The Reception of Structuralist Criticism in Arab Critical Practice

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Abstract :
Literary criticism is a prominent aspect of literature, particularly in the modern era, where critics have focused on uncovering the meanings and components of various literary texts, as well as the connotations and implications they carry. This endeavor has been supported by a range of contemporary Western critical methodologies and practices that primarily emphasize the internal critique of the text. These methodologies may converge, overlap, and occasionally differ in their approaches and techniques. This research paper aims to examine the transformations experienced by criticism in general and structural criticism in particular within the Arab world, along with the resulting cognitive issues. It seeks to portray the critical landscape through the perspectives of pioneers and notable figures such as Salah Fadl, Zakaria Ibrahim, Abdel Salam Al-Masdi, Abdullah Al-Ghathami, and Yumna Al-Aid, among others. More specifically, it focuses on the critical movement and its procedural and terminological mechanisms among some key figures in Arab literary criticism. Additionally, it aims to enable researchers and scholars to grasp certain concepts within the context of modern and contemporary critical methodologies, while also tracking the differences present in the dynamics of influence and reciprocity with others. As a result, structuralism has occupied a significant critical space in the Arab context, particularly concerning literature and its various fields of knowledge. Today, researchers and scholars encounter important theoretical and practical issues raised by structural criticism that continue to resonate. Furthermore, contemporary Arab critical discourse is characterized by plurality and divergence, rather than being a singular narrative. This multiplicity has led to different approaches in understanding and interpreting structuralism within literary texts.

Keywords: Criticism, Structuralism, Language, Russian Formalism, De Saussure.

Introduction

Modern critical methodologies have garnered-and still do- considerable attention from scholars of diverse backgrounds, primarily because they serve as a key to understanding texts and the issues and truths they embody, stemming from the creative individual's surrounding world. The knowledge produced by this individual makes research into it and its contents require a series of theoretical and practical procedures known as the critical process. This process has experienced significant expansion, especially in the last three decades of the twentieth century, during which textual analysis has become increasingly internal, focusing on the linguistic formation of the text. The aim is to uncover how textual elements are organized and to reveal the system upon which they are composed and interact within their context. Consequently, these modern methodologies have become the new tools for critics and creators to discover and utilize the underlying structures within texts, while also anticipating the aesthetic function of the text, independent of external historical, social, or psychological references.

The emergence of structuralism in criticism, along with the resulting terminologies and trends, has had a significant impact on both the Western and Arab critical landscapes, both of which have undergone historical and civilizational transformations affecting various aspects of life, from intellectual and political to social and economic dimensions. Consequently, a new awareness, interest, and critical perspective have emerged that draw from various studies and theses, particularly those of a scientific nature, and extend into the field of the humanities. This evolution reflects the artistic phenomenon's characteristics in expressing the self, the other, existence, and the processes of change and civilizational transformation.

What do we mean by structural criticism? What are the circumstances and contexts that contributed to its emergence? How has this critical practice transitioned into the Arab environment? In what ways do its proponents in the Arab context differ regarding terminology and methodology? What is the added value of this approach in reading Arabic texts?

Presentation

1. **Structuralism**

    The development of literature and literary studies has been closely tied to advancements in science, which in turn has fostered a flourishing of critical methodologies that benefit from scientific and intellectual movements. One significant outcome of this evolution has been the exclusion of the contextual conditions surrounding the text and its creator, in an effort to reach meaning and decode the text. These methodologies are deeply connected to various sciences and their achievements, particularly empirical sciences since the early eighteenth century. Among the profound transformations affecting the critical landscape in its interaction with texts was the emergence of the term "structuralism," which represents a holistic approach aimed at interpreting all human phenomena, including humanity, history, and heritage, through the lens of structure, its components, and the relationships that arise within it. This perspective attributes everything to

language, seen as the dominant model governing all human activities and fundamental to the understanding of these phenomena.

The term "structure" is derived from the trilateral verb "bana," meaning construction or method. It also conveys the sense of building and architecture, referring to the manner in which a structure is formed. In Arabic grammar, the duality of meaning and structure is based on how the units of the Arabic language are constructed and the transformations that occur within them.

