

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains how Post-Structuralism develops from Semiology and Structuralism, and its application to theories of Identity.

3.1 Post-Structuralism

The general ideas of Post-Structuralism are the rebuttal of Essentialism, the dismantle of Binarism and the deconstruction of metanarrative or the historical grand narrative. Post-Structuralism shares its method with Deconstruction. Pattarakulwanich asserts in *An Mai Ao Reang* (Reading against the Grain) that theories with the *Post-* attached are to them refer to theories influenced from Post-Modernism which removes certainty from any solid conclusion.

The term “Deconstruction” was firstly employed in Martin Heidegger’s article entitled “Basic Problems of Phenomenology” that was presented in the summer of 1927 (<http://midnightuniv.org/middata/newpage7.html>). Heidegger discusses the nature of phenomenology, a philosophical approach concentrating on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience that is made up of three different approaches; reduction, construction, and destruction. Heidegger points out that these three approaches are interrelated. Heidegger delineates that Deconstruction is not similar to destruction. Reynolds states in *Understanding Derrida* that Deconstruction is not a simple rejection or negotiation of certain ideas in Philosophy. The initial stage of deconstruction is the reversal and then the disruption of traditional philosophical oppositions. This double reading seeks the destabilization of philosophical positions and hierarchies in the hope of creating a new perspective (Reynolds, 3). However, Derrida holds a different view on the completeness of Deconstructive criticism. Even though Deconstruction can be used as a tool for Christianity, Marxism, and Feminism in the ways it interrogates some kinds of standard and shows how a work overlooks something or inadequately addresses something, Derrida argues that nobody can

explicate something thoroughly. He also does not suggest a way to make the book finally complete, but to show its necessary incompleteness.

In relation to literature, Post-Structuralism concerns with the omission of the study of the author's biography and social influence, and the denial of the concept of former claiming that authors and literary critics can not monopolize the right to construct the "meaning" of the text. Chetana Nagavajara suggests in *Trends in Literary Evaluation in Twentieth-Century: German, French, and Anglo-American Criticism* that literary study should focus on the text, not the author.

Nagavajara quotes Catherine Belsey in saying that;

"The death of author, the absolute Subject of literature, means the liberation of the text from the authority of a presence behind it which gives it meaning. Released from the constraints of a single and univocal reading, the text becomes available for production, plural, contradictory, capable of change (Nagavajara, 90)."

The above mentioned saying is also supported by Roland Barthes's essay entitled "the death of the author". Barthes mentioned that linguistics provides the destruction of the author with the valuable analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance of writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a subject, not a person.

Christina Howells asserts in *Derrida: Deconstruction from Phenomenology to Ethics* that Plato always refuses the intuition of the thing itself to writing and painting in the "proper" sense, because they deal only in copies and copies of copies.

According to Derrida, we are witnessing what he calls "the closure of the book" and "the opening of the text" (Howells, 74-75). As Quoted in the Preface of the English translation version of *Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also mentions that text becomes open at both ends.

Starting from Roland Barthes, Post-Structuralism was developed from Semiology and Semiotics around the late 1960s. In brief, Semiology is the French school of thought related to five difficult thinkers namely Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. Meanwhile, Semiotics is an Anglo-American term used among English speaking academics to honor Charles Sanders Peirce (Charoensin Olan, 8). Post Structuralist theorists believe

that the way to acquire knowledge is based on discontinuity, differentiation, and dispersion. In General, Post-Structuralist attempt to reverse or at least re-arrange the positioning of the meaning. In other words, meaning is formulated from differences and opposition.

Semiology was developed from Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics dividing two elements of communication; langue and parole (Charoensin Olan, 7). Langue is the system or the rule of the language controlled by society. De Saussure also said that the relationship between signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Meanwhile, parole is the actual articulation of the language of a particular speaker. Saussure employs two kinds of analysis which are firstly the synchronic analysis or the study of language as a functioning totality at any given time, and the diachronic analysis or the study of language through historical periods. Saussure argues that meaning is established from distinction and opposition. For example, "cat" is different from "mat" as it has a different beginning letter. However, Derrida disagrees with Saussure about the notion of the transparency of spoken language or speech.

Saussure's theories were later developed into Structuralism that extends the study of sign into the narrative form. Structuralism also presupposes a privileged centre of the universe on which we can base our belief systems. Therefore, it follows the same tradition of Western philosophy and metaphysics. Derrida calls this presupposition "Logocentrism".

