

*Warsaw Studies in English Language and Literature*

*Edited by Jacek Fisiak*

# From *Moby-Dick* to *Finnegans Wake*

Essays in Close Reading

Andrzej Kopcewicz

Edited by Janusz Semrau



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Andrzej Kopcewicz

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## Editor's preface

*[O]ne doesn't want to read badly  
any more than live badly.*

(Bloom 2001: 27)

This volume is a posthumous revised edition of selected papers by Andrzej Kopcewicz on a number of diverse nineteenth- and twentieth-century works of American and Irish fiction.<sup>1</sup> Professor Kopcewicz (1934-2007) earned his academic distinctions on the strength of his main publications in the field of Anglo-American modernist poetry and the history of U.S. literature. However, his special fascination and scholarly pursuit – basically its own reward – was fictional intertextuality. It was first sparked in his student days by James Joyce's *magnum opus*. As a work at once formidable, exciting and enlightening, it was to continue stimulating this fascination for years. Indeed, Joyce is present in this volume from the first essay to the last. Essentially a self-evolving project, an Emersonian series of ever larger circles<sup>2</sup>, *From Moby-Dick to Finnegans wake* is a transcription of some of the ideas the author had been developing towards a full-fledged study of intertextuality. In this sense the collection is a general indication and possibly an outline of what might have been.

Nobody needs convincing that the notion of intertextuality/intertextualities is an axiom of contemporary cultural and literary theory and practice. "Originally conceived and used by a critical avant-garde as a form of protest against established cultural and social values, it today serves even conservative literary scholars" (Heinrich Plett quoted in Klooss 1998: 3). However, Andrzej Kopcewicz was never really part of that discourse. His interest – *sine ira et studio* [without anger or partisanship] – was always informed by a truly humanistic motivation, including erotics of intellectual curiosity, and above all a genuine passion for reading. And when he eventually admitted to being a 'paranoid intertextualist', he would offer it in good humour, characteristically tongue-in-cheek.

Professor Kopcewicz was not only superbly cognizant and empathic of the multiplicity of texts but was uniquely sympathetic and open to a variety of criti-

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1 A shorter version of this book appeared in 2009 under the title *Intertextual transactions in American and Irish fictions*; see Ambrozy-Lis (2010).

2 "The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is ... to draw a new circle" (Emerson [1841] 1983a: 414).



cal approaches and tools. Most importantly from the vantage point of the present book, he entertained in a very profound sense the fundamental appreciation of the literary text as *text*: from poetry to short story to encyclopedic narrative. According to Joseph Kuhn (2009: 303), he was able to “intuit the arabesque curve and the strange, migratory behaviour of the literary sign with a rare penetration” – “[his] affinities were for the great masters of the *grammē*: Joyce, Barthelme, Pynchon, Melville, and Riffaterre”. On account of Kopcewicz’s “sharp imagistic focus, wit, distinctive turn of phrase and lucidity of argumentation”, Paulina Ambroży-Lis (2010: 115, 110) recognizes her erstwhile teacher as a “master of close reading”. Indeed, as Agnieszka Salska (2011: 281) notes in a broader sense and context, “Kopcewicz’s patience and kindness as a reader ... were legendary”.

The notion of close reading is typically associated with the phenomenon of New Criticism, as it developed its ideology, perfected its methods and finessed its way through the first half of the twentieth century. As DuBois (2003: 2) points out, while New Criticism has left a rich historical and theoretical legacy, it is the actual critical practice that finally marks it out most distinctively and in fact most successfully from other modes of literary investigation, interpretation and appreciation. To this day, the chief virtue of close (*lectio tacita*) textual analysis is to make it possible to ‘slow down’ the action within the text and to create thereby a space and stance (room, stanza) for critical rumination, convergence, integration, condensation and clarification of meaning. Most simply put, close reading puts the text in the spotlight, as the focus of intellectual and aesthetic circumspection and elucidation.