Thus, an increase in structure corresponds to an increase in meaning, and any transformation in structure leads to a change in significance. Structure is an organized subject with its own specific form and internal unity; the term "structure" inherently implies a totality composed of cohesive phenomena, each of which depends on the others and is defined through its relationships with them. Consequently, it is challenging to clearly define and distinguish structuralism, as it takes on multiple forms while providing a unified common denominator. Moreover, structuralism is continually evolving, and structuralists, in the eyes of others, are a collective engaged in the search for underlying universal relationships. (Hamad, 2017)

Linguistic structuralism emerged in the mid-1920s, led by Ferdinand de Saussure through his work *Course in General Linguistics*, published in Paris in 1916. The aim of linguistic study was to engage with the literary text from within, transcending external references and treating it as a linguistic system in its stability. This approach gained significant traction in both linguistic and literary fields, as scholars eagerly adopted it to analyze literary, textual, and linguistic phenomena. The concept of "structure" was defined as "the construction or method by which a building is erected," later extending to the arrangement of parts within a structure from an artistic perspective, which contributes to aesthetic beauty, a notion established in European lexicons since the mid-seventeenth century (Al-Saadani, 2000).

Structuralism is considered "a system of transformations that contains its own laws, enriched by these transformations and their roles. These transformations may extend beyond the confines of the system or incorporate external elements. Thus, structure consists of three characteristics: wholeness, transformations, and self-regulation" (Piaget, 1985). Structuralism emphasizes the structure and its components, as well as the relationships that emerge within it, attributing "all forms of culture—across all its dimensions—to language. It claims that language is the dominant model governing all human activities and is fundamental to our understanding of phenomena. Our responses to reality and perceptions are dictated by the structure of the language we use, and all diverse cultures are composed of systems that share a similar structure to that of language" (Qassab, 2009).

Structure, in its broadest sense, refers to the system of internal and stable relationships that govern objects and works, including creativity, where the part is unified with the whole according to specific laws and regulations that are manifested in:

1. Collection / Totality / Holism

Structuralists consider the literary text as a total structure composed of interconnected internal elements that cohesively bind together, resembling a cell whose components

thrive through their collective existence rather than in isolation. Therefore, partial structures possess characteristics distinct from those of the total structure; their significance arises only within the context of a complete and integrated whole.

The partial structure, as a component of the total structure, constitutes a system that permeates the text from beginning to end. In narrative texts, it is represented through temporal and spatial elements, as well as characters. In poetic texts, it manifests in rhythmic, linguistic, and structural patterns. Thus, "the structure is indeed composed of elements, but these elements are governed by laws that distinguish the group as a collective. These laws, referred to as structural laws, are not merely cumulative connections; they endow the whole with properties that differ from those of the individual elements" (Piaget, Structuralism, 1985). Therefore, the structure does not consist of external elements independent of the group, but rather of internal elements that adhere to the laws of the system and the group. Its significance lies not in the individual parts or the totality of the structure itself, but in the relationships among its elements, often referred to as composition and formation within this structure and system.

Structuralism posits that "every text implicitly contains an internal activity, making each element a building block for others while being built upon at the same time. Consequently, structuralism takes this characteristic into account to explore the transformations of structure and the changes it may undergo" (Hamad, *Contextual and Systemic Literary Criticism*, 2017). This is based on the idea that "the hallmark of structural configurations adheres to their compositional laws, ultimately making them structurally formative by nature... Thus, all structures comprise groups of transformations" (Piaget, *Structuralism*, 1985). Ibrahim Mahmoud Khalil views these structures as not "absolutely static; rather, they are subject to internal transformations, and consequently, they are not fixed, generating continuously evolving formations due to the internal regulation of the structure" (Khalil, 2011).

This characteristic serves as the internal driver of text structures, ensuring that the structure cannot remain static and unchanging. It is perpetually in a state of transformation due to the legal mechanisms that govern the activity of each textual structure. "This feature expresses an important truth in structuralism: that a structure cannot remain in a state of absolute stasis; rather, it is always susceptible to changes dictated by the specific needs established by the system's relationships or its contradictions. For instance, the ideas contained within a literary text become, through this transformation, a catalyst for the emergence of new ideas" (Hamad, *Contextual and Systemic Literary Criticism*, 2017). This guarantees a continuous internal activity within the text and its structures.

