MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

"nat language at any sinse of the world": The Processes of Signification in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

Verfasser

Paul Fagan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction

1.1 Deficiencies in Critical Approaches to *Finnegans Wake*

In the buginning is the woid (FW 378.29).[1]

When speaking at the '*Finnegans Wake* Contexts' symposium in 1987, Fritz Senn gave voice to what he termed his "linguistic dissatisfaction" with the state of *Wake* studies.[2] Despite many decades of scholarly explication,[3] Senn protested, "we do not understand *Finnegans Wake*." The critical community most committed to making sense of Joyce's enigmatic final work had, in Senn's eyes, "collectively [...] not done [its] most basic homework, the sort of perhaps pedestrian semantic rummaging that would make all the further, superior, exertions that depend upon it remotely possible" (*Inductive Scrutinies*, 226).

Sharing Senn's contention that there is "something premature" in this regard about much critical analysis of *Finnegans Wake* (*Inductive Scrutinies*, 236), it shall be this study's objective to engage in just such "rummaging" at the textual level of the *Wake*'s linguistic and semantic modes. Indeed, it is contended that the deficiencies in *Wake* studies result not only from the general theoretical disinterest in the "preliminary, humble, philological, spade work and low-level curiosity" that Senn perceives (*Inductive Scrutinies*, 227), but also, to perhaps an even greater degree, from the deficit of a candid and thoroughgoing exploration of the semiotic processes at play in the *Wakean* text. If we "do not understand *Finnegans Wake*," then, this is because too often interpretation is attempted without first asking the fundamental question of how exactly this unusual text works.

That such a linguistic analysis of the language of *Finnegans Wake* is largely absent in the critical canon may be observed by reference to Finn

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[1] As is convention in Joyce studies, all references to the *Wake* will be to page and line number, so that (FW 378.29), for example, refers to *Finnegans Wake* page 378, line 29.
[2] This talk, orignially delivered in Leeds, England, was later revised as the paper "Linguistic Dissatisfaction at the *Wake*", collected in *Inductive Scrutinies*, pp. 226-237.
[3] *Finnegans Wake* was first published on 4 May 1939 by Faber and Faber.

Fordham's recent, and comprehensive, survey of the many critical approaches "that *Finnegans Wake* has invited from readers and critics," which he enumerates as the structural, narrational, theoretical, inspirational, philological, genetic and exegetical (*Fun at FW*, 7). The largely linguistic approach to be undertaken in this study is conspicuous by its absence, particularly for such a linguistically non-orthodox text, and it is hoped that by rectifying this critical blind spot a new basis for future analysis might be established.[4] Fordham's critical overview serves as a more exhaustive point of reference than space could possibly allow here; however, as this study shall largely refrain from analysing the work's novelistic features in order to focus more fully on its semiotic processes, a brief summary of the general critical stance on such issues may provide beneficial context for the analysis to come, and highlight why such an approach is so sorely needed.

For critics who attempt an analysis of the work's novelistic features, the *Wake* concerns the fortunes of the Earwicker family, composed of embattled father HCE, his loyal wife ALP, their rival twin sons Shaun the Post and Shem the Penman and coquettish daughter Issy. The 'plot', as usually summarised, treats the fall of the father figure by virtue of a rumour of some unconfirmed transgression, the attempts of his wife to exonerate him in a letter, and the battle of the sons to replace him. Pioneering studies of these issues include Campbell and Robinson's mythological approach to the Wake's plot in *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*, William York Tindall's symbolic approach in *A Reader's Guide to Finnegans Wake*, and John Gordon's plot- and character-based study *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*. The work to best marry the close textual readings favoured here with a summary of the 'events' that constitute the *Wake*'s 'plot' is Luca Crispi and Sam Slote's *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake*, a chapter-by-chapter genetic examination of Joyce's notebooks, and of the evolution of the *Wake* through its many drafts and publications. Once again we find Senn largely sceptical of the general trend of such approaches, arguing that these "traditional summaries" are "most unsatisfactory and unhelpful, [as] they usually leave out the hard parts and recirculate what we already think we know" (*Fritz Senn and FW*). Indeed,

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[4] However a number of the approaches outlined by Fordham – specifically the narrational, philological and exegetical – shall also be incorporated in this study.

despite the many significant steps towards a working understanding of *Finnegans Wake* afforded us by these and other critical works, this present study largely shares Bernard Benstock's wariness of the tendency towards generalised statements about the book's content and themes. The inherent trap, too often succumbed to, is essentially "boiling down" *Finnegans Wake* into "insipid pap, and leaving the lazy reader with a predigested mess of [generalisations] and catchphrases" (Benstock, *Joyce-Again's Wake*, 4).[5]

Confronted with the inherently intractable difficulty of discerning a 'plot' from the *Wake*'s mutable language and novelistic modes, critics often attempt analysis by formulating structural, allusive or thematic codes. Once established by the critic, these codes are intended to tame the *Wake*'s wild plurality of signification, reduce its language to stable coherent 'meanings', and streamline its content to a system of stable characters and cohesive events. Once such a codifying force has been selected, it is made to centre the indefinitely interconnecting heterogeneous contexts provided by the *Wake*'s allusive complex within one supra-context, and, consequently, a unit of *Wakean* text is typically afforded 'meaning' by the manner in which it yields to the themes and structure of the chosen codifying text. Many such codes have been suggested, such as 'Irish History' (Boldereff iii & xi), the 'third chapter of Genesis' (Burrell 7), Vico's *La Scienza Nouva* (Verene 85), 'sleep' (Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark*, passim); as well as attempts to construct a unified narrative concerning the "real" Earwickers, external to the "dream" (or experiential reality of the *Wakean* text) such as John Gordon's *Plot Summary*.

