

--Roland Barthes, from "Textual analysis: Poe's 'Valdemar'"

[This article was written in 1973; it demonstrates the (post)structural method Barthes had devised, most famously, in *S/Z* (1970), his analysis of Balzac's story "Sarrasine." Notice the difference between the 'scientific' methodology here and the rather playful, arbitrary, analytical 'results.' The numbering and lettering are Barthes'; my emendations are in square brackets. If you'd like to read the entire short story by Poe, it's available on line: just click on this link: ["The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"](#).]

The structural analysis of narrative is at present in the course of full elaboration. All research in this area has a common scientific origin: semiology or the science of signification; but already (and this is a good thing) divergences within that research are appearing, according to the critical stance each piece of work takes with respect to the scientific status of semiology, or in other words, with respect to its own discourse. These divergences (which are constructive) can be brought together under two broad tendencies: in the first, faced with all the narratives in the world, the analysis seeks to establish a narrative model - which is evidently formal -- , a structure or grammar of narrative, on the basis of which (once this model, structure or grammar has been discovered) each particular narrative will be analyzed in terms of divergences. In the second tendency, the narrative is immediately subsumed (at least when it leads itself to being subsumed) under the notion of 'text,' space, process of meanings at work, in short, 'significance' (we shall come back to this word at the end), which is observed not as a finished, closed product, but as a production in progress, 'plugged in' to other texts, other codes (this is the intertextual), and thereby articulated with society and history in ways that are not determinist but citational. [. . .] Textual analysis, which is what we shall be attempting to practice in the following pages, is applied exclusively to written narrative.

Textual analysis does not try to describe the structure of a work; it is not a matter of recording a structure, but rather of producing a mobile structuration of the text (a structuration which is displaced from reader to reader throughout history), of staying in the signifying volume of the work, in its 'significance.' Textual analysis does not try to find out what it is that determines the text [. . .] but rather how the text explodes and disperses. We are then going to take a narrative text, and we're going to read it, as slowly as is necessary, stopping as often as we have to (being at ease is an essential dimension of our work), and try to locate and classify without rigor, not all the meanings of the text (which would be impossible because the text is open to infinity: no reader, no subject, no science can arrest the text) but the forms and codes according to which meanings are possible. We are going to locate the avenues of meaning. Our aim is not to find the meaning, nor even a meaning of the text[. . .] Our aim is to manage to conceive, to imagine, to live the plurality of text, the opening of its 'significance.' [. . .Textual analysis] touches on a theory, a practice, a choice, which are caught up in the struggle of men and signs.

[Barthes says he'll describe the "operating procedures" of textual analysis, which he refuses to call a 'method.' There are four of these procedures:]

1. We shall cut up the text I am proposing for study into contiguous, and in general very short, segments (a sentence, part of a sentence, at most a group of three or four sentences); we shall number these fragments starting from 1 (in about ten pages of text there are 150 segments). These segments are units of reading, and this is why I have proposed to call them 'lexias.' [. . .] All in all, the fragmenting of the narrative text into lexias is purely empirical, dictated by the concern of convenience: the lexia is an arbitrary product, it is simply a segment within which the distribution of meanings is observed; it is what surgeons would call an operating field: the useful lexia is one where only one, two or three meanings take place[. . .]
2. For each lexia, we shall observe the meanings to which that lexia gives rise. By meaning, it is clear that we do not mean the meanings of the words or groups of words which dictionary and grammar, in short a knowledge of the French language, would be sufficient to account for. We mean the connotations of the lexia, the secondary meanings. These connotation-meanings can be associations (for example, the physical description of a character, spread out over several sentences, may have only one connoted signified, the 'nervousness' of that character, even though the word does not figure at the level of denotation); they can also be relations, resulting from a linking of two points in the text, which are sometimes far apart, (an action begun can be completed, finished, much further on). Our lexias will be, if I can put it like this, the finest possible sieves, thanks to which we shall 'cream off' meanings, connotations.
3. Our analysis will be progressive: we shall cover the length of the text step by step, at least in theory [. . .] we shan't be carrying out an explication of the text, unless we give the word 'explication' its etymological sense, in so far as well shall be unfolding the text, the foliation of the text. Our analysis will retain the procedure of reading; only this reading will be, in some measure, filmed in slow-motion. [. . .]
4. Finally, we shan't get unduly worried if in our account we 'forget' some meanings. Forgetting meanings is in some sense part of reading: the important thing is to show departures of meaning, not arrivals (and is meaning basically anything other than a departure?). What founds the text is not an internal, closed, accountable structure, but the outlet of the text on to other texts, other signs' what makes the text is the intertextual. We are beginning to glimpse (through other sciences) the fact that research must little by little get used to the conjunction of two ideas which for a long time were thought incompatible: the idea of structure and the idea of combinational infinity; the conciliation of these two postulations is forced upon us now because language, which we are getting to know better, is at once infinite and