It can be said that there are four main Structuralism theorists; Jakobson, Greimas, Todorov and Barthes. Roman Jakobson's main concepts are about polarities in language which is metaphor and metonymy. Jakobson asserts that both of them possess equivalent status. However, metaphor exploits language's vertical relations, while metonymy exploits language's horizontal relations. In short, the opposition of metaphor and metonymy is the opposition between the synchronic mode of language or its immediate, coexistent, vertical relationships and its diachronic mode or its sequential, successive, linearly progressive relationship. Jakobson's seminal discussion of metaphor and metonymy comes at the end of a highly technical discussion of aphasia or language disorder. He begins by formulating one of the basic principles of Saussurian linguistics, that language, like all systems of signs, has twofold character, involving two distinct operations; selection and combination. To

produce a sentence like “ship crossed the sea”, the composer selects the words he needs from the appropriate sets of paradigms of the English language and combines them according to the rule of language. If the composer substitutes “ploughed” for “crossed”, he creates a metaphor based on a similarity between things otherwise different—the movement of a ship through water and the movement of the plough through the earth. If he substitutes keels for ships, he uses the figure of *synecdoche* (part for whole or whole for part). If he substitutes “deep” for “sea”, he uses the figure of metonymy, an attribute or cause or effect of a thing signifies a thing (Hawkes, 77-78).

According to Jakobson, “synecdoche” is a subspecies of metonymy: both depend on contiguity in space and time (the keel is part of the ship, depth is the property of the sea), and thus correspond to the combination axis of language. Metaphor, in contrast, corresponds to the selection axis of the language, and depends on similarity between things not normally contiguous. Aphasia tends to be more affected in one or other of selection and combination functions.

Algirdas Julius Greimas (A.J Greimas), a French Structuralist, used Saussure in developing the theory of the Semiotic Square to investigate the binary opposition of character, setting, ideology, etc (being/nothingness, hot/cold, culture/nature). In this sense he is unlike Saussure who did not go further to “Structure” or the relationship between objects. In *Structural Semantics*, Greimas asserts that thanks to the ability to see a distinction of opposition, the world takes shape. He also sees grammar in the narratives. He organizes characters into three pairs;

1. Subject versus Object
2. Sender versus Receiver
3. Helper versus Opponent (Hawkes, 91-93).

Tzvetan Todorov asserts that an attempt of structuralism is to constitute itself as a science (Young, 3). For Todorov, the emphasis on literature as writing is shifted to an emphasis on the activity of reading. Todorov tends to assume a “depth model”. In other words, its object of study is the depth semantics of text and a universal grammar which underlies all languages. However, the literary structure which is unlike other structure permits the *parole* to modify the *langue*. Todorov also argues that there is a grammar of literary forms or a grammar of the narrative. Todorov

asserts that a genre like “novel”, “poem”, “tragedy” placed on the cover of a book programs readers’ expectations, reduces its complexity by giving a knowable shape and context. The knowledge of “reality” is not only coded but is also structured by and through conventions. This is known as the social construction of reality (Hawkes, 95-106).

In *Post-Structuralism: A Very Short Introduction*, Belsey exemplifies Levi Strauss’s explanation of the universal rule of kinship in the Elementary structure of kinship that all societies have the rules concerning who may or may not marry whom (Belsey, 58). In this book, the object of exchange is women, given as gifts from one patrilineal clan to another through the institution of marriage to consolidate the relationship between groups of men. However, Judith Butler asserts that this kind of sexual and filial relationship (husband/wife, father/son) is an antifeminist notion attempting to approve the inevitability of patriarchy (Butler, 48-49, 52).

Theorists in this group believe that there are two levels of meaning in literary texts; denotation and connotation. In this manner, values, beliefs etc. are conveyed in connotation. In other words, it constructs the stereotype of the signified. According to Derrida, binary opposition creates violent hierarchies. He also suggests that empirical system of binary opposition is self-destructive. For example, he does not see any reason why “Black” is in opposition to “White” or either one should be privileged in certain hierarchy such as the Star War mythology.

The significant difference between Structuralism and Post-Structuralism is the breaking down of the hierarchy called structure and absence of fixed meaning or ultimate transcendental signified in any signifying system. Lacan says that signifiers are always slipped, and Derrida coins the term “floating signifiers” to refer to uncertain and indeterminate signifiers. Derrida makes an observation that there seems to be more signifiers to represent signifieds.

