

## SOCIAL AND LITERARY STRUCTURES:

### HOW ARE THEY INTERRELATED?

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*Abstract:* This paper critically reviews the models of the relationship between literary structures such as narrative and discourse, on the one hand, and social structures such as social networks, on the other. It first critically analyzes the earlier one-sided, non-reciprocal models and continues with a survey of the more recent reciprocal models which are suggested by scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Finally, it outlines how these new reciprocal models can shed more light on the interaction between literary and social structures. It is argued that literary and social structures conjointly constitute, through an uninterrupted ceaseless synergy, what we commonly came to call social organization. This paper presents an attempt to change our concept of social organization through reshaping our perception of language use.

Robinson Crusoe did not need a language. Disconnected completely from human society in an isolated island, he lived for a while a solitary life and functioned without speech. Nor did Adam need a language. As the first and the only man, he had no one to talk to. The image of social actor in the traditional social theory resembles that of Crusoe or Adam, for it strips social actor, action and organization away from language. Traditional social theory conceives speech as a peripheral phenomenon, if not merely an epiphenomenon, that sociologist can do without.

Yet, we are neither Crusoe, nor Adam. If we eliminate speech from our day to day life, no social organization, from family to state, can survive. "A social system in the present sense is not possible without language" (Parsons 1964: 34). Furthermore, by uncoupling

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discursive and social processes, traditional social theory created a big gap between two mutually dependent social planes as well as a discrepancy between our day to day social experience and thought.

Coupling the literary and social patterns through a reciprocal process provides a solution to the question of the relationship between speech and action. The reciprocal model does not annihilate the dialectic between words and deeds and maintains the tension between the two. The dialectic between words and deeds is a fundamental and a long established one to literary and social theory. Yet, there are different responses as to how these two relate to each other. Traditionally, either they are treated in complete isolation from each other or one is reduced or conflated to the other. Recent alternatives to these one sided theories explore their relationship without reducing or conflating one to the other. From this perspective, a reciprocal or circular causal model to explain the interplay between literary and social patterns replaces non-reciprocal causal models. One of the leading advocates of this new approach is Andrew Abbott (Abbott 1984, 1988a, 1988b, 1992a, 1992b, 1995, Abbott and Hrycak 1990).

Harrison White's recent attempt also marks a fundamental shift in social theory towards this direction (1992, 1996) which aims to bring language back in. He explores how social ties and narratives are mutually constructed through language use and couples the long divorced linguistic and social patterns. By doing so, he breaks away not only from the traditional social theory represented by Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel, but also from social constructionist approach, originally formulated by Berger and Luckman. The constitutive approach to language, which characterizes White's work, is fundamentally different from the social constructionist approach, which has originated from the work of Berger and Luckman (1967). The concern of the latter is to explain how our concepts and symbolic structures are historically and socially constructed, which also suggests a non-reciprocal model. Furthermore, it is grounded on the conventional referential approach to language as a symbolic means of expression. White's attempt, on the other hand, is to tie language in the social action through a circular model in which language and action are inseparably intertwined<sup>1</sup>.

Taking the issue on a broader plane, I claim that the views of the relationships between language use, narrative and social structure are founded on a particular concept of language, whether it is reflective or constitutive of social action. The first is based on the referential approach to language that concentrates on how language is used solely as a

1 Shoter's work reflects an ambiguous stand on this issue. On the one hand, he argues for "discursive constructionism," but on the other hand, perhaps without much awareness, he conflates this perspective to the conventional social constructionism. These two stands, however, are founded on different perspectives to language. "Discursive constructionism" of Shoter is, of course, social, yet, it is more precise in its focus on the mutual relationship between language and social organization because of its stress on the particular ways the two mutually shape each other. As an example, see, *Conversational Realities: Constructing Life through Language* (1996)

system of signification and communication<sup>2</sup>. The latter, however, is based on awareness that language, in addition to its referential role, serves in establishing and maintaining inter-personal relations and constructing social networks. Recent literary and social theory, as I will outline below, gradually move to this direction (Culler 1988).

Language use, and thus narrative and metanarrative, from this perspective, are reflective, but most importantly, constitutive of social actions, relations, and structures. Social ties constitute social structures, yet, discourse and stories shape ties and bestow meaning upon them. From the interaction of the two, metanarrative emerges. From an integrated perspective, narrative and social networks, both intricately related to each other in subtle and unstable ways constitute a narrative social structure.

One may follow one of the prevailing perspectives and analyze structure of narrative and social relations separately. However, my purpose here is to explore their mutual relationship, rather than the structure of each one in isolation from the other—which is what has conventionally been analyzed. To clarify my theoretical stand, it should also be noted here that I subscribe to structural realism and do not in any way conceptualize social structures as mere narratives. Instead, my purpose here is to explore the problematic of the multi-layer complex relationship between content and configuration of a social network.

Instead of adopting a conventional non-reciprocal model that attempts to reduce narrative to social structure or vice versa, I will propose a causally reciprocal model<sup>3</sup> which will allow to demonstrate the interplay between narrative and social structure. This model, at the same time, facilitates transitions between macro and micro levels as well as qualitative and quantitative aspects of social structure. On the micro level, actors are the attributed agency that finds its expression in various forms of narratives created, modified or selectively conveyed by them, as well as in metanarrative activity. The reciprocal model allows us to simultaneously examine both social structure and narrative, or configuration of the social network and its content, and thus to explore more fully what is going on in a social network.

Structuralism has several strains rather than a unified and homogeneous outlook. Common to all these strains is the idea that there exists a structure to signification, which can be discerned and explained with the same tools in social and cultural contexts. Consequently, structuralism extends methodological models initially developed by structural linguistics to all aspects of culture and society (Saussure, Culler 1975, 1988: 17; Lefkowitz 1989: 60-80). Speaking of the explanatory model used by structuralism, Culler

2 See for instance the work of William Hanks, *Referential Practice*. The title of the book clearly reflects the referential concept of language.

