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Structuralism and the Linguistic Model

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Abstract

Structuralism, constructivist.. are multiple labels for one name, structurally has generated a wide debate and dialog between the supporters of the curriculum and its opponents, and it was not limited to the sharp debate on how to deal with literary works but extended to define completely new concepts of literature and criticism and their relationships to ideology, language… and other issues directly related to the critical process. Are its new concepts of literature and criticism? And what is the mission of the structural critic and how he deals with the text.

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1. Introduction

With the emergence of structuralism, the notion of "structure" came to occupy a central place in a wide range of scientific fields and subfields, including anthropology, literary criticism, philosophy, and epistemology. This emergence was accompanied by the rise of major intellectual figures and works, among them Roman Jakobson in linguistics, Jacques Lacan in psychology, Michel Foucault, Louis Pierre Althusser, and Spagh in philosophy and epistemology, Roland Barthes and Lucien Goldmann in Western criticism, and Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology. In Lévi-Strauss's work in particular, structuralism underwent a qualitative shift, since his analyses, especially of the structure of the Oedipus myth, enabled structuralism to move from linguistics to literary studies.

2. Why the text?

Enter Structuralists considered the text to be a self-contained, closed, and opaque system, analogous to the linguistic system, and held that it is composed of the same levels as language. They argued that the interaction of these levels, their internal ordering, and their coordination according to specific patterns are what confer literariness upon the text, and that these features ought to constitute the primary object of inquiry. Consequently, the relationship that had previously been posited between the text and what lies outside it came to be suspended, and the author became estranged from the text once its structure was completed and closed. The text was understood to possess its own voice and vision, which may resemble the external world but do not represent it. It has its own space, time, worlds, and events, which may intersect with the external world without necessarily referring to it. From this perspective, the text forms an autonomous entity, existing in and of itself, and it became the central focus of structuralist studies. In this way, structuralism put an end to the previous domination of the author as the main concern of critics, as well as to the excessive preoccupation with the extratextual elements to which the text alludes, at the expense of attention

3. Foundations of the Structuralist Approach

The structuralist approach rests on a number of key foundations, which may be summarized as follows:

3.1 Tendency toward Formalism

Structuralism was regarded first and foremost as a form of expression. Language, in this perspective, is likewise nothing more than a form of expression and one of its instruments. It carries no independent meaning; the signified is embedded within the signifier.[1]

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3.2 Rejection of History

Structuralism rejected the value of history on the grounds that it was of no real use, and it thus Rejection of History.

3.3 Rejection of the Author

The early stirrings of the "death of the author" or the rejection of the author figure predate the formal establishment of structuralism as a critical tendency. The figure who insisted on this most forcefully was the French poet Paul Valéry, who stated that "the author is a meaningless detail" (*l'auteur est détail inutile*). A number of French theorists later embraced this view, among them Gérard Genette, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[2]

In this perspective, the author ceases to be a creator or a genius and becomes instead a mere user of language. The author does not invent language; rather, he relies on a vast inherited linguistic reservoir. The text therefore becomes multivoiced, since it is constructed out of multiple prior writings, that is, quotations. Roland Barthes consequently affirms that the only true speaker is "language" itself. Michel Foucault similarly declares that "men believe that their language is their servant, and they do not realize that they themselves are subject to its captivity".[3]

3.4 Rejection of Social Reference

Structuralism rejects recourse to society in the analysis of creative production. In other words, it denies that society exerts a direct influence on the creator and on the act of creation itself.[4]

3.5 Rejection of Meaning Outside Language

The structuralist school excludes any conception of language as inherently meaningful in an extralinguistic sense. It maintains that it is difficult to accept the existence of a system of images and things in which signifieds could exist outside language, and that the world of signifieds is nothing other than the world of reality.[5]

Structuralism is therefore concerned with the system and the way in which it is organized. This focus on the system implies that meanings are relative, varied, and multiple.

4 Structuralist Concepts

The main structuralist concepts are as follows.[6]

4.1 Language and Speech

The structuralist project was built upon modern linguistics, particularly the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, who formulated a series of binaries, the most important of which is the opposition between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech). Language denotes the set of general rules and conventions that govern the production of speech. Speech, by contrast, is the actual

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implementation of these general rules and conventions at the concrete, individual level. The relationship between the two poles of this binary is that of whole to part: language is the whole, and speech is the part. "

4.2 System of Relations

The notion of relational identity is of central importance for structuralist analysis of all types of social and cultural phenomena. The significance of this principle also lies in the break it represents with the principle of historical identity. From this perspective, language is understood as a system of units bound together by interlocking relations. The value and identity of these units are determined by their position within the system, rather than by their historical development.

