

LAURA PAVEL

## **THE CULTURAL TURNS: FROM CONVERGENT CONCEPTS TO INTERPRETIVE NARRATIVES**

*Self-reflexive Concepts, Competing Interpretations*

The many paraphrases of what Rorty has defined as the “Linguistic Turn” – the “Pictorial Turn”, followed by the “Literary Turn”, the “Performative Turn”, the “Ekphrastic Turn” or the “Rhetorical Turn” and the “Creative Turn” – appear to encapsulate aesthetic cartographies of the cultural field and, in particular, of the humanities, rather than actual epistemes of postmodernity. Other turns in the sphere of interdisciplinary cultural analysis, such as, for instance, the “Intermedial Turn”, the “Digital Turn”, the “Post-Critical Turn” or the “Archival Turn”, are more relevant for the multiplication of the various media of artistic and cultural creation, as well as for certain methodological and hermeneutical options emerging thereof. They may symptomatically succeed one another or appeal to researchers at one and the same time. The various interpretive communities that uphold them may come to interfere with one another or to create entire transnational networks of interpretation.

The cultural spins, mutations or, simply, the cultural “turns” of the past few decades, after the famous Linguistic Turn was coined by Richard Rorty, are, in fact, theoretical constructions and narratives of interpretation shared within various interpretive communities. Intellectual communities may emerge and persist by way of complicity with or polemical opposition against certain conducts or approaches to research methods and to styles of interpretation in the field of humanistic disciplines. How do these interpretive trends enter a dialogue, whether they are mostly aesthetic, ethical or political? To what extent can they be seen as competing or complementary trends in the context of several important contemporary cultural turns?

Various philosophical perspectives on the language, understood as the foundation of thought (see, for example, Wittgenstein, and several strands of analytic philosophy), and certain trends in linguistics, semiotics, literary theory and rhetoric outlined the emergence of a “Linguistic Turn”, as Richard Rorty believed<sup>1</sup>. Starting from the syntagm that Rorty legitimized and that may be,

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<sup>1</sup> The syntagm appears in the title of an anthology of philosophical essays edited by Rorty and published in the 1960s: Richard Rorty (ed.), *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*, Chicago – London, The University of Chicago Press, 1967.

ultimately, regarded as a matrix-like notion, other notions designating different perspectives of interpretation came to be proposed in the field of humanities, either inside or at the border of several intellectual, theoretical, academic communities. The art theorist and historian W.J. T. Mitchell, for instance, argues that one can gradually speak about a shift from the interstices of this watershed foregrounding of language to a new, so-called “Pictorial Turn”:

Rorty’s determination to ‘get the visual, and in particular the mirroring, metaphor out of our speech altogether’ echoes Wittgenstein’s iconophobia and the general anxiety of linguistic philosophy about visual representation. This anxiety, this need to defend ‘our speech’ against ‘the visual’ is, I want to suggest, a sure sign that a pictorial turn is taking place<sup>2</sup>.

The focus on discursiveness and textuality in the sphere of humanities was displaced, to some extent, in the 1970s-80s, by the visual paradigm, within which the issue of representation in modernity and postmodernity was analyzed through the lenses of several humanistic disciplines (anthropology, history, social sciences, art theory, philosophy). What is symptomatic, according to Mitchell, is a certain anxiety of the linguistic perspective towards visual representation and its subversive potential. The ambivalently oppressive and liberating force of images may be revealing for an ideology of aesthetics, as well as for a politics of artistic creation and reception. In addition, for some highly-contemporary aestheticians, to mention just Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop, relational art, collaborative art and participatory art do more than focus on representation and, at the same time, do more than to operate, in however an innovative manner, at the level of the imaginary; they impregnate certain patterns of extra-artistic, social conduct, enacting forms of community aggregation, beyond the monadic world of art. Starting from Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics (a concept launched by French art critic in 1998) and, at the same time, taking heed of the collaborative, “social turn”, which Claire Bishop speaks about (2006; 2012), certain artistic practices (live installations, performances, community theater, applied theater, artistic practices of the DIY type, internet art, etc.) are considered to outline a politics of creativity predicated on human relations, on ways of being together (togetherness), on sociability<sup>3</sup>. The abandonment of the author-centered perspective and of the

