Cryptic Subtexts in Literature and Film

“Cryptic Subtexts is a far reaching, original, engaging book that will alter the direction, and enrich the scope of, intertextual studies.”
—Jon Thiem, Professor Emeritus, Colorado State University

“Walker’s Cryptic Subtexts in Literature and Film: Secret Messages and Buried Treasure is a rare treat for the reader: an eloquent, comprehensive, yet accessible account of a promising new category and a rich panoply of literary, visual, music, and film artworks. Crossing cultures, art forms and disciplines, and showing how they productively interact even when—and especially when—they differ, Walker’s has created a book that is much needed today.”
—Professor Sanja Bahun, University of Essex

One of the primary objectives of comparative literature is the study of the relationship of texts, also known as intertextuality, which is a means of contextualizing and analyzing the way literature grows and flourishes through inspiration and imitation, direct or indirect. When the inspiration and imitation is direct and obvious, the study of this rapport falls into the more restricted category of hypertextuality. What Steven Walker has labeled a cryptic subtext, however, is an extreme case of hypertextuality. It involves a series of allusions to another text that have been deliberately inserted by the author into the primary text as potential points of reference. This book takes a deep dive into a broad array of literature and film to explore these allusions and the hidden messages therein.

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   Steven F. Walker
Cryptic Subtexts in Literature and Film
Secret Messages and Buried Treasure

Steven F. Walker
For Wallaby
... he confessed that it was indeed with him now the great amusement of life. “I live almost to see if it will ever be detected.” He looked at me for a jesting challenge; something far within his eyes seemed to peep out. “But I needn’t worry—it won’t!”

“You fire me as I have never been fired,” I declared; “you make me determined to do or die.” Then I asked: “Is it a kind of esoteric message?”

His countenance fell at this—he put out his hand as if to bid me goodnight. “Ah, my dear fellow, it can’t be described in cheap journal-ese!”

We had left the room. I walked again with him a few steps along the passage. “This extraordinary ‘general intention,’ as you call it—for that’s the most vivid description I can induce you to make of it—is then, generally, a sort of buried treasure?”

His face lighted. “Yes, call it that, though it’s perhaps not for me to do so.”

—Henry James, *The Figure in the Carpet*
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One of the well-established procedures of comparative literature is the study of *intertextuality*, i.e., the relationship of texts across time and across cultures as a means of contextualizing and analyzing the way literature grows and flourishes through inspiration and imitation, direct or indirect. When the inspiration and imitation is direct and obvious, the study of this relationship falls into the more restricted category of *hypertextuality*, and the comparative history of literature is studded with outstanding examples of this process of texts generating texts across time and across cultures. Thus, such a modern masterpiece as James Joyce’s *Ulysses* has its roots in Homer’s *Odyssey*, a Greek work composed more than two thousand six hundred years before it. Some of Thoreau’s *Walden* owes much to Charles Wilkin’s English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* (each has eighteen chapters, for starters), a classic of Hindu mysticism, composed in Sanskrit at least fifteen hundred years before. One of the masterpieces of French classical tragedy, Racine’s *Phèdre*, was directly inspired not only by the *Hippolytus* of the Greek tragedian Euripides but even more by the later Roman playwright Seneca’s *Phaedra*, itself a hypertextualization of Euripides’ tragedy. Medieval romances concerning the passionate love that bound Tristan and Isolde fatally together were the inspiration for the libretto of Wagner’s most influential opera. One could go on and on since it is quite the norm for later texts to be created under the influence and inspiration of earlier subtexts, with which they demonstrate a clear hypertextual relationship. And what is true of literary texts is equally true of films, which are constantly recycling aspects of earlier successful films as a means of increasing their own chances of success. So, it is easy to see why examining and analyzing this relationship of text and subtext is at the very heart of comparative study.\(^1\)

