

WEEK 4
FAKE-REAL

A work of fiction, particularly if conceived as a *building*, must have a structure—a structure that manifests and works though time—that generates and shapes ideas, emotions, and meaning.

One way of approaching your Fake-Real pieces, and anything you write, is to try to articulate its structure and how that structure affects ideas, emotions, and meaning.

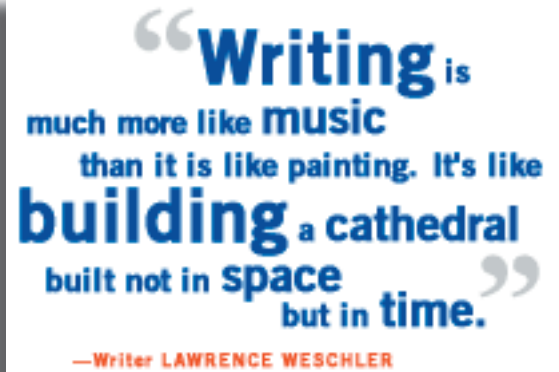
Structure is a vague word. It can be attached to a lot of things. For instance:

- PLOT STRUCTURE
- THEMATIC STRUCTURE
- DRAMATIC STRUCTURE
- GENERIC STRUCTURE
- MOTIF/SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE
- IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

It would seem as if almost any term can be put before structure and we can begin to think about some way of looking at how literature is built. In fact, that's just the point. One thing we do when we seek to understand literature is to try to see various aspects of the work in more *abstract* terms — to see it structurally. Usually, when we have perceived these underlying abstractions, we begin to see new connections between aspects of the work — parallels, patterns, and so on. Being a critical reader to yourself, you can perceive potential structures in your work; doing so allows you to re-enter your work for revision and ultimately gives you greater control over every aspect of your work.

Consider these related terms & metaphors to think about what structure is and what it does.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| ARCHITECTURE | PACING |
| FOUNDATION | ORDER |
| FRAME | SEQUENCE |
| PATTERN | SCHEMATIC |
| CONSTRAINT | ORDER |
| LAYOUT | FUNCTION |
| DESIGN | PROCESS |



A wonderful book on architecture, *Chambers for a Memory Palace*, inadvertently contains innumerable meditations on structure that serve the writer (story-designer) as well as the building designer. All we need are a few observations to know why this is and we can imagine the rest:

*The architect designs for numerous “audiences.” Not only different people, though this is true, but different *ways* of experiencing the structure: the newcomer who follows a path to the door, taking everything in for the first time; the regular who knows the space and requires it to be as functional as it is beautiful; the appreciator who knows the building so well that its shape is etched into the mind’s eye, viewable even from imaginary angles; and the impossible-audience-made-possible in photographs — esp. from above and so forth. Certainly there are others.

*The architect designs a *static* space knowing that its success is always dependent on the dynamic and subjective *temporal* experiences of its users.

*Finally, the architect designs both *visible and invisible* aspects of a building. In literary terms, it is sometimes the critic’s goal to speculate on the invisible foundations of a work, to imagine the framework that might exist behind the walls.

*Besides these large concerns, architects must consider pacing, the relationship between a path and a destination, perspectives, transitions, materials, light, sound, color....

A Final note: the notion of “chambers for a memory palace” is a reference to the old mnemonic strategy of rehearsing a speech while touring through a cathedral, for instance, assigning passages and key ideas to aspects of visual and spatial memories of the space. To deliver the speech, one need only tour the familiar building in one’s head.

1. Please write an **author's note** on one of your manuscripts (this is the one you'll be turning in tomorrow).
2. Please answer the questions below. (turn this sheet in with your revision strategy tomorrow).
3. Please choose your own group today — no more than **4** people per group — with the requirement that your group should have 2 students from each seminar and should not be *exactly* the same as either of your two previous groups.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. Describe your piece as a building (What sort of building is it?.. what is it like to see it in the distance, to enter, to walk through it? What is it made of? Is it large, small, open, tight, complicated, simple, intricate, bold, etc....).

2. What conventions of non-fiction/documentary have you used and why?

3. In what ways have you led your reader "by a chain of flowers"?

4. In your work, how much does it matter what is true and what is not?

5. What is the point of writing this sort of thing? What is the point of reading this sort of thing? (*please, no simple answers*)

In your discussions...

Try to come up with ways of describing the "structure" of each piece. Consider each of starred* analogies to architecture and how the writer has worked as a "story-designer."

* * * * *

In your comments, focus on **being descriptive of your experience as a reader.**

&

on **asking the author questions** about what they have done and how.