



## The Subjectivity of Literary Interpretations

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the effectiveness of literary interpretations applied to literary texts. It demonstrates how critical approaches provide an in-depth analysis of the subjectivity of literary interpretations in addition to their objective view of literature. That is, critical approaches open new horizons for readers to grasp the core conceptual meaning of literary works which, in turn, make the receptive readers involved in the analytical process of their elements, such as plot, setting, narrative point of view, and characterization. The discussion of literary interpretations reveals the possibility of delving deep into the critical nuances of literature as a human product concerned with depicting reality in both subjective and objective styles. In this respect, the paper sheds light in the relationship between the author and the reader in creating a literary text including the subjective mood of its interconnected elements. The subjectivity of literary interpretations will be highlighted by discussing this relationship in terms of formal interconnectedness and public sphere, structuralism, and post-Structuralism.

**Key words:** Formal interconnectedness; Post-structuralism; Public sphere; Structuralism, subjectivity; Theory

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Author-reader relationship is one of the most crucial

critical subjects of contemporary literary theories. This relationship stirred literary critics' arguments about the necessity of the subjectivity of literary interpretations. The necessity of this relationship plays an integral role in discovering new critical postulations that enrich the scholarship of literary criticism as a whole. The relationship between the reader and the author has to be constructed in the light of objectivity. The reader must be objective in discussing and addressing the precise description of the literary works. In this way, the reader is able to explore the multifarious elements used by the author in the literary work. Reading subjectivity, therefore, determines any literary work's distinctiveness. The necessity of the subjectivity of literary interpretation underscores the readers' critical faculty that makes them deal with the literary work from diverse cultural angles. This essay will discuss the author-reader relationship and how it affects and is affected by the subjectivity of literary interpretations with reference to formalism, structuralism and post-structuralism. The discussion will be supported with theoretical references to these critical approaches to unravel the necessity of the subjectivity of literary interpretation.

### 2. FORMAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND PUBLIC SPHERE

I think the subjectivity of literary interpretation is influenced by formal interconnectedness and public sphere to a great extent. The issue of social interconnectedness and the value of critical subjectivity are prominent in contemporary formalistic arguments. Still, formalistic social accounts of autonomy enable us to understand why readers do not completely lack autonomy and how readers' autonomy can be augmented. The self-discovery, self-definition, and self-direction skills that secure autonomy are commonplace. Indeed, some of them, such as introspective attunement to feelings and receptiveness

to others' feedback, are structural - compatible for and often promoted in critical readers' subjectivity (Trudeau 13). Although others, such as rational planning and self-assertion, are coded formalistic, many readers in fact have considerable proficiency in these areas. All too often, however, they exercise these skills only in narrowly restricted, structural - appropriate contexts. Yet, these readers may come off as creative, innovative, and critical in all interpretative situations. The subjectivity of literary interpretation, in the context, becomes very necessary for appreciating the generic aspects of literary works.

Formalistic public sphere seeks to rectify critical discrimination and inequalities against readers. While there is no single formalistic literary notions regarding the public sphere, there are interrelated subjects: exposing critical stereotypes, distortions, and omissions in author-dominated literature; studying textual creativity, genres, styles, themes, careers, and literary traditions; discovering and evaluating lost and neglected literary works by readers; developing formalistic theoretical concepts and methods; examining the forces that shape readers' subjectivity, literature, and criticism, ranging across structural relations and psychology; and creating new ideas of and roles for readers, including new institutional arrangements in the context of critical subjectivity. This is the authentic notion of formalistic bias which renders the reader's subjective insights towards literary texts. It enables the reader to have an overall discrepancy between the text and the world it approaches through the author's style. Formalism, hence, is one factor that creates this critical bias.

Such bias has a concomitant relationship between formalism and the public sphere. Formalistic public sphere and critiques have brought revolutionary change to literary and cultural disciplines concerning textual position in society, by critiquing inherited literary traditions representations and values, by stressing the importance of the work and the author, and by proposing institutional and social reforms. In such a way, readers would lose their presidency opportunity. This is because there is an "internal" objective rejection of their position in the formalistic critical issues.

