

Retroactive Thematization, Interaction, and Interpretation: The Hermeneutic Spiral from Schleiermacher to Goffman

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Abstract

This paper examines some common concerns of hermeneutics, Bakhtin's dialogism, American deconstruction and Goffman's pragmatics of interaction, in order to provide a theoretical basis for literary criticism grounded on wider communicative processes, more especially on the retroactive dynamics of communicative interaction.

The spiral is a spiritualized circle. In the spiral form, the circle, uncoiled, unwound, has ceased to be vicious; it has been set free....

If, in the spiral unwinding of things, space warps into something akin to time, and time, in its turn, warps into something akin to thought, then surely, another dimension follows—a special Space maybe, not the old one, we trust, unless spirals become vicious circles again. (Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*)

1. Introduction

This paper explores some aspects of the interface between the study of linguistic interaction and literary interpretation, in particular the common ground between Friedrich Schleiermacher's philological hermeneutics, Bakhtinian dialogism, post-structuralist interpretive theory, and the pragmatological study of communicative interaction proposed by Erving Goffman. Bakhtin's work, in particular, might be conceived as a nexus between Schleiermacher, who wrote in the early nineteenth century, and the pragmaticists and poststructuralists, but there is no need to argue a direct influence between these lines of reflection—they are to be conceived as responses to a common problem which therefore present some common features, in spite of the different disciplinary contexts to which these writers belong.¹

2. Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle

According to Schleiermacher, a hermeneutic process consists in the interaction of two distinct interpretive processes, one of a more objective nature, the other more oriented towards subjectivity. They are named by Schleiermacher, respectively, "grammatical" interpretation and "technical" (or "psychological") interpretation. Through grammatical interpretation we interpret a word or sentence as the manifestation of a common language;

technical interpretation considers that word or phrase a manifestation of “style,” the expression of an individual mind and of a concrete communicative intention.

Just as every speech has a twofold relationship, both to the whole of language and to the collected thinking of the speaker, so also there exists in all understanding of the speech two moments: understanding it as something drawn out of language and as a “fact” in the thinking of the speaker.²

These different approaches and objectives coexist in any given interpretive labour. They interact with one another, and they seek a common aim—understanding—so that “[i]n this interaction the results of the one method must approximate more and more those of the other” (1986:190). Nonetheless, one or another of these aspects may become dominant, and we find thus different interpretive “schools” or modes—for instance, “structuralism” versus “New Criticism,” to use a well-known twentieth-century example in the field of literary theory, or “formal” versus “integrational” linguistics as modes of approaching language, or, in a still broader consideration, “linguistics” versus “literary studies” as two philological disciplines.

There are, besides, two methods interpreters use in order to grasp a new meaning, if we follow Schleiermacher’s account. On one hand there is the comparative method, which compares a word, text or author with similar words, texts, or authors. On the other hand, there is the divinatory method, based on personal intuition, on the interpreters’ spontaneous contact with the genius of a language and on their perspicacity to grasp what is unique and individual in a given author or text.

Hermeneutic comprehension is therefore for Schleiermacher a complex process involving a mediation between linguistic system and individual message as well as an interaction between a comparative linguistic approach and an intuitive psychological approach.

The scope of hermeneutics gradually broadens as the interpreter lays an increasing emphasis on the second terms of the aforementioned binomials—the individual message and the psychological approach. Understanding a word or a syntagm is a predominantly linguistic-grammatical operation. The intuitive or psychological aspect of interpretation becomes more important as we try to grasp the sense of larger units—of the connections between sentences, or texts; the sense of a literary work, or of the whole production or personality of an author.

But even in the case of single words, one must also understand the unique and individual sense they may acquire in a specific context. There is no hermeneutic process so simple that it does not require an interpretive negotiation between general and specific dimensions, between the abstract norm and the concrete instance. We must understand the complete sentence containing it before we decide on the precise meaning of a word, but in order to construct the sentence we must already understand the word, at least provisionally. The same circular—or rather, circulatory—relationship exists between the individual sentences in a text and the complete text. This leads Schleiermacher (following Ast and other authors) to enunciate a key principle: the process of comprehension takes place through a hermeneutic circle. A part of a text is understood always in terms of the whole to which it belongs, and a whole is understood with reference to the parts it is made of. Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic circle could be described as this constant back-and-forth movement of attention from the part to the whole as we try to make sense of a text. This oscillation goes hand in hand with another complementary to-and-fro swing: the passage from a grammatical interpretive strategy to an intuitive-psychological one (a stylistic or

“technical” one, as Schleiermacher names it)—a to-and-fro swing between two modes of approach to interpretation. As we interpret, we continually reelaborate, in a retrospective or retroactive way, what is already known, in the light of the global coherence between those already-known elements and the new context. (I emphasize here the *temporality* of the circle).

Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics is highly versatile. His account addresses a variety of communicative phenomena, from Biblical interpretation to first-language acquisition, or (especially apposite to the present paper) the analysis of thematic sequences or topics in conversation. These processes have all in common the hermeneutic interaction established between a relatively well-known part and the whole the sense of which the interpreter tries to “divine” or guess.

3. The hermeneutic spiral

Still, the image of the circle as a description of the hermeneutic process is unfortunate (in spite of its good fortune), and it may create some confusion. The interpreter’s attention does shift from the part to the whole, with the help of comparisons and of intuition, and then back from the whole to the part, in order to reinterpret that part (thus, interpretation constantly requires reinterpretation). But once we return to it, the part on which we fix our attention is no longer what it was: it has been transformed by our improved comprehension, and will provide a firmer foothold for a second prospection of the whole to which it belongs. We see, then, that the celebrated hermeneutic circle is more exactly a hermeneutic spiral. Only interpretations which do not produce new meaning are circular, with the circle becoming in fact a vicious circle.³

If this schematization of the hermeneutic process as a growing spiralling movement is accepted, it comes as no surprise that no complete understanding can ever be achieved, since a spiral is an open curve which, unlike a circle, does not circumscribe a finite space. Any interpretation is provisional and relative to a given (and situated) critical project. In fact, from the moment a text is contemplated as a component part of a larger whole, the interpretive moment begins anew. It is easily seen that the attempt to read any cultural text opens up a potentially ever-expanding interpretive process. Once it has been actualized by the receiver and contextually interpreted, a sign acquires a more precise sense. But there are no fixed principles on how to delimit the relevant aspects of context, since what is relevant is relevant not in itself but with respect to a specific communicative process.⁴

4. Dialogism and interaction

Schleiermacher’s conception is highly suggestive, and it might sustain systematic comparison with a number of present-day concepts in discourse analysis, for instance with the notion that the processing of a complex syntactic structure, or of discourse generally, requires an interplay of top-down and bottom-up strategies. It also brings to mind the analysts’ accounts of reprocessing in garden-pathing syntactic constructions or narrative structures.⁵ It may also be usefully compared with other theories which have studied the diverse interactional processes in communication.

One such theory is Bakhtin/Voloshinov’s account of dialogism. In Voloshinov’s materialist theory of language, interaction is constitutive of language. Linguistic meaning does not consist solely of logical propositions: it includes valuation and stance, an attitude towards the subject matter and the interlocutor, and the confrontation of the presuppositions or perspectives of speakers and hearers. There exists, to be sure, a measure of common

ground as a necessary basis for communication. Further still, each enunciation anticipates to some extent the interlocutor's answer: it is addressed to a hearer whose implicit image is constructed to some extent by the speaker: "*The word is oriented towards an addressee, towards who that addressee might be.*"⁶

These effects of interlocution may assume complex forms, such as the multiplication of speaker and addressee figures described by narratologists (narratees and implied readers, both of which may be single or multiple, and proliferate by juxtaposition as well as by embedding). There is, at any rate, much common ground here between linguistics and literary theory. Discourse is for Bakhtin dialogic, it is "always already" embarked in an implicit dialogue with previous utterances,⁷ whether or not it is actually followed by an answer, and whether or not the answer is the one anticipated by the speaker or writer. Interaction with the other is inherent in language use to such an extent that many of the principles governing enunciation are to be found outside the speaker, in the attitudes and the presence of the addressee, even if the addressee is absent or is invisible, as happens in literature or other media of temporally or spatially deferred communication. Alterity is thus a constitutive principle of action in Bakhtin—an insight which is also present in the ethical philosophy of Buber and Levinas.

