CHAPTER- I

STRUCTURALISM

This module focuses on Structuralism its origin and development. It also studies the approach as methodology, its inter-relation with other branches of science and its functions

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1.0. Preliminaries:

In literary studies, we do not have a clear-cut definition or separation of the object of knowledge. When we formally study something, called literature, what do we really study? The object of the knowledge is not clearly defined. Most often, we talk of the psychological attributes of characters (e.g. Hamlet's madness), or the ethicality of their actions (was he right to carelessly kill Polonious?) We listen to a lot of lectures on the complexity of the character of Hamlet, or Lear, or Tess; or the greatness of Shakespeare, Milton, Ibsen, Dostoevsky, Joyce, Flaubert, Eliot, Jane Austen, Aphre Behn, Virginia Woolf, Harriet Martineau, George Eliot etc., whosoever we study, one-fourth of the time we talk of or listen. Lacking a clear definition or description of literature, the study of it proceeds in several directions at once, thus confusing the student and the teacher to no end. It is understandable that knowledge, comprehension and explanation cannot be allowed to depend on mere prejudice. We have to have a

systematic, rational, ordered understanding if we are to be able to explain. Since 'Structuralism' is a method of scientific knowledge, it focuses on reconstitution of the rules governing the production of meaning, whereas Post-Structuralism focuses on important elements of literary study, such as the roles of the reader and the author and the function of ideology.

1.1. Origin and Development of Structuralism

Linguistics as Major Starting-point of Structuralism:

Structuralism in linguistics and literary studies found its major starting point in the work of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, at the turn of the twentieth century. The term "structuralism" was coined in the ongoing work in linguistics, Semiotics, and literary analysis of Roman Jakobson. In this development, structuralism should be seen as a subdivision or a methodological field in the larger area of semiotics that finds its origins in the work of Charles Sanders Peirce as well as in that of Saussure. His work was an attempt to reduce the huge number of facts about language discovered by nineteenth-century historical linguistics to a manageable number of propositions based upon the *formal* relationships defining and existing between the elements of language. Saussure's systematic re-examination of language is based upon three assumptions:

1. The *systematic* nature of language, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts;
2. The *relational* conception of the elements of language, where linguistic "entities" are defined in relationships of combination and contrast to one another;
3. And the *arbitrary nature* of linguistic elements, where they are defined in terms of the function and purpose they serve rather than in terms of their inherent qualities.

All three of these assumptions gave rise to what Roman Jakobson came to designate as "structuralism" in 1929.

The basic philosophical assumptions of Structuralism:

Structuralism is an aesthetic theory, which is based on certain key philosophical assumptions:

1. That all artistic work of art or 'texts' possess a fundamental deep structure;
2. That texts are organised like a language with their own grammar
3. That the grammar of a language is a series of signs and conventions which draw a predictable response from human beings.
4. The signal-response model forms the basis of all textual operations.

Structuralism:

Structuralism is "Study of text as a whole and the kinds of interrelationships/contrasts that the system builds into it to make it meaningful". Contrasts are often times highlighted by calling attention to their basic oppositional/binary structure. For instance, in a newspaper the idea of front/back: front page/ back page/ important: less important. More interesting might be news/ads. But could also be very basic categories of cultural experience (although there could always be an argument about "who's" cultural experience): up/down, culture/nature, male /female.

Origin of Structuralism:

Structuralism as a concept is grand, controversial and elusive. For critical purposes, it is to be understood at two levels of generality:

1. first, as a broad intellectual movement, one of the most significant ways of theorizing in the human sciences in the twentieth century;

2. second as a particular set of approaches to literature. It flourished especially in France in the 1960's but with older roots and continuing repercussions.

The premise of structuralism is human activity and its products even perception and thought itself, are constructed and not natural. Structure is the Principle of construction and the object of analysis, to be understood by its intimate reference to the concepts of system and value as defined in Semiotics (Science studying Signs).

Origin of structuralism:

Structuralism first comes to prominence as a specific discourse with the work of a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, who developed a branch of linguistics called "Structural Linguistics."

Developments in Structuralism:

Saussure's *Course* has had many different kinds of influence on Humanities scholarship in the 20th Century. He seems to have touched on so many different concerns that his influence is indicative of a fairly general condition. The attitude to explain everything according to an understanding of language and its structures can be called linguisticism. Many trends emerged after Saussure, that there is no social or cultural experience outside the structures that language makes possible. Saussure was interested in finding his explanatory terms in phenomena that are not restricted to languages alone and these explanatory terms can be understood through structuralism.

How does an approach, Structuralism Work?

Synchrony/Diachrony:

A distinction must be made between the way languages appear to us and as they are at any given time. **Synchronic** linguistics is supposed to study the

systematic aspects of language rather than the **diachronic** aspects. This will not be the only occasion where an attempt at a scientific understanding of something finds it convenient to discount time. We can learn a lesson here: ignore it at your peril.

System/Process:

Structuralism assumes that for every process (an utterance for instance) there is a system of underlying laws that govern it. The system arises contingently (there are no natural or necessary reasons for the relations within it to be as they are).

Paradigm/Syntagm:

Language can be analysed according to two different poles, or axes. On the syntagmatic axis, we have the visible or audible utterance itself, e.g., "the cat sat on the mat". On the paradigmatic axis we have the way that our utterance remains tied to and governed by the system to which it belongs. Paradigm comes from a Greek word, *paradeigma*, and meaning *example*. An utterance is an example of one of the uncountable possibilities that the system makes possible. For instance, one could have said, "The dog sat on the mat." This would have represented a slightly unexpected choice but perfectly legitimate. Try "the log sat on the mat." Notice that these examples relate to each other either according to their signifiers (dog and log) or according to their signifieds (cat and dog). The system into which the paradigmatic axis dips governs all possible relations between signifiers and signifieds. Poets and readers' notice, are often inclined to look out for the unlikely one, for the more obvious one's utterance is the more it will sound like a cliché (the moon in June).

Roman Jakobson suggested that the functions of language could be understood according to the way the **paradigmatic** and **syntagmatic** axes of language interact.

The cat sat on the mat.

The dog sat on the mat.

The log sat on the mat.

On the syntagmatic axis one of these sentences can be selected. One of the other two lying dormant on the paradigmatic axis can possibly be substituted for the first. If we put them all together this projects aspects of the paradigmatic axis onto the syntagmatic axis. One draws attention to the systematic aspects of language. If readers ignore this you might have an image of a cat, a dog and a log all sitting on a mat. Most texts can be read according to the way that systematic aspects are manifested on the syntagmatic axis.

The syntagmatic axis and the paradigmatic axis of a poem:

A Poem by William Blake.

THE SICK ROSE

O Rose, thou art sick!

The invisible worm,

That flies in the night,

In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed

Of crimson joy;

And his dark secret love

Does thy life destroy.

The principles of selection and substitution allow us to draw up a provisional chart identifying aspects that are systematically linked to the rose and those that are systematically linked to the worm:

Rose	Worm
	invisible
	that flies
	howling storm
thy bed	the night
Crimson	Dark
Joy	Love
Life	destroy
Sick	Finding out

Remember that the Structuralist is interested as much in what is not evident as what is. The gaps on the rose side can be filled in. Against "invisible" we add "visible." Against "flies" we add "unmoving." Against "howling storm" we add "calm." And against "finding out" we add "being found out." The whole thing adds up to an active yet invisible protagonist getting the blame for the sickness of a visible yet passive (and passionate) victim.