Moreover, theorists of a formalistic aestheticism argue that the public sphere is reflected through literature, possessing its own images, themes, characters, forms, styles, and canons. At this point, readers form a subculture sharing distinctive economic, political, and professional realities, all of which help determine specific problems and artistic preoccupations that mark readers' position in societies. These realities are promoted by formalism-dominant textuality; and this society is the microcosm of the literary compositions which would be changed if subjective readers explore the fictional function of the work.

By the same token, the formalistic public sphere limits readers' subjectivity to express their ideas regarding

their conditions. Readers have to negotiate alienation and psychological barriers in order to attain independent position, which they try to achieve by reclaiming the heritage of textual creativity – which is essential critical subjectivity – remembering their own status among the surrounding public sphere milieus. They achieve this by refusing the debilitating cultural roles of subjective positions assigned to them by formalistic avant-garde. Anxieties common among subjective readers in formalistic-dominated, literary audience include close reading and textual analysis, and they recur in the images of the formalistic-dominated literary public sphere. Being so, readers' subjectivity could reduce social bias through striving to affirm their formalistic subjectivity that is restricted by the formalistic-dominated literary public sphere. Just so; subjective readers could, through their readings of critical discourses, affect the public sphere. As a result, this is because they tried her hands to impose readers' subjectivity in the entire society as possible as can be.

This formalistic action is the "universal" conceptualization of readers' subjectivity and its effect upon interpreting literary texts. To briefly illustrate, readers can obtain their subjectivity not only in the literary work, but also in the whole world beyond the work itself. This is the formalistic conceptualization of readers' subjectivity which exemplifies readers' identification of themselves against their surrounding critical public sphere and its impression of literary works. Such conceptualization neither expresses nor legitimates readers' subjective experience, and in perceiving it readers have to deeply think and critical act like actual critics. They could identify with various critical viewpoints, accept literary values and messages, and tolerate various traditional approaches concerning the text (Gates 84).

Under such critical conditions, readers' subjectivity must become resisting representative rather than assenting ones to a critical mainstream, using formalistic criticism as one way both to challenge traditional domination of the author's over the literary work. This critical subjectivity might be confirmed via a public sphere consensus; and the relationship between the reader and the author affects and is affected by this interplay between the readers and the public sphere that perceives the works in distinctive cultural ways. Thus, the readers' subjectivity is necessary to de-center the authorial domination over the text; and it replaces the author's styles with the readers' subjectivity with regard to the contemporary public sphere.

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### 3. STRUCTURALISM: CULTURE AND SELF-REFLEXIVITY

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These public sphere issues have been essential to determine the textual characteristics. It involves the literary linguistic elements and literary aspects could bring

forth new appreciation of the literary work. The result is that both of them could affect the receptive audience in many ways through critical rhetorical speeches. Consequently, the readers become able to accomplish, to some extent, their vision of critical subjectivity; and they do so through their structural subjective interpretations. However, their formalistic interpretations are resisted by authorial mainstream that is an integral part of the literary work itself. This is the factual essence of the cultural ambivalence between the critical readers' subjectivity and the author's impact upon the literary work.

The core conceptual implication of ambivalence is the opposing dimensions and perception concerning a certain culture. In essence, ambivalence exemplifies a cultural duality representing the readers' subjectivity dichotomy of identity. That is, it is the meticulous incarnation of the consistent fluctuation between one critical identity and its exact opposite (Outhwaite 48). It embodies the simultaneous binary opposition of attraction and repulsion. Structural critical insights render cultural ambivalence a specific implication regarding such binary opposition. Such critical ambivalence is considered the milestone theoretical insights of ambivalence since it postulates discursive claims on ambivalence and its readers' subjectivity involvement of other pertinent conception, chief among them are analysis, evaluation, and interpretation. In its broadest sense, cultural ambivalence encompasses the intricate ethnic mixture of the author and the readers' subjectivity. In this respect, the structural subjects are sometimes complicit and sometimes resistant. Such fluctuation exemplifies the essential existence of critical ambivalence. At this point, critical discourse describes has concomitant affinity with the structural readers' subjectivity since it could be exploitive and nurturing. Consequently, readers' subjectivity's conceptualization of ambivalence is merely a disruption of the hegemonic critical authority; and critical domination deforms the relationship between the structural subject and literary works. The critical point, here, is that cultural discourse does not welcome ambivalence as it is detested by the literary works that strive for superiority and domination over the structural subjects. For this reason, critical discourse attempts to produce effective compliant structural subjects that might reproduce its integral assumptions, values, and habits i.e., imitation of the literary works. The reason behind this imitation lies in the possibility of creating cultural equilibrium between the structural subjects and their literary counterparts. Interpretation, therefore, is the nexus of cultural ambivalence, which is one representative aspect of ambivalence developed by readers' subjectivity.