In more sense than one this volume can be perceived in its entirety not only as a series of widening but also palimpsestic circles, arranged *mutis mutandis* by their original chronology. The actual historical range of the texts discussed here extends from the early seventeenth century (Robert Burton) to the still (post-) contemporary (Paul Auster). The book opens with two introductory sketches: a semi-theoretical one on intertextuality and a semi-historical one on the interaction of high and low literary forms. Accompanied by a theoretical commentary throughout, the gist of the book is at times very detailed scrutiny of the intricacies, interrelatedness, overlappings, entanglements and reciprocities of some of the best-known works by Herman Melville and Thomas Pynchon – Henry Adams, Frank R. Stockton and Thomas Pynchon – Paul Auster and Herman Melville – Donald Barthelme and James Joyce – James Joyce, Flann O’Brien and Gilbert Sorrentino. There obtains with each of these essays a self-apparent belongingness rather than waywardness, tardiness or belatedness. At the same time – to borrow from the front matter of Gilbert Sorrentino’s intertextual chowder *Mulligan stew* (1979) – each one keeps its essential “selfness”. The quasi-chapters they constitute lend themselves to being read in any order, selec-

tively, and in different combinations. Given a literal perspective by incongruity, the semiotic-mythic Peircean-Joycean premise of the book is that a commodious vicus of recirculation (type by tope, letter from litter, word at ward) may bring the reader in any case (back) to the beginning. And even if, in a rough-guide manner, it should turn out that in “the buginning is the woid” (Joyce [1939] 1964: 378), we have here on hand *Finnegans wake*’s transcriptive and transatlantic postmodern rehearsal *The Dead Father* to remind us that “repetition is reality” (Barthelme 1975: 87).

Informed by a rare combination of poetic sensibility and disciplined as well as erudite mind, Andrzej Kopcewicz’s essays demonstrate that the agenda and methods of (the more traditional) close reading and (the more contemporary) intertextuality need not be exclusive of each other. Ultimately, to pastiche a line of particular resonance from Paul de Man’s *The resistance to theory*, the present publication is dedicated to the by no means self-evident necessity and – indispensably – intellectual pleasure of reading.

To stress the by no means self-evident necessity of reading implies at least two things. First of all, it implies that literature is not a transparent message in which it can be taken for granted that the distinction between the message and the means of communication is clearly established. Second, ... it implies that the grammatical decoding of a text leaves a residue of indetermination that has to be, but cannot be, resolved by grammatical means, however extensively conceived.

(de Man 1986: 15)

More practically, it is hoped that *From Moby-Dick to Finnegans wake* can offer in terms of both the why and the how a journey towards the appreciation and possible realization of Robert Scholes’s dictum (2001) that one of the surest ways to make oneself crafty is through the cultivation of the craft of reading.

Janusz Semrau

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## Some remarks on intertextuality<sup>1</sup>

Arguing from the premise that the whole of literature has a simultaneous existence, that it composes and comprises a simultaneous order, T. S. Eliot builds in his well-known essay “Tradition and the individual talent” a synoptic view of literary tradition. He posits that “what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it”. Consequently, “the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered” – since “the past [is] altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past” (Eliot [1919] 1975a: 38). Such a view of literature as a self-regulating organism, a polyphony of voices contrapuntally speaking across the temporalized space of history claims for all works of art a synchronic dimension and calls into question both the notion of originality and the hierarchy of sources. In fact, Eliot cautions the readers against the “prejudice” of praising the poet for the so-called uniqueness of his work. He urges them to abandon the search for what is believed to be distinctively individual in a work, what is supposed to constitute “the peculiar essence of the man”, allegedly distinguishing him or her from his/her predecessors. The point is that “not only the best, but the most individual parts of [one’s] work may be those in which the dead poets, [the] ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously” (Eliot 1975a: 38).

