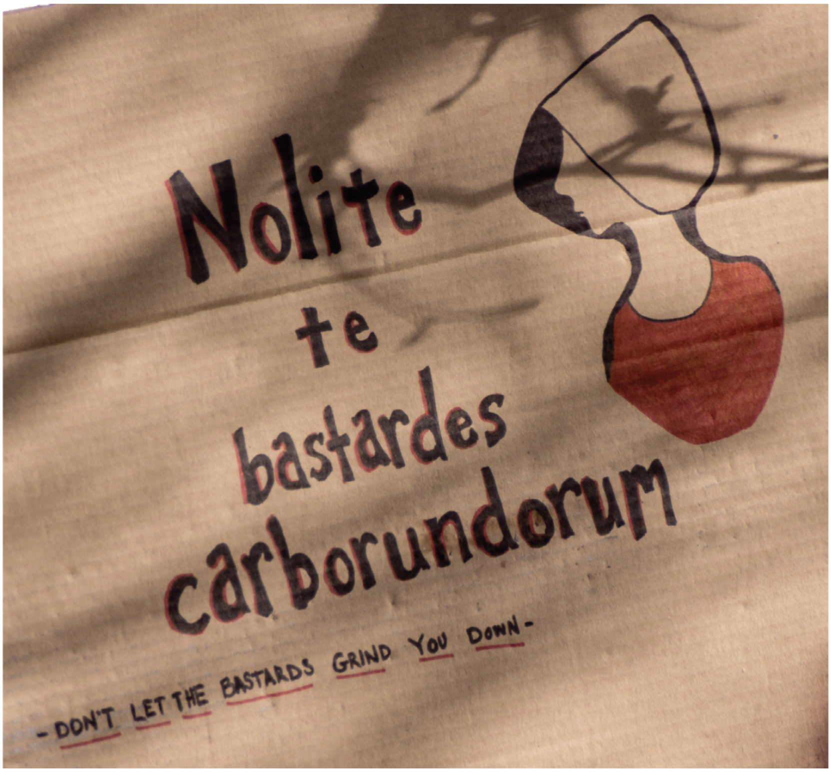
| I SAGGI DI LEXIA
35

LANGUAGESCAPES

ANCIENT AND ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGES IN TODAY'S CULTURE

a cura di

Vincenzo Idone Cassone
Jenny Ponzo
Mattia Thibault


Nolite
te
bastardes
carborundorum
- DON'T LET THE BASTARDS GRIND YOU DOWN -

I SAGGI DI LEXIA

35

Direttori

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I SAGGI DI LEXIA

Aprire una collana di libri specializzata in una disciplina che si vuole scientifica, soprattutto se essa appartiene a quella zona intermedia della nostra enciclopedia dei saperi — non radicata in teoremi o esperimenti, ma neppure costruita per opinioni soggettive — che sono le scienze umane, è un gesto ambizioso. Vi potrebbe corrispondere il debito di una definizione della disciplina, del suo oggetto, dei suoi metodi. Ciò in particolar modo per una disciplina come la nostra: essa infatti, fin dal suo nome (semiotica o semiologia) è stata intesa in modi assai diversi se non contrapposti nel secolo della sua esistenza moderna: più vicina alla linguistica o alla filosofia, alla critica culturale o alle diverse scienze sociali (sociologia, antropologia, psicologia). C'è chi, come Greimas sulla traccia di Hjelmslev, ha preteso di definirne in maniera rigorosa e perfino assiomatica (interdefinita) principi e concetti, seguendo requisiti riservati normalmente solo alle discipline logico–matematiche; chi, come in fondo lo stesso Saussure, ne ha intuito la vocazione alla ricerca empirica sulle leggi di funzionamento dei diversi fenomeni di comunicazione e significazione nella vita sociale; chi, come l'ultimo Eco sulla traccia di Peirce, l'ha pensata piuttosto come una ricerca filosofica sul senso e le sue condizioni di possibilità; altri, da Barthes in poi, ne hanno valutato la possibilità di smascheramento dell'ideologia e delle strutture di potere... Noi rifiutiamo un passo così ambizioso. Ci riferiremo piuttosto a un concetto espresso da Umberto Eco all'inizio del suo lavoro di ricerca: il "campo semiotico", cioè quel vastissimo ambito culturale, insieme di testi e discorsi, di attività interpretative e di pratiche codificate, di linguaggi e di generi, di fenomeni comunicativi e di effetti di senso, di tecniche espressive e inventari di contenuti, di messaggi, riscritture e deformazioni che insieme costituiscono il mondo sensato (e dunque sempre sociale anche quando è naturale) in cui viviamo, o per dirla nei termini di Lotman, la nostra semiosfera. La semiotica costituisce il tentativo paradossale (perché autoriferito) e sempre parziale, di ritrovare l'ordine (o gli ordini) che rendono leggibile, sensato, facile, quasi "naturale" per chi ci vive dentro, questo coacervo di azioni e oggetti. Di fatto, quando conversiamo, leggiamo un libro, agiamo politicamente, ci divertiamo a uno spettacolo, noi siamo perfettamente in grado non solo di decodificare quel che accade, ma anche di connetterlo a valori, significati, gusti, altre forme espressive. Insomma siamo competenti e siamo anche capaci di confrontare la nostra competenza con quella altrui, interagendo in modo opportuno. È questa competenza condivisa o confrontabile l'oggetto della semiotica.