But what I have labeled a *cryptic subtext* represents an *extreme* case of hypertextuality. It results from the discovery of awkward allusions and/or suspicious incongruities in the hypertext itself, which suggest that they are *clues* that must have been deliberately inserted by the author in order to point to the latent presence of a cryptic subtext. One might metaphorically call the latter an aspect of the *textual unconscious* in that it is the result of what was originally a conscious effort of textual repression on the part of the author. The cryptic subtext’s presence in the
primary text is not at all obvious (hence, it is “cryptic”), and it may even be quite well hidden indeed, in spite of the numerous clues that point toward its latent presence in the primary text and that eventually enable it to be identified. (In this book, I use the term “author” to indicate not only writers but artists and film directors, and “text” to indicate not only a literary production but also visual art and films.) The process of its discovery, both for the reader and the critic, involves a fair amount of literary detective work. I hope that the examples chosen for presentation over the course of this book will convey some of the excitement of this critical adventure.

Like subtexts generally, cryptic subtexts maintain a significant relationship with their hypertexts. But is it proper to label—even playfully—a cryptic subtext as a “secret message” or indeed as a “buried treasure”? Does it really have such importance? The value of studying the play of subtext and hypertext is hardly in doubt; it is one of the traditional procedures of comparative literature. By contrast, a cryptic subtext might seem to be of dubious usefulness for the analysis and interpretation of a given hypertext. Since, typically, the presence of a cryptic subtext in a text may have long gone undetected (at least as regards the published record), why should readers and critics bother with it now? One answer, of course, is that any text that has maintained its cultural interest over time inevitably undergoes a long process of interpretation and reinterpretation; the discovery of a hitherto undetected cryptic subtext would simply be part of that process. If nothing else, making such discoveries would be part of the intellectual pleasure of studying extreme cases of hypertextuality. To uncover what the author has so carefully concealed is an intellectual adventure that would require some of the talents of a Sherlock Holmes, using clues to solve a case, so to speak. Furthermore—and here the metaphors of secret message and buried treasure may prove even more suggestive—the cryptic subtext itself may offer—and usually does offer—a means not only of reinterpreting a text but sometimes of proposing an entirely new and different reading of it.

Thus, detecting the presence of a cryptic subtext can become a significant part of the process of interpreting a text. It involves finding something hidden in the text on the basis of clues scattered by the author—some possible allusion, some seeming incongruity. This hitherto neglected “something” may ultimately come to be seen as constituting a new dimension of the text itself—something important that was always there but that readers and critics had failed to see. A classic example of this would be—and this example will be discussed in Chapter Five—the presence of a classical cryptic subtext (the Alcestis of Euripides) in T.S. Eliot’s play The Cocktail Party (1949). Although this example is untypical in that, rather than maintaining the deliberate silence or obfuscation that characterizes most authors in relation to what they have carefully concealed, Eliot, having for a long while kept even his closest
friends and most attentive readers in the dark as regards the presence of a Euripidean subtext in *The Cocktail Party*, suddenly blew his cover and told the whole world his secret via a guest lecture at his alma mater Harvard a year later. This was quite unusual behavior! Authors have generally proved reluctant to furnish the maps that would lead to the discovery of their buried treasures or to the means of decoding their secret messages, although they never leave readers and critics without some valuable clues scattered here and there in the text. But once the cryptic subtext has been discovered, it can become the basis for an ongoing reinterpretation of the text, frequently in major ways—keeping in mind, of course, that this process of reinterpretation is something inspired by what the author deliberately concealed in the text, not by the critic’s or the reader’s original perspective or intuition. The cryptic subtext is and always was an integral part of the text, placed there deliberately by the author. It is not something created by the imaginative reader or critic.

