

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture - 12
Part - B
Structuralism

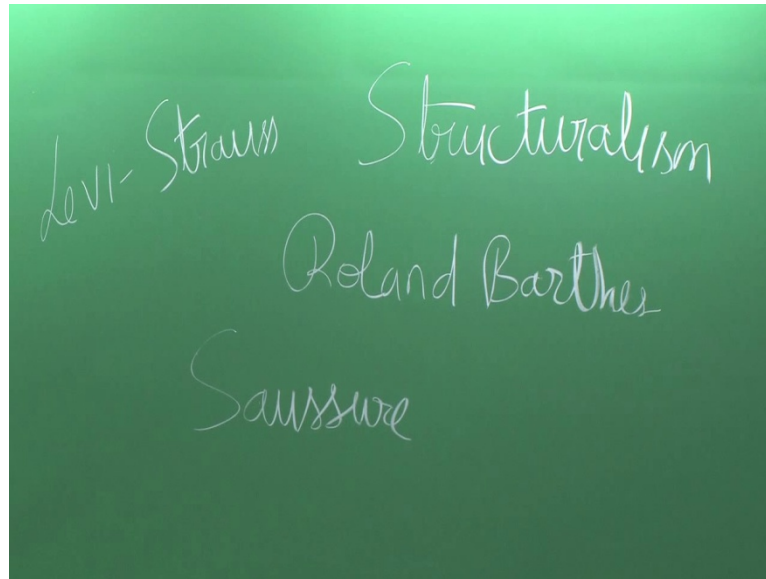
We have been talking about structuralism, which was a movement that originated in Europe, a literary movement also, a linguistics movement so. As we have already seen a structuralism feeds on basically the principles of linguistics. We have also been familiar with the ideas of Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, we will be looking at them in detail in our class on semiotics.

So, structuralism has influenced a number of fields of critical philosophical enquiry including philosophy anthropology, history, sociology and literary criticism. Of course and that is what our concern is for this particular course. So, almost all literary theorists beginning with Aristotle have emphasize the importance of structure. You may recall we have been talking about the beginning, the middle and the end as given to us by the classical writers.

So, people and scholars like Aristotle have the emphasize the importance of structure, conceived in different ways in analyzing a work of literature. Structuralist criticism now designates the practice of critics, who analyze literature on the model of structuralist, linguistics or linguist and linguistics. A structuralist criticism conceives literature to be a second order signifying system that uses the first order structural system of language as it is medium.

Structuralist critics often apply a variety of linguistic concepts. Structuralist theory concerns itself with all modes of communication and we have seen communication can include traffic signs, the other day, I showed you a plus sign. So, that is also sign which means, which communicates different things at different places. It is structuralist theory also looks at things such as Morse code a flag, gestures, smiles, clothes and even hair style and for someone, who is interested in structuralism. For example, a critic like Roland Barthes or a thinker like Roland Barthes.

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They find meaning in all these areas in all these things. We have seen how codes are arbitrary, we have already discussed this, when we were talking about how the word dog means, a certain kind of an animal in one language. And we have also seen that the same animal is referred to as something else in other languages. So, how are these words and terms given? So, these are all arbitrary; that is the idea, where literature and literary criticism are concerned.

Structuralism challenges the traditional belief that a work of literature or a text reflects a given reality. Instead structuralism believes that a literature or a literary text is constituted of other conventions and texts. So, this is important a work of art, constitutes other conventions, other texts for the structuralist. A literary work becomes a text; that is text; which is a mode of writing constituted by a play of internal elements.

According to specifically literary conventions and of course according to specifically done literary conventions and codes, a mode of writing is constituted. The individual author is not assigned any intentions. Structuralism replaces the author with the reader and this is very important, because when we discuss other theories like reader response theories, these ideas are come into play.

So, the importance of the reader and reader attains acquires the central agency in criticism. The focus of a structuralism is not on the sensibility of the reader, but on the impersonal process of reading. It brings into focus the conventions, codes and

expectations and make sense of the sequences of words, phrases and sentences; that constitute a text.