4.3 Synchrony and Diachrony

Synchrony refers to the time of interaction among elements at a single moment, that is, the time of their functioning together within a structure.

Diachrony refers to the time in which a structure is destabilized or an element within it collapses, and it is sometimes described as the opening of the structure onto time.

The study of a given language as a stable system at a specific historical moment falls under synchrony. Synchronically oriented analysis is therefore descriptive and static, and it remains independent of external phenomena and variables. By contrast, the study of the changes that occur in a language and their development over time falls under diachrony, so that diachronic analysis is historical in nature.[7]

4.4 Presence et absence (Presence and Absence)

The most significant development of Saussure's signifier–signified binary appears in what came to be known as relations of presence and absence. This development is evident in structuralist efforts to investigate meaning by probing the surface and depth of language. The concept of signifier and signified gained renewed impetus in the work of Roland Barthes, the critic, and Jacques Lacan, the psychoanalytic philosopher and critic, both of whom rejected the idea of a fixed bond between signifier and signified.

They argued that signifiers float and drift, as it were, luring signifieds toward them. These signifiers in turn become secondary, multiplied signifiers that attract composite signifieds. This shift liberated the word and allowed it to function as a free sign. In this configuration, the signifier corresponds to a state of "presence," whereas the signified corresponds to a state of "absence", since it depends on the recipient's mind to bring it into the field of signification.

Abdullah Al-Ghadhami notes that if the signified represents a condition of absence, then bringing it into the domain of

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signification requires a cultivated reader who can establish a dialectical relation between signifier and signified in order to produce meaning. All of this rests on verbal existence, which founds the value and force of the word, and which endows the word with a dual value: presence and absence, existence and lack.[8]

5 Steps of the Structuralist Method

The structuralist method proceeds through several steps in order to study a given object. The most important are the following.[9]

5.1 Observation

The method distinguishes between two basic stages, the first of which is observation. Observation consists in collecting and describing facts without passing judgment on them. It therefore requires neutrality and objectivity and entails observing facts within the framework of their relations.

5.2 Experimentation

Experimentation takes two forms:

* experimentation on facts;

* experimentation on models.

It is the stage in which the researcher confirms the information gathered through observation. A second level is experiment that is subject to inference, which essentially denotes the stage of constructing models and testing them.

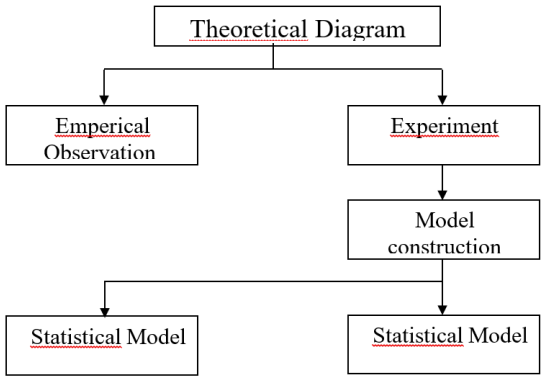
5.3 From Experimentation to Model Construction

At this stage, the researcher proceeds to schematization. The model denotes a theoretical conception of the totality of the facts. In other words, the model is a theoretical formulation of these facts that calls for a comprehensive definition which is not excessively complex.

5.4 From the Model to the Structure

The primary purpose of the methodological steps on which the structuralist method relies, namely observation, description, experimentation, synthesis, and model construction, is to arrive at the structure and to uncover it.

5.5 From Structure to System



5.6 From the System to Systems

At this stage, the analysis moves toward what structuralists describe as the “system

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of systems" (*ordre et ordre des ordres*). The ultimate objective of all preceding steps is to uncover the structure once it has been reached. This leads to a central question: what, then, are the defining features of structure?

