

From Narrative Narcissism to Distributed Intelligence

Reflexivity as Cognitive Instrument in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

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Our wholemole millwheeling vicocicrometer, a tetradomational gazeboctoticon...autokinatonetically preprovided with a clappercoupling smeltingworks expressive process. (Joyce 1939: 614.27-31)¹

This essay focuses on ways in which the final episode of James Joyce's Finnegans Wake (sometimes called "the ricorso") exhibits a deep, constitutive reflexivity. At issue is a propensity for self-characterization that surfaces in repeated specifications of Joyce's text by the text itself. Despite the chapter's reflexive (and more specifically recursive) profile, however, my essay disputes the further inference that the text's self-specifications are tantamount to hermetic self-enclosure. The Wake is not, I contend, a metafictional or proto-metafictional experiment marked by semiotic introversion—e.g., by a bottomless stratification of the text into (self-replicating) levels. Instead, adapting a phrase from Louis Mink and drawing on research pertaining to distributed cognition, I suggest that Wakean reflexivity functions as a cognitive instrument—specifically, a tool for distributing intelligent activity through time and space.

Precisely by commenting on its sources and detailing its own compositional mechanisms, Joyce's final episode suggests the porousness of the border between textual artifacts and their interpretive contexts. In this sense, the reflexivity of the chapter can be characterized as "lateral" in nature. Focusing on the linguistic, textual, and narrative protocols required for its own processing, the episode enhances its own capacity to distribute intelligence among textual designs, interpreters making sense of those designs, and the larger, transindividual environment or gestalt in which the activity of making-sense-of-textual-designs unfolds.

At least since Samuel Beckett's contribution to the *Examination* of what James Joyce then referred to as his *Work in Progress*, commentators have

¹ I follow standard critical practice in citing both the page and line numbers of passages from Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

stressed how the ideas of Giambattista Vico find expression in *Finnegans Wake*. In particular, critics have suggested that the seventeenth and final chapter of the *Wake*, standardly referred to as the “Ricorso,” can be read as a structural and thematic analogue to the fourth of Vico’s four cycles of history (Frye 1987; McHugh 1991).² At issue is the *ricorso* or return of chaos that comes after the poetic, aristocratic, and demotic phases of the historical cycle, and that initiates yet another round of historical development (Frye 4-5). In passages like the one that I have selected for my epigram, Joyce’s final chapter seems to invite a Viconian diagnosis of its own status vis-à-vis the *Wake* as a whole.

In turn, by suggesting a Viconian basis for the final episode, the epigram bears demonstrably on the origins, structure, and import of the larger text of which it forms a part. It thus indicates how Joyce’s chapter exhibits a deep, constitutive reflexivity—a propensity for self-characterization that surfaces in repeated specifications of Joyce’s text by the text itself. In this way, as I argue in more detail in sections 1 and 2 below, the episode invites comparison not only with a Viconian conception of “return” but also with post-Viconian work on notions of *recursivity*, which involves structures or processes capable of operating on their own output. Despite the chapter’s reflexive (and more specifically recursive) profile, however, I dispute the further inference that the text’s self-specifications are tantamount to hermetic self-enclosure. The *Wake* is not, I contend, a metafictional or proto-metafictional experiment marked by semiotic introversion—e.g., by a bottomless stratification of the text into (self-replicating) levels.³ Although Joyce’s text does prompt intensive reflection on the linguistic, textual, and narrative codes regulating its design and interpretation, the *Wake*’s formal profile does not warrant the claim that it is exclusively or even primarily auto-representational in focus or effect.

² In Italian, *ricorso* can mean “recourse” and “petition” as well as “recurrence” (Ragazzini 1968). The word *ricorso*, or rather a variant of the term (cf. *ricorso* + *rococo* + *course* + *-ing*), occurs only once in chapter 17 of the *Wake*: “And house with heaven roof occupanters they are continually attraverse of its millettstudinous windows, ricocoursing themselves, as staneglass on stoneglass, inplayn unglisch Wynn’s Hotel!” (609.13-16, my emphasis).

