THE QUEST FOR THE WHOLE BEHIND THE PARTS:
STRUCTURALISM OF INDIVIDUAL WORKS

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Submitted to the Department of English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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المدرسة البنوية في تحليل النص الأدبي المفرد: تحدي البحث عن الكل خلف التفاصيل

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مقدمة الى قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كمتطلب تكميلي للحصول على درجة الماجستير في الأدب الإنجليزي

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The Quest for the Whole behind the Parts: Structuralism of Individual Works

النظرية البنية في دراسة العمل الأدبي المفرد: تحدي البحث عن الكل خلف التفاصيل

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ABSTRACT

One of the harshest criticisms against Structuralism is the claim that it is not useful for the study of individual works. The paper interprets this claim as a misreading of the success of the theory in the area of poetics. It accuses such criticism of ignoring the theory’s applicability to different levels of analysis—anything from the institution of literature and an individual work. This paper defends the theory against this claim through two steps. The first introduces three major structuralist principles: "autonomy," "langue/parole" and "relations" and shows the variety of values that these principles can assume according to the level of analysis adopted in a study—i.e., literature, a homogenous group of literary works or an individual literary work. Establishing the variety of the values that the theoretical principles can take in application is necessary as it defeats the belief that these principles, when employed in a critical study, have only one true value that is related to producing poetics of either the institution of literature, a genre or a group of homogeneous works. The second step presents a practical example of how the three principles discussed in the first chapter can be applied to the study of an individual work. William Shakespeare's As You Like It is selected for this purpose. The application of the three principles in the study of the play prove to be both feasible and useful in determining the identity of the play as a comedy. The paper concludes by affirming the flexibility of the original spirit of Structuralism, which does not frown upon studying individual literary works.
ملخص البحث

كثيرًا ما ينظر للنظرية البنوية على أنها غير ذات جدوى في تحليل الأعمال الفردية وهو ما يعد أحد أكثر الانتقادات شراسة ضد هذه النظرية. عمل هذا البحث على تعليق هذا النقد بأنه القدرة الخاطئة للنجاح هذه النظرية في ميدان الشعر. وقد أظهر البحث أن مثل هذه الانتقادات تجاهلت مدى قابلية تطبيق هذه النظرية على مستويات التحليل المختلفة - التي تتداخل بين المؤسسة الأدبية والعمل الفردي. ويدعم هذا البحث النظرية البنوية ضد هذه الانتقادات في اتجاهين: حيث يقدم الأول ثلاث من المبادئ الرئيسية التي يقوم عليها المنهج البنوي، وهي: الاستقلالية، واللغة، الخطاب، والعلاقات، كما أظهر البحث تباباً في القيم التي تفرضها تلك المبادئ تبعاً لمستوى التحليل المتيني في الدراسة في مجال الأدب، إما على مستوى مجموعات الأعمال الأدبية المتجانسة، أو تلك الفردية. وبعد تحديد مثل هذا التبادن القيمي الذي يمكن تطبيقه خلال هذه المبادئ النظرية أمراً هاماً في تحص الاعتقاد القائل بأنه ليس لهذه المبادئ عند تطبيقها في الدراسات النقدية إلا قيمة حقيقية مفردة. ثم يعطي الاتجاه الثاني مثالاً عملياً لكيفية التي يمكن بها تطبيق المبادئ الثلاثة التي تمت مناقشتها في الفصل الأول من البحث على الأعمال الفردية. وقد اختبرت مسرحية الكاتب البريطاني وليام شكسبير، كما تحدث As You Like It في تحليل المسرحية بأنها نافعة للتطبيق وصالحة في تحديد الهوية الكوميدية المسرحية.

وللتأكد هذه الورقة البحثية من صحة الروح الأصلية للمنهج البنوي الذي لا ينبغي إقصائه في تحليل الأعمال الفردية.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

If a group of literature students were asked to demonstrate their knowledge of a literary theory of their choice, chances are they will avoid working with Structuralism. This hypothetical yet very likely situation indicates the strong prejudice of many against this theory, and its connection with enigma and complexity. It is imaginable that in some classes Structuralism as a literary method does not lend itself well to pedagogical purposes, given the variety of schools and methods that it tolerates and allows. However, this fact can be well handled by skilled teachers who introduce the variety as an authentic characteristic that entails enrichment rather than deficiency. Another likable and more serious reason for apprehension of the structuralist method in literature classes is the propaganda that Structuralism is only successful in the area of poetics. Since poetics is admittedly ranked difficult, even by top structuralist critics such as Jonathan Culler (preface viii), Structuralism by association is ranked difficult, too.

Needless to say, this association is not accurate. No one can dispute the difficulty of poetics; however, Structuralism in its original sense is not all about poetics. The claim that Structuralism as a literary method fails at the level of the individual text and is only successful in producing poetics misreads and does a lot of damage to the original spirit of Structuralism that encourages multi-level adaptability. This accusation which Robert Scholes reports in his Structuralism in Literature (142), advocates only one school of Structuralism that takes interest in poetics and builds on the theory’s success there. Many well known structuralist projects, such as Vladimir Propp’s The Morphology of the Folktales and Northrop Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism, are large-scale projects, where a
large number of works are surveyed or referred to. It could be true that literary
Structuralism is more impressive in its assumptions and findings in these large-scale
projects. However, this should not question the method’s adequacy for the study of
individual works. Nor should it cancel or belittle the efforts made in smaller-scale
structuralist projects that deal with individual works. As a matter of fact, some of the
most celebrated structuralist critics have devoted some of their projects to the study of
single works, such as Roland Barthes in his book S/Z.

The popularity of this misconception can be interpreted as a form of either
rejection or ignorance of the theory’s applicability to different levels of literature—
anything from an individual work and the institution of literature itself. The countless
potential application methods of Structuralism’s principles are widely accepted. In
literary criticism, the variety of the values that the principles assume is closely connected
with the level of analysis adopted in the structuralist project. This paper will rely on this
fact in defending Structuralism against the claim that it is not a workable literary method
for the study of individual works. While the paper is not concerned with clearing up all
the misconceptions about the theory, it is the author's hope that it succeeds to prove false
a major myth about it.

In order to accomplish this goal, the paper will first choose and illustrate three
major principles of Structuralism: autonomy, langue/parole and relations. Then, it will
explain how these principles can assume various values in literary criticism according to
the adopted level of analysis. The stress on the variety of application methods of the
chosen principles is designed to refute the assumption that the structuralist principles
have only one true method of application that is exclusively connected with producing
poetics. Moreover, the paper will present a practical example of how the three chosen principles can be applied to the study of an individual work. The chapters of the paper are designed to carry out the two-step plan; besides this introductory chapter, the paper is divided into two other chapters. The first chapter is a discussion of the major constructing principles of literary Structuralism; the discussion will shed some light on the linguistic roots of these principles. Referring to the linguistic origin of the theory is unavoidable since the two versions of the theory—the linguistic and the literary—are strongly connected. In fact, the literary version owes its existence, methodology and even its terminology to linguistic Structuralism. The paper will first explain each principle in its original linguistic context as Saussure, the father of linguistics, postulated it, then it will illustrate the various ways in which that principle or concept can be adopted in literary theory and practice. This should express the original spirit of Structuralism and its adaptability and flexibility. This is the spirit the paper wants to emphasize, rather than introducing the Structuralism of one school that would refute the other methods and understandings of the theory. The second chapter of the paper shows a detailed structuralist analysis of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* based on the principles discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter is meant to present a practical example of how Structuralism can be used in the analysis of an individual text.

**Review of Literature**

Insofar as a structuralist analysis of *As You Like It* is concerned, my search results returned very little. The closest query word being Shakespearean Comedy, it turns out to be of genuine interest to at least one prominent structuralist critic, Northrop Frye. Frye has written much on Shakespeare and much on Comedy—Shakespearean and
none—but his books *A Natural Perspective* and *The Myth of Deliverance* are exclusively
devoted to Shakespearean Comedies from a structuralist point of view. There, Frye
argues for the existence of "Shakespearean Comedy," an independent genre with its own
typical structure and shared conventions. However, this proposal of Frye’s only proves to
be ill received by other non-structuralist Shakespeare’s critics, such as Ralph Berry.
Berry insists on naming his book, which also deals with the structure of the comedies,
*Shakespeare’s Comedies,* instead of, say, *Shakespearean Comedy* or *Shakespearean
Comedies.* Berry’s decision is conscious; it is meant to oppose as well as refute Frye’s
argument in his respective books. Choosing a collective noun instead for his book title
indicates Berry's disapproving stance on Frye's suggestion of treating the Shakespearean
comedies as a single unit. Berry's objection is spelled out in the introduction to his book,
where he voices his suspicion regarding the accuracy of Frye’s project (4). He further
elaborates on his objections in a published article titled “Shakespearean Comedy and
Northrop Frye.”