I suoi metodi sono di fatto diversi, certamente non riducibili oggi a una sterile assiomatica, ma in parte anche sviluppati grazie ai tentativi di formalizzazione dell'École de Paris. Essi funzionano un po' secondo la metafora wittgensteiniana della cassetta degli attrezzi: è bene che ci siano cacciavite, martello, forbici ecc.: sta alla competenza pragmatica del ricercatore selezionare caso per caso lo strumento opportuno per l'operazione da compiere.

Questa collana presenterà soprattutto ricerche empiriche, analisi di casi, lascerà volentieri spazio al nuovo, sia nelle persone degli autori che degli argomenti di studio. Questo è sempre una condizione dello sviluppo scientifico, che ha come prerequisito il cambiamento e il rinnovamento. Lo è a maggior ragione per una collana legata al mondo universitario, irrigidito da troppo tempo nel nostro Paese da un blocco sostanziale che non dà luogo ai giovani di emergere e di prendere il posto che meritano.

Ugo Volli

Languagescapes

Ancient and Artificial Languages in Today's Culture

a cura di
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On the untranslatability of *Finnegans Wake* (and its semiotic consequences)

Gabriele Marino[*]

Abstract

Considered not only untranslatable, but also unreadable, *Finnegans Wake* (FW), the last book by James Joyce, has been the object of a series of translational attempts. What I want to suggest here is that: even the English reader is forced to "translate to themselves" the text (from so–called Finneganian to English); source oriented translations simply do not make sense (as they sabotage the very generation of meanings nested in the text); the only possible form of translation for a text such as this is re–creation (due to its polyglot nature and the consequent structural polysemy). FW stands not so much as a finished literary work, but rather as a heuristic model, a project in the making, a "work in progress" (as maintained by its provisional title): a puzzle that needs to be re–started every time, inviting the reader to complete it in order to appropriate it, always partially, in a diverse, idiosyncratic, and idiolectal fashion. The project designed by FW is that of a text that truly lives in its pragmatic dimension only and in the transtextual adventures activated, within the "limits of interpretation", by the "intention of the reader". It is no coincidence that Umberto Eco theorized the "open work" and the processes of "interpretative cooperation" starting from this book. A communicative limit object, FW should be taken as a model, instead of being dismissed as an exception, by every discipline interested in meaning–making.

Keywords: Finnegans Wake, meaning–making, semiotics, translation, Umberto Eco.

I am *not*: a linguist, a literary scholar, an expert in translation, nor in James Joyce studies. Speaking frankly, I am just a *Finnegans Wake* – henceforth, FW – enthusiast. I discovered this book when I was a teenager, and I simply fell in love with it. I wrote the final paper for my high school diploma about FW; but on examination my teachers preferred to ask me about the conception of time in Hegel. I tried to get in touch with its Italian translator, Luigi Schenoni, in order to politely polemicize with him; but he had already died[1]. I wrote a letter to Umberto Eco asking whether I could figure out a way to deal with FW for my MA thesis in Communication Studies; he told me

---

[*] Università degli Studi di Torino.