6 Features of Structure

Every phenomenon has a key that grants access to its truth. For structuralism, this key is the structure, conceived as a system of transformations governed by its own internal laws. As a system, it continues to function through the richness generated by these transformations. Structuralists generally identify three principal features of structure.[10]

6.1 Totality

Totality refers to the internal coherence and integration of the structure. The units that constitute a structure are marked by self-sufficiency; they are not independent elements forcibly assembled together. Rather, each unit derives its identity and function from its place within the overall configuration.

6.2 Transformation

A structure is not a fixed or static entity. It is in constant movement. Its laws do not operate merely as principles of passive construction; they participate actively in transforming the structure itself into a dynamic, generative system. These laws shape the structure, contribute to its continual formation, and simultaneously determine their own parameters.

6.3 Self-Regulation

Self-regulation means that language, or any structural system, does not construct its formations by appealing to patterns of external "truth." Instead, it builds its units and relationships through its own internal, self-contained systems.

This overview offers a concise introduction to structuralism. What follows examines how structuralism entered and developed within the field of modern Arabic literary criticism.

7 The Arab Reception of Structuralism

Structuralism reached the Arab world relatively late. A number of scholars theorized it and wrote about it, some adhering closely to its theses, others exceeding or reworking them. A group of critics maintain that when structuralism found the way blocked before it and had effectively exhausted itself on Western "markets", it sought to open up a new "market", namely the Arab one. As a result, positions towards it split between endorsement, rejection, and various attempts at reconciliation or compromise.

7.1 Stages of Reception

The reception of structuralism in Arab criticism passed through three main stages, which may be summarized as follows.

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7.1.1 Early Interactions and Translations

This first stage is essentially a phase of transfer and introduction, in which structuralist ideas, principles, foundations, and objectives were presented and disseminated, primarily in the form of articles.[11]

* In 1966, the critic Mahmoud Amin Al-Alim published a series of articles in the Egyptian magazine *Al-Musawwir* introducing structuralism, which he rendered into Arabic as "al-haykala" (structuration).

* In the late 1970s, several studies appeared in both the Mashriq and the Maghreb dealing with genetic structuralism and with formal structuralism. Among the critics who contributed to this phase were: Hussein Al-Wad, Jamal Eddine Bencheikh, Mohammed Bennis, Abdelmalek Mortad, Yumna Al-Eid, Kamal Abu Deeb, Ihab Hassan, and Nabila Ibrahim, among others. Ihab Hassan in particular, in the mid-1970s, succeeded in acquainting the Arab intellectual field with the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jackson, Barthes, and Saussure, and managed to establish himself as one of the most prominent theorists. His approach combined translation with creative, theoretically informed writing. In Tunisia, the critic Rachid Al-Ghazi emerged, engaging with the Russian formalists' analysis of the short story and with structuralists, especially those associated with the constructivist tendency such as Tzvetan Todorov.

* One also finds the translation of the article "Al-Nās wa-l-Ḥikāyāt" ["People and Stories"], regarded as one of the earliest translations of structuralist texts. Maurice Abu Nadhir translated it under the title "Alf Layla wa Layla" [*One Thousand and One Nights*] and read it through a structuralist lens in the journal *Mawāqif* in 1971. The journal continued to show interest in structuralist critics; in 1974 it published the introduction Roland Barthes wrote to his book *Études Critiques* [*Critical Essays*], without naming the translator, and in 1978 Kazim Jihad translated two chapters from the book *Al-Inshā'iyya* [*Poetics / Constructivism*].

* The impact of structuralism appears clearly in a substantial study by Hussein Al-Wad entitled *Al-Binya al-Qaṣaṣiyya fī Risālat al-Ghufrān* [The Narrative Structure in *The Epistle of Forgiveness*] published in 1972. It is considered the first extended study of its kind in terms of length and significance, and it served as a starting point for several lengthy university studies, such as Mohammed Rashid Thabit's *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām li-Mohammed Al-Muwayliḥī* (1973) and Radhiya Kabir's *Al-Tarkīb al-Qaṣaṣī fī Kalīla wa Dimna* (1976).

