



### Perspective

## Interpretation in Post-Postmodern Theoretical Drift and Gender Mutations

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To investigate the peculiarities of post-postmodern discourses of interpretation with the accent on their recent gender intersections. **Theoretical basis:** At the beginning of the XXI century, postmodernist theory, losing its importance and a certain 'political correctness', still leaves its key principles of interpretation and relativism unshakable. The appeal of the recent publications is determined by the fact that acts of interpretation permeate all post-postmodern narratives; allegedly, gender narratives are included per se. By interpreting, we bring our own meanings into everyday life, creating our own narratives, which are essentially gender "stories" with the representation of gender discourses. Interpretation is both "fixed" and "open," but the narratives are not "open": the process of constructing narratives is enriched by "natural interpretation," usually with a focus on the cultural and gender constructs. **Scientific novelty:** With its tendency to change, interpretation is becoming a symbol of the post-postmodern "normalization of change". The subjectivity of interpretation is not a transparent boundary between human beings and the world around them: the "better" the interpretation, the more objective our stories seem, and the stronger the constructs conditioned by society, gender, and ideology become. **Conclusions:** In a world where everything and everyone is seen as a text, interpretation becomes a crucial issue of theoretical problems. In the absence of a "perfect language," the paradox is that the text simultaneously makes the reader believe in his or her own understanding of its meaning and, by virtue of interpretation, makes this understanding impossible. The influence of language on the being and the being on language is realized in various ways: feminist readings of texts, for example, have both had a huge impact on gender theory and are currently creating a new metamodern wave of the feminist movement. The "work" of interpretation is multivalent and often opaque, but it is the work that conditions the concepts and constructs of culture, society, and gender.

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## Introduction

Interpretation is an endless stream of our orientation in the world, and literature stimulates this process by responding to the eternal changeability of the world and the human being in it. There is an assumption that interpretation arises naturally, and people live by constantly interpreting. In that case, as W. Iser puts it, we can paraphrase Descartes: "We interpret, and so we live" (Iser, 2001). Since one of the main characteristics of post-postmodernism is the assumption that there is no "privileged knowledge," researchers continue in the same vein, claiming that there is no "true interpretation." Undoubtedly, such an assertion may disqualify all alternative versions of interpretation from theoretical consideration. It is worth noting how R. Rorty (Rorty, 1982) writes about this: "Relativism is a view that asserts that every belief about a particular topic is as true as many other beliefs" (p. 66). In post-postmodernity, knowledge cannot be evaluated out of context in the broad sense of the term. Hence, there are no universal criteria for truth and validity that are out of context. As a result, nowadays, metamodernists see relativism as the main threat to truth. Thus, the main connection between post-postmodernism and relativism is reduced to the principle of truth. Ultimately, it is interpretation that continues to be the key in the metamodern transformations of such ultimate concepts as truth, God, beauty, etc.

The fundamental transformations with many axiological categories turn the line between good and evil, virtue and vice, into a conditional concept (M. Foucault, J. Derrida, R. Rorty, S. Žižek, etc.). Interpretation becomes a way of our representation of life, of our thinking, of viewing things in a certain socio-cultural and gender light, and of placing them within certain frameworks. Consequently, the picture of the world, represented by interpretation, androcentric ideology, and the science that serves it, is an incomplete and distorted perception of reality and, thus, a violation of the principle of objectivity.

The research of the recent decades, opening the "floodgate" of default, changes not only the angle of view but also the methodology of cognition. In a pluralistic world, nothing is certain, there are no undeniable facts, but can we still love truth without unchanging ideas?" asks J. Caputo, who explores the various notions of truth we can define and interpret. Metamodernists are certain, however, that relativism means that there are many competing truths depending on language, culture, gender, religion, needs, tastes, etc. (Caputo, 2013, p. 7).

In critiques of post-postmodernism, the fear that relativism, skepticism, and nihilism support anarchy is evident, and many theorists recognize that post-postmodern philosophers have contributed significantly to the creation of such a view. For example, R. Rorty (Rorty, 1982) once said that truth is simply a compliment we pay to ourselves when things happen according to our beliefs. Scholars exploring the nature of the self and the relationship of the self to the rest of reality ask the question: are we perhaps just a "collection" of stories? Where may our sexualities be heading in the twenty-first century? Do paradigmatic social orders take the larger variety of human histories and transform them into a smaller number of possible diversity of gender outcomes?