The differences in the two critics’ stands on the proper approach to Shakespeare’s
comedies signify larger differences between the schools that the two critics come from,
the Traditional school and the Structuralist school. Berry, the traditionalist, analyzes the
form of each comedy separately in order to show how that form contributes to the
meaning of the respective play. He conceives the comedies as quite unlike and never
attempts to study the similarities among them. Even in the brief discussion of “the
recurring techniques” in Shakespeare’s comedies that he admits their existence in the
introduction to his book, Berry insists that the discussion comes off in his book only as a
consequence rather than an aim (6). On the other hand, Frye, the structuralist,
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acknowledges the differences among the comedies but always focuses his discussion on the similarities among them. Even more, he takes the comedies to be variations on one basic structure. Moreover, he presents Shakespeare’s productions as a continuum, where the Comedies anticipate the Romances that follow them.

In A Natural Perspective, Frye treats the comedies “as one group unified by recurrent structures, devices and images” (Preface xxii). Treating the comedies as one unit is one essential characteristic that distinguishes his study as structuralist. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Frye focuses his study on the commonalities among the comedies rather than the differences. Of the common features among Shakespeare’s Comedies, Frye assigns structure the biggest role. Not only this, he also redefines Comedy, prioritizing the role played by structure in the definition: “a Comedy is not a play that ends happily: it is a play in which a certain structure is present and works through to its own logical end, whether we or the cast or the author feel happy about it or not” (46). As the quote above suggests, structure is prioritized in the definition of Comedy over the content of the comedy and the attitude of either the cast or the audience to that content.

Besides treating Shakespeare’s comedies as a single unit, Frye outlines in his book a typical Shakespearean structure that is supposedly applicable, with some variations, to the whole body of Shakespeare’s Comedies. This general pattern runs as follows:

The normal action is the effort of a young man to get possession of a young woman who is kept from him by various social barriers…. These are eventually circumvented, and the comedy ends at a point when a new society is crystallized, usually by the marriage or betrothal of a hero and
heroine. The birth of the new society is symbolized by a closing festive scene featuring a wedding, a banquet, or a dance. This conclusion is normally accompanied by some change of heart on the part of those who have been obstructing the comic resolution. (72)

Frye identifies three phases in this typical structure. The first is represented by an “anticomic society, a social organization blocking and opposed to the comic drive, which the action of the comedy evades or overcomes” (73). He explains that this anticomic society often takes the form of harsh or irrational laws, most of which are “preoccupied with trying to regulate the sexual drive, and so work counter to the wishes of the hero and the heroine, which form the impetus of the action” (74). Frye calls the second phase of the structure “the period of license and confusion” or the phase of “temporarily lost identity” (76). He explains that this phase is usually portrayed by “the stock device of impenetrable disguise, or by the activities of characters assumed to be invisible” (76). The third phase is the phase of the discovery of the identity—social or individual. Frye does not stop at outlining the typical structure of Shakespearean Comedy; he relates it to a mythic structure of ancient ritual that is believed to precede drama.

In The Myth of Deliverance, Frye deals with a smaller group of comedies than the one discussed in the previous book. The group consists of three plays commonly known as “the problem comedies:” Measure for Measure, All’s Well That Ends Well and Troilus and Cressida. Nonetheless, the discussion is never limited to these plays, as a true structuralist, Frye elaborates on other similar plays that support his argument. The book’s main argument is that Shakespeare’s Comedies have much to do with the myth of “deliverance” whereas his Romances have to do with the myth of “survival.” Deliverance
and Survival, Frye argues, are two myths that represent basic human concerns. Frye calls them myth or mythology because they are usually contained in “some kind of narrative (mythos) or story framework” (9). Throughout the book, Frye explains how the structure of the New Comedy, with which Shakespeare is associated, and in particular how the three comedies at hand demonstrate, especially in the climax, “a vision of deliverance, an expanded energy and freedom” (24). Frye believes the two myths—deliverance and survival—are closely connected. Based on this assumption, Frye links Shakespeare’s Comedies that represent the myth of deliverance with the Romances that represent the myth of survival. According to Frye, the comedies anticipate the Romances that represent the culmination of Shakespeare’s dramatic career. Frye elaborates on this idea in his discussion of each play. He also draws on Aristotle’s notion of “reversal” in analyzing these three plays. The three chapters of the book illustrate how Measure for Measure represents a reversal of Action, All’s Well That Ends Well a reversal of Energy and Troilus and Cressida a reversal of Reality.

Frye’s contributions to Shakespearean studies and literary Structuralism in A Natural Perspective and The Myth of Deliverance are huge. These books, which are in essence large-scale projects, are the type of projects with which Structuralism is often associated in the minds of many readers. The success and fame of such projects have unintentionally fed the myth that Structuralism can add little if anything to the study of individual works—all the reasons why a study of one of Shakespeare’s comedies from a structuralist perspective should be attempted in this paper. While Frye’s two books show, among other things, how Structuralist principles can be employed to illuminate a group of literary texts taken together, this paper intends to show how the same principles can be
applied in the study of an individual text. This does not mean that it disagrees with Frye’s assumptions made in his two books. On the contrary, it builds on them, especially on the idea that Shakespearean Comedy is an independent genre that has its own conventions.

The paper makes another divergence from Frye’s Structuralist approach to literary works in not connecting the basic structure of the play at hand with any mythical structure. Frye, unlike the majority of Structuralist literary critics, takes an additional step in the analysis of literary texts in relating the basic structure of the work(s) he studies to the structure of popular myths. This step is recognized in the tradition of literary Structuralism, and is generally considered to be optional.
CHAPTER 2
MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism has its roots in Structural Linguistics, a linguistic movement whose principles were laid by Saussure and made contemporarily influential through the works of Chomsky (Matthews*). In 1916, Saussure’s Course in General Linguistics was published posthumously. Ever since its publication, the book has been considered the Bible for Structuralism; many of Saussure’s principles have been embraced and employed in the structuralist approaches to the study of language, literature and other subjects. The following pages will outline some of the basic principles of the theory; these principles are “autonomy,” “the distinction between langue and parole” and “the principle of relation.” Other principles such as “coherence” and “self-regulation” will be referred to under the discussion of the three major principles. Each principle will first be introduced in its linguistic context; then an explanation will be offered of some of the various ways in which the principle is adopted in literary theory and practice. Choosing to refer to the linguistic context is designed to express the original spirit of Structuralism and its adaptability and flexibility. This is better than introducing the Structuralism of one school that might contradict, marginalize or cancel the other methods and understandings of the theory. The variety of the application methods of each principle will be connected to the level of analysis (i.e., a group of works or an individual text). The stress on the variety of application methods of the chosen principles is designed to refute the assumption that the structuralist principles have only one true method of application that is exclusively connected with producing poetics.
Autonomy

Autonomy is a fundamental principle of Structuralism. As a matter of fact, Saussure’s first major contribution to linguistics is conceived in declaring the autonomy of language and its study. Long before this declaration was made, linguistics was not an independent field; the study of language has been for a long time part of the practice of philology (Bressler 88). This accounts for philology’s methodological impact on the study of language at the time, especially apparent in the dominance of historical and comparative approaches to language studies. The linguist’s job in historical linguistics is limited to either tracing the evolution of linguistic units over time or comparing two linguistic units from two different eras. Saussure’s inventiveness is seen in introducing a new approach to the study of language, an approach that revolutionarily excludes the role of history and focuses instead on the system of language itself at a given time. Drawing a sharp distinctive line between the two methodologies, Saussure names his new approach “synchronic” and the old one “diachronic.” Without ruling out the importance of the diachronic approach in the general study of language, Saussure states that a proper study of language is synchronic. In synchronic linguistics, a Saussurian linguist studies the system of language and demonstrates how the whole system functions instead of studying its evolution over time or tracing the historical development of one of its constituents (89).

The independence of linguistics entails the rejection of the interference of history as well as that of other external factors. “External” here designates anything that is not part of the internal structure of language, such as social, geographical and political factors. Just as he distinguishes between diachronic and synchronic linguistics, Saussure...
differentiates between external linguistics (i.e., the study of the relationships between language and external non-linguistic factors) and internal linguistics (i.e., the study of the relationships among the internal factors of language). This separation, Saussure believes, is essential: “the more rigorously it is observed, the better” (Saussure 23). Again, without excluding the importance of external linguistics, Saussure believes that the proper study of language is the one that focuses on the internal factors of the language structure. That is because language, he postulates, is governed only by its internal rules: “The language itself is a system which admits no other order than its own,” (23). Internal factors are alone what define the structure of a given language at a given time. The simple test Saussure suggests in identifying an internal factor is in itself an indicator of the paramount role it has in the structure of language. An internal factor is simply recognized when it answers the following question in the affirmative: does it alter the system in any degree whatsoever? Only when it does is it recognized as internal and then allowed to be studied (23).

