, more radical, consequence that can be drawn from our analysis. If the meaning associated with an expression is not present in the expression itself, and if the speaker must make his own presence felt by communication through words, then it follows that the speaker is never fully present in the act of using language. And if, as a human being, I can only think and experience a world through language, then "I" and "my presence" are as much deferred as the meanings I attempt to grasp when I try to understand and explain myself. In other words, I am never present even to myself. Rather, it is language that speaks, not a unified and autonomous ego or self. (How is this related to Kant's theory of knowledge?)

We can conclude that;

1. All experience depends on language.
2. Since, to have a language is to be part of a whole form of social life. There is no possibility of a private (individual or personal) language.
3. Therefore, all experience is social experience, i.e. there are no private experiences.
4. Notice the central role played by the premise that experience itself "depends on" or is structured by language. Without this assumption, the slide into the de-centered self is not so easily motivated. (Cf. Heidegger's notion of the de-centered self. Derrida himself says that consciousness is an effect of language.) This poststructuralist view of language undermines the
theories of Descartes, Husserl and most of western metaphysical thinking about the primacy or centrality of the subject and reinforces the notion of the "decentred self" as characteristic of the human condition.

What alternatives can we imagine as a challenge to the poststructuralist position? One strategy would be to start by agreeing with Kant that we must have categories or concepts of some kind to organize human experience. But we might also disagree with Kant over the nature and *a priori* character of those concepts. In doing this, we could borrow from Heidegger the view that the categories of human experience are historical in nature and potentially in flux—not fixed and universal. But then we might question Heidegger's emphasis on the linguistic nature of these concepts by drawing on Gestalt psychology to argue for the existence of certain "structural" and hard wired components of human perception and thought of a *prelinguistic* nature. This is just one tentative direction one might take in challenging the view presented by the form of poststructuralism that we've been considering.

Other problems are raised if we consider language not simply as an object but as a practice. Suppose, we say to someone, "Open the window" in a situation where there is no window in the room. s/he might ask, "What do you mean?" This would be to question my "intentions" - what are we trying to accomplish by saying what we've said? Perhaps, we are making a point about the fact that there is no window in the room. Our paradoxical statement - inexplicable in Saussure's structuralist terms - might be meaningful to you in another practical sense. This is because understanding is recognizing what effects one might seek to bring about through the use of certain words. Our obscure command might be a request that we move to a room that has a window.

In other words, speech is not just an object, it is a form of behaviour, and as such it can only be understood contextually, i.e. in a situation. This realization of the pragmatics of language signals is a shift from language to discourse, and a concomitant change in emphasis away from a text's meaning to its function.
In the end, we can conclude that reality is linguistic but that language is real, and not necessarily *all* there is to human reality and experience.

**Limitations of Structuralism:**

Unlike other schools of psychology that I will discuss in the virtual lecture and in class, the school of Structuralism is, for the most part, completely dead in psychology. In fact, the school pretty much died with Wundt. One basic reason this occurred was that Wundt's methodology had a principal flaw that is not consistent with the mainstream views of experimental psychologists today, and this had to do with subject agreement and reliability. Since psychology often deals with data that are difficult to describe in concrete terms, it is very important to make sure that multiple observers can agree independently on a phenomenon that is being experienced. This is referred to as reliability. In the contemporary study of sensory and perceptual phenomena, when observers view, touch, or taste some stimulus, researchers go to great lengths to make sure that the observers are not biased or influenced in their report of their experience. Further, agreement among observers in terms of what they are experiencing is a prerequisite for considering the observations as valid. Unfortunately, Wundt's observers were students trained by Wundt, and, in fact, any disagreement was resolved by Wundt. Therefore, reliability or agreement among observers in Wundt's experiments only occurred due to bias induced by training. The use of trained observers, such as those in Wundt's laboratory is diametrically opposed to the current practice of using participants who know as little as possible about the phenomenon being studied in order to decrease bias, and increase objectivity. This is one reason why general psychology students often serve as subjects in psychology experiments.

