

## Conclusion

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all human social and cultural practices (Ibid: 25). Other opposite perspectives in the artistic and literary criticism of the 20th century have challenged structuralism from different aspects. While existentialists criticized structuralists for ignoring the issues of human freedom, another movement, raised after structuralism and known as poststructuralism, questioned their determinism and their approval of the certain cause. The main challenge though was shaped in mid 60s in Europe. In 1968 and during the rise of students in Prague, critics who were then focused on power, politics and social movements, convicted structuralists of 'depolitization'. The reason was that structuralists did not believe in anything but the structure of the

artistic work for examining art and literature. No artistic or literary criticism can do without observing the structure of the artistic work. However, confining criticism to the structural arguments does not suffice analyzing and discovering the beauties of the artistic works. As such, critics pay attention to other approaches such as deconstruction, cultural materialism, new feminism, Modern Psychological criticism as well as history and intellectual and social movements. Structuralism, as a school of thought and literary criticism is now regarded historic and despite its undeniable historical significance, is no longer a unique, modern, useful or reliable approach.

## Endnote

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\*. This paper rewriting an article entitled " Structuralism, the Last manifestation of "truth" despotism" which have been pulished in the Journal of Bagh-e Nazar (Vol.3, No.5, Summer 2006).

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of human life. In other words, structuralists, inspired by linguistics, created a process of rulemaking. Likewise, by relying on some prebuilt patterns and suggested structures, they tackled all systems of life with a prejudged perspective.

While criticizing and analyzing different phenomena, structuralists looked for those aspects that were adjustable to their pre-made truth. Binary oppositions, one of the pre-made truths, were common and well known all over the world before discussed by structuralists. However, structuralists developed this concept and defined it beyond what was meant by opposition. As such, literary styles according to Jakobson and other Russian formalists of 1920s and 1930s could be perceived through the binary oppositions of metaphor and metonymy (Makaryk, 2005: 32). Saussure believed that any system of language is composed of a series of sound differences combined with a series of meaning differences. In language there are only differences (Meghdadi, 1999: 169).

The meaning of any concept, as such, is based on differences within a system of opposition and contrast. In case of traffic light, though red and green are not opposite colors (chromatically, they are even complementary) in the traffic system their relation is of binary opposition. Binary opposition was essential in shaping the structuralists' studies. Levi Strauss believed in the formation of the units of myth within a system of binary oppositions. Roland Barthes applied this principle to all kinds of social experiences including clothing (Ibid). Building on some pre assumptions such as the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, as well as the binary oppositions, structuralists would "beg the question"-as is discussed in philosophy. Based on a premise, they initiated reasoning and consequently issued their final verdict that seemed irrevocable. However, misgivings about the original premise, would call the case off.

Structuralists' approach, as discussed before, was situated on a prebuilt division system that was contemplated as certain only by structuralists. In the third chapter of his book *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, Raman Selden discusses that "ordinary readers, have long felt that the literary work is the child of an author's creative life and an expression of the author's essential self. The text is the place where we enter into a spiritual or humanistic communion with an author's thoughts and feelings. Another fundamental assumption which readers often make is that a good book tells the truth about human life-which novels and plays try to 'tell things as they are'. However, structuralists have tried to persuade us that the author is 'dead' and that literary discourse has no truth function" (Selden, 1993: 95) Seldon goes on with examining structuralism and semiology and quotes Jonathan Culler, who is anti-structuralism: But the sin of Semiotics, according to Selden (1993), is to attempt to destroy our sense of truth in fiction (Ibid: 95). Continuing his argument, Seldon (1993) describes the spirit of structuralism as 'anti-humanist'.

"The word has been used by structuralists themselves to emphasize their opposition to all forms of literary criticism in which the human subject is the source and origin of literary meaning" (Ibid:96).

Structuralism, as known today, is an obsolete blueprint of an old system that used to produce ideas. In spite of all tremendous influences on the artistic and literary criticism, structuralism was a continuation of the 19th century Determinism. What is regarded as the flaw of this school is that structuralism, through an assumed certain truth, would dominate the processes of thought arbitrarily. The logic applied by structuralists was close to mathematics and for this very reason people were discouraged to criticize it. In fact, according to Selden (1993), at the heart of structuralism is a scientific ambition to discover the codes, the rules, the systems, which underlie

the same method, Veladimir Propp, also tried to analyze and categorize fairy tales and named his research Morphology of the Folktale. In the introduction of his book, Propp wrote that the term morphology is the study of forms and figures. In the field of botanical, morphology means the study of the composing elements and the structure of a plant. But I think that nobody has thought about 'the morphology of folktale' before. The forms and figures of a fiction and organic forms however require and deserve equal attention (Propp, 1989: 11).