[1] A few years later (at the graduate conference "Blank Spaces. A Survey on Absence", Salerno, 7 July 2017), I would have had the chance to do so with Enrico Terrinoni, the new Italian translator of FW (along with Fabio Pedone), whom I would like to thank.

he would not have suggested it even to his worst enemy. Nevertheless, I tried. And failed – This is a story of failures, isn't it? But FW continued to smoulder within my mind[2].

I study and practice semiotics and I think this discipline has a lot to say about this peculiar subject and, by employing exactly this peculiar subject, about semiosis and signification in general. That is why I suggest to "bring it all back home", to quote Bob Dylan; namely, to recover FW as a heuristic device for communication studies, just like Umberto Eco did in the first place[3]. I suggest to use FW not as a single text to be analysed, but rather as a model of how the mechanisms of signification can work, and I maintain that we have to take such mechanisms into serious consideration in our job, turning them from exceptions into rules. So, what is this all about?

1. What is *Finnegans Wake*?

Finnegans Wake is the last book by James Joyce (Dublin, 1882 – Zurich, 1941), composed in a span of time of sixteen years circa, after his masterwork *Ulysses* (1922); it was eventually published in volume in 1939 by Faber and Faber. The text is written in a polyglot pastiche, based on a primary layer of prominently Irish–affected English, and systematically employs portmanteau words and puns, weaving a labyrinth of intertextual, more or less cryptic, allusions, with the final aim to simulate the proteiform language of sleep and dream; whereas *Ulysses* is the tale of a day journey, FW is the tale of a night one[4].

The book is meant to be a representation of life and history in the paradigm of cyclicity, providing different manifestations to a set of basic, archetypical themes: "masculinity", "femininity", "sin", "the double" etc. Every character embodies a plurality of figures: the *pater familias* Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, his wife Anna Livia Plurabelle, their children Shaun, Shem, and Issy are actually "anybody"; the recurring sigla "HCE", derived from Earwicker's initials, stands for "Here Comes Everybody" as well. A key reference in the structure of the book and its implied ideology is Giambattista Vico's theory of recurring cycles; to the extent that the last verse of the book is completed by its very incipit, creating a loop:

---

[2] The Italian reader can find plenty of information about my personal obsession with FW, as well as – more interestingly – Eco's, in Marino (2016); an extended version of the same text is also available on the online magazine "Doppiozero" (doppiozero.com/materiali/io-un-altro-bruno-eco-joyce). See also Marino (2017).

[3] Semioticians have ignored FW. In fact, they use to mention it only in two circumstances: when they talk about Eco's erudite passions and when they want to address something strange and esoteric, resistant to interpretation (generally, they misspell the title by adding an inglorious Saxon genitive – *Finnegan's Wake*). Whereas enigmist, semiotician, and essayist Stefano Bartezzaghi has written a few journalistic, well–informed articles about FW (2017), the only works about FW explicitly addressing a semiotic framework seem to be Norris (1974), Weir (1989), and Sawyer–Lauçcanno's (1993; which has been defined as a "slim volume of semiotic poetry" by Whelan 1994, p. 122).

[4] Bishop (1986) describes it as "the book of the dark".

> A way a lone a last a loved along the [...] [IV, 628] riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs [I.1, 3].[5]

The title itself, a reference to the folk ballad *Finnegan's Wake*, suggests the idea of cyclicity: the Finnegans (subject) wake (verb); the Finns, the offspring of the wise Irish giant Finn MacColl, have come back again and are awaken.

The central idea of FW, which is staged through its lexicon and narrative structures, is that the complexity of reality is produced by a limited set of universal elements; just as it happens with language, to which FW serves as a metaphor, being a "word world" or the "epiphany of language" as Joyce used to say. FW is a "chaosmos" (I.5, 118), an ecology whose superficial disorder (chaos) is generated by an underlying set of simple rules of combination (cosmos)[6].

Even though it is likely the most studied book of the Twentieth century, in the philological sense of "annotated" and "glossed", FW is largely regarded as the untranslatable and even unreadable work *par excellence*: it is the "meandertale" (I.1, 18), the primitive *and* labyrinthic tale. I maintain both adjectives "unreadable" and "untranslatable" are inappropriate or, at least, need further explanation.