A second criticism of structuralism, mainly levelled by behaviourists who came some years later, was that structuralist theory dealt primarily with "non-observable" abstractions. Though participants could report on conscious experiences, these elements of consciousness themselves were thought to be unobservable theoretical constructions. The emphasis then, was on "internal"
behaviour. Interestingly, structuralism would eventually be vindicated in this internal behaviour criticism, in that the cognitive psychologists, one of the most historically recent schools of psychology, have returned to elaborate speculation about internal, non-observable phenomenon. Further, the basic structuralist notion that conscious experience can be broken down into fundamental elements is also consistent with contemporary research in sensory neuroscience. For example, cells have been identified in visual portions of the brain that respond to basic lines and shapes, and these are eventually combined in subsequent brain areas.

Reactions to structuralism:

Today structuralism is less popular than approaches such as post-structuralism and deconstruction. There are many reasons for this. Structuralism has often been criticized for being ahistorical and for favouring deterministic structural forces over the ability of individual people to act. As the political turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s (and particularly the student uprisings of May 1968) began affecting academia, issues of power and political struggle moved to the centre of people's attention. The ethnologist Robert Jaulin defined another ethnological method which clearly pitted itself against structuralism.

In the 1980s, deconstruction and its emphasis on the fundamental ambiguity of language--rather than its crystalline logical structure--became popular. By the end of the century structuralism was seen as a historically important school of thought, but it was the movements it spawned, rather than structuralism itself, which commanded attention.

Structuralism Semiotics and Narratology:

Emerging in the late fifties in France and reaching its heyday in the mid sixties, structuralism is a school of scientific enthusiasm. Never before, since the time of the Enlightenment had literary and cultural theorists been “ lulled” this way by the promise of a rational, scientific ordering of their object: as J. Hillis Miller has described their mood, they all started from a sort of “happy
positivism”.¹ These “Socratic, theoretical or canny”² scholars strongly believed that any cultural product was undeniably and equally liable to an investigation of its underlying patterns and values, and for that purpose they invented a “barbaric jargon” (as it was described by their opponents), which suited the scientific claims of their project.

Structuralism is in the first place a method of critical investigation, but at a deeper level of analysis it appears not only as a method, but also as a “general tendency of thought”, or an ideology, whose prerequisite is to “value structures at the expense of substances”, to use Gérard Genette’s words.³ Indeed, the ambition of the structuralist proponents (similar to that of archeologists or geologists) was to dig out the codes, systems and structures, which governed any cultural activity and its products. Language and all other discursive and symbolic systems is constituted from the immanent relations among their component elements, and the “grammar” of these relations is liable to


²² “For the most part these critics share the Socratic penchant, what Nietzsche defined as ‘the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of logic, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being’. ... The inheritors ... of the Socratic faith would believe in the possibility of a structuralist-inspired criticism as a rational and rationalizable activity, with agreed-upon rules of procedure, given facts, and measurable results.” Miller distinguishes between these critics and those coming after them, such as Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, who could be described as “Apollonian/ Dionysian, tragic, or uncanny”. (J. H. Miller, 336; 335).

being discovered and formulated. If meaning exists, it is made possible by the underlying system of distinctions and conventions, Jonathan Culler opined in *Structuralist Poetics*. “Wherever there are two posts one can kick a ball between them but one can score a goal only within a certain institutional framework”, he explains.4[4]5

Perception, thought, cultural products are constructed and not natural. STRUCTURE6[5] (which is related to the concepts of value and system) is the basic principle of construction and it becomes the main object of investigation. The structuralist approach is anti-humanist par excellence, as the human subject is no more the source of, and the main point of reference for cultural enterprises: it is removed from the focus of inquiry, so that the system can be isolated and analysed. Within this approach, structure is an abstract category, a centre, or point of origin (e.g. the geometry of perspective in the Renaissance painting, the arrangement of the sequences in folk narratives, or even the array of garments for a ceremonial occasion), and it supersedes other centres, such as history or the human person. Every component element has a relational meaning and value, because it exists as a result of an option: therefore the meaning can be found out by defining the place of the element within the general structure, rather than by relating it to the world outside that structure. If the meaning resides exclusively in the types of relationships among the component parts (the elements being arranged mostly as binary oppositions), then the structuralist view of structure differs substantially from the previous ones, including Cleanth Brooks’s

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6[5] From Lat. structus (heaped up, built).
definition, which included interpretations and evaluations, that is to say the work’s moral and cultural significance.