3 The reciprocal causality can also be called circular causality. It is suggested here as an alternative to the non-reciprocal causality which is based on a linear causal model. In the former model the causality works both ways between the parties whose relationship is under investigation whereas in the latter model the causality is directed only from one side to the other.

writes, "... as the example of a 'scientific' discipline, it suggested to critics that the desire to be rigorous and systematic did not necessarily entail attempts at causal explanation. An element could be explained by its place in a network of relations rather than in a chain of cause and effect" (Culler 1975: 255). Although they both share the same interpretive framework, there is a gap between literary and social structuralism that needs to be bridged. Yet, this gap cannot be bridged, I argue, unless the underlying referential concept of language is replaced by a constitutive approach to language (See Figure 1: How to bridge the gap between social and literary structuralism?):

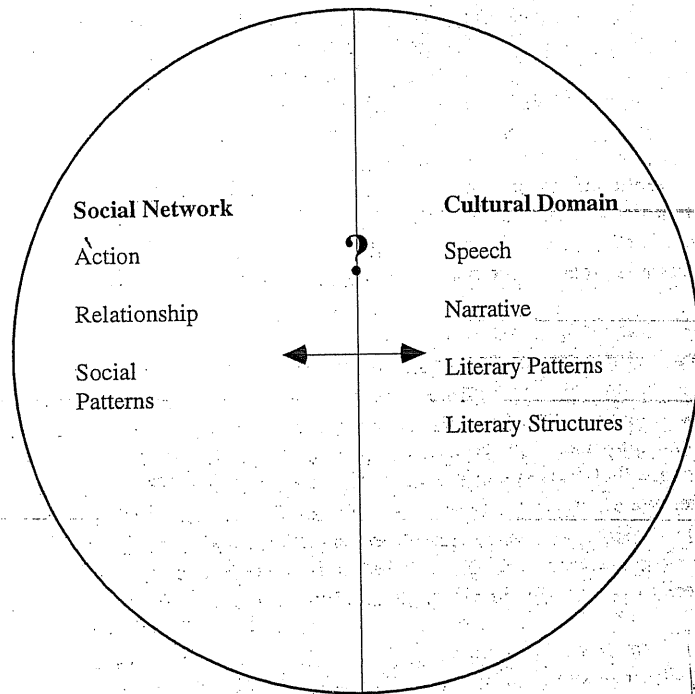


Figure 1: How to bridge the gap between social and literary structuralism?

The present gap between the two strands of structuralism and the non-reciprocal models therefrom is a result of the referential approach to language. This is because referential approach can produce only non-reciprocal models that privilege action over speech. Once the referential approach is replaced by a constitutive approach to language, most of the

problems blocking the way of social theory in coupling literary and social processes will be solved.

## I. HOW DOES NARRATIVE RELATE TO SOCIAL STRUCTURE?

I will first critically review the non-reciprocal, deterministic and reductionist models, before turning to the mutually causal models. I will also show how each model is founded on a particular concept of language. More concretely, I will outline how non-reciprocal models are based on a referential image of language while reciprocal models are rooted in a constitutive image of language. The exemplary models that I will discuss below demonstrate the long quest among scholars from a broad range of disciplines for an interpretive framework that will account for the relationship between literary and social phenomena. The puzzle, however, has yet to be solved.

### A. NON-RECIPROCAL MODELS: REFERENTIAL LANGUAGE

The referential approach allows us only to produce non-reciprocal models. From this perspective, language refers to "reality" and thus is only in secondary importance to it. What one-sided theories do can be summarized as follows: first, un-couple language use from social actions and relations, second, reduce or conflate one to the other. Classical structuralism both in social and human sciences is characterized by the referential approach to language. As a reaction to this approach which downplays the role of language, speech act theory, with the purpose of elevating language to the level of action, conflated speech to action and re-conceptualized speech as action (Austin).

Among the striking examples to non-reciprocal models, Narratology has a special place. Its central question on how things are ordered in social and literary planes (*mimesis* (telling) vs. *diegesis* (showing)) can be traced back to Aristotle and Plato (Chatman: 32). Classical structuralism isolates language from social relations and thus suggests a self-contained system.

In contrast, speech act theory and deconstructionism can be seen as two renown forms of reaction against this isolated and ahistorical classical approach to language. Deconstructionism, nevertheless, conflates language to extra-linguistic phenomena by turning everything extra-textual into texts. Speech act theory, on the other hand, with the purpose of emphasizing the importance of speech and elevating it to an equal level with social action, defined speech as an act which requires reducing speech to acts. In contradiction, Baker argues the opposite. For him, social patterns can be reduced to discursive patterns.

The referential approach problematizes the relationship between referent and language, sign and signified. The way the referent is conceived by this approach as the given and the

fixed entity to which speech refers poses problems because it is not easy to build a picture of social organization without including speech. This approach produces a rather Newtonian mechanistic image of social structure in a two dimensional space.

A more sociologically oriented referential approach problematizes the relationship between social context and speech but it takes them as given without looking at how they emerge in the first place. It also treats them as fixed entities. Yet neither the referent nor the context can be taken as given or fixed entities because they are unstable and unfinished relational constructs. Neither the referent nor the speech are fixed entities. Nor is the meaning that is believed to be stored in symbolic acts.

### 1. Narrative without Social Organization

The study of narrative, or Narratology, English translation of a French neologism, *narratologie*, which claims that the study of narrative texts constitutes a new science (Bal), can be seen as a prime example of isolating narrative from its social context. Bal defines Narratology as "the theory of narrative texts" (Bal 3). For him, a narrative text is "a text in which an agent relates a narrative" (Bal 5).

This isolationism is founded on a referential approach to language which is determined by "truth value" which denotes "the 'reality' of the actants within the actantial structure" (Bal 34-36). Bal argues that events in narrative and outside narrative follow the same rules, yet he completely disregards the significance of this connection in his approach to narrative. "Structuralists," claims Bal, "often work from the assumption that the series of events that is presented in a story must answer to the same rules as those controlling human behavior, since a narrative text would otherwise be impossible to understand" (Bal 1994:6). The ancient Greeks referred to this a *mimesis*, that is imitation of reality or merely telling what happened.

Scholes and Kellogg, in their book *The Nature of Narrative*, also contend that for a narrative to exist there must be two requisites, a story and a story-teller (1968: 4, 240). Valid, as this may be, from their perspective, this approach ignores the narrative social structure in which the story, the listener and the story-teller are embedded. From their perspective, the sole concern of narrative is to discover the patterns in the series of events (beginning, middle, and end). Bal summarizes this approach as follows: "Once we have decided which facts can be considered events, we can then describe the relationships which connect one event to the other: the *structure* of the series of events" (Bal 18)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> "A method for obtaining this description is discussed in the following paragraphs. Starting from Barthe's assumption that all fabulas are based upon one model, we can begin to search for a model that is so abstract that it may be considered universal—until, that is, the model in question is either rejected or improved. This model is then 'laid upon' the text that is being investigated; in other words, we examine the way in which the concrete events can be placed in the basis-model. The purpose of this work method is not to force the text into a general model and then conclude that the text is indeed narrative. Such a

The current studies of narrative from the perspective outlined above merely concentrate on the text, and aim to determine two things: (1) how faithful it is to 'reality' it imitates, (2) how the events in the text are connected to each other which must also imitate the way they are inter-connected in the outside world. Both purposes are evidently rooted in a referential understanding of language.