The declaration of the autonomy of the study of language through disregarding history and external factors has many implications. Firstly, it implies the completeness and wholeness of language at any given time (Scholes, Structuralism in Literature 18). This implication comes as a natural outcome of viewing language as a coherent structure as opposed to an aggregate. This means that the components of this language/structure are subordinated to laws, whereas in an aggregate they are not; they are rather cumulated. The absence of laws in an aggregate facilitates the individual components assuming independent characters from the complexes they compose. In a structure, this option never exists; instead, the components coordinate to help the whole structure develop
properties distinct from that of the properties of its original components (Piaget 8-9).

Secondly, conceiving language as an independent, whole and coherent structure suggests its self-regulation. For a system to be self-regulating means that it is capable of generating substructures through the force of transformational rules without losing its boundaries. A self-regulating system, such as language, allows for change and conceives change as enrichment rather than impoverishment as long as the laws of the structure are kept intact (14).

As for literature, Saussure’s call for the autonomy of language and its study and what it implies for the wholeness and completeness of language has a deep impact on literary theory and practice. One immediate effect that can be traced to this linguistic principle is the trend to view literary works as independent and self-regulating structures. Each literary work is seen as capable of being studied independently of history and any other external factors. Likewise, literature in general has come to be viewed as an independent structure, “whole, capable of transformation, self-regulating, autonomous and internally coherent” (Hawkes 54-55). This autonomous structure is totally “isolatable, separable from what goes on beyond it” (54). In effect, literary studies shift their focus from the relations between individual units and their historical antecedents to “the functional relations in the system as they operate at a given time” (Culler 13). The wholeness of the text that a structuralist study assumes is best seen in comparison with the other non-structuralist methods. Psychoanalysis or Marxism, for example, do not take the text as a whole, but choose from it what they want to interpret or emphasize. Frye believes these methods are inaccurate as they give undue weight to the textual elements they want to emphasize (6). In a contrary fashion, Structuralism examines the text as a
whole and studies the relations among the elements, and in some cases the relations among the relations.

In this new perspective of literature and literary works that Structuralism postulates, literary change and literary history get new interpretations. In interpreting literary history, structuralists, especially structuralist formalists, validate the belief that new forms or styles emerge in revolt against the old. However, they disagree with interpreting this emergence as a means of developing the old forms’ antithesis. They instead believe that this continual emergence is but a form of “reorganization, a regrouping, of permanent elements.” Hawkes links this “reorganization with the process of “ostranenie” (defamiliarization of the familiar) in the structuralist formalist school. The laws of ostranenie entail replacing any style or forms when it loses its air of strangeness and becomes habitual (Hawkes 55). Therefore, literary change is seen “not as a response to, or a by-product of, social change, but as the unfolding of a self-generating and self-enclosed sequence of styles and genres, propelled and furthered by internal exigencies” (55). Thus put, literary change is liberated from the historical and social factors that are traditionally fronted in reasoning its occurrence.

Additionally, so much as literature itself, the study of literature, or literary criticism, claims independence as a separate discipline under the structuralist movement. Northrop Frye, for one, raises this claim. In his renowned polemical introduction to Anatomy of Criticism, he calls for the autonomy of literary criticism from ideology and even literature: “criticism is a structure of thought and knowledge existing in its own right” (5). As an independent structure, Frye believes criticism should admit no external order (i.e., theology, science, philosophy or politics). Submitting literature to any external
order in any critical study would only threaten the autonomy of criticism and exaggerate
the values in literature that can be related to these external sources (6-7). This call for the
autonomy of criticism very much echoes Saussure’s calls for the autonomy of the study
of language and his objection to the interference of other disciplines in its study. As far as
the relationship between criticism and literature is concerned, Frye also calls for
independence but “with some measure.” He believes that criticism should deal with
literature with its own conceptual framework that is not that of literature, for this will
only support the parasite theory that views criticism as “an art based on pre-existing art, a
second hand imitation of a creative power” (3). Criticism, Frye believes, has to develop
its own conceptual framework out of a survey of literature. The job of a literary critic is
to “first read literature to make an inductive survey of his own field and let his critical
principles shape themselves solely out of his knowledge of that field” (7).

Finally, to summarize, the principle of autonomy is actualized in literary criticism,
just as in linguistics, in reference to both the subject matter—language in linguistics and
literature in literary criticism—and the approach to the subject matter. Following the
example of language, literary structuralists declare literature an independent system
capable of being studied without referring to other disciplines. Smaller systems within the
institution of literature also enjoy this privilege. Whatever the level of analysis a
structuralist study chooses to settle on, autonomy can always be achieved. It matters little
whether the subject matter is a group of works or an individual text; a synchronic view
can always be obtained.

**Langue vs. Parole**
Langue and parole are two key concepts in Structuralism. Saussure is believed to be the first linguist to distinguish and define these two levels of language. Saussure describes langue (i.e., language), as “a grammatical system [that exists] potentially in every brain, or more exactly in the brains of a group of individuals” (Saussure 13). In this sense, langue is presented as an abstract system that consists of rules and principles that are shared by all the speakers of a given language. In a contrasting manner, Saussure defines parole (speech) as “the sum total of what people say; it comprises individual combinations of words, depending on the will of the speaker…” (19). That is, it is the individual utterances made by speakers of the language in concrete everyday situations (Hawkes 9). Not only does Saussure distinguish between the two levels, he also makes it clear in his book that he privileges the abstract level over the actual level. He believes the distinction he has made is important as it distinguishes between what is “essential’ (i.e., langue) and what is “ancillary and accidental” (i.e., parole) (Saussure 13). The privilege of langue over parole is implicit in the description of the two levels: parole is described as individual, ephemeral and physical (i.e., concrete), whereas langue is depicted as collective, enduring and abstract, but nonetheless real. Langue is assigned a supernatural status where the will of the speaker cannot inflict change upon it, whereas parole, the inferior level, is totally subject to the will of the speaker.

Saussure believes the relationship between the two levels of language is that of interdependence that never compromises the distinction between the two. Langue, he explains, is necessary for parole to be intelligible and for it to produce all its effects. Likewise, parole is vital for language to accumulate in the brains of the speakers and for it to evolve. However, despite the interdependent nature of the relationship between
parole and langue, Saussure stresses the independent quality of both langue and parole that allows each to be studied irrespectively of the other. He regretfully observes that most of the linguistic efforts at his time and before were focused on the less significant, parole, at a time when, he believes, the proper study of language should concentrate instead on langue. The study of parole, he explains, is only important insofar as it illuminates the study of langue. In this light, parole is needed only to provide the instances from which the patterns of langue can be deduced. Saussure’s concepts of langue and parole were later adopted by Chomsky in his model of competence and performance. Chomsky defines competence as “the speaker/hearer’s knowledge of his language,” whereas performance as “the actual use of language is concrete situations” (Cook 22). However, there are differences between the two linguists’ models; notable among them is that Saussure’s langue is the property of a whole community of speakers, while Chomsky's competence is the property of a single speaker (Trask 163).

The distinction between the two levels of language assumes a host of different values in literary criticism. This variation is in large part connected with the level of analysis adopted in the structuralist project. In general, structuralist literary attempts differ in identifying what is parole in literature and what is langue. Basically, they are employed in one of two senses: either metaphoric or literal (Culler 114). When employed in its literal sense, langue is used to denote an abstract system of rules and principles that can assume actuality in examples of the parole (i.e., the individual literary works). The job of the critic per this view is to work towards formulating a general theory of literature, (i.e., a grammar of literature or what is alternatively known as poetics). However, there are two levels of grammar structuralist criticism aim at. The first, the
more general and ambitious, aims at formulating a universal grammar of literature. The second type of poetics aims at constructing a universal grammar of a group of works, mostly narrative. Robert Scholes in *Structuralism in Literature* names the first type “macropoetics” and the second “micropoetics” (91).

To begin with the first type, there are at least two notable structuralist critics who call for putting the structuralist activities on this track: Northrop Frye and Jonathan Culler. While it is true that the two critics share the call for establishing poetics of literature, there are major differences in their respective perceptions of how that poetics should be. On the one hand, Frye’s perception of poetics echoes that of Aristotle. In the polemical introduction to his landmark book, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye expresses his hope for a birth, rather a rebirth, of genuine poetics that grows out of literature itself. Since Aristotle wrote his *Poetics*, Frye believes, little has been done in this field. Frye’s book, *Anatomy of Criticism*, is sometimes considered as a sequel to Aristotle’s *Poetics* (Rockas 502). Poetics in Frye’s understanding is “an intelligible structure of knowledge about poetry, which is not poetry itself, or the experience of it” (Frye, Introduction to *Anatomy* 14). This structure is built up through reading literature with the aim of discovering “a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas” (17). The process begins in the text studied and ends in the structure of literature as a total form (Frye, *Anatomy* 342). Based on this, it can be safely concluded that the value of parole in Frye’s theory corresponds to the text while the value of langue is equivalent to the structure of literature as a total form.