How could we explain this obsession with such a theoretical notion as structure? The answer may lie, in our opinion, in the almost mystical fascination, which abstract configurations have always aroused in the human mind, with their challengingly symmetrical, geometric complexity.

The term “structuralism” was first used by Roman Jakobson in 1929:

Were we to comprise the leading idea of present-day science in its most various manifestations, we could hardly find a more appropriate designation than structuralism. Any set of phenomena examined by contemporary science is treated not as a mechanical agglomeration but as a structural whole, and the basic task is to reveal the inner ... laws of the system.7[6] /Emphasis added/

However, the remote roots of the structuralist movement, beyond the schools of Russian Formalism, the Prague Linguistic Circle and Polish Structuralism, can be found in Ferdinand de Saussure’s lectures, published in 1916, from students’ notes, as Cours de Linguistique Générale. Opposing the dominant historical perspective in the linguistics of his time, Saussure propounded a “scientific” study of language, which should start from the formal relations between its elements (relations of combination and contrast). Other premises of Saussure’s thought were the systematic nature of language, and the arbitrary nature of its elements. His epoch-making idea of the difference between the two manifestations of language - LANGUE (the language system) and PAROLE (speech acts) - is of a fundamental import for the development of structuralism. As Culler explains;

“It is easy to confuse the system with its manifestations, to think of English as the set of English utterances. But to learn English is not to memorize a set of utterances; it is to master a system of rules and norms which make it possible to produce and understand utterances. The linguist’s task is not to study utterances for their own sake; they are of interest to him only in so far as they provide evidence about the nature of the underlying system, the English language.” (SP 2)

When one deals with physical events, says Culler, laws can be formulated which are nothing other than “direct summaries of behaviour”, but when social and cultural phenomena are studied, behaviour often deviates considerably from the norm, a distance appears between them, and for the researcher “that gap is a space of potential meaning”.

According to Saussure, language, as a self-authenticated system, exists outside the individual, who cannot create or change it, and also outside the world of things. Therefore signification takes place not through the interaction of words and things, but through the association of the sound images (signifiers) with concepts (signifieds). And signifiers come into being through the relationships with other signifiers: these relationships can occur on the paradigmatic axis (the vertical column of possible substitute elements to be used at any given place) or on the syntagmatic axis (the series of individual terms combined in a contiguous chain to make up a meaningful utterance). Signifiers are arranged in pairs of binary oppositions, as Nikolay Troubetzkoy, a leading member of the Prague Linguistic Circle, observed later (for instance voiced/ non-voiced, nasalized/ non-nasalized, tense/ lax phonemes).

8[7] Troubetzkoy is also the linguist who first distinguished between phonetics (the discipline that studies actual speech sounds) and phonology the study of the phoneme structure).
Saussure realized that the study of sign-systems initiated by him led to the creation of a new discipline, which he called Semiology: in the following decades of the 20th century it developed as a parallel discipline, so closely connected with structuralism that sometimes the two terms were used interchangeably. In the second part of this chapter we will deal in a detailed manner with Semiology (or “semiotics”) and with its implication for literary studies.

In the activity of Roman Jakobson, one of the fathers of structuralism, linguistics and semiotics merged with literary studies. His career may be said to impersonate both the pre-history and the history of this trend of thought in the 20th century.

The position he adopted concerning the object of literary studies while he was a member of the Prague School differed from the one he had held as a formalist belonging to the Moscow Linguistic Circle. Now it was the relational nature of meaning that mattered, rather than the isolated content of the literary work, as it had been with the formalists. Instead of an analysis of “literariness” which should exclude anything extraliterary from its scope, after 1933 Jakobson emphasized poeticity and insisted that this was only one aspect of poetry; the poetic function appeared therefore as a relational, not an absolute aspect.