2. (Double somersault) Translation in FW

Whether by "language" we mean a set of morphs defined as systematic and whose signifiers are constructed by combining a determinate set of distinctive asemantic units, called phonemes[7], therefore the language of FW is *not* definable as a proper one. Furthermore, what has been called "Finneganian" is not associated to any actual or imaginary community, which is another key feature of what we can call a proper language. It is not possible to classify Finneganian as a utopian language, in the terms of

---

[5] I follow the traditional system of reference for FW: "book. chapter, page".

[6] My main sources for this brief summary of FW are Wilson (1931), Beach (1956), Melchiori (1982), Bollettieri Bosinelli (1990, 1996), Eco (1966, 1984, 1992, 1996, 2002), McCourt (2000). See also Camurri (2016).

[7] This is the definition one can find, for instance, in Tullio De Mauro's dictionary.

Marrone (2004), either, but rather as a particular kind of verbigeration or glossolalia[8]; at the same time, it is not, obviously, a case of gibberish, nor of grammelot[9].

The language of FW is the dream language, the means of the ever–changing dream dimension, since a super–ordinated dream–like narration would serve as the enunciative framework of the book[10]. Being written *through* many languages, sailing from the safe port of English, Finneganian is actually written in none of them. By developing Eco's remarks (1996), I would define Finneganian as an invented, unsystematic, polyglot language.

Such a defining feature of the text stands as the obvious main challenge for its translators; but it seriously challenges its readers as well. According to Bollettieri Bosinelli (1990, p. 143), FW "is not written in any kind of 'original', but is the result of a *process of translation*" itself (original emphasis), so that its picaresque reading should be correctly conceived as a "reading as translation" (*ibid.*). In other words, even the English reader has to engage with an internal translational effort; more precisely, an intralingual translation, a rewording, or paraphrase, in the terms of Jakobson (1959). The text must be translated into plain English – at least at a mental level – in order to be understood, and this translation is in overlap and in loop with the interpretation of the text. Since polymorphism and polysemy constitute the main mechanisms of functioning of FW as a text, the result of this intralingual translation cannot be the same for all the readers and cannot be definitive for none of them. Any interlingual translational attempt (e.g. from Finneganian into Italian) has to deal with these features.

Whenever one wants to translate poetry from one language into another, they must be apprised of the loss of something; usually, the specificities of the sound dimension. In FW, this dimension is hardly expendable, as it is the level which conveys the diverse, co–existing associations that the reader is allowed to make, according to the musical logic of what Joyce called "soundsense"[11], in order to build up a constellation of meanings for each single word. Then, word by word, to build up a constellation of meanings for the phrasal dimension of the text. And so on and so forth.

FW is largely known for being a continuously meta–referencing and self–

---

[8] A term borrowed from psychiatry which literally means incoherent and continuous speech, typically associated to psychopath states, particularly schizophrenia.

[9] Namely, it is not pure nonsense and it is not a series of pseudo–words whose structure and sounds look similar to the ones of an actually existing natural language.

[10] A famous and still quite cryptic passage of Ellmann (1982, p. 544) reads: "As Joyce informed a friend later, he conceived of his book as the dream of old Finn, lying in death beside the river Liffey and watching the history of Ireland and the world – past and future – flow through his mind like flotsam on the river of life".

[11] "Wanamade singsigns to soundsense" (FW I.6, 138).

describing work, as we have already seen with words such as "chaosmos" and "meandertale". Thus, the issue of translation is explicitly addressed a few times; in particular, with three metamorphosized tokens of the lexeme "translate", suggesting a particular way of translation for FW:

- "Translace" (II.1, 233): the words can be translated only if they are *translaced*; namely, networked, linked together;
- "Translout" (II.2, 281, note 2): "translate" + "lout" ("rough fellow", but also "to bend down"; the context is scurrilous) + "out". The translation must *bow to the reader* and has to be centrifugal;
- "Trasluding" (III.1, 419): in order to translate the text, the reader has to play (with the rules of) the game; even at the risk of obtaining an "off the top of one's head" and, therefore, "off topic" interpretation (the complete sentence reads "transluding from the Otherman of off the Toptic").

It is possible to find lots of textual, paratextual, and metatextual evidences of what Joyce meant by "translation" concerning FW. One of the most enlightening source in this respect is the series of conversations Czech poet and artist Adolf Hoffmeister had with Joyce in Paris between 1929 and 1930, exactly focussing on FW and the attempts to translate it. Joyce's statements are crystal clear[12]:

> I did not want to have to decide about the publication and translation of the book, especially when it involves no ordinary translation, but the creation of a new poetry in Czech.
>
> [FW] is not written in English or French or Czech or Irish. Anna Livia does not speak any of these languages, she speaks the speech of a river.
>
> I do not want to be translated, I have to remain as I am, only explained in your language. I am giving you every possible freedom in the transformation of words. I depend on you. In your country there are many rivers. Take your rivers: Vltava, Váha, Úslava and Nežárka.
>
> I think that you would need to be alive longer than you will be. Please, gentlemen, translate a piece for me, and then we will see whether it is possible to navigate Anna Livia in another language.
>
> You know that it is impossible to translate.

---

[12] Hoffmeister had been working on the Czech translation of *Ulysses* since 1928. The dialogues, which occurred in French, were first published in Czech on the "Rozpravy Aventina" review (1930–1931) and were partially translated into French, Italian, and English during the Sixties. The first unabridged translation from Czech into English (2005) provided the basis for a new Italian one (2007). Quotations do not include pages since I relied on the online version made available by "Granta" (granta.com/the-game-of-evenings).

As testified also by its pretty accurate working title, *Work in Progress*, FW seems to propose itself not as a finished work of art (which one may try to translate), but rather as a potentially never–ending reading, in the shape of a re–creative game: the "game of evenings", as it was named by Hoffmeister. Thus, it is no necessary to appeal to the classics of translation theory, such as Catford (1965) or Popovič (1976), in order to affirm its linguistic untranslatability, *stricto sensu*[13].

3. The FW project in practice

Articulating Joyce's statements into semioticians' jargon, passing through the "strata of sign" model proposed by Louis T. Hjelmslev, the precise *meaning* of the words of FW cannot be translated, as it lies in its actual manifestation, in its Substance, which is an unstable one, as we have seen. On the contrary, their *sense*, the deeper dimension of the text can be turned into other Substances, based on different natural languages, diverse from English (Fig. 1).

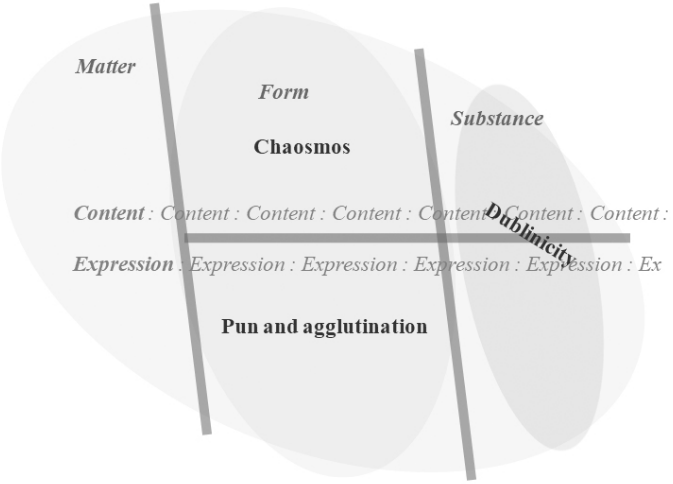
Matter
Form
Substance
Chaosmos
Content : Content : Content : Content : Content : Content : Content :
Dublinicity
Expression : Expression : Expression : Expression : Expression : Ex
Pun and agglutination

Figure 1: *Finnegans Wake* according to Hjemslev's strata of sign.

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[13] One may say that the only possible translational gesture allowed by FW is what Jakobson (1959) defines "intersemiotic translation" or "transmutation"; namely, the translation from one semiotic system (*nota bene*: not necessarily a natural language; e.g. the unsystematised language of FW) into another (the proper linguistic system of Italian language). To remain at the textual level, Genette (1982) would talk of a case of hypertextuality that works not by the direct transformation of the source text, which would be "transposition", but rather by imitation, which would be "forgery".

Following Eco, we would have "the aesthetics of chaosmos" (1966)[14] on the side of the Content Form, and "the poetics of pun and agglutination" (1996) on the side of the Expression Form. The Substance of FW, its "mythical dublinicity", is just the Figurativisation of its inner Theme[15], which is the exploration of another environment, different from Dublin: the language itself and its epiphanies through history.