Unlike Structuralism, Post-Structuralism is skeptical about the naturalization of the social construction of reality. As a result, the model of science that Post-Structuralism vehemently rebuts is Positivism which is a method of study which seeks factual data based on the beliefs of the existence of truth, certainty, reality and rationality. Post-Structuralism tends to replace it with the emphasis on the activity of the reader in a productive process of engaging with texts. Terry Eagleton states in

Literary Theory: an Introduction that a sign can be reproduced which is therefore part of its identity; but it is also what divides its identity, because it can always be reproduced in a different context which changes its meaning. It is difficult to know what a sign “originally” means, what its “original” context was: we simply encounter it in many different situations, and although it must maintain a certain consistency across those situations in order to be an identifiable sign at all, because its context is always different it is never absolutely the same, and it is never quite identical with itself. “Cat” may mean a furry-legged creature, a malicious person, a knotted whip, an American, a horizontal beam for raising a ship’s anchor, a six-legged tripod, a short tapered stick, and so on (Eagleton, 111-112).

The subject does not have any kind of stable identity and unified consciousness. No signifier is ever free of any other signifier. Thus no signification is ever closed. Roland Barthes supports that literature is a set of code which does not refer to the real world and real experience, but it is truly based on Mythology or Second-order signifiers. Barthes explains that there are two types of text which are readerly text and writerly text. Readerly text is encoded by the author while writerly text, more like modernist text, is a more open text where the reader is a producer and not a consumer.

Attempting to eradicate the stable human subject of the absolute right of the author in the western sphere of literature, Barthes decenterizes the “doxa” or prejudice, values or practices that society has naturalized, and granting the right to readers to response the text as the positions they are. Therefore, in literary studies context, the literary work, is no longer treated as a stable object or delimited structure. The critic would erase the claim of scientific objectivity in the text. It is also the critic’s duty to transform the text that can be read to be a writable text, and changes them into different discourse.

Barthes intends to destroy the unity of text as he regards that the writers just pick up the reader-made sign which is always available at his perception to resell it. Barthes decodes even the title of the story as a maker of text as a commodity¹. He

¹ Barthes’s notion is also supported by Marxist critiques. Louis Althusser argues that the production of literary works is similar to other kinds of production

deconstructs *Sarrasine* which is Balzac's novel by dividing the sign into 561 small units called lexias in his book *S/Z*. *S/Z* is an examination of this realist text that destabilizes the unity of the text, thereby making it more readerly. The story is divided into two parts, the story of the telling and the telling of the story. In the first part, the narrator attempts to seduce a beautiful Marquise by telling the second part; that is, he wants to exchange narrative knowledge for carnal knowledge. The lady wants to know the secret of the mysterious old man at the party, and the narrator wants to know the lady. Then, the bargain starts. The last thing the lady says "No one will have known me". In the second part, the sculptor Sarrasine for the opera singer La Zambinella, who had seen La Zambinella as a perfect lady finds out that the image of female perfection has been literally carved by a knife. His passion is actually based on the ignorance of the Italian custom of using castrated men, instead of women to play in the soprano (Young, 168-169). The main reason why Barthes chooses this text is that it explicitly thematizes the opposition between unity and fragmentation, between the idealized signified and the discontinuous empty play of signifiers, which underlies his opposition between the readerly and writerly.

Then, He divides five different codes of the narratives namely;

1. Proairetic (or narrative) code
2. Hermeneutic code
3. Semic code
4. Symbolic code
5. Cultural code

The proairetic code is the code of "actions" derived from the concept of *Proairesis* or the ability to rationally determine the result of an action. However, Barthes claims that as the readers go along, amassing the data provided by the narrative, only action is the name the readers give to each sequences, for example, "strolling sequences", "murder sequences" etc. Barthes argues that the basis of this narrative is therefore more empirical than rational, so it is useless to try to schematize this code further (Hawkes, 116-118).

The hermeneutic code consists of all the units whose function it is to articulate a question and a response in various ways. This code also portrays the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or can even

constitute an enigma and lead to its solution. This is the storytelling code, by means of which the narrative raises questions, creates suspense and mystery, before resolving these as it proceeds along its courses. Thus, the title of Balzac's story offers a good example of the hermeneutic code as it forces the readers to ask who commits which action immediately. Barthes asserts that this code usually involves syntactic ordering and can be recognized by its general "shape: a process of mystifying together with the implicit promise of subsequent demystification, the generation of suspense, to be followed by disclosure (Hawkes, 116-118).

The semic code is a code of connotations which utilizes hints or flickers of meaning generated by certain signifiers. For example, in the title of the story "Sarrasine", the final "e" of the name in French language suggests femininity of this code by simple lexical hint or flicker. This code deals to a certain extent with what Anglo-American criticism familiarly thinks of as themes or thematic structures. Then, the symbolic code is a code of recognizable groupings or configurations, regularly repeated in various modes and by various means in the text, which ultimately generates the dominant figure. Last of all, the cultural code manifests itself as a "gnomic" or collective, anonymous and authoritative voice which speaks for and about what aims to establish as "accepted" knowledge or wisdom. This assumption that "everyone knows" what the author means is clearly reinforced, and the code's function lies there: in the authentication by glancing or knowing reference, of established and authoritative cultural forms. This is the most controversial of the codes, and the least well-grounded, particularly as Barthes makes the initial and damaging admission that of course, all codes are cultural- a statement which, if true, it the self-denial of this code making this code the sum of all codes (Hawkes, 116-118).