³ My approach thus contrasts with the aim imputed to the essays collected in Attridge and Ferrer (1984): “not to produce a reading of [Joyce’s] intractable text, to make it more familiar and exorcise its strangeness, but on the contrary to confront its unreadability” (quoted by Norris 1992: 23). In question is the best strategy to use for interpreting the *Wake* among other, similarly highly reflexive fictions. Rather than consigning Joyce’s work to the category of monumentally unreadable texts, I focus on the cognitive properties arising from the system that the text helps constitute when readers engage with it during interpretive transactions. I thus try to make a case here for construing Joycean reflexivity as a tool for thinking—i.e., as an artifact whose intelligence-boosting powers derive from its relation to a larger system for generating and propagating representations through time and space (cf. Herman 2003, forthcoming; see also my next note).

Instead, adapting a phrase from Louis Mink (1978) and drawing on research pertaining to distributed cognition, I suggest that Wakean reflexivity functions as a cognitive instrument—specifically, a tool for distributing intelligent activity through time and space.⁴ Precisely by commenting on its sources (“the heroticisms, catastrophes and eccentricities transmitted by the ancient legacy of the past, type by tope, letter from litter, word at word” [614.35 – 615.1]) and detailing its own compositional mechanisms (“the dialytically separated elements of precedent decomposition for the verypetpurpose of subsequent recombination” [614.33-35]), the final episode suggests the porousness of the border between textual artifacts and their interpretive contexts. The reflexivity of *Finnegans Wake* makes it a text that affords cues for its own processing. The *Wake* thereby enhances its own capacity to distribute intelligence among textual designs, interpreters making sense of those designs, and the larger, transindividual environment or gestalt in which the activity of making-sense-of-textual-designs unfolds.

Hence, in parallel with research that questions earlier (e.g. formalist) paradigms positing a polar opposition between text and context, my approach suggests that artifacts like Joyce’s should instead be viewed as components of a larger gestalt or functional system. By enabling or enhancing the propagation of representational states, such systems generate cognitive properties irreducible to those of their individual

⁴ Mink (1978) focused on narrative as an instrument of mind, describing it as “a primary and irreducible form of human comprehension, an article in the constitution of common sense” (132). More specifically, Mink argued that narrative alone can identify and describe aspects of the world in a way that makes constant and necessary reference to their location in some process of development (146). In this essay, I build on Mink’s ideas to characterize reflexive fictions like the *Wake* as tools for thinking—more precisely as instruments for distributing intelligence within systems or gestalts that are “smarter” than any of their components taken alone.

⁴ In this context, I use the terms intelligence, intelligent activity, problem solving, thinking, and cognition more or less synonymously, adopting Rogoff’s (1990) definition of intelligence as the socially supported ability to solve problems grounded in particular domains of activity. In turn, Rogoff builds on a larger research tradition that stems from the work of Lev Vygotsky (cf. Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1985, 1998). According to this tradition, instead of being abstract, individualistic, and ratiocinative, thinking in its most basic form is grounded in particular situations, socially distributed, and targeted at specific purposes or goals. Building on the same tradition, Hutchins (1995, 1999) elaborates the concept of “cognitive artifacts,” i.e., constructed or found objects or structures that provide representational tools for understanding and managing the complexities of experience. My discussion of reflexive fictions as tools for thinking echoes Hutchins’ account, according to which various sorts of representational tools help organize problem-solving activities into functional systems. I also draw on Hutchins’ (1995) understanding of cognition as computation taken in a broad sense—such that the idea of “computation” is “as applicable to events that involve the interaction of humans with artifacts and with other humans as it is to events that are entirely internal to individual persons... For our purposes, ‘computation’ will be taken... to refer to the propagation of representational state[s] across representational media” (118).

components (textual designs, interpreters, contexts of interpretation). The thinking whole is smarter than the thinking parts. Further, the intelligence of the system cannot be localized in any one of its components, but is rather distributed throughout the network of representations supported by the gestalt.