Being "theoretically untranslatable, *Finnegans Wake* is the easiest text to translate, as it allows maximum freedom"[16]; in this respect, it is as much radical as democrat. The main example of a translational attempt in which Joyce participated, directly and prominently, exactly follows this idea. It is the Italian translation of two fragments – the initial pages and the final ones – from the section "Anna Livia Plurabelle" (book I, chapter 8); Joyce realised it with the collaboration of Nino Frank between 1937 and 1940, in full Fascist era (as a matter of fact, parts of the text were emended/censored by a second collaborator, Ettore Settanni). The outcome was published in two parts, with the title *Anna Livia Plurabella* and *I fiumi scorrono*, in the magazine "Prospettive".

This version is a heavily "target oriented" – to use old fashioned terminology – translation; an adaptation of the sense of the chapter in the key of Italian language and culture[17]. Joyce deliberately cuts off lots of the English–based fluvial puns and adds lots of Italian–based ones; just a couple of examples: he turns a "trinity scholard" into a "laureata di Cuneo", losing the reference to the sacred trinity and to Trinity college in order to allude to cunnilingus; he turns the exclamation "for coxyt sake" (a reference to the infernal river Cocytus) into the Venetian–flavoured "Ostrigotta, ora capesco", which opens to a whole new set of semantic inferences (Ostrogoths, God, host, oyster, *capire*, *uscire*, etc.)[18].

4. FW. Eco. Semiosis

As a semiotician, I am not particularly interested in the untranslatability of FW *per se*, but rather in its consequences, in what this issue can tell us about the mechanisms of meaning–making. We generally consider meaning as something that is somewhere *out there*, hidden inside the text, something that has to be discovered, and that, once it is being discovered, is here, more or less, once and for all. Therefore, it can be explained, paraphrased, translated, revived, manipulated. This does not apply to FW, which programmatically makes its meanings explode, prismatically, rhizomatically, since its words cause "dislocutions", "transformations that disrupt as much as they parallel the source references"[19]. The words in FW are Deleuzean "living structures", symbiotic beings, that change their linguistic affordances depending on whom they are facing, depending on the reader; the rules of the "game of evenings" are as many as its participants and as many as their rounds and matches. The act of reading and interpreting FW cannot be nothing but a work of cooperation between the reader and the text; between the active Subject – the Hero engaging with the quest for meaning – and the Helper, which is, at the same time, the Opponent.

---

[14] The sentence served as the title to the 1989 English translation of Eco (1966).

[15] In the terms of the generative trajectory of meaning as elaborated by Algirdas J. Greimas.

[16] Eco (1996, p. XI, my trans).

[17] Following Popovič (1976), any "source oriented" translational attempt of a text like FW would produce nothing but a "sub–interpretation".

[18] See Eco (1996) for an in–depth analysis.

It is know, but never sufficiently stressed, how Umberto Eco got into semiotics and into his signature "interpretative cooperation" theory thanks to FW, ending up elaborating successful notions such as "open work", "encyclopaedia", and "model reader"[20]. FW is the open work *par excellence*, the actualized model of Peircean unlimited semiosis. And whether deconstruction is a way of reading texts which drags itself along by the "drifts of an exceeding signifier", according to Jacques Derrida, then FW is the epitome of deconstruction too[21]. But Eco (1990) warns us: the semiosis is unlimited, but not indiscriminate, the interpretations are indefinite, maybe infinite, but not every single one of them is legitimate; the boundaries of the *intentio operis* (what the text allows us to say about it) are the "limits of our interpretation".

Beckett (1929), an early enthusiast of FW, defined it as a "purgatorial work", the realm of possibility; where, by "possible", we do not mean "alternative choice", but rather "parallel, simultaneous development", in fascinating consonance, on the one hand, with the notion of "grammar of choices" as presented by Halliday (1978)[22] and, on the other, with the concept of "hypertext" as originally meant by Nelson (1965). Due to its mechanisms of functioning and to the simple and prolific logic of "sound-sense", FW bypasses the constraints of the linearity of verbal language, trespassing into the land of stratification, of musical harmony and polyphony, for each single word of it is like a musical chord, playing the "music of ideas"[23].

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19. Fritz Senn quoted in Waisman (2005, p. 196).