### 2. Social Organization without Narrative

Referential approach in social and human sciences sees language as a representation of the *real* and thus in secondary importance to it. From this perspective, speech is seen either completely irrelevant to social organization or, at most, its symbolic representation. The referent, the social, on the other hand, is variably constructed by divergent strands of social and literary theory. The outcome is either complete isolation or conflation (Archer 1989) of the literary to the social. Hence comes an image of social actor resembling to Adam or Crusoe, stripped off from discursive dimension.

This approach rightly emphasizes the way discourse and narrative are socially constructed, but completely ignores how social structures are in turn narratively constructed. The result is a non-reciprocal causal model, and thus a reductionist one. Narrative, for them, is only a symptom while the real meaning lies elsewhere. The task of the analyst is to debunk the narrative and discover the real meaning. Even as a referential system language is not straightforward, it functions indirectly. This approach can be traced back to Marx, if not earlier. Marx conceived literature as superstructure that is produced by infrastructure, thereby privileging the latter over the former.

In contrast to the other founding fathers of sociology such as Weber, Durkheim and Simmel, who, quite curiously, remain almost completely silent on the issue of language, discourse and narrative, in a few tangential comments he makes, Marx at least acknowledges a place for language in the working of society. For Marx, language and thought are dependent variables; "that neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own, that they are only a *manifestations* of actual life" (1978: 118). In *German Ideology*, Marx writes,

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, or intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into "*relations*" with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not

procedure could at best be useful for testing doubtful cases when trying to specify the corpus. Rather, a confrontation between a concrete fabula and a general model allows the description of the structure of the fabula of the text in question to be stated more precisely *with regard to* the basis model by which the specific structure is placed in relief and made visible. A 'perfect fit' as well as any deviations from the basis model can influence the meaning of the text" (Bal 18-19).

exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all (Marx 1978: 51).

Literary theorists who subscribe to classical Marxism still see language as a superstructure and literary structures as representations of a real phenomenon, that is social relations (Jameson 1981:145-148)<sup>5</sup>.

We would therefore propose the following revised formulation: that history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious (Jameson 1981: 35).

Jameson calls narrative a "socially symbolic act," reminding us of Burke who also called language "symbolic action" (Burke 1966). What Jameson means by this is the act of interpretation of the text. "Interpretation is here construed as an essentially allegoric act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code" (1981: 10). Interpretation is an inevitable act because we cannot confront texts immediately. Hence comes metacommentary, the interpretive master code or the political ideology, that determines the way we variably carry on the socially symbolic act of interpretation.

Theory's task should, then, be to expose the implicit master code by deconstructing the dominant metacommentary. In this connection, Derrida's work, which represents a sophisticated obliteration of the literary in favor of the social, comes to mind. His work shows how he reduces the social to the textual by applying a terminology originally developed for the textual to the social. For him "there is nothing outside text" and social acts also must be treated as texts whose referent are power relations. Derrida's approach reduces the text to the extratextual by turning everything extratextual into text and texts to representations (Anderson 1989; Ellis 1989; Kamuf 1991:8-19).

At a later date, Parsons went further than the epiphenomenalism of Marx in recognizing the necessity of incorporating language in social theory, yet he did not seriously pursue this tangent interest. "Language," he writes, "as that concept is generally understood, is not an isolated phenomenon" (1968: 357). For Parsons, learning language, which is a necessary condition of becoming part of society, cannot be possible without entering into social relations. Parsons writes,

5 "In the spirit of a more authentic dialectical tradition, Marxism is here conceived as that "untranscendable horizon" that subsumes such apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself, and thus at once canceling and preserving them" (Jameson 1981: 10). Applying this perspective to structuralism, Jameson suggests that there are three, rather than two, terms to structural analysis. The absent variable, he calls, is history (1981:145-148).

We know quite definitely that the individual does not develop language spontaneously without undergoing a socially structured learning process in relation to others. It is quite definite that this process must be part of a system of social relations which is orderly within certain limits, however difficult it may be to specify the limits in detail. It is altogether probable that many protohuman groups failed to make the transition to the human sociocultural level of action because of failure to fulfill the prerequisites of the emergence of language or of some other functionally essential aspects of culture (Parsons 1964:34).

Furthermore, a social system, Parson suggests, is impossible without language. Nor is it possible to reproduce and maintain the social system without the help of language. Parsons writes,

Thus a social system in the present sense is not possible without language, and without certain patterns of culture, such as empirical knowledge necessary to cope with situational exigencies, and sufficiently integrated patterns of expressive symbolism and of value orientation. A social system which leads to too drastic disruption of its culture, for example through blocking the processes of its acquisition, would be exposed to social as well as cultural disintegration (Parsons 1964: 34).

Although Parsons acknowledged the vital importance of language for the construction and maintenance of a social system, and refuted the traditional image of social structure uncoupled from the literary structure, his concept of language was still heavily influenced from the prevailing referential approach to language. The primary social function of language(s), for him, was transmitting meaning: "the use of language is a process of emitting and transmitting messages, combinations of linguistic components that have specific reference to particular situations" (Parsons 1968: 357). Parsons did not, however, seriously pursue his interest to its logical ends. Consequently, the task of conjoining literary and social practices, as I will show in the remainder of this paper, was left to the future generations of social and human scientists.

One of the first serious attempts to add this missing dimension, that is language, to social theory is Habermas who suggested to "linguistify" social action. Habermas attempts in his *The Theory of Communicative Action* to append the linguistic dimension to the works of the founding fathers of sociology by cross-fertilizing and retooling them from a contemporary perspective. His project is to reconstruct the concept of society as "an ideal communication community," founded on a conceptual framework of "normatively regulated" and "linguistically mediated" social interactions. He borrows the latter two concepts from Mead and Durkheim respectively in order to overcome the limitations of Weber's purposive activity and rationality. This, he suggests, can happen through "taking as our guideline the idea of "linguistification"" (Habermas 1989: II, 2).