Propp intended to systemize the composing elements of fiction and like Levi Straus, to access the smallest unit through analyzing those elements. His approach towards finding the "system" of fiction, and its basic composing elements, was not pointless but the system that ruled fairy tales would not include the process of narratives creation. Works of Alann Robbe-Grillet, Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce categorized as 'anti-novel'- as was known in Europe- waived the plot and so are not adjustable to the "system" introduced by Propp. The notion of system to structuralism, as mentioned by Robert Scholes, in his book Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction is pivotal (Green et.al, 2001: 280).

In their later researches, Levi Strauss, Jacobson and Roland Barthes were under the influence of Propp. However, hardly are the simple plots of folk tales comparable to the complicated and intrinsic plots of great works of literature. In this regard, Propp and Todorov walked the same path: producing a scientific truth based on undeniable principles. To assume that the forms of modern fiction are the constant repetitions of the original narrative is imposing a predefined principle on the process of creating fictions.

As said by Scholes in his book Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction, while examining the history of narrations, we see some modern

forms that have developed the structure of early fictions to an unrecognizable extent. However, the new forms are not disconnected from their original narrations and have repetitively returned to their roots to benefit from their magical power (Scholes, 2000:93).

The denial of history and social evolution results in such principles for structuralism. The consequence of this denial is a perspective that compares the structures of modern and original fictions and finds them adjustable. In this chapter of his book, Scholes praises the ingenuity of Propp and Levi Strauss and declares myths, allegories and fairy tales as the pre-instances and ancestors of, and the models for, all narratives and the later developed forms of fiction. Reducing the elements of fiction to the old structure of myth and folktales imposes a predefined pattern to every new creation of fiction. In other words, it is a 'justified' determinism that is displayed as an absolute scientific categorization through an imposed fabricated truth.

To establish their multi sided prism of thoughts, structuralists applied the structuralist linguistic classifications to the artistic and literary criticism as well as other aspects of human behaviors. As such, the axes of syntagmatic and paradigmatic, initially proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure, were used extensively by Roman Jakobson. Structural linguists regarded the fabricated classification of syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes as a discovery of some core traits inherent to language. Jane Aitchison (1988) in General Linguistics discusses that In order to divide the vast phenomenon of language into examinable parts, linguistics have exposed some fabricated categorizations on it (Ibid : 58).

Assuming these fabricated categorizations as rules, inherent to the nature of human mind, structuralists have applied them to different fields such as eating, dressing and other systems

cinema syntax to the language syntax as well as the elements of image and language, filmmakers tried to find a common syntax for language and the units of cinematic images.

Based on some immature notions, structuralists of cinema, as said by Peter Wollen, claimed that cinema has a language and thus regarded “shot” as comparable to the word. So it was suggested that editing of the shots implies a kind of syntax. The idea was very popular and specifically developed in educational workshops and books that would discuss the theory of film (Nickols, 1999: 115).

For his innovative theory of “Cinema of Poetry”, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975), the famous Italian director was deeply impressed by linguistic structuralism. Pasolini, however, believed that the semiology of communication patterns in cinema is beyond the pattern of meaningfulness in the language system. Pasolini would describe cinema through literature and claimed that cinema is essentially a poetic language (Ibid: 43). Although the linguistic general rules that justify the meaning system in literature, are not applicable to cinema. Thus, to justify the syntactic system of cinema, Pasolini used semiology which was also used by others like Peter Wollen, Christian Metz and Bill Nickols who had very different and opposite opinions. Cinema, as said by Metz, is a language that has no codes. Regarding Saussure’s perspective, Metz’s idea of cinema is a parole without langue. This idea is explained by Wollen in his book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. (Wollen, 1984: 112). Looking for everlasting and eternal formulas for creating and analyzing fictions led other critics like Tzevetan Todorov and Veladimir Propp to the same extreme ways.