structured.

I think that these remarks are sufficient for us to begin the analysis of the text (we must always give in to the impatience of the text, and never forget that whatever the imperatives of study, the pleasure of the text is our law). [Barthes introduces his chosen text - Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," in Charles Baudelaire's translation - and explains his reasons for the choice: he needed a very short text and one that "was symbolically very dense." I should note that the French have always held Poe in high regard.]

To be frank, I ought to add this: in analyzing the 'significance' of a text, we shall abstain voluntarily from dealing with certain problems; we shall not speak of the author, Edgar Poe, nor of the literary history of which he is a part; we shall not take into account the fact that the analysis will be carried out on a translation. [. . .] This does not necessarily mean that these problems will not pass into our analysis; on the contrary, they will pass, in the proper sense of the term: the analysis is a crossing of the text; these problems can be located in terms of cultural quotations, of departures of codes, not of determinations.

A Final word, which is perhaps one of conjuration, exorcism: the text we are going to analyze is neither lyrical nor political, it speaks neither of love nor society, it speaks of death. This means that we shall have to lift a particular censorship: that attached to the sinister. We shall do this, persuaded that any censorship stands for all others: speaking of death outside all religion lifts at once the religious interdict and the rationalist one.

Analysis of lexias 1-17

(1) - The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar -

(2) Of course I shall not pretend to consider it any matter for wonder, that the extraordinary case of M. Valdemar has excited discussion. It would have been a miracle has it not - especially under the circumstances. (3) Through the desire of all parties concerned, to keep the affair from the public, at least for the present, or until we had further opportunities for investigation - through our endeavors to effect this - (4) a garbed or exaggerated account made its way into society, and became the source of many unpleasant misrepresentations, and, very naturally, of a great deal of disbelief.

(5) It is now rendered necessary that I give the *facts* -- as far as I comprehend them myself.

(6) They are, succinctly, these:

(7) My attention, for the last three years, had been repeatedly drawn to the

subject of Mesmerism; (8) and, about nine months ago, it occurred to me, quite suddenly, that in a series of experiments made hitherto, (9) there had been a very remarkable and most unaccountable omission: (10) - no person had as yet been mesmerized 'in articulo mortis.' (11) It remained to be seen, (12) first, whether, in such condition, there existed in the patient any susceptibility to the magnetic influence; (13) secondly, whether if any existed, it was impaired or increased by the condition; (14) thirdly, to what extent, or for how long a period, the encroachments of Death might be arrested by the process. (15) There were other points to be ascertained, (16) but these most excited my curiosity (17) - the last in especial, from the immensely important character of its consequences.

1. -- The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar - (-- La Vérité sur la case de M. Valdemar --)

The function of the title has not been well studied, at least from a structural point of view. What can be said straight away is that for commercial reasons, society needing to assimilate the text to a product, a commodity, has need of markers: the function of the title is to mark the beginning of the text, that is, to constitute the text as a commodity. Every title thus has several simultaneous meanings, including at least these two: (I) what it says linked to the contingency of what follows it; (ii) the announcement itself that a piece of literature (which means, in fact, a commodity) is going to follow; in other words, the title always has a double function; enunciating and deictic.

