

The Circle of Textualization*

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Abstract

This paper tries to establish the idea of "the circle of textualization" as an essential idea for literary interpretation. It first touches on the problem of "the hermeneutical circle." It then suggests that to experience is to interpret; to interpret is to perceive and react, or simply to "read" and "write." Reading (the internalization of external texts) and writing (the externalization of internal texts) form a perpetual circle of textualization which human beings never cease to engage in. Foucault's distinction between the fundamental, creative discourse and the derivative, commentary discourse is criticized. This paper argues that the writer's text, the critic's, the reviewer's, the translator's, the editor's, the printer's, the publisher's, or indeed everyone's text is at once creative, critical, commentary, translative, editorial, evaluative, and interpretative. What we call intertextuality is in fact a very complicated network of textualization. The philosophical ideas of "intention" vs. "extention" are used to explain the acts of reading and writing and to discuss the issues of textual meaning and textual indeterminacy. In the discussion, many modern scholars' dichotomies of reading are mentioned. Finally, this paper uses two figures to show the various factors involved in the circle of textualization and concludes that as man cannot avoid interpretative fallacies, the circle of textualization is a circle of indeterminate reading and writing of texts both correctly and incorrectly all the time.

Key words : the circle of textualization, the hermeneutical circle, reading, writing, intention, extention, internal text, external text

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It is well known that in the West hermeneutics was originally limited to Biblical exegesis, but since the nineteenth century it has been extended to any theory or procedure in interpreting literary, legal, or social science texts. Today this "science" has developed to such an extent that it is impossible to discuss the subject of textualization without reference to it. However, despite its modern development, some basic hermeneutic issues still remain to puzzle us and leave us room for hot dispute. The problem of the "hermeneutic circle," for instance, is itself still subject to various interpretations.

As we know, the "hermeneutic circle" was first described in the early nineteenth century by the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, and was so named later in the same century by the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey.¹ It describes this paradoxical fact: the meaning of constituent parts of a whole can be understood only if the whole has prior meaning, but only when those constituent parts are understood can the full meaning of the whole be grasped. Thus, in trying to understand a text, we must approach its parts by reference to its whole and at the same time grasp its entirety by reference to its parts. This, then, involves a progressive clarification of mutually conferred meanings. And the interpreter, according to Schleiermacher, cannot but "leap" intuitively into the circle, like the leap of faith.

In our century, Martin Heidegger has a different formulation of the hermeneutic circle, though. For him the paradoxical problem is to be solved not by an intuitive leap into the circle, but in terms of interplay between an interpreter and a tradition which is encountered, understood and remade in an open dialect. This position of Heidegger's is maintained and further described by his disciple Hans-Georg Gadamer, who believes that the interpreter is always situated in relation to the tradition "out of which the text speaks." For Gadamer, the effect, or *Wirkung*, of a text is an important constituent of its meaning. Since this *Wirkung* differs for different ages, it

has a history and tradition (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) which necessarily conditions any contemporary interpreter's understanding of the text.²

To "leap" into Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle and thus concentrate on the relationship between the constituent parts and the whole of a text is an objectivist gesture of interpretation. On the other hand, to emphasize the interplay between an interpreter and a tradition as Heidegger and Gadamer did, is to adopt a historicist view of the text by placing the interpreter as well as the text in the context which time is always developing with new interpreters and new texts of all sorts. These two hermeneutic positions, however, are not incompatible. They are, rather, mutually complementary. And I think E. D. Hirsch, Jr. has justified this claim by postulating the distinction between the idea of *meaning* and that of *significance*.

According to Hirsch, "*meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable."³ Thus, to leap into Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle is to explore the "meaning" of a text while to plunge into Heidegger's is to investigate a textual "significance."

However, Hirsch's position is often questioned. The reader-oriented critics such as Stanley Fish, for instance, will doubt that there is any invariable authorial meaning going with the text. For Fish, "the obviousness of the utterance's meaning is not a function of the values its words have in a linguistic system that is independent of context; rather, it is because the words are heard as already embedded in a context that they have a meaning that Hirsch can then cite as obvious."⁴ In his view of the instability of the text and the indeterminacy of textual meaning, Fish simply regards everything in the text – its grammar, meanings, formal units – as a product of "interpretative strategies" adopted by an "interpretative community."

I am not here to judge, once for all, which school of hermeneutics is correct. For me all theories are partially right and partially wrong, and that is why disputes can arise among them. To be sure, to theorize is itself to interpret. And to interpret is to set in motion a "circle of textualization" which comprises two basic human activities: namely, reading and writing. This argument of mine needs further explication, of course. But after my explication I believe such hermeneutic problems as the meaning of "meaning" and the indeterminacy of meaning will be clarified. For me, we human beings (and all those things which can be said to have consciousness) are forever interpreting: we begin to interpret the moment we cry at birth, and keep interpreting our environment (context) until we die. Each time we are in contact with anything, our senses will turn the perceived object into an image, and the image will then be sent to our mind to be kept and processed there in various ways and turned into our feelings or ideas, giving rise at the same time to our reaction to the perception. Now, as to perceive is to internalize images of external objects, it is similar to the activity of reading. For to read is also to internalize an external object. It is only that reading always involves a particular human language, but perception does not. However, we can think this way: in perceiving things we are using a primary language, that is, our intuition, with which God has endowed every one of us; whereas in reading a written work we are using a secondary language, which our culture obliges us to learn. In other words, what we normally call "reading" is but a secondary interpretation while perception is a primary one. To read a book, for example, is to perceive the book first (interpreting its "natural code," i.e., page texture in terms of color, shape, etc.) and then to read it (interpreting its contained linguistic code).

But perception or reading is only the beginning of interpretation. The entire process of an interpretation always ends with a sort of reaction. To perceive a fire, for instance, may cause the perceiver to utter "Fire!" or go

and get some water to extinguish it. Now, to utter a word or to perform a deed is to externalize a feeling or idea (an internal text) which comes from perception or reading. Since writing is similarly an act of externalizing feelings or ideas, we may well suggest that writing is a particular kind of reaction.

Indeed, if we regard every physical object as an external text and every mental object as an internal text, and if we consider every internalizing act as reading and every externalizing act as writing, then we will reach the conclusion that as long as one lives, one is "reading" and "writing" every minute. To perceive external texts (including God's texts like mountain, water, tree, insect, etc., and man's texts like building, furniture, road, book, etc.) is to "read" them, and to react in consequence of the perception by expressing one's internal texts (feelings or ideas about the perceived external texts) is to "write" them. This thinking naturally presupposes that all natural objects are signs of God's language, just as all artificial objects are signs of man's language.

