

**Jake Fraser**

## **Futures Past and Present: On Structuralism, Today.**

- Strukturalismus, heute. Brüche, Spuren, Kontinuitäten, Hannover, Schloss Herrenhausen, 24.–27.2.2016. Concept and organization: Martin Endres and Leonhard Herrmann (Universität Leipzig). Financial support from the VolkswagenStiftung.

Leipzig Germanists **Martin Endres** and **Leonhard Herrmann** set an ambitious intellectual agenda for their conference on »Strukturalismus, heute«, calling for a reckoning-up of still unpaid or unacknowledged debts to structuralist principles in an ostensibly poststructuralist era. What emerged during the course of the four-day conference in Hannover (24–27.2.2016) was perhaps even more ambitious: a discussion of the complex temporal dynamics of structuralism – as notoriously ahistorical method and historically influential movement – that took up the question of structuralisms past, present and future. In extending the temporal and disciplinary horizons of the investigation, conference participants may have been responding to the latent semantic potential in the conference’s title. For »Strukturalismus, heute« can be read several ways, and enumerating some of these readings may help sketch out a background for the discussion of the conference proceedings that follows. First, »structuralism, today« can be understood as a glance backward to an earlier age, a retrospective movement along the diachronic axis. From this perspective, a few important dates are worth noting: the conference marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the posthumous publication of Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale*, structuralism’s founding text, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 8<sup>th</sup> issue of the French journal *Communications*, dedicated to the *analyse structurale du récit*. With essays by Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes, A.J. Greimas, Umberto Eco, Christian Metz, and Gérard Genette, its publication marked a watershed moment for structuralist literary studies. Second, »structuralism, today« can be understood synchronically, as an inventory or snapshot of the present, an overview of contemporary structuralist approaches. Finally, »structuralism, today« can be read in the imperative mood, as exhortation or demand: *Structuralism, today!* In this regard, the conference title would function as something of a manifesto, a call to arms to regain (or simply defend) the disciplinary ground gained by structuralist methodology.

All three of these readings were at work in the talks delivered over four days at the *Schloss Herrenhausen* in Hannover, resulting in both a more nuanced historical picture of structuralism as movement and a sense of its continued potential as method. Before turning to the presentations, however, it is worth saying something about the conference organizer’s own temporal positioning of their theme. In their opening remarks, Endres and Herrmann characterized the conference – and its concern with structuralism, today – as something of a deliberate anachronism: current approaches in the humanities emphasize historicity, performance, materiality and dynamics, creating an apparently unfavorable climate for structuralism’s suggestion of austere formalism and timeless order. And yet, Herrmann and Endres note, a number of structuralist remainders, such as the fundamental distinction between sign and signification or the preference for method over subjective intuition, persist into an ostensibly poststructuralist present. What is the status of these remainders? Are they just that – atavistic remnants which have until now somehow avoided the poststructuralist gaze, and hence its critique? Are they instead perhaps revenants, structuralist principles whose return signals a growing dissatisfaction with poststructuralist theory? Or are they to be understood as elements of a structuralist »inheritance«, as foundational – and thus indispensable – assumptions linking structuralism and post-structuralism together in an overarching conceptual paradigm? In short,

Herrmann and Endres ask, are we *still* structuralist? Are we *once again* structuralist? Or were we, perhaps, *always already* structuralist?

## Proceedings

Speaker substitutions in the lead-up to the conference resulted in a slight deviation from the organizer's original structure, which had grouped presentations thematically under the headings »Structure and Sign«, »Structure and Narration«, and »Structure and (Digital) Culture«. Fortunately, in the course of the proceedings, a host of both overt and subterranean affinities between papers emerged spontaneously, allowing questions and concerns from previous talks to serve as points of reference and departure for later ones. In an attempt to make visible some of these continuities among papers, I have deviated from the chronological order in which participants presented and instead gathered their papers into four broad categories according to their primary temporal orientation: Genealogies of Structuralism (1), Returns to Structuralism (2), Structuralism and Literary-Critical Methods (3) and Contemporary Structuralist Models (4). Naturally, there is quite a bit of overlap among these categories, and many talks could be classified under two or more headings. In grouping them as I have, my goal has been merely to draw out one particular set of affinities, not to give an exhaustive account.