* The Algerian critic Jamal Bencheikh's study entitled "Taḥlīl Far'ī Bunyawī li-Qaṣīdat al-Mutanabbī" [A Partial

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Structural Analysis of a Poem by Al-Mutanabbī] is likewise one of the pioneering works in structuralist analysis. To this may be added Nabila Ibrahim's valuable study *Qiṣaṣunā al-Sha'bī min al-Rūmānsiyya ilā al-Wāqi'iyya* [Our Folk Tales from Romanticism to Realism], which in turn influenced Abdelhamid Buraio's book *Al-Qaṣaṣ al-Sha'bī fī Minṭaqat Biskra: Dirāsa Maydāniyya* [Folk Tales in the Biskra Region: A Field Study].[12]

We may here mention some of the structuralist works translated by Arab modernist intellectuals:

*Jean-Marie Auzias, *Al-Bunyawiyya* [Structuralism], translated by Mikhail Ibrahim Makhoul, Publications of the Ministry of Culture and Guidance, Damascus, 1973.

*Jean Piaget, *Al-Bunyawiyya* [Structuralism], translated by 'Aref Mataymna and Bachir Aubry, 'Uwaydat Publications, Beirut, 1980.

*Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Al-Ināsa al-Binā'iyya*, vol. 2 [Structural Anthropology, vol. 2], translated by Hassan Fannash, Dar Al-Inmā', Beirut.

*Adolfo Bascio, *Al-Bunyawiyya wa-l-Tārīkh* [Structuralism and History], translated by Mustafa Al-Masnaoui, Dar Al-Hadātha, Beirut, 1981.

* Robert Scholes, *Al-Bunyawiyya fī al-Adab* [Structuralism in Literature], translated by Hanna Abboud, Publications of the Arab Writers' Union, Damascus, 1984.

7.1.2 The Stage of Theorization

The following are selected examples of theoretical efforts, presented in chronological order of publication:

Zakaria Ibrahim, Mushkilat al-Binya [The Problem of Structure], 1976

Zakaria Ibrahim opens his book with a central question: Is structuralism a science, a philosophy, or a method? He concludes that it is a method, in line with the position of its leading figures such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Piaget. He then defines "structure", outlines its three main features, and presents the achievements of key structuralist thinkers, including Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Louis Althusser.[13]

Critics have regarded this work as a comprehensive book that seeks to introduce structuralism and its principal figures, relying on a philosophically oriented style of exposition and discussion.[14]

Salah Fadl, Nazariyyat al-Binā'iyya [The Theory of Constructivism], 1977

Salah Fadl's book is written in a critical idiom through which he examines the origins, orientations, and levels of structuralism. The first part is devoted to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the

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Russian formalists, and the Prague Circle. Fadl insists on using the term *al-binā'iyya* (constructivism) rather than *al-bunyawiyya* (structuralism), arguing that it is terminologically more accurate and etymologically closer to the Arabic root. He then classifies the sources of structuralism into four schools:

* the Geneva School;

* the Russian Formalists;

* the Prague Circle;

* modern linguistics.

In the second part, he addresses:

* structuralism in literature;

* levels of structuralist analysis;

* the conditions of structuralist criticism;

* the language of poetry;

* the anatomy of the short story;

* semiotic systems in literature.[15]

Abdel Fattah Kilito, Al-Adab wa-l-Gharāba [Literature and Strangeness], 1982

Kilito divides his book into two main parts:

* A conceptual part, in which he seeks to clarify key notions related to literature, such as text, reader, addressee, poetry, and prose.

* An applied part, in which he subjects Arabic rhetoric to analysis, arguing that the primary aim of classical rhetoric was to explain the Qur'an and account for the modes of its inimitability. He also discusses the Arabic *maqāmāt* and differentiates systematically between prose and poetry.

Kilito adopts a structuralist procedure. Methodologically, he mobilizes binary oppositions and derives generative structural rules for the production of texts. He also draws on literary theory in matters of genre and classification, and employs structuralist poetics and stylistics, in addition to a semiotic approach when addressing narrative rules.[16]

Several criticisms have been directed at this work, among them:[17]

* instability and inconsistency in the use of critical terminology;

* the amalgamation of overlapping methodologies;

* the absence of a precise definition of literature.