(a) Announcing a truth involves the stipulation of an enigma. The posing of the enigma is a result (at the level of the signifiers): of the word 'truth' [in the French title]; of the word 'case' (that which is exceptional, therefore marked, therefore signifying, and consequently of which the meaning must be found); of the definite article 'the' [in the French title] (there is only one truth, all the work of the text will, then, be needed to pass through this narrow gate); of the cataphorical form implied by the title: what follows will realize what is announced, the resolution of the enigma is already announced; we should note that the English says: -- The Facts in the Case . . . -- : the signified which Poe is aiming at is of an empirical order, that aimed at by the French translator is hermeneutic: the truth refers then to the exact facts, but also perhaps to their meaning. However this may be, we shall code this first sense of the lexia: 'enigma, position' (the enigma is the general name of a code, the position is only one term of it).

(b) The truth could be spoken without being announced, without

there being a reference to the word itself. If one speaks of what one is going to say, if language is thus doubled into two layers of which the first in some sense caps the second, then what one is doing is resorting to the use of a metalanguage. There is then here the presence of the metalinguistic code.

(c) This metalinguistic announcement has an aperitive function: it is a question of whetting the reader's appetite (a procedure which is akin to 'suspense'). The narrative is a commodity the proposal of which is preceded by a 'patter.' This 'patter,' this 'appetizer' is a term of the narrative code (rhetoric of narration).

(d) A proper name should always be carefully questioned, for the proper name is, if I can put it like this, the prince of signifiers; its connotations are rich, social and symbolic. In the name of Valdemar, the following two connotations at least can be read: (i) presence of a socio-ethnic code: is the name German? Slavic? In any case, not Anglo-Saxon; this little enigma here implicitly formulated, will be resolved at [lexia] number 19 (Valdemar is Polish); (ii) 'Valdemar' is 'the valley of the sea'; the oceanic abyss' the depths of the sea is a theme dear to Poe; the gulf refers to what is twice outside nature, under the waters and under the earth. From the point of view of the analysis there are, then, the traces of two codes: a socio-ethnic code and a (or the) symbolic code (we shall return to these codes a little later).

(e) Saying 'M(onsieur) Valdemar' is not the same thing as saying 'Valdemar.' In a lot of stories Poe uses simple Christian names (Ligeia, Eleanora, Morella). The presence of the 'Monsieur' brings will it an effect of social reality, of the historically real: the hero is socialized, he forms part of a definite society, in which he is supplied with a civil title. We must therefore note: social code. (f)

2. 'Of course I shall not pretend to consider it any matter for wonder, that the extraordinary case of M. Valdemar has excited discussion. It would have been a miracle had it not - especially under the circumstances.'

(a) This sentence (and those immediately following) have as their obvious function that of exciting the reader's expectation, and that is why they are apparently meaningless: what one wants is the solution of the enigma posed in the title (the 'truth'), but even the exposition of this enigma is held back. So we must code: delay in posing the

enigma.

(b) The word 'extraordinary' is ambiguous: it refers to that which departs from the norm but not necessarily from nature (if the case remains 'medical'), but it can also refer to what is supernatural, what has moved into transgression (this is the 'fantastic' elements of the stories - 'extraordinary,' precisely [The French title of Poe's Collected Stories is 'Histoires extraordinaires'] - that Poe tells). The ambiguity of the word is here meaningful: the story will be a horrible one (outside the limits of nature) which is yet covered by the scientific alibi (here connoted by the 'discussion,' which is a scientist's word). This bonding is in fact cultural: the mixture of the strange and the scientific had its high-point in the part of the nineteenth century to which Poe, broadly speaking, belongs: there was great enthusiasm for observing the supernatural scientifically (magnetism, spiritism, telepathy, etc.); the supernatural adopts a scientific, rationalist alibi; the cry from the heart of that positivist age runs thus: if only one could believe scientifically in immortality! This cultural code, which for simplicity's sake we shall here call the scientific code, will be of great importance throughout the narrative.