The remainder of my essay uses Joyce's episode to flesh out this general understanding of texts and contexts as part of an overarching functional gestalt or system for thinking; my contention is that, rather than opting out of systems of this sort, highly reflexive texts like Joyce's actually make them smarter. Section 1 sketches a diachronic approach, commenting on how Joyce's text enables the distribution of intelligence through time. In particular, I examine how the reflexivity of the *Wake*, by grafting its textual designs onto developments in neighboring fields of inquiry contemporaneous with Joyce's text, helps propagate representations through historical space. Section 2 focuses on synchronic dimensions of Joycean reflexivity. Here I recast the putative narcissism of the *Wake* as a sociosemiotic system that affords structure for readers' current-day transactions with the text. That structure helps distribute intelligence among Joyce's textual designs and the sense-making activities of interpreters engaging with those designs; the *Wake*'s self-specifications thus help constitute a larger system for thinking in the here and now (cf. Herman forthcoming). Finally, section 3 outlines some broader implications of my approach for notions of postmodern reflexivity, building on earlier work (Herman 2000) to suggest that texts like Joyce's necessitate the development of a theory of "lateral" reflexivity.

Joycean Reflexivity in Diachronic Perspective

On the one hand, the *Wake*'s reflexive profile links it with contemporaneous theoretical developments in fields such as (meta)mathematics, logic, and language theory. Accordingly, what might *prima facie* appear to be a wholly autorepresentational project is better construed as a means for anchoring the text in the discursive environments from which it emerged—and with which the form as well as the content of the text prompt interpreters to affiliate it. The text's very reflexivity is, in other words, a vehicle for spreading representations outward, into its contexts of production and reception.

In this connection, the recursivity of the "Ricorso" is of paramount importance. In the decades preceding the publication of Joyce's text, investigators in a number of fields had begun laying the groundwork for theories of recursivity that in turn constituted the basis for models of generative grammar and modern computational technologies, among other

initiatives. In particular, metamathematical inquiry had stimulated research into recursive definitions—definitions that set out “a direction for the formation of definitions, [or provide a] general rule by which...individual definitions...are formed” (Waismann 1959: 80). A property of both formal and natural languages, recursivity, as it had begun to be characterized by early twentieth-century logicians and mathematicians, is what makes those languages (or sign-systems) susceptible to the repeated application of the rules that generate them, and so accounts for their inherent creativity and adaptability.⁵

This cross-disciplinary work on recursivity underlies Chomsky’s early generativist models of language as a “discrete combinatorial system,” in which “a finite number of discrete elements [e.g., words] are sampled, combined and permuted to create larger structures [e.g., sentences] with properties that are quite distinct from those of their elements” (Pinker 1995: 84; cf. Chomsky 1957, 1964).⁶ As a recursively organized system, the grammar of a language has the capacity to operate on its own output and thereby produce such complex strings (in English) as The long deferred, far overdue, keenly anticipated, eagerly awaited, etc., etc., conclusion to this sentence. The grammaticality of the preceding string can be accounted for by the recursive application of the adjective- and adverb-insertion rules that form part of the structure of the English language, and that allow for an (in principle) infinite sequence of adjectives or adverbial phrases to be placed before a noun (cf. Crystal 1991: 292).