1-3. Self-Regulation (L'autoréglage): Self-regulation is "the fundamental third characteristic of structures, as they can adjust themselves through this self-regulation, thereby maintaining their integrity and the uniqueness of the structure and the work itself" (Piaget, *Structuralism*, 1985). There is no need for an external law to activate or motivate them; much like a sentence relies on its own linguistic system.

This property of self-organization "enables the structure to organize itself in order to maintain its unity and continuity; this is due to its adherence to the laws of the whole,

which allows for a kind of 'self-revolution.' This means that its internal transformations do not extend beyond its boundaries, but rather continually generate elements that belong to the structure itself. Despite this closed nature, it does not imply that it cannot be part of a broader structure without losing its intrinsic properties" (Hamad, *Contextual and Systemic Literary Criticism*, 2017).

Thus, structuralism does not view the elements that comprise a work of art as independent and merely adjacent parts within a mechanism or system. Instead, it considers the entirety of these elements in their integrated and intertwined relationships; each element has a partnership and interconnection with multiple other elements that make up the original text, which is based on the principles of unity and integration, especially in narrative texts. This perspective is supported by Siza Qassem and Abdullah Khader Hamad, who argues that "structuralism, in its critique of literature, starts from the premise that the structure is self-sufficient. The literary text, for instance, is a structure composed of elements, and these elements adhere to structural laws that extend beyond their role as cumulative links binding the parts of the literary entity together. They bestow upon the whole characteristics that differ from those of the individual elements... This ensures a set of distinctive features; first, the structure is a system of external transformations, and second, this system does not require any external element; it evolves and expands from within, ensuring the structure's independence and allowing the researcher to comprehend this structure" (Hamad, *Contextual and Systemic Literary Criticism*, 2017).

2. Conditions and Contexts

Structuralism, as previously mentioned, aims at a coherent total system that explains all human phenomena, particularly those related to artistic and literary creativity. It is characterized by its internal structures, which encompass various fields of knowledge, including mythology, anthropology, and contemporary scientific understanding in all its diversity. Therefore, the emergence of the structuralist approach is regarded as a pivotal event and a qualitative shift in the history and development of criticism, with a series of historical transformations and scientific pathways laying the groundwork for its emergence, including:

2.1 De Saussure and the Linguistic Model: Ferdinand de Saussure is regarded as "the true father of the structuralist movement in the modern era, despite the fact that his works were published only after his death. His lectures on linguistics were published by some of his students in 1918, based on his notes and the recordings made by some of his listeners. His lectures marked the beginning of a new era in the fields of linguistic science and the humanities in general" (Ibrahim, 1990). This was achieved through his presentation of a series of opposing binaries in language and linguistic study, including langue and parole, the signifier and the signified, as well as the concepts of synchrony and diachrony, along with structural and paradigmatic relationships.

Regarding langue and parole, Saussure distinguished between them on the basis that "language is a system of rules and principles related to a particular language, which operates in the minds of the community and represents the normative model of language, while the actual practices that emerge in individual performances and speech are referred

to as 'parole.' This conception of language aligns closely with what is known as linguistic structures, even though he did not specifically use that term" (Fadl, 2002).

Concerning the signifier and the signified, Saussure refuted the view that language is merely a process of naming things, offering an alternative definition in which the linguistic sign connects an idea with a sound image, rather than a thing with its name. By "sound image," he does not refer to the physical aspect of the sound, but rather to its psychological image, meaning the impression and effect it leaves on the senses (Saussure, 1985).

As for the issue of synchrony and diachrony, he states that the synchronic perspective represents a horizontal axis in which the relationships between "elements exist on a fixed basis, with time having no influence, while diachrony represents a vertical axis in which the relationships between sequential elements are based on temporal or historical change" (Zakaria, 1990). Building on the aforementioned binaries, he arrives at the concepts of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships, asserting that "words in speech acquire relationships that depend on the linear nature of language, as they are interconnected, and this fact prevents the simultaneous articulation of two elements" (Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 1985).

Thus, the ultimate goal of "linguistic study is to engage with the literary text from within, transcending external referentiality and considering it as a linguistic system in its stability and permanence. This approach has achieved success in both the linguistic and literary domains, as scholars eagerly embraced it, using it as a method and framework for engaging with literary, textual, and linguistic phenomena" (Hamad, *Contextual and Systemic Literary Criticism*, 2017).

