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Ladies and Gentlemen,<sup>1</sup>

I believe that we are mainly here to talk, which is to say that I should not speak at all; but after all, I suppose that in order for you to be able to exercise your right to have a say, which will be a right to examine and a right to critique, it is necessary that I expose myself to your blows. And consequently, I am going to present some slightly untidy remarks on the basis of which I hope you yourselves will have an occasion to express your opinions.

The subject that I have chosen, at bottom, insofar as I did not know beforehand who I was speaking to – luckily, as it happens, because if I had known in front of whom I would be speaking, I believe that I would have given up speaking altogether. For on the one hand, the audience is comprised of extremely intimidating people who are my colleagues and who, consequently, know more than me. And on the other hand, there are many students who know me already and who have already seen my act. Consequently, all this is evidently a little intimidating and embarrassing for me. Thus, not knowing too much about who I had to speak in front of, I thought that I could speak about the problem of the relations between structuralism and literary analysis.

Of course, I have no competence to speak about this problem of the relations between structuralism and literary analysis (as you can well imagine). In fact, if I have chosen this subject, it is largely because it is currently the nest, the site of a number of ambiguities. You all know, from having heard echoes at least, the debate about what is called “la nouvelle critique.” Hiding beneath this debate, I believe, are a number of concepts that are, ultimately, rather ill-defined. And it is with a search for definitions in mind that I would like to orient what must be the crux of this meeting, which is to say, the earlier debate.

In general, I believe that we could say this. To all appearances, this discussion which has been dragging on for several years now not only in France, but in other countries, the impression is that it opposes a number of things and people, that it opposes a critique of, say, a scientific type to a critique of, say, an impressionistic type. We also have the impression that it opposes the supporters of content and meaning to the supporters of pure form. We have the impression, too, that this is a debate which opposes historians to those who are only interested in the system and the synchrony of works. We have the impression that it is, after all, also a matter of a conflict of persons or even of social groups, since there is, on the one side, the supporters of the old and outdated French University and then, on the other, the supporters, well, of a sort of intellectual renewal which would necessarily be external to the university.

I am not sure that this manner of characterizing the debate is absolutely accurate. It is not true that the most reactionary in this debate of *la nouvelle critique* are necessarily within the university. The university, which does not always have many reasons to be proud of itself, can boast of not counting among its members a number of people who are the supporters of precisely this old-style critique. Neither is it true that analyses like those of Jean-Pierre Richard<sup>2</sup> entirely ignore the meaning of a work in order to speak only of its content. It is not true that the present tendencies of literary analysis refuse history in favour of pure system and synchrony. Therefore I do not believe that all these qualifiers and all these determinations allow us to situate the debate correctly.

To try to outline it better, I would like to introduce a notion which is completely familiar now and which, at first glance, should actually bring with it far more difficulties than it can solve: this is the notion of structuralism. In general, we can say that the debate currently turns upon the possibility, upon the right,

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<sup>1</sup> Some months after the publication of *Les mots et les choses* (1966), Foucault obtained a leave [*détachement*] from the University of Clermont-Ferrand to go teach philosophy at the University of Tunis. He moved to Sidi Bou Saïd in the autumn of 1966 and he would not leave Tunisia until two years later, in October 1968. The conference “Structuralism and Literary Analysis” was held at Club Tahar Haddad, in Tunis, on February 4, 1967. The present transcription was made from the recording preserved in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley (Reel 81 – A, B and C).

<sup>2</sup> See J.-P. Richard, *L’univers imaginaire de Mallarmé* (Paris, 1961). See also Foucault’s review, “Le Mallarmé de J.-P. Richard,” *Annales* (1964): 996-1004.

upon the fruitfulness of a method we call the “structuralist” method. Yet what is structuralism? It is extremely difficult to define it when we consider that, after all, under this word we designate analyses, methods, works, and individuals as different, for example, as the history of religions as done by Dumézil,<sup>3</sup> the analysis of mythologies by Lévi-Strauss,<sup>4</sup> the analysis of the tragedies of Racine by Barthes,<sup>5</sup> the analysis as well of literary works as it is currently done in America with Northrop Frye,<sup>6</sup> the analyses of folktales that Russians like Propp have done,<sup>7</sup> the analyses of philosophical systems like those of Guérout.<sup>8</sup> All this is placed under the structuralist label. It is thus perhaps slightly dangerous to wish to illuminate all these problems with a notion so confused.