It would appear that such endeavours to discover a 'matrix code' through which the *Wake*'s language may be decoded stem from the perceived absence of a meaningful or stable engagement between the *Wakean* text and the English linguistic code.[6] By thus circumventing the effect of the text's

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[5] As the novelistic features of the *Wake* shall be largely avoided in a preference for a closer examination of these semiotic processes, for matters of character and plot summary any number of these secondary sources may be consulted.

[6] The 'English linguistic code' is defined by Lauren B. Resnick as the system which constitutes "the sound patterns of [the language's] lexical elements and the rules for combining these elements into grammatical sequences" (262). The employment of the term in this study, then, is best understood as referring to the system of probable or potential meanings encoded within the language system's lexical and grammatical features. As Resnick argues, however, this system "by itself does not preserve information about events" (262), and this issue shall be addressed in full in the second half of 'Chapter 2'.

exploitation of and engagement with a language system, however, the claim that such themes or allusions represent or reveal the 'meaning' of the text is largely problematised, as the question of how such extratextually formulated codes are textually signified and enabled remains unanswered. In other words, instead of inferring discourse from the discourse trace of the *Wake*'s text, such approaches reverse the process by formulating a discourse and then investigating the text for the ways in which it exemplifies the perceived code.[7] By the same token, the conjectural tendencies and disposition toward generalisation of the plot summaries may also be seen as deficiencies resulting from the absence in the critical canon of a thoroughgoing linguistic analysis of the *Wake*'s unconventional approach to language use. Finally, on a more fundamental level, such narratological or structural studies commonly offer little insight into the experiential reality of reading *Finnegans Wake*, where dealing with the opaque manifest forms of its non-lexical items is a much more immediate concern for understanding, and even enjoyment, than its thematic or allusive features. At the very least, one imagines that to investigate the book's characters, plot and themes without first enquiring into how its language operates is a matter of putting the cart before the horse.

1.2   Line of Investigation

Undertaking to address this critical gap in the body of *Wake* studies, and to return to a process of inferring the *Wake*'s discourse *from* its text, the primary goal of this study shall be to demonstrate that the code which provides the *Wakean* text with pragmatic significance and creative implicatures is not primarily a thematic, allusive or narrative-based one, but rather the English linguistic code which Joyce, in writing his last work, is so often assumed to have abandoned. In order to achieve this goal, the book's

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[7] There is a distinction to be made between 'discourse' in a linguistic sense as "the meaning that a first person intends to express in producing a text, and that a second person interprets from the text," and in the social theory sense (from Foucault) as "a set of socio-cultural conventions for conceiving of reality in certain ways and controlling it" (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 129). The majority of this study will be concerned with the former act of "construing texts by keying them into contexts so as to [realise] discourse meaning" (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 27), but the latter sense shall also be utilised when the discussion turns to matters of schematic knowledge.

extreme experimentations with non-lexical signs and excessively hypotactic syntax shall be demonstrated to engage in an exaggerated but ultimately adherent way with the English linguistic code, and through this deviant adherence both produce 'meaning' and undermine language's claim to univocal meaning. That the possibilities for signification embedded within this code are insufficient for 'meaning' to occur, however, shall also be addressed with reference to the influence of extratextual features such as context, schemata and discourse domains on the *Wakean* text. To these ends, the processes of signification at work in *Finnegans Wake* shall be approached from three perspectives, namely the text's *adherence* to the linguistic code to forge equivocal semantic predictability, its motivated *deviations* from this code to create implicatures of meaning, and finally the manner in which the book's *cyclical* structure creates a tension between prognostic and anagnostic modes which defers and alters such signification.

Concomitant with such a line of investigation is the larger issue of how a full analysis of the *Wake*'s engagement with the English linguistic code may help deepen our understanding and definition of 'language' itself. As a consequence, if the argument digresses from *Finnegans Wake* for some considerable stretches (particularly in chapter 2 of the study), this is because the fundamental questions being addressed are not exclusively undertaken towards an explication of Joyce's work, but also as a means of enquiring into what experimental literature – of which *Finnegans Wake* is considered the ultimate manifestation – can contribute to our understanding of *how* language itself actually 'means'. The ultimate motivation in selecting *Finnegans* Wake as the central point of investigation is that, as "one of the great monuments of twentieth-century experimental letters" (Bishop, *Introduction*, vii), Joyce's final work makes entirely manifest and acute the very fundamentals of the complex relationship between thought, language and reality.