2.2 Russian Formalism: According to researchers, Russian Formalism represents the second and fundamental source in the crystallization of structuralist thought during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. In addition to Saussure's contributions, it "took upon itself the task of secularizing literary study, originating from two scientific gatherings: one in Moscow and the other in Saint Petersburg" (Ehrlich, 2000).

The pioneers of the first wave of Russian Formalism include Roman Jakobson and Peter K. D. Shklovsky (1915), while Boris Eikhenbaum, Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynianov, and Tomashhevski are recognized as founders of the second circle (1919). Their goal was "to put an end to the methodological confusion prevalent in traditional literary studies and to establish a systematic science of literature as a distinct and integrated field of intellectual endeavor" (Ehrlich, *Russian Formalism*, 2000). This was achieved through their treatment of "form as a set of functions" (Waugh, 2007).

Their foundations were based on two essential theses: emphasizing the literary effect and its constituent parts, as well as insisting on the independence of literary science. For them, form was no longer merely a superficial layer; it transformed into a dynamic unity whose meaning arises from within itself, independent of any external elements that traditional theory might advocate. This perspective brought the concept of structure closer to that of form.

The formalists focused their study of texts on the artistic aspect, considering literature itself to be the subject of literary science. They advocated for what Roman Jakobson

referred to as "literariness," without considering external factors such as the author's life or social and economic realities. Thus, the foundation of Russian Formalism lies in their view of literary creativity as a linguistic art form, where the elements of language and form are fundamental to its artistic construction. They posited that literary language serves as both a means of communication and an artistic end in itself, with the value of creativity residing in its formulation.

In the context of encompassing all the influences that have enriched the structuralist approach in criticism, it can be stated—alongside the previously mentioned movements—that there are other foundational references that have contributed effectively and directly to establishing the tenets of this textual criticism. Notable among these are the Prague School and the Tel Quel group, both of which assert that external contexts do not directly and mechanically influence literary works. Thus, structural linguistics appears to be, to a greater extent, a significant source of structuralist thought in its Western roots.

2.3 The New Criticism Movement

New Criticism serves as the third significant source that established the foundations of the structuralist approach by advocating for and opposing prevailing traditional critical perspectives rich in subjective interpretations and historical references when analyzing literary texts. Proponents of New Criticism, represented by the critic and poet John Crowe Ransom—who published a book of the same name in 1941—argue that literature creates something new and independent, governed by its own laws, free from all external influences (historical and social contexts) and considerations (the author's life and biography). Thus, the role of the critic in this new approach is to study the literary work in and of itself, focusing on "the way each literary work uses language. Exploring sources, influences, schools, and movements does not lead us to understand the structure of the poem or novel, nor does it explain the function of imagery, symbolism, inspiration, irony, or apparent contradictions" (Maki, 1987). This perspective is grounded in a set of principles that advocates believe are the sole pathway to understanding the meaning of the text, which include:

- The purpose and goal of critical reading is not to extract content or reveal meaning, but to uncover the mechanisms within the literary work that lead to a distinctive artistic structure and style that overshadows other elements.
- The internal context of the literary text is what should be analyzed to decode its symbols and uncover their meanings, as well as to study the relationship between these meanings and the content of the poem, providing the reader with the pleasure of discovering their ability to produce the literary significance of the text.
- The belief in avoiding a focus on the poet's self, considering that poetry takes precedence over other expressive genres; they refer to the persona of the speaker rather than the poet in the poem.

3. The Arab Context and Structuralist Theories

The early 1970s can be regarded as the beginning of structuralist criticism in the Arab world, while the 1960s served as a preparation for this shift (Waghlīsī, Literary Criticism: Its History, Pioneers, and Arab Applications, 2007). This period is characterized by a discontinuity in contrast to the transformations and the quantitative and qualitative accumulation seen in Western structuralism, which experienced various forms of structuralism. This led to a crisis marked by fluctuations among methodologies, their integration, and occasionally dependency, along with instances of ambiguity and confusion. A common feature of this Arab perspective is the assumption that the text is a self-contained structure, with no external changes influencing its internal frameworks and components. Furthermore, the development of structuralism in Arab countries has been uneven and inconsistent, largely due to proximity to centers of Western knowledge and engagement with various languages.