It follows, therefore, that as the world is full of God's texts and man's texts, every conscious mind is forever interpreting them by a never-ending repetition of reading and writing, that is, constantly internalizing them and then externalizing them again and again. To live is to experience. To experience is to interpret. To interpret is to perceive and react, or simply to read and write. A writer is just someone who leads a particular life, who spends much of his time reading both God's texts and man's texts and then creating his own texts by employing human language to externalize his experience of life. A person may never write anything in a conventional language such as English, French, or Chinese. Nevertheless, the moment he is walking or doing anything else, he is "writing" in his own personal language, thus expressing his own style of life.

Indeed, we are every one of us a "reader" and "writer" at every

moment. It is only that at a particular moment we may be "reading" not an ordinary book or text but something which we usually do not regard as a book or text (a natural object – a tree, for example), nor may we be "writing" an ordinary book or text but something which we seldom call so (an artificial but nonlinguistic work – a table, for example). But all the same. No matter whether it is an ordinary book (text) or not, "reading" is the beginning of an interpretation and "writing" is the end. As long as we live, we are engaged in an endless circle of interpretation: we "read" and "write," "read" and "write," "read" and "write," ... all the time. That is, we never cease to internalize God's or man's texts and then externalize them again and again. We are, in a word, forever existing in a "circle of textualization," forever changing external texts into internal ones and vice versa.

There is no writer but has read something. A rude pot and kettle mender like John Bunyan might really be able to produce one of the three greatest allegories of the world's literature "without learning or literary example" except the Authorized Version of the Bible.⁵ Yet, he had "read" much of his world, in addition to what his meager "school education" had provided him with. When a romantic poet turns to "the Book of Nature," he is not just finding consolation in it but also reading or interpreting it. Surely, a classical writer may be better versed in his predecessors' works than a romantic writer while the latter may be better "versed in the country things" than the former; yet, both types of writers must of necessity have read both God's and man's texts in order to write in man's conventional language. Wordsworth, for instance, had read Pope and other writers before he could compose his romantic poems preaching the gospel of "wise passiveness": "One impulse from a vernal wood/May teach you more of man;/Of moral evil and of good,/Than all the sages can."⁶

Emerson has a wise dictum: "We are symbols, and inhabit symbols." To regard the whole universe as a Great Text created by God is to regard

all objects therein as symbols and presuppose that such symbols, together with their ever-changing ways of combination, constitute the Divine Language of God (or gods, if you like). Thus, every literary man is a user of at least two languages: he uses God's language (let us call it the language of nature) to "read" and "write" sensually and intuitively, and uses man's language (the language of culture) to read and write intellectually.

Now, what we normally call a writer is someone who has an intensive use for man's language or the language of culture. A poet, a novelist, a playwright, or an essayist is such a person. But there are other people who also read and write very much in man's language of culture although as a rule they are not called "writers." A critic who reads a literary work and then writes a critical essay, or a reviewer who writes a book review, for instance, is not a "writer" in the usual sense of the word; but like a writer he certainly makes an intensive use of his acquired language of culture. Likewise, when a translator translates or when an editor edits a work, it is again primarily a business of using man's conventional linguistic systems.

To use any linguistic system seriously is always to interpret something. An English writer (poet, novelist, essayist or playwright) may use English to interpret his world or his life experience by writing a text. A critic, reviewer, translator, or editor may in turn use his own language to interpret the English writer's text. To "interpret" means here a variety of intellectual activities, of course. It includes the act of criticizing, commenting, evaluating, judging, explaining, explicating, etc. And to be sure, we may easily accept a piece of criticism or a review as the result of the critic's or reviewer's interpretation of the text he has read. But many may not so easily accept a translation or edition of some work as the result of the translator's or editor's interpretation of that work. Yet, if we are willing to consider the matter thoroughly, we must admit that no translator can translate, nor can any editor edit, anything without first making a critical reading (i.e., inter-

pretation) of his target text. A translation or an edition is, doubtless, an implicit interpretation.

Recently G. Thomas Tanselle has argued convincingly that a textual scholar's effort is a critical effort. He says, "any text that a textual critic produces is itself the product of literary criticism, reflecting a particular aesthetic position and thus a particular approach to what textual 'correctness' consists of."⁷ If we wish to push the matter a bit further, indeed, even a printer or a publisher is also an interpreter of texts. A printer's concern is of course about the way of printing texts while a publisher's is about the commercial, educational, or political values of texts. But when a printer decides to print a text in a particular way, is the decision not made on the basis of his understanding and interpretation of the text? Likewise, when a publisher decides to publish a book, he must already have a sort of understanding or interpretation of the book, too. Certainly, a printer or publisher may not bother to read carefully in person the text to be printed and published; he may gain his understanding or interpretation of the text from someone else (e.g., an editorial board or a literary agent). Nevertheless, no one can deny that he has, to a certain degree, his own interpretation of the text after he reads it himself or hears about it from others.

In this connection, we may note in passing that like any ordinary reader, a minstrel is an interpreter of literary texts, too. When a scop moved from court to court reciting his versions of *Beowulf* or other epic stories, was he not interpreting the texts he had in mind? Similarly, when a scanner scans a poem, he is (much like a musician playing or directing music) also interpreting the poem's text.

In his "The Discourse on Language," Michel Foucault distinguishes between two categories of discourse: "There is no question of there being one category, fixed for all time, reserved for fundamental or creative discourse, another for those which reiterate, expound and comment."⁸ For

him, "a single work of literature can give rise, simultaneously, to several distinct types of discourse." "The *Odyssey*, as a primary text," for example, "is repeated in the same epoch, in Berand's translation, in infinite textual explanations and in Joyce's *Ulysses*."⁹ Here Foucault says as much as that the writer's text is the primary text, and it is the "fundamental or creative discourse," while the translator's, critic's, reviewer's, editor's, and all other readers' texts are secondary texts insofar as they are based on, related to, or influenced by, the writer's primary, creative text.

Basically, I think, Foucault is right in making this distinction. However, I must point out two inadequacies connected with this distinction. First, it is hardly all satisfactory to impute creativeness wholly to the writer's text, suggesting that the translator's or critic's or any other reader's text is not creative in nature. As we know, Matthew Arnold has already told us that criticism is not to be denied its "sense of creative activity": "it may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity; a sense which a man of insight and conscience will prefer to what he might derive from a poor, starved, fragmentary, inadequate creation."¹⁰ Today, in fact, many have agreed that no criticism is without creativeness even though the degree of its creativeness may not be as great as that of a "creative work."

For me, a piece of criticism and a "creative work" differ actually not in their degrees but in their kinds of creativeness. A piece of criticism, it is true, is explicitly and chiefly derived from a criticized work. I say "explicitly" because one can see clearly, for instance, that Erich Auerbach's "Odysseus' Scar" stems from the reading of Homer's epic.¹¹ And I say "chiefly" because one can also understand that Auerbach, to use the same example, does not base his criticism of the epic entirely on his reading of it: he has in truth read other things (e.g., the Bible) and based his idea not only on his readings but also on his common sense which originates largely from other life experiences. Anyway, whereas we admit a piece of criticism is

explicitly and chiefly derived from a criticized work, there is no guarantee that the criticized work is therefore more creative than the critical work. For all the originality imputed to Homer, we must grant that Auerbach is original and creative, too, in writing that famous essay. For me, indeed, a piece of criticism and a "creative work" are equally creative in the sense that both are similarly the result of readings – readings of literature and "readings" of life. It is only that the former is conspicuously grounded on the latter in most cases. (There are indeed exceptional cases. For example, criticism of criticism is possible. And how about criticism of a translation of a "creative work"?)

In fact, we have really become accustomed to the idea that criticism is also creative in nature. Meanwhile, however, we seem not to have noted duly that creative writing is also critical writing. When an author parodies another author, a literary tradition, or a particular style (e.g., Aristophanes parodies Aeschylus and Euripides in *Frogs*, Cervantes parodies the whole tradition of medieval romances in *Don Quixote*, and Shakespeare parodies John Lyly's euphuism in *Henry IV*, Pt. I), is he not obviously critical of what he is parodying? By the same token, when an author writes "under the influence of" another author, a literary movement, or a literary school (e.g., Milton under the influence of Virgil, William Morris under the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism, and T. S. Eliot under the influence of the Metaphysicals), is he not also critical in the sense that he either accepts or rejects certain elements of that influence? And, furthermore, when any writer writes of anything on the basis of his experience, is he not critical of that thing or that experience? Indeed, whatever we do, we are criticizing in a broad sense.

After considering the closeness between creative writing and critical writing, we are next in a position to relate translation to both types of writing. In the Preface to his *Ovid*, John Dryden distinguishes three grades of

translation thus:

First, that of metaphrase, or turning an author word by word, and line by line, from one language into another. ... The second way is that of paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered. ... The third way is that of imitation, where the translator (if now he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the groundwork, as he pleases.¹²

Now, is the third way of translation as expounded here far different from creative or critical writing? By no means. In effect, every instance of translation is as much the result of reading or interpreting some other text as the act of creative or critical writing. And if we are willing to broaden the sense of "translation," we might claim, too, that to paint a picture, to compose a piece of music, or even to build a house is a sort of creative and critical "translation" — all these activities, like any other activity, necessarily "translate" ideas (internal texts) into concrete works (external texts). Thus, to live is to create, to criticize, and to translate.

But in creating, criticizing, and translating, we are also editing if by "editing" we simply mean the action of altering, adapting, and refining. And, conversely, since to edit is to alter, adapt and refine, we cannot but admit that it is, to a high degree, creative and critical by nature; and somewhat translative, too.

Thus far, in criticizing Foucault's distinction between the fundamental, creative discourse and the derivative, commentary discourse, I have tried to make it clear that in truth there is no big difference between them. To my mind, the writer's text, the critic's, the reviewer's, the translator's, the editor's, the printer's, the publisher's, or indeed everyone's text is at once creative, critical, commentary, translative, editorial, evaluative, and interpretative. They are all immersed in the hermeneutic circle or the "circle of textualization." They all involve the two basic human activities: reading and writing, or the internalizing and externalizing of texts.

After we understand this, it becomes apparent that there is no sense in claiming, as Foucault does, the writer's text to be primary and considering every reader's as secondary. In point of fact, everyone's text can be primary or secondary, depending on whether it serves as the original or comes as the derivative. When *Odyssey* is criticized, translated, reviewed, edited, recited, printed, or published, it is primary because it is now the original in people's minds. But, as Edward Young has pointed out, Homer is only an "accidental original." There is every reason to believe that *Odyssey* must have been modeled on some earlier works, like any other masterpiece in the world. If it had not imitated any known work, it must, at least, have imitated life or nature, which, as we have repeatedly emphasized, is full of God's texts and man's texts. In this sense, then, we can say this epic of Homer's is also derived from other texts and therefore can be called secondary, like a critical essay or translation of the work.

Personally I feel a large quantity of the so-called modern or postmodern work owes its birth to the development of critical theory. Now, suppose a creative work is really created out of a critical essay, can we still call the creative work primary and the critical essay secondary? For example, we know Bertolt Brecht's many plays belong definitely to the genre of "epic theater." And it is certified that the name as well as the idea of "epic

theater" comes from a famous essay "On Epic and Dramatic Poetry" by Goethe and Schiller.¹³ Given this situation, can we say *Mother Courage and Her Children* is the primary text while "On Epic and Dramatic Poetry" is the secondary?

Many of our contemporary French critics have been persistent in underscoring the point that there is no origin for texts. The truth is: every text has its origin in some other text or texts. It is only that the origin is not often immediately identifiable. Foucault himself says that a primary text will allow us to create new discourse ad infinitum.¹⁴ Now I add that anyone's text can be the primary text.

Yet, logically speaking, there is a linear pattern among the kinds of texts we have discussed. In the process of publishing a literary text, for instance, we first have the writer's text, which may then be edited and printed before it is published. Normally, after the writer's text is published, we then have the translator's or critic's text, which may also be edited and printed before it is published. But the translator's or critic's text can be again translated or criticized. It can also be so read by a creative writer that a new creative work results from it. Now, the creative work or translation or criticism originated from any other creative work or translation or criticism is forever capable of being read and interpreted for creating yet new creative or translative or critical texts. Therefore, to trace the true history of a single text – be it creative, critical or translative – is often to betray a very long and very complicated line of intertextual relationships. A biographer of an author, as so many biographies can bear testimony, is often one who sees only some obvious relationships among texts concerned. Take T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* for example. How many texts have "influenced" (i.e., helped to make possible) this modern text? Only the works alluded to? I think all previous texts of the world – not just the Western literary tradition – have either closely or remotely "influenced" it. One

may not say our Four Books have directly inspired Eliot into writing the poem. Yet, can we not say that our Four Books have indirectly and remotely affected Eliot since they do affect Western thinking in some way?

I am not here to trace any line of intertextual relationships. My point is: what we call intertextuality is in fact a very complicated network of textualization. As Paul Ricoeur conceives it, each text is indeed free to enter into relation with all the other texts.¹⁵ And as Julius Kristeva and others conceive it, each text is indeed like a mosaic work, or a series of quotations.¹⁶

But no matter how complicated the pattern of an intertextual relationship may be, it is forever the relationship of alternation between internal and external texts, or between reading and writing, which makes what I call the "circle of textualization." And it is this phenomenon of alternation that ushers in the moot issues of textual meaning and textual indeterminacy.