Another prominent example of one who foregrounded the role of language in social life is Foucault. Yet, his work is also characterized with referential approach to language and conflating the literary and social to each other in different stages of his career. Since, he had different minds at different times, it is daunting to treat Foucault's work as a coherent body.

"In his earlier work, where 'discourse' was presented as an abstract structure of thought, it was also viewed as uninfluenced by non-discursive elements like interests and power. Consequently at this stages he had to emphasize the *arbitrariness of discursive changes*, which was effectively to conclude that cultural dynamics can be described but cannot be grasped theoretically. In his later work he switched his stress to the other side of the divide and overemphasized the role of power in constituting knowledge, which now became *relative to Socio-Cultural contingencies*. However, such contingencies were viewed as patternless processes where domination was confronted by a recalcitrant 'agonism', a sort of inveterate thirst for struggle, independent of particular conditions. Consequently, the later work endorses the *arbitrariness of Socio-Cultural interaction* because no account is given of why, when, or how people do struggle" (Archer 1989: xviii).

The above survey demonstrated that the referential approach to language would allow only non-reciprocal and reductionist explanatory models of the relationship between literary and social patterns. The non-reciprocal model can only be achieved by doing violence to both linguistic and social structures. They for the most part reflect the bias against speech and language and conflate or reduce the literary phenomenon to the social phenomenon or attempt to treat the latter in terms created initially for the former. None of these models can sufficiently capture the interplay between literary and social structures. The recent orientation in this quest, however, moves rightfully towards a reciprocal model based on a constitutive concept of language which I will discuss next.

## B. RECIPROCAL MODELS: CONSTITUTIVE LANGUAGE

One can see from the above survey that non-reciprocal frameworks marked an important stage of development in the way we had perceived the relationship between language and social organization. Regardless of their reductionism, they increasingly stressed the importance of language and its place in social life, which was a non-issue in the classical period of social theory. They may even be considered to have prepared the ground for the arrival of reciprocal models because they did half of the task by drawing a causal line going from the social to the literary, only to be complimented by another causal line going from the literary to the social. These stages can be seen as different phases in the query for an answer to the question on the relationship between words and deeds.

The ceaseless synergy between words and deeds, we recently came to know, can only be demonstrated by applying a constitutive outlook to language. This uninterrupted interplay between narrative and social structure is best demonstrated by a reciprocally causal model of

culture and social structure. Saussure, the founder of modern structural linguistics, can be considered to be the first to notice this strong connection although he did not elaborate on it much and his views on this issue have not been appreciated until recently. However, as I will show below, it is increasingly adopted by scholars among social scientists, literary theorists, and linguists.

Both social and human scientists in increasing numbers have come to accept a constitutive view of language and to explain the relationship between language and social action through reciprocal models. In the reciprocal model, causality works both ways. Traditional non-reciprocal models, on the other hand, suggest a one-way causality. I will show below just by way of example that in the social sciences, White, Sewell, Abrahamson and Fombrun, Somers, and Emirbayer and Goodwin have variably suggested such a model. Culler also provides a survey of scholars from various disciplines who adopted this approach (Culler 1988: 15). There are others who would be difficult to enumerate here, nor is it necessary to provide a catalog of them.

Literary theorists and linguists also increasingly acknowledge the relationship between literary and social phenomena. Contemporary literary theory in its various strains shares a common interest: "connecting the literary and the non-literary" (Culler 1988: 23). The linguists whose ideas I will discuss below, as representative examples, include Silverstein and Lucy with special emphasis on their work about metalanguage, in particular reported speech. Ong's work on orality and literacy will also be discussed in this conjunction because it can be used to identify the impact of the oscillating modes of narrative between the verbal and the written on the social network of the social actors who switch between these modes of narration.

### 1. Saussure on the Relationship between Society and Language

If Saussure is the first architect of structuralism in the modern sense, then he is also the first to acknowledge the relationship between social and literary processes. More importantly, unlike his contemporaries, he rejected the reduction of one to another. To his credit, he demonstrated that society and language cannot be imagined separately, nor can they be reduced to each other. Yet, as a linguist, he concentrated on "language as a social institution" and his primary concern was on linguistic patterns. Consequently, he did not fully address the mechanisms that connected these two inseparable and mutually dependent planes. This was thus left to the future generations.

Saussure's image of language and the community of speakers is best illustrated by a graph he included in his book (Saussure 78). This graph is reproduced here for convenience (See Figure 2: Language, time and community of speakers).

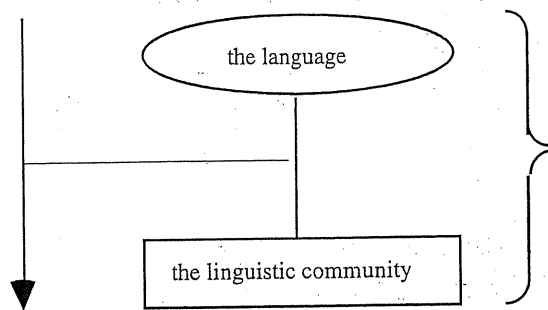


Figure 2: Language, time and community of speakers

According to Saussure, as Figure 2 illustrates, the connecting mechanism between language and the community of speakers is time. "Language is no longer free, for time will allow the social forces at work on it to carry out their effects" (Saussure 78). Change and continuity are jointly produced by the interaction of language and the community of speakers—which are connected through time. Saussure continues, "This brings us back to the principle of continuity, which cancels freedom. But continuity necessarily implies change, varying degrees of shifts in the relationship between the signified and the signifier" (Saussure 79).

It is evident that Saussure recognizes a dynamic mutual dependence between language and the discourse community without conflating or reducing one to the other. Saussure discusses reductionist views and rejects them. For Saussure, literary and social mechanisms are so intrinsically coupled that the whole field of language can be subsumed under the title of sociology.

He asks, "must language be combined with sociology?" (Saussure 6). However, he concludes, this would not be correct because it would lead to reductionism. Language, for Saussure, is a "social fact," a term possibly borrowed from Durkheim, and jointly owned by all social sciences, yet it cannot be reduced only to a "social fact" either. Likewise, speech is a social act and requires at least a dyad, or the "speaking circuit" as Saussure calls it, to take place. Saussure claims, "The act [speech] requires at least two persons; that is the minimum number necessary to complete the circuit" (Saussure 11). Language, argues Saussure, belongs to the individual (micro structures) and to society (macro structures); therefore it must be studied on both planes. Saussure calls the former "speech" (*langage, parole*) and the latter "language" (*langue*)<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, there are diachronic and synchronic

<sup>6</sup> "But what is language [*langue*]? It is not to be confused with human speech [*langage*], of which it is only a definite part, though certainly an essential one. It is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty. Taken as a whole, speech is many-sided and heterogeneous; straddling several

structures on both micro and macro levels. It is possible to map Saussure's query for structures in the following way (See Figure 3: Map of Saussure's query for structures).

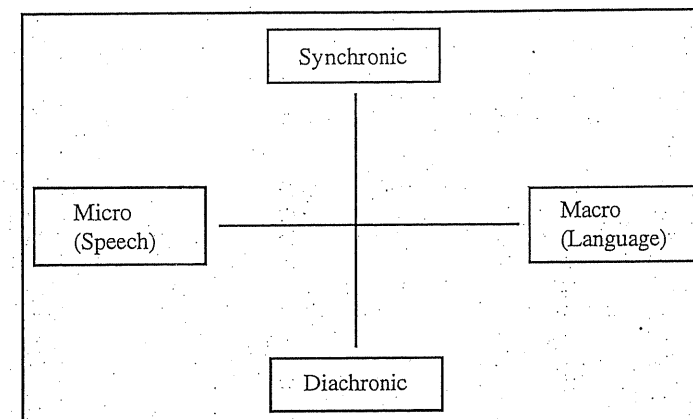


Figure 3: Map of Saussure's query for structures

## 2. Literary Theorists: Narrative and Social Action

Building on Saussure's vision, literary critics expanded structuralist query in two ways: first, to the direction of daily narrative by emphasizing the similitude between the structures of literary and non-literary texts; second, to the direction of social life by emphasizing the interplay between social and literary processes. These two developments are interrelated. Once literary theory successfully claimed daily language use, it became possible to investigate its relationship with daily life from a literary perspective. This expansion in focus gave unprecedented primacy to language in the interpretation of social action.

Literary theorists employ a constitutive approach to language and aim to demonstrate the crucial role of language in the construction and re-generation of social identities, control mechanisms, and structures. Reciprocal causality is used as a method to connect literary and social mechanisms. Culler provides a list of literary theorists who subscribe to reciprocal models in the relationship between literary and social phenomenon (Culler 1988: 15).

Thanks to their re-definition of their paradigm, the influence of literary theorists expanded to areas that were traditionally left to other disciplines such as history, anthropology, political science, sociology and psychology. Increasing numbers of scholars

areas simultaneously—physical, physiological, and psychological—it belongs to the individual and to society; we cannot put it into any category of human fact, for we cannot discover its unity" (Saussure 9).



from these disciplines revise the conventional approach that neglect the role of language and begin to problematize the relationship between their subject matter and language use.

#### a. Barthes: Narrative Constitution of a Spectacle

Barthes argues that "narrative's function is not to represent, it is to constitute a spectacle."<sup>7</sup> For Barthes the coherence, unity, and naturalness of the text out of sequence are "myths" to be denied by the critic whose task is to ceaselessly break and interrupt the narrative text, and disregard its seemingly natural divisions (Barthes 1974: 13-16; 1988: 95-150).<sup>8</sup> Barthes's tool in doing that is Semiology. Semiology/Semiotics<sup>9</sup> is originally suggested by the Swiss linguist Saussure.

Saussure postulated semiology (from the Greek *semion*, sign) as that which would study 'the life of signs within society.' (Saussure 16). Saussure envisioned that linguistics should remain only as a part of semiology, and he acknowledged that the success of his linguistics was due to this approach. The project was to be taken up later by Barthes. Semiology is not primarily concerned with the content, thus the referential dimension, as such but with the forms that enable sounds, images, gestures, etc. to function as signs (Moriarty 1991: 23).

Barthes questions the referential approach not only to language but also to all social signs and problematizes what it assumes as natural. Like Bakhtin, he stresses the communal structure needed for language and the meaning to be possible. Barthes, furthermore, sees the role of listener, or the reader, more important than the teller, or the author. Barthes proclaimed "the death of the author" by shifting the authority on meaning from the author to the reader through reversing the traditional image of the way in which meaning is produced.

Classical criticism has never been concerned with the reader; for that criticism, there is no other man in literature than the one who writes. We are no longer so willing to be the dupes of such antiphrases, by which a society proudly recriminates in favor of precisely that it discards, ignores, muffles, or destroys; we know that in order to restore writing to its future, we must reverse the myth: the birth of the reader must be requited by the death of the Author (Barthes 1989 [1968]).

7. "Society is a spectacle he [Barthes] can help explain, by revealing to us some of the mechanisms by which it obscures its artificiality" (Sturrock 1979: 61).

8. "We shall therefore star the text, separating in the manner of a minor earthquake, the blocks of signification of which reading grasps only the smooth surface, imperceptibly soldered by the movement of sentences, the flowing discourse of narration, the "naturalness of ordinary language" (Barthes 1974: 15). See also Hayden White (1987: 35-36) and Sturrock (1979: 52-80).

9. The term 'semiotics,' deriving from the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, is now more generally accepted than semiology, *semiologie*.

Denying the complete authority the author and the sign/word traditionally enjoyed is necessary for a more complete understanding of the way in which the social sign system, a part of which is language, operates in producing and reproducing the social system. Nothing should be seen in these processes as natural and must be put under critical inquiry, especially claims of authority.

Here we discern the total being of writing: a text consists of multiple writings, proceeding from several cultures and entering into dialogue, into parody, into contestation; but there is a site where this multiplicity is collected, and this site is not the author, as hitherto been claimed, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any of them being lost, all the citations out of which a writing is made; the unity of a text is not in its origin but in its destination, but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that *someone* who holds collected into one and the same field all of the traces from which writing is constituted (Barthes 1989 [1968]).

### 3. Linguists: Discourse and Social Action

Similar to literary theorists, an increasing number of linguists also problematize the relationship between pattern in discourse and social action. Discourse analysis and pragmatics are particularly concerned with the ways language construct and is constructed by social organization. In this connection, the works of Silverstein, Lucy and Ong are especially important.