We should also note that structuralism is an opposition to mimetic criticism and also to any form of criticism that holds the view; that a text is a way of communication between author and readers. Structuralism is used in literary theory, for example, if you examine the structure of a large number of short stories to discover the underlying principles that governed their compositions. Principles of such as narrative progression or of characterization, you are also engaged in structuralist activity.

If you describe their structure of a single literary work discover, how it is composition demonstrates the underlying principles of a system, a structural system. Literary critic Northrop Frye, he takes a different approach to structuralism by exploring the ways in which Jones of western literature, falls into and he gives us a word mythoi, m y t h o i. And how literary western literature falls in the categories of mythoi, he gives theories of modes or historical criticism, for example, tragic, comic and thematic, he gives the theory of symbols or ethical criticism, for example, literal or descriptive or formal or mythical.

He also gives us theory of myths or archetypal, criticism and the last theory as given to us by Northrop Frye is the theory of Jones and of rhetorical criticism that is a prose drama, lyric, etcetera. So, from this background, we now get acquainted with one of the greatest writers of our time, thinkers and structuralist and as well as someone whose work also make a transition from structuralism to post structuralism Roland Barthes.

One of his seminal works is mythologies published in 1957, which states, where a Barthe states that if structuralist analysis of narrative is to be useful to the critic of culture. And it is meanings, then it must start with a detail reading of the formal properties that make meanings possible. Roland Barthe, who lived between 1915 and 1980; his theoretical thoughts developed from structuralist to post structuralist perspectives.

Some of his works are centered and colored in fact, by his Marxist ideology. Barthe extended structural analysis and semiology to broad cultural phenomenon and that is one of the major contributions of Barthe. Barthe also questioned the limits of structuralism pointing the way to freer assessment of texts and their role in culture. Barthe made the

famous assertion, which all of us are familiar with death of the author, where he plays on the idea of the text as a site of free play.

So, death of the author this a Bartheans term and this was this is also the title of an essay by Barthe frequently referred to in all modes of literary criticism. Barthes major works included as I have already told you mythologies, elements of semiology and introduction to the structural analysis of narrative. His post structuralist discussions are contained in his analysis of Honore de Balzac the French writers, his work Sarrasine.

And where, Barthe has done structuralist reading of Sarrasine by Balzac in his work, S by Z; published in 1970. Barthe has also authored the pleasure of the text published in 1973. In mythologies Barthe undertook an ideological critique of various products of types of Mass Buzau culture attempting to account for the mystification of cultural or history into a universal nature for Barthe.

Myth is not an object or a concept or an idea, but a language and this is interesting, it reads myths as a language, it is a mode of signification. Barthe saw Bourdieu ideology as a process of myth making, whereby the Bourdieu have seen, instead of identifying itself. As a class merges into the concept of nation, thereby presenting Bourdieu values as being in the national interest. Through this depoliticizing the Bourdieu according to Barthe was able to postulate, it is own definitions of justice truth and law as universals.

According to Barthe, myth can be opposed or undermined either by producing an artificial myth, highlighting it is own mythical status or by using speech. Barthe challenged classical views of the human subject and viewed and author as a grammatical function, rather than a psychological subject, this is important in classical writing, in conventional criticism, the idea was that the author constructs a text. And it is all about communication between the author and the reader.

Barthe challenges this in his essay the death of the author published in 1968, he argues that as soon as narration occurs as an end in itself. This disconnect or this connection occurs. A voice losses it is origin. The voice of the author, the authors enters into his own death. So, it is a metaphorical kind of death, where the author is no longer present anymore.

The moment a narrative gets over and then writing begins, for Barthe, the author was a product of our society in so far as emerging from the middle ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the reformation. So, these are the ideals that governed the supremacy of, the myth of the supremacy of the author. All these things, it discovered the prestige of the individual the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology.

Even in the present our studies of literature are tyrannically centered on the author according to Barthe, who says that a text can no longer be viewed as releasing in a linear fashion a single theological meaning as the message of the author god; that is god. Author as god rather a text according to Barthe is a multi dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.