To talk about the problem of textual meaning, we must first acknowledge that meaning is always a mental entity, and as such it cannot but exist in someone or other's mind, although we often tend to believe it is embedded in physical objects. In other words, meaning is but a sort of internal text, which is never identical with the external text, though representable by it. Now, who can claim to have the authority to decide the meaning of a literary text? This question easily brings us to the consideration of the "intentional fallacy."

As we know, "the intentional fallacy" was a term popularized by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley.¹⁷ From the two critics' biographical data, we know they are posing as "New Critics" when they attack the fallacy in an essay with the very term as its title. They are, in fact, advocating the "objective theory" that a literary text has an independent public existence. Consequently, they are encouraging "intrinsic studies," while discouraging "extrinsic studies," of literature by replacing the Romantic system of values

(covering the ideas of sincerity, fidelity, spontaneity, authenticity, genuineness, originality, etc.) with the scientific one (integrity, relevance, unity, function, maturity, subtlety, adequacy, etc.). They simply dispute the Romantic view of the author as an important source of meaning for texts.

We know Wimsatt and Beardsley attack not only "the intentional fallacy" but also "the affective fallacy." For them, the reader's impressions and the author's are equally unreliable as the standard for determining textual meanings. This New Critical stance, I think, is basically sound and firm in that it stresses the priority of the work as the basis of critical judgment. No one, I believe, would deny that one's reading of "To His Coy Mistress" should be done first and foremost on the text itself, and Andrew Marvell's politics, religion, and career as well as the responses or reactions of other readers to the work can only serve as an accessory guide to one's interpretation. However, art does not exist in a vacuum. Any artifact is created by someone at some time in history, and it is received by certain people at certain times, too. Hence, if it has any meaning at all, it cannot but be connected with the creator or receiver's mentality.

In my mind a literary text is hardly separable from the intention of the author who creates it, nor from the intention of the reader who reads it. It is only when a work is viewed as a pure physical text, a mere construct of black spots with blanks on paper entirely detached from author and audience alike, that we can say it has an "impersonal" or "objective" existence. Otherwise, we must admit that the work, the author, and the reader are a trinity, bound each to each with a common "intention"; therefore, no critical effort can manage to separate them without committing a sort of "intentional fallacy," and to assert the absolute authority of any one of them is impractical if not impossible.

This idea of mine bears largely on the meaning of the word "intention."¹⁸ I think we must first understand that any object (i.e., any external

text) that comes into one's mind is an intended object. If a perceived object has any meaning at all, the meaning is never intentionless.¹⁹ Actually, to intend is to "in-tend," that is, to turn an external text into an internal text by our mental activity (which is no other than the act of "reading"). Before an author writes a text, he usually has to "intend" a lot of things. (In our common language, we say he has to have a lot of life experience.) The things he "intends" include such natural objects as mountains, waters, flora and fauna, and such man-made objects as practical inventions, devices, and artifacts. After he "intends" these objects for some time, some developed "intentions" will then arise in his mind to direct his outward action. (The developed "intentions" are commonly called "ideas.") If he is an ordinary man, the "intentions" may cause him to live an ordinary man's life. If, however, he is a wit (in the neoclassical sense) or a genius (in the romantic sense), his "intentions" may lead him to create artistic works. When creating an artistic work, he is then an "author" in the usual sense of the word. Now, in the process of artistic creation, he is in fact turning his "intentions" (internal texts) again into an external object (text) by the use of his tool (and language is a writer's tool). If we can coin the word "extention" as the antonym of "intention" and make it mean the external object or text resulting from externalizing one's "intention," then we can hold that to read is to "in-tend," to form "intentions" in the mental world while to write is to "ex-tend," to form "extentions" in the physical world.

It follows then that our most important problems are whether or not an author's "intention" (internal text) is identical with his "extention" (external text), and whether or not the author's "extention" is identical with his reader's "intention" of it. As we know, in the long past very few critics ever doubted the identity of an author's "intention" with his "extention." That is why people could comfortably resort to studies of authors' lives and freely connect their discovered authorial intentions with works, thus committing the

so-called "intentional fallacy." After the Anglo-American New Criticism, however, people seem to become gradually aware of the discrepancy between an author's "intention" and his "extention." In Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature*, for instance, it is said that

"Intentions" of the author are always "rationalizations," commentaries which certainly must be taken into account but also must be criticized in the light of the finished work of art. The "intentions" of an author may go far beyond the finished work of art: they may be merely pronouncements of plans and ideals, while the performance may be either far below or far aside the mark. If we could have interviewed Shakespeare he probably would have expressed his intentions in writing *Hamlet* in a way which we should find most unsatisfactory. We would still quite rightly insist on finding meanings in *Hamlet* (and not merely inventing them) which were probably far from clearly formulated in Shakespeare's conscious mind.²⁰

What Wellek and Warren mean by "intentions" here does not much accord, of course, with my definition. Nevertheless, the above quotation makes it clear that they do think an author's "extention" can become very different from his "intention." And I think they are right in suggesting that. For a work certainly can be either above or below or even far aside the mark because of conscious or unconscious factors on the part of the author. Consequently, the New Critics have reason to warn us not to rely on the author's expressed intentions for judgment of his work.

I think the discrepancy between "intention" and "extention" can be best clarified with the idea of *differance*. As we know, when Jacques Derrida

coined the word, he was playing on two meanings of the French word *differer* : difference – between signs as the basis of signification, and deferment – of presence by the sign which always refers to another sign, not to the thing itself.²¹ Now we can say an author's "extention" (i.e., external text) is a version (or copy, or transcription, or expression, or code, or record, or embodiment, or whatever else one thinks fit to use) of his "intention" (i.e., internal text). Between these two terms, there is also a semiotic relationship: the author's "extention" is the signifier and his "intention" is the signified. So according to the Derridean idea of *differance*, there is always difference between an author's "extention" and his "intention," though the difference may be hard to specify.

As a matter of fact, an author's entire creative process includes both the stage of reading and the stage of writing. No one can write anything without reading something. And for an author, to read is to "read" life, which includes the experience of reading books and other experiences. When an author "reads," he is building up his "intention" (internal text); when he writes, he is then turning his "intention" into "extention" (external text), which as an external entity can be further read by others, whom we call readers. If one of the readers becomes a critic, that is, becomes one who expresses his idea in oral or written language about an author's work, then he will indeed undergo the process of turning his own "intention" of the author's "extention" into his own "extention," which is again readable by others. (Critics' criticism can be criticized again just as a translation can serve as the basis for another translation.) Thus, if we think of the universe as a composite of things each of which is a text, then the universe is full of texts which are created, that is, "read" and "written" all the time by various authors including God and man. When we make "textual analysis," we are interpreting, which often involves "the hermeneutic circle" or "circle of textualization" because we are repeatedly beginning with "reading" and ending

with "writing." Yet, in this hermeneutico-semiotic system, no single "reading" ("intention") or "writing" ("extention") has an absolute determinate "presence," though it is always supplementarily present in one form or another in the mental or physical world. The definite "meaning" we seek in any text is always deferred by the alternate acts of "reading" and "writing," or by the constant interchange between "intention" and "extention." If we understand this, can we accuse any reader of having "the intentional fallacy"? Can we say someone has a wrong idea when we know no idea, be it the reader's or the author's, ever exists as absolute truth or determinate presence?

We may recall now that E. D. Hirsch, Jr., maintains that it is impossible to have any objective interpretation unless meaning itself is unchanging.²² And for him the one underlying meaning of the text which does not change is the author's willed meaning, that is, his intention. For he believes that the meaning of a text "is determined once and for all by the character of the speaker's intention."²³ If Hirsch's position is correct, then any mode of reading is but a way of approaching the authorial intention; any study of the text, be it intrinsic or extrinsic, is but an attempt to reconstruct the unchanging intention of the author. Thus, the "intentional fallacy" as the Anglo-American New Critics conceive it is out of the question with Hirsch.

Hirsch's position has been devastatingly criticized by David Couzens Hoy. In the latter's *The Critical Circle*, Hirsch is said to have committed the Cinderella fallacy (a fallacy which grows out of the dogmatic belief that if we think a thing must be there, then it is in fact there, even if it can never be seen), because he "begins by noting that there cannot be reproducibility without determinate meaning and goes on to assert that since there is reproducibility, it follows that there must be determinate meaning."²⁴ I agree that Hirsch has committed the Cinderella fallacy in doing that logical reasoning. Nevertheless, I still think Hirsch is right in postulating the idea of a determi-

nate meaning which is tied up closely with the authorial intention. Although it is theoretically true that there is no dependable glass slipper we can see as a test, since the old slipper will no longer fit the new Cinderella, yet we can suppose that a short lapse of time should not bring about change appreciable enough in Cinderella's feet to render impossible our recognition of the true girl. Paradoxically, our senses are not keen enough to perceive any minute change in objects so as to hinder seriously our sense of identity. Theoretically, the idea of *differance* is right: the author's "intention" is never identical with his "extention," and his "extention" is never identical with the reader's "intention" of it. Yet, in practice the author often so succeeds in making his "extention" accord with his "intention" that we can say what a text means and what its author intends it to mean are "the same." And the reader often so succeeds in "in-tending" the author's "extention" that he can feel his "intention" of it is equivalent to, if not identical with, the author's "intention." Theoretically, it is true that every interpretation is a misinterpretation.²⁵ Yet, in practice the majority of interpreters believe they have made the right interpretations and their belief as such is often justifiable in terms of our common understanding or consensus. The truth is: understanding literature is like understanding life: no one can claim his understanding is the only true understanding, but all can agree on an understanding as the valid understanding within a certain space and time. In other words, reading (and writing as well) is a social behavior. And any social behavior is a matter of common agreement, not a matter of scientific truth.

Mention can be made here of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The play, as we know, is a vivid presentation of a relativist theme: the difficulty of presenting "truth." The six characters' reality of life is incapable of being staged satisfactorily after they have found the author. But why? Because the characters feel that as soon as the actors begin to act their story, the cheap conventions of the stage have intruded

and their "truth" is distorted (reality becomes artificiality). Judging from this response, we know the characters' "intention" is not well understood by the author. But whose fault is it? I say nobody's. For there is unavoidably some disparity between the characters' "intention" (their idea about their family tragedy) and their "extention" (their verbal description of their tragedy), and so is there between the actor's "intention" (idea about the characters' tragedy) and their "extention" (their presentation of the tragedy). That is to say, the "truth" or "reality" contained in the characters' internal text is thrice distorted in the alternation of intentions and extentions, which finally becomes the actors' stage presentation.

Since a gap always exists between one's "intention" (internal text) and "extention" (external text), and between one's "extention" and another's "intention" of it, it is no wonder that many people feel it difficult to express themselves at times, and still more people feel it impossible to make themselves understood. Facing this situation, shall we give up any hope of communication, then?

A serious writer will answer No to the question. He may understand that every reading is a misreading, every writing a miswriting, every understanding a misunderstanding, every interpretation a misinterpretation, etc. Yet, he knows, too, that communication is not for complete or perfect understanding. In the course of reading, writing, or interpretation, we can always give heed to some determinate, shared meaning rather than to the indeterminate, unshared sense. The hermeneutic circle or the circle of textualization is built on the basis of sameness rather than difference. That is why even Stanley Fish, who is one of the "New Readers" M. H. Abrams accused of being apostles of indeterminacy and undecidability, concedes that "communication does occur, despite the absence of an independent and context-free system of meanings."²⁶

But how on earth does communication take effect in the realm of litera-

ture? This bears largely on the problem of the nature of reading. And regarding this problem many modern reader-oriented critics have their own opinions. Roman Ingarden, for instance, presumes that literary works form organic wholes, but every text is readily equipped with its indeterminacies, and therefore it is the reader's function to concretize the text correctly by rendering it internally consistent. Similarly, Wolfgang Iser suggests that the reader's journey through the text is a continuous process of adjusting his viewpoints based on his formerly expected textual meanings, and besides such adjustments to read is to actualize the text by filling up the "blanks" or "gaps" (of meaning) necessarily existing in it. Somewhat different from Ingarden and Iser, Hans Robert Jauss uses the term "horizon of expectations" to describe the process of reading literary texts in a given period. For him, each text has its original "horizon of expectations," which tells us how it was valued and interpreted at its first appearance. When it is read later, however, the horizon is always already changed, and so (following Gadamer's argument that all interpretations of past literature arise from a dialogue between past and present) Jauss views the reader's understanding as a "fusion" of past and present horizons.²⁷

Interpretations of the process and nature of reading do vary among critics. But all critics seem to agree that the actual reader can in fact carry on two types of reading. Ingarden, for example, distinguishes "ordinary, purely passive (receptive) reading" from "active reading." He grants that every reading is an activity consciously undertaken by the reader and not a mere experience or reception of something. Nevertheless, he asserts that in many cases "the whole effort of the reader consists in thinking the meanings of the sentences he reads without making the meanings into objects and in remaining, so to speak, in the sphere of meaning." Thus, this purely passive manner of reading is mechanical in the sense that the reader "is occupied with the realization of the sentence meaning itself and does not absorb the

meaning in such a way that one can transpose oneself by means of it into the world of the objects in a work." By contrast, in "active" reading one not only understands the sentence meanings but also apprehends their objects and has a sort of intercourse with them. In other words, when a literary text is read actively, "we think with a peculiar originality and activity the meaning of the sentences we have read; we project ourselves in a cocreative attitude into the realm of the objects determined by the sentence meanings."²⁸