#### a. Silverstein: Reflexive Language and Reported Speech

The recent attempt to foreground metalinguistic activity and the reflexive aspect of natural or ordinary language is significant not only for studies of language structure and use but for all research in the human and social sciences with an interest in discourse as well (Lucy 1993: 1-4). This new orientation departs from and elaborates further on the constitutive role of language. Most of our talk is about talk, others or ours, past or future, which is called reflexive language, or metalanguage. If our language did not have the reflexive capacity it has now, we would not be able to comment our other talk and, consequently, our daily life would be impaired. "This [language] use depends in crucial ways on the reflexive capacity of language, that is the capacity of language to represent its own structure and use, including everyday metalinguistic activities of reporting, characterizing, and commenting on speech" (Lucy 1993: 1).

Reported speech, unique to the human language (Hockett 1963:13, Lyons 1977, Silverstein 1976: 16, Lucy 1993: 9, Gömbört), is a crucial metalinguistic activity. "Among the most important such explicitly reflexive activities is *reported speech*, speech which purportedly re-presents another specific speech event" (Lucy 1993: 2). Thus, the patterns in reported speech present a special interest for social network analysts. Reported



speech has an extremely important role in the way social networks are constructed and maintained. Reported speech is also especially important in building indirect ties with those who are in different time and space from the social actors. Sociologists, using methods from social network analysis and metalinguistics, can thus show the parallelism between the uniqueness of human language and the uniqueness of human social organization.

The reflexive power of language and its various uses in everyday life are currently explored from three perspectives: (1) the logico-linguistic tradition which, from a referential approach to language, makes a distinction between language that refers to objects (object language) and that which refers to other language events (metalinguage); (2) the semiotic-functional tradition which emphasizes the centrality of metacommunicative framing of all language use; (3) the literary performance approach which foregrounds the use and power of reflexive speech in transforming existing contexts, especially in verbal arts.

Silverstein's work on metapragmatics aims to delineate the patterns and structures involved on this newly discovered plane as well as metapatterns emerging from its relationship to (mere) pragmatics and its object, whether its the same, different or fictive speech event. Silverstein argues that social/discursive interaction is contingent upon concurrent operation of the three planes, ordinary speech, pragmatics, and metapragmatics. Indexicals, which serve as pragmatic and metapragmatic signals, tie these planes to each other and to the social context in which speech event occurs. Each interaction, from this perspective, creates an "interactional" and a "denotational" text (Silverstein 1993: 36).

To achieve or accomplish the laying down of (at least one) interactional text in and by discursive interaction thus requires that in addition to the paired indexical semiotic functions of presupposition and entailment, the functional modality of pragmatics that discursive interaction literally consists of, there be simultaneously in play another functional modality, that of metapragmatics—here, the metapragmatic *function* of occurring sign-forms—that at least implicitly models the indexical-sign-in-context relationships as event-segments of interactional text. Without metapragmatic function simultaneously in play with whatever pragmatic function(s) that may be in discursive interaction, there is no possibility of interactional coherence... Understanding discursive interaction as events of such-and-such type is precisely, having a model of interactional text (Silverstein 1993: 36-37).

Silverstein defines his concept of denotational text as follows:

Such a text, which many theorists tend to identify incorrectly with interactional text, has seeming concreteness to the extent that referring-and-predicating are understood as the central, or even exclusive, purposive functions of discursive interaction (cf. most information-processing or logical views of the coherence of discursive interaction) (Silverstein 1993: 37).

Silverstein's analysis employs a constitutive approach to language and metalanguage to demonstrate the sophisticated operation of language in several planes in continuous interaction with each other as well as with the social context. In the process both the social and the linguistic, which make each other possible in the first place, are mutually produced and reproduced.

Linguistic phenomenon has multilayers in the way Silverstein perceives it. There is language and metalanguage, pragmatics and metapragmatics. The interrelationship between these levels, in addition to their relationship to the social action, is the new problematic Silverstein brought to linguistics. Silverstein aims to show how these levels are differentiated from each other and how they dynamically interact in the social process. Such a multilayered image of language opens up new possibilities that classical uni-layered approach to language does not afford. I argue that employing such an image better reveals the interplay between discursive and social patterns on the level of metalanguage.

#### b. Ong: Changing Modes of Narrative between Orality and Literacy

Silverstein's work sheds light on the micro level interaction between language and social action. The macro level interaction and the historical processes therefrom still beg an explanation. Ong's work on the macro level analysis of interaction between changing modes of discourse and social change complements, I can say, Silverstein's micro level analysis.

It is well known to social scientists that the changing modes of production affect social structure. How about changing modes of discourse? Do changing modes of narrative also affect social structures? Ong answers this question positively and undertakes the task of exploring the impact of the transition to writing, and its sequel, to print, on social order. He attempts to unearth the origins and the consequences of the changing modes of discourse in our social life. The medium and the technology used in the production and marketing/dissemination of narrative had undergone historical changes, from oral conversation to writing, from writing to print, from print to electronic media. What are the correlates of these changes of discursive production in our social life, their origins, and consequences?

To say that a great many changes in the psyche and in culture connect with the passage from orality to writing is not to make writing (and/or its sequel, print) the sole cause of all the changes. The connection is not a matter of reductionism but of relationism. The shift from orality to writing intimately interrelates with more psychic and social developments than we have yet noted. Developments in food production, in trade, in political organization, in religious institutions, in technological skills, in educational practices, in means of transportation, in family organization, and in other areas of human life all play their own distinctive roles. But most of these developments, and indeed very likely every one of them, have themselves being affected, often at great depth, by

the shift from orality to literacy and beyond, as many of them has in turn affected this shift (Ong 1995: 175).

The macro level analysis of interaction between discursive and social patterns will probably gain more interest as we move now into a new stage with the advent of the computers and the Internet. We already observe how communities emerge in cyberspace, how they conflict with each other, and how they strive for control. They even commit crimes. The New York based local newspaper, *The Village Voice* published an article titled, "A Rape in Cyberspace or How an Evil Clown, a Haitian Trickster, Two Wizards, and a Cast of Dozens Turned a Database into a Society." (Dibbell 1993: 36-42). The article describes how a rape took place on the Internet and how the community reacted, after long debates, by capital punishment. Of course, both the crime and the punishment were virtual as was the community itself, consisting of people on their computers from miles away.

I have come to believe that they [his experiences within the virtual community where the rape and reactions against it took place] announce the final stages of our decades-long passage into the Information Age, a paradigm shift that the classic liberal firewall between word and deed (itself a product of an earlier paradigm shift commonly known as the Enlightenment) is not likely to survive intact... the commands you type into a computer are a kind of speech that doesn't so much communicate as make things happen, directly and ineluctably, the same way as pulling a trigger does. They are incantations, in other words, and anyone at all attuned to the technosocial megatrends of the moment—from the growing dependence of economies on the global flow of intensely fetishized words and numbers to the burgeoning ability of bioengineers to speak the spells written in the four-letter text of DNA—knows that the logic of the incantation is rapidly permeating the fabric of our lives. ...