On the other hand, Culler’s poetics is a theory of reading literature, or what he alternatively calls “literary competence.” Culler’s poetics concerns itself with studying
the reading conventions rather than the individual works. He believes theory of literature should explain how a work is capable of generating a variety of meanings, instead of interpreting these meanings. Culler in his argument seems more influenced by Chomsky’s terminology and model than by Saussure’s. While that does not change a lot of things—at the end, Chomsky’s model is in large part built on Saussure’s model; it signifies in his theory the shift from Saussure’s collective langue to Chomsky’s individual’s competence, and consequently the shift of focus in building poetics of literature from the text—say, as in Frye’s theory—to the reader. Analogous to Chomsky’s linguistic competence, Culler argues the existence of a literary competence that he defines as the internalized grammar of literature that helps the reader to convert linguistic sequence into literary structures (Culler 131-152). Like linguistic competence, literary competence is structure-dependent and must be learned. Chomsky’s subsidiary level, performance, is also adopted by Culler to denote the reader’s attempt to interpret works.

Having said this, parole and langue assume new values in Culler’s theory: parole becomes the event, (i.e., the particular meaning the reader derives from reading), while langue or the system on which the events depend is the reader’s competence (Sturrock 112). With the values of langue and parole placed outside the text and literature in Culler’s theory, one might wrongly conclude that Culler eliminates the role of the text in his poetics. However, this is not true; it might be more accurate to conclude that Culler assigns the reader a larger role in the process of meaning building, sometimes at the expense of the text’s. According to him, the literary work offers the essential structure that the reader fills with meaning (Culler 147). The individual work in his theory is depicted as a “vehicle of an implicit theory,” an “utterance,” or a “locus,” in which
theoretical or practical analyses are carried out. (114). Literature, on the other hand, is rendered as an institution, a system whose constituents are the reading conventions that the reader assimilates from reading literature.

Aside from Frye’s and Culler’s theories of poetics, there are narrower-scale structuralist projects that still employ langue in its literal sense. Instead of formulating a general grammar of literature, as in Culler’s and Frye’s, these projects seek to produce a grammar of the corpus of works they study, mostly narrative, limiting their efforts to only a partial area of the institution of literature. Traditionally, these efforts are grouped under Structuralist Narratology. Narratology is known as “the science of narrative” (Onega 1). It seeks to formulate a grammar of narrative, a goal that is consistent with the larger structuralist goal of finding a grammar of literature. It is largely believed that this field has started with Aristotle’s Poetics, where first references to the structure of epic are made (Surdulescu 1). However, Narratology has presented itself as a scientific field with the emergence of Structuralism in the second half of the twentieth century (Surdulescu14, Onego 1). Famous names of structuralist narratologists include Vladimir Propp, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, A. J. Greimas, Claude Bremond, Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette. A survey of the contributions of these prominent critics is beyond the scope of this paper. However, hopefully a brief introduction to the work of one of them would give an example how the concepts of langue and parole are employed in similar projects.

Vladimir Propp is among the early critics who applied the Saussurean linguistic model to literature (Guerin 240). In his *Morphology of Folktales*, Propp studied 100 Russian folktales with a view of detecting the common structural features among them.
To achieve this, he kept his focus on the invariant structural elements of the tales. He observed that while personages of the characters always change, the roles and the functions of the characters remain the same (Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* 64). After studying the hundred tales, he abstracted 31 functions that repeatedly made their appearance, though not necessarily all concurrently, in these tales. Besides the functions, Propp devised four universal rules, surprisingly applicable to all fairy tales. Moreover, Propp specified eight character roles usually common with the fairy tales (64). All these contributions Propp had made to the study of narrative can be safely said to belong to the ongoing narratologist goal of formulating a grammar of narrative.

In Propp’s model, the entire group of abstracted functions is the langue, whereas each individual tale is a parole (Guerin 240). In theory, this statement should be true of all the structuralist narratologist productions. However, this is not always the case; not all narratologists succeeded in moving from the step of the analysis of examples of the narrative to working out a grammar of that narrative. One notable example is Levi-Strauss’s controversial study of myth. Myth here denotes a special kind of narrative that is “orally transmitted and culturally selected” (Sperber 34). Levi-Strauss gained his fame as a key structuralist figure from studying the internal as well as the external structures of the myths on a parallel and oppositional basis. Levi-Strauss’s research methodology—arranging the relationships in a system of oppositional values—accredits him the title of a structuralist. Nevertheless, he can hardly be called a structuralist narratologist proper, because of his failure to devise a universal grammar of myth (41). Levi-Strauss’s work stops somewhere before reaching the crucial step of arriving at a general rule that predicts
the behavior of any myth. Having said this, it is inaccurate to state that langue was employed in his work in its literal sense despite his fame as a structuralist narratologist.

Interestingly enough, Levi-Strauss has his own unique application of Saussure’s langue and parole to myth. According to him, myth, like language, can be analyzed into two basic levels: parole and langue. Strauss defines parole and langue from the perspective of the time referent that each use. According to him, parole belongs to “nonreversible time”, and langue to reversible time. Given this, a myth is a parole when it cannot be reproduced, whilst it is a langue when “the pattern it describes is timeless,” (i.e., can be reproduced) (Levi-Strauss 210). However, unlike language, myth can be simultaneously both parole and langue, that is, it can belong to reversible time and nonreversible time concurrently, something that does not happen in language. He categorizes this case as a third level, specific only to myth, that combines the properties of the first two (e.g. langue and parole).

All the already discussed values of langue and parole are but variations on the literal sense, the first of two senses langue and parole can assume in literary criticism. Similar variations are also expected in the second sense. In the metaphoric sense, langue becomes any group of works that make up a homogenous system. For instance, it can be set at the level of a genre, a group of works, one author’s works or works produced in a certain age, as long as the elements of each of the above options constitute a homogenous group. The individual works within each system are studied as examples of the parole of their respective system. The aim of studying a collection of works is not to work out a grammar for them, such is the case in micropoetic projects—Structuralist Narratologist projects. This is because in this kind of structuralist activity langue, the abstract level, is
not the implicit grammar behind the individual texts, it is rather the abstract homogeneous system that is made up of parallel individual texts. Thus, instead of approaching the individual works to work out a grammar for them, the group of works is approached as one system to reveal its rules and forms (Culler 114). Sometimes, the aim is only to study the type of relations among the paroles (the individual works) of one system or to investigate the relationship between these paroles and the langue that they belong to (Sturrock 102).

The metaphoric sense also accounts for the Structuralism of individual works that is sometimes overlooked by the critics of Structuralism. In this kind of structuralist activity, the boundaries of langue are set at the level of the text; the individual work is conceived as an organic totality. This type of Structuralism, Culler observes, bears affinity with the traditional studies that treat individual works as organic wholes or as a variant of a single project. However, he asserts that they make their departure from traditional criticism in enlivening the spirit of the system in their analysis as well as in establishing the text interrelations “not on identity of substance but homology of differences” (Culler 114). That is to say, structuralism of individual texts keeps structuralist spirit through examining the work as a whole and self-regulating system and through establishing the relationships among its parts on a “homology of differences,” (i.e., differential relationships) rather than on thematic unity.

Another departure this kind of structuralist projects make from traditional criticism is in their approach to meaning. Structuralism of individual works and Structuralism in general are non-interpretive activities, that is, they do not study the individual works with the aim of interpreting them, though meaning is tackled indirectly.
This is not to suggest that structuralist studies utterly shun interpretation; it rather does not make it the central issue, Structuralism, as often said, takes interest in answering the question of how the meaning is built rather than what is it. Meaning in these projects has two features according to Sturrock. First, it is imminent: determined only within the text itself, by the correlation of its parts. Second, it is functional: “It asks the question: what does this or that element of the text mean as an element of the (or else of a) text” (Sturrock 113).

In sum, as the preceding discussion shows, Saussure’s two terms—langue and parole—assume different values in the already diverse structuralist projects. This variation is in large part connected with the level of analysis adopted in a structuralist project. When it is adapted in its metaphoric sense, langue is used to denote a homogenous group of works and sometimes a single unified work. However, when adopted in its literal sense, langue is used to mean an abstract set of rules that explain as well as expect the behavior of the paroles, which are in this case the individual works that either exemplify or break these rules. Even in this sense, the value of langue is not all the same in all the structuralist projects that employ it in this sense. Sometimes, as in macropoetics, langue is used to denote a universal grammar of literature in general, as in Frye’s and Culler’s respective theories. At other times, in micropoetics, langue is used to denote the grammar of a partial area of literature, mostly narrative. This last goal is the stated ambition of a group of structuralists known as structuralist narratologists. However, it must be noted that this is only a general classification that does not rule out the variations on the value of langue that can take place even in the projects of one group. Culler’s poetics and Levi-Strauss’s study of myth can be cited as examples here.
Relations

The last major Structuralist principle this paper will discuss is the one that highlights the role of relations among the constituent elements of a given system; in other words, it is the principle that explains how the parts work to make a whole. In his landmark book, *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure presents an example of how the system of language can be scientifically studied from a relational point of view. The example he presents in his book has been later adopted in the structuralist study of other systems in other fields such as literature, sociology, psychology, culture, etc. Saussure’s technique entails first identifying the essential elements of the system and then identifying and classifying the different kinds of relations that connect these elements together. His achievement in this area is conceived in considering the “sign,” not the “word” as previously held, as the essential linguistic element. In his study of the sign, Saussure proposes a new model, where he defines sign as a psychological whole that consists of two sides: phonetic and conceptual (Saussure 66). The phonetic side of the sign is also psychological, for it is not the actual physical sound, but rather the hearer’s/speaker’s psychological impression of that sound; he names this side the “signifier.” The second side is the concept that the signifier refers to; this part of the sign is called the “signified.”