What is of interest here, particularly to a student of intertextuality, is not so much the fact of the poet’s immediate or remote predecessor speaking through his own text, but the reversal of that order: the contention that the later poet’s voice can be heard in the text of his/her predecessor. This is precisely how Eliot’s the Fisher King of *The waste land* (1922) merges with his medieval prototype and how he can be recognized in the figure of Jake Barnes in Ernest Hemingway’s *The sun also rises* (1926), for example. A line from a Webster, a Middleton, or a Verlaine in a poem by T. S. Eliot will acquire not only a new contextual meaning – it will also bring that meaning to its original context. All this, along with the famous dictum about the extinction of the poet’s personality, places Eliot’s literary theories in close proximity to the basic assumptions of some of the more recent intertextual investigations.

If we assume that a creative act, be it of inscribing or of deciphering, is a function of prior reading, if we assume that all writing and reading are supplementary processes, and that the supplements – whether those of selection or of serendipity, or those that ghost-like haunt a new text asking to be fleshed out – are also functions of yet prior reading(s), then we must accept that all creative

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1 This is a revised version of Kopcewicz (1992). Used by permission of the publisher.

acts are inherently intertextual phenomena. With this recognition, we must also inescapably conclude that all authors are first of all readers. Eliot acknowledges this by defining the poet's mind as "a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together" (Eliot 1975a: 41).<sup>2</sup> Equating "letter" with "litter", James Joyce compares all literature to a rubbish heap (mound) of the past, present and future texts, out of which his own work is also composed, and to which it inevitably returns. "[W]riting thithaways end to end and turning, turning and end to end hithaways writing and with lines of litters slittering up and louds of latters slettering down ... why, pray, sign anything as long as every word, letter, penstroke, paperspace is a perfect signature of its own?" (Joyce [1939] 1964: 114-115). According to Donald Barthelme (1967: 97), language is a "trash phenomenon". This is, in fact, "all there is". Also, a literary artifact is merely a "rehearsal" of other literary artifacts and of other literary events (Barthelme 1975: 93). Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) teaches that texts enter into a "dialogue" with other texts. A dialogical text recognizes its own difference, but as dialogue can only be effected through an intertextual intercourse, or trans-action, the generic boundaries become immediately problematic. An exemplary contemporary text, whether modernist or postmodernist, is particularly conscious of its dialogic nature since it tends to absorb, accommodate, transform, and otherwise turn to its own use a plethora of discourses, language registers, genres, styles, citations, structures and themes – through which it fades into other texts. The example of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is only too well known. In *The sot-weed factor*, John Barth (1960) enters into an ironic dialogue with the text of the American colonial history in the hope of "replenishing" the exhausted form of the novel as a genre. In *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), in itself an ironic compound of borrowed texts, Flann O'Brien postulates a "limbo" of fictional characters:

The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors should draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before – usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate irksome explanations, and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimblerriggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature.

(O'Brien [1939] 1967: 25)

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2 "If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark" (Eliot 1975a: 41).

Articulated at the beginning of the twentieth century, this proposition was probably meant as a joke. However, O'Brien himself did draw upon well-known sources for his fictional characters. One of them is Finn Mac Cool, the legendary hero of Ireland, who happens to be also the eponymous hero of Joyce's most famous novel *Finnegans wake* (1939). In O'Brien's fifth and last novel, *The Dalkey archive* (1964), we meet James Joyce *in propria persona*, in turn. The author of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans wake* makes also a brief appearance in Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan stew* (1979), a more recent intertextual novelistic construct, dedicated to Brian O'Nolan – real name of author Flann O'Brien – from whose *At Swim-Two-Birds* the American postmodernist drew the major characters for his own work. Of course, not to know that behind *Mulligan stew* looms a shadow of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, of *The great Gatsby*, and a welter of other texts, will not make for a defective reading. It is nevertheless rather obvious that – against “persons of inferior education” (O'Brien 1976: 25) – intertextual reading does imply an elitist reader of sorts.