### 1. Genealogies of Structuralism.

Linking the talks in this category is a concern with structuralism as a historical phenomenon; presenters offered remarks on the foundation and consolidation of structuralism as movement, its conceptual lineage, and its affinities to developments in neighboring disciplines. In the conference's opening presentation, **Ludwig Jäger** (Köln/Aachen) returned to structuralism's origins with a provocative question: Did Ferdinand de Saussure invent structuralism with his *Cours de linguistique générale*, or is Saussure rather an invention of the *Cours*? In his talk »Begründer oder Erfindung des Strukturalismus? Saussure und der *Cours de linguistique générale*«, Jäger cast a critical eye upon the work done by the *Cours*' two editors, Saussure's students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Jäger detailed the numerous distortions of Saussure's thought introduced posthumously by his students, including a number of the *Cours*' best-known statements. Thus, structuralism's putative origins with Saussure emerge as something of an origins myth. Saussure, Jäger argued, would not only have not approved of the publication of the *Cours* – he would have even been one of its earliest critics. The second half of Jäger's paper was devoted to four of these major criticisms, pitting the »Saussure« of the *Cours* against the *vrai* Saussure on fundamental issues like the form/substance distinction and the relation between *langue/parole* (a »dialectical interplay« for the real Saussure, not a distinction between the »essential and the incidental«, as one famously reads in the *Cours*<sup>1</sup>).

A further genealogical contribution came from **Christian Benne** (Copenhagen), whose »Apologie des Buchstaben A. Indogermanistik und Moderne« pursued the relation between Saussure's early work on Indo-European linguistics and his later structuralist pursuits. In his talk, Benne traced Saussure's systematic understanding of language as a mutually determining and co-constituting whole (what Saussure, in the *Cours*, terms »valeur«<sup>2</sup>) back to his fascination with the work of early Indo-European scholar Franz Bopp. In a further twist, the Idealist overtones in Bopp's work likely stem from Friedrich Schlegel's 1808 *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*. Benne then asks whether the later Saussure of the *Cours* does not in fact continue the project of the earlier Indo-Europeanist Saussure – namely, the investigation of the relationship between *son* and *mot* and the status of the signifier's materiality. This interest links him to another avid student of Indo-European, a contemporary of Saussure's also interested in

the relation between sound and word: Stéphane Mallarmé. Affinities between structuralism's scientific aspirations and its artistic echoes were also at the center of **Dieter Mersch's** (Zürich) presentation »Strukturelle Mathematik und Strukturelle Ästhetik. Geschichte einer Méésentente«. Mersch began with an overview of the history of mathematics from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the formalist turn around 1900, an attempt to develop a rigorous logical-axiomatical foundation that would serve as a ground for future work. Although these attempts foundered on various (insoluble) problems of such formalization, their effects and impetus lasted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mersch discussed the history of one of the best-known of these attempts, the pseudonymous French collective Nicolas Bourbaki and its attempts to reformulate mathematics on a formal and self-contained basis in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Numerous personal and conceptual ties linked *Bourbakisme* to the French avant-garde literary group *Oulipo*, whose members employed stringent mathematical formulas and formal constraints to desubjectivize their poetic and literary productions. In closing, Mersch noted that the formalist turn in mathematics and poetry rested on a double misunderstanding – first on a conception of mathematics that placed undue emphasis on its merely mechanical aspects, and then on the belief that such a program could or should form the backdrop of a theory of literature. **Eva Geulen's** (Berlin) contribution »Unbekannte Strukturalisten: A. Jolles and G. Kubler« drew out of Goethe's natural-scientific work on comparison and series formation elements of proto-structuralist thought. Goethe, Geulen argued, understood series and the underlying relations between elements they suggest as always provisional, temporary, open to belated modification or reorganization; he systematically resisted or delayed the move from a series to a pre-ordained, lawful unity underwriting them. On this basis, one could assess other thinkers of seriality and structure – Franco Moretti, D'Arcy Thompson, George Kubler and André Jolles – with respect to whether they perceive series as essentially pre-ordained (and thus closed) or open and subject to retroactive revision. Finally, **Nacim Ghanbari** (Siegen) sketched in her contribution »Doing Culture« und die Arbitrarität des Zeichens« the link between contemporary praxeological and performative approaches in cultural studies and the structuralist insistence upon the arbitrariness of the link between signifier and signified. Although contemporary cultural studies has attempted to downplay its linguistic roots, Ghanbari argued that the reception of Saussure's arbitrariness-postulate (through Emile Benveniste, among others) was instrumental in allowing scholars of culture to understand important cultural institutions – such as gender – as conventionally made and thus modifiable.

