FRIDAY'S FOOTPRINT
Structuralism and the Articulated Text

By Wesley Morris

Wesley Morris has devoted himself to no less ambitious a task than to attempt a synthesis of a large number of theoretical critical perspectives usually treated as mutually exclusive. It is the measure of his achievement that he has been able to bring theoretical unity to the work of a rich variety of recent critics and to reconcile structuralism and poststructuralism with the divergent systems of such writers as Cassirer and Wittgenstein, the existentialist Sartre, phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Poulet, and the linguists Chomsky and Jakobson — critics whose schools are thought to be antagonistic, not only to the structuralist and poststructuralist phenomena, but to one another as well.

The design of Friday's Footprint serves to guide the reader toward a theory of literary interpretation, the primary issue of which is to define the literary "text" and its "context." Professor Morris begins with a discussion of William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses as an example of this author's "uses" of myth in forging his novel — "uses" being a term that, he points out, must be read as ambiguous, since it is not clear to what degree Faulkner uses the "Myth of the South" and to what extent (as Claude Lévi-Strauss would insist) the myth uses him. It is clear from this discussion, however, that because the novel "belongs to" culture, it also reflects the problematics of all human being and belonging; and insofar as the novel is an articulate text, the problematics of belonging poses questions of meaning, style, and self-expression that must be examined in light of both traditional romantic philosophies of language and the challenges to that tradition raised by contemporary structuralist and poststructuralist theory.

The discussion of the philosophy of language and stylistics in succeeding sections represents an attempt to deal with these problems in a series of dialectical engagements with major philosophers and critics. In Plato, Wittgen...
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for Barbara Alverson Morris
Let the earth speak, therefore, since the men are beyond our grasp. Over and above the delights which it had given me by the river's edge, let it at last answer up and yield the secret of its unspoiledness. What lay behind those confused appearances which are everything and nothing at one and the same time? If I take any particular scene and try to isolate it, that tree, that flower could be any other tree, any other flower. Could it also be a lie, that whole which gave me such delight, that whole whose parts vanished as soon as I tried to examine them individually? If I had to admit that it was real, I wanted at least to master it, all of it, down to the smallest detail. I turned a prosecutor's eye upon the enormous landscape, narrowing it down to a strip of clayey river-marge and a handful of grasses: nothing there to prove that when I next raised my eyes to the world about me I should not find the Bois de Boulogne stretched out all round that insignificant patch of ground which was trodden daily by the most authentic of savages but from which Man Friday's footprint was absent.

Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques*