

## Structural causality

stems from a different treatment of chronology and causality. In the 'story' the events are linked together according to their temporal sequence and causality. In the 'plot' they are rearranged, disrupting the chronological order and causal connections. In the precise definition by \*Boris Tomashevskii in his *Teoriia literatury* [*Theory of Literature* 1925], 'the story consists of a series of narrative motifs in their chronological sequence, moving from individual cause to effect; whereas the plot represents the same motifs, but in the specific order of occurrence to which they are assigned in the text.'

Another fundamental difference between the story and the plot, according to \*Viktor Shklovskii, results from the introduction into the narrative of authorial digressions, comments and observations. In many works, these digressions are motivated realistically but in some they are 'laid bare,' drawing the attention of the reader to their presence rather than their function. For Shklovskii, the best example of the plot technique 'laid bare' was Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* with its continuous disruptions of the action, authorial digressions, displacement of chronology, transposition of chapters, and retardations. In the opinion of Shklovskii, *Tristram Shandy* was the most typical novel in world literature for it revealed the aesthetic laws of plot construction without any realistic justification.

The concept of plot was further developed by \*Vladimir Propp in his study of the structural laws of the folk-tale, *Morfologiiia skazki* [*Morphology of the Folktale* 1928]. Focusing on the elements of the composition rather than on characters, Propp distinguished 31 elements that appear in the structure of the folk-tale. He perceived these elements as 'functions' and defined them in terms of their significance for the course of the action. He formulated some important rules about the sequence of functions which, he maintained, would appear in the same order even if some of them were absent. (See also \*narratology.)

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## Primary Sources

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The concept of structural causality, derived from the work of French Marxist philosopher \*Louis Althusser, has been most rigorously used by \*Fredric Jameson to explain how social forces manifest themselves in literary texts. (See \*text.) Althusser endeavours in *Reading Capital* (1965) to establish the centrality of structural causality to Marxist philosophy. Traditional historiography, according to Althusser, has available to it 'only two systems of concepts with which to think effectivity' (186). One, 'a transitive mechanical causality,' is linear and works only within a 'homogenous planar space' (182). This type of causality, which Althusser attributes to political economy, cannot 'think the effectivity of a whole on its elements' (186). The other option, 'expressive causality' (187), reduces the social totality to an 'inner essence' and sees the elements of the totality as 'no more than the phenomenal forms of [its] expression' (186). This type of causality, which Althusser attributes to Hegel, only works 'on the absolute condition that the whole [is] not a structure' (187). Marx, conceiving of the \*social formation as a 'complex and deep space' (182) and a 'structure in dominance,' needed a new type of historical causality which would allow for the relative independence of the various levels and their different temporalities, and which would yet bind them together in a totality. According to Althusser, this third type of causality and the only one adequate to its object is 'a structural causality' (186).

Althusser begins *Reading Capital* with the claim that a \*symptomatic reading of Marx uncovers one 'important answer to a question that is nowhere posed.' Marx answers the question 'of the effectivity of a structure on its elements' without having posed it 'because the age Marx lived in did not provide him ... an adequate concept with which to think what he produced.' He answered the question through a proliferation of images and metaphors around the image of *Darstellung* (representation, exhibition, presentation) (29). (See \*metonymy/metaphor.) Althusser claims that this image is the keystone of Marx's work and at-