The sense of a work of art belonging to and deriving from a community of letters ('litters') is often expressed by the artists seeing themselves as scavengers and plagiarists. William Faulkner (quoted in Cowley 1958: 122-123) claims that the author is really of no importance – “If I had not existed, someone would have written me, Hemingway, Dostoevsky, all of us” – and goes on to suggest that writers are completely “amoral”, in that they will “borrow, beg, or steal from anybody and everybody to get the work done”. We all remember T. S. Eliot's claim that only the best poets know how to steal. It is a recognition enforced by Ezra Pound: “Great poets seldom make bricks without straw. They pile up all the excellences they can beg, borrow, or steal from their predecessors and contemporaries, and then set their own inimitable light atop of the mountain” (Pound 1910: 251).

The notions of originality, of authenticity, of repetition, of texts as stolen goods, of the artist as thief, copyist, plagiarist, are particularly vividly brought into play in *Finnegans wake*. Its script, which is to say the character by the name of Shem, is accused of all possible intertextual ‘crimes’. “Who can say how many pseudostylistic shamiana, how few or how many ... piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place ... from his pelagiarist pen” (Joyce 1964: 181-182). It is the pen of a plagiarist and a pelagian scribe, a copyist of texts already copied, the pen of Joyce himself. This is the notorious “poorjoist” and the “prosodite” (the prostitute of prose and prosody), the “notesnacker”, the author of the “refurloined notepaper” (the twice purloined letter), “a polyhedron of scripture” (Joyce 1964: 113, 107). This is also the last word in “stolentelling” in which “[e]very dimmed letter ... is a copy” (Joyce 1964: 424). In Donald Barthelme's *Snow White* the heroine, herself a poet, yearns for “some words in the world that were not the words [we] always hear”. It is a longing that gets answered by: “Fish slime” – “Injunctions!” – “Murder and create!” (Barthelme 1967: 6).

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If there is no virginity in language since all the words have been already used, adulterated, and in a sense exhausted, then what looks like a new textual combination is in fact always also a repetition. Absolute newness and originality, a yearning for prelapsarian innocence, may indeed be a romantic phantom, a fallacy of the origin(s). Yet, the admission of stealing and of plagiarism need not spell the confusion of impotence and exhaustion of creative energies. It may offer a perverse axiological metaphor for a strategy of writing – intertextuality as an ongoing process of textual self-consciousness, a self-reflexive impulse of a text in dialogue with other texts. A text, as Raymond Federman argues (1976: 565-566), is in fact always a pre-text, a text waiting to be completed by the reading process: “It is a MONTAGE/COLLAGES of thoughts, reflections, meditations, quotations, pieces of my own (previous) discourse (critical, poetic, fictional, published and unpublished) ... For PLAGIARISM read also PLAYGIARISM”. “Playgiarism” is a happy Federman nonce pun implying play in thievery; a text lifted (Joyce’s stolen fruit or a forged cheque), displaced and redeemed thereby in an intertextual word-play – indeed, in an intertextual game. It is in this kind of context that Barthelme’s “rehearsal” can be read as a metaphor for intertextual transactions. Etymologically, ‘rehearsal’ derives from ‘hearse’, meaning a funeral procession and burying. But it can also refer to harrowing, reharrowing, raking over – burying litter (letters in a text) and thus cultivating it as for a new crop. This brings to mind Joycean “superfetation” – the “burrowing of one world in another” which, we are advised, is one of the keys to the exuberant economy of *Finnegans wake* (Campbell and Robinson 1961: 28-29).