Yet it is on this structuralism that I would like to pause for a little while. Structuralism, it is understood, is not a philosophy. It is not a philosophy, and structuralism can be linked to philosophies that are completely different from one another. Lévi-Strauss has explicitly linked his structural method to a philosophy, say, of the materialist type. Someone like Guérout, for example, has, on the contrary, linked his own method of structuralist analysis to what we can roughly call an idealist philosophy. Someone like Althusser, for example, explicitly uses the concepts of structural analysis within a philosophy which is an explicitly Marxist philosophy. Thus I do not believe that we can establish an unequivocal and determinate relation between structuralism and philosophy.

You will tell me that all this is known, that we know all too well that structuralism is not a philosophy, but a method. It is exactly here that I would like to make an objection. It does not seem to me, finally, that we can really define structuralism as a method. Firstly, it is very difficult to see in what way the method of analysis of folktales by Propp can resemble the method of analysis of philosophical systems by Guérout; in what way the analysis of literary genres by Frye in America can resemble the analysis of myths by Lévi-Strauss.

In fact, it seems to me that the word “structuralism” designates much more a set of disciplines, perhaps not even disciplines, but preoccupations, a number of analyses which share, at bottom, an object. And so paradoxically enough, I would define structuralism, and the different structuralisms, by the commonality of their object. I would say that structuralism is currently the set of attempts by which we try to analyze what we might call the “documentary mass” [*masse documentaire*]. That is to say the set of signs, traces, or marks that humanity has left behind and that humanity continues, every day and in greater and greater numbers, to form around itself. This documentary mass, this mass of traces – signs that are thus deposited and sedimented in the history of the world and that are entered into the universal archive which is formed and which is always being formed – this documentary mass, of what is it made? Of course, it is all the strictly verbal traces, all the written traces. It is, of course, literature. But it is in a general way all the other things that it has been possible to write, print, circulate; it is equally all that which has been said and which, in one way or another, has been conserved in the memory of men,

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<sup>3</sup> See for example G. Dumézil, *Les dieux des Indo-européens* (Paris, 1952); Id., *Les dieux des Germains. Essai sur la formation de la religion scandinave* (Paris, 1959); Id., *La religion romaine archaïque* (Paris, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> See notably Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques I. Le cru et le cuit* (Paris, 1964); trans. Doreen and John Weightman under the title *The Raw and the Cooked: An Introduction to a Science of Mythology* Vol. 1 (New York, 1969). See also, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris, 1958); trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf under the title *Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1963).

<sup>5</sup> See Roland Barthes, *Sur Racine* (Paris, 1963); trans. Richard Howard under the title *On Racine* (New York, 1964).

<sup>6</sup> See notably Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, N.J., 1957); and *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> See Vladimir Propp (1928); trans. Marguerite Derrida, Tzvetan Todorov, and Claude Kahn under the title *La morphologie du conte* (Paris, 1970); trans. Laurence Scott under the title *Morphology of the Folktale* (Bloomington, Ind, 1958); see also Propp (1946); trans. Lise Gruel-Apart under the title *Les racines historiques du conte merveilleux* (Paris, 1983); partially trans. Ariadna Y. Martin and Richard P. Martin in *Theory and History of Folklore* (Minneapolis, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Martial Guérout (1891-1976), professor in the Collège de France from 1951 to 1962, gave his chair the name, “History and Technology of Philosophical Systems.” During his life, he devoted systematic studies to, among others, Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Leibniz, Berkeley, and Fichte.

memory that is their psychological memory or the material memory of some record. It is likewise all the marks that man has been able to leave around himself: works of art, architecture, cities, etc. All of which means that the objects that man has made conform not only to the pure and simple laws of production, but also to systems which constitute them as marks, and as precisely marks of what man himself has made.