In Saussure's view, "sign" does not equate "symbol"; as a matter of fact, he warns against using the two terms interchangeably. The major difference between sign and symbol lies in the type of relationship either has with its referent. In Saussure’s theory, the relationship between the two sides of the sign is arbitrary. This means that there is no internal connection between an idea (e.g., to use Saussure’s example, “sister”) and the
sequence of sounds it assumes (e.g., “s-i-s-t-e-r”). The relationship between the two sides is rather a matter of convention. Unlike the sign, the relationship between the symbol and the concept it designates is not wholly arbitrary. Symbols show traces of a natural connection to the concept they designate (68). Saussure supports his claim of the arbitrariness of sign with the fact of the diversity of world languages. Had there been an internal connection between signifier and signified in each sign, the world would have spoken one language, Saussure argues.

The importance of this Saussurean model is seen in its implications: according to this model, word, as an example of sign, does not refer to a thing, but rather to the concept of that thing. To untie the relation between the word and the substance it refers to in Saussure’s model is another way of saying that Saussure refuses to reside the value of the individual unit in its substance. This fact has won him the title of an anti-substantialist thinker (Jameson 13, Culler 12). Like substantialist identity, historical identity of the linguistic unit is overruled in Saussure’s theory; this is strongly suggested by his stance on diachronic linguistics discussed earlier. The value of a linguistic unit is never determined by its relations with, say, its historical antecedents. Instead, Saussure prefers to identify the individual units through its relational identity: its function in the system and its relations with the other units in the same system. “The characteristics of the unit merge with the unit itself. In a language, as in other semiological systems, what distinguishes a sign is what constitutes it, nothing more. Difference is what makes characteristics, just as it makes values and units” (Saussure 119).

As the quote above suggests, of all the possible types of relations that can exist among signs, only relations that are based on difference count in Saussure’s theory.
Saussure believes that a chain of signs assumes its systematic character only by virtue of the differential relations that connect its parts (118). Based on this, the two parts of the sign, signifier and signified, assume their characteristic identities through the differences they have with the other signifiers and signifieds in the same system. For example, a signifier is defined in the system of language only through the phonetic differences it holds against the other signifiers in its immediate environment. The same is true for any signified: it develops its characteristic features out of the conceptual differences it has with the other signifieds in its immediate environment. The term “differences,” Saussure asserts, should be used with respect of the component of sign in isolation; however, with sign as a complete unit, the term “opposition” should be used instead to describe its relations with other whole signs in the same system (119).

Because the relations an individual unit has with other units of the system are essential in recognizing the identity of that unit, the second step in Saussure’s approach is elaborating on the types of differential relations that usually exist among the signs. Saussure groups the differential relations between signs into two categories: syntagmatic and associative (paradigmatic). Syntagmatic relation is derived from the word syntagma: "a combination based on sequentiality" (121); that is a group of linguistic units arranged in a sequence, (e.g. “a successful effort”). The sequential order of the units plays a key role in the definition. A typical example of syntagma is the sentence, yet it can also be smaller than that. Hence, syntagmatic relation describes the relations among the parts of a syntagma. That is to say, it describes the relations of a linguistic item with its immediate linguistic elements in a given discourse—(i.e., with what precedes the unit, or what follows it, or with both). Since sequentiality is essential in the description of a syntagam,
it may be safely said that syntagmatic relations take interest in the sequential relations of the elements studied.

Associative (paradigmatic) relations, on the other hand, concern the relations an individual linguistic unit has with other linguistic units that share with it some similarities or associations (Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* 146). The similarities can be either in form or meaning or both. For example, the word “education” is in part defined by the other words that end with the suffix -tion, such as “liberation” and “eradication.” Likewise, “education” is partially defined by its synonyms such as “teaching” and “instruction.” The differences between “education” and the other items which could have filled the same slot in a given sequence determine the value of the word (Culler 15). However, in paradigmatic analysis, these items with which the studied items are compared must not occur in the context. Finally, it must be noted that these two types of relations—syntagmatic and paradigmatic—apply to the basic linguistic element as well as to the larger complexes made up of smaller units.

As far as Saussure’s definition of the sign is concerned, it is generally accredited for the emergence of a new field that aims to study sign in a scientific manner. The “sign” that wears the linguistic mantle in Saussure’s book, has grown in the new field of Semiology (“Semiotics”) to include also non-linguistic signs, such as sounds, images, gestures, etc. Today, Semiotics is a science that has its application in literary studies as well as in sociology, psychology and cultural studies. In literary criticism, “Semiotics” and “Structuralism” are sometimes used interchangeably. At other times, it is used to denote only a structuralist methodology that looks to the text or literature as “a formal system of signs” (“Semiotics”). The idea of system persists here irrespectively of the size
of the system. Any literary system ranging from individual text to the institution of literature can be investigated as a sign system. One can talk about semiotics of literature, semiotics of fiction or semiotics of individual texts. Scholé’s *Semiotics and Interpretations*, for instance, covers a bit of each. It discusses semiotics of literature as well as semiotics of individual texts. Approaching the literary text(s) as (a) sign system represents only one way of how the knowledge of sign and relations can be utilized in literary criticism. Even if the structuralist refuses to treat the literary texts as a sign system, he/she can borrow the linguistic terminology and definition in identifying and studying the relations among the constituents of a given literary system.

In fact, tracing all the possible ways in which the principle of relation can be applied in literary criticism is impossible. The basic concept behind these various methods is studying the literary subject from a relational, more specifically a differential point of view. How to study a text from a relational point of view can take many forms. One structuralist reading can choose to divide the text into smaller systems on the basis of difference, (e.g., the male/female relationship). The meaning of the text is expected to arise from the differences among these systems. Another structuralist study, which can equally claim adopting the relational point of view, might choose to first identify a unit of analysis (e.g., event of plot, character, etc.). Afterwards, it elaborates on the relations among the units based on the factor of difference. Syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinction or analysis can be used in the description of the relations among the units. However, its use is optional; because it is only one expression of the factor of difference. A third structuralist reading of the text, which also highlights the differential point of view, analyzes the text in terms of the major binary opposition operating in it. This binary
opposition can be related to other minor opposition in the text; meaning is expected to arise from this process. These three methods are only three variations in the relational investigation of an individual text. Similar variations are also expected in the relational study of a group of works.

In sum, there are many ways in which the principle of relation can be utilized in literary criticism; tracing all of them is beyond the scope of this paper. The core of all the various methods is to investigate the literary system from the point of view of difference. Sometimes, the factor of difference can take the form of binary opposition or syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinction or analysis. These techniques are only different expressions of the same factor, (i.e., difference); thus they can be dropped provided the factor is maintained in other ways. Conducting a relational study is not restricted by the level of analysis; it can apply to an individual work, higher or lower systems. In fact, the variation in the possible level of analysis is in part responsible for the various forms a relational study can take.
CHAPTER 3

STRUCTURALISM AND AS YOU LIKE IT

The first chapter of the paper has gone through the basic principles of Structuralism—autonomy, langue vs. parole and relations. Moreover, it has featured a general demonstration of the potential values these principles can take in literary theory and criticism, with special emphasis on the diversity of these values. The discussion has been careful to illustrate the applicability of the principles to the study of individual literary texts as well as to groups of individual texts. While this alone could be used to defy the voices that doubt Structuralism’s feasibility for the study of individual texts, the paper also features a practical example of how the three principles can be employed in the analysis of an individual text to back up the same goal. In this chapter, Shakespeare’s comedy, As You Like It, is chosen for a structuralist analysis. It is the author’s hope that this application succeeds in defeating the myth that Structuralism as a method of literary criticism is not workable for the study of individual works.

Autonomy

A structuralist study is basically a study of the relations of a given system, whatever that system is. While this represents an application of the third principle discussed previously, the application of the first two principles provides a methodological orientation to the study of relations. With respect of the principle of autonomy, it must be noted that autonomy should be in effect with regard to the work at hand, (i.e., As You Like It) as well as with the approach to the work. This study of As You Like It does not consult any external system, such as Theology, Sociology or Psychology in interpreting
or analyzing the play. It will focus instead on the internal structure of the play. In thus

doing, the autonomy of the approach is achieved.