But is the cryptic subtext an *essential* part of the text? It might seem paradoxical that the text can be, and has been, given thoroughly adequate readings in the absence of any recognition of a cryptic subtext. One might conclude that the cryptic subtext is a useless element of the text, although it might be fairer to label it as *nonessential*. For example, reading and interpreting *Time Regained*, the last volume of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, does not require the reader to intuit the presence of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic mass in its textual unconscious, although Proust has scattered clues throughout pointing toward its subliminal presence. All the same, once this cryptic liturgical subtext has been detected, its recognition can only reinforce the paramount theme of the narrator Marcel’s inner transformation as a spiritual human being and as an artist—a theme that is quite clearly articulated in the text—via the subliminal analogy it develops with the transformational drama of Christ’s death and resurrection as celebrated in the mass (see Chapter Three for more on this topic). In other words, the cryptic subtext adds something valuable to the text, although its presence cannot be seen as truly essential or as necessary for an adequate reading of the text.

So, the attempt at detecting the presence of a cryptic subtext might seem to be somewhat of a gratuitous act, unlike, for example, the explanation of hermetic poetic language, which *calls* for decoding, as in the case of Mallarmé’s modernist masterpiece “The Afternoon of a Faun.” Nor is it a matter of elucidating *obvious* obscurantisms of the sort that are found throughout Joyce’s *Ulysses*; such page by page commentary is an important part of making a difficult text more accessible and readable for a broader audience. These are matters that require attention; dealing with them is indeed essential for an adequate reading of the text. But such is not the case with the cryptic subtext: although it certainly *adds*
something to the text, it is by no means an essential part of the text, which, it would seem, can very well do without it.

In that case, why did the author bother creating it in the first place, only to conceal it? There are several plausible answers to this question, although in most cases, we are forced to guess at the author’s original intentions.

First of all, concealing a cryptic subtext in the text may have allowed the author to make a provocative statement in a way that guarantees maximum deniability. Some things too provocative and risky to enunciate openly are best left unsaid—or at least barely hinted at. As the classic piece of advice to fellow politicians once given by the Boston politico Martin Lomasney goes: “Never write it if you can speak; never speak if you can nod; never nod if you can wink.” Following this classic piece of advice favors maximum deniability, and it has been revised in recent times to include the added admonition “never put it in an email.” In a similar fashion, if authors wish to communicate something that might create a scandal or a dangerous commotion, they might do well to choose the option of relegating this dangerous bit of provocation to a cryptic subtext. The advantage of this option is that it protects the author and their texts from public opprobrium and/or censorship; no author wants the text as a whole to fail to reach its intended audience, which scandal or censorship might impede. The disadvantage is that the message, so carefully hidden—the treasure so carefully buried—may escape notice at first; for all practical purposes, it has ceased to exist. Of course, authors may hope that at some time in the future, this secret message may be decoded or the buried treasure dug up. It goes without saying that, in this as in all other cases, if we wish to avoid speculation concerning the tricky issue of an author’s intentions—which in all events are usually undocumented—we can simply refer to the status of the text itself as a “mixed message” combining overt and covert elements.

A second response to the question “why did the author do it?” would highlight aesthetic considerations. As discussed in Chapter Six, Lina Wertmüller’s film *Swept Away* (1974) may well have been created partially as a covert response to Michelangelo Antonioni’s *L’avventura* (1960). But, although the cryptic subtext seems obvious once it is detected, it does not result in a parody of the earlier film; if it had been more overt, this could have well been the case. Parody requires that both the subtext and the text that parodies it be represented clearly, almost side by side, as it were, in order for the humor of the parody to be successfully generated by obvious similarities and contrasts. However, if such parody is to be avoided, the latent presence of the cryptic subtext at least allows for the suggestion of such an intertextual link, without forcing the issue.
Another aesthetic consideration that might result in the extreme subordination of a cryptic subtext into a hypertext would be the need to keep a theme of secondary importance from overwhelming or ultimately displacing a text's major thematic concerns. If the sometimes cynical realism of Flaubert's depiction of a straying provincial doctor's wife's love affairs may be said to dilute the pathos of his novel, to suggest that Emma Bovary is a tragic victim of the force of cosmic love viewed from a Platonic perspective would be to confuse the reader needlessly. Such a mystical perspective on the heroine would be out of sync with the dominant theme of the misfortunes of a somewhat naïve, adulterous wife. But if Flaubert was determined to get it into the text anyhow, the option of relegating it to the status of a Platonic cryptic subtext would be a satisfactory means. Similarly, in the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses*, the dominant thrust of Joyce's transformation of the *Odyssey*'s famous scene of Odysseus escaping from the monstrous Cyclops' cave was surely parodic. To have added to this brilliant piece of mock-epic an obvious parody of Plato's *Symposium* would have been one parody too many. Joyce wisely decided to keep this second parody hidden as a cryptic subtext, although, once discovered, it proves to be quite hilarious in its own right. (See Chapter Four for both these examples.)