I believe that what we are in the process of discovering at the moment is the autonomy of that aspect by which and under which we can analyze everything that man can make, this aspect not being that of the economic production of these objects, of these things, of these signs, of these marks etc., but the aspect by which these marks and these signs are consistent with one another as marks, as signs. It is a matter of finding the system for determining the document *as a document*. And we might call this discipline of the document as document, drawing on etymology – but I am not very strong [here] –, I imagine that we should be able, starting from the Greek verb *deiknumi*, to find something like *deixology* or whatever, which would be the general discipline of the document as document, and which would be, at bottom, what structuralism is currently in the process of constituting. An analysis, then, of the internal constraints of the document as such. And it is, I believe, from this point that we can understand the apparently flexible character of structuralism. Because in effect, structuralism deals with everything. It deals with philosophy; it deals with publicity; it deals with cinema; it deals with psychoanalysis; it deals with works of art, etc.

Secondly, this explains, I believe, the importance that structuralism cannot fail to attach to something like linguistics, insofar as linguistics is at the heart, precisely, of all those documents that man leaves around himself, for after all, language is the most general form in which the human document in general appears.

Thirdly, this explains, I believe, the conflicts that the method, that the concepts of structuralism, that the structural descriptions [provoke]. That is, the conflicts that arise regarding this structural description in the disciplines that study the document not specifically as a document, but as something that it was possible to produce in a system of the economic type in the broad sense. That is to say that faced with everything that has been sedimented in the history of humanity, we can take essentially two attitudes: either we can seek the series of processes which have permitted these different objects created by humanity to be produced, and this is the search for those laws of production that I would call, broadly speaking, economics; or we can try to study the set of remnants – the set of marks that define the objects created by humanity – as, and only as, documents. It is this second aspect that characterizes, I believe, against economics, against the economic analysis of production, what we could call the *deixological* analysis of those same objects.

The distinction between these two forms of analysis is perhaps obviously a little delicate to make and you understand well why it poses problems. But, after all, we have a model right before our eyes. This model is simply what is offered to us by the natural sciences. We know well, for a good thirty years now, that the old analysis which was practiced in the nineteenth century, the analysis of energy processes, is no longer able to fully account for a number of phenomena – phenomena of the physical order, the chemical order, of the biological order above all –, and that it is also necessary to analyze, in addition to energy processes, what we call information processes. And at the moment, we can no longer do biology without envisaging the perpetual interaction that exists between the energy processes and the information processes that make all biological phenomena possible. The definition of the relations between energy processes and information processes evidently poses many problems, but the analysis of these relations can only be done insofar as we have distinguished the two levels, the energetic level and the informational level.

It seems to me that the problem is more or less the same with regard to “human” phenomena, which is to say that the phenomena called human must be analyzed at two levels: at the level of their production, which is the economic level; and the level at which they conform to the very laws of the document as document, that is to say, the *deixological* level. And if it is true that it is really going to be necessary one day to attempt to study the interference that exists between these two levels – this interference which is the very substance, the very object of history – this interference will only be able to be defined insofar as we have already properly distinguished the two levels. I believe that the

methodological importance, the epistemological importance, and the philosophical importance of structuralism lies precisely in this. It was initially a method, and there is no doubt that it is as a method that it made, as it were, the breakthrough toward this new object, toward this stratum, toward this new epistemological domain that I call by the arbitrary word “deixology.” And it is from this methodological breakthrough that this new object is in the process of being constituted, and from the moment this new object is constituted, inevitably, structuralism can no longer be defined purely and simply as a method. It becomes the obligation pure and simple to roam this new domain before us, which is to say that structuralism has arrived at the point where it must erase itself and disappear as a method in order to recognize, in some way folding back on itself at the moment of its erasure, that what it has done was quite simply to discover an object. We could compare the example of structuralism with that of pathological anatomy at the end of the eighteenth century. Pathological anatomy at the end of the eighteenth century was quite simply a medical method used by a number of doctors and which generated many arguments and difficulties. And then, finally, the analysis of pathological anatomy discovered an object which was not foreseen: physiology; so that physiology was then developed as an autonomous discipline, using pathological anatomy as a particular method.<sup>9</sup> This is probably what is going to happen to structuralism.