His experience on LambdaMOO shook, if not completely changed, the political views of Libbell about freedom of speech and the liberal distinction between speech and action—which constitutes a remarkable example on the far reaching ramifications of changing modes of discourse. "The more seriously I took the notion of virtual rape, the less seriously I was able to take the notion of freedom of speech with its tidy division of the world into the symbolic and real" (Dibbell 1993: 43).

I can no longer convince myself that our wishful insulation of language from the realm of action has ever been anything but a valuable kludge, a philosophically damaged stopgap against oppression that would just have to do till something truer and more elegant came along. Am I wrong to think this truer, more elegant thing can be found on LambdaMOO [the name of the computer where the aforementioned database is saved]? Perhaps I continue to seek it there, sensing its presence just beneath the surface of every interaction (Dibbell 1993: 42).

Yet the old modes of discourse never completely recede due to the advent of new technologies of discourse. As the invention of cars did not make the bicycle disappear, the

electronic media will not completely replace the other modes of discourse. Computers did not replace the pen and paper. Nor did writing substitute for oral conversation. Perhaps, the electronic media, just as writing and printing, will open new possibilities for social organization by reproducing it, and by being reproduced by it.

#### 4. Social Scientists: Language and Social Organization Conjoined

An increasing number of social scientists, as I mentioned earlier, apply a mutually-causal model to the relationship between literary and social patterns. The scholars whose works reviewed below should be seen only as examples because the purpose is not to provide a catalog of names who subscribe to this view but rather to map a recent orientation among social scientists from various disciplines. I will briefly review the views of Sewell, Emirbayer and Goodwin, Abrahamson and Fombrun, Somers, Steinmetz and Hart, and finally White.

In contradiction to Baker's non-reciprocal model, Sewell develops a causally reciprocal model concerning the relationship between culture and structure. For him, "symbolic activity both shapes and is shaped by phenomena not reducible to symbolic meaning—for example, interpersonal communication networks... Texts should be seen as social products that have social consequences" (Sewell 1994: 32). He explains his model in the following way: "They are linked to extratextual realities both through their authors, who creatively use existing linguistic conventions to carry out their socially formed intentions, and by readers, who are influenced by texts but also interpret them—again, creatively—in terms of their own socially specific identities and interests" (Sewell 1994: 37). Sewell's perspective is an important indication of departure from reductionism towards a reciprocal model (1992).

Emirbayer and Goodwin also suggest a reciprocally causal model in order to account for the "multiplicity of structures—societal as well as cultural—within which actors are situated in any given moment." They propose that "[t]hey [network analysts] would do well also to thematize the complex ways in which actors' identities are culturally and normatively, as well as societally, determined—the empirical interpenetration, in other words, of those cultural and social structures...." They try to develop "a truly synthetic account of social processes and transformations that takes into consideration not only structural but also cultural and discursive factors..." (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994).

Abrahamson and Fombrun explain the relationship between culture and social structure by a "circular influence process." "Most importantly," they write, "we specified a circular influence process between value-added networks and macrocultural homogeneity: Interorganizational cooperative and competitive interdependence both shape macroculture and are stabilized and perpetuated by the macroculture they engender" (Abrahamson and Fombrun 1994: 750).

Somers, Steinmetz, and Hart also subscribe to causal reciprocity, although in varying terms. Analyzing their work, Sewell writes, "like all five authors in this series, Steinmetz addresses the rather different question of how narratives shape the lived history—the question of what Margaret Somers calls "ontological narrativity" and Steinmetz himself calls "social narratives." The premise of these articles is that narrative has what Janet Hart calls a "dual role": it is not only a means of representing life, used self-consciously by historians, novelists, and storytellers, but a fundamental cultural constituent of the lives represented" (Sewell 1992: 482-483).

a. White: Mutual Construction of Ties and Stories

For Harrison White narrative reflects and constitutes ties while ties presuppose and generate stories. White explores the intricate ways identities, ties and stories interplay to produce a social structure. His emphasis is on the attempts of control and how these attempts relate to identities, stories and ties. "Stories," writes White, "are essential vehicles for elaborating networks..." (1992: 67). "Stories describe the ties in networks (1992: 65) for actors and onlookers (1992: 69)," and constitutes them. "A tie becomes constituted with story, which defines a social time by its narrative of ties" (1992: 67). "Stories come from and become a medium for control efforts: that is the core" (White 1992: 68).

Control efforts, for White, result from and develop into multiple and multilevel identities intermeshing with each other to form a social organization (1994: 3-64, 312-316). Embedded within a broader social organization, identity is a relational concept different from "self" and "personality." Contentions and contingencies produce identities in social action while identities generate action. "Identity," as defined by White, "is any source of action not explicable from biophysical regularities, and to which observers can attribute meaning" (1992: 6). Identities, like ties, are narratively constructed. They are multiple and multilevel, each accompanied with a set of stories, again exhibiting the interplay between the literary and the social. Identities remain as sites of conflict and can survive only if "they fall into self-reproducing configurations ... which inducts as it embeds an identity into still further social organization" (1992: 23)<sup>10</sup>.

White stresses that switching language is the key process to demonstrate the interdependence between, and the coevolution of, social and discursive structures. In the process of switching talk, social actors and their tie remain the same, though modified by the newly added content, whereas the stories and the way they are told undergo change.

10. The embedding social organization, for White, must be perceived in its spatial (social and physical) and temporal (synchronic and diachronic) context. For instance, in the *hadith* transmission network, ages later, narrators—whose identities are formed and embedded in the context of the larger structure—are called to take sides as friends and foes to criticize and defend the identities of their predecessors. The ceaseless contention over identities gave rise to the flux of identities for narrators through time even after their demise. In a clientelist structure, such as the *isnad* system, if the identity of one's patron is in jeopardy, so is his or hers. By defending the identity of one's patrons, and their patrons ad infinitum, one defends his or her identity which derives directly or indirectly from theirs.

Stories, or more clearly the accounts of what happened, are continuously and selectively altered through reflexive accountings.