Bakhtin and Voloshinov provide a model for integrational and interactional linguistics *avant la lettre*. Their assumptions could be usefully compared with those of integrational linguists like Roy Harris and Michael Toolan, and, in a wider methodological sense, with the work of symbolic interactionists like Herbert Blumer in the social sciences.⁸ Here I will focus on another theory whose emphasis on integrational analysis and interaction provides yet another methodological analogue and a grounding for an interactional theory of interpretation—Erving Goffman's analysis of verbal interaction and framing in *Forms of Talk*. I will briefly compare some of his concepts with the notions of hermeneutic reelaboration expounded above.

5. Action and retroaction: Goffman

Goffman criticises analytical approaches to speech which disregard the context—in pragmatics as well as in grammar (1981:31). Part of the limitations of the linguistic approaches he criticises stem from the tendency of formal linguistics to limit context to the linguistic co-text, thereby ignoring that the governing principle of interaction often lies not in the semantic coherence of discourse but in the pragmatic coherence of non-verbal action. Discourse thus rests on a global framework of interaction which is not necessarily verbal in nature. Many times these non-verbal aspects of context become accessible to observation gradually, as the interactional process takes place. They become manifest in the responses to earlier enunciations, as such responses (which are not necessarily 'replies' in a semantic sense) often verbalize in an explicit way what Austin would call the interlocutors' perlocutionary reaction, their interpretation and evaluation of the speaker's utterance or actions, their response to the interactive mutual positioning proposed verbally or non-verbally by the speaker. Enunciative interaction therefore acts, according to Goffman, as an interpretation of what has been said and done up to then, both for the interlocutors and (perhaps especially) for the student of communication who analyzes a decontextualised transcription of the original exchange (Goffman 1981:33-34).

Following Gunter (1974), Goffman observes that the interactants, as well as the student analyzing their interaction after the event, cannot predict what the next

communicative move will consist in. Instead, the thematic connection between an enunciation and the reply/response to it can be established only retrospectively:

what is available to the student (as also to the actual participants) is not the possibility of predicting forward from a statement to a reply—as we might from a cause to its effects—but rather quite a different prospect, that of locating in what is said now the sense of what it is a response to. For the individual who had accepted replying to the original statement will have been obliged to display that he has discovered the meaningfulness and relevance of the statement and that a relevant action is now provided. (Goffman 1981:33)

Sometimes, the sense which is discovered retrospectively in the original speaker's utterance and is brought to light through the hearer's response is not intentional in its origin, and may have escaped the speaker's or the bystanders' consciousness. The hearer can then underline his/her interpretation of that sense either directly or indirectly, trusting his/her interpretation of what has been said to the interlocutors' or bystanders' inferential reconstruction. For instance, through our answers or responses we can retrospectively uncover slips of the tongue, puns or unintentional obscene meanings present in the speaker's words, and direct the speaker's or other interactants' attention toward these aspects of the utterance. We can even 'construct' them retroactively, that is, we can attribute to a speaker's utterance, on the basis of the words used by that speaker, an intention or a sense which we know was not originally there before our intervention, but which may be planted there for some practical purpose, either playful or confrontational.⁹

It is apparent that the response can be verbal or non-verbal, and can refer to a verbal or non-verbal element of our interlocutor's performance. Thus, each conversational turn retrospectively highlights those elements of the other interlocutor's previous intervention the speaker chooses to respond to.

And what conversation becomes then is a sustained strip or tract of referencings, each referencing tending to bear, but often deviously, some retrospectively perceivable connection to the immediately prior one. (Goffman 1981:72)

Goffman argues that speech activity does not rest on a verbal structure of conversational turns, but on an interactional sequence in which non-verbal action is determinant, with verbalization often occurring as a means of explicitly repositioning the interlocutors on the basis of preexisting non-verbal interaction. Consider Goffman's account of the role of discourse (or "talk") in a service encounter such as paying at a checkout counter: although verbal discourse may occur,

talk and its characteristic structure hardly provides a characterization of the service sequence in progress, this servicing being a game of a different kind. In the serious sense, what is going on is a service transaction, one sustained through an occasion of cooperatively executed, face-to-face, nonlinguistic action. Words can be fitted to this sequence, but the sequencing is not conversational. (1981: 39)

We may extend this insight, through a rather blunt reformulation, in the sense that the basic sequencing of human communication as a whole is not conversational, discursive or verbal—though words may be partly fitted to it, and it may be partly fitted to words.