This is, roughly, the current situation of structuralism. This is what I wanted to say about this general meaning, about the general meaning of this word.

And what does literary analysis proper have to do with all this? If what I have told you is correct, you can see that literary analysis is necessarily part of these disciplines of the document: it is a matter of studying in a privileged fashion those documents that we call “literary works.” In fact, literary analysis, and structural literary analysis, has always held a bit of a lofty position with regard to the disciplines I am speaking to you about and which we have, up to this point, grouped under the name of structuralism. In fact, literary analysis joined this domain of the deixological disciplines very early on. Why and how?

I believe that we may summarize the situation very schematically in the following manner. Formerly, the function of literary analysis was essentially to enable communication, to mediate between the writing – the work proper – and its consumption, that is, its reading by a public. Literary analysis was in fact a sort of ambiguous act, midway between writing and reading, which was supposed to allow a number of people to read a text that was written by one person. This mediating function of literary analysis can be summed up and described under three headings. On the one hand, the function of literary critique, of literary analysis, was to sort those written texts which ought to be read from those which did not deserve to be read. That was how literary critique got rid of works like those of Sade or La Fontaine once and for all. This was its first role. Its second role was to judge works, to tell a potential reader in advance whether a work was worth anything and what it was worth in relation to other works – thus to place a work on a hierarchical scale. And thirdly, [literary analysis] had the role of simplifying the work – in any case, of simplifying the operation that reading a work entails – and it was to give a sort of schema of the production of the work, explaining how the author wrote, why he wrote, what he wanted to do, etc. These three functions – sorting, judging, explaining or clarifying – meant that when faced with a written work, literary analysis took up the position, as it were, of the ideal reader. And those who did literary analysis, practicing this absolute reading – dominating and ideal – wrote a text which was to be a mediation for the future reader, which was to authorize, found, and simplify the future reader’s reading of the original text. It was therefore this linear structure: a) writing, b) literary analysis, c) reading – it is this structure that defined, I believe, the role of what is specifically called critique. For literary analysis was critique. That is to say, it was a criticism that sorted out; it was an aesthetic that made judgments; and it was at the same time a kind of history of the production of the work, an explication of the reasons why [it was produced], a reduction of the work to the reasons why it was produced. This is, roughly, the reason why all literary analysis was fundamentally critique. This is also why there was, why there has been in all western-type societies that class of curious and formidable personages called literary critics, the invention of which – perhaps the sad invention, but never mind – dates back roughly to Sainte-Beuve.

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<sup>9</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris, 1963) ; trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith under the title *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York, 1973).

I believe that over the course of the twentieth century, the position of literary analysis changed. A completely different configuration was substituted for the linear schema that I have tried to represent for you. I believe that literary analysis has now gotten away from this road, from the writing-consumption axis which situated it formerly. And now literary analysis has become a relation no longer of writing to reading, but of writing to writing. That is to say, literary analysis is now the possibility of constituting, from a given language called “the work,” a new language, a new language such that this second language, obtained from the first, can talk about the first. The problem of critique, you see, no longer exists as it did formerly, as it was in the nineteenth century: how can and how should readers in general, and the ideal reader in particular, judge the work in question? Now the issue of critique is this: what transformation must the language of a work undergo so that the language thus transformed speaks about this work and expresses something about this work? To the extent that critique, literary analysis has become this [issue], you can understand how and why literary analysis, now, is not at all interested in the production of the work, in how its birth was possible. Instead, it is going to be interested in the work as document, that is to say, as it is made with this form of document called language; that is to say, literary analysis is going to concern itself with the work insofar as it is, fundamentally, language. And it is in this way that literary analysis is going to become like the analysis of myths, etc, and along with them, a sort of deixology.