Looking for a definition of intertextuality, one inevitably comes back to the seminal concept formulated in 1969 by Julia Kristeva, who in her semiotic approach to the word, the dialogue and the novel claims that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 1980: 66). A text, then, is a combination of intertexts – enmeshed in parodying, complementing, reaffirming or transforming, so that our subsequent reading of those intertexts is always modified by this particular transaction or inter-change. Intertextuality is a two-way, reciprocal process, inasmuch as the intertext is modified by its transformation in the text under scrutiny. The text under scrutiny cannot remain unaffected by its absorption of the intertext. Simply put, a text is always a potential inter-text. As the intertextual traces are often concealed, half-concealed, or distorted, it is obviously the reader’s role to identify and decipher them. For Michael Riffaterre, there must obtain lexical and structural correspondences between a text and its intertext, their lexis and syntagmas, for the intertextuality to properly materialize, i.e.,

manifest itself. “Intertextuality”, argues Riffaterre (1985: 41), is the reader’s perception that “a literary text’s significance is a function of a complementary or contradictory homolog, the intertext. The intertext may be another literary work or a text-like segment of the sociolect (a fragment of descriptive system, for instance) that shares not only a lexicon, but also a structure with the text”. Riffaterre focuses mainly upon small intertextual units, or subtexts.

How should we read (or mis-read) intertextually? *Finnegans wake* contains the following statement: “In the buginning is the void, in the muddle is the sounddance and thereinofer you’re in the unbewised again, vund vulsyvolsy” (Joyce 1964: 378). Any student of Joyce will easily recognize the interplay of two powerful intertexts here: Giambattista Vico’s *The new philosophy* and the Bible (John 1:1). The three syntagmas meaning the beginning, the middle, and “thereinofter” with “vulsyvolysy” (“Ricorso”), “waltzing” the sentence back to its beginning in the “void”, are a gram of Vico’s cyclical history – the matrix informing the theme and structure of Joyce’s book. “In the buginning is the void ...” is of course a travesty of “In the beginning was the word”. It parodies the divine nature of the origin, of the creation of language and all communication. The “void” – the word (voice) lapsed in the void is the fallen word; and hence God identified with Word in the intertext (“and Word was with God and the Word was God”) – becomes fallen Divinity, or God of the Gnostics (another possible intertext). Divinity resounds in the “bug” of the “buginning”, not only through its reference to the biblical beginning, but also through its association with HCE, the protagonist of Joyce’s novel, whose name – Earwicker – derives from earwig, an insect, a beetle, a ‘bug’ believed to creep into people’s ears, its verbal form also suggesting secret communication. (In passing, it is worth recalling here that according to the medieval tradition, the way Mary conceived was through the ear.) In the text of *Finnegans wake*, Earwicker is both the first man Adam, the fallen man, and also the All-Father, the divine principle/agent/actant whose voice in the thunderclap spelling God’s wrath is also the voice of the lapsed divinity – a garbled signifier manifesting audibly its inarticulateness as it falls into the void, i.e., the “void” – incoherent but nonetheless frightening in its roaring stutter, echoed in the stutter that riddles HCE’s utterances. Joyce’s “bug” can be furthermore read as a homophone of ‘Bóg’ – ‘God’ in Polish – which reasserts its sacral aspect, and through the phonetic association with the river Bug (also a homophone of ‘Bóg’) androgynizes itself, as it enters into the intricate river symbolism of the text, the feminine sphere of the word that belongs to ALP (the Goddess, the mother, the wife, the sister, the lover, etc.). In fact, the voice of HCE can be often heard precisely in the voice of his wife ALP.<sup>3</sup> The androgynous deity – it can be also read as the gnostic

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3 Neither would this reading be lost on Joyce himself. A meticulous reader of world maps, he