20. In this respect, the key source is the little known Eco (1992), where the author reconstructs his first approach to semiotic studies starting from his interest in Middle Age aesthetics and in the works of James Joyce. His main study about Joyce (1966) was originally published as the central part of his seminal work about the "indetermination of contemporary poetics" (1962).

21. Derrida used FW as a model for *Glas* (1974), his book comparing Hegel's philosophical works and Jean Genet's autobiographical writings. See also Derrida (1987).

22. See also Prandi (2004, p. 306).

23. A definition, more than often recovered by Eco in his Joycean writings, first applied by Ivor Armstrong Richards to Thomas Stearns Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).

5. FW from exception to rule

Paradigms, theories, and techniques are a matter of economy of means; they are designed on the basis of a canon, a set of given subjects, which are common and prevailing. Even when we have to deal with peculiar subjects, we are able to apply our grids to them, as the grids were inferred out of them, by induction, in the first place. But "some subjects are more peculiar than others", George Orwell would say; some subjects do not fit the box for the "usually non–fitting cases" and succeed embarrassing our categories. This happens with FW and translation, literary, and communication studies; they cannot be defined as "scientific" unless their categories would find a way to take into account "exceptions" and limit objects such as this. Otherwise, we have to rethink the categories themselves. FW can teach us things, in the respect of a kind of artificial compound, realised in a hard science laboratory; an object to be tested and through which to test the available tools of inquiry.

Reversing common thinking, we should consider Translation as a hyponym of Re–Creation, and the latter as a hyponym of Interpretation, which would serve as the overall hypernym. In other words, the fact that we can re–write a literary work into a language different from the original one by employing a set of elements which allows us to maintain its literal meaning is a lucky – though widespread – coincidence. Any literary work – and any semiotic text in general – proposes itself as a communicative project, as a "machine for generating interpretations"[24], giving us the possibility to reconstruct its idiolect, its specific code; which may be used as a template, a blueprint, a set of instructions to build up similar machines in turn. Depending on the complexity of the project, on the amount of possible interpretations, we can extend this code to other works. In other words, the fact that we can consider a text as something telling us a linear story that fits to be told (the famous Genettean "Marcel becomes a writer") is a lucky – though widespread – coincidence[25].

FW suggests a number of interpretations, which are not exclusive, but co–existent, as it suggests a form, more than a linear story. We are familiar with the idea that meaning would display itself only in action, *in praesentia*, as formed Matter, Substance; but what we may call the "metaphysics of meaning" inferable from FW seems to suggest we can get access to making–sense in a quite different fashion.

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[24] Eco (1979).

[25] The idea that the actualised, readable literature would be just a kind of statistical exception within the realm of combinatorial possibilities is beautifully explored by Jorge Luis Borges in his essay about the "definitive library" (1939) and in his celebrated short story *The library of Babel* (1941).

6. Conclusion

Dozens of authors have spent decades and thousands of pages explaining us *what it is about* and *what it references to*, which is the scholarly, erudite, and textual philology approach to FW. Just a few have tried to put the Joycean project into practice: that is *producing* Finneganian texts, Finneganian theories, Finneganian projects on the basis of their own language. In fact, those who got inspired by FW throughout the Twentieth century have employed it exactly in such a way; we have already mentioned at least two of them (Eco and Derrida), but nevertheless a short alphabetical raid can be of some interest: Jay David Bolter, Jorge Luis Borges, Anthony Burgess, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, John Cage, Northrop Frye, Wolfgang Iser, Marshall McLuhan, Terence McKenna, Charles K. Ogden, Flann O'Brien. All these theorists, philosophers, intellectuals, writers, and artists did not focus on the story and the vicissitudes of Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, but rather on the structures of FW and how to use them to their advantage; to build up their own "word world", to put it simply.

An apparently abstract work such as FW actually proposes a model which draws to radical pragmaticism. The meanings of the text, a basin of parallel possibilities, and the subsequent appropriation of it, depend on the competences and on the encyclopaedic knowledge its empirical reader is equipped with. The gaze and the hearing of the reader turn the text, each time, into a new and different one. Whether FW keeps on keeping us awake as we try to figure it out, we would be on track. Since its ideal reader should be "suffering from an ideal insomnia" (I.5, 120).

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I SAGGI DI LEXIA / 35

Languagescapes

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