Sadouq Nour Eddine, Ḥudūd al-Naṣṣ al-Adabī [The Limits of the Literary Text], 1984

In this book, Sadouq examines the novel, the short story, and poetry. He analyses, among other works, Mohammed Zafzaf's novel *Muḥāwalat 'Aīsh* [*An Attempt at Living*] and *'Ālam bilā Kharā'iṭ* [*A World without Maps*] by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra. He has been criticized for focusing almost exclusively on Moroccan literature.[18]

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Shukri Azziz Madi, 1984

Madi's book consists of a set of lectures delivered at the University of Constantine. He devotes one of its eight chapters to structuralism, and proposes a schema for structuralist analysis, which he formulates as follows:

* the literary work is a specific system, and must therefore be studied through an immanent analysis;

* the deep structure is what renders a work genuinely literary;

* structuralist analysis is the discovery of the text's internal system;

* literature does not say anything about society;

* structuralists do not recognize a subjective or social dimension for literature, since literature is an autonomous linguistic entity;

* structuralists do not recognize the historical dimension;

* structuralist analysis concentrates on the following levels: grammatical, rhythmic, and stylistic;

* structuralism excludes subjective dimensions, and the reader becomes the actual producer of the text.[19]

Madi's procedure has itself been criticized. Instead of beginning with the origins of structuralism and then moving to the mechanics of analysis, he reverses this order.

Fouad Abu Mansoura, Al-Naqd al-Bunyawī al-Ḥadīth [Modern Structuralist Criticism], 1985

Fouad Abu Mansoura devotes the second part of this book to Arab structuralist criticism. However, he introduces examples that are largely unrelated to his stated topic, and roughly 150 pages have little or no connection to structuralism itself.[20]

Abdallah Ibrahim, *Ma'rifat al-Ākhar* [*Knowing the Other*], 1990

In Abdallah Ibrahim's view, what distinguishes structuralism is its concern with codifying the rules of discourse and analysing its levels, in an attempt to grasp the relations that govern it. Structuralism is, for him, a method rather than a philosophy, a procedure rather than an ideology. The author discusses the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, addresses the origins of structuralism, and concludes with a brief treatment of Arab structuralism.[21]

7.1.3 The Stage of Application

We may summarize these applied efforts as follows.[22]

Mohammed Berrada

Berrada stresses that he benefited from the sociology of literature in his study of the new Arabic novel. He acknowledges that

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his critical applications ultimately accorded priority to historical dialectics, since he preferred to "revive" the vision of the structuralist method as developed in particular by György Lukács and Lucien Goldmann.

Mohammed Bennis, Ẓāhirat al-Shi'r al-Mu'āṣir fī al-Maghrib: Maqāraba Takwīniyya [The Phenomenon of Contemporary Poetry in Morocco: A Genetic Approach], 1971

In this work, Bennis presents two main methods: the structural method and the genetic structural method.

Yumna Al-Eid

Yumna Al-Eid is influenced by genetic structuralism and by Bakhtinian theorization, which links formalism to Marxism. In her studies, she adopts a reading and interpretive trajectory shaped by the French structuralists who focused on semantics, such as Greimas and Todorov.

Khalida Said, Ḥarakiyyat al-Ibdā' [The Dynamics of Creativity]

Khalida Said approaches the linguistic element as a quasi-sacred component of literary creativity, a view that derives from the structuralist method. She does not employ a large number of operational structuralist terms; instead, she frequently uses diagrams to articulate her analyses.

Kamal Abu Deeb, Al-Ru'ā al-Muqni'a: Naḥwa Manhaj Bunyawī fī Dirāsat al-Shi'r al-Jāhilī [Persuasive Visions: Towards a Structural Method in the Study of Pre-Islamic Poetry]

Abu Deeb adopts the structuralist method in order to approach the *Mu'allaqāt* and other pre-Islamic odes. He argues that this method turns the understanding of the poem into a model for understanding the world. His procedure relies on explanatory diagrams, formal "equations", and statistical tables.

This has been a concise introduction to some of the Arab efforts that received and appropriated the incoming structuralist current. What is striking about the examples mentioned is that they fall within the category of welcoming and supportive engagements with structuralism. They received its principles, sought to understand and elucidate them through translations as an initial phase, then moved to theorization, and finally to applied criticism.

8 Structuralism as a Linguistic Model

A spontaneous question arises here: Did structuralist criticism truly illuminate the text and codify the creative process? Is the codification of creativity nothing more than a failed, indeed impermissible, attempt to deal with the construction of the text in an abstract, generic, and ultimately empty manner? Or does the codification of creativity instead signify a strengthening of formal organization, an affirmation of scientific spirit and methodological

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precision, whereby language becomes the basis and effective producer of the concepts that circulate through it?