Ingarden's distinction is close to Roland Barthes's. According to Barthes, there are readings "which are mere acts of consumption: precisely the ones in which the 'significance' is censored all the way along." "Full reading," he continues, "is the kind in which the reader is nothing less than the one who desires to write, to give himself up to an erotic practice of language."²⁹ This distinction of Barthes's is fully appreciated by Mary Bittner Wiseman, who, in echoing Barthes's (and also Julius Kristeva's) idea, says: "What is ordinarily called reading is often passively consuming worlds and voices presented by culture and author; it is merely a kind of looking and listening. The other sort of reading is operating a text, speaking to it as to the other as instigator, as Kristeva says."³⁰

But closer to the real process of reading is Michael Riffaterre's distinction between heuristic reading and retroactive reading. According to Riffaterre, each reading act comprises two stages of interpretation. The reader first performs a sort of heuristic reading, during which textual meaning is apprehended through the reader's linguistic competence and literary competence. After that, the reader performs a sort of retroactive reading:

As he progresses through the text, the reader remembers what he has just read and modifies his understanding of it in the light of what he is now decoding. As he works forward from start to finish, he is reviewing, revising, comparing

backwards. He is in effect performing a structural decoding: as he moves through the text he comes to recognize, by dint of comparisons or simply because he is now able to put them together, that successive and differing statements, first noticed as mere ungrammaticalities are in fact equivalent, for they now appear as variants of the same structural matrix.³¹

Propounding a "transactional theory" of the literary work, Louise M. Rosenblatt believes that the same text can be read either efferently or aesthetically. In efferent reading "the primary concern of the reader is with what he will carry away from the reading," while in aesthetic reading "the reader's primary concern is with what happens during the actual reading event." Adopting the first stance, therefore, the reader "disengages his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response to the verbal symbols; he concentrates on what the symbols designate, what they may be contributing to the end result that he seeks – the information, the concepts, the guides to action, that will be left with him when the reading is over." In contrast, the second stance will permit the whole range of reading responses generated by the text to enter into the reader's center of awareness, and out of these materials he will then select and weave what he sees as the literary work of art.³² Needless to say, Rosenblatt's two stances of reading are parallel in a way to all the other dichotomies just mentioned above.

In fact, all the dichotomies of reading so far covered can be related to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic distinction between two aspects of the act of understanding: speech is to be understood, first, as something carved out of language and, second, as a fact about a thinking subject. The first aspect, as Peter Szondi explains, is the study of speech in its relationship to the whole language; it thus employs the grammatical interpretation based on

factual knowledge of language and history. The other aspect is the study of speech in its relationship to the mental process of an author; hence, it employs the psychological interpretation (Schleiermacher also calls it "technical" interpretation), based on empathy or psychological identification with the author on the part of the reader.³³

But Schleiermacher's "psychological" interpretation has played down the active, productive, retroactive, operating, or aesthetic element involved in the course of reading. For it does not take into account the fact most modern critics are never tired of repeating: Reading actually refers to two "semiotic" (to use Robert Hodge's preferred term) acts – "one an act of interpretation that attempts to reconstruct the original act of production, the other a piece of writing which incorporates the text-as-read into a new text."³⁴ In other words, Schleiermacher has indeed overlooked the creative quality contained in the act of reading.

Yet, creative or not, reading is always based on an external text, which is always part of a larger context or always an intertext to other texts. In consequence, reading can be focused mainly on the text itself or on its relationship with other texts; that is, on its own textual meaning or on its contextual or intertextual meaning. Paul Ricoeur calls these two different targets of reading explanation and interpretation:

We can, as readers, remain in the suspense of the text, treating it as a worldless and authorless object; in this case, we explain the text in terms of its internal relations, its structure. On the other hand, we can lift the suspense and fulfill the text in speech, restoring it to living communication; in this case, we *interpret* the text. These two possibilities both belong to reading, and reading is the dialectic of these two attitudes.³⁵ (*italics mine*)

This dichotomy of reading is somewhat similar to Szondi's division between grammatical and psychological readings, to be sure. But I think it is even more closely related to David Birch's classification of "relevance." According to Birch,

"Relevance is determined for the most part in two ways: the first way looks at a number of rules of relevance that apply internally in a text, that is, the function and context of the text are not considered; I'll call this "text-in-itself relevance."

The second way is the exact opposite: the text is considered as part of a much larger field of discourse and its relevance depends on social/historical institutions; I'll call this "institutional relevance."³⁶

These two types of "relevance" are in effect no other than what Hirsch calls meaning and significance, or what Ricoeur calls sense and meaning.

It is clear now that the passive, consumptive, grammatical, heuristic, or efferent reading tends more toward internal relevance or explanation to get at the text's relatively more stable semantic component which Hirsch calls meaning but Ricoeur calls sense, whereas the active, productive, psychological, retroactive, or aesthetic reading tends more toward institutional relevance or interpretation to get at the text's relatively more indeterminate semantic component which Hirsch calls significance but Ricoeur calls meaning. Now, is there any actual reading which belongs purely to one or the other class of reading? Certainly not. Every actual reading is understandably a combination of both. But owing to the reader's personal or situational differences, a particular instance of reading can be more characteristic of one or the other type.

If every reading is actually both passive and active, efferent and

aesthetic, explanatory and interpretive, etc., we can conclude that it is more or less creative at any time it occurs. This creative quality in reading is best explained by Rosenblatt:

Through the medium of words, the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text.³⁷

This creative reading is indeed an interaction (or transaction, as Rosenblatt prefers it) between the text and the reader. And its result is: the reader forms an internal text (i.e., idea) from such an interaction. No wonder one can assert that "each time a reader reads a text, a new text is created."³⁸ And Ricoeur can hold thus: "To read is, on any hypothesis, to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text. This conjunction of discourses reveals, in the very constitution of the text, an original capacity for renewal which is its open character. Interpretation is the concrete outcome of conjunction and renewal."³⁹

We know Barthes is all for the "writerly text" and against the "readerly text," because the former, he believes, leaves more room for the reader to create his own text in reading it. In reality, Barthes's theory of the text

does not only "extend to infinity the freedoms of reading (authorizing us to read works of the past with an entirely modern gaze, so that it is legitimate, for example, to read Sophocles' 'Oedipus' by pouring Freud's Oedipus back into it, or to read Flaubert on the basis of Proust), but it also insists strongly on the (productive) equivalence of writing and reading."⁴⁰

In view of its similarly creative or productive quality, reading can indeed be equated with writing. It is only that reading is creative at the stage of internalizing an external text, while writing is creative at the stage of externalizing an internal text; the former produces an internal text, the latter an external one. And indeed, one can never be sure which comes first in the "circle of textualization," reading or writing? Just as we can never be certain which comes first, the egg or the chicken? It is only that in the hermeneutic process, we normally take reading for the beginning, and writing for the end, of a particular interpretation. Thus, a critic begins his criticizing in reading a text and ends it in writing a critical essay.