Despite all of this, structural criticism in the Arab world has, due to mutual influence, become a hallmark of modern criticism for both Arab critics and audiences. This is achieved through the presentation of theoretical concepts and practical procedures found in numerous critical writings, with variations in perspective that can be observed through the following comparisons:

3-1 Linguistic Structuralism

This approach refers to the study of language at various levels—phonetic, morphological, and syntactic—starting from the language itself and distancing itself from all external factors. According to this perspective, the literary text possesses complete autonomy in its use of linguistic symbols (words) and the meanings that arise from them.

Among Arab scholars, we can highlight Salah Fadl's experience in his book *Theory of Structuralism in Literary Criticism* (1978), where he discusses Western structuralism, outlining its conceptual and procedural trajectory from inception to completion. He reveals prominent figures, various opinions and trends, as well as a range of practical procedures and their terminology. This is presented in a structured, concise manner, viewing structuralism as "a set of relationships between different elements or primary processes, provided that the researcher identifies the characteristics of the group and the relationships among them from a particular perspective. However, it is noticeable that whenever certain elements come together, structures emerge characterized by regularity; this whole is what is termed a system" (Fadl, *Theory of Structuralism in Literary Criticism*, 1998). Consequently, the author develops a new vision of structuralism related to **the system** advocated by Saussurean propositions and the formalist school, ultimately generating a new term: "**new rhetoric**" in the study and analysis of both poetry and prose. An additional distinction in this study is that The author focuses on the content, which is not at the core of structural studies and the interest of formal significance. According to him, this focus poses an obstacle to the structural project, as he states: "Purely formal study has signalled its inadequacy when it neglected to track the interwoven relationships of literature with various cultural and social phenomena and ignored the psychological unity of the social being who creates and consumes what his hands have produced" (Fadl, *Theory of Structuralism in Literary Criticism*, 1998), highlighting the importance of both the creator and the reader in the creative process throughout history and time.

Zakaria Ibrahim, in his book *The Problem of Structure* (1976), also sought to theorize this approach but did so through a perspective that is deeper and raises more questions, particularly regarding the philosophical aspect, which he views as having three levels to achieve structure: the intentional level, the systemic level, and the structural level. At the intentional level, we confront a "purpose" or "structure"; at the second level, we assert that the subject we are studying possesses a "structure"; and at the third level, we can conclude that this subject itself is a "structure" (Zakaria, *Philosophical Problems: The Problem of Structure*, 1990). Therefore, for him, **structuralism is a system of stable relationships that converge in form rather than content**. This structuralism branches into other forms, such as anthropological, cultural, psychological, and Marxist, indicating that this science is distinct from the world itself. This study elucidates the various intellectual and cognitive realms occupied by structuralism. However, this comprehensiveness in approach and definition has led some to argue that it has strayed from two fundamental fields: "literature and literary criticism" (Azzaam, 2003).

3-2 Structural Formalism

Claude Lévi-Strauss is considered a pioneer of anthropological structuralism. He employed a structuralist approach to study the development of societies, viewing them as systems interconnected by a set of relationships. From these relationships, distinct human groups differentiate themselves from one another. This is similarly true for their languages, which cannot be studied in isolation from the sounds and linguistic characteristics unique to each community.

In 1991, Abdessalem Mseddi presented a valuable book titled "The Issue of Structuralism," in which he explores structuralism as a textual practice aimed at highlighting the significances of structure as a form composed of invisible links and relationships. According to him, structuralism is neither a science nor an art; rather, it is a methodological hypothesis based on several dimensions: formative, methodological, philosophical, and epistemological. The anthropological, formal, and formative structuralism serve as the foundation of this new framework. Thus, Mseddi contends that structuralism is "more of a method for addressing phenomena than anything else" (Mseddi, 1991, p. 18).