Todorov’s book, *The Poetics of Structuralism*, is his main connection to structuralism. In 1968, Todorov first published his book *What is Structuralism?* each chapter of which got

published separately as a different book later. The first chapter of the book was then published in 1973 as *What is Structuralism? 2: Poetics*” (Nabavi, *Poetics of Structuralism; Introduction*). Regardless of the new era, the 300 years of separation, and Boileau’s strict and inflexible views, in his book *Todorov*, like Boileau from the 17th century, prescribes the principles and perspectives of Neo-Classism for establishing irrevocable scientific rules and inflexible formulas. For example he says that it would be an error to separate the narrator from the implied author and regard them as a character among other characters. Here, comparing narrative with play is illuminating; In play each character is a source of speech (and nothing more) while the differences between these two literary forms go way beyond this: In a narrative, the narrator who says “I” plays a different role than other characters while in play, all the characters play at the same level (Todorov, 2000 : 73). Aside from any judgement, the very act of issuing five strict rules within these limited lines is regarded as Todorov’s flaw.

In an essay “*The Grammar of Narratives*”, Todorov, in an attempt to assign some theories for writing narratives, declares that an ideal narrative begins with a state of equilibrium which is then disrupted by an event. The equilibrium is returned as a result of an attempt to repair the damage of the disruption. Though the new equilibrium state looks like the first one, they are not the same at all. Thus, the narrative consists of two equilibrium and disequilibrium states. The first one is relatively static and kind of repetitive: a position that is capable of eternal repetition. The second one is dynamic and does appear only once (Ahmadi, 1999: 281).

While defining fiction, Todorov had some trivial French melodramas of the 19th century in mind (though he was born in 1939). Using



according to Andre' Martinet, consists of two stages. The divided units of the first stage, morphemes as he calls them, consist of both phone and meaning. Each word might include several morphemes that form the smallest meaningful units of a language. Laughing, as an example consists of laugh + ing. The divided units of the second stage, though still phonic, have no meaning anymore: l + a + u + g+ h + i + n + g. Each of these units is called phonemes. Phonemes are different from alphabetic letters as "the creditability of phonemes comes from uttering but letters from writing" (Najafi, 1992: 29).

The morphemes, hence, are either meaningful independently, or make a meaningful difference by being added to other independent morphemes.

The progress, caused by the study of phonemes, shaped the first major improvement for the structuralist studies. Based on this, structuralists initiated to discover grammatical, syntactic, and phonetic patterns related to human's specific system of meaning in different systems such as kinship, dressing, cooking, talking, myths and totems (seldom, 1993: 102). Both the Prague school and their American counterparts, though different in phonetic undertakings, firmly believed in the idea that language is divisible. The criterion for dividing the language, according to Saussure and the followers of the Prague school, was the meaning differentiation. However, for a long time, the American linguists were not looking for "meaning" in the process of dividing language (Bierwisch, 1984: 66).

Encouraged by the popularity of the idea of language division in the midst of 20th century, structuralists would compare all artistic and cultural phenomena to language and so applied the same division system for understanding them. Structuralists, looked for a formula where the "whole" and the composing "elements"

were equal and tried to extend the application of this "lingual" formula to literature, myths, fashion and every other historical and cultural experiences.

The French anthropologist, Claude Levi Strauss, who was the only pioneer of structuralism who declared himself as a structuralist, applied the same approach to the study of myths (Ahmadi, 1991: 183). Like Saussure, who believed in the separation of language and speech, Strauss differentiated the "general system of myths" from "individual units that form myth". Relying on the linguists who considered phoneme as the smallest unit of language, Strauss talked about the smallest units that formed myths. In his book *The Raw and the Cooked*, he announced the structural similarities between myth and language (Meghdadi, 1999: 63) and as such, introduced mytheme as the myth's smallest building unit. In the process of coining the term mytheme, Strauss proved his loyalty to the structural linguistics methods by using pun device for connecting mytheme and phoneme. Strauss applied this approach to discover the undividable mythemes of the Oedipus myth and more than 800 myths of Latin America.

Like all other structuralists, Levi Strauss was interested in scientification of his ideas and presenting his analyses as irrevocable hypotheses by relying on a logical system that resembled mathematics. But according to Radner (1994) every hypothesis that claims to be scientific should be revocable. It means that the hypothesis is cancelled if some potential conditions and situations become actualized (Ibid: 55). However, the ideas of Levi Strauss are not revocable and so the truth or falseness of his theories is not provable (Ibid).