Analogously, and as I discuss in more detail in my next section, Joyce’s episode unfolds as a series of directives for framing interpretations of its own linguistic, textual, and narrative features, and of the relations between those features. Sharing with contemporary logical, linguistic, and metamathematical research a concern with recursive functions,

⁵ For more information on early twentieth-century work on the foundations of mathematics, proof theory, and recursive definitions, see Bernays (1967) and Rey-Debove (1978). Furthermore, note that in the “Ricorso” itself, Joyce mentions “Jørgen Jargonsen” (621.22)—i.e., Jørgen Jørgensen. McHugh (1991: 621) observes that Jørgensen, a Danish philosopher and logician, studied Aborigines’ vocabularies. But beyond this Jørgensen also published a 1931 *Treatise of Formal Logic* in three volumes (see Jørgensen 1951), as well as research concerned with a variety of metamathematical issues (e.g., Jørgensen 1932).

⁶ Thus, in Brown and Miller’s (1982) characterization of Chomsky’s early generative framework, whereas “any language has a limited number of basic syntactic constructions,” nonetheless “embedding and recursion allow an endlessly vast scaffolding” on which to hang “different combinations of lexical items” (122). In this framework, the sentences of a language form part of a “recursive set,” definable as follows: “A set of objects, e.g., numbers that can be enumerated but for which there exists no procedure for determining whether a given object is a member of that set is a recursively enumerable set. A set of objects for which such a procedure exists is called a recursive set” (Brown and Miller 1982: 125).

the *Wake* re-applies to its own forms and themes the linguistic, textual, and narrative rule-systems that enabled its production, thereby generating several kinds or rather levels of self-representation. Joyce's work uses language to characterize the grammatical and semantic properties of language; exploits its identity as a written text to comment on the nature and scope of textuality itself; and builds into its narration of characters, situations, and events metanarrative indicators that bear on the structure and uses of narrative in general, Joyce's own narrative in particular. In this way, the reflexivity of the chapter, rather than truncating or even severing its relations with other socio-semiotic domains, multiplies its points of contact with surrounding theoretical developments, discourse genres, and modes of inquiry.

Joycean reflexivity is thus an instrument for grasping the embeddedness of the text in the discourses that helped give it shape and on which it in turn had a shaping effect. Paradoxically enough, the *Wake*'s self-reflexive profile is what allows the work to spread or distribute representations across the larger network of texts and contexts in which it is situated, and by means of which current-day readers can measure the historical distance separating Joyce's time from their own. History breaches the text through its strategies for self-representation; what might on first blush seem to be evidence of an esoteric formalism in fact gives the text its exoteric force, its purchase on the wider world.

Joycean Reflexivity in Synchronic Perspective

On the other hand, reflexivity of the "The Ricorso" helps distribute intelligence not just diachronically or "vertically," by spreading representations throughout the network of texts and contexts defining historical space, but also synchronically or "horizontally," by structuring readers' interpretive transactions with the text in the here and now. Providing parameters for its own processing, the text in effect delocalizes itself; the reflexivity of the episode situates Joyce's chapter in the interstices between readers, contexts for reading, and the text's own formal and thematic designs. In other words, rather than closing the chapter in on itself, the reflexivity of the episode serves to embed Joyce's textual artifact, in a specific way, within a larger functional gestalt—within an interpretive transaction whose cognitive properties cannot be reduced to those of any of its components taken alone.

In characterizing how the text's self-specifications function as a cognitive instrument in this sense, I build on Hutcheon's (1984 [1980]) account of diegetic and linguistic modes of reflexivity in the fiction that she construes as being, "in some dominant or constitutive way, self-refer-

ring or autorepresentational” (xii). To Hutcheon’s two broad categories of reflexivity I add a third, metatextual reflexivity, to designate strategies by which Joyce’s episode refers to or comments on its own status as a (written) text. Although the present section thus outlines modes of reflexivity in the episode, my chief concern is less typological than functional. At issue is how the metalinguistic (section 2.1), metatextual (section 2.2), and metanarrative (section 2.3) dimensions of the *Wake* help constitute a system for thinking—a knowledge-generating gestalt associated with its design as well as its interpretation (section 2.4).