From the practical side of this structuralist approach, a significant amount of literature has emerged. Notably, Kamal Abu Deeb has contributed two important studies that aim at both theorization and application: the first titled "The Dialectic of Concealment and Revelation: Structural Studies in Poetry" (1979), and the second titled "Concealed Visions: Towards a Structural Methodology in the Study of Pre-Islamic Poetry" (1986). According to him, this latter work "is not an application of ready-made methods, nor a mere transfer of those methods from fields where they were first used to a new field; rather, it is a project conducted within the framework of a precise theoretical awareness of these methodologies, addressing the issues they raise and the achievements they realize, particularly the work of Lévi-Strauss, alongside Propp's project, which played a distinctive role in advancing Lévi-Strauss's work" (Abu Deeb, 1987, pp. 6-7). Thus, Kamal aims, through this work, to transform Arab thought in its examination of culture, humanity, and poetry, shaping it into a structuralist perspective that transcends

superficiality and fragmentation to identify the fundamental components of phenomena within culture, society, and poetry. Consequently, he seeks to explore the essential transformations of the structure that give rise to new manifestations, which can only be understood by relating them to the basic structure / the superficial structure and the deep structure.

Additionally, Khalida Said's book *The Dynamics of Creativity* (1979), Siza Qasim's *The Construction of the Novel* (1984), as well as *Narrative Discourse Analysis* (1989) and *The Structure of the Novel* (1990) by Said Yaktine, can be considered significant sources in the application of formal structuralism, whether in poetry or prose, drawing from heritage or influenced by Western imports. All of this was presented with a "focus on the structural aspects that constitute the narrative text, steering clear of philosophical interpretation by choosing the type of reading, its objectives, and the nature of its engagement with the texts under examination " (Omar Ailane, 2010, pp. 82-85).

3-3 Structuralism of Genesis

In this context, structuralism of genesis can be viewed as the result of the combination of two terms: structure (Structure) and genesis (Genèse). This term is a translation of the French concept (La génétique Structuralisme), which refers to the interpretation of all human production based on the reconciliation of formalist propositions with the foundations of Marxist or dialectical thought, commonly known as the materialistic and realistic interpretation of thought and culture in general.

Critics note that this direction of structuralism has been characterized by significant dissemination and presence, exemplified by the pioneering effort of the critic Jamal Shaheed in his work (*Synthetic Structuralism, A Study of Lucien Goldmann's Methodology 1982*). In this work, he presents the theoretical framework for the emergence of the structuralist-genetic approach in the West, while also surveying key concepts and applied studies in the field. However, a notable aspect of his study is the introduction of new terms to replace their Western counterparts. For instance, he uses the term "**generative structure**" as a counterpart to "formative structure," stating, "It is essential to emphasize that formation and generation here do not involve any temporal dimension that refers the studied object back to its historical birth and origin. The temporal aspect in this regard is very secondary, and Goldman does not hide his discomfort with the term 'structure,' fearing its connotations of stability and immobility... Unfortunately, the term 'structure' carries connotations of stasis, and thus it is not entirely accurate. We should not speak of structures, as they exist in social life only rarely and for short periods, but rather about the processes that form the structures" (Jamal Shaheed, 1982, p. 77). He further elaborates on the relationship between the signifying structure and the text, explaining that it "helps to discover the internal unity of the text and shapes the essential relationships within the text (including the relationship between form and content), so that it becomes impossible for us to understand one of its angles without referring to the totality of the text, which encompasses all the social and historical responses that shape a particular worldview expressed within the text" (Jamal Shaheed, 2007, p. 81).

In addition to Jaber Asfour's study in his book *Contemporary Theories* (1998), where he used a term distinct from formative structuralism, referring to it as "**generative structuralism**," he states: "Generative structuralism is the Arabic formulation I have settled on for translating the original Western term "*Structuralisme Génétique"*, which refers to the method formulated by the French philosopher and literary critic of Romanian origin, Lucian Goldmann" (Jaber Asfour, 1998, p. 83). This term was subsequently translated by Hamid Lahmidani as "**socio- structural analysis**" in his work *Toward a Socio- Structural Analysis of the Novel* (1984). Additionally, Muhammad Sari's book titled *In Search of New Literary Criticism* (1984) represents another pioneering effort to define generative structuralism in the contexts of Goldmann and George Lukács, both theoretically and practically, offering a more analytical perspective on the theoretical side. This approach, in its practical aspect, has been the subject of numerous publications and readings, with notable contributions including Mohamed Bennis's *The Phenomenon of Contemporary Poetry in Morocco: A Formative Structuralist Approach* (1979), followed by Said Allouche's study titled *The Novel and Ideology in the Maghreb* (1981), and Yumna Al-Eid's *Understanding the Text: Studies in Contemporary Literary Criticism* (1983). Additionally, Hamid Lahmidani's work *Moroccan Novel and Social Reality: A Formative Structuralist Study* (1984) and Idris Belmelih's *The Rhetorical Vision in Al-Jahiz* (1984) further enrich this discourse. These studies illustrate that formative structuralism is among "the most well-known and widely circulated terms, requiring no enumeration of its users (and there are many) or contexts of use" (Yūsuf Waghlīsī, 2008, p. 149). Consequently, these practical applications have been characterized by acknowledging "two basic interrelated phenomena: the first being the linguistic nature of the literary text, and the second the dialectical social nature, whereby neither negates the other" (Bennis, 1985, p. 24).