spirit trapped in the endlessly circulating contaminated materiality of the fallen language – looms here as a shadow of yet another intertext entering the intertextual game. Thus, the sentence under scrutiny, parodying its intertext (“In the beginning ...”), establishes itself as a subtext, a matrix, a simulacrum parodying the whole text, the “cyclewheeling history” of *Finnegans wake* (Joyce 1964: 186) – its desire to name the ineffable, to unveil the word in the “void”, to de-void the Word. Since a fall presupposes a rise, there is yet another reading of the same sentence, using possibly Vico’s *The new science* as an interpretant (an interpreting intertext). Put differently, Joyce’s text filtered through Vico’s notion of genesis and the birth of human speech can be read as imitation of God’s voice in the thunder. Accordingly, it can be perceived not as a parody of its biblical intertext, but as reshaping itself towards its articulation – a manifestation of an emerging order, or at least a yearning for some such order. We see here ‘word’ collapsed into ‘void’, striving to redeem itself in its biblical intertext. It is also the Gnostic soul arising from materiality in its longing for the perfection of the prelapsarian condition. This reading strips Earwicker of his divinity in that his characteristic stutter may well signify imperfect humanity now. Yet, his desacralization is only superficial since throughout the text of *Finnegans wake* stuttering is also always identified with the voice of God, i.e., the voice of a stuttering God. This is how it/he will forever remain both human and divine. The fall and the rise – the basic elements of life and death, death and resurrection informing Joyce’s cosmos – remain not in a juxtapositional but in a supplemental relationship to each other. The rise is inscribed in the fall. We can say that Joyce’s text contains both the parody of its origin and a denial of such parody (or a desire of self-fulfillment in the parodied intertext). Hence, the ultimate meaning is always deferred and, paradoxically, captured at the very juncture of difference. The validity of such a reading finds its substantiation in the dialectics of the novel subsumed in the trope-like notion of the unity of the contraries. “Direct opposites, since they are evolved by a common power, are polarized for reunion by the coalescence of their antipathies. As opposites, nevertheless, their respective destinies will remain distinctly diverse” (Campbell and Robinson 1961: 89). Apparently, Joyce borrowed this conceptualization from Giordano Bruno, which indicates yet another intertext that could be usefully brought into play here.

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knew enough of the Slavic languages not to fail to see the shadow of divinity in the name of the Polish river Bug. The pan-Slavic form “Bog” (God) appears on page 449. Besides, Joyce lists such Slavic rivers as the Vistula (199), the Niemen (202), the Wieprz (204), the Prut (209), the Dniester (210); all of them in the vicinity of the river Bug. Cf. McHugh (1980).

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Since it derives from the science of sign, intertextuality is often appreciated in terms of literary semiotics and tends to be considered as part of comparative studies. Unlike comparative studies, though, disregarding sources, origins, and influences, it cuts across (all) boundaries, closures, and generic fields. In order to generate its own semiosis, a text may answer any random call of an intertext from far beyond any horizon of expectations or presuppositions. Replacing the source-hunting with its own ‘text-hunting’, intertextuality is also in danger of a happy paranoiac intellectualization. In other words, intertextuality calls for a system of constraints, rules or – to use Charles Sanders Peirce’s term – some “ground” on which to play its game. It is in this respect that Riffaterre’s studies are worthy of scrutiny. Riffaterre replaces the reading along the text/intertext linear axis (a common intertextual practice) with an intertextual model based on the triadic sign (sign, object, interpretant) proposed by C. S. Peirce for semiotics. In its skeleton outline, Peirce’s model assumes that a sign stands to somebody (the reader) for something (sign’s object) in some respect or capacity, creating in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, the interpretant.<sup>4</sup> In Riffaterre’s semiotic triangle, Peirce’s sign is the text (a subtext or a segment of the text) that is perceived as the homolog of an intertext (object). “It stands to the reader for the intertext in this respect that the meaning it conveys depends on the text’s mode of actualization of the intertext (completing, negating, reversing, etc. the representations composing the intertext)” (Riffaterre 1985: 44). The object of the literary sign (text) is the first intertext, whereas the interpretant is the second intertext, one that the text brings to bear on its relationship with the first text (object). The interpretant is “equivalent to, or more developed than, the text. It therefore also stands for the object but from another perspective indicated by, and derived from, a feature of the literary sign (i.e., a lexical or syntagmatic component of the text). This derivation is encoded in the text, enabling the reader permanently to retrieve the interpretation that generated it” (Riffaterre 1985: 44). In other words, this is building a semiotic system of literary interpretation that posits a three-way relationship: among the text, the primary intertext, and the secondary intertext (interpretant). The function of the latter is to mediate between the text and the intertext. It translates, interprets, or defines