Rose	Worm
Passive	**Active**
Visible	invisible
Unmoving	that flies
Calm	howling storm
thy bed	the night
Crimson	dark
Joy	Love
Life	Destroy
Being discovered	Finding out
Sick	*Well*

Now, we have a fairly thorough representation of the systematic aspects of this poem (it is an easy one to do because Blake is a good poet). Notice that we haven't concerned ourselves with the business of **interpreting** the poem. There is something weird in it. The signifier (the visible part of the sign) could be placed on the left hand side with the rose. The signified, on the other hand, could quite easily be placed on the right hand side with the worm (which is invisible). One could then argue that the rose represents the poem "The Sick Rose" and the worm represents the interpretation we give it (thus making it sick). However, notice too that the speaker (the one who says "Oh Rose . . . ") is the one who is really doing all this "finding out" in so far is it is his (why did we gender the speaker?) interpretation of the rose's sickness (it was the invisible worm, I'm sure of it). A vicious cycle is in place. The speaker interprets the sickness of the rose as being caused by an invisible worm, which we interpret as syphilis. Whenever the case the function of the invisible party remains enigmatic (a signified is always invisible--any thing you put in its place will become yet another signifier). The system of concepts that allows us to think in certain pattern makes all this speculation possible. Readers interpreted the speaker as male not because they thought that he was Blake. Because the rose is passive and lying in a crimson bed, and because love is in some sense implied, we can make a judgement based upon conventions and filling in yet more missing parts.

Rose	Worm
Passive	**Active**
Visible	Invisible
female	*male*
Rose	*speaker*
Signifier	Signified
Poem	Interpretation

So, fundamentally, the Structuralist sees nothing but signifiers and relations between signifiers. It takes a great deal of sophistication to see that the one thing that makes it all possible is always imperceptible. It is the absent

signified that would ground the whole process if only it could be made visible without actually becoming just another signifier.

Whatever interpretation readers put on, (or "find out" in) "The Sick Rose" can even be described in analogical structures.

1.2. An Introduction to Structuralists:

Emerging in the late fifties in France and reaching its heyday in the mid sixties, structuralism is a school of scientific enthusiasm. Never before, since, the time of the Enlightenment had literary and cultural theorists been "lulled" this way by the promise of a rational, scientific ordering of their object: as J. Hillis Miller has described their mood, they all started from a sort of "happy positivism". These "Socratic, theoretical or canny" scholars strongly believed that any cultural product was undeniably and equally liable to an investigation of its underlying patterns and values, and for that purpose they invented a "barbaric jargon" which suited the scientific claims of their project.

Ferdinand de Saussure and his assumptions:

Ferdinand de Saussure (November 26, 1857 - February 22, 1913) was a Swiss linguist. He was born in Geneva, he laid the foundation for many developments in linguistics in the 20th century. He perceived linguistics as a branch of a general science of signs he proposed to call semiology. His work 'Cours de linguistique générale' was published posthumously in 1916 by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye based on lecture notes. This became a seminal linguistics work, perhaps the seminal structuralist linguistics work, in the 20th century. De Saussure emphasized a synchronic view of linguistics in contrast to the diachronic (historical study) view of the 19th century. The synchronic view looks at the structure of language as a functioning system at a given point of time. This distinction was a breakthrough and became generally accepted.

"A sign is the basic unit of langue (a given language at a

given time). Every langue is a complete system of signs.

Parole (the speech of an individual) is an external manifestation of langue."

Another important distinction is that between syntactic relations which takes place in a given text, and paradigmatic relations. De Saussure made an important discovery in Indo-European philology (It is a branch of the human sciences dealing with language and literature, specifically a literary canon, combining aspects of grammar, rhetoric, historical linguistics (etymology and language change), interpretation of authors, textual criticism and the critical traditions associated with a given language.) which is now known as the laryngeal theory. Roland Barthes, in his book Mythologies, demonstrated how de Saussure's system of sign analysis could be extended to a second level, that of myth.

Saussurean linguistics points to a similar state of affairs within the world of language. He argued that words only work because they are within a system of differences, not because they are somehow tied into the real world. Indeed, they operate in a separate sphere. Words do not depend on reality for their meaning nor do they depend on intention of author or speaker. They are a self-sufficient system and once uttered they have meaning because of their place in the system and not because of what the speaker meant. The author and reality then are not taken into account in Structuralist interpretations.

Indeed, Structuralists are not much concerned with meaning either as they are more concerned with the signifier than the signified. And so they don't care much about the content - they are interested in the formal features that allow meaning to come about - not in the meaning/content itself.

The most elementary ideas of Saussurean linguistics are summarised here.

1. There is no necessary connection between words and the thing. For example, the word 'dog' is an arbitrary label -- this can be proved by simply looking at other languages where other words like 'chien' are used. We might as well use 'woofer' or 'furry' for 'dog' -- it doesn't really matter.

2. To reflect this Saussure came up with this system to explain meaning. The sign is divided into two elements: the signifier and signified.

3. The signifier is the material aspect of the sign -- the word on paper, the spoken word, or a traffic sign or a supermarket (signs are not only linguistic).

4. The signified is the concept that results in your mind -- the idea of a dog, or a chair, or liberty or whatever.

Diagrammatically it can be represented this way:

SIGNIFIER

SIGN   **=**

SIGNIFIED

A sign is composed of two elements: for example, a red light and the idea STOP! But there is no necessary connection between the two -- it is purely conventional. You can imagine a society where the red light means GO AS FAST AS YOU CAN! Even in one society or sign system one signifier may mean many things; a red light may mean 'brothels are near'. This last example is important, for it illustrates well one of the points of structuralism; that meaning is never 'inside' the signifier -- whether it is a light, or a poem, or a word. The meaning is dependent on context -- a red light hanging over a road is likely to be a stop sign; outside a house in a well-known area, it will probably signal that this is a house of prostitution.

Saussure argued this out in a way that sounds odd, initially at least. He argued that things have meaning because of what they are not. The letter 'c' works because it is not any of the other letters in the alphabet. The word 'dog' works as a signifier because it is not the word 'bog', 'hog', 'fog' or 'academic'. This sounds a little funny; that the word 'dog' works because it is not the word 'toaster' but you may see his point that meaning is defined by what the sign is not.

The two most important implications of this theory are:

That meaning is not inside something, but is the product of a set of relationships, often negatively defined. And that we do not have direct access through language to reality itself. However, we try to access reality; it is always through language or other sign systems. We think through language, even attempting in order to appreciate a garden, for example, one will be thinking through words such as 'beautiful' or 'picturesque' - connection without the mediation of language is not possible. Reality, the 'referent' in this system is there, but culture can only access it through our sign systems.

Ferdinand de Saussure and Structural Linguistics:

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure studied language from a formal and theoretical point of view, i.e. as a system of signs which could be described synchronically (as a static set of relationships independent of any changes that take place over time) rather than diachronically (as a dynamic system which changes over time).

Sign is the basic unit of language:

According to Saussure, the basic unit of language is a sign. A sign is composed of signifier (a sound-image, or its graphic equivalent) and a signified (the concept or meaning). So, for example, a word composed of the letters p-e-a-r functions as a signifier by producing in the mind of English-speakers the concept (signified) of a certain kind of rosaceous fruit that grows on trees, viz. a pear.

Roman Jakobson:

The term "structuralism" was first used by Roman Jakobson in 1929. In the activity of Roman Jakobson, one of the fathers of structuralism, linguistics and semiotics merged with literary studies. His career may be said to impersonate both the pre-history and the history of this trend of thought in the 20th century.

Roman Jakobson, (1896-1982): Russian-American linguist and literary critic, from Moscow. He coined the term structural linguistics and stressed that the aim of historical linguistics is the study not of isolated changes within a language but of systematic change. In Czechoslovakia in the late 1920s and the 30s, Jakobson and a few colleagues, most notably N. S. Trubetzkoy, developed what came to be known as the Prague school of linguistics. He worked with Morris Halle on distinctive-feature theory, developing a binary system that defines a speech sound by the presence or absence of specific phonetic qualities, such as stridency and nasality. Through his contact with French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and others, Jakobson was influential in the development of structuralism.