## 2. Returns to Structuralism

This heading is meant to comprehend talks whose historical dimension consisted in returns to or re-readings of key structuralist texts, from Jakobson to Lévi-Strauss. **Ralf Simon** (Basel) offered in his »Was genau heißt: ›Projektion des Äquivalenzprinzips‹? – Roman Jakobsons Lehre vom Ähnlichen« a thorough-going reinterpretation of Roman Jakobson's famous definition of the poetic function. The poetic function, Simon argued, consists not merely in the quantitatively elevated recurrence or repetition of a paradigm, but is rather a principle of transformation that reconfigures all the other functions of the linguistic message. Thus, when the poetic function dominates in a message, it transforms the message's addresser- and addressee-functions into complex constructs of author and reader, its referential function into one of fictionality, and its metalingual function into one of a self-referential immanent poetics. On this reading, Simon argues, Jakobson (and his poetic function) emerges as the representative of a more flexible eastern European structuralism, distinct from a more rigid western European structuralism and already anticipating a number of (western) poststructuralist critiques. A return to Jakobson was also at work in **Daniel Carranza's** (Chicago) »Rilkes absolute Metapher und die Entarbitrarisierung des Zeichens«. Carranza began with Jakobson's generalization of the

figures of metaphor and metonymy such that they coincide with what had been, since Saussure, the two fundamental operations of language – the movement of combination (metonymy) along the syntagmatic axis and the movement of selection (metaphor) on the paradigmatic axis. Although Jakobson's move would prove influential for later work, it relegated metaphor to the paradigmatic (and thus synchronic) plane and thereby failed to account for metaphor's diachronic elements (above all that of semantic innovation). By contrast, Carranza's theory of the »absolute metaphor« demonstrated a conception of metaphor as syntagmatic (and thus temporalized) activity: in the absolute metaphor, the reciprocal interaction in time of two semantic fields (those of the metaphor's tenor and vehicle) allows for new semantic potential to emerge. The question of innovation in time was also at the center of **Jake Fraser's** (Chicago) talk »Irreversibel: Struktur, Prozess, Rekursion«, which investigated structuralist resources for thinking the emergence, evolution and differentiation of structures. Taking as his point of departure Claude Lévi-Strauss's reflections on the relationship between structure and process in his writings on *bricolage*, Fraser argued that Lévi-Strauss and structuralism more broadly struggled to think recursive processes – those capable of revising or rewriting their own structures. Tellingly, the famous *bricoleur* of Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* is unable to use the tools at hand to develop new tools. Inspiration for a more flexible structuralism, Fraser suggested, could be found in cybernetic systems theory, where structure is thought operatively, as a resource deployed (and continually revised) by self-organizing systems. The issue of revising and refashioning structuralist concepts was front and center in **Karlheinz Stierle's** (Saarbrücken) presentation »Ist der Strukturalismus überholt? Zur Aktualität einer strukturalistischen Literaturwissenschaft«. Stierle suggested that the promise and premises of a structuralist literary studies had been abandoned too early, and that the approach still offered tremendous potential. One major source of difficulty lay in Saussure's too-sharp distinction between *langue* and *parole*; a structuralist literary studies would have to think the relation between the two not just as a *linguistique de la parole* but rather as a unique relationship between system and discourse, code and enunciation. A more-nuanced way of thinking this relationship could be found in Merleau-Ponty's writings on language and in speech-act theory, where the tension between individual speech acts and social code is thought as a productive source of tension; a structuralism which adopted these premises would avoid the traps of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics without condemning discourse to the mere realm of the incidental.

### 3. Structuralism and Literary-Critical Methods

Talks in this category shared a concern with structuralism as a disciplinary practice and research paradigm. In his talk »Realismus – Historische Aspekte eines Erzählverfahrens« **Moritz Baßler** (Münster) presented the model (and some of the findings) of what he termed a »positivist archival structuralism«, a research paradigm which uses structuralist concepts to delineate literary styles and epochs. Departing from Jakobson's remarks on predominantly metonymic and metaphoric literary-historical movements (symbolism is essentially metaphoric, realism metonymic), Baßler argued that these categorizations apply not to the content narrated but to the style of narration. Hence, »realistic« or metonymic narration applies equally well to 19<sup>th</sup>-century texts as to the contemporary television series. Further, structuralist analysis of innovations in the narrative structures of modern television serials such as »Game of Thrones« shows a tendency towards the cutting and recombination of distinct (but simultaneous) narrative strands, resulting in the impression that the diegetic world is the condition for diegesis and not vice versa. **Monika Schmitz-Emans** (Bochum) also used structuralist models to theorize new corpora – in her case, collections and novels of collecting. Her talk, »Poetiken des Sammelns in der neueren Literatur«, took as its basis recent attempts to