Ties of a type are both network and domain, both relation and talk. It is talk that switches, no tie—and certainly not persons, they being deposits and byproducts of the process. The substance of a tie lies in what reflexive accountings are accepted in that network-domain as warranties, and in what are the presuppositions and entailments. These can all together be approximated as a particular set of accepted stories. Thus, within a particular micro-historical setting, the tie is also a boundary, which comes as the envelope of a joint selection process across story set (White 1996: 1042).

White aims to extend the discursive reflexivity, which we discussed earlier, to social interaction and firmly tie them to each other. For him, reflexivity characterizes both discourse and social interaction. Hence comes the challenge of managing our accounts and ties *via* careful and/or spontaneous switchings which results in a greater challenge: managing the ambiguity in discourse and social relations in presence of onlookers, the public.

In continuing reflexive processes of mutual perception, the switchings to publics being negotiated may not appear abrupt or even be marked, either by those relations that go along in that switch or by those that do not. At least at a micro scale of dyad, there can be many realizations of publics that are strategic. But publics may sustain censoring among fellow temporary inhabitants, censoring which accords with some culture-wide code of politeness rather than the concerns of specific network-domain (White 1996: 1056).

Switching between networks can be synchronic or diachronic. Switching between the former, as White argues, is necessary for the rise of language registers. Narrative, on the other hand comes from and survives through diachronic switchings between network domains to which it gives life at the first place. Discursive patterns, as White foregrounds, "evolves in mutual accommodation with some form of dominance order" (White 1996: 1039). I will also use both synchronic and diachronic switching of language and network to shed light on the structure of dominance, or power/authority, in a narratively constructed social network.

I outlined above how the quest to account for the relationship between words and deeds took various turns. The examples I reviewed in this connection are far from being exhaustive. There are many others whose work I could not discuss here due to space constraints such as Geertz, Bruner, Tilly, Bearman and Shotter as well as others from divergent disciplines contributing to the development of a reciprocal model as an alternative to the linear model.

I demonstrated with the above survey that the move towards rapprochement between literary and social structuralism on the issue of relationship between literary and social

patterns in diverse fields reinforce each other. Increasing numbers of scholars from divergent fields have recently come to acknowledge that neither narrative and discourse, nor action and speech can be uncoupled. Instead they attempt to couple them through a circular model. In the introduction of his book, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, Labov formulates this interpretive framework succinctly: "it [the language use] defines and is defined by the social organization ..." (Labov 1984: xiii).

## II. HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN LITERARY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURALISM?

Literary and social patterns, brought to bear upon each other, jointly produce metapatterns. Metapatterns produce metastructures. "What does one gain, what does one perceive," asks Volk, by moving through these layers of comprehension?" (Volk 1995:1). The answer is "Patterns of patterns—metapatterns" (Volk 1995:1). Human social organization is thus a metastructure, as I see it, conjointly produced by patterns in speech and action. Speech is perceived to be a distinctive capability of humans which has its undeniable role in their social actions and relations which distinguishes human social organization from those of animals (White 1992). Consequently, an image of social organization which is stripped from language is no longer human. What is gained by coupling literary and social processes as metapatterns is this distinctive nature of human social organization.

Such an image can be created by bringing literary and social structuralism to bear upon each other which would replace the rather mechanistic and non-reciprocal models of social process (Abbott and Hrycak 1990a, 1990b; Abbott 1984, 1988a, 1988b; 1992a, 1992b, 1995). In recent decades, structuralism has made considerable advances in social and literary fields. These rather isolated attempts produce segmented understanding of language and society which recent studies try to integrate to construct a more comprehensive image of social and literary processes. Yet, there is still a gap between the social and literary structuralism.

### Social and Discursive Authority

One example of how such an integrated approach can enhance our understanding would be the issue of social power. Although social and discursive power always come together, the common practice today in human and social sciences is to use one, from a linear causal perspective, to explain the other. Since they always exist together, it is easy to advocate both models: social power leading to discursive authority, or discursive power leading to social authority.

Yet, both the centrality of an actor in a social network and his discursive power are contingent upon each other. The onlooker may see only the manifest discursive power and

be misled by this appearance to ignore the social aspect of that power. For instance, Baker writes, "political authority is, in this view, essentially a matter of linguistic authority" (Baker 1990: 4-5). In demonstrating the mutual dependence between social and discursive powers attributed to actors in their social networks, we cannot rely on the traditional non-reciprocal models on the relationship between literary and social patterns.

Each social network is at the same time a cultural domain (White 1996). In other words, the borders of a discourse community overlap with the borders of a social network. Conventionally, the question of power has been treated separately on both planes that led to reductionist interpretations. The sociological problem, from this perspective, has been to determine which has primacy over which. Some have argued that the social plane has supremacy, while others argued the opposite. In contrast, from an integrated perspective that I have outlined above, we can expect new questions to emerge. For instance, how does social and discursive power/order mutually produce and reproduce each other? Why do social actors with social authority have the discursive authority as well?

## III. CONCLUSION: COUPLING LITERARY AND SOCIAL PATTERNS

One can extrapolate from the above critical survey that there is a large-scale movement in human and social sciences towards bridging the gap between various strands of structural query. This new orientation adopts a constitutive approach to language as opposed to traditional referential approach. It also adopts a non-linear image of social process as opposed to conventional non-reciprocal models. Armed by these constitutive approaches to language and a reciprocal model for the interplay between literary and social processes, the rapprochement between the two lines of structural query grow.

Sociologists have long internalized the referential approach to language that resulted in privileging action over speech. Yet, social action is impossible to imagine without speech. However, the referential approach blocked the way of establishing the connection between language use and social process without reducing or conflating one to the other. But the recent constitutive approach to language, as I showed above, allows us to show the synergy between action and speech to construct and re-construct social structures.

The above account also demonstrates that the relationship between words and deeds, more specifically between narrative and social structure, should not be taken as a binary dichotomy, but rather as a mutually productive and constitutive dialectic. It became clear that there are problems in establishing and maintaining such a dichotomy because speech can be perceived as act and act can be perceived as speech due the fuzzy border between them. Yet, the dialectic and the tension should be maintained while the difference between the two is exploited in establishing a constitutive approach to language which, in turn, would allow us to understand social action and relations better.

The fallacy of conflation no more holds, giving way to the recognition of the relative autonomy of, as well as mutual interdependence between, the literary and social structures. The Crusoe or Adam-like image of a social actor in literary and social theory is increasingly being replaced by an image that can stand more to everyday experience.

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