1.3 Approach

In addressing the semiotic processes at play in *Finnegans Wake* this study's preference is for an interweaving of linguistic and literary modes of analysis. As these approaches constitute inherently different conceptualisations of the processes by which meaning is produced and received, and of the representative possibilities of language, such an approach is favoured in the attempt to counteract their potential for producing weighted results. H.G. Widdowson identifies the units of concern to the linguist as "those of the abstract system of the language," and stresses that to analyse texts in terms of such units is "to treat such texts primarily as exemplification of the system" (*Stylistic Analysis*, 236). Conversely, while linguistics is broadly concerned with the means of signification, literary analysis is concerned with "what ends are achieved in terms of the communicative effect of the language used" (Widdowson, *Stylistic Analysis*, 236). The employment of either approach to the exclusion of the other would thus significantly and inevitably influence, even determine, the results of the study, resulting in an illustration of how the language of the *Wake* conforms to either *a priori* assumption. In order to demonstrate that *Finnegans Wake* does not exemplify linguistic or literary codes, but rather exploits them to its own pragmatic ends, this study shall begin with a linguistic analysis of the 'means' of signification in the text (primarily in chapter 2) and gradually incorporate more literary analyses of the ends of its language use (in chapters 3 and 4). The complications inherent to this dual approach (such as their seemingly exclusive allowances of synchronic and diachronic meaning) shall be tackled as they arise. To these ends it is also considered preferable to focus primarily on an empirical analysis of the artefact of the *Wakean* text itself, so that findings on the means and ends of the semiotic process may be more closely aligned.

One crucial caveat, however, should be offered before proceeding. It should be kept in mind at all times that when this study speaks of 'meaning' or 'meaning making' it is not in the search for, or belief in the existence of, univocal meaning, particularly as regards the text of *Finnegans Wake*. 'Meaning', as employed in this study, does not refer to *the* meaning of a text,

but simply the absence of meaninglessness, and an understanding of such meaning as equivocal in nature shall be acknowledged, and even encouraged. While this distinction should become readily apparent from the approach undertaken, it is still worth stressing at the offset that what is to be investigated is not *the* meaning of *Finnegans Wake*, but rather 'meaning' in *Finnegans Wake*; in other words, not so much *what* the text means, but *how* it manages to do so, despite the odds.

1.4 Secondary Sources

A handful of investigations into the *Wake*'s semiotic processes have been conducted, although none from a predominantly linguistic perspective (with the exception, perhaps, of Katie Wales' writings on the work). Of these semiotic probings into the language of *Finnegans Wake*, this study is most beholden to the work of Derek Attridge. The approach undertaken shall be to build upon Attridge's treatment of *Finnegans Wake*'s as "paradigmatic [...] of the literary corpus" (*Peculiar Language*, 234) by investigating the ways in which the *Wake*'s processes of signification are also paradigmatic of the processes by which *any* text exploits the English linguistic code in order to create 'meaning'. In establishing a theoretical groundwork for the analysis of the semiotics of 'experimental language' in particular, and of the formation of neologisms, the works of French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-Jacques Lecercle have proven indispensable. The more linguistics-related portions of this study are most indebted to the writings of H.G. Widdowson, whose treatment of text as a 'discourse trace' is considered the most exhaustive and accurate analysis of how 'meaning' is forged from text. With respect to the *Wake*'s modes of creativity the insights supplied by philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's conceptualisation of the 'postmodern' as the representation of the unrepresentable, and by linguists Paul Grice and Dell Hymes' explorations into 'creativity' as the process of forging implicature through motivated violations of linguistic and communicative norms, have been invaluable. Finally Fritz Senn's pragmatic approach to this most unpragmatic of texts has influenced most every aspect of this study, and without his writings on the anagnostic processes at play in Joyce's works,

most particularly in *Ulysses*, the final chapter of this study could not have been written.

2 'Wakese' and the English Linguistic Code

2.1 Introducing 'Wakese': Critical Responses to the Language of The *Wake*

Much ink has been spilled over the vexing subject of the seemingly inscrutable language of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the author's final and most radically experimental work. Expanding on the linguistic and stylistic experimentations of his magnum opus *Ulysses*, Joyce composed the *Wake* predominantly in neologisms; non-lexical items which take the form of portmanteaux, puns, phonetic echoes, idiosyncratic composites of polyglot morphemes, and etymological wordplay. Indeed it is this approach to language for which Joyce's *Wake* is most notorious, and for which it acquires its greatest degree of infamy as a work of immeasurable difficulty and even meaninglessness. Given that such highly unconventional language use "gives the book a forbidding aspect of impenetrability" (Campbell and Robinson 3), such presuppositions concerning the work's semiotic incoherence need hardly be surprising, yet often their unfortunate consequence is an unwillingness to engage critically with the realities of the *Wakean* text. Faced with such bewildering opacity, many commentators appear to feel a greater urge to evaluate than to understand, and, as with all things regarding the book, such evaluative criticism proves decidedly divisive.

On one end of the spectrum critics endeavour to defend, even revere, the impenetrability of the book's contorted language with an appeal to its aesthetic and phonetic qualities, rather than to its seemingly unorthodox semiotic processes. Representative of such a stance is Paul Rosenfeld's suggestion that in *Finnegans Wake* "the style, the essential qualities and movement of the words, their rhythmic and melodic sequences, and the emotional [colour] of the page are the main representatives of the author's thought and feeling." To all of these aspects, Rosenfeld suggests, "the accepted significations of the words are secondary" as "the writing is not so much about something as it is that something itself" (in Deming 663). Unsurprisingly, however, a great many critics find little aesthetic value in a text so wilfully obscure; on the contrary, the work's linguistic experimentations are

often demonised as the ultimate travesty of experimental letters gone further than good sense or human patience would dictate. As H.G. Wells phrased the charge in a personal letter to Joyce, the author of *Finnegans Wake* had "turned [his] back on common men, on their elementary needs and their restricted time and intelligence" (qtd. in Ellmann 688).