To comply Post-Structuralism with "identity", certain perception such as gender, social status is melted. Anant Kanjanapan asserts in *Naewkit Puntan Tang Sangkom Lae wattanatham* (Basic Concept of Society and Culture), that Friedrich Nietzsche demolishes the notion of rationalism. Nietzsche also regards that unity and dignity are just a fiction. Nietzsche thinks that human instinct is repressed when they are in a community. Srifaungfung also refer to David Hume's thought in *Attalak Kan Toptuantisadee lae Naewkit* (Identity: theory and framework review) that

Rationalism is not an innate or intrinsic quality. On the contrary, he thinks that rationalism is acquired quality. Kanjanapan also mentions about Max Weber's concept that bureaucracy has substantially shaped an identity by enforcing the collective consciousness through legal, traditional and charismatic domination on people. In the same manner, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), the French social scientist, regards power as created by "discourse". Foucault asserts that truth and knowledge is justified by the instrumentalist approach derived from institution's control such as family, community, school, university, nation state etc. An obvious example of this theory is the justice system in different periods. One particular action could be regarded as a wrongdoing due to a construction of a particular meaning. On the other hand, that action could no longer be regarded as a wrongdoing when the constructed meaning is questioned or changed.

From psychoanalysis viewpoints, Varunee Purisinsith discussed in *Naewkit Puntan Tang Sangkom Lae wattanatham* (Basic Concept of Society and Culture) that Sigmund Freud argues that children will realize their sexes when they could distinguish physical difference and individual identity is based on gender Identity. Feminist group argues that this kind of repression is caused by certain form of culture. According to Purisinsith, during the second half of the 20th century, the women's nature is questioned by the theory of feminism. Purisinsith argues that formerly there are three major myths of women namely, first of all those women are irrational. Therefore, they are not supposed to be leaders. Secondly, the myths of women's inability to handle mathematics and sciences which pushes them from high-paid careers and make women became unskilled labor. Last of all, and probably the most important, women are considered service-oriented whose main ability is to care for children and the elderly. Feminist group regards that Freud's theory supports patriarchy and legitimates the pattern of relationship between Men and Women.

Purisinsith has explained that gender identity is constructed to control women. In *Satriniyom Kabuankan Lae Naewkit Tansangkom Heng Satawat Tee Yee Sip* (Feminism: Social Movement and Concepts in the 20th century, Purisinsith argues that the Phallus is the sign of the penis that girls learn that they do not have. Hence, the envy is not automatically developed. When the girls realize differences, they would conform themselves with the cultural role imposed by the society. In other words, as a

