

Making text talk: reading as listening

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This article is an attempt to enact and make real Gadamer's view that literacy is always a matter of coming into meanings that are alien and other. The eminent texts of all cultures, especially our own, suffer from that fate and so they need to be re-interpreted and re-appropriated anew by each generation; otherwise, they fall into dogma, meaninglessness or irrelevance. This encounter with the alien that becomes us is the work of reading, a labour in which we find ourselves both renewed and transformed.

When we read we have to let go of the voices of people around us and let the book talk to us. We have to stop listening to things around us and listen to the book. What is it saying?

A book is from far away. It is very soft. Just a whisper. We have to be very still and quiet to hear it. When we read we have to stop listening to the voices near to us and listen for the very soft voice coming from far away. Coming from the book. The book is speaking to us. What is it saying? What is it saying to us readers? what is it saying to me?

Listen to the book. This is called concentrating. Concentrating means blocking our ears to things around us, so we can listen to the faraway voice of the book. Reading means hearing what the book is saying. We have to listen hard to hear what it is saying. If we listen to what is around us then we won't hear what the book is saying. If we listen to our body because it is sore, we won't hear what the book is saying. If we are sad, we won't hear what the book is saying. If we are hungry, we won't hear what it is saying. If we are worried, we won't hear what it is saying. If we are sick for home, we won't hear what the book is saying. If we are sick for our country, we won't hear what it is saying. If we are angry, we won't hear what it is saying.

But there is another reason why it is hard to hear what a book is saying. The words in the book are not our words. The words in the book stop us from hearing the voice of the book. The voice of the book is behind those words. But the words in the book stop us from hearing what the voice is saying. The words in the book stop us from hearing what the book is saying. The words get in the way. The words get in the way because we don't know them. Some are strange. Some are new. Some are big. The words are jargons. We can't hear what the book is saying to us because the words are jargons and they get in the way.

How can we hear the voice behind the words? They are stopping the voice of the book from getting to us. They stop the book from talking to us. The book can't talk to us because the words make it talk in language we don't know. The language of the words is not our language. But the voice is our language. How can we hear it? What are we going to do about those words? Those words that make the book talk another language. But we don't understand that language. How can we understand the book? How can we listen to it? Even if we do listen to it, it won't talk our talk. What can we do?

Here is what we can do. We have to help that book talk our language. Not the language of those words it is in now. The voice wants us to hear what it says. But it is under a spell. The words in that book have cast a spell over it. We have to let the voice free so it can be strong and talk with us. It wants to talk with us. It can only be free if we help it talk our language, our way. It wants to talk our language but the words are stopping it. We must break open those words so that the voice can fly out and speak strong in our language.

The book wants to talk to us in our language but it can't. Those words, those strange words, those words from over there, those English words, those jargons, are stopping the book from talking with us. They don't want us to talk with the book. They don't want the book to talk with us. They are stopping us from sitting down and talking with the book.

We have to steal the voice from those words. The voice wants to be with us. It wants to be strong and sit down with us. The book likes us. It wants to be with us. It wants to be in our language. We must free it. It can get free if we help it. We have to free it. We have to find our words for it to get into. We have to steal the voice of that book from those words and put it in our own words. In our language. We must go over there and find our words so it can come back

here. Now the book feels happy. It has come back home. It has come back to its country, to our country. Those words took it away. Now it can come back to us and be with us. At last it has come back to its country. The voice of that book is happy now. It can be with us. It can stay with us. We can talk with it and it can talk with us.

The voice is happy now because it feels understood. It knows we understand it. But we will have to keep talking up that book and finding our own words for it or it will end up under a spell again. That book wants to be one of our stories. But will we let it? Will we find some words or paintings for it to be with us.

But maybe that book is tricking us. It might be a bad voice. It might be trying to weaken us. We must be strong with it. We must not let it weaken our language. We must find our own words for it. Then it will make our language strong and make us strong.

We must be boss of those words that are stopping us from being strong. But we don't want the words, we want the voice they have put under a spell. We have to help that voice sneak into our words so it can come home to us. If we can be boss of those words, the voice behind those words will be with us and make us strong. We will be able to sit down and talk with it on our country. We will be stronger and it will be weaker because it is in our country. It doesn't know our country or our language. It will be shy. We must give it our words so it gets strong. We must talk lots of words into that voice so it gets strong with us. We should talk it up, that book, and see what it has to say for itself. It might make us strong.

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