The examples analyzed in this book illustrate, for the most part, strategies that the authors utilized initially, either for avoiding dangerous controversy or for avoiding aesthetic incongruence. But once uncovered, the covert dimension of the cryptic subtext becomes overt, and the possibility of engaging with the subtext as a means of developing new and interesting perspectives on the text is a welcome one for the reader and the critic. Once the cryptic subtext has entered the picture, not only do certain details in the text (the “clues”) take on added significance, but the text as a whole can never be viewed in the same way again. The uncovered subtext, now no longer cryptic, becomes an acknowledged part of the text itself, and the text itself, at least to a certain degree, is thereby transformed. The apparently inessential and negligible cryptic subtext may then turn out to be the key to new and provocative interpretations—buried treasure indeed!

On the other hand... there are moments when I suspect that the presence of a cryptic subtext is the result of no serious intentions on the part of the author whatsoever! Art has a purely ludic dimension, and there is nothing preventing the author from enjoying *playing* with the audience. In such an instance, film critics like to call the cryptic subtext an “Easter egg,” and, like the discovery of a brightly colored egg in a springtime egg hunt, finding it is essentially just a game. The latent presence of Plato's *Symposium* in Joyce's “Cyclops” may be just such an instance of the author at play.

Since the first step in detecting the presence of a cryptic subtext is recognizing the clues that the author has provided and scattered in the
text, it lies with the critic and the reader to judge when something in
the text initially seems mysterious or somehow out of place—in other
words, when it may be a clue. The clue will be something that seems a
bit incongruous; its place in the text does not seem entirely justified by
the context. The reader and the critic have to be willing to trust their in-
tuition (Sherlock Holmes again!) that something is not quite right in the
text. For example, as we shall see in Chapter One, Henry James’s nar-
rator at the opening of *The Turn of the Screw* fusses around with dates
in an irritatingly vague kind of way. Or again, T.S. Eliot, whose first
audiences and critics failed completely to guess the presence of a classical
subtext in *The Cocktail Party*, was to say later that he had noticed that
members of his first audience had been a bit disconcerted by the presence
of a drunken uninvited guest, apparently Irish, who suddenly broke out
into song; his presence did not fit in with the general tone of Eliot’s rep-
resentation of a typical English, upper-middle-class social event, which
took the form of a witty and sophisticated drawing room comedy, not
a farce. But this apparently misplaced character turns out to be an im-
portant clue that points to a significant cryptic subtext. Although the
audience’s initial puzzlement was thoroughly justified, the presence on
stage of a drunken Irishman points toward a dramatic reincarnation of
the drunken hero Heracles, who had played a crucial role in Euripides’
*Alcestis*, and from there to the classical subtext that underpinned Eliot’s
comedy as a whole.

Once a plausible cryptic subtext has been tentatively identified on the
basis of numerous clues that all point in the same direction, is it im-
portant to prove that the author can reasonably be assumed to have
been acquainted with it? Obviously, yes since, if one assumes that the
cryptic subtext was inserted *deliberately* into the hypertext, the author
must already have been familiar with it. So, for example, in the case
of *Madame Bovary*, providing evidence for Flaubert’s likely familiarity
with the Platonic myth that plays such a large role in Plato’s *Phaedrus*
is a necessary step, even if, in other cases where such evidence is lacking,
one may be forced to argue for the general plausibility of assuming the
author’s familiarity with the subtextual material, given the cultural and
historical context. Once again, it is important to insist that the cryptic
subtext is not something brought up by the reader and the critic as a
means of useful comparison; rather, it is an intrinsic part of the text as
created by the author.