3. 'Through the desire of all parties concerned, to keep the affair from the public, at least for the present, or until we had further opportunities for investigation - through our endeavors to effect this -'

(a) Same scientific code, picked up by the word 'investigation' (which is also a detective story word: the fortune of the detective novel in the second half of the nineteenth century - starting from Poe, precisely - is well known: what is important here, ideologically and structurally, is the conjunction of the code of the detective enigma and the code of science - scientific discourse - which proves that structural analysis can collaborate perfectly well with ideological analysis).

(b) The motives of the secret are not given; they can proceed from two different codes, present together in reading (to read is also silently to imagine what is not said): (i) the scientific-deontological code: the doctors and Poe, out of loyalty and prudence, do not want to make public a phenomenon which has not been cleared up scientifically; (ii) the symbolic code: there is a taboo on living death: one keeps silent because it is horrible. We ought to say straight away (even though we shall come back and insist on this alter) that these two codes are undecidable (we can't choose one against the other), and that it is this very undecidability which makes for a good

narrative.

4. 'a garbled or exaggerated account made its way into society, and became the source of many unpleasant misrepresentations, and, very naturally, of a great deal of disbelief'

(a) The request for truth, that is, the enigma, has already been placed twice (by the word 'truth' [in the French title] and by the expression 'extraordinary case'). The enigma is here posed a third time (to pose an enigma, in structural terms, means to utter: there is an enigma), by the invocation of the error to which it gave rise: the error, posed here, justifies retroactively, anaphorically, the [French] title . . . The redundancy operated on the position of the enigma (the fact that there is an enigma is repeated in several ways) has an aperitive value: it is a matter of exciting the reader, of procuring clients for the narrative.

(b) In the actional sequence 'to hide,' a second term appears: this is the effect of the secret: distortion, mistaken opinion, accusation of mystification.

5. 'It is now rendered necessary that I give the *facts* -- as far as I comprehend them myself'

(a) The emphasis placed on 'the facts' supposes the intrication of two codes, between which - as in (3b), it is impossible to decide: (i) the law, the deontology of science, makes the scientist, the observer, a slave to the face; the opposition of fact and rumor is an old mythical theme; when it is invoked in a fiction (and invoked emphatically), the fact has as its structural function (for the real effect of the artifice fools no one) that of authenticating the story, not that of making the reader believe that it really happened, but that of presenting the discourse of the real, and not that of the fable. The fact is then caught up in a paradigm in which it is opposed to mystification (Poe admitted in a private letter that the story of M. Valdemar was a pure mystification: *it is a mere hoax*). The code which structures the reference to the fact is then the scientific code which we have already met. (ii) However, any more or less pompous recourse to the fact can also be considered to be the symptom of the subject's being mixed up with the symbolic [. . .] the narrator takes on an imaginary role, that of the scientist: the signified of the lexia is then the asymbolism of the subject of the enunciation; 'I' presents itself as asymbolic; the negation of the symbolic is clearly part of the symbolic code itself.

(b) The actional sequence 'to hide' develops: the third term posits the necessity of rectifying the distortion located in (4b); this rectification stands for: wanting to unveil (that which was hidden). This narrative sequence 'to hide' clearly constitutes a stimulation for the narrative; in a sense, it justifies it, and by that very fact points to its value (its 'standing-for'), makes a commodity of it: I am telling the story, says the narrator, in exchange for a demand for counter-error, for truth (we are in a civilization where truth is a value, that is, a commodity). It is always very interesting to try to pick out the 'standing-for' of a narrative: in exchange for what is the story told? In the 'Arabian Nights,' each story stands for a day's survival. Here we are warned that the story of M. Valdemar stands for the truth (first presented as a counter-distortion).