Whether defending the aesthetic virtues of such vanguardism or decrying its perceived attack on literature and sense, the deficiency in these evaluative approaches lies in their evasion of an even partial engagement with the language of the *Wake* itself. By thus substituting appraisal for analysis, these critics recycle entirely subjective *a priori* assumptions about what constitutes good literature or language use, such as that the merit of a text lies in its sonority, or in its appeal to some abstract notion of the "common man". Whatever "the emotional [colour] of the page" means to Rosenfeld must remain his personal response to the "rhythmic and melodic" quality he perceives and not an empirical observation, as for every critic for whom the *Wake*'s language is melodious, there is surely another for whom it is the worst cacophony of Western letters. By the same token, Wells' qualification to legislate how these 'common men' may choose to spend their time, or the appropriateness of the book's level of 'difficulty', is equally subjective. In any case the point is debatable, as the argument has also been proffered by Joycean critic John Bishop for considering *Finnegans Wake* a book "very much for the 'common reader' – provided that one [modernises] one's understanding of that term." In the "multi-culturally diverse late twentieth century" in which the canon has been largely deconstructed, Bishop argues, "only a book like *Finnegans Wake* could possibly appeal to a 'common reader' – by including between its covers something in common for everybody, even if that something doesn't appear on the same page, or in the same place on the same page" (*Introduction*, viii). Be that as it may, the point to be made is that the subjectivity of such standards of measurement and judgement highlights that a text's perceived value or quality ultimately yields less insight into what that text *is* than into the individual critic's preconceptions about literature and language. Such evaluative approaches thus circumvent the most significant question for, and greatest obstacle to, forging a basis of academic enquiry into the *Wake*; not as to whether the work is good or bad (by whoever's

standards), or whether it is inappropriately difficult, but rather whether its language bears interpretation and comprehension, or is little more than nonsense. Indeed, if close examination of the text of *Finnegans Wake* may yield both signification and significance, however ambiguous, then the more pertinent question becomes how meaning can occur in such an obviously and wilfully deviant text, despite our intuitive notions concerning the relation between language and meaning?

2.1.1 Nonsense or Polysemy? Meaning and the *Wake*

With the firmly held conviction that the "rub" of Joyce's last work lies in an inquiry into *if* and *how* its text forges meaning, this study shall address Louise Bogan's non-evaluative proposal that "before one starts hating or loving or floating off upon [the language of *Finnegans Wake*], the attention might be bent toward discovering what it is, and how it works" (in Deming, 665). One might expect literary critics, hardened experts in this field, to have a better handle on the nature of such language use, and on the operations of its semiotic processes. On this matter of the *Wakean* text, however, we find critical opinion decidedly split.

Edwin Muir, reviewing the work in the *Listener*, gave voice to the fundamental uncertainty felt by many with the head-scratching assertion that "as a whole the book is so elusive that there is no judging it; I cannot tell whether it is winding into deeper and deeper worlds of meaning or lapsing into meaninglessness" (in Deming 677). The question of whether the *Wakean* text permits or denies meaning is such a divisive issue, in fact, that Russian political and literary historian D.S. Mirsky could proclaim that "this is pure nonsense, the work of a master of language writing nothing [...] smearing up language and sense into a kind of formless, meaningless mass" (in Deming 591), and in stark contrast Joyceans Margot Norris and Fritz Senn could argue, respectively, that the *Wake* "uses words and images which can mean several, often contradictory, things at once" (Norris 120), and is "polysemantic" (*Fritz Senn and FW*). It is clearly not overstating the matter to observe that there is a problematic critical chasm between condemning a text as infuriatingly meaningless and praising it for its great proliferation of

meaning. This broad spectrum of reactions to the text, with respect to its *quidditas* and *haecceitas*, may, by and large, be divided into three broad critical categories, and the disparity between their findings may prove surprising.

2.1.2 The *Wake* as Non-Linguistic 'Nonsense'

You will say it is most unenglish and I shall hope to hear that you will not be wrong about it. (FW 160.22-23)

The first critical reaction to the *Wake* is that its strange language conveys no meaning and does not, in fact, constitute language at all. This view was especially prevalent in early reviews of the *Wake* in its serialised and final forms,[8] although admittedly it holds slightly less sway in the current critical climate. Sean O'Faolain for example, writing in 1928 on the language of "Anna Livia Plurabelle",[9] accuses Joyce of having "rejected valid English," and contends that these "meaningless scrawls" cannot be understood "as language for they are as near nothing as anything can be on this earth" (in Deming 391-2). The *Wake* as a whole is treated in less condemnatory terms in B. Ifor Evans' 1939 review for the *Manchester Guardian*, yet the assertion remains that the book "is not written in English, or in any other language, as language is commonly known" (in Deming 678). Many in Joyce's inner circle of friends and family similarly grumbled that the work, over which the author toiled for approximately half of his literary career, was "usylessly unreadable" (FW 179.26-17). Biographer Richard Ellmann relates that Stanislaus Joyce "rebuked [his brother] for writing an incomprehensible nightbook" (603), and Joyce's patron Harriett Weaver informed the author in a 1927 letter that she did not care much for "the darknesses and unintelligibilities of [his] deliberately entangled language system," and that to her mind Joyce was wasting his

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[8] Various sections and chapters of the work were published throughout its seventeen-year gestation period under the title *Work in Progress*, most prominently in the Parisian literary journals *Transatlantic Review* and *transition*. The final text published, and the only one done so under the title *Finnegans Wake*, was the novel form, on 4 May 1939, and it is exclusively to this text (*Finnegans Wake*, and not its various manifestations as *Work in Progress*) to which this study will refer.