Goffman's account of the relationship between language and action shares much ground with the theories of some major linguists such as Pike or Firth. According to Pike, one should "give for the total event, as a unit, a unified description" which "would simultaneously analyse and describe non-linguistic behaviour as well as the smallest and most intricate elements of linguistic structure."¹⁰ Likewise, from a phenomenological perspective

on language, Maurice Merleau-Ponty contends that language does not make sense if we understand it with respect only to things said: for him, the mistake made by semanticists consists in closing up language upon itself, as if it only spoke about itself— for language takes its life from a preexisting ‘silence’.¹¹ Any act of speech or writing, therefore, involves a negotiation with the unsaid, and a choice on the part of the speaker or writer as to which aspects of the unsaid can be presupposed, and which ones need pointing out in order to become interactionally relevant or usable.

We have noted that, according to Goffman, a response may refer to non-verbal aspects of communicative interaction, and may thereby contribute to the reelaboration or redirectioning of interaction. Also that, more specifically, the response to non-verbal elements may itself be more or less explicitly verbalised. A response which gives a verbal formulation to non-verbal interactional elements may be interpreted in linguistic analysis as a change in the topic of conversation (to the extent that the notion of conversational topic is restricted to the coherence of what is verbally expressed, and not of what is expressed at large). At this point an observation may be introduced regarding the different types of non-verbality which may be subject to interactional reinterpretation. On the one hand we have non-linguistic or paralinguistic phenomena—proxemics, gesture, tone, etc., which are the primary object of Goffman’s analysis, given that his study centers on face-to-face verbal interaction. On the other hand, this retroactive interpretive process also bears on the understanding of non-codified information, and of information which is not explicitly thematized. Such information becomes therefore a species of linguistic gesture, even if it presents itself in a verbally accessible mode—as individual style, or as the specific form or wording given to the message.¹²

6. Post-structuralist rereadings

Several modes of literary interpretation may be explained, at least in part, following this line of reasoning. They involve retroactive reelaboration within an ongoing deferred dialogue with the original work, or with other readings of that work (in this case it is the critic who proposes the “ratified” participants in a given instance of critical interaction). The critic may be writing in the mode of what may be called “friendly criticism,” elaborating a critical discourse which abstains from thematizing any elements not thematized by the author, or, at any rate, thematizing only elements which are ideologically consonant with the work’s intentional theme, or subordinated to it. On the other hand, the critic may engage in what Judith Fetterley calls “resisting reading,” a mode we might also call “critical criticism,” or “polemical criticism”—sometimes even “confrontational criticism” or “unfriendly criticism.” Such criticism addresses metalinguistically (and thereby verbalizes) *ideologically dissonant* stylistic or “gestural” elements—dissonant either with the work’s explicit theme or with the critic’s own values.

A reading path which is marginal in a given text may be thematized in the metalingual model of the work constructed by the critic’s discourse, and may become the main object of interpretation for a specific critical reading. Thus, critical processes instantiate (and evince) the general principles of communicative interaction, and relevant connections may be established between the linguistic theories describing basic communicative interaction (oral and in praesentia), such as conversational analysis, and other metalingual activities or language games, such as deconstruction, which at first might seem to have little in common with them.

Let us take Paul de Man as an example. The main thesis of his book *Blindness and Insight* is that critical labour is not as lucid regarding itself as it might seem to be. This book is devoted to the deconstruction of other critical texts, and it holds that criticism achieves its best insights when it is literary and not literal, when critical texts require to be read between the lines, so that their profoundest sense contradicts the literal assertions made by the critic. In what follows, “reader” refers to de Man’s position as the reader of the critical text, and “critic” (or sometimes “author”) refers to the critic who is the author of the critical text analyzed by de Man:

The reader is given the elements to decipher the real plot hidden behind the pseudo-plot, but the author [critic] himself remains deluded.... it is left to the reader to draw a conclusion that the critics cannot face if they are to pursue their task. (de Man 1983: 104)

That is, the critic’s blindness is the necessary condition for the lucidity of his (sic) text:

Critics’ moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight. (de Man 1983:109)

It is by no means clear, though, who is the subject of that insight. It is not the critic (the author of the critical text analyzed by de Man), as we have seen that that critic is blind to the deeper sense of his text. It could be argued it is Paul de Man’s insight which is at issue here—in deconstructing Derrida’s text, for instance, de Man shows Derrida’s relative blindness. But, curiously enough, de Man ignores these subjective attributions; he silences his labour as a critic and objectifies the insight saying it belongs to “the text”—it is well known that for the American school of deconstruction “the text deconstructs itself.” But, which “text”? Not, it seems, the text written by the critic (the “author”), who remains blind to the deconstructive reading—nor the text as it has been read by other readers, who unlike de Man, have remained oblivious to this problem. The text is not a brute fact: it is a text insofar as it is read by someone. The lucidity pointed at by de Man belongs only to the text as read by de Man, and to the text de Man teaches us to read. The insight is de Man’s reading the text, and ours insofar as we make his reading ours.

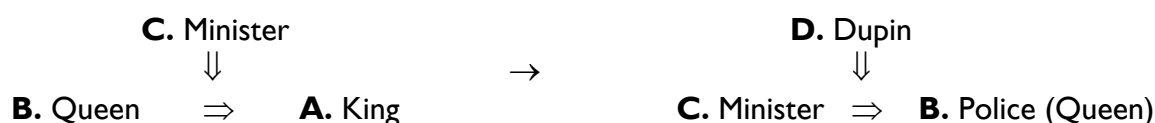
And, correlatively, a blind spot is created *retroactively*: something which did not exist before de Man’s reading, or at any rate something which did not exist in the same sense, exists now, in the text which other readers had read without perceiving that blind spot (being blind to blindness, as it were). The text has been transformed by the critical reading, although de Man experiences (to my mind) a moment of critical blindness similar to the ones he describes, and does not put it this way—instead, he holds that the whole task had already been done by the self-deconstructive text.¹³

Another critical mode which may serve to exemplify the processes of explicit thematization I have described as a “hermeneutic spiral” is psychoanalytic criticism. Freud’s famous *dictum* promising that the ego will be where the unconscious used to be, can be seen as a programmatic declaration as to the role of the verbalization of behaviour and of retroactive thematization. It comes as no surprise, given this *methodological* standpoint, that retroaction will also appear as a pathological *phenomenon* to be studied by the psychoanalyst—for instance in Freud’s account of phantasized childhood traumas, in which the traumatic scene is a post facto retroactive elaboration and should not be interpreted literally. What is more problematic is the reluctance of much psychoanalytic criticism to acknowledge and explore this uncanny parallelism between the neurotic phenomenon and the analyst’s own retroactive constructions.

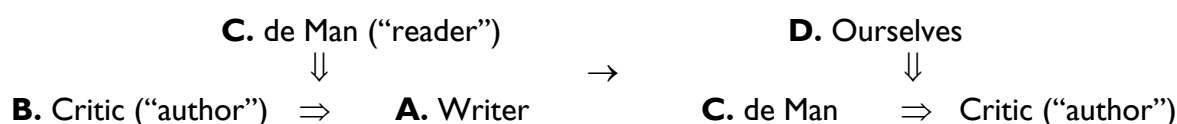
Lacanian psychoanalysis has been most aware of such hermeneutic issues. Lacan's well-known seminar on Poe's "The Purloined Letter" describes a triangular relationship between symbolic positions available to the subject which may be described in terms of the hermeneutic spiral described here. The symbolic positions ascribed by Lacan in the earlier part of the analysis to the King, the Queen and the Minister may be described as follows:

- The King is blind to what he should see.
- The Queen perceives the King's blindness, but becomes vulnerable insofar as she believes herself to be in the position of the one "who sees"—because she forgets that she can also be seen.
- The Minister is the one who sees the Queen's mistake, and takes advantage of it; he flaunts his superior position by outwitting the Queen's police—but then makes the same mistake himself, and is bested by Dupin.