Jakobson’s 1958 manifesto “Linguistics and Poetics” paved the way for further linguistic-semiotic analyses of texts, establishing the basic terms of investigation. He described six factors contributing to verbal communication: the addresser (or encoder) and the addressee (or decoder); the message; the code (usually a language); the context (or referent); the contact (or medium: live speech, writing, and so on). There is a function of communication corresponding to each of these, respectively the emotive, cognitive, poetic, metalingual, referential, phatic functions. It is very rarely that only one function is fulfilled: in reality there is a diversity of them, one usually being predominant. On the other hand the poetic function, for instance, does not appear only in poetry, but also in
many other types of verbal messages, including advertisements, and so forth. We will refer in detail to the poetic function later in this chapter.

Relying on Saussure’s description of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, Jakobson formulated a new theory based on the opposition between SELECTION and COMBINATION in the acquisition and the use of language. In “Two Aspects of Language”, a study combining linguistics and psychopathology, first published in 1956, he analysed the manifestations of aphasic disturbance with mental patients: each form of aphasia consists in some impairment of the faculty for either selection and substitution or for combination and contexture. The relation of similarity (typical of metaphor) is suppressed in one case, while that of contiguity (typical of metonymy) is absent in the other one. So Jakobson implies that the two linguistic operations can be understood in terms of the corresponding rhetorical figures.

The alternation METAPHOR / METONYMY can be considered to underlie all forms of verbal art, and not only these, Jakobson insists. In Russian lyrical songs the former predominates, while in heroic epics it is the other one, which does. This opposition can be extended to describe various literary schools: romanticism and symbolism are dominated by metaphorical patterns, while the realistic trend is mainly metonymic:

The realistic author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time. He is fond of synecdochic details. In the scene of Anna Karenina’s suicide Tolstoy’s artistic attention is focused on the heroine’s handbag; and in War and Peace the synecdoches “hair on the upper lip” or “bare shoulders” are used by the same writer to stand for the female characters to whom these features belong. (92)

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10[9] Synecdoche is regarded here as a form of metonymy.
Later on David Lodge applied Jakobson’s distinction to 20th century literary trends, describing modernism as mainly metaphoric (due to its symbolistic and mythopoeic bent) and anti-modernism as metonymic (realistic). As for postmodern writing, Lodge seems unable to establish a hierarchy between the two terms. The scales appear to be even, and, according to him, critics had better examine the efforts of postmodern authors “to deploy both metaphoric and metonymic devices in radically new ways, and to defy (...) the obligation to choose between these two principles of connecting one topic with another.”11[10]

When Jakobson turns to sign systems other than language, he mentions the metonymical orientation in cubism, where “the object is transformed into a set of synecdoches”, and, conversely, the surrealist painting, with its “patently metaphorical attitude”. The same dichotomy can be found also in Freud’s concepts (the “metonymic ‘displacement’”, the “synecdochic ‘condensation’”, based on contiguity, and, respectively identification and symbolism, based on similarity). The magic rites as they were described by Frazer are, too, based on one or the other of the two principles.

Attacking the unipolar schema which was used before and which artificially privileged the study of metaphor in poetry and that of metonymy in prose, Jakobson insisted in his analysis that the metaphor / metonymy bipolarity actually characterized all symbolic processes and all human behaviour. His theory of the competition between the two rhetorical devices was of primal consequence for the structuralist studies henceforth.


natural, as they shared kindred principles and, separately, laid the foundations of structuralist thought, but the younger Lévi-Strauss made his entrance on the scholarly scene in the 1950s, when Jakobson was already an established name.