It is true, nevertheless, that once the case for the plausible presence of
a cryptic subtext has been successfully made, there is still the question of
what to do with it, and from this point on, the reader and the critic are
free to speculate. The author has no doubt deliberately placed it in the
text, but the fact of its deliberate insertion does not provide any means
of automatically interpreting its significance in and for the text. Here,
debate and hermeneutical controversy are to be expected and welcomed.
The discovery of a previously undetected cryptic subtext reveals a hitherto concealed dimension of the text itself, which, now reconstituted, so to speak, is open to reinterpretation and even, as we shall see in the next chapter, to provocative reinterpretation.

What a thrill such a discovery can be! However, I am hardly alone in succumbing to the temptation of exulting in the glory—or the illusion—of being the first to discover something new and significant in a text—the first to dig up a buried treasure or to decode a secret message. In fact, this is not unlike the experience of any reader or critic, for whom the process of coming to grips with a text is often accompanied by the frisson of seemingly making new discoveries at every turn. This is because every reader adds personal associations to the text, and these personal associations are intrinsic to the very process of reading itself. Thus, it can be considered that every text becomes, even if only to a tiny degree, a new text with every new reader’s reading of it. It was Marcel Proust who took this position to its ultimate logical conclusion, when he predicts that the great novel his narrator Marcel now feels empowered to write will enable all its readers to read into the text their largely unconscious “real life,” which otherwise might have remained eternally hidden from them.

But, however beneficial such a reading of one’s secret life into the text may be, it is not the same thing as coming to terms with the presence of concealed elements within the text itself. As Matei Calinescu has argued in Rereading (1993), there is a role specific to the process of rereading that can make a different kind of discovery, i.e., a discovery of something that the author has deliberately hidden in the text. For Calinescu, such discoveries are the goal of what he calls “competitive rereading” (201). He analyzes “textual concealment” (247) as the probable result of a “calculated or intentional” (244) act of the author, signaled by the presence of “hermeneutical clues” (234).

Matei Calinescu grew up and began his career in communist Romania, where evading political censorship had become a fine art, and then emigrated to the US in 1973. He tells here the story of how he came to the idea of “rereading... for the secret”:

In the mid-1980s, after several “innocent” readings of certain texts by an author in whom I was interested at the time, I discovered that they contained carefully coded meanings that came to me as a total surprise. To refer in more detail to those texts would be both cumbersome and superfluous here. Suffice it to say that they confronted me with a number of theoretical problems in which all of a sudden I took great interest: How does one conceal meaning? What is the relationship between latent, hidden meaning and manifest deceptive meaning? And how can an outsider become aware even of the existence of such meaning when it is well concealed?
But what I am elucidating in *Cryptic Subtexts* is something different—not a text’s “hidden meaning” but the hidden presence of another text by a different author that may prove to be of great hermeneutical interest, once it is detected and its possible relationship with the original text analyzed and apprised. This particular type of hidden meaning, in other words, is not “buried” in the text itself but rather exists outside of the text in another text. Its latent presence is signaled by a number of clues, and, upon discovery, its relationship with the original text becomes the subject of hermeneutical inquiry.

In both instances, however, it is more than reasonable to assume that the hidden meaning was hidden deliberately by the author. For example, Frederick Ahl has argued in his *Sophocles’ Oedipus: Evidence and Self-Conviction* (1991) that “the charges against Oedipus are based entirely on his own testimony” (21) and that the audience’s assumptions concerning Oedipus’ guilt are no more well founded than Oedipus’ own:

Oedipus chooses to accept that Laios and Jocasta were his parents, and that he killed Laios—even though no substantiating evidence emerges to confirm either him or us in that belief. On the contrary, there is much to suggest that he is misled by his own fears, his faulty inquiries, and the ambiguous statements and complex motives of his interlocutors. Yet he believes.