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<sup>2</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> While devoting a consistent corpus of studies to participatory art, critic and theorist Claire Bishop points out to some “discontents” of such artistic collective projects, analyzing the intricate and sometimes difficult to assess relationship between their presupposed ethical relevance and their aesthetics: “Rather than judging art as a model of social organisation that can be evaluated according to pre-established moral criteria, it is more productive to view the conceptualisation of these performances as properly artistic decisions. This is not to say that artists are uninterested in ethics, only to point out that ethics is the ground zero of any collaborative art. To judge a work on the basis

regime of aesthetic autonomy and artistic subjectivity can also shape, as it were, various critical, interpretive communities, justifying their need to share codes and legitimizing narratives and, thus, enhancing critical sociability.

On the other hand, even the condition and status of the spectator (spectatorship) often goes against the grain of the textuality-based reception model, by deciphering, through the act of reading, a text (which may be not just literary, but also cultural, anthropological, psychoanalytical, etc.). The conceptual density and multifunctional nature of the term “text” are taken over by “picture” and the interpretive model of visuality. However, W. J. T. Mitchell, the advocate of the Pictorial Turn, insists on their concurrence and cohabitation, suggesting the existence of hybrids, such as “image-texts”. Just like in the case of cultural analysis through the lenses of textuality, focusing on “picture” signals not only an ekphrastic type of displacement, an exchange of interpretive posts and hermeneutical tools, but also involves a network of inextricable relations between visual and discursive processes, or between both of the latter and the mechanisms of power, between institutions and bodies, as well as between social objects and their ability to be figured through discourse and, simultaneously, through visual representations:

It [the pictorial turn] is rather a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figural<sup>4</sup>.

The method by which art history and, above all, the study of visual culture pass from a position of theoretical marginality to one of centrality among the humanistic disciplines consists in investing a concept – in this case, that of “image”, but also that of “picture” – with self-reflexive and metacritical potential, just as it was the case with concepts such as text and discourse. W. J. T. Mitchell’s statements about “picture” could function as theorems that are also valid for other terms-concepts, which acquired, successively, primacy in the field of theory:

The picture now has the status somewhere between what Thomas Kuhn called a ‘paradigm’ and an anomaly, emerging as a central topic of discussion in the human sciences in the way the language did: that is a kind of model or figure for other things (including figuration itself), and as an unresolved problem, perhaps even the object of its own ‘science’<sup>5</sup>.

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of its preparatory phase is to neglect the singular approach of each artist, how this produces specific aesthetic consequences, and the larger questions that he/ she might be struggling to articulate”. See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London, Verso, 2012, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

Just like *picture*, several concepts became the objects of their own “sciences”, but also transversal interpretation tools, surpassing the boundaries of several disciplines: text, discourse, representation (concepts that are central to the orientation towards discursiveness and discursivization of other disciplines and artistic practices in the poststructuralist age); figure (and the dynamics of figurality, in texts and images alike, in rhetoric strategies, or in-between the object of analysis and the interpretive subject); object, thing (within the area of philosophical interpretation, but also of cultural or aesthetic theory, called “object oriented ontology-OOO”, supported mostly by the philosopher Graham Harman and derived from the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour); narrative (within in the framework of the so-called “Narrative Turn”); performance (to be associated with what director Richard Schechner, the founder of the interdisciplinary domain of “performance studies”, describes as a “Performative Turn”); cultural analysis (which involves bridging the gap between high culture and low culture and the interpretation of cultural objects inside the fabric of institutions, forms of power, ideological mechanisms, styles, or aesthetic posts).