think the objects of a collection as signs, which form together a paradigm or code and can be arranged syntagmatically. Schmitz-Emans then asked whether, on these grounds, collections and collecting could not be understood as narrations and narrating, respectively: the addition of an object to an existing collection would expand both the paradigm and the syntagma. Such an understanding, she showed, does seem to exist – both in museum exhibitions dedicated to »speaking« things and the books or texts that accompanied them. **Hannah Eldridge's** (Madison) presentation »Einsetzung metrischer Zeichen: Durs Grünbeins physiologische Poetik« moved in the opposite direction: she asked about the extent to which contemporary cognitivist and neuroscientific approaches to poetics recall structuralism's promise to lend scientific rigor to literary study. However, encounters between science and literature have tended to look more like confrontation than collaboration – whether in the contributions to the 1958 conference »*Style in Language*« (where Jakobson claimed that poetics was a subfield of linguistics) or in current work on cognitive aesthetics and evocriticism. Eldridge then turned to contemporary German poet Durs Grünbein to display some of the ambivalences and contradictions that result from this confrontation: Grünbein at one and the same time takes natural-scientific concepts and structures as the basis for his thought and poetics, while at the same time criticizing the reductionism of natural scientific thought. **Andreas Ohme** (Jena) similarly drew attention to contemporary methodological trends. In his »Beschreiben oder Bewerten? Zur Relevanz des strukturalistischen Paradigmas«, he delivered an impassioned plea for literary studies to not lose the precision and clarity with respect to delineating and describing its object that structuralist methods had provided—a danger posed, for example, by poststructuralist narratologies that have traded conceptual precision for expanded considerations of works' context and thematic content. **Nicole Sütterlin** (Cambridge), by contrast, embraced poststructuralist narrative theory in her »Untod des Autors. Poststrukturalistisches Erzählen nach der Wende«. Taking Roland Barthes' famous essay on the »death of the author« literally, Sütterlin built on previous work on the novel ›after theory‹ with a study of novels whose narrators perform their death, speaking from beyond the grave. Sütterlin's reading of Marcel Beyer's *Das Menschenfleisch* demonstrated amongst other things an attempt to pair poststructuralist claims about the materiality of the signifier with the literalization of poststructuralist figures of thought, such that intertextuality comes to resemble a form of cannibalism.

#### 4. Contemporary Structuralist Models

The talks grouped together in this heading generally attempted systematic or historical overviews of a field or approach, ranging from narratology to media semiotics. As such, they are somewhat difficult to summarize in the format of conference proceedings, and my accounts of their content unfortunately can only gesture towards their complexity. **Benjamin Specht** (Stuttgart) took the tale of the prodigal son from the *Gospel of Luke* as the basis for demonstrating a theory of literary semantics. How, Specht asks, can the already significant elements of a narrative (their ›authentic‹ meaning) acquire a collective, secondary or ›inauthentic‹ [uneigentlich] meaning, in addition to their literal significance? In proceeding, Specht delineated four forms of this relationship between authentic and inauthentic meaning: analogical, allegorical, parable-like, and ambiguous [vieldeutig]. The tale of the prodigal son, Specht argued, can be read as embodying each of the four forms, suggesting a co-constitution of text through reader. **Michael Scheffel** (Wuppertal) offered in his talk »Narratologie – eine aus dem Geist des Strukturalismus geborene Disziplin?« an overview of the various formalist and structuralist schools that had contributed to contemporary narratological thought. The wide range of schools and methods that have all attempted to develop a systematic account of narration – from folklore studies to Russian formalism, from French structuralism to post-war