(c) The 'I' appears [in French] for the first time - it was already present in the 'we' in 'our endeavors' (3). The enunciation in fact includes three I's, or in other words, three imaginary roles (to say 'I' is to enter the imaginary): (i) a narrating 'I,' an artist, whose motive is the search for effect; to this 'I' there corresponds a 'You,' that of the literary reader, who is reading 'a fantastic story by the great writer Edgar Poe'; (ii) an I-witness, who has the power to bear witness to a scientific experiment; the corresponding 'You' is that of a panel of scientists, that of serious opinion, that of the scientific reader; (iii) an I-actor, the experimenter, the one who will magnetize Valdemar; the 'You' in this case is Valdemar himself; in these two last instances, the motive for the imaginary role is the "truth." We have here the three terms of a code which we shall call, perhaps provisionally, the code of communication. Between these three roles, there is no doubt another language, that of the unconscious, which is spoken neither in science, nor in literature; but that language, which is literally the language of the interdict, does not say 'I': our grammar, with its three persons, is never directly that of the unconscious.

6. 'They are, succinctly, these:'

(a) Announcing what is to follow involves metalanguage (and the rhetorical code); it is a boundary marking the beginning of a story in the story.

(b) 'Succinctly' carries three mixed and undecidable connotations: (i) "Don't be afraid, this won't take too long": this, in the narrative code, is the phatic mode . . . the function of which is to hold the attention,

maintain contact; (ii) "It will be short because I'll be sticking strictly to the facts"; this is the scientific code, allowing the announcement of the scientist's 'spareness,' the superiority of the instance of the fact over the instance of discourse; (iii) to pride oneself on talking briefly is in a certain sense an assertion against speech, a limitation of the supplement of discourse, that is, the symbolic; this is to speak the code of the asymbolic.

7. 'My attention, for the last three years, had been repeatedly drawn to the subject of Mesmerism;'

(a) The chronological code must be observed in all narratives; here in this code ('last three years'), two values are mixed; the first is in some sense naive; one of the temporal elements of the experiment to come is noted: the time of its preparation; the second does not have a diegetical, operative function (this is made clear by the test of commutation; if the narrator had said seven years instead of three, it would have had no effect on the story); it is therefore a matter of a pure reality-effect: the number connotes emphatically the truth of the fact: what is precise is reputed to be real (this illusion, moreover, since it does exist, is well known; a delirium of figures). Let us note that linguistically the word 'last' is a 'shifter' [deictic, see glossary]; it refers to the situation of the speaker in time; it thus reinforces the *presence* of the following account.

(b) A long actional sequence begins here, or at the very least a sequence well-furnished with terms; its object is the starting-off of an experiment (we are under the alibi of experimental science); structurally, this setting-off is not the experiment itself, but an experimental programme. This sequence in fact stands for the formulation of the enigma, which has already been posed several times ('there is an enigma'), but which has not yet been formulated. So as not to weigh down the report of the analysis, we shall code the 'programme' separately, it being understood that by procuration the whole sequence stands for a term of the enigma-code. In this 'programme' sequence, we have here the first term: the position of the scientific field of the experiment, magnetism.

(c) The reference to magnetism is extracted from a cultural code which is very insistent in this part of the nineteenth century. Following Mesmer (in English, 'magnetism' can be called 'mesmerism') and the Marquis Armand de Puységur, who had discovered that magnetism could provoke somnambulism,

magnetizers and magnetist societies had multiplied in France (around 1820); in 1829, it appears that it had been possible, under hypnosis, to carry out the painless ablation of a tumor; in 1845, the year of our story, Braid of Manchester codified hypnosis by provoking nervous fatigue through the contemplation of a shining object; in 1850, in the Mesmeric Hospital of Calcutta, painless births were achieved. WE know that subsequently Charcot classified hypnotic states and circumscribed hypnosis under hysteria (1882), but that since then hysteria has disappeared from hospitals as a clinical entity (from the moment it was no longer observed). The year 1845 marks the peak of scientific illusion: people believed in a psychological reality of hypnosis (although Poe, pointing out Valdemar's 'nervousness,' may allow the inference of the subject's hysterical predisposition).

(d) Thematically, magnetism connotes (at least at that time) an idea of fluid: something passes from one subject to another; there is an exchange (an interdict) between the narrator and Valdemar: this is the code of communication.

8. 'and, about nine months ago, it occurred to me, quite suddenly, that in a series of experiments made hitherto,'

(a) The chronological code ('nine months') calls for the same remarks as those made in (7a).