Beginning with an analysis of the Cartesian claim that we are non-physical beings and Locke's view of human beings as self-aware matter, scholars consider how contemporary technology is reconfiguring our minds, asking whether this change will be for good or evil.

Researchers explore the possibility that, in an ever-changing world, we and our bodies can evolve separately, following our own objectives.

*Purpose.* To explore how basic human considerations make interpretation seem "natural" and the forms it takes not; to analyze the formulations of the interpretive approaches in their relationship to objectivism and gender.

### **Presentation of basic material**

In the post-postmodern world, hermeneutics, in its close relationship with interpretation, becomes a key term in analyzing the mutations of "ultimate" concepts. The postmodern situation demonstrates that there is no Truth outside of interpretation, but interpretation alone does not create truth. Interpretation is a way of investigating subjects in a certain "focus" and within a designated framework. One of the main characteristic features of interpretation is formulated as follows: if "absolutes" cannot be found anywhere, interpretation is present everywhere. The subject of art requires interpretation: detectives interpret the appearance of evidence, teachers interpret literature and history, doctors interpret symptoms, and so on. For example, beauty, as an "ultimate" concept, is recognized "intuitively." However, there can be a gulf between physical beauty and spiritual beauty. Then there is the problem of taste, taste as the power of design over consciousness, as the ability to follow the demands of fashion. For example, the entire twentieth century is marked by the destruction of the superiority of the beautiful over the ugly; today, according to scientists, the ugly exists "in itself," and the beautiful exists "in itself," hence they are equal (Barthes, 1983, p. 56).

It should be noted that R. Barthes, in his classical, conditioned the problem of interpretation in hermeneutics `The Death of the Author` with his placement of the text in "postmodern conditions" where interpretations are inevitable because writing tends to exhibit a "zero degree of meaning". In proclaiming this, he meant that readers create their own meanings independently of the author's intentions. Thus, texts are always unstable and subject to change. R. Barthes argues that the traditional critical approach raises a problem: how can we tell exactly what the author intends to say? An author is simply a "scriptor", the word Barthes uses to break the traditional continuity of the terms "author" and "authorship." The scriptor (scriptwriter) produces but does not explain his work, Barthes emphasizes. Thus, "The Death of the Author" rejects the idea of authorial intention, instead developing a reciprocal critical theory for the reader. The traditional author, who believed he or she had the power to possess meaning, is dead; it is this that inspires the reader to interpret any text he or she likes. P. Barthes suggests that textuality is a "woven tapestry at work"; it is textuality in the "woven tapestry" that connects individual texts. The text does not belong to anyone. It is simply there, waiting for someone to give it meaning, and this idea affirms the "flowing" function of textuality and its infinite openness to interpretation (Barthes, 1983).

In `Mythologies`, Barthes argues that meaning/signification is present almost everywhere, not just in books and paintings but also in slogans, common toys, food, and popular rituals of everyday life. He proves that anything and everything in culture can be decoded, not just literature, but also love, fashion, photography - everything. For Barthes (Barthes, 1972), words and objects have the

ability to appear natural, as if what they say is eternal and true, rather than arbitrary and overconfident.

Barthes is so important in this context because he is the "interpreter" of the semiotic model of language that W. Eco calls "natural language". According to W. Eco, any natural language consists of a plan of expression (lexicon, phonetics and syntax) and a plan of meaning, which is a set of concepts that can be expressed. Any language organizes a "universe" that is amenable to thought and can be told in a certain meaningful form. Thus, natural language is defined by W. Eco (Eco, 2009) as a holistic system; being structured in a certain way, it presupposes a certain vision of the world. And here the problem of denotation and signification arises. In F. Saussure's structuralism, signification is the process that links the signified and signifier to produce a sign. Consequently, a sign can be understood as a relation that has no meaning outside the system of signification. Accordingly, signification is the product of a system of representation that has no meaning. The theoretical complexity of the problem was touched upon by F. W. Humboldt, who argued that if a word of one language has no equivalent in another, translation is impossible, except in the case of understanding translation as an activity that cannot be regulated and formalized (Girenok, 2010, p. 355).