Structuralism actually came into being as a distinct method of investigation through Lévi-Strauss’s anthropological investigations. His innovative analysis of myth (ancient Greek myths, but also Amerindian ones), representing a response to the former psychologically oriented interpretations, was made much the same way linguistics studies sentences in order to discover their “grammar”. In his view, the meaning of myth can be found not in its isolated components, but in the manner in which they are combined, making up bundles of relations called by Lévi-Strauss “gross constituent units” (or mythemes, a term isomorphic with “phonemes”). The mythical narrative (for instance, Oedipus’s story) is treated by the French author as an orchestra score, “perversely presented as a linear series”:13[12] the scholar’s task is to re-establish the “correct” arrangement of the components and for this purpose he draws up a chart, in which the four vertical columns (the paradigmatic axes) represent the meaning units (respectively the overrating of blood relations, their underrating, monsters being slain, difficulties to walk or to behave straight). The horizontal (syntagmatic) reading of the segments is not of interest for the mythographer’s theory, as the myth’s deep structure is revealed only by the paradigmatic axes. Oedipus’s story is thus reduced by Lévi-Strauss, through a display of staggering logical schemata, to a skeleton of internal oppositions which express a basic quandary of origin: the contradiction between the ancient culture’s belief that mankind is autochthonous (i.e. born from one and same), and, on the other hand, the awareness that human beings are born from the union of man and woman (i.e. from two and different).

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Lévi-Strauss’s view has a diachronic element in it, notwithstanding: he takes into account “all the available variants” of the myth, because there is no one true version of which the others are but distortions. Furthermore he pays heed to all available legends, which make up a mythology, looking for its generic system (langue). This view presupposes a metaphorical perception of the condition of human beings, animals, deities, a perception which is based on binary oppositions, such as nature / culture, this world / the other world, agriculture / warfare, raw / cooked, and so on. The mythical system mediates between the opposed factors - its function is to reconcile contradictions.

The French scholar was confident that ethnography, as a social science, was indeed able to probe the structure of the myth’s internal relationships, if one agreed that conscious laws reflect unconscious beliefs, that a system is more than the result of a specific combination and that no term has meaning apart from its binary opposite. (The concept of BINARY OPPOSITES implies an exclusive opposition, as for instance in the case of the two electric charges.) The structuralist’s tools (such as the “algebraic matrix of possible permutations and combinations”) were in his view adequate and sufficient for investigating not only cultural products, but the structure of the human mind in general - the institutions created by it, the forms of knowledge.\[^{14}\]

It is also worth noting that in Lévi-Strauss’ structuralist view the various cultural manifestations were no more hierarchically classified: ways of cooking, religious beliefs, mythic narratives were analyzed from an equal standpoint, that is at the sign level. This disregard of established hierarchies would become even more manifest in the work of another French structuralist, Ronald Barthes. The cultural criticism, which Barthes initiated, includes the semiology of fashion, the

“mythology” of wrestling, the pleasure of reading, and others.\textsuperscript{15} For instance, his analysis of garments as signs speaks about the “system” made up of toque, bonnet and hood (pieces that cannot be worn at the same time), and the “speech”, or “syntagm”, which involves the juxtaposition of different elements, such as skirt, blouse and jacket. A restaurant menu can be described in a similar way, based on the Saussurean dichotomy, which is put to work in domains other than language. Moreover the semiotics practised by the Paris School has extended the structuralist analysis to such fields as legal discourse, gestural language, and social sciences.

In a later phase of his activity, Barthes was interested mainly in the inner structure of TEXTUALITY, leaving aside the other “signifying systems” he had discussed before. His all-out reading of Balzac’s short novel “Sarrasine”, in a seminal study, \textit{S/Z} (1970), makes use of various semiological perspectives and is built like a musical score. In a “textual analysis” of E. A. Poe’s story “Valdemar”, performed in a similar fashion, Barthes confesses that this method does not try to describe the structure of the work; it is not a matter of recording a structure, but rather of producing a mobile structuration of the text (a structuration which is displaced from reader to reader throughout history) ... Textual analysis does not try to find out what it is that determines the text (gathers it together as the end-term of a causal sequence), but rather how the text explodes and disperses.\textsuperscript{16} /Emphasis added/

Textuality appears to Barthes as interplay, a weaving of codes, which create a kind of network and deny any origin. To a certain extent, texts are only


manifestations of codes. Textuality is no more just the written condition of the literary work, but a concept, which implies the multiplicity of signifying effects that arise in the process of reading; the interpretive “closure” is thus staved off.