2.1 Metalinguistic Dimensions

Jakobson (1960) attributed a metalinguistic function to expressions oriented primarily toward the communicative code itself. Thus, the following utterance would carry a (predominantly) metalinguistic function in Jakobson’s terms: In English the word dog refers to a four-legged animal. Likewise, Joyce’s “Ricorso” manifests a metalinguistic profile, involving both a general emphasis on language as a medium for communication and a series of quasi-grammatical locutions scattered throughout the chapter.

For example, ALP in her closing monologue describes Shem-Shaun as “Dogging you [HCE] round cove and haven and teaching me the parts of speech” (620.33-34). Earlier in the chapter the narrator includes an apostrophe to “Be! Verb umprincipiant through the transitive spaces!” (594.2-3). There are also passages that either comment on or else enact changes of verbal tense and mood (“Then’s now with now’s then in tense continuant. Heard. Who having has he shall have had. Hear!” [598.28-29]; “their ilks and their orts and their everythings that is be will was theirs” [599.1-2]), as well as passages that focus on syncategorematic expressions and discourse particles, such as prepositions and connectives, whose meaning derives from their functions in sentence-level syntax or in more extended stretches of talk (“among hosesoes, cheriotiers and etceterogenous bargainboutsbarrows, ofver and umnder, since, evenif or although, in double preposition as in triple conjunction” [595.23-25]; “And in effect, as?” [615.11]; cf. “Tunc” ‘then’.... “quoniam” ‘since, now’.... “uptiam” ‘anyway’” [611.4; 10; 25]). Other passages work to conflate the characteristics of synthetic or inflected languages (like Latin) with those of analytic or uninflected languages (like English), as in “our hugibus hugibum” (598.34) and “Petrificationibus! O horild haraflare!

Who his dickhuns now rearrexes from underneath the memorialorum” (610.3-4).⁷

The narrator also comments on the various semantic roles that can be fulfilled by nouns—“Every those personal place objects if nonthings where soevers” (598.1)—and also on the grammatical and conceptual requirements for using one subset of nouns, i.e., names: “when a nam nought a nam whenas it is a” (607.11-12). Indeed, as this last quotation suggests, the chapter at times concerns itself, metasyntactically, with the conditions for well-formed sentences. There are thus concatenations of words—e.g., “Yet clarify begins at” (594.12)—that disrupt and so thematize the syntactic patterning of spoken as well as written English. More generally, one of the themes of the chapter is the scope and nature of the medium—language—in which its subject-matter takes shape.

2.2 Text as Metatext

Furthermore, the episode reflects on its own status as a member of that particular species of language use commonly called (written) texts.⁸ For instance, the appearance of Shawn the “latterman” produce a slightly revised version of the Lord’s prayer—“Bring us this days our maily bag!” (603.7-8)—and so encodes within the chapter indications of its own role as a written message, a “sound sense sympol” (612.29). But more than this, the episode features representations of the accoutrements as well as the activity of writing. Many passages could be instanced as representations, within Joyce’s text, of the production of written texts. Take the following rhetorical question: “What will not arky paper, anticidingly inked with penmark, push, per sample prof, kuvertly falted when style, stink and stigmataphoron are of one sum in the same person?” (603.25-28). The concern with penning, and transcription more generally, figures in other passages as well: “Pens picture at Manchem House Horsegardens shown in Morning post as from Boston transcripped” (617.22-23); “The rare view from the three Benns under the bald heaven is...something to write hume about” (606.14-16). Elsewhere, the text literalizes the metaphor according to which thinking is a form of mental notetaking: “if you know your Bristol and have trudged the trolly ways and elventurns of that old cobbled city, you will sortofficially scribble a mental Peny-Knox-Gore” (606.17-19).

⁷ Herman (1995: 56-58) comments on analogously reflexive features of the “Sirens” chapters of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, linking them to the shared concerns of modernist fiction and contemporaneous theories of language.