(b) Here is the second term of the 'programme' sequence": in (7b) a domain was chosen, that of magnetism; now it is cut up; a particular problem will be isolated.

9. 'there had been a very remarkable and most unaccountable omission:'

(a) The enunciation of the structure of the 'programme' continues: here is the third term: the experiment which has not yet been tried - and which, therefore, for any scientist concerned with research, is to be tried.

(b) This experimental lack is not a simple oversight, or at least this oversight is heavily significant; it is quite simply the oversight of death: there has been a taboo (which will be lifted, in the deepest horror); the connotation belongs to the symbolic code.

10. '-no person had as yet been mesmerized "in articulo mortis."'

(a) Fourth term of the 'programme' sequence' the content of the omission (there is clearly a reduction of the link between the assertion of the omission and its definition, in the rhetorical code: to announce/to specify).

(b) The use of Latin (in articulo mortis), a juridical and medical language, produces an effect of scientificity (scientific code), but also, through the intermediary of euphemism (saying in a little-known language something one does not dare say in everyday language), designates a taboo (symbolic code). It seems clear that what is taboo in death, what is essentially taboo, is the passage, the threshold, the dying; life and death are relatively well-classified states, and moreover they enter into a paradigmatic opposition, they are taken in hand by meaning, which is always reassuring; but the transition between the two states, or more exactly, as will be the case here, their mutual encroachment, outplays meaning and engenders horror: there is the transgression of an antithesis, of a classification.

11. 'It remained to be seen'

The detail of the 'programme' is announced (rhetorical code and action sequence 'programme').

12. 'first, whether, in such conditions, there existed in the patient any susceptibility to the magnetic influence;'

(a) In the 'programme' sequence, this is the first coining of the announcement made in (11): this is the first problem to elucidate.

(b) This Problem I itself entitles an organized sequence (or a sub-sequence of the 'programme'): here we have the first term: the formulation of the problem; its object is the very being of magnetic communication: does it exist, yes or no? (there will be an affirmative reply to this in lexia 78): the long textual distance separating the question and the answer is specific to narrative structure, which authorizes and even demands the careful construction of sequences, each of which is a thread which weaves in with its neighbors).

13. 'secondly, whether if any existed, it was impaired or increased by the condition;'

(a) In the 'programme' sequence, the second problem here takes its

place (it will be noted that Problem II is linked to Problem I by a logic of implication: 'if yes . . . then'; if not, then the whole story would fall down; the alternative, according to the instance of discourse, is thus faked).

(b) Second sub-sequence of 'programme': this is Problem II: the first problem concerned the being of the phenomenon; the second concerns its measurement (all this is very 'scientific'); the reply to the question will be given in lexia 82; receptivity is increased: 'In such experiments with this patient I had never perfectly succeeded before . . . but to my astonishment . . .'

14. 'thirdly, to what extent, or for how long a period, the encroachments of Death might be arrested by the process.'

(a) This is Problem III posed by the 'programme.'

(b) This Problem III is formulated, like the others - this formulation will be taken up again emphatically in lexia 17; the formulation implies two sub-questions: (i) to what extent does hypnosis allow life to encroach on death? The reply is given in lexia 110: *up to and including language*; (ii) for how long? There will be no direct reply to this question: the encroachment of life on death (the survival of the hypnotized dead man) will end after seven months, but only through the arbitrary intervention of the experimenter. We can then suppose: infinitely, or at the very least indefinitely within the limits of observation.

15. 'There were other points to be ascertained,'

The 'programme' mentioned other problems which could be posed with respect to the planned experiment, in a global form. The phrase is equivalent to 'etcetera.' Valéry [a French writer, roughly contemporary with Baudelaire, the poet who translated Poe] said that in nature there was no etcetera; we can add: nor in the unconscious. In fact the etcetera only belongs to the discourse of pretence; on the one hand it pretends to play the scientific game of the vast experimental programme; it is an operator of the pseudo-real: on the other hand, by glossing over and avoiding the other problems, it reinforces the meaning of the questions already posed: the powerfully symbolic has been announced, and the rest, under the instance of discourse, is only play acting.