Such concepts with irradiating power can be detected both in the interdisciplinary dialogue (especially in the sphere of humanities) and in their extensions into debates on aesthetics, on the ethical relevance of an aesthetic and interpretive approach, but also on the political content encapsulated in artistic practices and aesthetic sedimentations. On the other hand, there also emerge and become operational certain concepts whose hermeneutic effect is somehow derived from the first series: intermediality, the Other, otherness, *differance*, dissemination, archive, the category of the secondary, liminality, performativity, literarity, visuality, theatricality, *agencement* - assembly (*l'agencement collectif d'énonciation*, the concept launched by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure*), rhizome, deterritorialization, *dispositif* (coined by Michel Foucault, reinterpreted by Giorgio Agamben, it encompasses power relations, captures and controls gestures and discourses, and involves a process of subjectification), the anthropocene (which entails, in recent years, a watershed in cultural anthropology, but also in aesthetics and artistic practice, etc.).

### *Convergent Theories, Hermeneutic Illusions*

The analytical potential of these concepts varies depending on a series of deterritorializations, permutations and mutual contaminations, on the ways in which they are processed, expanded and re-grouped by various interpretive communities and their critical approaches. This is a ceaseless hermeneutic exercise, which sometimes appears to be targeted at itself and for itself, because it pertains to an aesthetic conduct, to the critical condition, while at other times it has ethical or political relevance. In his famous essay “Is There the Text in This Class?”, Stanley Fish drew attention to the fact that, when claiming to reveal, in

oracular fashion, truths about the meaning of a text, what critics do, invariably, is interpret: “What I have been saying is that whatever they [the critics] do, it will only be interpretation in another guise because, like it or not, interpretation is the only game in town”<sup>6</sup>. The institution or mechanism of interpretation, in the sense of the immanent principle set forth by Fish, comes into play as a contingent hermeneutic game, dependent on the context, and encumbered by conventions, biases and community values.

I have already referred several times to the notion of “interpretive community”, launched by Stanley Fish in the 1980s, as I consider it to be a working instrument whose validity needs to be brought once again into discussion. The perspective advocated by Fish is admittedly anti-foundationalist, being impregnated by a pragmatism of reading: the meaning of a text that is subject to interpretation is, according to Fish, a collective construct belonging to the members of various communities, to their rules, history and customs. The demythicizing, anti-foundationalist and disenchanting perspective on interpretive mechanisms proposed by Stanley Fish has sometimes drawn accusations that he is a relativist cynic, a “fatalist” even, or that he practices a sophistic discourse (see Martha Nussbaum’s reproach against him)<sup>7</sup>.

Yet, the space of critical discourse is, according to Fish, not so much an expression of interpretive subjectivity as the result of pre-scripted constraints. It is preset by the predecessors to such an extent that even the impulse of the new critics to disavow the vision of their precursors stems, as Fish contends, from certain conventions that are specific to the “institution” of interpretation:

This means that the space in which a critic works has been marked out for him by his predecessors, even though he is obliged by the conventions of the institution to dislodge them. It is only by their prevenience or prepossession that there is something for him to say; that is, it is only because something has already been said that he can now say something different. This dependency, the reverse of the anxiety of influence, is reflected in the unwritten requirement that an interpretation present itself as remedying a deficiency in the interpretations that have come before it<sup>8</sup>.

The meaning of a text straddles the border of interpretive conventions within the community, being negotiated according to the interests of fluctuating micro-groups, of “subcommunities” that are perpetually redefined:

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<sup>6</sup> Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Cambridge – London, Harvard University Press, 1980, p. 355.

<sup>7</sup> In an essay entitled “Sophistry about Conventions”, Martha Nussbaum strongly denounces Stanley Fish’s subjectivism and relativism, his rejection of rational arguments, as well as his “Gorgian view that there is no truth anyway and it’s all a matter of manipulation” (“Sophistry about Conventions”, *New Literary History*, “Philosophy of Science and Literary Theory”, XVII, 1985, 1, Autumn, p. 130).