These positions may be rewritten, for our purposes here, as the positions of the author, the "reader" and the critic, respectively. Thus, we might describe de Man's position as represented in the above account as the intermediate symbolic position, that of the "reader" of a critical work whose interpretive activity (bearing on a critic's reading of a literary text) is being observed by us—a position which in Poe's story is occupied first by the Queen and then by the Minister).¹⁴ The critical process therefore provides a displacement analogous to the one narrated in Poe's/Lacan's allegory of interpretation:



C's dominant comprehension of B comprehending A is displaced the moment C's comprehension becomes observed and comprehended by a third party, D. Analogically,



It is significant that de Man should use the word "reader" to label his position—while it is apparent that he is a reader who leaves a trace which can be read, i.e. a critic. By calling himself a "reader" de Man tries to efface the agency and one might say the very existence of his critical text.

It has of course been noted that the critic's subject position is by definition liable to displacement—the critic will inevitably become the object of another deconstructor's reading, as observed by Derrida.¹⁵ In the above scheme, the reader should mistrust, to begin with, the term I use ("ourselves") to conflate my position and my reader's. A different interpretive perspective (which may involve language games imported from a different discipline) shows the underside of a writer's lucidity, revealing it as the effect of textual structures which become visible from the new angle adopted. The significance of the text is thereby altered and reinterpreted—but not from any stable or definitive viewpoint: only in a given interpretive context or even a given discursive encounter.

Even a first reading, especially if it is not a naive one, may involve such retroactive intervention on the text. But the fullest manifestation of this retroactive reworking is to be

found in critical modes which partake of the “hermeneutics of suspicion”—psychoanalysis, ideological and political criticism, deconstruction. These critical modes involve a drastic recontextualization of the text being analyzed. The middle ground is to be found in more consonant or “friendly” critical approaches which try to recover and expand the meaning of the text. All criticism, though, involves rewriting, in the form of interpretive summarising, highlighting of patterns, or discursive recycling for use in another context.

Processes of rereading favour retroactive elaborations and reformulations of theme, due precisely to their cumulative effect. Actually, all criticism rests on rereading. Critical readings to some extent de-thematize the text in the long run, so that due to the requisite originality of critical readings, there are aspects of canonical works which become exhausted or become intractable. That very intractability enables other subordinate reading tracks to become visible or tractable—which they would not have been as a first-hand approach to the text. A critical reading creates, therefore, an intertextual network both with the work being analyzed and with other readings of that work (which may or may not be addressed explicitly). These intertextual networks must be described in the analysis of critical metalanguage. It is on this intertextual complex that the thematization proposed by the critical discourse rests: the critical discourse’s ability to formulate in an explicit way textual relationships which have been imperfectly perceived or described before, as well as its ability to retroactively intervene on the signification of previous literary or critical texts. In this way, (literary) history is constantly rewritten, as the present significance of past texts and historical phenomena is reinterpreted—our representations and understanding of past events and texts are the result of this constant retroactive intervention, and involve the explicit thematization and linguistic articulation of previously intimated but as yet unstated relationships.

7. Recapitulation (Philology)

There exists, therefore, a structural continuity between the modes of intertextual reelaboration proper to critical debate on the one hand, and the interaction between verbal and non-verbal communication which is so exemplarily described in Goffman’s conversational analyses. A critical reading, like a conversational turn, may provide either a *reply* or a *response* to the text being analyzed. For Goffman, “although a *reply* is addressed to meaningful elements of whole statements, *responses* can break frame and reflexively address aspects of a statement which would ordinarily be ‘out of frame’” (Goffman 43). For our purposes here: a critical response may choose to address what is conveyed by the text, not just what is said in it, carving out its own reference in the textual body, thematizing semiotic structures and relationships which heretofore had a non-propositional status—even if they were relationships between words—and giving them a propositional interpretation which is in effect a retroactive reworking (and a construction) of the text’s significance.

It was the awareness of a continuity between linguistics, historical studies, hermeneutic theory and literary criticism that gave rise in the nineteenth century to the general hermeneutics of Ast and Schleiermacher. The nineteenth-century theoretical paradigm for philological studies underwent radical transformations after the formalist and anti-historicist movements of the earlier twentieth century. But perhaps today, after the revolutions and spirals of the twentieth-century—of poststructuralism and pragmalinguistics—it is worth noting that the continuity between linguistics, hermeneutics, history and criticism is still current in an interdisciplinary space where time and communicative interaction give rise to meaning and thought. “A special Space maybe,” to quote from my epigraph from Nabokov—

not the old one, but still a space we can call by the time-honoured name, Philology, as long as it keeps unwinding and spiralling, and producing new significance.