The text becomes a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. The writer has only the power to mix writings, therefore, the concept, the death of the author writer creates only, what is available around him. So, he draws on from a variety of things around him. And then, because of his power to blend and mix certain things, he calls himself or presumes himself to be the soul creator and Barthe challenges this notion.

So, literature therefore, by refusing to assign an ultimate meaning to the text facilitates an anti theological activity, which is revolutionary. Since, it refuses to fix meanings in the end and all this also sort of refutes the power of reason science and law because the author there is no fixed meaning anymore. Others great writers of and thinkers of structuralism include Jeffrey Hartmann, who wrote structuralism, the Anglo American adventure.

Jeffrey Hartmann in 1996, which is an essay that appeared in *ail French studies* dedicated to situating. Structuralism in it is various domains of use, such as literary criticism, anthropology, aesthetics psychology and linguistics. Structuralism is believed to be established quite prominently in America by 1970 with the publication of the languages of criticism and the sciences of man.

In the 70's; this was an important phenomenon, because of the publication of a number of influential works by American academics including Fredric Jameson's, *prison house of language* and Robert Squillace's. Robert Squillace's structuralism in literature and

Jonathan Culler's structuralist poetics and Saussure as Jameson's Title suggest the prison house of language.

Structuralism was a vision of a world which was known only through the system of differences that is language and itself conceived by structuralist followed Ferdinand de Saussure in terms of the primacy of language. For a structuralist specific utterances only assumed a meaning relative to some pre existing system of rules and conventions. The mapping of which was identified by Jonathan Culler as the primary goal of literary interpretation and not the making of the meaning preserve.

We must also understand that structuralism help to eliminate any sense in which literature operated outside or apart from culture by stressing the implication of literature and other cultural practices in an elaborate network of science. This also lead as we have already been talking about, that the author was dead, Roland Barthes famous claim. Whereas, critics had once work to show how apparent contradictions could in fact be resolved to underscore the fundamental unity of literary text.

Structuralist became concerned often for political reasons with demonstrating the reverse of this explains. This critical turn during the 1970's away from what Barthe calls the writerly, which is often realists text and towards it is readerly, which is often, today we refer to it as a modernist or even postmodernist kind of narratives. So, from writerly to readerly works all this away from an aesthetic appreciation of closure.

And toward a political grounded affirmation of the virtues of openendedness and at times even incoherence and this was welcome, this was not considered something undesirable. This was all welcome to be openended to be even incoherent at times this shift was accompanied and was consistent with the view, argued for in colors structuralist poetics that the making of textual meanings is primarily the readers responsibility.

The reader features prominently in a variety of approaches to textual meaning in America as reader response theory and this is something that this cause is going to look at. This encompasses theorists linked by their belief in the central role played by the reader in making text meaningful. Several American critics during the 70's including is people like Norman Holland and Stanley Fish in his highly influential text is there a text in this class. There is a title of his essay, he his work and they called for the interpretative authority within the reader and not in the author nor in the text.

These theorists also asserted that the underlying structures within text required for making their interpretations possible should be systematically identified and cataloged. Fishes influence in this area has proven the most significant in the development of reader response. Again, in his essay, Fishes essay, how to recognize a poem, when you see one interestingly title, Fish concludes that readers are responsible not merely for the meanings assigned to text, but for the very text themselves.

Again, in his is there a text in this class and interpreting the variorum he argues for a legitimacy of interpretation. In addition to informing reader response theory structuralism during the 70's, fused with earlier formalisms to provoke and analysis of narrative from subsequently termed narratology. And that is the area we are getting into narratology.

So, structuralist narratology owes much to the works of French theorists again Roland Barthe and also an important name another important name Gerard Genette. From the early 60's critics like Wayne Booth and his major work is the rhetoric of fiction and this work also played an important role in shaping, the scope of narratology. Throughout the 1970's theories proposed by booth Barthe genette and also seymour chatman, who wrote story and discourses and all these ideas continued to influence scholars. Interested in further refining and clarifying our understanding of such narrative elements as narratives, time, mode and point of view. A major argument between narratology has focused on the concept of the implied author. Now, let me draw your attention to the bibliography.

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