The position he adopted concerning the object of literary studies while he was a member of the Prague School differed from the one he had held as a formalist belonging to the Moscow Linguistic Circle. Now, it was the relational nature of meaning that mattered, rather than the isolated content of the literary work, as it had been with the formalists. Instead of an analysis of "literariness" which should exclude anything extra literary from its scope, after 1933 Jakobson emphasized poeticity and insisted that this was only one aspect of poetry; the poetic function appeared therefore as a relational, not an absolute aspect.

David Lodge:

David Lodge applied Jakobson's distinction to 20th century literary trends, describing modernism as mainly metaphoric (due to its symbolistic and mythopoeic bent) and anti-modernism as metonymic (realistic). As for

postmodern writing, Lodge seems unable to establish a hierarchy between the two terms. The scales appear to be even, and, according to him, critics had better examine the efforts of postmodern authors "to deploy both metaphoric and metonymic devices in radically new ways, and to defy the obligation in order to choose between these two principles of connecting one topic with another." He published the book, *Working with Structuralism*, in1981.

Lévi-Strauss:

Claude Lévi-Strauss - whose ethnological work has been at the origin of structuralism's success - and literary criticism, using the work of Roland Barthes, Lévi-Strauss concluded first of all an interpretation of the most pronounced social phenomenon - kinship - which he elaborates on the basis of the Jakobsonian linguistic model, having transposed the latter onto the ethnological plane"

Structuralism actually came into being as a distinct method of investigation through Lévi-Strauss's anthropological investigations. His innovative analysis of myth (ancient Greek myths, but also Amerindian ones), representing a response to the former psychologically oriented interpretations, was made much the same way linguistics studies sentences in order to discover their "grammar".

Lévi-Strauss's view:

Lévi-Strauss's view has a diachronic element in it, notwithstanding: he takes into account "all the available variants" of the myth, (94) because there is no one true version of which the others are but distortions. Furthermore he pays heed to all available legends which make up a mythology, looking for its generic system (*langue*). This view presupposes a metaphorical perception of the condition of human beings, animals, deities, a perception which is based on binary oppositions, such as nature / culture, this world / the other world, agriculture / warfare, raw / cooked, and so on. The mythical system mediates between the opposed factors - its function is to reconcile contradictions.

The French scholar was confident that ethnography, as a social science, was indeed able to probe the structure of the myth's internal relationships, if one agreed that conscious laws reflect unconscious beliefs, that a system is more than the result of a specific combination and that no term has meaning apart from its binary opposite. (The concept of BINARY OPPOSITES implies an exclusive opposition, as for instance in the case of the two electric charges.) The Structuralist's tools were in his view adequate and sufficient for investigating not only cultural products, but the structure of the human mind in general - the institutions created by it, the forms of knowledge.

It is also worth noting that in Lévi-Strauss' Structuralist view the various cultural manifestations were no more hierarchically classified: ways of cooking, religious beliefs, mythic narratives were analysed from an equal standpoint that is at the sign level. This disregard of established hierarchies would become even more manifest in the work of another French structuralist, Roland Barthes.

Roland Barthes:

Ronald Barthes was a French literary philosopher whose ideas were influenced by structuralism, but who would be opposed at being labelled a "Structuralist" because that would impose one line of thought for this eclectic.

The cultural criticism which Barthes initiated includes the Semiology of fashion, the "mythology" of wrestling, the pleasure of reading, and others. For instance, his analysis of garments as signs speaks about the "system" made up of toque, bonnet and hood (pieces that cannot be worn at the same time), and the "speech", or "syntagm", which involves the juxtaposition of different elements, such as skirt, blouse and jacket. A restaurant menu can be described in a similar way, based on the Saussurean dichotomy, which is put to work in domains other than language. Moreover the semiotics practised by the Paris School has

extended the Structuralist analysis to such fields as legal discourse, gestural language, and social sciences.

His view of the text and textuality, supported by the concept of the actual infinity of language, signifies a complete break with the older New Critical perspective of the text as an autonomous, autotelic object.

With Roland Barthes's earlier theoretical work, structuralism reaches a climax which includes in it the adumbration of its decline: if we leave aside the studies of other narratologists and semioticians, it is evident that the later works of Barthes, Foucault's studies and especially Derrida's contributions represent decided steps toward re-visioning or entirely reversing the Structuralist principles.

Claude Levi-Strauss:

Levi Struass is known as "Father of Structuralism;" He was born in Brussels and obtained a law degree from the University of Paris. He became a professor of sociology at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil in 1934. It was at this time that he began to think about human thought cross-culturally and alertly, when he was exposed to various cultures in Brazil. His first publication in anthropology appeared in 1936 and covered the social organization of the Bororo (Bohannan and Glazer 1988:423). After W.W.II, he taught at the New School for Social Research in New York. Here he met Roman Jakobson, from whom he took the structural linguistics model and applied its framework to culture (Bohannan and Glazer 1988:423). Levi-Strauss has been noted for the elaboration of the Structuralist paradigm in anthropology (Winthrop 1991).

The most striking results in a field other than linguistics emerge with the work of the French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss. He thought that linguistics was the first discipline among the humanities (or social sciences, as some parts of the humanities like to be known) to be established on purely scientific principles.

Marcel Mauss:

Marcel Mauss: This masterly figure taught Levi-Strauss and influenced his thought on the nature of reciprocity and structural relationships in culture (Winthrop 1991). Edmund Leach.

Jacques Lacan:

French literary critic, Jacques Lacan largely influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis; would also not admit to being a "Structuralist," but whose work reflected some of the same principles of structuralism. Known as an arrogant academic who also did not enjoy being associated with one paradigm, he did not collaborate with any of his French contemporaries.

Jacques Derrida:

French social philosopher and literary critic who may be labelled both a "Structuralist' and a "Poststructuralist;" wrote critiques of his contemporaries' works, and of the notions underlying structuralism and poststructuralist.

Michel Foucault:

French social philosopher, Michel Foucault, whose works have been associated with both Structuralist and post-Structuralists thought, more often with the latter. When asked in an interview, if he accepted being grouped with Lacan and Levi-Strauss, he conveniently avoids a straight answer: "It's for those who use the label [structuralism] to designate very diverse works to say what makes us "Structuralists". However, he has publicly scoffed at being labelled a Structuralist because he did not wish to be permanently associated with one paradigm, much like Barthes. Foucault deals largely with issues of power in his works, that is, who has power in a society. For this reason, he was closely associated with poststructuralist thought.