On the other hand, this study takes the play as an autonomous system as it

examines it from a synchronic point of view. To study As You Like It synchronically is
to freeze the play in time and to study the relations within the structure of the play at that
moment. Tracing the place of the play in the spiritual development of Shakespeare or in
the chronological line of his theatrical production would make good substance for a
diachronic study, which contradicts in essence with the synchronic view that
Structuralism promotes. However, it must be noted that autonomy is not all about
synchronicity—the exclusion of relations across time—but also about the exclusion of
relations with factors outside of the text. A proper structuralist study of As You Like It
would disregard the social, religious, political, historical and biographical background or
elements operating during the time of the writing of the play. The fact that the play was
written during the reign of Queen Elizabeth or that Shakespeare reportedly had played the
role of Adam or whether people at Shakespeare’s time used to marry for love or
biological reasons are of no use in this structuralist study. None of those external factors
or any other similar factors would be used in the analysis of the play in this paper. This is
not to deny the existence of the relations between the work on one side and the outer
world on the other manifested in the social, political systems and the like; but only to
stress the importance of the internal relations among the elements of the text in producing
its value.

Stressing the autonomy of the play suggests its wholeness and structural
coherence. It insists that the play as an independent system is built on certain internal
laws to which its components are subordinated. These laws govern what component of
the text goes with what, and ultimately give the text the form that it exists in. The internal
laws or internal relations are the type of factors that are suggested for inspection in a
structuralist study. This is because Structuralism suggests that meaning is embedded in
these relations. Where As You Like It is concerned, this study takes the play as an
independent whole that is structurally coherent. Given this, the focus of the study would
be on the relations among the elements of the text rather than on the elements themselves
or the text’s relations with the outside world. This will be done with a view to detecting
the value of the text, especially its comic aspect.

Apparently, as shown above, the principle of autonomy can be successfully
applied to the study of a single literary work. It is true that this principle would have a
slightly different application had the subject of the study been a homogeneous group of
works or literature in general; however, this should not wrongly suggest that the principle
is inapplicable to an individual work of art. In fact, whether a single work, a
homogeneous group of works or literature in general, each is worth studying as an
independent structure from a structuralist point of view. However, the focus of the study
changes according to the structure chosen as a subject for the study. For example, if
literature as an independent structure is the subject of the study, the focus of the study
would be on the functional relations in the system of literature that give it its wholeness.
And if a homogeneous group of works (e.g., Shakespearean Comedies) as an independent
structure is the subject of the study, the focus shifts to examine the functional relations
among the different comedies that give the group its wholeness and coherence. So is the
case with the individual works. If a single work as an independent structure is the subject
of the study (such as *As You Like It* in this paper), the focus should be on the functional relations within the text that ultimately give it its wholeness.

**Langue and Parole**

Langue and parole are two levels of analysis the structuralist critic has to identify even if implicitly, at the very beginning of his/her critique. As was mentioned before, the values of langue and parole differ substantially in different Structuralist projects, a variety that Structuralism, nonetheless, allows. However, it is still possible to make a general statement about the value of the two concepts and say that they are basically employed in two senses: literal or metaphoric (Culler 114). In the literal sense, langue is grammar or the abstract system of rules and principles behind the text(s). Parole in this literal sense is the concrete example, the text from which langue can be deduced. In the metaphoric sense, langue means any homogeneous group of works. Any individual work within this homogeneous group can be taken as an example of the parole. The relations among the paroles in this sense are studied and the commonalities are highlighted with the aim of revealing more information about the langue they belong to. Additionally, in other cases, the boundaries of the langue can be set at the level of the individual work provided it is taken as an independent structure. Whatever the sense employed, the aim of any structuralist project is to construct the langue out of information embedded in the parole. Both senses of the terms are used by eminent Structuralist critics.

Where this study of *As You Like It* is concerned, this paper chooses to set the level of langue at the individual play, *As You Like It*. Langue is employed here in the metaphoric sense. This means that the play is viewed as a self-sufficient whole system that encompasses smaller systems within it. The elements of this system/text are
subordinated to rules, the uncovering of which is one goal of the analysis of the play. Each element of the play has its function that ultimately determines the value of that element. The value of the play as a whole is determined by the functional relations among its elements. Having set the boundaries of langue on the level of the play, the internal relations of the text will receive more emphasis than any other relations that may tie the play with higher textual systems, such as Shakespearean comedy, Shakespearean plays, festive comedy; Elizabethan comedy so on and so forth. This does not mean that the paper rejects the play’s relations with the other higher systems. Instead, it focuses on the internal relations of the text in compliance with what setting langue at the level of the play entails.

Relations

A structuralist study is basically a study of a given system’s relations. To apply the third principle in this paper is to study *As You Like It* from a relational point of view. This can be accomplished through many methods. One method is to identify and then relate the smaller systems within the play. For instance, there are four variations on male/female relationships, and two variations on elder brother/younger brother relationships in the play. Each couple in these variations represents a system from a structuralist point of view. Relating the systems with emphasis on the differences among them is expected to offer insight into the value of the play. Another way of studying *As You Like It* from a relational point of view is to identify the major binary opposition in the play, (e.g., harmony/discordance) and to show how it operates and generates meaning in the entire play. In a second step, the major binary opposition is to be related to other
minor binary oppositions operating in the play, such as city/forest opposition. This step also has its share in meaning building.

Another method of studying *As You Like It* from a relational perspective is mimicking Saussure’s methodology in first identifying a unit of analysis and then illustrating the relations among these units based on the factor of difference. This option will be adopted in this paper. However, instead of Saussure’s sign, the basic unit of analysis used here is the smaller events that make up the action of the play. Consequently, the focus will be on the relations that tie together these events. It will also be on the relations among the larger constituents made up of these smaller events, (i.e., the plot). Thus, if the play features more than one plot line, then the ties that exist among these several plots will be studied, too. Syntagmatic relations and its subdivisions will be used in the description of the ties that exist among the events of the action of the play. Syntagmatic analysis, being interested in the form or the surface structure of the text, is the best expression of the factor of difference in this study. *As You Like It* will be scanned for syntagmatic relations. The result of this scan will be used in determining the comic aspect of the value of the text.

In literary Structuralism, syntagmatic relations denote the various ways in which elements within the same text may be related to each other (Chandler 81). Syntagmatic relations are subdivided at the hands of post-Saussurian structuralists into three types: sequential, spatial and conceptual. Sequential relation is the type of relation that ties an element with its preceding or succeeding elements. It is basically temporal and causal. Spatial relation, on the other hand, works through juxtaposition, parallelism and contrast. It is about “above/below; in front/behind; close/distant; left/right (which can also have
sequential significance); north/south/east/west; and inside/outside (or centre/periphery)” (87). Finally, conceptual relation concerns the conceptual structure of argument or description, such as the conventions of expository prose (84). There are texts—text here is used in its broadest sense to include things as diverse as narrative, movie, photography and painting—that are based on one type of syntagmatic relationship. For instance television narrative is essentially based on sequential relationships, and photography is essentially based on spatial relationships, whereas argument is based on conceptual relationships. On the other hand, there are texts that contain more than one type of syntagmatic relationships; such is the case in drama and cinema, which include both spatial and sequential relationships. When a text contains more than one type of syntagmatic relationships, usually one type tends to be dominant (82).

Since conceptual relationship is exclusively connected with argument and description, it will not be discussed in relation to As You Like It. The play will be analyzed only against the sequential and spatial relationships evident in it. The paper proposes talking about sequential and spatial relations through the metaphor of axes, with the sequential relations representing the vertical dimension and the spatial relations standing for the horizontal dimension. An analysis of the syntagmatic relations of the text will show the direction to which the text tends to spread—sequential (vertical) or spatial (horizontal). This piece of information is important in revealing the identity as well as the value of the text.

A close look at As You Like It shows that it has two major, closely connected plots. Plot A concerns the love/hate relationship between Orlando and his brother Oliver, whereas Plot B is about the love relationship between Orlando and Rosalind. These major
plots score the highest percentage of presence in the play than the reset of plot lines: 39% and 60% respectively. Each major plot has its one or several mirror subplots. The sequential relations of the play—which make up its vertical dimension—are conceived in the causal and temporal ties among the smaller events of each plot or between two plot lines. On the other hand, the play’s spatial relations—which make up its horizontal dimension—are basically conceived in the parallel or contrasting ties among the events of one plot or between two or more than two plot lines.