Secondly, this explains why literary analysis, to the extent that it transforms a given language into a new language which must speak about [the given language], is now tied, quite closely, to the problem of linguistics. This also explains how and why it is tied to the problem of logic, that is to say, to the problem which principally concerns the transformation of statements. Finally, you see how and why literary analysis – no longer being that mediation between writing and reading – cannot but abandon that old function of sorting, critique, and judgment which used to belong to it. From now on, literary analysis will suspend all judgment of the work, will suspend every function of sorting for the reader. There will be no more sacred works, there will be no more works instantly valorized for literary analysis. The role of the critic, that is to say, the role which consisted of sorting and judging works, will no longer be anything but the role, as it were, of a road surveyor of literature. In relation to literary analysis, reviews like those we read in the newspapers are, so to speak, nothing but a kind of tail, and it is well known that at the very tip of this tail the plume of Pierre-Henri Simon is planted.<sup>10</sup>

You see as well why and how history – historical analysis insofar as it is the study of the production of a work – how this historical analysis can no longer be the essential and primary theme of literary analysis. For literary analysis no longer worries about knowing how a work was able to be produced, but rather [about knowing] how a work can generate another language in which the work or certain of its aspects are manifested, that is to say: the language of analysis.

This is, I believe, how we might explain the presence, firstly, of this new discipline called “literary analysis,” and then, secondly, the proximity of literary analysis to disciplines that are seemingly far removed from it, but whose kinship now becomes clear. All these disciplines that deal with the document as document, whether it is a purely spoken document as in the case of psychoanalysis, for example, or a document of the oral tradition as in the analysis of folktales, or an analysis of documents like, for example, the documents that sociology deals with.

So this is roughly what I wanted to say, fairly schematically, to situate a little the problems of the structuralist disciplines and of literary analysis. Now I would like (and this would be the third direction for a possible debate) to situate for you a little – but you know it better, you know it better than I – the current tendencies of structuralism insofar as it is the form of literary analysis.

The use of structural concepts in literary analysis poses a small historical problem that it is quite curious. As you know, structural analysis in the literary domain was invented a very long time ago,

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<sup>10</sup> Pierre-Henri Simon (1903-1972) was a literary critic, essayist, and novelist who in 1961 began [writing a literary column; commença à tenir le feuilleton littéraire] in the daily *Le Monde*. Among his works of literary criticism, see notably *Histoire de la littérature française au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. 1900-1950* (Paris, 1956) and *Le domaine héroïque des lettres françaises. X<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1963).

exactly a half century ago, in Russia. Around 1915, the Russian Formalists, who were trained primarily in linguistics, began to apply concepts that were already basically structural concepts to literary analysis. Then in Prague, in Czechoslovakia, in the U.S.A, and in England, where a certain number of Russian Formalists had emigrated – it was there that literary analysis in a structuralist form was developed. And finally, just after the war of 1940-1945, we saw this thing that is literary structuralism take shape (in a very timid fashion) in France. Yet curiously, in France, structuralism in the literary domain was not originally developed from a reflection on what language [*langue*] is. That is to say that historically, the linguistic model played only a very small role, it played practically no role in the formation of the French *nouvelle critique*. In fact, the point at which *la nouvelle critique* was constituted in France, the point of irruption of *la nouvelle critique*, was, curiously, psychoanalysis – psychoanalysis in the strict sense of the term, the “extended” psychoanalysis of Bachelard and the existential psychoanalysis of Sartre. *La nouvelle critique* was constituted from these forms of analysis. And it is plainly afterwards – that is to say very recently, less than ten years ago, barely seven or eight years – that literary analysis in France discovered the linguistic model and transferred, as it were, the methods of the psychoanalytic denomination to the linguistic denomination. The psychoanalytic denomination was of course a relatively lax denomination, extremely free in relation to the Freudian letter of the law. Nevertheless it was along those lines that structuralism could emerge. It is not at all surprising that the structuralism of *la nouvelle critique* was born out of psychoanalysis, for a very simple reason: it is that insofar as psychoanalysis is also, after all, a study of the document, which is to say, a study of the human speech [*parole*] such as it is spoken by someone in a certain well-defined situation and, as you know, insofar as psychoanalysis is itself a treatment of the document, it cannot but be structuralist at least in the sense that it is also a discipline of the deixological type. Thus it is not surprising that literary analysis in France has come to structuralism not via linguistics but via psychoanalysis. This is how we should historically situate the birth, I believe, of this *nouvelle critique*.