⁸ For the purposes of this analysis, I adopt Brown and Yule’s (1983) definition of texts as “verbal record[s] of...communicative act[s]” (6)

In addition, in her monologue ALP speaks of all that went into her composition of the message-in-a-bottle that she floats towards HCE, “Carried in a caddy or screwed and corked....With a bob, bob, bottle-by”: “Sometime then, somewhere there, I wrote me hopes and buried the page when I heard Thy voice” (624.1-5). Indeed, ALP advises that HCE

watch would the letter you’re wanting be coming may be. And cast ashore. That I prays for be mains of me draims. Scratching it and patching at with a prompt from a primer. And what scrips of nutsnolleges I pecked up me meself. Every letter is a hard but yours sure is the hardest crux ever....But once done, dealt and delivered, tattat, you’re on the map. Rased on the traumascript from Maston, Boss. (623.29-36)

Like the structures and functions of language generally, then, the design and interpretation of written texts figure as privileged themes of Joyce’s last episode. The information about writing presented in the episode is in turn applicable to the particular instance of writing that presents that information. Or, to invoke a computational analogy that underscores the recursivity of this “Ricorso”: the episode, as an output of the writing procedures it specifies, functions too as an input for the procedures readers use to interpret it as a piece of writing.

2.3 A Narrative about Narratives

The chapter contains, however, even more exacting self-specifications, persistently signalling its status as a textual manifestation of language that is also narratively organized. The text includes a variety of what might be termed metanarrative indicators, i.e., prompts, contained within the narrative itself, that suggest how to construe the nature and functions of stories (cf. Prince 1992). Thus, when ALP (re)tells her and HCE’s tale by remarking that “One time you’d stand fornenst me....And one time you’d rush upon me....Three times in all...” (626.21-26), the use of explicit temporal markers in ALP’s embedded or hypodiegetic narrative emphasizes how stories involve the concatenation of otherwise discrete events into sequences. The text also offers fullblown descriptions of the tellability—that is, the noteworthiness and hence suitability for conveying in a narrative—of the events recounted in *Finnegans Wake* as a whole:

Of all the stranger things that ever not even in the hundrond and badst pageans of unthowent and wonst nice or in eddas and oddes bokes of tomb, dyke and hollow to be have happened! The untireties of livesliving being the one substance of a streamsbecoming. Totalled in tolteld and teldtold in tittletattle tale. (597.4-9)

The chapter contains, as well, a version of the formulaic narrative opening “It was a dark and stormy night....”; the comparative prolixity of Joyce’s version, though, suggests how stories, piggybacking on the recursivity built into language as a semiotic system, accommodate a virtually unlimited amount of expansion and customization: “It was a long, very long, a dark, very dark, an allburt unend, scarce endurable, and we could add mostly quite various and somenwhat stumbltumbling night” (598.6-9).

The lexicon of the episode is, furthermore, rich with designations for narrative or its absence, including “our oldhame story,” “Tobecontinued’s tale” and “balladproof” (616.4; 626.18; 616.32). In fact, as ALP’s closing remarks to HCE suggest, the setting of the episode is not just a “lanscape” (595.4), but more specifically an environment whose spatiotemporal coordinates can be defined through stories. Narratives become in effect the basic substance of the Wakean world, and stories the atoms of experience: “I will tell you all sorts of makeup things, strangerous. And show you to every simple storyplace we pass” (625.3-6).⁹

Significantly, one of the narrative constituents of chapter 17—part of that “sameold gamebold adomic structure of our Finnius the old One, as highly charged with electrons as hophazards can effective it” (615.6-8)—is *Finnegans Wake* itself. Thus Muta adverts to the very text in which he figures as a partner in dialogue: “An I could peeceive amonkst the gatherings who ever they wolk in process?” (609.30-31, my emphasis). Likewise, with its emphasis on wholes, wheels, and cycles—“wholemole millwheeling vicociclotometer”—the self-descriptive passage on the “smeltingworks exprogressive process” that I used for my epigram thematizes the logic of recursion enacted by this very passage, which effectively inserts a miniature copy or replica *of* the text *into* the text itself.¹⁰