[9] A chapter of *Finnegans Wake* published in a separate volume in 1928 when the full work was still known to the public as *Work in Progress*. The chapter occurs in the final 1939 text as the eighth and final chapter of Book I (pp. 196-216), and as untitled in the final book, is often referred to critically as I.8, although the title of the separate publication is also still used.

genius (qtd. in Parrinder 205). Indeed, the *Wake*'s characters often appear to echo such sentiments, as when Issy, in a footnote to the 'Nightstudies' chapter, declares that there is "none of your cumpohlstery English here" (FW 271.F4). One of the *Wake*'s shadowy narrators[10] at one point even appears to concur with the charges of Joyce's critics and closest peers, contending, "this is nat language at any sinse of the world" (FW 83.12), or 'not language in any sense of the word.'

This charge that the *Wakean* text is little more than non-linguistic "nonsense" is necessarily predicated upon a lexical, even logocentric, model of how 'meaning' is created. 'Meaning' is thus determined as a process in which the producer of a text encodes a 'message', which is then decoded by its receiver. These en/decodings, although relative to context, are considered possible *only* if both users use the same fixed and socially determined code. Lexical items are thus believed to operate as carriers of meaning so that "the signifieds [...] are recoverable from the signifiers" (Frawley 7),[11] implying a transparent relation between a text and its intended meaning. Non-lexical language use, by severing this connection between signifier and signified, is thus regarded as synonymous with 'meaninglessness'. As a consequence a text is defined as meaningful or meaningless in relation to its level of adherence to established lexical and grammatical forms.

If one concurs that language is a socially arbitrated and fixed series of encodings and decodings then it is entirely rational to consider the *Wake* "nonsense", as its text clearly does not conform to such standard lexical and grammatical forms as found in dictionaries or Chomskyan summaries of grammar.[12] As a result, the *Wake* appears to void both meaning and context by virtue of its non-referential nature, and thus create a semantic incoherence

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[10] The *Wake* contains a great number of different narrative voices, marked by shifts in tone, vocabulary, and accent. Some are recognisable, such as the Four Masters, whose voices weave in and out of the text (for example in II.4), and their donkey, who appears to narrate III.1. A great many, however, remain unidentifiable.

[11] The terms 'signifier' and 'signied ' were most famously employed by from Swiss linguist and father of 'semiotics' Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure defines the 'sign' as "a two-sided psychological entity," comprising both the 'signifier' (or "signal") – the 'material' form the sign takes – and the 'signified' ("signification") - the concept it represents (66). We will return to Saussure's contentions about the 'sign' again, but for now it may suffice to highlight that for unde rthis model Saussure, the signifier and signified are inseperable.

[12] Linguist and author Noam Chomsky emphasises that there is an innate set of linguistic principles shared by all language users, which he refers to as 'Universal Grammar' (see Chomsky *passim*).

that defies understanding or interpretation. As this view of language is so widely attested in the minds of many language users by its compliance with their intuitions as to how language works, any analysis of 'meaning' in *Finnegans Wake* shall have to address this integral question: as *Finnegans Wake* largely comprises non-lexical signifiers which possess no socially agreed upon signifieds, then how can the text mean anything at all?

2.1.3 The *Wake* as a New Language

Are we speachin d'anglas landadge or are you sprakin sea Djoytsch? (FW 485.12-13)

The second critical response has been to contend that such language use may yield meaning under scrutiny, but that this meaning occurs with great difficulty to the reader because the *Wakean* text is, in fact, written in a *new* language that must be learned through familiarity and inference. Illustrative of this view is Arnold Bennett's assertion that the work is "written in James Joyce's new language, invented by himself" (in Deming 404). This supposed language has most often been referred to by its proponents as '*Wake*se', and is sometimes conceived of as a 'dream language' representative of the nocturnal subconscious. Joseph Campbell, for example, claims that "when Joyce moves to the dream world of *Finnegans Wake* [...] Joyce writes in dream language so that the words carry multiple meanings" (Campbell, *Mythic Worlds*, 16).

The other prevalent stance inherent to this conceptualisation is that this '*Wake*se' is a new language because it is *all* languages, a view outlined (if not endorsed) by Derek Attridge as the belief in the work as Joyce's "tower of anti-Babel"; an attempt to reverse God's confusion of languages "by making out of the kaleidoscope of languages a new tongue" (*Joyce Effects*, 158). This charge is most usually rooted in the observation that the *Wake*'s neologisms borrow so heavily from so many world languages that all linguistic borders are erased and thus the *Wake* cannot belong to the English language. The *Wake*'s narrators appear as divided on this issue as the book's critics, as the *Wakean* text is also referred to as "polygluttural" ('polyglottal') and "anythongue athall" ('any tongue/thing at all') (FW 117.13,15). The question

becomes particularly vexed when Luke[13] asks the non-compliant Shaun in III.3 "Are we speachin d'anglas landadge or are you sprakin sea Djoytsch?" (FW 485.12-13). Luke's query, most likely aligning himself with the *Wake*'s perplexed readership, is as to whether 'we' (narrators, characters, etc.) are speaking English, Deutsch, a mix of languages, or quite simply speaking 'Joyce' ("Djoytsch")?