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4 The most commonly cited Peirce’s definition of the sign reads as follows: “A sign or *representamen* is something which stands for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of that representamen” (Peirce 1932: 228).

the intertextual transformations. (My second reading of Joyce's "In the bugin-nin ..." through a feature from Vico's *The new science* may be taken as an approximation of the working of this triadic model.) Riffaterre also postulates that all three units should be variants of the same structural matrix. They should share not only the same lexis but also the same syntagmatic organization, which will result in a circular, oscillatory reading. This is extending a circular hermeneutics in that it contains the semiosis that Peircean interpretant generates within the field of intertextual self-reflexivity. Riffaterre concerns himself with small textual segments-subtexts, and his model provides for exemplary intertextual reading (as illustrated by his interpretations of a Kurt Vonnegut's subtext and a line from Achillini).<sup>5</sup> It also arrests a natural intertextual tendency – particularly that of deconstructive class – towards unbridled polysemy.

Intertextual reading seems to be predicated upon circularity, in that the texts are interchangeable, depending upon the perspective of perception. A reading based upon the Peircean triadic model in which the interpretant is not treated instrumentally, but is treated as a sign that in its own right produces in turn a subsequent triad, may issue forth a spirally unfolding paradigm that would accommodate texts larger than intratextual subtexts – separate texts – and channel their inevitable transformation(s). It would constitute a compromise between closed intertextuality and the waywardness of deconstructive semiosis. However, in order for such a paradigm to materialize, intertextuality should perhaps open itself up to more than mere discursive textual investigations. Except, for instance, Gérard Genette's study *Palimpsests* (original in French in 1982), intertextuality is mainly discourse-oriented. Consequently, we need to be sometimes admonished against confusing it with thematics, source-influence relationships, imitations, etc. If we assume that what meets the eye in a literary text is only a surface manifestation of the multiplicity of unseen but equally tangible signifieds shaping themselves into a total teleology, that a code is inseparable from text, or texture from structure, a paradigm generated by a thematic matrix would prompt into an intertextual play elements intrinsic to the unified poetics of form and content, of discourse and structure.

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Jorge Luis Borges claimed that he could recognize the voice of Franz Kafka (of *The castle*) in the texts of his precursors from diverse literatures and historical times: Zeno, Han Yu, Kierkegaard, Leon Bloy, Lord Dunsany. Since Borges's claim implies intertextuality, his conclusions deserve to be quoted in full.

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5 For a critique of Riffaterre's and Peirce's triad see Morgan (1985).

If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous selections I have enumerated resemble Kafka's work: if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other, and this fact is the significant one. Kafka's idiosyncrasy, in greater or lesser degree, is present in each of these writings, but if Kafka had never written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist. The poem "Fears and Scruples" by Browning is like a prophecy of Kafka's stories, but our reading of Kafka refines and changes our reading of the poem perceptibly. ... The fact is, that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation the identity or plurality of men matters not at all. The first Kafka of *Betrachtung* is less a precursor of the Kafka of the shadowy myths and atrocious institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany.

(Borges 1964: 108)