<sup>8</sup> Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p. 350.

Within the literary community there are subcommunities (what will excite the editors of *Diacritics* is likely to distress the editors of *Studies in Philology*), and within any community the boundaries of the acceptable are continually being redrawn<sup>9</sup>.

If we are to consider a particularly relevant case for the existence of polemically divergent communities and subcommunities, which tend to assert themselves in competitive rather than complementary manner, this is to be found, for instance, in the effervescence of the American academic milieu of the 1980s. The so-called “French Theory” gained ground especially across the Atlantic Ocean, by paradoxically filtering the philosophical premises of French theorists like Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari or Jean-François Lyotard through critical-ideological and, at the same time, quasi-literary lenses. Commenting on the implications of this intellectual phenomenon from a standpoint that simultaneously encompasses theory and academic policy, from an anthropological and a political angle (that is, by means of the relativization and politicization of literary and aesthetic interpretation, in general), François Cusset evokes an entire cast of academic celebrities in the United States, from the 1970s:

The battle over the privilege of “showcasing” on their territory such thinkers as Derrida or Foucault at conferences created oppositions between, for example, Berkeley, Buffalo, and New York University (for Foucault) or Yale, Cornell, and Irvine (for Derrida). [...] As with sports teams, each university created a specialty that it wanted to broaden into the national market: Yale deconstructionists versus literary epistemologists at Cornell, Harvard psychocritics versus the postcolonials at CUNY, New Historicists at Berkeley versus Irvine Derrideans, Chicago neo-Aristotelians versus Stanford moralists, and so on<sup>10</sup>.

If, however, we move beyond these polemics and impassioned intellectual competitions within academia, and adopt the idea of ceaseless interpretation games, whereby communities share specific interpretations, but appear not to be able to situate themselves outside them, being capable of assessing themselves solely inside their own conventions and within their conceptual schemata, then we may see that this “game” perpetuates a few illusions. In other words: constructing hermeneutic narratives of cultural analysis has fostered a few hermeneutic illusions, if I may call them so. And to what extent such illusions, *trompe l'oeuil* effects in interpretation, turn out to be beneficial for the way in which the hermeneutic practice is reflected in the critical and imaginative dialogue with the object of analysis? Concepts such as text, picture, narrative, performance (with its

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 343.

<sup>10</sup> François Cusset, *French Theory. How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*. Translated by Jeff Fort, with Josephine Berganza and Marlon Jones, Minneapolis – London, The University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 77.

more complex derivative, used in an interdisciplinary manner, performativity) are often given a far too comprehensive interpretive role, sometimes by extrapolating some of their meanings, at other times by overestimating their explanatory power. This illusion may be a matter of the excessive faith in their multiple functionality and semantic coverage, which may also appropriate an epistemic value. Concepts are subject to an “expansion” and re-thematization process, turning thus into points of reference and pretexts for transversal interpretations, which cross beyond the boundaries of one or another interpretative community.

But text, image, narrative, or the concept of performance and that of performativity tend to operate, at the same time, also self-reflexively, self-critically, while containing and maintaining their own dilemmas and constitutive fissures. Could this self-reflexivity represent a way out of the constraining and self-generating “institution” of interpretation? Or: could interpreters/ critics distance themselves from their own mania for self-deception?

The various narratives of interpretation carry with them the narcissistic illusions (or delusions) of those who interpret, being subjected to the pressures of the institution of literary criticism (and, by extension, that of cultural criticism). In the cavalcade of so many turns over the last few decades, there have, nonetheless, also emerged many occasions for theoretical exultation, creativity and intellectual effervescence, derived from the intersection and enmeshment of disciplinary perspectives. When the philosopher and Shakespearean specialist Stanley Cavell asked the rhetorical question – “But can philosophy become literature and still know itself?”<sup>11</sup> –, he ultimately opted for a kind of literaturized philosophical argument which was symptomatic of the *literary turn* of the 1990s. In turn, the philosophers Richard Rorty and Martha Nussbaum have constantly resorted to theoretical arguments and examples taken from literature. Hayden White is representative for the shift of emphasis towards a fictional-literary outlook on history and Clifford Geertz has applied to cultural anthropology mechanisms of interpretation that are specific to literature. On the other hand, the sphere of literary studies (comprising comparative literature, literary history and theory, the sociology of literature, cultural studies, poststructuralist studies, critical theory) has appropriated certain philosophical theses, resignifying them and using them in a transversal, translational manner. That is the case of the already mentioned corpus of theory of French extraction in the American academia, that is the French Theory. François Cusset notices the phenomenon of disciplinary recentering certain philosophical thesis set forth by Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari, Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard, by extrapolating and overemphasizing their literary dimensions<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 494.

<sup>12</sup> “As they strayed away from the French departments, the texts by Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Lacan that had first been encountered underwent a disciplinary recentering that consisted in drawing

Literaturization enhances paradoxically, in this case, the ideological dimension and the political stakes of discourse, rather than its canonical-aesthetic component.

On the other hand, the literary becomes the focal center of ethical perspectives with the American philosophers Stanley Cavell and Martha Nussbaum, or serves as a generator of social coexistence, of behavior patterns and ways of self-relation, which pertain to the aesthetics (and ecology) of existence. Certain concepts enshrined in the literary field are reconsidered and, even if they do not entail any paradigm shifts, they have been lately expanded beyond the literary sphere and the history of aesthetics. For example, for the literary theorist Marielle Macé, style can figure out ways of being (*manières d'être*) and account for a stylistics of existence<sup>13</sup>.

Inside the “institution” of criticism (not just that of literary criticism, but also that of aesthetic theory) and interdisciplinary cultural analysis, the mechanisms and manners of producing the specific meanings of one interpretive community or another depend on the reconfiguration of the manner of operating with concepts and, at times, of hyper-interpreting them. For example, when given discretionary interpretive power, they almost always end up contaminating several areas of analysis and can reposition or even provisionally recenter certain disciplines, emphasizing a certain epistemic authority at the expense of others. The theorist Mieke Bal laments, for instance, the way in which some concepts have come to be used in excess, to be turned into clichés that are, therefore, of too little relevance for the actual practice of cultural analysis. A symptomatic case, highlighted as such by Mieke Bal, who is dedicated to both narratology and aesthetic and cultural studies analysis carried out far beyond the boundaries of disciplines, is that of the term-concept narrative:

It is hard to find cultural objects that cannot, in some way or other, be labeled ‘narrative’. With the extension of its use, this flexible concept adapts its content to the objects that challenge it. To cite an example from my own practice, visual images are almost always narrative in some way or another. If they don’t tell stories, they perform one, between image and viewer<sup>14</sup>.

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(not to say stretching) them toward literary studies, foregrounding and prioritizing their analyses of text (of or textuality), and even casting their philosophical propositions as inherently literary”. See François Cusset, *French Theory*, p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Stylization is, according to Marielle Macé, “cette opération générale par laquelle un individu ressaisit de façon partiellement intentionnelle son individualité, répète toutes sortes de modèles mais aussi les module, redirige, infléchit les traits” (*Façons de lire, manières d'être*, Paris, Gallimard, 2011, p. 166).

<sup>14</sup> Mieke Bal, “From Cultural Studies to Cultural Analysis: «A Controlled Reflection on the Formation of Method»”, in Paul Bowman (ed.), *Interrogating Cultural Studies. Theory, Politics and Practice*, London – Sterling, Pluto Press, 2003, p. 35.



