

Of course I know you are a viry vikid girl to go in the dreemplace" (527.4–6). Yet the narrator's equally frequent self-mockery establishes identification and sympathy between the narrator and the reader, who are lost together in the world of the *Wake*. Similarly, if I refer interchangeably in this essay to "Joyce" and "the narrator," it is because no clear distinction between the two (or rather, between an intrusive author and his various narrators) is maintained in *Finnegans Wake*.³

Among theorists and Joyceans, the knowledge that in revising the *Wake* Joyce deliberately sought to make its language increasingly dense, obscure, and elaborate has only encouraged the attitude that reading this book is an exercise in futility. Even so influential and insightful a critic of fiction and its relationship to the reader as Wayne Booth, in his pioneering book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), claimed that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are works that "cannot be read; they can only be studied" (325). As for students and other readers, the Joyce industry with all of its extensive guidebooks to understanding Joyce and his world has been perhaps more obstacle than aid. John Henry Raleigh, himself the author of a guidebook to *Ulysses*, admits that "such guides . . . can intimidate the beginning student of their subject" (10). He humorously imagines the conscientious student trying to wade through all of the Joycean guides: "What I have in mind is an ideal student with an ideal desire to use all the resources of the Master. . . . My hypothetical student sits down at his desk, the text of *Ulysses* open before him, his reference books arranged about the text. . . . He can

either engage a friend to turn the pages for him or, if he has some money, he can buy mechanical book-page turners" (9). If this is the case

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authorial addresses to the "dear reader" and gives it a new spin, reflecting the influences of Fielding and especially Sterne in Joyce's

bold new postmodernist world. After reexamining Fielding's and Sterne's influential invocations of the reader, as well as some relevant major critical statements about the reader, I shall consider authorial addresses to readers at various points in the *Wake*, and finally focus on a key section consisting of two successive chapters in which Joyce addresses himself more persistently and directly to the reader than he does anywhere else in his canon.⁵

wanted to do in *Tom Jones*, but as an invitation to join in the fictional, comic fun, much as in *Tristram Shandy*. Betty Rizzo's description of reading *Tristram Shandy* can be applied equally well to the *Wake*: "The game consists of following blindly without map or instructions through each advance, retreat, or digression while at the same time trying to savor fully each jest, double meaning, or allusion" (67). And John Preston argues that *Tristram Shandy* was the culmination of the

eighteenth-century process by which the best novelists gave more and

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in *The Implied Reader*, however, and thus misses the similar connection between innovative self-consciousness and direct addresses to the reader in the *Wake*; instead, he gives detailed attention to parody and allusion in *Ulysses*. Iser sees the reader as *guided* by texts. Pieter Bekker notes that the *Wake* is partly "a burlesqued commentary on the Wakean text and on the reader's encounter with the text" (189), adding, "This is not the sort of thing Iser meant when he described reading as an activity guided by the text" (190).

The reader's activity in the *Wake* is meant to be playful, partaking

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“making it up as we go along” (268.n.2). He leaves it perhaps deliberately unclear as to whether he is talking about the reader or about himself (or both) when he remarks, “O, you were excruciated, in honour bound to the cross of your own cruelfiction!” (192.17–19)—and also when he calls his book an “Impassable tissue of improbable liyers!” (499.19), and asks, “What static babel is this, tell us?” (499.34). Moreover, Joyce deconstructs the author/reader polarity completely by addressing not only his “dear reader,” but the “gentle writer” himself: “I can tell you something more than that, drear writer” (476.20–21). Joyce muddies his waters even further by appearing to interrupt his own narrator: “So you were saying, boys? Anyhow he what?” (380.6). He confesses his own ignorance in another footnote: “I’m blest if I can

Concerning HCE’s murky crime, which seems to lurk at the very center of the *Wake*, it is freely admitted that “little headway, if any, was made in solving the wasnotto be crime conundrum” (85.21–22). As for Joyce’s

FINNEGANS WAKE

This tortuous but rich rhetorical triangle—the author/reader/text

entire section of the *Wake* consisting of two successive chapters: the last chapter of the first book (104–25) and the first chapter of the second book (126–68). The former is ALP's letter—a synecdoche standing for

dozen questions and answers.¹⁴ ALP's letter is a manual for reading the whole *Wake*, with a particularly concentrated collection of invocations of

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they are not justified, those gloompourers who grouse that letters have never been quite their old selves again" (112.23–25). To the reader, the narrator says, "Let us now . . . talk . . . turkey" (113.23, 113.26), insisting, "We are not corknered yet, deadhand!" (116.11). Joyce

³ It is also virtually impossible to tell the difference between Joyce's narrator(s) and his characters in the *Weka*—at least in any consistent way. Tracing

words and the reader the meaning" (*Fearful* 427)—in Frye's words "an exact description of all works of literary art without exception" (428).

¹¹ As Mary-Elisabeth Tobin writes, in Barthes' terms "the plaisir (pleasure) that comes with reading readerly texts loosely corresponds to the eighteenth-century reading experience, and the jouissance (ecstasy) that comes from writerly texts is what many contemporary critics desire in their reality. . . . The reading experience Barthes values is one that unsettles the reader, jarring him out of cultural assumptions, bringing her to the brink of the abyss" ("Bridging" 213).

Katherine Lever in her 1960 manual *The Novel and the Reader* began her chapter "What Is a Reader of Novels?" with the answer, "The reader is himself a novelist" (44).

¹³ Jerry A. Varsava stresses that the idea of the "author" in Foucault's sense "allows the reader to dissolve (or ignore) contradictions and incompatibilities

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