Diagram showing a summary diachronic view of Structuralism in modern anthropology:

Figure 1. A summary diachronic view of structuralism in modern anthropology.
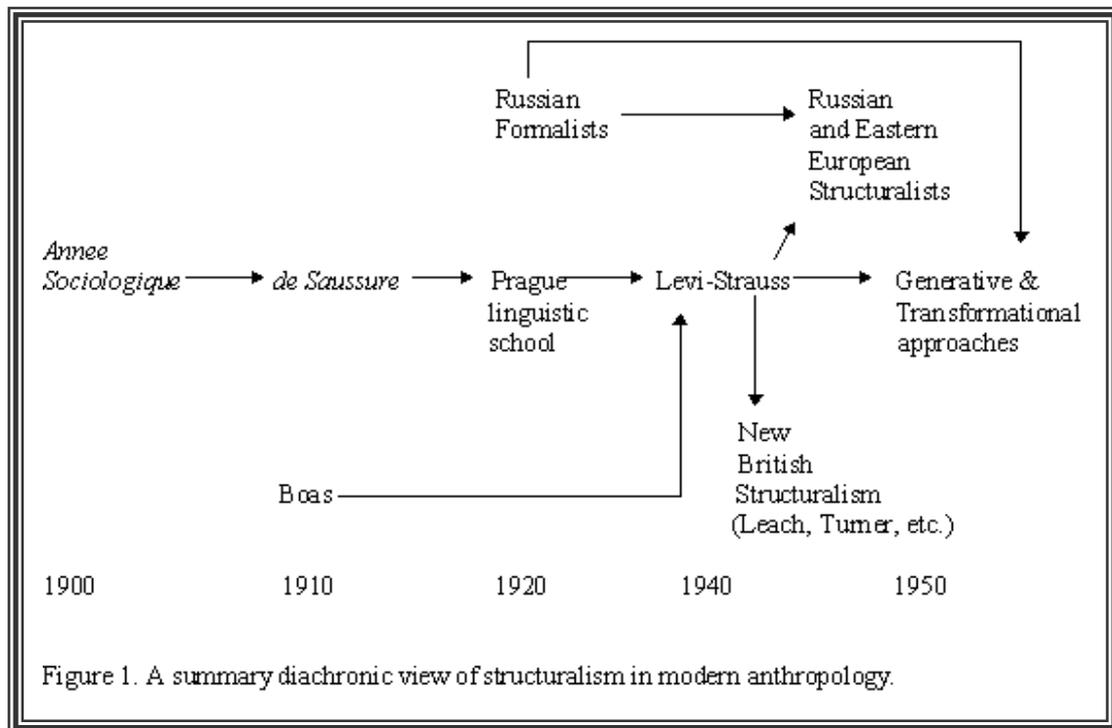
1.3. Structuralism as Methodology

What is Methodology?

On the methodological level, Lévi-Straussian structuralism asserts itself as a method of scientific knowledge and even lays claim to the rigor of the exact sciences. Therefore, it is opposed to all exclusively phenomenological approaches to knowledge, which pretend to gain immediate access to meaning through a descriptive analysis of what we experience or perceive (Lévi-Strauss's *réel* and *vécu*). In opposition to phenomenology, which 'postulates a kind of continuity between experience and reality', Lévi-Strauss affirms that 'the transition between one order and the other is discontinuous; that to reach reality, one has to first reject experience, if only to reintegrate it into an objective synthesis devoid of any sentimentality'. For Lévi-Strauss, intelligibility is therefore not given at the level

of perception or of daily experience. It is rather the result of a *praxis* based on the construction of models which alone permit access to the hidden meaning of phenomena, a meaning which is formulated in terms of structure. Lévi-Strauss's goal is *not* to change our perception of the concrete, but to reveal the concrete's true nature which, precisely, escapes perception"

Definition:

Structuralism is similar to existentialism in that it is a way of thinking on reality in present, but is so broad and diverse that it cannot be confined in one way of thinking. Structuralism can be found in many areas of study; such as mathematics, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, and the physical sciences. It is a methodology and an ideology whose goal it is to finding a structure responsible for generating a text or the deep structure that is a system that offers a visual pattern of the text and not just an outline by which the author works. Structuralists are interested in the "deep structure;" the visual pattern; and not just a "surface structure."

Characteristics:
Structuralism can be classed down into four basic concepts:

1. It is holistic. Parts of a system are only understood by the way they interact with other parts. The meaning of things such as gestures and sentences fit into the context of the language.
2. It prioritises the constant over the inconstant.
3. Structuralism opposes 'Positivism'. Positivists explain things by what they observe while Structuralists see an unobservable structure in observable chaotic world.
4. Structuralists believe that social structures constrain people sanctions.

The Methodological Heritage of Czech Structuralism:

Structuralism, as a distinctive methodological theory in science, humanities and philosophy, began to develop in the Czech region in the mid-20s of this century. It derives from the broad current of European structural thinking which aimed to overcome the crisis of traditional metaphysics and substance ontology by working out the categories of structure and function.

Structuralism Rejects:

- Structuralism rejected the attempts of positivism to apply the laws and principles of inorganic nature to the sphere of social phenomena, especially language, culture and art.
- In this regard it has opposed conceptions, which comprehend the whole as merely the sum of its parts.

Structuralism Stresses on:

- The analysis of individual facts in the context of the whole.
- And it comes to understand that the quality of a system depends on its inner structure.

METHODOLOGY:

Principles of Structuralism

1. Define the phenomenon under study as a relation between two or more terms.
2. Construct a table of possible permutations between these terms.
3. Take this table as the general object of analysis which at this level only can yield necessary connections: the empirical phenomenon considered at the beginning being only one possible combination among others-the complete system of which must be constructed beforehand.

1. 4. Linguistics and the Development of Structuralism

Linguistics:

Structuralism: Saussure and Language

The work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure is the starting point for much contemporary literary theory. Saussure described language as a system of differences with no positive terms. He argued that meaning is not inherent in words, nor does it arise from any reference to things outside language; rather the meaning of a word arises from its *difference* from other words. Saussure's theory was to revolutionise humanities studies and gave rise to two new disciplines: S*emiology* (study of signs) and *structuralism* (study of structures of meaning).

The Course in General Linguistics:

The Sign:

According to Saussure, The sign is the basic element of language. Meaning has always been explained in terms of the relationship between signs and their referents. Back in the 19th Century an important figure for semiotics, the pragmatic philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce (pronounced *purse*), and isolated three different types of sign: The **symbolic** sign is like a word in so far as it refers by symbolising its referent. It neither has to look like it nor have any natural relation to it at all. Thus the word cat has no relation to that ginger monster that wails all night outside my apartment. But its owner knows what I'm talking about when I say "your cat kept me awake all night." A poetic symbol like the sun (which may stand for enlightenment and truth) has an obviously symbolic relation to what it means. But how do such relationships come about? Saussure has an explanation. The **indexical** sign is like a signpost or a finger pointing in a certain direction. An arrow may accompany the signpost to San Francisco or to "Departures." The index of a book will have a list of alphabetically ordered words

with page numbers after each of them. These signs play an indexical function (in this instance, as soon as you've looked one up you'll be back in the symbolic again). The **iconic** sign refers to its object by actually resembling it and is thus more likely to be like a picture (as with a road sign like that one with the courteous workman apologising for the disruption). Cinema rhetoric often uses the shorthand that iconic signs provide. Most signs can be used in any or all three of these ways often simultaneously. The key is to be able to isolate the different functions.

Saussure departs from all previous theories of meaning by discovering that language can be examined independently of its referents (that is, anything outside language that can be said to be what language refers to, like things, fictions and abstractions). This is because the sign contains both its signifying element (what you see or hear when you look at a written word or hear a spoken one) and its meaningful content. The sign cat must be understood as being made up of two aspects. The letters--which are anyway just marks--"C" "A" "T"--combine to form a single word--"cat." And simultaneously the meaning that is signified by this word enters into my thoughts (I cannot help understanding this). At first sight this is an odd way of thinking. The meaning of the word cat is neither that actual ginger monster nor any of the actual feline beings that have existed nor any that one day surely will--a potential infinity of cats. The meaning of the word cat is its potential to be used (e.g., in the sentence "your cat kept me up all night.") And we need to able to use it potentially infinitely many times. So in some strict sense cat has no specific meaning at all, more like a kind of empty space into which certain images or concepts or events of usage can be spilled. For this reason Saussure was able to isolate language from any actual event of its being used to refer to things at all. This is because although the meaning of a word is determined to a certain extent in conventional use (if one had said "your snake kept me up" he would have been in trouble) there is always something undetermined, always something yet to be determined, about it.