In what follows, we shall present a set of critical positions. Some endorse and welcome the linguistic model, while others call for a definitive rejection and a radical break with it, warning of the dangers that its application may pose for the literary field.

8.1 Positions Opposed to the Linguistic Model

A number of Arab critics and researchers have opposed the linguistic model, among them the following.

Shukri Azziz Madi

Shukri Azziz Madi writes: "Speaking about structuralism is not an easy matter; it is akin to speaking about what occurs in the convolutions of the brain".[23]

By this remark he signals the extent of structuralism's opacity and complexity, especially given that it defines literature as a purely linguistic embodiment, a set of sentences. In his view, this is a truncated definition, and it raises so many problems that a full discussion would require many pages. It is sufficient here to note that the fact that language is the material of literature does not mean that literature is reducible to language. Stone is the material of the statue, but the statue is not "mere stone". It is therefore futile to define a statue as a "stone body".

In the same way, to define the short story as a set of "functions", or a collection of syntactic sentences and verbal acts, and to treat literary discourse as just another linguistic occurrence, leads to the erasure of the specificity of literature and art. It also effaces the historicity of the text, since structuralism approaches the text as a closed entity, complete in time and space. On this basis, One Thousand and One Nights becomes equivalent to the novels of At-Tahir Wattar and to pre-Islamic odes, all in the name of "precision" and "objectivity".[24]

Abdallah Ibrahim

In *Ma'rifat al-Ākhar* [*Knowing the Other*], Abdallah Ibrahim observes: "The structuralist method remained captive to the linguistic model, and for this reason studies fell into the impasse of rigid positivism and normativity. The results of analysis began to converge, whatever the field of application, because they relied on a single, pre-given model".[25]

This situation, he suggests, is one reason why many researchers, including Roland Barthes, moved away from pure descriptivism in order to search for a more adequate way of approaching discourses. A new generation of critics then emerged, seeking to break out of structuralism's narrow frameworks and to free methodology from its strict constraints. Alongside Barthes, figures such as Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida contributed to this shift,

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which opened the way for the development of semiology and hermeneutics as critical "revolutions".[26]

Bassam Katous

Bassam Katous enumerates the main shortcomings commonly attributed to structuralism as follows:[27]

Structuralism is based on a prior linguistic model imported from the field of language and applied directly to a different field. As a result, critical method becomes captive to this pre-constructed linguistic pattern.

* The structuralist method is essentially generalizing and fails to bring out the specificities of literature and creative production. It tends to erase the hypothetical and open-ended character of literary works.

* Structuralist procedure paralyses the agency of both author and critic. It subjects them to a strict and pre-determined determinism, which in turn leads to repetitive and homogenized analyses.

Terry Eagleton

Terry Eagleton identifies several major consequences of structuralism.[28]

* Structuralism treated literature as a "structure", and in so doing turned it into a kind of idol. With the rise of structuralism, the universe inhabited by traditional aestheticians such as Croce, Curtis, Auerbach, Spitzer, and Wellek appeared to belong to a bygone age.

* Structuralism "slapped" the bourgeois cult of the individual self by denying that the individual consciousness is the source of meaning. Language, in the structuralist view, precedes the individual, who is its product rather than its origin.

* Structuralism itself came to resemble a new form of metaphysical idealism: language no longer reflects reality, it produces reality.

* For structuralism, the literary work does not refer to an external object and does not express a unique individual subject.

* Yet language is a practice, and no practice can exist without active human subjects.

Structuralism, in Eagleton's reading, tends to posit an ideal reader, a "super-reader" who never makes mistakes. Such a figure is impossible, because interpretation requires difference and plurality, not a fixed set of rules that govern all readings. Eagleton cites as an example the structuralist study carried out by Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss on Baudelaire's poem "Les Chats", Michael Riffaterre commented on this analysis, arguing that it is so intricate that even the most alert reader would struggle to understand it.

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8.2 Positions Supporting the Linguistic Model

Supportive views of the linguistic model are numerous; the following examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Salah Fadl

Salah Fadl welcomed structuralism in emphatic terms. In his view, this current brought with it strengthened formal rigor, organizational control, and a scientific spirit grounded in methodological precision. Structuralism, he argues, succeeded in imprinting other critical currents with its own stamp and in transforming the prevailing language of criticism worldwide, as well as the theoretical conception of literature and its relation to society. With this current, literary criticism ceased to be primarily a space for the emergence of ideologies or theories tied to political, social, or economic agendas. Its most significant step lay in the attempt to emancipate literary criticism so that it might function as a genuine "science of literature".