Authorial self-reflexivity accentuates inherent problems in structural interpretation of literary works. Readers subjectivity's proposal of the authorial

intentionality goes concomitantly with structural kinds of problems underpin the structural stance towards technical experimentation with structural voices implicit in literary works' structures. In this respect, the three specific conditions to describe what structuralism could be the linguistic aspects of readers' subjectivity, structural relations and the minority of readers writing on the issue of hegemonic approaches regarding structuralism. Readers' subjectivity incorporates structuralism as the plurality of readers voices which form an independent movement which asserts that formalistic equality and difference are not contradictory concepts.

The inadequacies are caused by reflexivity monotonous reliance on the previous literary depictions. This reliance, consequently, carries out the collapse between fiction and reality and forces formalistic to question their ontological status. Perceiving structural traditions from a "freed" perspective, accordingly, would concrete critical symbolic perception as unequal to literary works. Structural relations overlap and develop according to the social and traditional construction of the text or readers' subjectivity (Lodge 62). Therefore, the vast unifying social systems change into different elaborate classes formed by a series of collapsed events. Such relations, moreover, forge an idealization of oppositional thoughts establishing a unified cultural structural mainstream caused by nonwestern critical trends.

Readers' subjectivity offers more sinuous human paths than ideology, paths that demand more of concentration inasmuch as they may be marked only by suspicion or attenuation of the track of structural relations, where they would set up crusty substantives for the mind's grasp to help it around corners. Being so, the readers' subjectivity propriety triggers the orientation of text as being a subject to or unequal to readers' subjectivity. These are the natural characteristics of human subjectivity in terms of structural criticism. I consider radical structural approach as inclusive of readers' subjectivity. This is because radical structuralism may lead to genuine interpretation of the literary work. Readers' subjectivity is one source of the structural analysis that stems from the traditional rivalry within society; the other comes from beyond the readers' critical dilemmas. In fact, the structuralism applied by readers' subjectivity has not yet been eradicated, only temporarily curbed. Shortly after the interpretation and disintegration in the course of the analysis, textual harmony would be brought under control. So, readers' subjectivity, together with non-pragmatic interpretation, and self-reflexivity might be considered as the supreme structural principles used by readers' subjectivity. They have integral connection with structural relations pursued in the entire components of the literary text. Interpreting the literary work from this perceptive connects the

author-reader relationship and how it affects and is affected by the subjectivity of literary interpretation.

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#### 4. POST-STRUCTURALISM AND IDENTITY

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Post-structuralism addresses the issue of identity within the scope of diverse humanity studies. It perceives identity in the light of anthropology, psychoanalysis, ecocriticism, queer and structural studies and other interdisciplinary fields. In this sense, cultural identity becomes of paramount importance for perceiving a specific human ethnicity and its difference from other ethnicities. For this reason, scholars try their hands to provide sufficient and appropriate conceptualization of cultural identity and its patient relationship with Post-structuralism. Cultural identity is often approached in terms of readers' subjectivity as a theoretical framework. Cultural identity emanates from the readers' subjectivity experience. To illustrate, the cultural minority is left with psychic complexes after the period of post-structuralism.