Signifier/Signified:

Saussure divides the sign into its two aspects. First there's the bit that you can see or hear. Actually you can imagine signs that are accessible to each of the senses. The laboratory technicians at Channel, for instance, have an acute receptivity to the smallest nuanced difference between scents. In this case they are literally "readers" or "interpreters" of scent in so far as they are able to identify minute differences. So if you can see, hear, touch, taste or smell it you can probably interpret it and it is likely to have some meaning for you. Audible and visible signs have priority for Saussure because they are the types of sign that make up most of our known languages. Such signs are called "verbal" signs (from the Latin *verba* meaning "word"). The sensible part of a verbal sign (the part accessible to the senses) is the part you see or hear. This is its **signifier**. You can understand this much by looking at a word you don't understand--a word from a language you don't know, perhaps. All you get is its signifier. The following marks are the best approximation we can make to a word in an imaginary foreign language: **bluk.** It is a signifier. Already, though, notice that a certain amount of signification occurs--the foreignness is already part of its signified and the fact that we recognise it as a combination of marks that can be repeated already presents us with a potential **signified**. And, most eerily, although we only saw the mark we simultaneously heard it in our heads--not actually but that part of our brain that listens out for sounds took one look at a non-existent word and *heard something* too. The **signified** is what these visible/audible aspects mean to us. Now we know very well that some marks mean very different things to different people at different times. The word "cat" in my example means "ginger monster" to me but to my neighbour it means cuddly old much maligned softy who is only innocently going about its business. The signified is thus always something of an interpretation that is added to the signifier. Usually we individuals don't have to work too hard at interpreting signs. The groundwork has already been done--which is why "cat" pretty much nearly always means what it means. One of the most influential aspects of Saussure's course is his explanation concerning that groundwork.

System and Utterance:

There is no natural or necessary reason why the non-existent word **bluk** should sound the way it does. What we call phonemes (the elements of sound that make up words) correspond to the graphemes (elements of the written words) in no natural or necessary way. The correspondence has just come about over time and repeated usage and is constantly though imperceptibly changing. Yet literate speakers of a given language hear the correspondence immediately**.** (Now the invention of recorded sound is over a century old it might be fun to chart the changes, though that, as we are just about to discover, is entirely irrelevant). This unexplained correspondence between written and spoken marks would be no big deal in itself perhaps (though I do find it eerie) if it were not for the fact that the meanings of words--the signifieds--attach to their signifiers in just such an unreliable way. There is never a natural or necessary relationship between signifier and signified. Saussure says that the relationship is entirely arbitrary. So where does this meaning come from? How do signifieds and signifiers come together? Saussure tells us that we must get away from thinking about the changes that occur to languages through time. Before he arrived this is pretty much what language study was about: charting changes through time. Saussure calls this diachronic linguistics. Instead, he advises, we should focus our attention on what makes a language what it is at any given moment, forgetting about time altogether. He called this new linguistics, which he invented, synchronic linguistics. Synchronic linguistics studies what he calls la langue (which is French for "language"). What he means by this is the language system. The word "system," in this case, suggests an arrangement of interrelated elements and accounts for the way these elements relate to each other. The elements in Saussure's language system are signs. It is because of the specific ways in which these signs interrelate in the system that it is possible to say anything at all. When we do say anything it is an instance of what Saussure calls parole (French for speech). An instance of parole can be called an utterance. An utterance is any meaningful event that has been made possible and governed to an extent by a pre-existing system of signs. There is virtually nothing in experience and certainly

nothing meaningful that cannot be said to belong to one or more of these systems of signs. Let's look at some examples of types of utterance. The following are utterances: "Your cat kept me up all night"; a sonnet by Shakespeare; Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics;* Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; my suit and tie; Alexander Pope's garden in Twickenham. As such there is in each case a specific system that underlies and to an extent governs the types of utterance that can be made. What is the specific mechanism that allows systems to operate in these ways?

Difference:

Up until now, it might have been possible to understand the elements that make up this system, the signs themselves, as actually existing, perhaps even physical things. Get out your dictionary and there they will all be--a finite number, listed alphabetically and related to each other in definitive ways. Let's have a look at how this works with our most simple sign "cat".

We look it up and find this: Etymology: Middle English, from Old English *catt*, probably from Late Latin *cattus, catta* cat. Date: before 12th century.

1. a carnivorous mammal (*Felis catus*) long domesticated as a pet and for catching rats and mice.
2. any of a family (*Felidae*) of carnivorous usually solitary and nocturnal mammals (as the domestic cat, lion, tiger, leopard, jaguar, cougar, wildcat, lynx, and cheetah).
3. a malicious woman.
4. a strong tackle used to hoist an anchor to the cathead of a ship.

cat

m

Quite apart from the fact that the signifier appears to have three quite divergent signifieds (carnivorous mammal, malicious woman and strong tackle),

we find that it belongs in a family and has already been opposed to its conventional sparring partner the mouse (as in Tom and Jerry). You wouldn't be that likely to call a malicious man a "cat" (though who knows these days) either, so it seems as if some kind of gendering has gone on too. Furthermore you can solve any worries about any of the words used to define cat by turning to their own entries in the same dictionary. If you were to be very pedantic and silly you might spend days following the trail of cross-references. But these aspects are nothing to do with what holds the system together as a system. For that we must turn to something that it is not even possible to perceive and here we enter into the world of paradoxes. Saussure says that there are no actual positive existing terms in a language system--the dictionary must be an illusion then! Well, in some sense it is. Sure, the marks are there--but our understanding and our impression of them is owed to something we cannot have an impression of at all. That something is difference. This is what Saussure says: "A language is a system of differences with no positive terms." We recognise the marks of a language because they are marks in distinction and different from each and all of the other marks in the system. In fact we recognise marks as marks by virtue of the differences between marks rather than the marks themselves. You can see this easily with the fact that handwriting differences and quite stark differences in font on the word processor don't make any difference to the function of the mark itself--at best it is an aesthetic difference (not to say that that isn't important in its own right of course). As far as their being marks of the language system is concerned, so long as a given mark isn't bent so far as to become a different one, that is, so long as they operate within the elastic range that difference allows, then we will recognise them in a positive way. All possible marks have their possibility thanks to their differences. But what is a difference? Ah! That is a tricky one. I've already shown that the signifier is the sensible part of a sign. And we know that its signified is not itself sensible. We might call it "mental" or "intelligible" as opposed to sensible. Now, the trouble with difference is that it is neither sensible nor intelligible. Saussure had drawn a curious picture designating the two realms of the mental and the audible looking a little like a seascape with the sky above the

horizon. Several vertical lines cut the picture into individual segments. He meant by this to demonstrate that neither sound nor thought has any meaning but is just a mass--a meaningless continuity--without the articulation into segments that language provides. These segments are the signs, the elements of a language system, which is all very pretty but how do you then picture the difference that makes it all possible? You can never actually see, hear, touch, taste or smell a difference. Sense is stuck in the world of impressions. But if we are asked to accept that differences are what make signs possible, that the signifiers cat, bat, rat, dog, and mouse, have their distinctive qualities owing to their differences, then meaning can only come into being for us in the empty, imperceptible differences between signifiers. It is thus the system of differences that makes possible and to a certain extent governs meaningful experience. We can exemplify it as follows:

SIGNIFIED   :

Concept   :

SIGNIFIER   :

Sound Image: CAT

This becomes the basic model of the sign in structuralist approach to signifying phenomena. The signifier is the vehicle for meaning and the signified is its cargo.

1.5. Structuralism and Other Branches

The special role of Russian Formalism: Structuralism and other social sciences: In addition, to mention the special role of Russian Formalism, the development of structuralism in the social sciences and humanities was influenced by the methodological conceptions of W. Dilthey, F. de Saussure and K. Mannheim. Under the influence of E. Husserl, W. Dilthey in his later works began to employ the notions of structure, sign and meaning. According to Dilthey not

only particular manifestations of life, but also cultural and historical forms have a structural character. The historical world is understood as the entirety of life manifestations realized in their "meaning connections".