How was it developed and in what direction? I believe that we can say roughly this. The goal of everything we call *la nouvelle critique* is to define with regard to a given text, that is to say, a literary work: firstly, the elements according to which one can divide the given work; secondly, the network of relations that hold together the elements so defined. You will tell me that all of this is simple, but it poses problems. All of this poses problems because the work conforms to a division into chapters, into paragraphs, into sentences, into words; this division is not the same as that which must be established by the analysis in order to show how and why the work functions.

The first principle of structuralism in literary analysis is to consider that, contrary to the old schema of the nineteenth century, the work is not essentially the product of time; a work does not follow, both in its birth and then in its existence, a linear pathway that would be, roughly, a chronological thread. The work is recognized as a fragment of space in which all the elements exist simultaneously. This simultaneity being granted, the whole work being juxtaposed in this manner, it is from this moment that we can divide the work into its elements and establish the functioning that may exist between these different elements. In other words, it is not the diachronic thread of the work that must lead us; it is the synchrony of the work with regard to itself. This is not to say that we dismiss the fact that the work has appeared at a given moment, in a given culture, or with a given individual. But to define how the work functions, it is necessary to recognize that it is always synchronic in relation to itself.

In general, literary analysis up to the present has established the synchrony of the work in relation to itself in two ways: firstly, in the dimension of the imaginary, and secondly, in the dimension of language. The place in which the work was initially spatialized and rendered contemporaneous with itself was the imaginary; and we tried to constitute, and we can say that in general a number of works of literary analysis have constituted, a logic or even a geometry of the imaginary. Such was the work of Bachelard at first, which constituted a sort of elementary logic of the literary imagination through a number of qualities that were opposed to one another – and this independently of the psychology of the author, independently of the psychology of the reader as well – the sort of qualities that would exist objectively of themselves, at the heart of things, so to speak, and whose system of oppositions would give to the work its possibility

and its logic. That is a sketch of the logic of the imaginary.<sup>11</sup> An experiment in the geometry of the imaginary can be found in a work like that of Poulet, for example, where he did a series of analyses of the circle in which he showed how the works themselves – in what they narrate and in the law that forms them, that forms the different parts and the different elements – conform to geometric figures that are at once represented in the work and representatives of the work.<sup>12</sup> It is along this line, following Poulet, that Starobinski, for example, did a study of Rousseau<sup>13</sup> on the theme of obstruction and transparency; and he has shown how, in the themes of the entire *oeuvre* of Rousseau, you find this curious spatial figure with a sort of opacity that comes to cover things and to isolate man from things, and then, a search for transparency that cannot be achieved, which must in any case be achieved through language as the instrument of the “translucidification” of this veil, of this wall, which separates the individual from things; and language is what polishes and makes transparent this kind of veil. The work is thus, in its themes, animated by that, but at the same time the work is precisely this spatial figure, for it is through his work and through that literary work that Rousseau wrote. It is through that work that Rousseau tried in effect to make the world transparent, this world that, since his childhood and since the injustice that he had been the victim of in his childhood, had become for him absolutely opaque and lost. Thus, the work in itself is effectively that species of spatial configuration and dynamics of space that is represented in what it says. This is how we could situate a number of analyses which would be analyses of the logic and geometry of the imaginary.