Therefore, the apparent impact of readers' subjectivity appears on their critical demeanors since they suffered a lot under the textual practices of the readers. Post-structuralism ascribes identity to the narratives of exclusion, othering, and cultural appropriation. The structural minority as the marginalized other; and such marginalization is an impasse to the readers' subjectivity to formulate their neoliberal identity because they lack the social discourse to create a shift from pre-critical to post-critical identity. In this way, post-structuralism appropriates this shift as politics of critical ontological discordance with the contemporary literary discourse; and it includes different cultural notions to explore the otherness of sustained readers' subjectivity and the possible theoretical critiques to formulate an interdisciplinary interrelationship between post-structuralism and other critical approaches as well as their crucial role in identifying the nature of the readers' subjectivity and its relative critical identity.

Here, I would refer to post-colonialism as an interdisciplinary approach with post-structuralism. I will specifically address the issue of identity to clarify my stance regarding the author-reader relationship and how it affects and is affected by the subjectivity of literary interpretations. Dariusz Skórczewski and Agnieszka Polakowska approach postcolonial identity from a different perspective. They scrutinize the individual and collective peculiarities of identity. They make a contrastive affinity between the collective and the individual cultural traits of identity. Identity is not a collective postcolonial phenomenon. It does not include all social classes within the same regional or national demarcations. It is simply individual i.e., it comprises the individual's national

sense of belonging to homeland, which, simultaneously, exemplifies the comprehensive meaning of identity. "of interest here is rather collective identity, a social version of identity, which is co-experienced, co-mediated, and co-defined through intersubjective experiences" (41). Being so, Skórczewski and Polakowska prefer individual identity to collective identity because the former is the core conceptual nuance of identity discourse. Identity discourses, in this regard, is initiated by individuals who adhere to the sense of nationhood; and the individuals, who sincerely have a stout sense of belonging, embody the whole collective identity through relative discourse; and "identity discourse of a nation is thus a complex entity" (41).

Skórczewski and Polakowska draw out a connection between individual identity and its reflection in literary narratives. Individual identity is intricate ethnic mosaics of diverse fields, such as journalism, literature, art and so forth. These fields meticulously incarnate the integral depiction of the entire nationhood and its multifarious aspects conveyed by identity discourse; Skórczewski and Polakowska argue that individual identity "is composed of a set of narratives that reflect and inform the process that formed and continue to shape a given nationhood and that are transmitted by means of various channels, from mass and popular culture through literature, arts, journalism, and education to academic and nonacademic critical discourses" (41-42). Furthermore, they contend that individual identity opposes the critical hegemonic discourses which "construct racial and cultural difference" (42). Being so, individual identity is a contradictory national trend; and it vehemently opposes critical interferences in national affairs. Hence, national individuals utter their rejection of colonialism via their subjective responses to indict the foreign colonial effect on their national identity. Accordingly, the individuals' ethnic discourse serves as a means of expressing their aversions to abnegating any form of critical authority "viewed in the context of national discourse and national ideology" (44). The postcolonial aspect of post-structuralism is an active example of how the subjectivity of literary interpretation could be influential. This is because it is one definitive feature of post-structural approaches and their concern with identity as a postcolonial phenomenon.

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#### 5. CONCLUSION

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This essay discussed the author-reader relationship and how it affects and is affected by the subjectivity of literary interpretations. The main focus was on the formal interconnectedness and public sphere, structuralism and culture and self-reflexivity, and post-structuralism and identity. These critical matters were discussed in relation to the necessity of the subjectivity of literary

interpretation. The discussion of these critical approaches is necessary for recognizing the relationship between the author and the reader and how this relationship influences the literary text. As a whole, my stance was on the side of the subjectivity of literary interpretation because the reader's perception of literary works from different critical angles results in critical novelty and cultural authenticity. I tend to support the subjectivity of literary interpretation as it paves the way for undiscovered literary elements. It also sustains the readers' critical objectivity on dealing with the literary work and their influential function in the lives of people. Thus, my predilection to the subjectivity of literary interpretation is attributed to its potential to create innovative look at literary works and their function in our everyday lives.

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