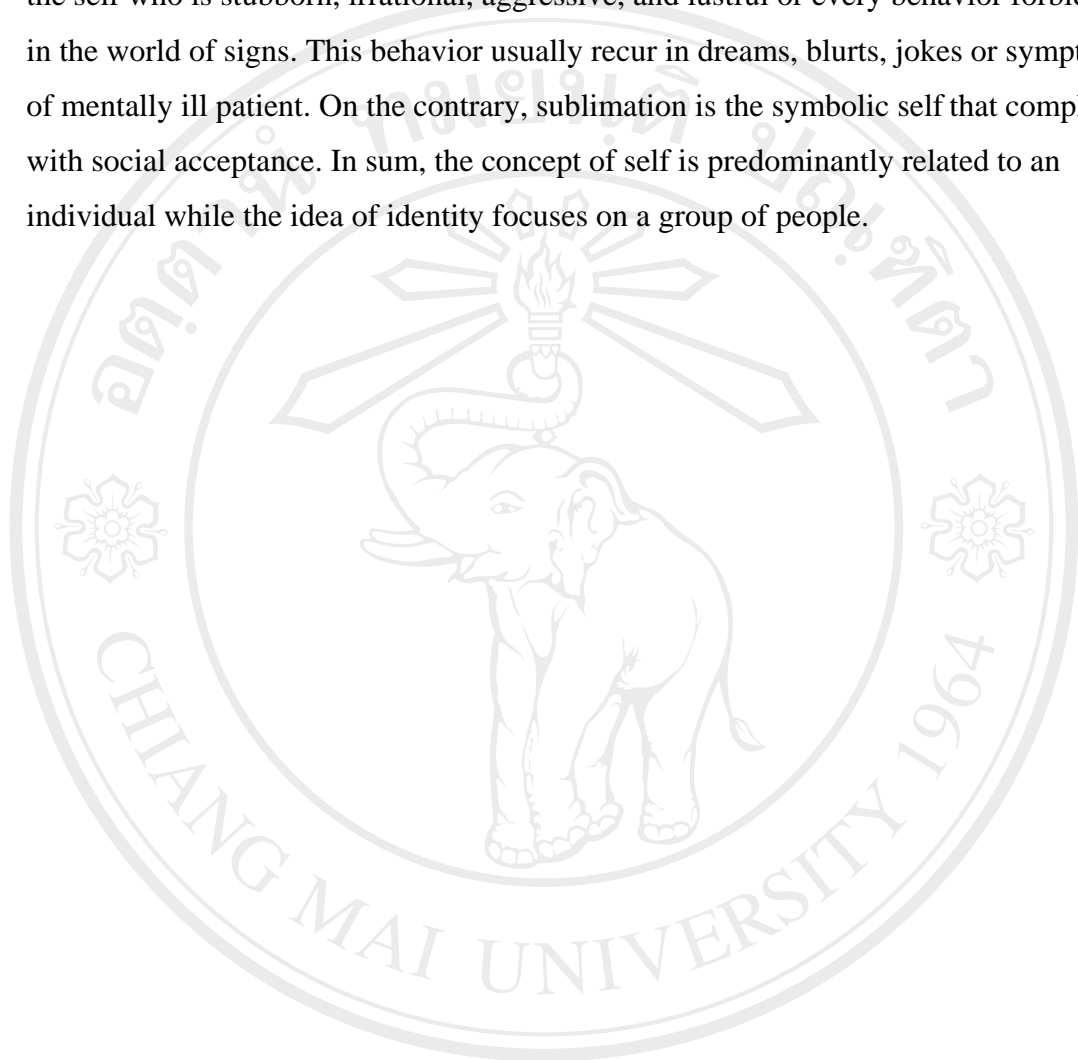
result, Oedipus complex, the fear of Castration or penis envy complex that formulates gender identity is socially constructed through discourse (Purinsith, 154-155).

Identity becomes more complex when different cultures increasingly clash in this globalizing era leading to the redefinition and renegotiation of the concept of “Self” and “Other”. As mentioned in the presiding part that Essentialism or the truth claim has become an illusion. To define what “Identity” means is not to discover its root or its origin but to reveal how this constructed notion has been concealed and naturalized. As quoted in <http://midnightuniv.org/midnight2544/0009999548.html>, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) asserts that human beings are nothingness as they have been undergone 3 processes of registering which are the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real to become human beings. As a consequence, human beings would bear 3 persons in one body.

Lacan’s theory is inspired by Feminist criticism of the concept of Oedipus complex and Castration, which lacks of the explanation on women’s psychology. For Lacan, “Ego” is alienated from “Self” that makes his theory different from Freudian theory (Hongthong, 13). For Lacan, the first person is created through the imaginary record causing narcissistic behavior. This person is the constructed by the realm of the imaginary that the self or “I” want to present him/herself to others. Therefore, the formation of self is constructed through the capture of its own gestalt or the picture they see in the mirror. The second person is formed by the symbolic records such as rationality, laws and morality. Firstly human beings construct their identity by trying to understand themselves by imitating the appearance of other objects. The formation of this person is objectified by rules, ideology, values, and discourse. Lacan asserts that the subconscious mind of human beings is full of discourse. For this reason human beings are merely the cultural innovation or cultural beings. The third person is purely constructed with inner emotion. Consequently, Lacan argues the self’s identity is negativity of the performance.

According to Lacan, the first stage of human beings’ identity takes place in the imagination which is an imitation of other objects. This human knowledge is a result of identity or ideal ego when human beings undergo social dialectic. Lacan asserts that this first identity is an alienation from the true nature of human beings as the social dialectic has gradually changed human beings’ identity. Or when the culture is

accepted, it becomes part of identity. Lacan claims that identity contains a binary opposition; preservation and sublimation. Preservation is an identity of negativity or the self who is stubborn, irrational, aggressive, and lustful or every behavior forbidden in the world of signs. This behavior usually recur in dreams, blurts, jokes or symptoms of mentally ill patient. On the contrary, sublimation is the symbolic self that complies with social acceptance. In sum, the concept of self is predominantly related to an individual while the idea of identity focuses on a group of people.



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