2.1.4 The *Wake* as English

Here English might be seen. Royally? (FW 13.1-2)

The final claim regarding the *Wakean* text is that, however odd or seemingly impenetrable, it is at its core essentially English. Katie Wales, still adhering, in part, to the 'Babelian' conceptualisation, deems the book's language "a universal language based on English" (*The Language of Joyce*, 136).[14] Sam Slote makes a similar assertion that *Wakean* peregrinism (its incorporation of features of other languages) "operates upon an (apparently) English syntax and lexicon" (*Derrida's War at FW*, 196). Yet again, contradicting previous claims that the *Wake*'s text is either "nat language" or "anythongue athall," a *Wakean* narrator contends (in lexically and grammatically non-deviant English, no less) that "here English might be seen" (FW 13.1). If this contention that the *Wake* is written in English were to be verified, then close linguistic inspection of the text would have to demonstrate that it engages with and exploits the syntactic, phonotactic and morphotactic possibilities of the English linguistic code in a meaningful and exclusive fashion, and that its polyglottal impulses could somehow be shown to be paradigmatic of lexical English word-formations.

This final proposition would appear to offer the most empirically assessable and verifiable approach to testing whether the *Wake*'s language use constitutes nonsense, '*Wakese*' or 'English'. As such, if this study is to

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[13] Luke is one of the Four Masters, who play alternating roles in the *Wake* as both narrators of the text, and characters within it.

[14] Wales's vacillations in this regard are characteristic of the general tendency of critics to hedge their bets on the issue of what exactly the *Wake*'s text is. In another work Wales describes the *Wake*'s language as "a universalised Hiberno-English that is also not English, but a unique 'lingua franca'" (*Lexicology*, 1473).

systematically address what the *Wakean* text *is*, and *if* and *how* it signifies, then such an investigation into whether, and to what degree, the work exploits the possible significations encoded within the English language system would appear the most attractive line of investigation.

2.2   The Syntax and Morphology of English

From gramma's grammar she has it that if there is a third person, mascarine, phelinine or nuder, being spoken abad it moods prosodes from a person speaking to her second which is the direct object that has been spoken to, with and at. (FW 268.16-22)

Having defined the central undertaking of this chapter as an exploration of the concept of 'meaning' as it relates to the influence of the English linguistic code on the *Wake*'s coinages and syntactic structures (and vice versa), it shall be necessary to set the *Wake* aside temporarily so that a theoretical groundwork for such an analysis may be established. The most pragmatic point of entry into this debate would seem to be a definition of what, exactly, distinguishes 'English' from other linguistic systems syntactically and morphologically, so that a series of principles may be established by which a text may be considered as exploiting its particular code. Before returning to the *Wake* these principles shall be tested upon Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky", so that their mechanics may be most clearly demonstrated.

2.2.1   Identifying English Syntax

Have your little sintalks in the dunk of subjunctions. (FW 269.2-3)

Languages are most commonly differentiated by appeal to their distinct grammars – namely the different sets of logical and structural rules that preside over the composition of sentences and words – and by their individual lexicons, which are considered to be unique and individual from each other. Thus, as the first step in this journey of testing whether the *Wakean* text exploits the English linguistic code to create meaning, a number of decidedly elementary definitions of the distinctiveness of English syntax shall be considered. If such observations appear largely banal initially, they shall

ultimately prove beneficial in the necessary shift away from the perceived importance of lexicons for distinguishing between language systems towards a distinction predicated upon their grammatical features and morphotactic possibilities. As we shall soon see, this correction is not only desirable to the ends of this study, but also necessitated by the significantly problematic aspects inherent to lexical approaches to language distinction.

As a predominantly *analytic language*, English uses syntax to convey subject-object distinction, and as such its Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order is relatively crucial for distinguishing meaning, to the point that "the dog bites the man" bears a decidedly different 'meaning' to "the man bites the dog," and "bites the man the dog" has no syntactically encoded significance. This is not the case in predominantly *synthetic languages* such as German or Czech, where the subject-object distinction is encoded through inflection, so that word order possesses little or no semantic significance (although the pragmatic significance of syntax remains a feature). Thus, in contrast with a highly synthetic language such as Latin – where an intelligible sentence is formed morphologically so that items may be placed in a largely arbitrary order – semantic meaning in English is predominantly married to its syntax, and, as a consequence, 'English' sentences and texts may be defined as such by virtue of their adherence to the SVO word order. Other such distinguishing syntactic features include its pre-noun adjectives (contrasted with, for example, the post-noun adjectives of Spanish or Italian), or the distinction made between modal and main verbs. These factors result in a significant degree of *syntactic predictability* in English sentences, so that the opening word by necessity determines what is to follow, as according to Bolinger's notion of 'linear modification',

> before a speaker begins, the possibilities of what he will communicate are practically infinite, or, if his utterance is bound within a discourse, they are at least enormously large. When the first word appears, the possibilities are vastly reduced. (281)

By the logic of this theory, if the opening word of an utterance is a subject noun phrase, for example, a verb shall have to follow at some point, regardless of how many hypotactic sub-clauses succeed it. As such, one of the grounds upon which the language of *Finnegans Wake* might be

determined as operating within the English linguistic code is whether it may be demonstrated as conforming to the analytical syntax of English – SVO word order, pre-noun adjectives, etc. If this were indeed to be the case, then the *Wake*'s sentences would lose their apparently random and digressive quality and be shown to be *syntactically predictable*.