There is a second direction that is much more recent and which is the analysis of the literary work based on the linguistic schemas that characterize it. And I believe this analysis was done for the first time in France by Lévi-Strauss with regard to a sonnet by Baudelaire, where he showed how the *Chats* sonnet was wholly structured by the phonetic possibilities available to Baudelaire, and he constructed this sonnet based on a system of redundancies that he arranged according to the phonetic characters proper to the French language.<sup>14</sup> This study, which remained little known, quite forgotten for a certain number of years, has recently been brought to light again, and currently, the works of Barthes and Genette are entirely oriented in this direction, except that the linguistic schemas with which they attempt to define a work, the linguistic schemas they use are not those of phonetics, but those of syntax and of semantics. It is principally rhetoric, the schemas of rhetoric, that they use as a guiding thread for the analysis of works. This assumes, of course, that the literary work itself is nothing other than a kind of redoubling of linguistic structures on themselves. This assumes that the literary work is, in a way, language manifesting itself in its structure and in its virtuality.

Finally, there would be a third direction – and I will stop myself because, once more, it is merely indications that I must give you. There is a third direction that is currently still more or less unexplored, but of which we can ask ourselves if it would not be [allowed].<sup>15</sup> You know in effect that the people who have reflected on language lately, the linguists on the one hand and the logicians on the other, have noticed that when we study statements, there is an element or rather a series of elements that are at least as important as *la langue*, and this is what we call, roughly, the extra-linguistic. Linguists like Prieto and logicians like Austin have shown that in fact, the linguistic structure of a statement was far from being sufficient to account for its total existence. Prieto in particular has shown how the contextual elements

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<sup>11</sup> See notably Gaston Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves. Essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (Paris, 1942) ; trans. Edith R. Farrell under the title *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* (Dallas, 1983); and *L'air et les songes. Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (Paris, 1943); trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell under the title *Air and Dreams ; An Essay on the Imagination of Movement* (Dallas, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> See Georges Poulet, *Les métamorphoses du cercle* (Paris, 1961); trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman in collaboration with the author under the title *Metamorphoses of the Circle* (Baltimore, 1966).

<sup>13</sup> See Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, la transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris, 1957); trans. Arthur Goldhammer under the title *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Transparency and Obstruction* (Chicago, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> See Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss “‘Les Chats’ de Charles Baudelaire,” *L'Homme* (1962): 5-21; trans. F.M. De George in *The Structuralists: From Marx to Lévi-Strauss*, ed. Richard T. De George and Fernande M. de George (New York, 1972).

<sup>15</sup> Conjecture; inaudible word.



constituted by the very situation of the individual speaking are absolutely necessary to give meaning to a number of statements and, indeed, to a large number of statements.<sup>16</sup> In fact, every statement silently relies on a certain objective and real situation, and the statement would certainly not have the form it has if the context were different. The first (*princeps*) example that Prieto takes up is this: when you have a red notebook on a table and you want to ask someone to pick up that notebook, you say to him, “pick it up” or “pick up the notebook”; when there are two notebooks, one red and one green, you ask your interlocutor to pick up one of the notebooks by saying, “pick up the red one” or “pick up the one on the right.” You see that these two statements, which have exactly the same meaning (an order from A addressed to B to pick up the notebook on the table), this same meaning gives rise to two statements that are entirely different depending on whether the objective context is the first or the second. In consequence, the definition of a statement, the choice of the form of a statement is possible only as a function of this context.

On the other hand, and now I am moving to the research of the logicians, someone like Austin has shown that the statements themselves cannot be analyzed independently of the speech act, which is actually performed by the speaker at the moment when he speaks.<sup>17</sup> For example, when someone says “the session is called to order,” this phrase is not at all constative. Indeed, the session is not open, it does not constate that the session is open; it does not give an order either, for the session does not obey and it does not open on its own because it was ordered to. What is this statement? It is a statement that is grammatically identical to a constative and which is nevertheless neither a constative nor an affirmation. It is something that Austin calls a performative. Little matter what he calls it. You see that, based on this simple example, the description of a statement is in no way complete simply once we have defined the linguistic structure of that statement.