The vertical structure of the play is most evident in the separate development of each major as well as each minor plot line. Beginning with Major Plot A, tracing the development of the plot should uncover the ties that push it forward on the vertical dimension. In Act I, Scene i, Orlando complains about the way he is kept by his brother, deprived of proper education and his lawful inheritance. Orlando’s complaint makes his jealous elder brother, Oliver, determined to get rid of him. Oliver is seen in the same scene conspiring with a wrestler to kill his brother. In the following scene, unsuspecting Orlando wins the wrestling match and blows his brother’s plans away. Informed about his employer’s vicious intentions, Adam, a loyal family servant, urges Orlando to immediately run away and offers to accompany him. Orlando and Adam choose to take shelter in the forest. Because they have run away in a rush and are ill-prepared, Orlando and especially the elder Adam soon become weary. Anxious about the well-being of his old friend, Orlando searches the forest for food and drink. He finally finds help at the forest camp of Duke Senior, the exiled Duke. Duke Fredrick moves the plot forward in Act III, Scene I, when he forces Oliver to fetch Orlando, out of a false belief that Oliver has accompanied his daughter and niece in their own run. Offstage, Oliver complies with
the Duke’s commands and heads for the forest, where he runs into trouble with a lioness. Orlando happens to be passing by; he saves the life of his brother. This act of kindness transforms Oliver into a loving brother; the new kind face of Oliver is witnessed in his tender account of the accident and his brother’s courage while conversing with Rosalind and Celia in Act IV, Scene iii. In Act V, Scene ii, the two brothers are best friends who confide to each other about their love lives.

Thus, the action smoothly moves forward through complication till it reaches its resolution. The climax of the plot is conceived in Oliver’s intention to end his brother’s life, with one event leading to another, the complication is resolved with Oliver abandoning his vicious intentions and reconciling with his brother. The smoothness of the movement of the action is accredited to the sequential relations, both causal and temporal, which exist among and connect together the events of the plot. Every event of the action is affected by the preceding event and causes the following event to happen. The progress of Plot A through sequential relations is one element that gives the vertical dimension of the text a boost. Another element is the progress of Plot B. Tracing the development of this plot line should explain how the plot progresses through sequential relations. As was mentioned before, Plot B, which has 60% presence in the play, is centered on the love relationship between Rosalind and Orlando.

Act I is an orientation to the lovers, Orlando in Scene i and Rosalind in Scene Two. Both characters are presented as cuffed, subdued and trapped in their respective environments. Act I also features the first meeting between the two lovers, during which they instantly fall for one another. The hostile circumstances in which Rosalind lives get worse in Act I, Scene iii, forcing her to run for her life to the Forest of Arden. Because
her loving cousin has fled with her, Duke Fredrick, her mischievous uncle, is upset to know about the two girls’ flight in Act II, Scene ii. Similarly, the uninviting circumstances of Orlando’s life force him to run to the Forest of Arden in Act II, Scene iii. The following scene shifts to Rosalind to show her initial struggle in the forest and how she later gets help. Two scenes later, in Act II, Scene vi, Orlando and his loyal servant Adam are seen struggling in the forest. The following scene shows how they are relieved.

After showing how Orlando and Rosalind were removed from the city and relieved from the hardship of the country, the action shifts back to resume the love between the two, which was interrupted as soon as it was triggered at the first time they met, after the wrestling match. In Act III, Scene ii, Orlando declares his love for Rosalind; he writes mini love poems for her on the leaves of the trees. Rosalind finds out about the poems and about the presence of Orlando in the forest in the same scene. Not quite sure about his feelings, disguised Rosalind keeps Orlando in the dark about her true identity and decides to set him up in a wooing game to discover the reality of his feelings. Two scenes later, in Scene iv of the same act, Rosalind discusses with Celia her doubts about Orlando’s love. In Act IV, Scene i, Orlando is tired of the game; he tells Ganymede, disguised Rosalind, that he only wants to meet and address the real Rosalind. In Scene iii, Orlando is late for the wooing game; changed Oliver accounts for his absence. In Act V, Scene ii, disguised Rosalind checks on the wounded Orlando and promises to bring the real Rosalind as Orlando promises to marry her if she really comes. Assured of the sincerity of his love, Rosalind takes off her disguise and agrees to marry Orlando after she gets her father’s approval in the last scene of the play.
Just as in Plot A, sequential relations play a huge role in the progress of Plot B. Causal and temporal relations serve to connect the events of the plot, with one event taking place after and because of the preceding event, and so on until the plot reaches its resolution and the play its end. However, unlike Plot A, spatial relationships, conceived in parallelism, seem to be equally effective in gluing the events of Plot B. Parallelism is especially dominant in the first half of the development of the plot, more specifically, in the first and the second acts. Parallel relations are what suggest pairing Rosalind and Orlando before and after their first meeting at the wrestling match and when they meet again in the forest. For example, Orlando is introduced in the first scene of the play as a victim of harsh circumstances forced by a close relative. In the same fashion, Rosalind is introduced in the following scene. These mischievous relatives force Orlando and Rosalind respectively to leave their homes under the threat of death, all at about the same time. Both Orlando and Rosalind decide to use the forest as a shelter. Their respective trips to the forest and stories of survival follow parallel patterns. For instance, both are accompanied by a loyal friend or servant. And both are seen struggling with the change upon their first arrival to the forest. The relief of both parties is carried out with help from the inside, by a dweller of the forest. From this point on, parallel relations cease to work in order to give way to the sequential relations to carry out the development of the plot alone. Because of the existence of the two types of relations, (i.e., the sequential and the spatial), it is safe to conclude that the second major plot proceeds on both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

As shown above, spatial relations conceived in parallel co-plays a huge role in the structure building of the play. This role is effective on the level of event, the basic unit of
analysis adopted in this paper. However, the role of spatial relations is not restricted to only that level; it also works on a higher level of construction, (i.e., plot). Spatial relations play a more complicated role in connecting the numerous plot lines of the play. As You Like It features four subplots in addition to the two major plots. These subplots hold either parallel or contrasting relations with the major plots as well as with each other. The presence of this number of subplots makes the biggest source for the substance of the horizontal dimension of the play. The subplots will be traced here to show the mechanism of spatial relations at the level of plot.

Subplot 1 revolves around the discordant relationship between Duke Fredrick and his rival brother, Duke Senior. This relationship is parallel to the one between Oliver and Orlando from Plot A. Each of the two brothers from each plot line forms a system from a structuralist point of view. In each system, there is a virtuous brother and an evil one. The usurper tyrannical Oliver from the first system has its parallel point in Duke Frederick from the second system. Similarly, the subdued Orlando has his parallel point in Duke Senior from the second system. In terms of plot, the developments of both plot lines also run parallel to one another. Subplot 1 starts offstage shortly before the play commences. It starts with Duke Fredrick usurping the dominions of his brother and exiling him to the forest with his attendants. Fredrick’s attitude towards his brother echoes Oliver’s attitude towards his own brother. Like Fredrick, Oliver banishes his brother and usurps his inheritance. The subdued brothers from both plots are forced to flee to the forest to save their lives. The tyrannical brothers from both plots go to the forest at some point in search of different things. Moreover, the two tyrannical brothers from both plot lines undergo transformations that lead them to reconcile with their respective brothers. In general, the
development of both Plot A and Subplot 1 moves from disharmony to reconciliation. Clearly, they are meant to parallel each other. With the specification of their parallel developments proven, it is safe to say that the two plots are connected via spatial relations.

The same can be said about the three remaining subplots; they are supposed to compare with Major Plot B as well as with one another. Like Plot B, Subplot 2, Subplot 3 and Subplot 4 are about courtship and romantic relationships between a man and a woman. Subplot 2 deals with the courtship and the eventual marriage of Silvius and Phebe. On the other hand, Subplot 3 is on the courtship and marriage of Touchstone and Audrey, whereas Subplot 4 is on the love and marriage of Oliver and Celia. Although all the three plot lines along with Major Plot B deal with courtship and marriage, they still demonstrate meaningful differences from one another. Of all the three subplots, Subplot 2 stands out as the longest and the most comparable to Plot B. Both Major Plot B and Subplot 2 describe a special kind of courtship connected with idealized love. The basic line of both plots runs as follows: a man falls in love with a woman, whom he relentlessly courts without any seeming sign of yielding until he becomes at some point sadly disappointed. A twist takes place towards the end and the man marries the love of his life. Needless to say, there are differences between the two plots—Major Plot B and Subplot 2—probably the most notable among them is the involved characters’ attitudes towards this kind of courtship. However, in terms of plot, the major difference is that in Plot B, Rolando, taking part in the so-called “love coaching lessons” conducted by the disguised Rosalind, is unaware of the fact that he is actually addressing his true love.
Despite these differences, parallel relations between the two plot lines are strong enough to suggest comparison.

A different kind of spatial relation connects Subplot 3 with Major Plot B and Subplot 2. Subplot 3 contrasts with these two plot lines. The relationship between Touchstone and Audrey is the most removed from the idealized love connected with Subplot 2. The attraction between Touchstone and Audrey is totally physical; the couple at no time recognizes the need to wed and hastens in making the necessary arrangements for their wedding. The courtship of the couple is brief; consequently Touchstone, unlike Orlando from Major Plot B and Silvius from Subplot 2, suffers no pain of love whatsoever. However, the happy ending of this brief courtship is delayed, in spite of the wish of the impatient couple. The delay is not because of reasons related to the bride, as is the case in the previous two plots, but rather because of reasons related to the groom. At one point Touchstone becomes suspicious of the fidelity of his wife-to-be and consequently grows worried about the future of this hasty marriage. His suspicions are confirmed or probably triggered by the fact that Audrey has another suitor. Later on, in the first scene of Act I, Touchstone confronts the other suitor and proves his superiority over him in a word game, and thus proves to be the more qualified of the two to marry Audrey. Despite the early arrangement of their wedding, Touchstone and Audrey, like the other couples, get married only by the end of the play. Again, spatial relations, this time conceived in contrast, connect the subplot with the comparable major plot as well as with other minor plot lines.