As a consequence of structuralism popularity throughout the world, a group of filmmaker would extend this immature idea that cinema, just like language, is also a system of signs which is based on the same system of linguistics synthetics. Therefore, through comparing the

1920s were Mukarovsky, Feliks Woodicka, and Jan Ripka. The structuralist linguists of this group, who followed Russian formalists, were also influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure, the definite pioneer of structuralism (Makaryk, 2005: 174). The Prague Linguists Circle were in fact the original structuralists. Their ideas influenced a group of French scholars such as Claude Levi Straus, Roland Barthes, Michelle Foucault, Gerard Gene, Louise Althusser, Jacque Lacan, Algirdas Julien Greimace and Jean Piaget, and resulted in the formation of French structuralism. The Prague structuralism as such, could be regarded as a bridge between Russian formalism and the Western Europe modern structuralism. The common principles of structuralists' perspectives include:

1-Meaning is the outcome of the process of "differentiation". Moreover, meaning is not defining something in the real world but is the simple result of sign differences in a signification system. For instance, though the words woman and lady both refer to a female human they are not defined by their similarity but their difference. The two words are considered as two signifiers that signify the same signified but in the field of meaning they are defined by what makes them different and not what they have in common.

2- The signifiers are connected through either positioning together on the syntagmatic axis or substituting each other on the paradigmatic axis. So while words, as signs, form meaningful concepts on the syntagmatic axis, they develop into poetic conceptions through being replaced by literary substitutes. Likewise, simile, according to structuralists, is the product of syntagmatic axis while metaphor is of the paradigmatic axis.

3- Structuralists noticed that the mind of human being perceives most phenomena through binary oppositions such as life/death, hot/cold, nature/culture and etc. Literature, all over the world including Persian literature, has applied

juxtaposition as a literary device. However, binary oppositions, as practiced by structuralists, go beyond literature and include all fields of thought, language and philosophy.

Some of the most influential instances of binary oppositions, as mentioned by Makaryk, are sense/reference (Gottlob Frege) synchrony/diachrony, syntagmatic/paradigmatic (Ferdinand de Saussure), signifier/signified (the French Structuralism), object/subject (Rene Decart), noumenon/phenomenon (Emanuel Kant), interpretation/understanding (Wilhelm Dilthey, Hans- Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur),(Makaryk, 2005: 98). The perspective of structuralists, in this regard, is binary and so the world of the text, as defined by them and presented to the reader, is binary.

4-The principles of "semiology" was formed by the examination of signs by structuralists. Each sign, according to structuralists, explains a combination of a signifier and a signified. Semiology was designed as a science to examine the life of signs in the core of social life (Guirou, 2001: 13). Language, as observed by Saussure was a signification system, and part of a more pervasive science that was called semiology by him. At about the same time as Saussure's but from a different perspective, Charles Sanders Pierce defined his own system of signs. While Saussure's Priority was the social function of sign, Pierce focused on its logical function.

Of ten principles of structuralism, the above four were selected from an article by John Lye from the University of Brock. (Lye, 1997).

Through analyzing the structure, structuralists impose an absolute truth on the reader. The rest of the paper is to criticize and examine this claim.

### **Structuralism and the challenges**

Democritus, the ancient Greek philosopher believed in dividing any particle to an indivisible point. Relying on this notion, structuralists started analyzing sentences and words. As such, they first divided each word to morphemes and consequently any morpheme to phonemes. Language analysis,

proposed the "death of the author", a notion that sounded so innovative for its own era. Nowadays, it's hard though to believe in the death of the author and a total ignorance of the historical and social contexts while analyzing a literary work. Destabilizing the "meaning" of a text and acclaiming that the truth of the text is accessible by relying only on the structure of a literary work seems alluring at the first glance. However, today, our lives are blended with the world we live in today to such an extent that the idea of separating them sounds fallacious. Do the recognition, perception and categorization of signs lead us to a final truth for perceiving the text?

Semiology, as a science, was first proposed in the lectures of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) at Geneva University where he offered three linguistic courses from 1906 to 1911. None of Saussure's ideas were published during his life but a collection of them got published posthumously in 1916 by Albert Sechehaye and Charles Bally who, during an exceptional initiative, gathered the pamphlets of his students. The publication of the book was a turning point in the field of literary and linguistic studies. In the introduction of the book, titled as "Place of Language in Human Facts: Semiology" Saussure writes: "A science that studies the life of signs within society" is conceivable: it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology' (from Greek *semefon* 'sign').

Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance, Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts" (Saussure, 2003: 24).

The assumption of a science capable of deciphering all the artistic, literary and humanities codes seems almost impossible now. A literary code-if there is

any-is too complicated to be readily deciphered by the sharp and acute formulas of semiologists and structuralists.

Semiology tried to find its place in the age of modernism when reason was the key for unravelling all the mysteries of existence. In the second half of the 20th century, semiology followed a path which was formerly paved by structuralists; the path to find an irrevocable, final and certain truth. The "truth of life", however, is often relative, unstable and uncertain.

To distill "certainty" from literature, structuralists and semiologists thus, replaced truth with formulas that were based on signifying connections.

### **School of Prague and development of structuralism**

Throughout the history of literature, and particularly after Renaissance, the distinguished critics, authors and literary figures of a specific age were usually connected to the literary school of the same age. As an example, the origin of Neo Classicism was connected to the presence of authors and poets such as Nicola Boileau, Alexandre Pope and Samuel Johnson. Likewise, critics like Goethe, Coleridge or Schlegel brothers emerged from the Romantic school. However, the twentieth century was an age when critics, independent from traditional critical approaches, looked for modern approaches to observe and evaluate the nature of art and literature. For their literary approach, these new critics relied on the 'text' (literature) and later developed the application of the concept to all other phenomena. In fact, to the newly emerged approach, the concept and the criteria of text was applicable to everything. The basis of this new approach, as mentioned previously, was the specific appreciation of "language" by new critics. To the scholars, language had never been as pivotal as in the 20th century. Thus, the great critics of this age such as Roman Jakobson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Leo Spitzer, Nicolai Trubetzkoy and many other pioneers of structuralism were all linguists. Other members who formed a group in Prague in late

language. To reach the effects of the meaning, hidden in the core of a literary work, formalists paid attention to neither a 19th century vision, nor the age and the society the author lived in. None of them encouraged formalists to explore the character of the author. What was unraveled by traditional approaches did not seem significant to formalists. From formalistic perspective, the critic's major task was to discern the devices and techniques applied by the author for deciphering the world of the text to readers.

Literary criticism, according to Russian "formalism" and the ideas of its significant figure, "Victor Shklovsky", was not supposed to examine the images and the contents anymore. To formalists, language is the main significance of literature worthy of examination. Thus, the major part of all innovations and creations are rooted in the ways language is applied and expressed. "Literature, from formalists' view, is a mere linguistic phenomenon. Literary language, as such, is a kind of language that should be observed from a linguistic perspective" (Shamisa, 2015: 174).

Formalists, in fact reduced all the discussions about literature, and poetry in particular, to a mere examination of form and structure. "Formalists emphasized that poem is made of words and not of poetic subject" (Meghdadi, 1999: 347). To formalists all the former literary approaches were invalid. Roman Jakobson, as such, argued that literary text, and not literature, is the subject of literary criticism. His goal was to find ways that would develop an ordinary text to a literary text (Todorov, 2000:117).

Methodologically, all these ways would end up to linguistics. As mentioned by Tynyanov, another Russian formalist, a term that would be considered as literary in an age, is just a linguistic phenomenon in another age (Ahmadi, 1991:45). The climax of this perspective is presented by Victor Shklovsky in *Art as a Technique* where he denies all social and historical references in examining an artistic work.

The role of a critic, according to Shklovsky, is to find techniques, used by the author, that

defamiliarize the familiar objects. As the consequence of their interest in the literary structure, formalists prioritized form to content. Rejecting all the approaches connected to the circumstances influential in crafting an artistic work, formalists endeavored to enrich literary criticism with a scientific feature by relying on the artistic devices used by the author. The role of the "science of literature", according to them was to extract the constructive components of a literary work solely from within the text and to present them to the readers as the absolute truth. Restrictions imposed on Russian formalists by Stalin and his followers, as well as the formation of Prague's Linguistic Society at the end of 1920s, resulted in perpetuation of formalists' critical theories, enriched with new characteristics, outside Russian borders.

The process made literary devices and techniques and eventually "the structure of the text" pivotal to critics. "Structuralism", as a school, was then established by members of the Prague Circle including Roman Jakobson, Jan Mocarovsky, Rene Wellek, and Vilem Mathesius. Structuralism, like formalism, challenged all traditional literary approaches. Language, before structuralism, was assumed to include reality and to reflect the author's mind or the world as was seen by the author. As a consequence of concentrating on linguists for analyzing the structure of the text, and following Saussure's perspective, the language was not used to explore the author's being anymore. According to Selden, the experience of neither the author nor the reader was thus considered as the source of the meaning (Selden, 1993: 125).