In this context, the very concept of truth was reconfigured. Fadl writes that "the task of the critic is not to test the writer's credibility in relation to society, but to select the language of literary writing and to assess the degree of its coherence, organization, and strength or weakness, irrespective of the truth that the writing claims to reflect".[29]

Zakaria Ibrahim

States:

"…Structure is Her Majesty, the undisputed sovereign of science and philosophy, number one without rival from 1966 until today. Structure is no longer a merely scientific or philosophical concept that appears in the writings of linguists, anthropologists, or historians of culture. It has also become a kind of universal key invoked by the businessman, the trade unionist, the economist, the educator, the grammarian, the literary critic, the film director, the short story writer, and the fashion designer. Perhaps the secret of the popularity of this word lies in the contemporary human need to grasp the unity of reality. In truth, the term (structure) carries within it the fulfillment of the dream of the human mind, which has long tried to lay its hand on the object".[30]

Abdessalam Al-Masdi

Abdessalam Al-Masdi also praises structuralism and its linguistic model. He writes:

"What structuralism sought to consolidate, with the support of all its accompanying tributaries, was the extraction of the concept of literature from the framework of the absolute in which it had been defined in abstract terms, by means of a kind of immanence that determines the thing in itself, in order to insert it into the context of concrete existence".[31]

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Structuralism, in his reading, dared to approach the text in such a way as to strip away the aura of sacrality that had long surrounded literature and often obstructed patient, objective vision. This vision proceeds on two levels:

- **Description**, which corresponds to the level of engaging with language in its syntactic structure.

- **Explanation**, which corresponds to the level of tracing the indices that govern the fabric of language as it is transformed into a stylistic event.

In this way, structuralism left a distinctive mark in its pedagogical dimension, particularly in the field of textual explication. Textual explanation, as an instructional mechanism, contributes to honing the faculty of perception and refining the capacities of comprehension and discrimination through precise engagement with language as both the material and the instrument of study.[32]

Abdelmalek Mortad

For Abdelmalek Mortad, structuralism represents a new method that aspires to secularize the understanding and writing of literature, to expose its latent dimensions, and to illuminate its hidden corners within the space of the text. He states that structuralism "was acutely aware of the ordeals literature has endured as a result of the intervention of philosophical schools and ideological currents, and of their encroachment, or what might be called 'the assault on the ways of reading literature and analyzing its texts.' Structuralism came in response to this, calling for the autonomy of literature, analogous to the autonomy enjoyed by many sciences themselves".[33]

Taken together, these positions endorse structuralism and its analytic procedures, particularly the linguistic model. A significant caveat, however, concerns the sometimes-excessive celebration of structuralism, as in the views of Zakaria Ibrahim and Salah Fadl. Other positions welcome it, but with greater restraint.

This recalls the comment of Abdallah Al-'Ashshi on Saad Al-Bazei's claim that "structuralism will lead to the rescue of pre-Islamic poetry." Al-'Ashshi responds: "How can a method that is itself relative apprehend the absolute?" He adds: "There is no harm in being dazzled emotionally, but not intellectually".[34]

His point is that the Arab reception of structuralism was, to a considerable extent, psychological and affective rather than rigorously conceptual.

9 Conclusion

We shall conclude this article by recalling, briefly and without mere repetition, the main shortcomings we have registered with regard to the structuralist project:

* Critical practice has come to deal with

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mute texts that do not speak.

* The vacuum produced by the "death of the author" has been filled by the structuralist critic, who assumes the mantle of creativity and raises the banners of metalanguage and metacriticism. Structuralism thus shifted towards a new critical language that draws attention to itself, on the assumption that it is no less creative than the language of the text.

* This procedure has resulted in the reduction and miniaturization of the text in a way that has deprived scientific analysis of its ability to generate meaning.

* The danger of the structuralist model lies in its presupposition of a closed, definitive text. To posit the existence of a general pattern or system for a given genre is, in effect, to posit a general system that is closed and final.

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