What may appear to be a speculative expansion of the area in which narratology operates, by placing it in connection with a domain that is most foreign to the idea of diegetic succession, that of the visual arts, is in fact a test of the limits of narrativity. Such an exploratory approach of the concept is seen by Mieke Bal as “illuminating for an understanding of those images that ‘fight’ narrativity, while also shedding new light on what narrativity can mean”<sup>15</sup>. Along with the expanded operationality of narrative structures, there comes an investigation of those images that resist interpretation through the lenses of the narrativity idea. Therefore, the concept of narrative assumes a reasonable dose of self-reflexivity, and Mieke Bal resorts to it with utmost care not to excessively deploy it or ascribe to it phenomena or objects of analysis that refuse to be deciphered through its prism.

With all the critical dimension associated to such a concept, it is, one might say, a conglobing, canon-generating concept, a focal center of analysis, which entails the convergent arrangement, in a relational framework, of several cultural objects, events and artistic creations, literary discourses and anthropological practices. Transversal analysis, beyond the boundaries of a humanistic discipline or another, also makes recourse to concepts that are “rebellious” rather than conglobing, asserting their strongly disruptive, even emancipatory nature (both in relation to the condition of the one who analyzes and in relation to the objects analyzed through these concepts). What is relevant, in this regard, is the concept of performativity, a dynamic, processual interpretive instrument, located on the border between the philosophy of language (especially in terms of speech acts theory), performing arts, live art, anthropology, sociology and literary theory, multimedia studies. Moreover, the quasi-ubiquitous concept of performativity is at the heart of the domain of Performance Studies, a cross-discipline or post-discipline<sup>16</sup> introduced several decades ago in the American university curriculum by the director and theorist Richard Schechner. For Schechner, one could argue that the humanities, artistic theory and practice, as well as anthropological research have gone through a Performative Turn. A convergent understanding of both performance and ritual, whereby ritual is seen in its inherent performativity, has been at the root of the collaboration between Schechner and the famous anthropologist Victor Turner. Actually, the liminal rites of passage and the liminality are experienced through their performative nature, as one’s identity, as well as the communal, shared values are continuously enacted and exposed in the liminal, in-between periods. On the other hand, as far as the identity construction

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>16</sup> “Performance studies starts – claims Schechner – where most limited-domain disciplines end. A performance studies scholar examines texts, architecture, visual arts, or any other item or artifact of art or culture not in themselves, but as players in ongoing relationships, that is, ‘as’ performances” (*Performance Studies. An Introduction*, London – New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 2).

is concerned, gender theorist and cultural analyst Judith Butler argues that performativity should be understood “not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constraints”<sup>17</sup>.

A paradoxical expansion of the meanings of performativity allows the association of this dynamic and anamorphic concept even with visual creation. Moreover, the arguments in favor of the performativity of the visual can be brought if we reassess the theory of the art critic Horst Bredekamp, referring to “image act”/ “Theorie des Bildakts”. According to Bredekamp, images claim a right to “life” and acquiring an “image agency” takes place through their dialogue with the viewer/ receiver. The position of power (including the sometimes discretionary, abusive interpretive power) of the interpreting subject becomes relativized in relation to the “activity” of images, with their emancipation from the status of passive objects of analysis.

Despite the disciplinary boundaries of critical discourse (be it applied to literature or to visual arts, to performing arts or to “cultural objects” placed at the interface of various languages and mediums of expression), we can easily discern the common concerns of many critics and analysts belonging to fluid interpretive communities, with permeable boundaries. Underlying entire turns or mutations, with their narratives of interpretation, has been either the myth of the power or fragility of words, or that of the power or vulnerability of images, acts of language, gestuality, of the way they “speak” or look back at the beholder and participate in a process of subjectivation. Performativity, textuality or even literariness and visuality are radial notions, theoretical nuclei of various “cultural turns”, which sometimes come from the specific difference of one field or another, from the claim of one language to encapsulate all others and to impose a temporary (and illusory, in fact) epistemic domination. But they are also extensive conceptual metaphors, open to permutations and reversals of meaning, or to transversal approaches. Relational aesthetics pertains, on the one hand, to the ekphrastic dialogue between arts, but especially to those daily encounters in a shared space, which can acquire the form of a performance with artistic or political stakes. Therefore, Bourriaud’s comprehensive syntagm may be adopted even when we analyze somewhat similar posts and tools of interpretation belonging to critics – those who, through their interpretive exercise, establish inter-communities, co-dependencies and collaborative practices.