Structuralism, as a method of thought, that claimed the discovery and emergence of a "new truth", was absolutely dominant in Russia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France and America for decades. The over figurative interpretation, suggested by structuralism, was all entangled in linguistic fallacies. In order to ignore all the marginal information about the author's biography and era, structuralists had already



## Introduction

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The criteria of artistic and literary criticism are beyond the personal choice and taste of each single individual. Permanent and inclusive methods for analyzing the artistic work have always been questioned. As such, critics have always faced the most essential questions and dilemmas in the field of criticism: What is it that immortalizes an artistic work? What formal or contextual criteria endow value to an artistic or literary work? Regarding the essence of art, which one is dominant: form or content? And finally what are the basic criteria for recognition of this dominance, and criticizing and evaluating the artistic and literary works? If the hidden mysteries of an artistic work are decipherable through examining its form and structure, then should critics analyze and probe the structure of an artistic work or its meaning? This paper is to challenge the triviality of meaning in an artistic criticism. It is also to observe the obstinate emphasis on the structure of an artistic

work as an indication of the superficiality of some great figures of structuralism in an age of reason autocratic leadership and the zenith of modernism.

As a touchstone and criteria, artistic and literary criticism has been practiced throughout the history to evaluate the level of human's intellect and the quality of their taste in each era. Criticism, as a cultural process, has always been looking for the latent “truth” within the artistic and literary work. To extract this truth, traditional criticism however, has usually relied on the efficient elements surrounding the text. To unravel the hidden mysteries of the text, the life of the author and the social and historical circumstances that they lived in, as well as their lives and psychological peculiarities were all scrutinized by the traditional critic. By moving on the margins of the literary work, the traditional critic would try to access the core of the complicated labyrinth of the text.

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### The background of structuralism

The strongholds and the high fortifications of traditional criticism were broken by the emergence of formalism in Russia and the establishment of “Moscow Linguistic Circle” as well as the “Society for the Study of Poetic Language –OPOJAZ” in St. Petersburg. Looking for a “scientific” base for their literary studies, the members of these groups would also try to destabilize the foundation of this notion that art is a mirror held up to reality (Makaryk, 2005: 199).

Formalism tried to intertwine literary criticism with a set of clear and discern principles. To guarantee the scientific characteristic of formalistic approach, the formalist critics wished to replace all the diverse notions of

critics, the different interpretations and all the contradictory and opposite perspectives with a set of clear, stable and absolute criteria. They intended to ensure their addressee that, through this literary approach, they would experience a modern, strong and reliable method. Therefore, the first Russian formalists, as mentioned by Patricia Waugh, tried to introduce formalism as not a school but a scientific movement (Waugh, 2006: 215).

The effects of traditional criticism were not appealing to formalists at all. They looked to define “literature” as different from “literariness” in an effort beyond justification or interpretation of the contents of a literary work. Their goal was finding techniques that would explain the methods that enriched a text with a literary

# A Challenge to the Absolute Dominance of “Truth” in Structuralism\*

**Ataollah Koopal**

Ph.D. in Art Research, Islamic Azad University of Karaj, Iran  
koopal@kiaiu.ac.ir

## Abstract

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Structuralism, as an artistic and literary approach, originated in the Eastern Europe during the first decades of the 20th century and reached its climax in the Western Europe in the second half of the same century. Through focusing on the structures of the artistic and literary works for analyzing them, structuralists created some criteria and formulas that seemed irrevocable and invariable from their perspective. Structuralism, as such, was presented as a scientific critical approach.

Structuralism, initially, was based on linguistics, however, it later extended to fields as diverse as anthropology, philosophy, history and finally different branches of humanities. This paper is to undertake a critical review of, and a reflection on structuralist approaches as developed in humanities, artistic and literary criticism.

What was once called structuralism is an obsolete approach not practiced any more. Despite the fact that some researches in the field of humanities rely on a few aspects of this approach, structuralism should be regarded as the last attempt of critics for establishing an absolute and irrevocable “truth”.

## Keywords

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Artistic and Literary Criticism, Structuralism, Text, Meaning.