Note 1 cites T. S. Eliot's "Points of view" as the source of Borges's notion of literary tradition implied here. The fact that Kafka writes his precursors in as much as his precursors write Kafka is a veritable intertextual notion, as is the fact that all those writers may not know (of) one another at all. What is of interest here is the fact that Borges is using Kafka's text to read texts apparently not resembling one another. In other words, Kafka is used here as an interpretant to flesh out from his text a paradigm common to them all, whose matrix could be as much Kafka's shadowy myth as a Zeno's paradox. Given the interchangeability of texts, we may now assume Kafka's text as an inter-text discovered in Lord Dunsany's "Carcassonne" and select Zeno's 'paradox against time' as an interpretant of the intertextual transaction transpiring there(by). As its subsequent intertextual combination would articulate a variant of the same paradigm – the paradigm functioning as an interpretant, or a sign, subject to transformations – its matrix would of necessity remain indefinable, unless in very general terms, recognizable enough to accommodate a new text. Thus, we could supplement Borges's 'Kafka paradigm' with such works as Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's rainbow* (1973) and John Barth's *The sot-weed factor* (1960), or such unlikely works as Robert Coover's *Spanking the maid* (1982) and Jan Potocki's *The manuscript found in Saragossa* (c. 1805-1814) – not so unlikely any more, in fact, as they would bear on Kafka's *The castle* (1922).

What obtains in Borges's text can be reformulated in terms of the Peircean triad, paying now particular attention to his concept of the "ground". A sign, "a representamen", stands for its object "not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of that representamen" (Peirce 1932: 228). It becomes clear, then, that the "ground" participates in the process of signification which is inscribed in the triad and thus in the semiosis generated by that triad. In James Mark Baldwin's *Dictionary of philosophy and psychology* (1902), Peirce defined a sign as "any-thing which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which it itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on ad

infinitum” (Sheriff 1989: 58). All of this transpires, it should be noted, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, i.e., within a certain “ground”.

The interpretant (“secondary intertext”) being produced, determined by the sign (text) as that sign’s (text’s) ‘equivalent’, selects, indicates, defines or ‘interprets’ for that sign (that text) its object (“primary intertext”) – merging them, so to speak, into one entity. It marks its difference transforming itself into a sign (text) for which that new entity is an object (“primary intertext”). In order to explain for itself its own semantic relationship with that object (“primary intertext”) it must now produce an interpretant (“secondary intertext”). It is an endless process, but one that delimits its signification with a system of determinants. It builds itself into a ground – indeed: into a paradigm. Each subsequent sign being a configuration of a prior sign entering with that sign into a signifying process produces a ground, an idea (in fact, a sign). Since these signs are presupposed, prefigured or otherwise determined by yet prior system of signs, then the ground they produce must be a variant of the ground for the whole signifying process. A text sending forth its interpretant may modify or contradict its intertext, but as that interpretant transforms itself into the text, it also acknowledges and reinforces the ground from which it derives and of which it is a variant. The ground is the paradigm – a signifying process transforming itself into its own variants defined by the signification it produces. It allows the signs to enter into any signifying variety of configurations but it also provides them with a field of rules, a field on which they may play their game.<sup>6</sup> But inasmuch as the ground is the function of these configurations, it is the signifying process that sets these rules – as it generates the ground. We are dealing here with a self-reflexive system capable of regulating itself as it is presupposes and absorbs new elements. This will result, to invoke T. S. Eliot again, in the alteration of the whole order, even if ever so slightly. The process sets in motion those particular feedback activities that involve intertextual reading. To discover Kafka’s ‘idiosyncrasy’ in the welter of heterogeneous texts is only a part of the game. For the intertextual reading to complete itself, it is necessary to discover the traces of these intertexts in Kafka, and through Kafka in other texts, so that there may be established a ground common for them all. Importantly, any of these texts is potentially capable of substituting Kafka as a matrix for the ground. This is precisely what is meant by ‘plenitude’ of intertextual readings.

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6 According to Sheriff (1989: 95), Peirce’s ground and Wittgenstein’s language games are similar, if not exactly the same: “Language games as rule-governed activities provide the frame of reference for all use of linguistic signs. ‘When a language game changes, then there is a change in concept, the meaning of words changes’. The meaning of a poem or any other sign always involves a ground (Peirce sometimes substitutes the term ‘idea’) or a language game that it produces or modifies. These games are public, shared, part of one’s culture and controlled by rules; the choice of a language game that determines the meaning of sign is, however, private and not controlled by rules”.

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