You see from these two examples – which are simply points of reference – that within the studies of language, we are in the process of realizing that the analysis of discourse can no longer be done solely in linguistic terms. Discourse is not simply a particular case within language. Discourse is not a manner of combining elements together according to the linguistic rules that are given by the language itself. Discourse is something that necessarily overflows the language. We could thus ask ourselves if literary analysis – that is to say, the analysis of that special discourse which is a literary work – should not take into consideration all the extra-linguistic elements that we are now in the process of discovering in the analysis of language. And, in general, I see that there will be [two]<sup>18</sup> directions in which we could go.

Firstly, we could try to define, somewhat in line with what Prieto described, what is actually said in statements of literature. Indeed, when you open a novel, there is no context to this novel. When, for example, Joyce, beginning *Ulysses*,<sup>19</sup> says – unfortunately the name of the character escapes me –: “Descend the staircase,”<sup>20</sup> the staircase, which is designated by a definite article, is not next to you. It is not like when you say, when I say, for example, “the glass.” When I say “the glass,” you know perfectly well that it is this glass. When Joyce in his novel says “the staircase,” nobody knows what this staircase is; there is no real context. And yet, Joyce does not say all, he does not explain exactly what the context should be that we should put in place in order to fill, as it were, this empty indication given by the definite article. It is the work itself that divides, in some way, in a non-existent context, what must appear and what does not need to appear. It is sufficient to compare, for example, a description of Balzac’s and a description of Robbe-Grillet’s to see exactly how, in certain works of the Balzacian type, there are a number of things that absolutely must be said and which are in some sense the context. The extra-linguistic is presented in the work itself: the date of the event, the city where it is located, the name of the

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<sup>16</sup> See Luis J. Prieto, *Messages et signaux* (Paris, 1966).

<sup>17</sup> See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* (Oxford, 1962); trans. G. Lane under the title *Quand dire, c’est faire* (Paris, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> Foucault says “trois.”

<sup>19</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Paris, 1922); trans. Auguste Morel under the title *Ulysse* (Paris, 1929).

<sup>20</sup> The English text says, “Halted, he [Buck Mulligan] peered down the dark winding stairs and called out coarsely: “Come up, Kinch! Come up, you fearful jesuit!”

character, his ancestors, what has happened to him, his past, etc. And if you take a novel by Robbe-Grillet, when Robbe-Grillet begins *Labyrinth*<sup>21</sup> by saying: “Here,” you will never know what this “here” is – if it is a city, which city it is, in what country it is located, if it is an apartment, if it is a picture, if it is a real space, if it is an imaginary space, etc. You see therefore that the way in which the extra-linguistic is manifested in the statements of the literary work is very different from one epoch to another and from one writer to another. And we could, in the vein of the linguistic analyses of Prieto, study the role of the extralinguistic context within the work itself.

Secondly, we could also study a bit in the line of what the logicians, Austin in particular, have done. [We could] study the way in which statements are somehow posed in the very text of the literary work: what is the act that is actually performed in a given sentence? And it is clear that in a description, in a reported dialogue, in a reflection by the author on his own character, in a psychological notation [...] you see there is an entire formal analysis of the work, but one which would be done in a way that is not at all the way of linguistics. [It would be]<sup>22</sup> a structural study of what is extralinguistic in the linguistic statements of the work itself.

I have simply pointed out these possible directions of work to show you essentially how structuralism, far from being bound to some doctrinal position, far from being bound to a precise and definitively realised method, is, in fact, much more a domain of research, a domain of research which opens up probably in a rather undefined way. In any case, so long as we have not yet scoured the ensemble of this documentary mass that humanity has deposited around itself, of which literature is a part, so long as we have not used all possible methods to show what this document as document is, structuralism, if it is true that structuralism is simply the science of the document, you see that structuralism will have a good life. In any event, we should absolutely not identify structuralism either with a philosophy or even with a particular method.

These are, very roughly, the indications that I wanted to give you and this – unfortunately I have gone a little long – to quite simply introduce the questions, objections that you would like to make.

*Text established by Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini  
Translated by Jonathan Schroeder and Suzanne Taylor*

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<sup>21</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Dans le labyrinthe* (Paris, 1959); trans. Richard Howard under the title *In the Labyrinth* (New York, 1960).

<sup>22</sup> Interruption of the recording.