Notes

* A preliminary Spanish version of this paper was read in December 2002 at the annual conference of AEDEAN, the Spanish Society for Anglo-American Studies.

1. Goffman does cite an early translation of Voloshinov's chapter on reported speech (1986:529).
 2. Schleiermacher, quoted in Palmer (1969:88). Note that the notions proposed here by Schleiermacher prefigure some aspects of the Saussurean dyad *langue / parole*.
 3. On the classical image of the circle as a scheme for understanding, and its "opening" in modern philosophy since Hegel, see Schmidt (1990).
 4. Compare a similar observation by Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:35) concerning the termination of linguistic processing in any given instance.
 5. On "top-down," "bottom-up" and other coherence-building processes see f.i. van Dijk (1980). On garden paths, see f.i. Jahn (1999), Oertel (2000).
 6. Voloshinov (1973:85; quoted in Harland (1999:158), whose exposition of dialogism I partly follow in this paragraph.
 7. For instance, my use of the scare-quoted expression 'always already' in this sentence signals to readers familiar with deconstruction an implied analogy between Bakhtin's theories and deconstruction which may be further explored by these readers.
 8. On the principles of integrational linguistics, see Toolan (1996) or Harris and Wolf (1998). Blumer's methodological papers are collected in *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (— actually a critique of formalized, non-interactional methods).
 9. See Leo Hickey (1994).
 10. Pike (1967:26). Firth notes the importance of describing the relations "between elements of linguistic structure and nonverbal constituents of the situation" (1968:203, 148, 173, 177). Consider, likewise, the implications of the "interactionist assumption" and the "situational assumption" for discourse processing as described in Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983:7f): that discourse is interpreted within "the whole interaction process" among speech participants, including "verbal and nonverbal interaction", and that this interaction is "part of a social situation" wherein participants may have "functions or roles", and special "strategies" and "conventions" may apply. I owe my awareness of Pike's and Firth's concern with the articulation of verbal and nonverbal elements to Robert de Beaugrande's account (2000, chapters 5, 8 and 11—the chapter on van Dijk and Kintsch, wrongly titled 12 in the current online edition of de Beaugrande's volume).
 11. Merleau-Ponty (1969:167). I became aware of this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thought through a lecture on his work by M^a Carmen Hernández Sáenz (2003).
 12. R. P. Blackmur's notion of "language as gesture" could therefore undergo a pragmatolinguistic reformulation—and this suggestion of mine might perhaps serve too as a practical example of retroactive reelaboration, by rereading Blackmur in the light of the theory proposed here.
 13. I have dealt with this issue at greater length (1998).
 14. "[L]'on est en droit de douter qu'il sache ainsi ce qu'il fait, à le voir captivé aussitôt par une relation duelle où nous retrouvons tous les caractères du leurre mimétique ou de l'animal qui fait le mort, et, pris au piège de la situation imaginaire : de voir qu'on ne le voit pas, méconnaître la situation réelle où il est vu ne pas voir. Et qu'est-ce qu'il ne voit pas ? Justement la situation symbolique qu'il a su lui-même si bien voir, et où maintenant le voilà vu se voyant n'être pas vu." (Lacan 1970:41).
- "([W]e may properly doubt that he knows what he is thus doing, when we see him immediately captivated by a dual relationship in which we find all the traits of a mimetic lure or of an animal

feigning death, and, trapped in the typically imaginary situation of seeing that he is not seen, misconstrue the real situation in which he is seen not seeing.

“And what does he fail to see? Precisely the symbolic situation which he himself was so well able to see, and in which he is now seen seeing himself not being seen.” (Lacan 1988:44).

The passage quoted here may therefore be read as a description of de Man’s account of blindness—blind to its own vantage point, which is thus conflated with ‘the text’s.’

15. “And today no exercise is more widespread” (Derrida 1988:112). A model of this deconstructive chain is to be found in the collection *The Purlined Poe*, which collects a chain of readings of Poe’s story in which each critic discovers the blind spots in the work of the previous deconstructor—Derrida being one of them.

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