German thought – meant, Scheffel cautioned, that there is neither one structuralism nor one theory of narrative, but rather a number of competing forms. **Andreas Blödorn** (Münster) and **Jan-Oliver Decker** (Passau) also delivered historical overviews of structuralist approaches in their fields (film studies and media semiotics, respectively). Blödorn (»Strukturalistische Ansätze in der Filmanalyse«) detailed the difficulties faced by structuralist and semiotic approaches in film studies in locating smallest significant units for analysis, suggesting that perhaps movement could form the basis for a new film semiotics. Decker's talk (»Strukturalistische Ansätze in der Mediensemiotik«) presented an overview of the *Passau school* of media semiotics, demonstrating how semiotic models from Lotman could be used to understand the productive exchanges between the center and periphery of a semiosphere: fan fiction for mass-culture phenomena like *The Lord of the Rings* allowed peripheral users to modify semantic codes, producing effects that then made their way back to the center. **Marianne Wünsch** (Kiel) provided, in addition to a schematic account of structuralist and semiotic approaches in literary studies, a methodological critique of cultural studies [Kulturwissenschaft] in her talk »Strukturalismus; Literaturwissenschaft – Medienwissenschaft – Kulturwissenschaft«: lacking a discipline-specific object or research methodology meant that *Kulturwissenschaft* had no claims to the disciplinary status of a science [Wissenschaftlichkeit]. **Alexander Becker** (Düsseldorf), finally, presented in his »Bemerkungen zur Bedeutung der Struktur in und für die Sprache aus sprachanalytischer Sicht« a perspective on linguistic structure from the standpoint of contemporary analytic philosophy. Structure, on this account, is what allows sentences to have meanings that transcend the mere enumeration of their parts, and thus allows them to be true or false: sentences without structure are neither true nor meaningful sentences, but rather lists. One consequence of this link between meaning and structure is, Becker argued, that our access to the world is unavoidably shaped by language.

## Conclusion

In the wrap-up discussion that followed the conference's final presentation, two issues emerged as both central points of concern for participants and open questions going forward. Opening the floor, Herrmann expressed his surprise that the most pressing concern of structuralism seemed to be not that of sign systems or semiotics, but rather structuralism itself, insofar as structuralism and structure had emerged as unsettled epistemological and ontological problems. »Gibt es Strukturen« Herrmann asked, »oder sind sie heuristische Postulate, die im Akt des Beobachtens entstehen?« – a question which could not help but recall Saussure's despair upon discovering that the ›hidden‹ anagrams he was finding in Latin texts were perhaps *too* easy to find, and thus »fantasmagorie«. <sup>3</sup> One way of overcoming the apparent opposition would be to reframe it as a problem of attribution: a more precise structuralism would perhaps need to distinguish between structures of production, structures of texts, and structures of reception. This would pose in turn the question of structure and function – once one raises the question of the location of structure (in the author, in the reader, in the text), structuralist theory must contend both with the possibility of multiple structures active simultaneously as well as the possibility that structures differ qualitatively with respect to their function. <sup>4</sup> Another way of answering (or at least addressing) the question would be Foucauldian: yes, structures exist, insofar as they are anchored in historical constellations of institutions, regimes of knowledge, concrete practices of reading, writing and philology, networks of exchange amongst scholars, etc. From this perspective, one would substitute for a history of structuralism a genealogy of structures.

A second, related focus of the discussion was the question of structuralism as method. Structuralism, it was observed, is and was both a universalizing theory with tremendous capacities for abstraction as well as a heuristic practice that made new entities, relations, and

corpora visible for literary scholars. In this regard, one might think of influential early works of French structuralism like Lévi-Strauss's »The Structural Study of Myth« and Barthes' *Système de la mode*, whose imbrication of theoretical speculation and critical interpretive practice is such that one is perhaps justified in speaking of ›concrete theory‹ or (to blend the terms and fields that Barthes was still attempting to distinguish in his *Critique et vérité*) »scientific criticism«. From this, however, emerges a series of questions concerning the relationship between structuralism and the ›scientific‹ study of literature: are there other, alternative but still scientific methods of studying literature? If so, what might they look like? If not, what happens to the specificity of structuralism as a movement or concept – can it still be distinguished from a general impulse toward the scientific study of literature?