I will resume here, by way of a provisional conclusion, the somewhat redundant phrase of Stanley Fish: “What I have been saying is that whatever they [the critics] do, it will only be interpretation in another guise because, like it or

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<sup>17</sup> See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. London – New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 2.

not, interpretation is the only game in town”<sup>18</sup>. It is a self-evident statement, a truism, apparently, that highlights the perspectivism of interpretations, their relativistic, contingent character. But this maxim also appears to contain a certain dose of cynicism – the thesis that everything is just interpretation does not include the need for ethical discernment, or stakes that exceed and transfigure subjectivism or even the self-generating intellectual game of interpretation. Perhaps we should also detect here an inherently skeptical positioning of the interpretive game or, at least, the disillusioned acknowledgement of its own critical condition, which generates and proposes itself as an “institution”.

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<sup>18</sup> Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p. 355.

## THE CULTURAL TURNS: FROM CONVERGENT CONCEPTS TO INTERPRETIVE NARRATIVES

*(Abstract)*

After the famous “Linguistic Turn”, labeled as such by the philosopher Richard Rorty in the 1980s, the cultural spins, mutations or, simply, the cultural “turns” of the past few decades have largely been the result of debates with aesthetic or ethical stakes, but also ways in which the political has found artistic expression and has been translated into “cultural objects”, in an anthropological sense. The “Pictorial Turn” and, then, the “Literary Turn” or, no less, the “Performative Turn”, the “Ekphrastic Turn” or the “Rhetorical Turn” have represented, ever since the 1970s and the 1980s, privileged methodological frameworks for research conducted in the humanities area, in which interpretative styles that are complementary or polemically pitted against one another are vying for supremacy. They may symptomatically succeed one another or appeal to researchers at one and the same time, but they most often operate with convergent concepts. The various interpretive communities that uphold them may come to interfere with one another or create entire transnational networks of interpretation.

*Keywords:* Linguistic Turn, Performative Turn, Post-Critical Turn, interpretive communities, convergent concepts.

## COTITURILE CULTURALE: DE LA CONCEPTE CONVERGENTE LA NARAȚIUNI INTERPRETATIVE

*(Rezumat)*

După celebra cotitură lingvistică („the Linguistic Turn”) statuată de către filosoful Richard Rorty în anii 80, cotiturile (sau mutațiile, sau doar „turnurile”) culturale ale ultimelor decenii sunt consecințele unor dezbateri cu mize fie etice, fie estetice, dar totodată și modalități ale politicului transpuse în creații artistice și în „obiecte culturale”, în sens larg antropologic. „The Pictorial Turn”, apoi „the Literary Turn”, dar nu mai puțin „the Performative Turn”, „the Ekphrastic Turn”, „the Rhetorical Turn” constituie, din anii ‘70 și ‘80 încoace, cadre metodologice privilegiate de cercetarea în sfera umanioarelor, în care se confruntă stiluri de interpretare complementare sau aflate în contrapunct polemic unele față de altele. Ele se succed în chip simptomatic sau sunt uneori concomitente, operând de cele mai multe ori cu concepte convergente. Iar diversele comunități de interpretare care dau seama despre ele ajung să interfereze și să coaguleze întregi rețele interpretative transnaționale.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* cotitura lingvistică, cotitura performativă, cotitura postcritică, comunități interpretative, concepte convergente.