Now, both reading and writing (in their usual sense) are linguistic acts. They cannot do without language. What, then, is the role played by language in the circle of textualization? In his *Language, Truth and Poetry*, Graham Dunstan Martin convincingly argues that the semiotic triangle made up of word, concept and referent should be replaced by the rectangle with word-form, word-image, concept, and referent as its four sides (see figure 1 below):

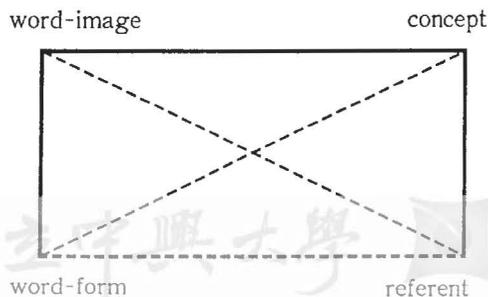


figure 1
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In the act of reading, to use this figure, we first have contact with the word-form (the word as we hear it pronounced or see it written or printed in any particular instance), then turn it into the word-image (our mental apprehension of it, and assimilation of it to other similar sounds or shapes all interpreted as "the same"), and then connect it to the concept (the meaning or sense of the word) before realizing it in terms of the referent (the external object represented by the concept of the word-image of the word-form).⁴¹ In fact, in reading a written or printed text, we must change the written or printed form into the written or printed image of the word first, and then connect the visual image with the representing sound (auditory image) before we can connect it with the concept of the word. So in the seemingly simple act of reading a printed poem, we need to undergo a good series of linguistic changes in our mind before the poem as an external entity can be said to make sense (have connection with the outside world). Now, every linguistic change in our mind is really an interpretation, and the change can be creative in the sense that the mind does participate actively in the making of the word-image and the concept, as well as in the perception of the word-form and the referent. (Perception, by the way, also involves an active transaction between the perceiver and the object perceived – according to Ulric Neisser, a prominent cognitive psychologist.⁴²)

In the act of writing, as we can conceive it, the order of the linguistic changes is reversed, of course. The writer begins with the referent, forms his concept of it, turns it into a word-image, and finally actualizes it in a word-form. The changes, needless to say, are also textual changes (internal and external), which bring about new texts each time and therefore are productively creative, and hermeneutically interpretative.

But, as I have repeatedly emphasized, reading and writing need not be performed on linguistic texts only. As all objects can be regarded as texts, so can our ordinary perception and reaction to it be thought of as a sort of

"reading" and "writing." Hence, all men, including reader and writer, are "reading" and "writing" all the time so long as they live. That is to say, we actually never for a moment step out of the "circle of textualization," so long as we still keep our consciousness and thus are still able to interpret the galaxies of texts (God's and man's) that come within our sensual contact.

Recently, Linda Flower used a conceptual map to highlight certain features of reading and writing as constructive processes. The map is as Figure 2 printed below:⁴³

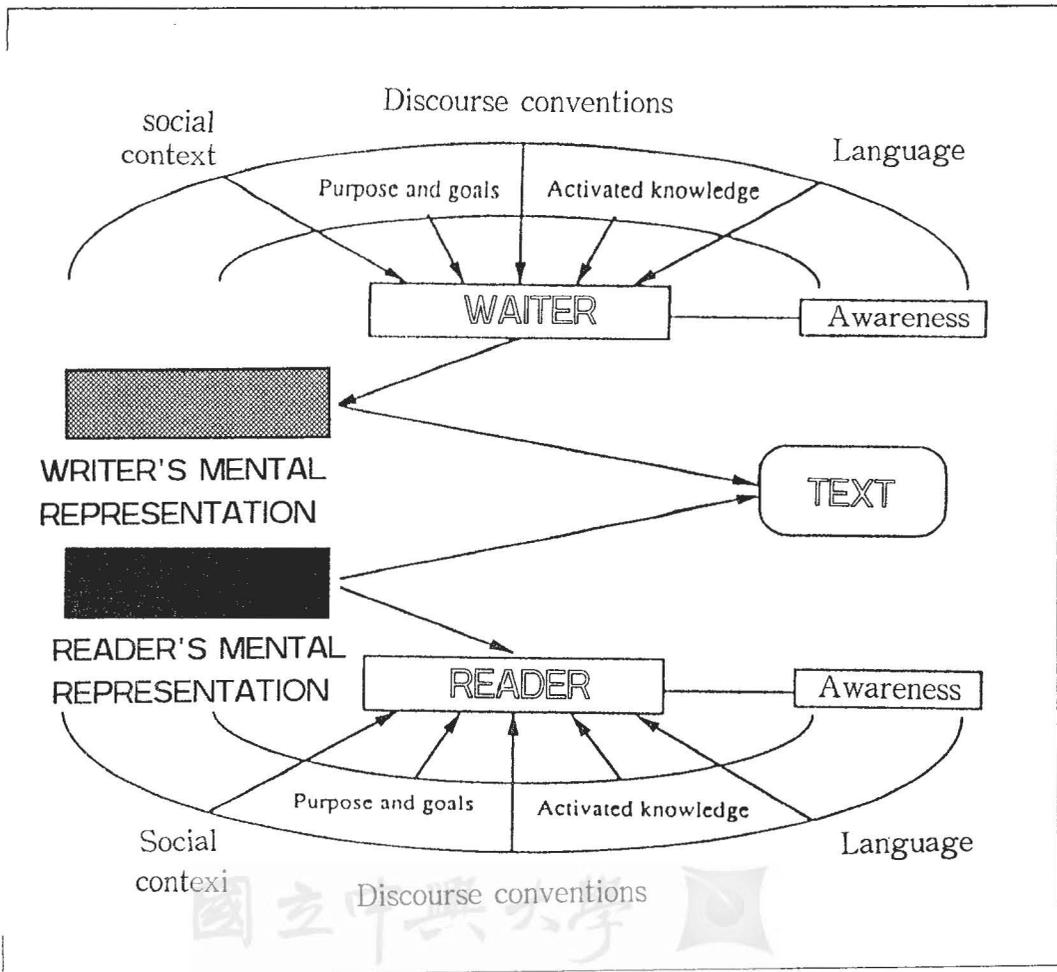


Figure 2 Key elements in discourse construction.