Addressing these two broader areas of concern – the nature and location of structure, the question of method and practice – may require returning to (and perhaps rethinking) the relationship between structuralism and semiotics. Certainly one view of structuralism today, borne out by official histories and underwritten by a founding dictum (Saussure's testamentary assertion that linguistics would someday be but one branch of a broader semiology that studied the social use of signs<sup>5</sup>), would suggest that semiotics is the proper heir of and to structuralism – a view in evidence when conference participants used ›sign system‹ [Zeichensystem] as a synonym for ›structure‹. And yet, the all but total eclipse of semiotics by poststructuralism<sup>6</sup> suggests that the resources required to respond to poststructuralist critique may lie not in a general theory of signs, but rather in notions of structure compatible with the poststructuralist emphasis on the material, the historical, and the non-hermeneutic.<sup>7</sup> Hence, a different take on structuralism today might look to the conference's genealogies of structuralism for alternative conceptions of structure: in morphology and D'Arcy Thompson's biological structuralism, in Shannon and Weaver's cybernetics, information and systems theory, and in Bourbaki's structural mathematics.<sup>8</sup> Structuralism today – which is to say, a contemporary structuralism, a structuralism of and for the future – may require a detour through structuralisms past.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Charles Bailly/Albert Séchehaye (eds.), Paris 1967, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, II.4 "La valeur linguistique", 155–169.

<sup>3</sup> Saussure qtd. in Starobinski, *Les mots sous les mots. Les anagrammes de Ferdinand de Saussure*, Paris 1971, 138. See also Jonathan Culler, *Ferdinand de Saussure*, revised ed., Ithaca 1986, 123–134. Anagrammatic structures have been a source of discovery and anxiety for many structuralist literary critics; see Jakobson's speculation on the Hölderlin / Scardanelli anagram in his »Ein Blick auf ›Die Aussicht‹ von Hölderlin«, in: *id.*, *Poesie der Grammatik und Grammatik der Poesie: Sämtliche Gedichtanalysen*, Hendrik Birus/Sebastian Donat (eds.), vol. 2, Berlin 2007, 139–238; here: 147ff., and Daniel Heller-Roazen's account of Tristan Tzara's 14-year search for hidden anagrams in the work of medieval French poet Francois Villon in »Secrets of Tristan Tzara«, *October* 144 (2013), 25–48.

<sup>4</sup> Niklas Luhmann distinguishes between structures of (re-)production and structures of description in *Soziale Systeme*, Frankfurt am Main 1984, 382–387.

<sup>5</sup> See Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Charles Bailly/Albert Séchehaye (eds.), Paris 1967, 33 (›Place de la langue dans les faits humains. La sémiologie«).

<sup>6</sup> Although the disciplinary fate of semiotics obviously varies by country (on this, see Thomas A. Sebeok/Jean Umiker-Sebeok (eds.), *The Semiotic Sphere*, New York 1986), one can speak generally of an anticipated semiotic imperialism that never came to fruition. On the relation between structuralism, poststructuralism and semiotics in the American context, see Peter Brooks' account of his experiences with the Yale Literature program, where Brooks' fear that the program would be taken over by a "general semiotics of the type best represented by Umberto Eco's *Theory of Semiotics*" proved entirely wrong—what succeeded was, instead, »rhetorical reading« (»Aesthetics and Ideology: What Happened to Poetics?«, *Critical Inquiry* 20:3 (1994), 509–523; 511f.).

<sup>7</sup> On the post-hermeneutic turn, see (still) David Wellbery's foreword to the English translation of Friedrich Kittler's, *Discourse Networks*, Stanford 1990, vii–xxxiii. On the relationship between structuralism and history, see Foucault's comments on the explicitly historical orientation of early structuralist approaches in his »Return to History«, in: James D. Faubion (ed.), *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, New York 1998, 419–432.

<sup>8</sup> One node in which all three of these alternative structuralisms coincide is Claude Lévi-Strauss. During his time in New York in the 1940s, Lévi-Strauss not only met with Bourbaki founder André Weil (who wrote a mathematical appendix for Lévi-Strauss's *Elementary Structures of Kinship*), but also read avidly both in morphology and D'Arcy Thompson's biological structuralism as well as in early cybernetics, information and systems theory. The latter passion he shared with Roman Jakobson, Émile Benveniste and Jacques Lacan. Upon his return to Paris in the early 50's, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Benveniste met regularly with Bourbaki-inspired mathematicians Jacques Riguet and Georges-Théodule Guilbaud. On this, see Lydia H. Liu, *The Freudian Robot: Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious*, Chicago 2010, 167ff. and Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, »From Information Theory to French Theory: Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss and the Cybernetic Apparatus«, *Critical Inquiry* 38 (2011), 96–126.

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