3-4 Deconstruction

Starting from the premise that the text (the focal point of the structuralist method) represents "a new interpretation of it, and the impossibility of reaching a definitive and complete meaning for any text, in addition to liberating it from being a closed and self-sufficient entity" (Abdullah Al-Ghathami, 1994, p. 50), Arab critics have sought to embody this critical approach through numerous articles and critical opinions, both direct and indirect, that have been dispersed in various journals and magazines, sparking debates and inquiries as a theoretical procedure in the beginning.

In 1985, Saudi author Abdullah Al-Ghathami published *Sin and Atonement: From Structuralism to Anatomy: A Critical Reading of a Contemporary Model*, which is considered one of the first theoretical contributions to the field and methodology until the release of his second book, *The Poem and the Counter Text* (1994), signaling the emergence of the deconstructive approach. He states: "Since we practice reading and criticism from within, this means we delve into the depths of this interior and immerse ourselves in it to increase our awareness of it and ourselves within it. We will then be a party in an open dialogue that is based on opposition and contradiction, utilizing resolution, criticism, and dissection as means to open the circles and penetrate through them" (Al-Ghathami, 1994, p. 81).

This translation, according to Al-Ghathami, is based on a critical perspective that encompasses more than one traditional approach contained within the text and discourse, founded on a principle of destruction for the sake of reconstruction. It lays the groundwork for the emergence of subsequent terms like " undermining," which does not conform to the idea proposed by deconstructionists regarding the concept of building after deconstruction. This aligns with the metaphor that Derrida uses to describe Western metaphysical thought, referring to it continuously as a structure or edifice that must be undermined (Megan Al-Ruwaili, 2003, pp. 107-108).

On this basis, the deconstructive principle is founded on three main tenets:

The Principle of Presence and Absence: These are considered fundamental components of the text, where words within the text are shaped by both axes simultaneously. "The text presents itself to the reader as a closed presence, and what is required from the reader is to identify the absent elements within the text to achieve a natural existence or an understandable value for it" (Abdullah Al- Ghathami, 1994, p. 84). Thus, the process of bringing forth that absence varies from one reader to another, with differing degrees of effectiveness.

The Principle of Difference: This principle "emerges in the literary text as a primary value, characterized by the divergence of the text's language from ordinary language, and the distinction between what is present and what is absent. This stems from the connection between presence and absence... The word exists freely, relying on an absence that the reader brings forth. Thus, the difference in the text acts as a space of emptiness that extends between the elements of presence and those of absence, requiring the reader to build bridges that fill this void" (Yūsuf Waghlīsī, 2008, pp. 364-365).

The Principle of Effect: Al- Ghathami presents this as the act of reading resulting from the text's action, representing a form of textual interaction where language transitions from mere discourse to a constructive action based on presence and absence.

Among the works that have applied deconstruction to literary texts, we can also consider Abdullah Al-Ghudami's book *Anatomy of the Text* (1987) and Abd al-Malik Murtad's *A Semiotic and Deconstructive Study of the Poem "Where Is My Layla?" by Muḥammad al-ʿĪd Khalīfah* as significant examples. These works demonstrate the application and adaptation of this post-structuralist method, albeit with some discrepancies at the level of terminology or procedural implementation. Al- Ghathami, in his analysis of poetic texts, argues that deconstruction gives the text new life with each reading, suggesting that what we uncover during the first analysis may be surpassed in subsequent readings. He asserts that "deconstruction, in this view, transcends fixed meanings through the disruption and free play of words, as it undermines the text by exploring what it does not explicitly state. It contradicts the text's clear logic and apparent claims, probing the underlying logic within the text, as well as the points where the text exceeds the rules and standards it has set for itself. It is a process of stripping the text bare and revealing or tearing apart its secrets" (Bashir Taourirt, 2010, p. 201).