A minor variation takes place in the development of the final subplot, Subplot 4. Both parallelism and contrast, two types of spatial ties, connect Subplot 4 with Major
Plot B and Subplots 2 and 3. It is true that this particular subplot starts late in the play and that it is the least developed plot line in the play. However, it features just enough to compare with the other plot lines. Celia and Oliver meet for the first time when Oliver has just completed going through a spiritual transformation that has created him anew. Like Audrey and Touchstone, Celia and Oliver fall for one another at the first sight. Soon later, Oliver is seen expressing his wish to wed her. Celia and Oliver’s love definitely has the urgency of Touchstone and Audrey’s love. However, it does not sink to their pure animalistic motivation. On the contrary, Oliver’s recent spiritual transformation lends the new love a spiritual touch that recalls Rosalind and Orlando’s love (Saccio). However, the comparison with Rosalind’s and Orlando’s love is not thorough. This is because neither Oliver nor Celia demonstrates the foolishness of the idealistic love depicted in Major Plot B or even Subplot 2. Paralleling in parts and contrasting in others, Subplot 4 is connected to the comparable plot lines through spatial relations.

This ends the discussion of connecting the mirror subplots with their comparable major plots via spatial ties—parallel or contrasting. However, this should not suggest that the plot lines are exclusively tied through this type of relation. There are instances in which sequential relations play a role, though limited, in connecting the plot lines together. For example, Rosalind from Plot B helps bring Subplot 2 to its conclusion. This happens when she gets Phebe to promise to marry Silvius if she should decide for any reason that she does not want to marry Ganymede. At the end of the play, when Ganymede’s true identity is revealed, Phebe consents to abide by her promise. Another example is when Orlando is late for his courting lessons conducted by Ganymede (disguised Rosalind). He does not show up because he was busy rescuing his brother
from the paws and jaws of a lioness. At this point, Major Plot A and Major Plot B cross. Orlando’s sickness has assured Rosalind of his commitment, which in turn incites her feelings and motivates her to abandon her disguise. When the rescued brother meets with Ganymede to recount for the absence of his brother, he meets gorgeous Aliena (disguised Celia), and falls for her. At this point, another two plot lines cross, Major Plot B and Subplot 4. This occasion has facilitated introducing Oliver and Celia to one another. Likewise, Touchstone accompanying Rosalind in her journey to the forest has facilitated his meeting with the goatherd Audrey, for whom he instantly falls. In fact, it is another instance in which two plot lines—Major Plot B and Subplot 3—are connected via sequential (causal) ties. Although sequential relations have a share in connecting the plot lines together, this share remains limited in comparison with that of spatial relations.

So far there are four sources discussed for the enhancement of the horizontal dimension of the play: the fact that the play has two major plots, the existence of four subplots, the parallel ties in Major Plot B and the spatial relations among the subplots and between them and their respective major plot lines. On the other hand, there are two sources for the substance of the vertical dimension. The first is the progress of each plot line vertically from a beginning to an end through causal and temporal relations. The second is the few instances pointed out earlier in which a causal ties connect the plot lines together. Given this, it is may be safely said that *As You Like It* tends to spread on the horizontal dimension as much as, if not more than, it does on the vertical dimension. This conclusion is based on the syntagmatic analysis of the surface structure of the play performed earlier.
The fact that the play heavily depends on the horizontal dimension in stretching its structure is unorthodox. If we try to draw a sketch of the structure of *As You Like It* and compare it to that of a Shakespearean tragedy, say, *Macbeth*, the result would be something similar to Figure 1. In Figure 1, black arrows indicate the sequential relations, causal or temporal, among the events of one plot line, while red arrows stand for sequential relations among the different plot lines. On the other hand, blue lines represent spatial relations—parallel or contrasting. The difference between the two sketches in terms of the horizontal axis is eye-catching. The structure of *As You Like It* definitely stretches on the horizontal dimension a way more than *Macbeth* does. This is due to many reasons. One of them is that *Macbeth* avoids featuring more than one major plot or too many subplots. Usually when the employment of a subplot is deemed necessary in a tragedy, it is used with restrictions: the subplot must be closely connected with the major plot through causal ties (Aristotle 36). The events of *Macbeth* in general show the working of cause and effect. In all of this, *Macbeth* observes the decorum of Tragedy that Aristotle has outlined in his *Poetics*, which in sum encourages a strictly vertical spreading of the structure of the play. The sketch of the plot of *Macbeth* in Figure 1 backs up this point.

On the other hand, *As You Like It* violates the recommendation of a strict vertical spreading of the structure in relying on the horizontal axis as much as or probably more than the vertical axis. In fact, the violation of the recommendation and the reliance on the horizontal dimension instead prove to be characteristic of the identity of the play as a comedy. Evidently, the violation stems from a view that perceives comedy as an antithesis of tragedy. The relational study of *As You Like It* performed earlier shows that
the state of antithesis is also effective on the level of structure, more specifically, on the type of relations employed in gluing the structure of the play. This study’s contribution is not in observing that Shakespearean comedy has a definite structure that is generally defined as being the antithesis of that of tragedy. This claim has already been made (Coghill 202). It is rather conceived in specifying this structural antithesis in terms of the dominant type of syntagmatic relations. It advocates identifying As You Like It as a comedy based on its reliance on spatial relations more than on sequential relations, a contrary situation to the case in tragedy.

Through analyzing the play in terms of the syntagmatic relations evident in it and relating the result of the analysis to the identity of the play as a comedy, the discussion has shown an example of how the principle of relation and thus Structuralism can be applied to the study of an individual text. This example does not claim to be the only way in which the principle of relation can be employed in the study of the play. Some other examples were referred to earlier. In essence, the outcome of the analysis builds on opinions that believe that Shakespearean comedy has a structure of its own that is distinct from that of tragedy. This opinion was explicitly expressed by the structuralist critic Northrop Frye, whose views on the topic were reviewed early in the paper. There, Frye outlined the typical structure of Shakespearean Comedy based on the analysis of different groups of comedies in his two reviewed books. The divergence this study makes from his example is in employing the perspective of structural difference in the study of a single work of Shakespeare instead of many, with a view of proving not only the applicability but also the usability of the structuralist method in the study of individual works.
In this connection, the study does not claim to exhaust all possible structural characteristics of the play that are related to its comic identity. There is always room for more structuralist studies to investigate this topic. Likewise, there is room for other studies to see how the conclusion of the analysis applies to other comedies written by Shakespeare and how that suggests associating his comedies or setting them apart from the comedies written by his contemporaries. One would have to see the extent to which the other plays tend to stretch their structures on the horizontal axis and how that is related to the comic aspect of their identity.

**Conclusion**

Literary structuralism, originating in the principles of structural linguistics first laid by Fredric Saussure, has no reservations whatsoever to applying the principles to the level of individual text. Whoever claims otherwise is in fact limiting Structuralism to one level of analysis that is connected with poetic production. The voices that propagate the view that Structuralism fails at the level of individual text are in fact advocating one school of Structuralism that takes interest in poetics. In disagreement with this view, the paper was designed to defend Structuralism against this claim. In order to carry out the defense, it has given a taste of original structuralism that was founded on Structural linguistics through choosing and discussing three principles of Structuralism and their various values in literary criticism. The stress on the variety of values the principles could assume in literary Structuralism was meant to defeat the assumption that these principles have one true method of application that is connected with poetic production. This assumption implies and is the basis for the claim that the theory fails at the level of the individual work. In a second step, the paper has presented a practical example of how the
principles of "autonomy," "langue/parole" and "relations" can be used to determine the
comic identity of Shakespeare’s As You Like It.

Finally, it is the author’s hope that the fear and dread of Structuralism in literary
classes be minimized. Literature students need to be assured that working with the
structuralist method is not totally different from what they already know and do. In this
connection, Michel Lane writes: “no single one of these properties is by itself a
distinguishing characteristic of Structuralism. Most have separately been held as items of
belief or rules of procedure in other philosophies and methods. What is distinctive is this
particular combination of them” (Lane 17). Hopefully, what this paper suggests in
stressing and handling the variety of methods that the structuralism allows will help in
reducing the dread.
APPENDIX

Figure 1: Plot Development of *As You Like It* and *Macbeth*

### As You Like It

- Major Plot A
  - Subplot 1
- Major Plot B
  - Subplot 2

### Macbeth

- Major Plot
  - Subplot 3
  - Subplot 4
Sequential tie in one plot

Sequential tie among plot lines

Spatial tie
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