Structuralism and Sociology:

The main representative of the Czech Structuralist concept in sociology and social philosophy was Arnot Inocenc Bláha (1878-1960). From a methodological point of view he was influenced by T.G. Masaryk and especially by E. Durkheim whose structural-functional conception of society he assumed. Bláha's conception of society as the "rule of rules", conceived in the '20s, was very similar to later ideas of C. Lévi-Strauss' cultural anthropology. In his book *Filosofie mravnosti* (Philosophy of Morals, 1922) Bláha understood morality as the "function of order", but--under the influence of T.G. Masaryk--he laid stress on the specific role of the individual in ethical relations and social reality. Though in Bláha's conception man is determined by social norms, at the same time he is their co-creator.

Structuralism and Sociological and Philosophical thought:

In the further development of his sociological and philosophical thought A.I. Bláha developed the conception of federative functionalism which--contrary to the theory of the other Czech Structuralist philosopher and sociologist, J.L. Fischer--rejected a hierarchical order to social functions, considering them all to be equally important.

However, it was especially the works of structurally oriented literary scientists and aestheticians, which found acceptance abroad, so we will introduce Czech structuralism through their thought.

Structuralism and Aesthetics:

In aesthetics, two parallel antipositivistic streams could be considered in the history of European thinking: the Anglo-Saxon line (the Cambridge School

and American New Criticism) and the Slavic Formalism (Russian Formalism, Czech Structuralism, the Polish Integral School). Some researchers, such as V. Erlich, have unilaterally accented the connection of Czech structural thinking with Russian Literary Scholarship Formalism (V. klovskij, V. irmunskij, R. Jakobson), but they substantially underestimated the continuity of Czech Structuralism with the tradition of the "Prague Aesthetic School" in the nineteenth century (Josef Durdík, Otakar Hostinský), which proceeded from J. F. Herbart's Formal Aesthetics.

Structuralism and Art:

The movement from Herbart's Formalism, to the structural approach, to art characterized the aesthetics of Otakar Zich (1879-1934), who created his own conception of form as a set of meanings. He elaborated this in connection with the German aesthetician, Johannes Volkelt's psychological semantic conception of aesthetics. Zich's emphasis upon sound and rhythmic qualities as substantial and constitutive values of poetry have had special influence upon the formation of Czech Literary Formalism.

Further, the theoretical approach offered by structuralism emphasizes that elements of culture must be understood in terms of their relationship to the entire system (Rubel and Rosman 1996:1263). This notion, that the whole is greater than the parts, appeals to the Gestalt school of psychology. Essentially, elements of culture are not explanatory in and of themselves, but rather form part of a meaningful system. As an analytical model, structuralism assumes the universality of human thought processes in efforts to explain the "deep structure" or underlying meaning existing in cultural phenomena. "Structuralism is a set of principles for studying the mental superstructure".

Structuralism and Materialists:

Materialists would also generally object to structural explanations in favour of more observable or practical explanations. Levi Strauss' points out that analysis

of the role of the coyote as "trickster" in many different Native American mythologies rationalizes that the coyote, because it preys on herbivores and carnivores alike, is associated with agriculture and hunting, and life and death is thus a deviation from natural order, or abnormal. Lett further shows that a materialist perspective is offered by Marvin Harris in the explanation of the recurrent theme of coyote as trickster: "The coyote enjoys the status of a trickster because it is an intelligent, opportunistic animal". Strauss helped to spawn the rationalist-empiricist debate by furthering the inquiry into the idea of panhuman mental processes, and what determines culture.

Structuralism and Science:

Another reaction to structuralism is grounded in scientific inquiry. In any form of responsible inquiry, theories must be falsifiable. Structural analyses do not allow for this or for external validation. Although these analyses present "complexity of symbolic realms" and "insight about the human condition," they simply cannot be subjected to scientific scrutiny.

Structuralism and Story/Film:

What came out of all this was the idea that language is a system based on difference. Culture was seen by Levi-Strauss as similar to a language in this respect, and Structuralist critics carried this one step further. They argued that stories have deep structures like a language. Just as a sentence is underwritten by the structures of grammar (as well as others) so it is literature underwritten by structures.

So what's a narrative? Tzvetan Todorov argues that the simplest possible narrative consists of an equilibrium followed by a change which results in a new equilibrium. e.g. The king rules the land. Macbeth murders the king and then is killed in turn. The new king rules the land. Gotham city is threatened by the Penguin. Batman defeats the Penguin. Gotham city returns to peace. A peaceful group of Englishmen are disturbed by a vampire. He is killed. They return to their lives.

It is true that the structural rules that all stories must obey. But in following situation or a story where this does not occur – for example, 'The shop is empty. A man walks into the shop.' Not much of a story is it? But if we add 'He steals a fur coat and runs' we have a story of a shoplifter.

Structuralism is good at highlighting those strategies or structures of story, which we take for, granted. Even simple stories can have extremely complex structures. Even when we are probably aware that when you read a story it's not really the author who is telling it but some sort of narrative level. Structuralism comes up with some terms, which are more specific than the usual terminology of 'first person etc. narration'.

Structuralism and Mathematics:

The attention of the mathematician focuses primarily upon mathematical structure, and his intellectual delight arises (in part) from seeing that a given theory exhibits such and such a structure, from seeing how one's structure is "modelled" in another, or in exhibiting some new structure, showing how it relates to previously studied ones...But...the mathematician is satisfied so long as he has some "entities" or "objects" (or "sets" or "numbers" or "functions" or "spaces" of "points") to work with, and he does not inquire into their inner character or ontological status. The philosophical logician, on the other hand, is more sensitive to matters of ontology and will be especially interested in the kind or kinds of entities that are actual...He will not be satisfied with being told merely that such and such entities exhibit such and such a mathematical structure.

> If an expression of the form "x=y" is to have sense, it
>
> can be only in contexts where it is clear that both x
>
> and y are of some kind or category C, and that it is
>
> the conditions which individuate things as the same C
>
> which are operative and determine its truth value.

[Benacerraf,287]

Benacerraf concludes that numbers could not be sets at all on the grounds that there are no good reasons to say that any particular number is some particular set, for any system of objects that forms a recursive progression would be adequate. He also points out the results of Takeuti who has shown that the Godel-von Neumann-Bernays set theory is reducible to the theory of ordinal numbers less than the least accessible number. This supports the thesis that sets are really ordinal numbers, but leaves us with the question of which is really the more fundamental object: sets or ordinal numbers. Benacerraf refers back to Martin's quotation that "the mathematician's interest stops at the level of structure. If one theory can be modelled in another (that is, reduced to another) then further questions about whether the individuals of one theory are really those of the second just do not arise.

In "Mathematics and Reality", Stewart Shapiro offers a non-Platonist version of structuralism.

Music as a Text

Music is a text. It does not mean that music can be reduced to a score. It does not mean that a text is a sequence of words or notes on paper. It does mean that music, as a sounding or notated phenomenon, is as a system of signs inscribed on the play of differences.

Music is not a closed text. Any musical 'element' functions as a sign, which means that it refers to another element that is simply not present. This connecting chain makes every element of music a constituted beginning with 'traces' of other elements of the chain or system within it.

Music as a text can be read. It acquires meaning. Meanings Deconstruction demonstrates the impossibility of establishing well-grounded distinctions between what can be read in the text and what is read into it. But in every reading practice, in every interpretation or performance, a (musical) text is also rewritten.

1.6. Functions of Structuralism and Conclusion:

Structuralism bags the following features:

- Its origins can be traced to Durkheim and Mauss; specifically their interest in how humans classify and organize their worlds.