⁹ Note the parallel between Joyce’s emphasis on stories as the ultimate constituents of experience and the “philosophy of process” that Alfred North Whitehead was developing during the years in which Joyce composed his *Work in Progress*. In *Process and Reality*, published the same year as the *Exagmination* edited by Beckett, what Whitehead characterized as a Newtonian focus on particular sensible objects gives way to an ontology of occasions and events: “the actual world is built up of actual occasions; and... whatever things there are in any sense of ‘existence,’ are derived by abstraction from actual occasions. I shall use the term ‘event’ in the more general sense of a nexus of actual occasions, inter-related in some determinate fashion in one extensive quantum” (Whitehead 1929: 113).

¹⁰ Compare, in this connection, McHale’s comments on “Chinese-box worlds,” suggestions of infinite regress, and the other fictional strategies that he associates explicitly with recursive structures in postmodernist fiction (McHale 1987: 112-30). However, in insisting on the cognitive benefits of Joycean reflexivity, my argument cuts against the grain of McHale’s suggestion that postmodern fictional experimentation is defined by its predominantly ontological (rather than

Joyce's last chapter also includes within itself an account of how it completes, or rather does not complete, the polysemic text that readers both are and are not coming to the end of:

What has gone? How it ends?

Begin to forget it. It will remember itself from every sides, with all gestures, in each our word. (614.19-21)

The *it* contained in these sentences relates anaphorically to the very narrative—*Finnegans Wake*—in which the preposition functions as an anaphor.

2.4 Interpretive Transactions as Systems for Distributing

Intelligence

If a text includes, more or less pervasively and explicitly, protocols for its own interpretation, then the boundary between what is inside and what is outside the text must be viewed as gradient and fuzzy, rather than binarized and clear-cut. By the same token, reflexivity of the sort discussed in sections 2.1 – 2.3 not only throws into doubt the formalist polarization of texts and contexts, but also suggests how the text/context distinction itself can be reconstituted as a statistical distribution or spread of representational states across representational media, to revert to Hutchins' (1995) terms. At issue is a system of representation-generating and –transmitting components thanks to which the process of cognition can be co-enacted by multiple agents, textual and contextual as well as human. If this system eludes description in formalist terms, which privilege text over context, its characterization also requires moving beyond reader-response theorists' efforts to accentuate context.¹¹

epistemological) import.

¹¹ Reader-response theorists have done much to counteract the formalist dissociation of texts and contexts, insisting that the poetics of literary and other texts be set up on a transactional basis. Whereas formalists such as the New Critics argued against what they termed "the affective fallacy," or the fallacy of confusing a text with how it affects readers (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1992 [1949]), for theorists such as Rosenblatt (1978) and Iser (1979) textual designs must be studied with constant reference to how those designs trigger readers' interpretive activity. The formalists had made the domain of interpretation wholly parasitic on the domain of the text; for Rosenblatt and Iser the domain of the text and the domain of interpretive activity are mutually constitutive. Meanwhile, Fish (1980) stakes out an anti-formalist position, reweighting the text-context polarity such that context becomes all. For Fish, the domain of interpretation at once circumscribes and constitutes the domain of the text; readers, or rather interpretive communities, must actively configure (what they recognize as) semiotic cues into texts, which would not exist at all without their structuring, text-creating practices. As I discuss in the present subsection, however, reflexivity of the sort found in Joyce's "Ricorso" suggests the need to reconfigure the text/context distinction itself as a matrix of representational systems and processes that subsumes textual artifacts, contexts of interpretation, and interpreting readers.