2.2.2 Approaches to Defining Words

While these syntactic features are by no means followed consistently and uniformly in all instances of English utterance, they form a very loose set of principles upon which the English code can be distinguished from other language systems. The question of what constitutes a 'word', on the other hand, is a significantly more controversial issue, and, as we shall see, the definition of a language by virtue of the items in its lexicon proves to be highly problematic.

There are two main lexicological approaches to the questions of how 'words' should be defined, and of what the criteria is for their 'legitimate' inclusion in the lexicon. As we shall see, however, a number of conflicting definitions and criteria arise from their application. The *onomasiological approach* begins with a particular semantic concept and asks which word or words refer to it, while the *semasiological* begins with the formal word and enquires as to which semantic concept it refers. As we shall be primarily concerned with an analysis of the *Wakean* text the latter approach is clearly the more relevant to our purpose, although for the present question of defining the concept of a 'word', both approaches shall be considered.

As Ingo Plag underlines, the definition of a 'word' is much more problematic than it may at first seem, regardless of the direction from which one chooses to approach the matter. The *orthographic* definition, for example, designates a word as "an uninterrupted string of letters," however this view does not accommodate different orthographic versions of the same lexical item (4). Plag points to the variants 'word formation', 'word-formation' and 'wordformation', which are all attested to, and highlights that it is clearly not desirable to consider these semantically unified but orthographically different items as alternately constituting one or two words (5). Homographs pose an

even more significant complication for the orthographic definition of words, as the question arises whether 'head', for example, should be considered one word in all instances of its use, or if its nounal, adjectival and verbal applications (and the many semantically different uses possible for each category) should be considered as different words.

In an attempt to rectify this problem, a *semantic* definition designates a 'word' as a lexical item expressing "a unified semantic concept" (7). As to what might constitute such unified semantic concepts, it seems there is a human cognitive bias towards reducing complex phenomena and processes so that they may be conceptually considered as a single and knowable entity. 'The Renaissance', for example, may be allowed the status of a 'word' in so far as it is considered as a unified concept, despite the fact that it refers not only to a cultural movement, but to its many different manifestations and evolutions over a period of three centuries, among many different geographies, peoples, cultures, political circumstances, as well any number of individuals (politicians, artists, religious leaders), works of art, events, and so on. On a smaller scale people may customarily conceptualise 'electricity' as a unified 'thing' that powers their household appliances, despite the fact that what is actually being referenced is a number of different processes, properties and phenomena. As it is convenient to particular communicative ends to conceive of 'electricity' in this way, however, the conceptualisation becomes eligible to be assigned a 'word'. In the scientific community, however, where specificity is required, 'electricity' is no longer deemed to be a "unified semantic concept", and is thus replaced by a number of 'words' corresponding to what scientists rather consider to be more exact and individual unified concepts, such as 'electric charge, 'electric current', 'electric field', 'electric potential' and 'electromagnetism'. It would appear, then, that there is a 'least effort principle' involved in the conceptualisation of words, where 'words' and 'concepts' are aligned only if it is useful to do so.[15] The alignment of unified semantic concepts and words is then a subjective rather than an objective enterprise.

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[15] Or if it adheres to your schematic view of the the world. The issue of schematic knowledge will be addressed in section 2.6 of this study.

Further complications arise for this definition. Newspaper headlines, for example, often employ extremely long compound nouns to refer to a highly specific unified semantic concept, such as the use of "helicopter pilot death crash fears" to refer to fears that a specific helicopter pilot may have perished in a crash. While orthographically this headline would comprise five words, semantically it is considered a single compound noun, as it refers to one semantic concept, demonstrating that "not every unified semantic concept corresponds to one word in a given language" (Plag 7). This definition is also problematic in so far as there are a great many semantic concepts which are not referred to by any existing sign, whether compound nouns or not, and can only be referenced by appeal to circumlocutory sentences. For obvious reasons, such a collapsing of the distinction between words and sentences is also not desirable.

A humorous but illustrative example of the deficiencies in these models is offered by Douglas Adams and John Lloyd's pseudo-dictionary *The Deeper Meaning of Liff*, the foreword of which states that "in Life, there are many hundreds of common experiences, feelings, situations and even objects which we all know and [recognise], but for which no words exist" (vii). The stated purpose of this humorous dictionary, then, is to address such gaps in the lexicon from an *onomasiological* perspective and assign 'words' to these unified semantic concepts, such as 'abilene' – "the pleasing coolness on the reverse side of the pillow" (2) – or 'shoeburyness' – "the vague uncomfortable feeling you get when sitting on a seat which is still warm from somebody else's bottom" (90). Here we can see the problematic notion of having to define both "the pleasing coolness on the reverse side of the pillow" and "abilene" as bearing the same status of 'word'. The more relevant issue raised by this humorous dictionary for the matter of *Finnegans Wake*, however, is the necessity of word coinage to rectify deficiencies in the lexicon's ability to economically denote recognisable and unified semantic concepts. As such, we might say that the semantic definition of words is preferable to the orthographic, although due to deficiencies of taxonomy this definition often may result in a blurring of the distinction between sentence and word, as a result of which neologisms are not only rendered desirable, but also have a legitimate claim to the status of words.