The importance of concepts is always great when we are dealing with translation: since there is no complete equivalence between code units, we can only speak of the adequacy of the messages. U. Eco proposes to think not of a "third linguistic parameter" in translation but of an instrument of comparison. As for the structuralists (Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, etc.), they promised "liberation from the riddle of meaning," but as a result, they are known to return to the language. P. Ricoeur, for example, demonstrates a complex attitude toward structuralism and does not recognize structuralism as a philosophical discipline. On the other hand, according to Ricoeur (Ricoeur, 2008), hermeneutics means finding the meaning hidden in the symbol, and in this sense hermeneutics is a philosophical discipline. However, Ricoeur says interpretation is a meeting point between linguistic/non-linguistic language and lived experience. The specific features of hermeneutics are represented in the fact that the influence of language on the being and the being of language is realized in different ways (Ricoeur, 2008, p. 119). It is also very important that in the cultural communication process, multiple "ambiguities" and "uncertainties" inevitably arise, leading to the distortion of the communication product. In literary criticism, the term "resistance of a literary work to reading" supposedly defines the peculiarities of language functioning in literature. "Resistance of a literary work to reading" is seen as an approach according to which each reader brings something to the text that belongs to him/her. Hence, the same text takes on different meanings for different readers. Considering reading as deconstruction, J. Miller argues that "resistance" is a property of the words of a work of art, a property of rhetoric, a result of interaction, a play of tropes, concepts, and narratives. It is the impression that a work of art makes on readers using a sequence of words. However, like writers, readers are often tempted in their evaluations to consider one common meaning in their need to rely on the faith of a single meaning in a work of art (Miller, 1980). According to Miller, the latter resembles the property of a Mobius strip, which simultaneously possesses one and two surfaces.

The fact that it was literature that became the focus of the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s was no accident: literary discourse was one of the few through which the social reality of women over the centuries could be reconstructed and by exposing negative images of women in

the works of G. Miller, G. Lawrence, N. Mailer, L. Tolstoy, and other writers, N. Miller, A. Dworkin, A. Rich, and other female researchers brought the problem of the relationship between femininity and its representation in "male" literature to the forefront of further women's studies of female aesthetics, androgynous poetics and gynocriticism. As for poststructuralism, it should be noted that J. Derrida mobilizes a radical poststructuralist implication of the point that structures of meaning (without which we understand nothing) include and imply their "observers": to observe is to interact, Derrida argues (Derrida, 2007). It is necessary to emphasize P. Ricoeur's idea that in every hermeneutic discipline, interpretation is placed at the intersection of linguistic and non-linguistic, language, and life experience (Ricoeur, 2008, p. 119). It justifies J. Kristeva's claim that any rationalist attempt to transform the world into its image is only one more interpretation that cannot see that it embraces a void. (Schmitz, 2000).

The key point here is the constructed "frame." Scholars refer to this "frame" as context, arguing that nothing can be understood outside of a set of assumptions within which things are correctly or incorrectly placed (Zizek, 2015). However, subjectivity is not some boundary between the individual and reality: we are all, individually and collectively, socially and ideologically constructed.

*Scientific novelty.* In postmodernity, the criteria of truth and reliability are not considered by "definition" out of context, with the result that it is the interpretation that acts as the key to postmodern transformations in limiting contexts of culture, society, and gender. "Interpreter" acquires a special status in translation since full equivalents of language units as codes are rare. As a result - we can only speak of the adequacy of the messages to be interpreted. The activity of the "interpreter" is an opaque boundary between the individual and reality; rather, it is a kind of entrance to the "tower" of our individuality - masculine or feminine, or in the varied aspects of gender relations.

## **Conclusions**

Interpretation as the moment of "meeting" between language and lived experience is a symbol of fluidity in an era of normalizing change. The theory of post-postmodernism vividly represents the plurality of "truth" in the ambiguity of meanings, the significance of context, and the decentered life in stories and narratives. Interpretation becomes the key to the transformations of ultimate concepts, the vanishing absolutes of philosophy. The turn has tended to accept a strategy of keeping categories of analysis dynamic, even nomadic. In a world where everything and everyone is seen as a text, the text belongs to no one, being always open to interpretation, with the influence of language on the being and the being on language - the being realized in various ways. For example, the feminist interpretive reading of texts, which had a tremendous impact on feminist theory in the late twentieth century, essentially sparked a new wave of feminist movement. Evidently, the 'work' of interpretation is not a transparent and concrete boundary between the individual and reality; the more objective the narratives seem, the stronger the constructs conditioned by society, gender, and ideology become.

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