At a given point in the unfolding of the episode, the text's formal designs, its surrounding semiotic and cultural environs, or its readers may be carrying more or less of the representational load that must be borne for the text to be interpreted. But at no point are any of these components wholly void of cognitive properties, which arise from their synergistic interplay with one another and in the context of the system a whole. Thus support for the interpretation of Joycean reflexivity derives, in varying degrees over the course of the chapter's development, from the text's formal self-specifications, from its embeddedness in a constellation of discourses concerned with the problem of reflexivity in general and recursivity in particular, and from the textual, generic, historical, and other, more broadly cognitive competencies and dispositions of its readers. Further, the distinctive "thumbprint" of this system for thinking derives from the interaction of all these components during the reading experience, with every such textually enabled system involving different modes and degrees of interaction between the components at issue.

The reflexivity of Joyce's text, then, affords it with a particular cognitive thumbprint. By virtue of its metalinguistic, metatextual, and metanarrative self-specifications, Joyce's episode incorporates structural representations of the text into its own surface structures. It thereby distributes those representations across a wider array of functional components than would be the case with a text exhibiting less self-reflexivity. Furthermore, as I have suggested in the previous subsections, the chapter's self-representations are recursively organized, with the multiple, interacting systems that generate the "Ricorso's" linguistic, textual, and narrative structures operating on their own output to produce language about language, a text focusing on textuality, and a narrative concerned with storytelling. The reflexivity of the chapter is thus of a particular, highly differentiated sort, yielding several sets of (interlocking) interpretive protocols. These protocols jointly contribute to a system for thinking in which the textual artifact itself carries more of the representational burden than would a work without benefit of this nested structure of metalinguistic, metatextual, and metanarrative cues. Accordingly, to better sift out the reader's specific contributions to systems for thinking enabled by texts, reader-response theorists would do well to consider how the role of the reader co-varies with changes in the make-up of the larger representational gestalts of which reader, textual artifacts, and contexts of interpretation are all ingredients. The text, and not just the reader, is an intelligent agent, as is the situation of the text in the network of discourses from it derives part of its identity and effect.

3. Toward a Lateral Reflexivity

In an earlier essay (Herman 2000), I discussed how another self-reflexive text—namely, Patrick Modiano’s 1968 novel *La Place de l’étoile*—also refuses to be read as a full-fledged auto-representation, a text that closes in on itself through techniques of self-representation. Instead, Modiano’s novel displays a “lateral” mode of reflexivity. Openly exhibiting its status as an assemblage of story-versions, the novel anchors itself in the ongoing, transtextual process of telling and retelling stories. Precisely by engaging in multiple self-paraphrases, the form of Modiano’s text inserts the narrative into the social circulation of stories, while also illuminating how that circulation works.

As Joyce’s “Ricorso” suggests, however, lateral reflexivity encompasses a wider range of story artifacts and interpretive processes than those emerging from narratives like Modiano’s—i.e., from narratives that insist on their own status as particular versions, among many other possible versions, of situations and events. As Joyce’s episode demonstrates, there is in fact a wide variety of metanarrative indicators, many of them highlighting aspects of narrative other than its version-making potential. In addition, metalinguistic and metatextual modes of reflexivity can play an equally crucial role in distributing intelligence through space and time; these sorts of features, too, serve to lateralize reflexivity such that a text, just by specifying protocols for its own interpretation, reaches beyond itself. A task for future research is to establish a fuller inventory of the formal designs promoting such lateralization, as a route to understanding the systems for thinking that lateral reflexivity in turn helps generate. In this connection, the approach to distributed intelligence developed by Rogoff (1990), Hutchins (1995, 1999), Wertsch (1985, 1998), and others working within the (broadly) Vygotskian research tradition promises to provide important resources. That work suggests that inquiry into reflexive fictions like Joyce’s forms part of a broader research endeavor: namely, the study of how artifacts of various kinds participate in larger representational systems; how the artifacts afford structure for those systems; and how in turn the artifacts acquire from the systems distinctive, cognition-enhancing properties, thereby becoming tools for thinking.

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