Texts can be READERLY or WRITERLY (lisible or scriptible) - a distinction Barthes put forward in S/Z, with an extraordinary discursive virtuosity. In order to understand the writerly, he claims, the critic should begin by discussing readerly texts (i.e. “classic” ones, like “Sarrasine”), and that is what Barthes is doing in this study. The latter are finished objects, in other words products, not productions, like writerly texts. They have Aristotelian plots, they abide by the logic of temporality and reject the dissemination of meaning. On the contrary, the writerly text, which is not a real thing and which “we would have a hard time finding /.../ in a bookstore”,¹⁷ [16] is triumphantly plural, and its reader becomes a producer, out of a mere consumer. “There may be nothing to say about writerly texts,” says Barthes in his provocative manner, because they thwart any criticism or metalanguage, any ideology. In conclusion they have a virtual existence, and to the very end of his essay Barthes retains this ontological ambiguity: a readerly text can be more or less plural, but a writerly one is rather just “ourselves writing”.

His view of the text and textuality, supported by the concept of the actual infinity of language, signifies a complete break with the older New Critical perspective of the text as an autonomous, autotelic object.

With Roland Barthes’s earlier theoretical work, structuralism reaches a climax which includes in it the adumbration of its decline: if we leave aside the studies of other narratologists and semioticians, it is evident that the later works of Barthes, Foucault’s studies and especially Derrida’s contributions represent decided steps toward re-visioning or entirely reversing the structuralist principles.

However, the influence of structuralist concepts and methods has not ceased to be present in several domains of the human sciences, from psychology to sociological studies. Thus the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, drawing on Saussure’s and Jakobson’s tenets, speaks about the horizontal chain of signifiers which composes a “metonymic structure” and constitutes the subject. Moreover the workings of the human unconscious can be understood only if we adopt as a premise the idea that it is structured a like a language. The structuralist perspective of ideology, set forth by the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, is one more example of this kind. He believes that ideological systems have an absolute control over human beings, through their all-encompassing institutions, and actually it is they that constitute concrete individuals as subjects.

After this survey of the rising and the ebbing of structuralism, we can try to sum up its impact upon literary studies in general. It is characteristic of structuralists to refer to the totality of literary texts and emphasize the conventions, which underlie all of them, rather than choose as objects of investigation particular works. As Robert Scholes has put it, structuralism seeks to establish a model of the system of literature itself ... By moving from the study of language to the study of literature, and seeking to define the principles of structuration that operate not only through individual works but through the relationships among works over the whole field of literature, /it/ has tried ... to establish for literary studies a basis that is as scientific as possible.\textsuperscript{18 \[17\]}

Structuralists uncovered the similarities of function and re-constructed the whole of literature as a system of signs and codes, based on the differentiation between the manifest and the latent layers (as in language): the latent systematic layer in literature includes classes of concepts such as characters, themes, images, as well as the “grammars” or conventions which underlie the structure of plots, be these comic or tragic. When we read Greimas’s classification of “actants” in

narratives, for instance, we realize that the text is actually re-constructed as a paradigm, as a model of structural potentialities: it becomes a piece of the huge intertext. Of course, this method shifts the concern away from the relations between the text and the world; a literary narrative, for instance, is no more understood as a succession of imaginary, yet verisimilar events, which provide us with a moral conclusion or arouse our emotions, but as an object of scientific investigation. This is an activity that requires the critic’s change of outlook, or, in Michael Ryan’s words a willing suspension of belief, a putting aside of that primary effect of any work of literature, which is our enlistment in its illusion or in its evocative language". ¹⁹ ¹⁸