- Beginning in the 1940s, it developed in the 50s and becomes very popular and influential in the 1960s.

- Structuralism had a passing influence on anthropology and a perhaps greater and more lasting influence on the humanities.

- There are no Structuralists in anthropology today, but some do structural analyses.

- Culture is seen as a system of ideas (so it is an idealist paradigm, not materialistic).

- The "father" of structuralism, and its foremost exponent, is Claude Levi-Strauss.

- Sir Edmund Leach, the British social anthropologist, was the most important proponent, aside from Levi-Strauss.

- In addition to Durkheim and Mauss, a major influence was Ramon Jackobsen, a pioneer in the development of structural linguistics.

Contradictory statements about Structuralism:

- There are contradictory statements about Structuralism like Levi-Strauss claimed it was a more scientific anthropology, but others seem to think it was less scientific and more humanistic because it is impossible to verify a structural analysis (like a Freudian interpretation).

- It has been concluded that Structural analysis is more a matter of interpretation than hypothesis-testing.

- But to Levi-Strauss himself structuralism is a way of analysing the mind and discerning its universal, inherent features rather than a way of discovering the underlying 'logic' of a particular culture. Where as to others, however, it is a way of discovering the underlying "logic" of a particular culture.

Remarks From the eminent writers and critics expressed in their various speeches and work published:

Following are the different facades of 'Structuralism', which will help the readers to understand the theory at various levels. These are selected from the different books to reach to the maximum possible meanings of the method, Structuralism;

1. "Structuralism is bound up with the general movement away from positivism, 'historicizing history' and the 'biographical illusion', a movement represented in various ways by the critical writings of a Proust, an Eliot, a Valéry, Russian Formalism, French 'thematic criticism' or Anglo-American New Criticism ... Structuralism, then, would appear to be a refuge for all immanent criticism against the danger of fragmentation that threatens thematic analysis: the means of reconstituting the unit of a work, its principle of coherence ... Structural criticism is untainted by any of the transcendent reductions of psychoanalysis, for example, or Marxist explanation, but it exerts, in its own way, a sort of internal reduction, traversing the substance of the work in order to reach its bone-structure: certainly not a superficial examination, but a sort of radioscopic penetration, and all the more external in that it is more penetrating" (Gérard Genette, "Structuralism and Literary Criticism", in Newton (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*, pp. 135-40; 136).

2. Structuralism is an approach that grew to become one of the most widely used methods of analyzing language, culture, and society in the second half of the 20th century.

3. 'Structuralism', however, does not refer to a clearly defined 'school' of authors, although the work of Ferdinand de Saussure is generally considered a starting point.

4. Structuralism rejected existentialism's notion of radical human freedom and focused instead on the way that human behaviour is determined by cultural, social, and psychological structures.

5. "Structuralism has emerged from linguistics and in literature it finds an object which has itself emerged from language. We can understand then why structuralism should want to found a science of literature or, to be more exact, a linguistics of discourse, whose object is the 'language' of literary forms, grasped on many levels ... In short, structuralism will be just one more 'science' (several are born each century, some of them only ephemeral) if it does not manage to place the actual subversion of scientific language at the centre of its programme ... (Roland Barthes, "Science versus Literature", in Newton (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*, pp. 140-44; 142).

6. "Structuralism has been in fashion in Anglo-American intellectual circles since the late sixties, as is demonstrated by the number of critical anthologies and books which have appeared in the last decade. The critical excitement generated by structuralism reached its peak in America in the mid-seventies: the label became then the product, with the predictable result that any thinker, past or present, who was anyone fit under the 'structuralist umbrella'". (Harari, "Critical Factions/Critical Fiction", in Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies*, pp. 1717-72; p. 17).

7. "For Lévi-Strauss, as for structuralism in general, it is important to emphasise that the structure is not directly observable, since access is gained to it only at the end of a progressive 'reduction' which permits one to distinguish the pertinent oppositions (the constitutive units of the system) that alone have signifying value" (Harari, "Critical Factions/Critical Fictions", p. 21, n. 10).

8. "The task of literary structuralism is not to discover the meaning of a work, but to reconstitute the rules governing the production of meaning" (Harari, "Critical Factions/Critical Fictions", p. 22).

9. "Historically, structuralism was born of linguistics, and all the fields it covers have to do with signs. All the disciplines encompassed by structuralism - linguistics, poetics, ethnology, psychoanalysis and, clearly in the background but still related, philosophy - are grouped under the sciences of the sign, or of sign-systems" (Harari, "Critical Factions/Critical Fictions", p. 28).

10. "Structuralism is a philosophical view according to which the reality of the objects of the human or social sciences is relational rather than substantial. It generates a critical method that consists of inquiring into and specifying the sets of relations (or structures) that constitute these objects or into which they enter, and of identifying and analysing groups of such objects whose members are structural transformations of one another" Peter Caws, *Structuralism: The Art of the Intelligible,* Humanities Press International, Inc.: Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1988), p.1.

11. "'Structuralism' as a proper name includes a number of diverse practices across different disciplines in the human sciences. What they all have in common is a Saussurean linguistics. The possibility of this was posited by Lévi-Strauss in 1945, in his essay, -Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology.

12. Structuralism is a method of analysis. The structuralist method, then, assumes that meaning is made possible by the existence of underlying systems of conventions which enable elements to function individually as signs. Structuralist analysis addresses itself to the system of rules and relations underlying each signifying practice: its activity more often than not consists in producing a model of this system" (Young, *Untying the Text*, p. 3).

13. "As Terry Eagleton puts it "Structuralism proper contains a distinctive doctrine... the belief that the individual units of any system have meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another...."

14. "T. Eagleton has remarked that one of the primary drawbacks to structuralist research is that it is "hair-raisingly unhistorical."" Need to focus on where categories and structures come from.

15. "Structuralism is the name that is given to a wide range of discourses that study underlying structures of signification."

When does such signification occur?

Such 'signification' occurs in our meaningful doings like discussions, reading or writing. Signification occurs wherever there is a meaningful event or in the practice of some meaningful action. Hence, the phrase, "*signifying practices*" came into existence. A meaningful event might include any of following: writing or reading a text; getting married; having a discussion over a cup of coffee; a battle. Most (if not all) meaningful events involve either a document or an exchange that can be documented. This would be called a "text." Texts might include any of the following: a news-broadcast; an advertisement; an edition of Shakespeare's *King Lear;* the manual for a new washing machine; the wedding vows; a feature film. From the point of view of structuralism all texts, all meaningful events and all signifying practices can be analysed for their underlying structures. Such an analysis would reveal the patterns that characterise the system that makes such texts and practices possible. We cannot see a structure or a system per se. In fact it would be very awkward for us if we were aware at all times of the structures that make our signifying practices possible. Rather they remain unconscious but necessary aspects of our whole way of being what we are. Structuralism therefore promises to offer insights into what makes us the way we are.

Structuralism is an approach to the study hence we can stress on its functions as follows:

1. **Levi Strauss:** Structuralism asserts itself as a method of scientific knowledge and even lays claim to the rigor of the exact sciences.

2. The task of literary structuralism is not to discover the meaning of a work, but to reconstitute the rule governing the production of meaning"

3. Structuralism was born of Linguistics, and all the fields it covers have to do with signs. All the Disciplines encompassed by structuralism: Linguistics, Poetics, ethnology, psychoanalysis and, clearly in the back ground but still related, philosophy are grouped under sciences of the sign, or of sign –system.

4. Structural analysis does not explain the meaning of a text.

5. Structural analysis describes and explains a text as a system of narrative transformations.

6. The task of literary structuralism is not to discover the meaning of a work, but to reconstitute the rules governing the production of meaning"

7. Structuralism insists on the difference between signifier and signified.

8. Structuralism is good at highlighting those strategies or structures of story, which we take for, granted. Even simple stories can have extremely complex structures. This is particularly true of narration.