We do not in any way diminish Oedipus’ heroism if we concede that this play is not about his final self-discovery but about his ultimate self-deception. He is misled by others but is, above all, self-deluded. His missing the mark, his error, his *hamartia*, is tragic enough.

(264)

I would argue against the likelihood of such a subtle interpretation occurring to the spectators—at least, to most of the spectators—of the play’s first stage performance in the theater of Dionysos in Athens around 329—that is, to the popular audience that Sophocles had to reach out to and impress. But in the context of a later reading—and even of many rereadings—of the text, not to mention of later stage productions, it is certainly possible to imagine a happy few—Calinescu’s “insiders”—eventually coming to see things Ahl’s way:

no conclusive evidence is presented that Oedipus killed his father and married his mother. If we decide that Oedipus is the son and killer of Laios and the son and husband of Jocasta, we are doing so on the basis of assumptions external to the arguments presented—doing, in fact, what Oedipus himself does.
Ahl then adds—significantly—that this is “perhaps the trap into which Sophocles would have us fall” (x). In other words, Ahl’s paradoxical re-interpretation of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* is actually not so much an interpretation of the text as the detection of a hidden meaning originally put there by Sophocles himself as an alternative to the overt meaning communicated for the purpose of catering to the expectations of a popular audience familiar with a traditional myth.

*Oedipus the King* has been labeled more than once a predecessor of the detective story, a genre in which, however puzzling the initial situation may appear, it is usually resolved in the end with the revelation of the identity of the true perpetrator of the crime. Pierre Bayard has made a career as a popular literary critic by writing several intelligent and amusing critical works belonging to what he labels “la critique policière” (Bayard *Baskerville* 63), in which he revisits literary cold cases (including that of Oedipus (*Baskerville* 61–2)) which have long been assumed to be definitively closed. We know who killed Hamlet’s father (his uncle Claudius)—we know who killed Roger Ackroyd (the narrator Dr Sheppard). Or do we? For Bayard (*Enquête sur Hamlet: le dialogue des sourds*, 2002), “the number of clues that point towards Hamlet’s guilt is so great that it is surprising that no author until today has examined this hypothesis” (176; *my translation*). Whether one fully accepts Bayard’s hypothesis that it was Hamlet himself who killed his father, one can certainly appreciate Bayard’s delight in considering himself to be the first one to solve “one of the oldest enigmas in world literature” (135; *my translation*). Although he does not address the problem directly as to whether this cryptic alternative conclusion was something Shakespeare himself buried in the text, presumably Bayard takes this for granted. The same is true when it comes to his concluding (*Qui a tué Roger Ackroyd?*, 1998) that it was Dr Sheppard’s sister Caroline who was Roger Ackroyd’s actual murderer. In fact, in this instance, Bayard is a bit more explicit. He writes that is clear that Agatha Christie’s concern up to the very end was “to divert at all costs the reader’s attention” (90; *my translation*) from the real assassin—although “many readers have had the unpleasant impression that they are not being told everything” (17; *my translation*). It took Bayard’s rereading of the text to come to the realization that the only truly satisfactory solution to the murder is something Agatha Christie deliberately chose to hide from the reader. But why would she have done this? Calinescu might have suggested (cf. *Rereading* 246) that perhaps her intention was purely ludic—that for once, the Queen of Crime allowed herself the delicious pleasure of playing with her readers. But in this instance, Bayard does not pronounce himself on the issue of the author’s possible motivation.