16. 'but these most excited my curiosity,'

Here, in the 'programme,' it's a matter of a global reminder of the three problems (the 'reminder,' or the 'résumé,' like the 'announcement,' are terms in the rhetorical code).

17. ' - this last in especial, from the immensely important character of its consequences.'

(a) An emphasis (a term in the rhetorical code) is placed on Problem III.

(b) Two more undecidable codes: (i) scientifically, what is at stake is the pushing back of a biological given, death; (ii) symbolically, this is the transgression of meaning, which opposes life and death.

[Barthes now analyzes the rest of the lexias, which he does in less detail - admitting that "it would take too long."] *Methodological conclusions*

The remarks which will serve as a conclusion to these fragments of analysis will not necessarily be theoretical; theory is not abstract, speculative: the analysis itself, although it was carried out on a contingent text, was already theoretical, in the sense that it observed (that was its aim) a language in the process of formation. That is to say -or to recall - that we have not carried out an explication of the text: we have simply tried to grasp the narrative as it was in the process of self-construction (which implies at once structure and movement, system and infinity). Our structuration does not go beyond that spontaneously accomplished by reading. In concluding, then, it is not a question of delivering the 'structure' of Poe's story, and even less that of all narratives, but simply of returning more freely, and with less attachment to the progressive unfolding of the text, to the principal codes which we have located.

[. . .]Although all the codes are in fact cultural, there is yet one, among those we have met with, which we shall privilege by calling it the *cultural code*: it is the code of knowledge, or rather of human knowledges, of public opinions, of culture as it is transmitted by the book, by education, and in a more general and diffuse form, by the whole of sociality. We met several of these cultural codes (or several sub-codes of the general cultural code): the scientific code [. . .], the rhetorical code, which gathers up all the social rules of what is said [. . .], the chronological code: 'dating,' which seems natural and objective to us today, is in fact a highly cultural practice [. . .], the socio-historical code [. . .] [Barthes continues, naming other codes and emphasizing actional and enigmatic codes.]

These are the codes which traverse the fragments we have analyzed. We deliberately don't structure them further, nor do we try to distribute the terms within

each code according to a logical or semiological schema; this is because for us the codes are only departures of 'déjà-lu' [already-read], beginning of intertextuality: the frayed nature of the codes does not contradict structure [. . .] but on the contrary (this is the fundamental affirmation of textual analysis) is an integral part of structuration. It is this 'fraying' of the text which distinguishes structure - the object of structural analysis, strictly speaking - from structuration - the object of the textual analysis we have attempted to practice here.

The textile metaphor we have just used is not fortuitous. Textual analysis indeed requires us to represent the text as a tissue (this is moreover the etymological sense), as a skein of different voices and multiple codes which are at once interwoven and unfinished. A narrative is not a tabular space, a flat structure, it is a volume, a stereophony [. . .]

All this 'volume' is pulled forward (towards the end of the narrative), thus provoking the impatience of reading, under the effect of two structural dispositions: (a) distortion: the terms of a sequence or a code are separated, threaded with heterogeneous elements: a sequence seems to have been abandoned (for example, the degradation of Valdemar's health), but is taken up again further on, sometimes much later; an expectation is created; we can now even define the sequence [. . .] (b) irreversibility: despite the floating character of structuration, in the classical, readable narrative (such as Poe's story), there are two codes which maintain a directional order, the actional [and the enigmatic codes. Barthes claims that 'modern' narrative attempts to reverse this irreversibility.]

We must not, however, exaggerate the distance separating the modern text from the classical narrative. [Barthes explains that Poe's story too exhibits 'undecidability.'] Undecidability is not a weakness, but a structural condition of narration: there is no unequivocal determination of the enunciation: in an utterance, several codes and several voices are there, without priority. Writing is precisely this loss of origin, this loss of 'motives' to the profit of a volume of indeterminations or over-determinations: this volume is, precisely, 'significance.' Writing comes along very precisely at the point where speech stops, that is from the moment one can no longer locate who is speaking and one simply notes that speaking has started.

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