The above map shows that writing and reading are acted on by multiple forces: the outer circle in the figure denotes forces such as the social context, discourse conventions, and language, and the inner circle denotes the activated knowledge and purposes relevant to this particular act of reading or writing. The map also shows that writing and reading lead to the construction of mental representations of meaning – in the minds of reader and writer. But as it is explained, these internal representations (what I call *internal texts*) cannot be equated with the (external) text the writer writes down or the cues to meaning construction the reader perceives, or with any one reading of the text itself. However, we can think of these constructions as two related but different networks of information, which are not necessarily coded in words and sentences or even language (i.e., not necessarily linguistic texts). Instead, this knowledge may take the form of abstract propositions, code words and pointers to schemas, or even images (i.e., nonlinguistic texts). Moreover, these representations of meaning are likely to go well beyond the propositional content of a text and to include both a reader/writer's own web of intentions and those they impute to the other players in the discourse.⁴⁴ Thus, a certain "fallacy" is likely to occur when anyone inadvertently equates these representations of meaning (*internal texts*) with the propositional content of the (external) text, or with the reader/writer's own web of intentions, or with the intentions imputed to the other players in the discourse. The three kinds of fallacy are respectively the "objective fallacy," "intentional fallacy," and "affective fallacy," of course.

But to err is human. In our ceaseless life of interpretation, in the unending leap into "the hermeneutic circle," or in the perpetual engagement with "the circle of textualization," we really cannot avoid "reading" or "writing" inaccurately, because language is a medium and anything going through a medium is likely to be changed somehow, just as a ray of light is refracted, a sound is weakened, through the air or water. Perhaps we are

unwilling to acknowledge it, but it is true that what we call creation or production is as much the result of misinterpretation as that of correct interpretation. The circle of textualization, in a word, is the circle of indeterminate reading and writing of texts correctly and incorrectly, as the "New Readers" will gladly pronounce it to be.



Notes

1. This and the following information concerning the term is based on the explication of the 'entry "hermeneutics" in Karl Beckson & Arthur Ganz, *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*, 3rd edition, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989), and in Roger Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).
2. See David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1978), pp. 41-2.
3. *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven & London: Yale U. P., 1967), p. 8.
4. *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge MS.: Harvard U. P., 1980), p. 309.
5. See W. V. Moody & R. M. Lovett, *A History of English Literature*, revised 7th edition, pp. 169-71.
6. See his "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned."
7. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P., 1989), p. 35.
8. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, tr. by A. M. Sheridan Smith, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 220.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
10. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," in M. H. Abrams, et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 4th edition, vol. 2, p. 1423.
11. This famous essay is the first chapter of his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. by W. R. Trask, (Princeton U. P., 1953).

12. Quoted in William K. Wimsatt, Jr. & Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 216.
13. See Maynard Mack, et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, 4th edition, (New York: Norton, 1979), vol. 2, p. 1276.
14. "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 221.
15. "What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," in Vassilis Lambropoulos & David Miller, eds., *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 1987), p. 334.
16. See Owen Miller, "Intertextual Identity," in Mario J. Valdes & Owen Miller, eds., *Identity of the Literary Text* (Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 1985), p. 24.
17. They first published "The Intentional Fallacy" in 1946. The essay was later included in their *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington, Kentucky: U. of Kentucky P., 1954).
18. As will become clear below, I am here influenced by Franz Brentano's "intentional psychology," Alexius Meinong's theory of objects, and their subsequent phenomenologists.
19. Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels argue for this point in their "Against Theory." See W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Against Theory* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1985), pp. 11-30.
20. *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, 1949), p. 136.
21. See Roger Fowler, ed., *Modern Critical Terms*, p. 55. For Derrida's own discussion of the term, see his "Differance," tr. by Alan Bass, rpt. in Hazard Adams & Leroy Searle, eds., *Critical Theory Since 1965* (Tallahassee: Florida State U. P., 1986), pp. 120-30.
22. See his *Validity in Interpretation*, p. 214.

23. *Ibid.*
24. *The Critical Circle* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1978), p. 18.
25. This is an idea discussed in Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading*. But Bloom uses the word "misprision" instead of "misreading" or "misinterpretation." The notion is also discussed in Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight*.
26. *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p. 321.
27. See Raman Selden, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (Brighton, England: The Harvester Press, 1985), chapter 5. Also Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 80ff.
28. *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (Evanston: Northwestern U. P., 1973), pp. 37-40.
29. "Theory of the Text," in Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 42.
30. "Texts of Pleasure, Texts of Bliss," in James M. Heath & Michael Payne, eds., *Text, Interpretation, Theory* (London & Toronto: Association of University Presses, 1985), pp. 54-55.
31. *Semiotics of Poetry* (London: Methuen & Co., 1978), pp. 5-6.
32. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (London & Amsterdam: Southern Illinois U. P., 1978), chapter 3, p. 22ff.
33. See Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, tr. by Harvey Mendelson, (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1986), pp. 101-3.
34. Robert Hodge, *Literature as Discourse* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 110-1.

35. "What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," in Lambropoulos & Miller, p. 338.
36. *Language, Literature and Critical Practice* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 35.
37. *Literature as Exploration* (New York: The MLA of America, 1976), p. 30.
38. Birch, p. 21.
39. "What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding," in Lambropoulos & Miller, p. 343.
40. "Theory of the Text," in Young, p. 42.
41. I have somewhat modified Martin's definitions of the terms. See his *Language, Truth and Poetry* (Edinburgh: At the U. P., 1975), p. 26.
42. See his *Cognition and Reality: Principles and Implication of Cognitive Psychology* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1976), esp., p. 54.
43. See her "Interpretive Acts: Cognition and the Construction of Discourse," in *Poetics*, 16 (1987), 109-130.
44. For this explanation, see Linda Flowers, et al., *Reading to Write: Exploring a Cognitive and Social Process* (New York & Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1990), p. 13.

試論「文化圈」

董崇選*

摘要

本文試圖建立「文化圈」為詮釋文學的基本概念。全文先論及西方所謂「詮釋圈」的問題，接著認定經驗人生便是在詮釋人生；詮釋即覺知加上反應，亦即產生「內文」的「閱讀」加上產生「外文」的「寫作」。而人類一生都在「閱讀」人生與「寫作」人生：閱讀為詮釋之始，寫作為詮釋之終，兩者構成一詮釋圈。但此詮釋圈也是一種「文化圈」，因為閱讀是將外物「內文」化，寫作則將內心「外文」化。有了這種「文化圈」的觀念之後，便知所有的文本——包括作家的、評批家的、翻譯家的、編輯者的、及至出版商的——都是一樣地有創造性、批評性、翻譯性、編輯性、詮釋性等。其實，如果再運用「內涵」與「外延」的觀念來探討，我們便可以進一步知道：在閱讀與寫作不斷循環的「文化圈」裏，文本的意義確實存在著不確定性。從現代各種「閱讀的二分法」中，我們更能了解到：詮釋的謬誤是無可避免的。本文最後用兩個圖表來說明閱讀與寫作所形成的「詮釋圈」或「文化圈」，有牽涉到那些產生詮釋困難的因素。

關鍵詞：文化圈、詮釋圈、閱讀、寫作、內涵、外延、內文、外文

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