After the initial enthusiasm which accompanied structuralism in its earlier stages, it came under attack from various directions, either for its neglect of the social dynamics, or for its disregard of temporality in general, as it took into account only the immutable synchronic paradigms, or still for brushing aside the specificity of the actual text, which is regarded as just the result of the implementation of a systematic convention. Such a perspective suggested that there is no Truth to find behind the structure of the text, an idea that was to be taken over and brought to an extreme formulation by the post-structuralist theoreticians. The “death of the author”, in Barthes’s words, was another consequence hard to stomach by the traditionalist or phenomenologically-minded critics, as it, too, revealed the “anti-humanist” spirit characterizing the structuralist thought. There were, however, authors, such as Foucault, Julia Kristeva and the later Barthes, who made use of structuralist assumptions and at the same time distanced themselves from them, moving toward post-structuralist positions. Actually, as several commentators have pointed out, the theoretical basis of structuralism is undermined by the fundamental inner contradiction between the idea of systematicity and, on the other hand, the relational and arbitrary nature of signs. As mentioned before, structuralism and semiotics had a parallel evolution,

which led to numerous overlappings. The following section will be devoted to one theoretical enterprise of this kind.

2.5. Application of Structuralism and in Narratology:

Narratology

In humanistic and literary studies, structuralism is applied most effectively in the field of “narratology.” This nascent discipline studies all narratives, whether or not they use language: myths and legends, novels and news accounts, histories, relief sculptures and stained-glass windows, pantomimes and psychological case studies. Using structuralist methods and principles, narratologists analyse the systematic features and functions of narratives, attempting to isolate a finite set of rules to account for the infinite set of real and possible narratives. Starting in the 1960s, the French critic Roland Barthes and several other French narratologists popularised the field, which has since become an important method of analysis in the United States as well.

What came out of all this was the idea that language is a system based on difference. Culture was seen by Levi-Strauss as similar to a language in this respect, and Structuralist critics carried this one step further. They argued that stories have deep structures like a language. Just as a sentence is underwritten by the structures of grammar (as well as others) so to is literature underwritten by structures. I am going to concentrate on one kind of structural analysis -- narratology. Some of the technical elements as we will find are very abstract -- the important thing is that we are trying to find the structures that generate a narrative.

So, seen any good narratives lately?

So what’s a narrative? Tzvetan Todorov argues that the simplest possible narrative consists of an equilibrium followed by a change, which results in a new equilibrium. e.g. The king rules the land. Macbeth murders the king and then is killed in turn. The new king rules the land. Gotham city is threatened by the Penguin. Batman defeats the Penguin. Gotham city returns to peace. A peaceful
group of Englishmen are disturbed by a vampire. He is killed. They return to their lives.

The suggestion is that this is one of the structural rules that all stories must obey. Try to think of a story where this does not occur – for example, ‘The shop is empty. A man walks into the shop.’ Not much of a story is it? But if we add, ‘He steals a fur coat and runs’, we have a story of a shoplifter.

Trying to find the basic structures that generate narrative was the structuralists’ game. Todorov’s structure is very simple. But narratives have other structures that are less simple. Here is a famous example of one structure which reminds us what we often forget – how ‘constructed’ stories are. Structuralists point to the difference between:

**Discourse:** this is the narrative as it unfolds as we read the book or see the movie.

**Story:** this is the order in which the events would have taken place if they had been real.

The times, that these most obviously differ, is when you have a flashback technique. The discourse might be this:

**Discourse:** Woman murders husband Long flashback sequence showing how he mistreated her, Police come and arrest woman.

**Story:** Man mistreats woman. Woman murders man. Police come and arrest woman.

See how in the discourse, which is what you read or see on screen the order of imaginary events has been reworked to create interest. But all works of art do this to some extent – they compress time, or show separately two events, which are simultaneous. There are no real events of course but imagining them allows us to see how highly conventional is the structure of discourse. The flashback is not natural
but a conventional element of discourse. Examine *Pulp Fiction* in the light of this structural observation.

Structuralism is good at highlighting those strategies or structures of story, which we take for granted. Even simple stories can have extremely complex structures. This is particularly true of narration.

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