9. **Structuralism is about meaning, not just about form.** Genette is at pains to point out that structuralism is not just about form, but about meaning, as linguistics is about meaning. It is a study of the cultural construction or identification of meaning according to the relations of signs that constitute the meaning-spectrum of the culture. When Jakobson writes of the centrality of tropes to imaginative writing, he places the categories of meaning at the heart of the structural method, as tropes, including metaphor and metonymy, are the way we say something by saying something else, figures of signification. Ambiguity, which is a meaning-function, is at the heart of the poetic function.

10. **Structuralism is a general tendency of thought.** Structuralism is, however, not necessarily an intrinsic fact of nature but rather is a way of thinking; structures are "systems of latent relations, conceived rather than perceived, which analysis constructs as it uncovers them, and which it runs the risk of inventing while believing that it is discovering them" -- that is, structures are explanations of coherence and repetition, they appear in what they seek to explain, they in a sense provide the terms and the vehicle of explanation. as we can only now through knowledge frames. Structuralism is the explanation of texts or events in their own terms (as those terms are conceived), **not** in relation to external causes.

When one turns to the internal dynamic of a text as an object, a field of meanings, and to the coherence of it as a text, rather than as biography or sociology, one reads structurally. Structuralist reading abandons psychological, sociological, and such explanations. One can see New Criticism as a structural methodology, although it is not structuralism: in structural analysis of theme, for instance, theme would be seen in the context of the *relations* of themes, that is, of certain elements of filaments of the configuration, or network or matrix of, of social meanings, which meanings constitute culture.

11. **Structuralism is however not merely intrinsic criticism, the criticism of the thing itself.** Genette mentions the other form of intrinsic criticism, phenomenological criticism, in which one becomes in touch with the subjectivity of the creative voice of the work. Ricoeur refers to this, Genette writes, as the hermeneutic method: the intuitive convergence to two consciousnesses, the authors and the readers. This is a little confusing, because this is not hermeneutics properly speaking, but rather phenomenological hermeneutics. When there is hermeneutics, Genette says, when the text is available to us in that immediate a way, then structural reading fades; but whenever we have to look more objectively, when we are transversing barriers of time, say, or of culture or interest, then the structural method, the search for

principles of order, coherence and meaning, becomes dominant - literatures distant in place and time, children's literature, popular literature.

Genette goes on to suggest that the difference between hermeneutic and structural reading is a matter of the critical position of the critic- (between identity and distance, say). Structuralism is an intrinsic reading free from subjectivity, when we become the ethno-methodologists of our culture.

12. **Structuralism ties the meaning of the work to the meanings of the culture.** Genette suggests that *topics* is an area of study that structuralism can bring us to -- the traditional subjects and forms of the culture (from the Greek *topos*, 'place'; we prefer to refer to culturally-constructed sites of meaning as *topoi*, to try to retain the full meaning of the idea). *Topics*, or *topoi*, are structural in that they underlie the way we talk and think about things in our culture. They are in a sense psychological, Genette says, but collectively so, not individually. Throughout, in writing of the cultural knowledge that structuralism provides, Genette has been suggesting that 'high' literature is not the only, perhaps not the primary, location for the study of cultural meanings: the serious study of popular culture has begun.

13. **Structuralism opens the study of genre to new light.** Different genres predispose the reader to different attitudes, different expectations. Different genres lead to different expectations of types of situations and actions, and of psychological, moral, and aesthetic values. Without conventional expectations we cannot have the difference, the surprise and the reversals, which mark the more brilliant exercise of creativity.

Hence creativity is in a sense structural, as it depends on our expectation, which it theme plays upon.

14. **Structuralism can be applied to the study of literature as a whole, as a meaning system.** Structurally, literature is a whole; it functions as a system of meaning and reference no matter how many works there are, two or two

thousand. Thus any work becomes the *parole*, the individual articulation, of a cultural *langue*, or system of signification. As literature is a system, no work of literature is an autonomous whole; similarly, literature itself is not autonomous but is part of the larger structures of signification of the culture.

15. **Structuralism studies literature synchronically, but with diachronic awareness.** Structuralism studies literature historically by studying it as it were in cross-section at different times, by seeing in what way literature divides up the traditional topics of the cultural imagination. Change is intrinsic to literature, as the Russian formalists thought; what the change registers is the alterations of the relations of meaning within the culture. Structuralism can then yield a fruitful approach to the history of literature, not as a series of great works, or of influences of one writer upon another, but more structurally, more systematically, as the way in which a culture's discourse with itself alters. The meaning of an individual work is ultimately and inevitably only the meaning within a larger frame of cultural meanings, and these meanings change in relation to one another across time and cultures. As well, the additions of other signifying systems, such as cinema, alter but do not disrupt the system of literature. A structural analysis of the construction of cultural meaning can thence replace the meaning of the individual instance, the particular work, while the meaning of the individual work is illumined and rendered more fully significant by being read in the context of its full systemic, cultural meaning.

The Basic Concern of Structuralists:

The basic concern then of Structuralists is to demarcate the boundaries of the system being studied (its wholeness), to identify its syntax and the relations between its syntactical elements, its self-regulation and then view the findings so that the transformations can be apparent. Any system is amenable to Structuralist analysis, and the arts have proved a fruitful area of study, especially literature and film.

Literature falls into genres, and genres can be treated as systems with their own particular set of rules and grammar. Mystery stories for example contain a murder, a mystery surrounding the identity of the murderer, a pattern of detection and the ultimate discovery of the murderer.

These reserve formal elements signal the text's genre to the audience. Different examples of the genre will handle the stock conventions in their own particular manner, which is the principle of transformation in operation. The tracing of transformations in a genre can be very revealing about literary and cultural development.

Remember, that the Structuralist is interested as much in what is not clear as what is.

Conclusion:

Structuralism rose to prominence in France through the application by the French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, of Saussurean structural linguistics to the study of such phenomena as myths, rituals, kinship relations, eating conventions. Literature seemed especially appropriate to a structuralist approach as it was wholly made up of language. Structuralism does not make a difference between literature and other forms of writing or value judgments between good and bad literature.

Working from Saussure's perception that meaning is relational, structural anthropology identifies the binary oppositions in a culture as they are manifested in story and ritual. Insofar as stories mediate between irreconcilable oppositions, mythmaking is a survival strategy". **"Ironically, structuralism has had to sustain the opposing charges that;**

a. It lacks humanity because it subjects literature to scientific analysis and

b. It is over-idealistic because it searches for universals and gives greater privilege to synchronic systems than to historical change".

In any society, communication operates on three different levels: communication of women, communication of goods and services, communication of messages. Therefore kinship studies, economics and linguistics approach the same kinds of problems on different strategic levels and really pertain to the same field.

Structuralism is an approach that grew to become one of the most widely used methods of analyzing language, culture, and society in the second half of the 20th century. 'Structuralism', however, does not refer to a clearly defined 'school' of authors, although the work of Ferdinand de Saussure is generally considered a starting point. Structuralism rejected existentialism's notion of radical human freedom and focused instead on the way that human behaviour is determined by cultural, social, and psychological structures.

Broadly, Structuralism seeks to explore the inter-relationships of elements (the 'structure') in, say, a story, rather than focusing on it contents, through which meaning is produced within a culture. It is also accepted as a distinctive methodological theory in science, humanities and philosophy, began to develop in the Czech region in the mid-20s of the century. The Postmodernists themselves prove, more than any other group, that in terms of the generation of meaning, Structuralism is the Westerner's first and foremost ontological and epistemological foundation.

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