However, a few years later, in his study of Arthur Conan Doyle’s masterpiece *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (*L’affaire du chien des Baskerville*, 2008), in which Bayard claims to have decoded “a message
that has not been decrypted until the present day” (18; *my translation*), the critic goes so far as to insist that the most satisfactory solution is something of which even the author was unaware. Beryl Stapleton, in appearance simply a wrongfully persecuted young woman, would be the actual perpetrator of the crime—and not her husband Jack, as Sherlock Holmes mistakenly concludes in the end. For Bayard, this shows that one of Conan Doyle’s characters “went so far as to commit a murder without the knowledge of the author.” “How could Conan Doyle have been so mistaken?” asks Bayard (18; *my translation*). His explanation is that the author did not realize just how much fictional characters can act freely, as though they have a kind of autonomous existence from their creator, and so, “having failed to take this freedom into account, Conan Doyle did not perceive that one of his characters had definitively escaped from his control, and enjoyed leading his detective [Sherlock Holmes] astray” (19; *my translation*).

But Bayard’s argument strikes me as involving quite a stretch. It may be true that “even Homer nods” and that there may be loose strings in the best of plots. But an author of the caliber of Conan Doyle—or Sophocles or Agatha Christie—cannot easily be supposed to have stumbled so badly when it comes to resolving such a major issue as the proper identification of a murderer. That said, it is not impossible to assume that an author might indeed wish to provide the text with an alternative covert solution but in such a way that this alternative does not draw attention away from the overt solution. Or, as we have speculated before, in the case of Agatha Christie, it may be that the author is simply enjoying the forbidden pleasure of toying with the reader. In both of these two cases, one may imagine that it is also for the eventual delectation of “insiders” that the hidden solution is consciously suggested by the author, even if these readers are still in the future.

The previous examples discussed all concern a dimension of the text that Frank Kermode (*The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative*, 1979) has called its “latent sense” (5). Latent sense is detected, he writes, by the exceptional reader or “initiate.” For Kermode, there are

a class of narratives which *have* to mean more, or other, than they manifestly say. How do we know this? First because…. we assume that the book is not trivial and vacuous, even if it seems so at first. This prejudice is supported by many signs that the writing, however odd, is not incompetent… But the initiate assumes that the absence of some usual satisfactions, the disappointment of some conventional expectations, connote the existence of other satisfactions, deeper and more difficult, inaccessible to those who see without perceiving and hear without understanding.
Following through on the pursuit of these “deeper satisfactions,” one may begin to wonder why no one has gotten there before. But, writes Kermode,

> We do not regard this as evidence that we are on the wrong track. We all assume that good readings may very well be made, perhaps for the first time, long after the death of the author and his contemporaries. These will, of course, be... insiders’ readings.

(10)

Like Calinescu and Ahl, Kermode assumes that the solution to the enigma lies within the text itself, deliberately complicated by the author for the purpose of challenging the reader. Of course, we are still not dealing with what we are calling in this book “cryptic subtexts.” Cryptic subtexts may be as difficult to detect as “latent senses”; as is the case with these, there are clues signaling their hidden presence provided deliberately and consciously by the author. But the difference difference is that the cryptic text itself—as opposed to the clues—is located not within the text, as is the case with a latent sense, but outside of the text. In that respect, they are more similar to what Herman Meyer (The Poetics of Quotation in the European Novel, 1961) has called “cryptic quotations.” Unlike “conspicuous quotations,” they

remain hidden for the average reader, and reveal themselves only to connoisseurs. In the case of the cryptic quotation we are dealing less similar to what Herman Meyer (The Poetics of Quotation in the European Novel, 1961) has called “cryptic quotations.” Unlike “conspicuous quotations,” they

Meyer sees the literary function of the quotation as primarily one of embellishment:

> In general, it might be maintained that the charm of the quotation emanates from a unique tension between assimilation and dissimilation: it links itself closely with its new environment, but at the same time detaches itself from it, thus permitting another world to radiate into the self-contained world of the novel.

(6)

But although cryptic subtexts, like cryptic quotations, point outside of the text itself at some other text (as Meyer puts it, “a preformed linguistic