Comparing these perspectives leads us to consider the structuralist approach, since its inception to the present day, as one of the closest methodologies for analyzing and studying literature as an artistic phenomenon arising from the interplay of several internal

components. Foremost among these is language, "which serves as the primary womb for the emergence of the structuralist standard. Through its evolving architecture and its functional interrelation with historical moments, it represents the best depiction of structure. Linguistic knowledge has absorbed the structuralist idea, refining its features and establishing the concepts that lead to it... adhering to the principle of relativity in assessing phenomena and definitively abandoning the law of absoluteness that has constrained linguistic science for a long time" (Abdullah Khader Hamad, p. 128).

Subsequently, the term "structure" itself has seen numerous variations in defining its concept and manifestations, indicating its inherent property of self-sufficiency in generating meaning within the text, according to frameworks that are unique to each text.

Thus, it can be said that the structuralist approach is a modern scientific method prompted by rapid developments in contemporary times, moving away from external analyses of literature and literary phenomena that focus on historical contexts and circumstances. Its core idea posits that the general connection of an idea or a set of ideas fundamentally relies on internal elements structured according to a logical system, and that this system and connection cannot exist apart from the textual framework or structure.

Conclusion

In reviewing the most significant critical propositions and their presence in the Arab literary landscape, we can conclude that the structuralist approach, along with the trends that have emerged from it, ultimately reflects a centrality in Western discourse—due to its pioneering nature—based on the principles of accumulation and transformation between the old and the new, or what is known as the critical heritage versus the new scientific theory within the Arab context. This dynamic raises important issues regarding reception among Arab critics. In general, we can conclude that:

- It appears that criticism, based on the opinions presented—albeit limited—is a second language or discourse about discourse in interpreting the literary phenomenon, which continues to evolve and seek the alternative and innovative in forms of Arts speech and their variations.

- Structuralism, as a critical method in studying this phenomenon/texts, revolves around exploring the laws and internal systems of literary works, aiming to reach meaning. This approach has been utilized by Arab critics, reflecting diverse methodologies, particularly in the applied aspects that have seen significant investment in these new intellectual and philosophical concepts across various Arab regions.

- The numerous terminological equivalents for the western term "Structuralism" in the Arab world have been translated by Arab critics under various names, including structuralism "(البنيوية) (with a kasra and a damma), structuralism, constructivism, structuralism, composition,...

- The history of the emergence of this discipline in the Arab world differs from its origin in the countries of its birth. In other words, while it began to become outdated in its early stages elsewhere, it started to settle among us Arabs, which led to confusion in understanding, theorizing, and even keeping pace with developments. This resulted in a tendency among Arab critics to mix and skip certain stages while

focusing on specific aspects, giving rise to new terms such as "new rhetoric" by Salah Fadl, "system" by Zakaria Ibrahim, "formative structuralism" by Abdel Salam Al-Masdi, and "generative structure" by Jamal shaheed, as well as "dissection" by Al- Ghathami.

- The frequent combination of theoretical and practical approaches has led to overlapping terminologies and their use inappropriately. This often occurs under the guise of uniqueness and leadership in celebrating this Western influence, especially when it comes to receiving these sources in their original language. Consequently, critics have diverged in their perspectives, with some considering it a theory (Salah Fadl, Yumna Al-Eid), others viewing it as a methodology (Mohamed Beniss, Yūsuf Waghlīsī, Abdullah Ibrahim, Al- Ghathami...), and some integrating both aspects (Abdel Salam Al-Masdi).

- Some Arab critics focus their work in structuralism on content at the expense of form, while others prioritize form over content. Additionally, there are those who rely on external aspects rather than internal ones (Emotion).

- Engaging with the majority of studies presented in this field is challenging, as the Arab landscape has witnessed numerous and diverse readings of this approach, both theoretically and practically. Therefore, it remains for the researcher to select those that align with their interests and needs.

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