This definition of words as conceptual, rather than orthographic, units of language which denote recognisable and unified (but subjective) semantic concepts stands in direct opposition to the criteria by which 'words' are most usually defined – namely their inclusion (or not) in a comprehensive dictionary. Indeed, along these lines, one often hears reference made to units which are 'real words' and those which are not, a hierarchisation that constitutes a modern and relatively arbitrary distinction.

The first instance of an English dictionary as it is known today – Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 1755 – marks the moment of the conception of this modern model of a unified and standardised language which defines its constituent parts by their inclusion in its dictionaries, rather than by their ability (by social agreement or by their exploitation of the linguistic code) to manifest recognisable semantic concepts.[16] However, even at the moment of this imposed shift to the hierarchisation and standardisation of lexical items, Alvin B. Kernan describes Johnson's dilemma in his endeavour to follow John Locke's "clear world of words, ideas and things," as he found himself

> unable to escape from [...] a scene of speaking and writing where people make and change language from moment to moment to suit their particular purposes, where Vanity affects peculiar pronunciations and meanings, where the diction of labourers is "casual and mutable [...] formed for some temporary or local convenience," [...where...] fashion and convenience [...] create terms which flourish briefly and die easily, science amplifies language "with words deflected from their original sense," [and] translation from other languages changes grammar itself. (192-3)

George Steiner expands on these deficiencies in the dictionary's ability to define and contain words when he argues for language as "the most salient model of Heraclitean flux," describing it as a system which "alters at every moment in perceived time" because "if they occur in temporal sequence, no two statements are perfectly identical" (18). Steiner continues to describe the "Heraclitean flux" of language thus:

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[16] While Johnson's work was the first to systematically follow the approach and format of the modern dictionary, it was by no means the first attempt to collect 'English' words. The earliest known instance of such a collection, Robert Cawdrey's *A Table Alphibeticall* in 1604, was only 120 pages long with 2,543 definitions, mostly in the form of one-word synonyms. For a comprehensive list of the various forms of English dictionary between Cawdrey's and Johnsons' see Jones 274.

new words enter as old words elapse. Grammatical conventions are changed under pressure of idiomatic use or by cultural ordinance. The spectrum of permissible expression as against that which is taboo shifts perpetually. At a deeper level, the relative dimensions and intensities of the spoken and the unspoken alter [...] So far as language is mirror or counterstatement to the world, or most plausibly an interpretation of the reflective with the creative along an 'interface' of which we have no adequate formal model, it changes as rapidly and in as many ways as human experience itself. (19)

Thus we may start to see that a language is not inherited as a fixed, unified and stable entity, but as a malleable and mutable system which attempts to allow reference, through adaptation and invention, to an almost infinite number of conceivable concepts, far outnumbering those covered by the words collected in even the most comprehensive dictionaries. Word coinage once again becomes the norm, rather than a perversion of a perfectly complete system.

Thus allowing for an understanding of words as not only constituting *probable occurrences* as attested in dictionaries but also *possible constructions* which allow reference to semantic concepts for which no lexical item presently exists,[17] goes some way to legitimising the *Wake*'s word-formations, if not, as yet, outlining how they may be considered meaningful or 'English'. To test whether the *Wake*'s neologisms may be legitimately considered meaningful their *semantic predictability* shall have to be uncovered, and to these ends an appeal to the synthetic qualities of the English code is necessary.

2.2.3 The Semantic Predictability of Words

While the English linguistic code is largely analytic in nature, it does possess a number of synthetic qualities, such as the bound stems whose purpose it is to indicate plural nouns, adjectives, nouns, and adverbs. Andrew Radford highlights that one of the most commonly shared qualities of 'words' (lexical or not) in the English language is that they are "assigned to grammatical categories on the basis of their shared morphological and syntactic properties" (28). Beyond such grammatical categorisation, the

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[17] That language users also coin neologisms to reference concepts for which perfectly serviceable and probable signifiers already exist shall be treated later in this chapter.

synthetic qualities of the code may also determine the semantic predictability of non-lexical words. As Andrew Carstairs-McCarthy highlights, "it must be that these unlisted and unlistable words are composed of identifiable smaller parts (at least two) put together in a systematic fashion so that the meaning of the whole word can be reliably determined" (16). As such, a semasiological analysis of the potential meanings encoded in these synthetic qualities and their combinations with morphemes should determine whether non-attested and non-lexical neologisms manifest a recognisable semantic concept.

This theory that words might be semantically predictable would seem, on the face of things, to contradict Saussure's assertion of the arbitrariness of the sign. Saussure, however, qualifies his principle that signs are "arbitrary" (67) and "unmotivated" (69) with the following assertion:

> The fundamental principle of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign does not prevent us from distinguishing in any language between what is intrinsically arbitrary - that is, unmotivated - and what is only relatively arbitrary. Not all signs are absolutely arbitrary. In some cases, there are factors which allow us to recognize different degrees of arbitrariness, although never to discard the notion entirely. The sign may be motivated to a certain extent. (130)

Consider the following headline from the *National Review*: "The Obamafication of Obamamania."[18] The words 'Obamafication' and 'Obamamania' clearly do not signify by an arbitrary connection between signifier and signified, but rather constitute motivated exploitations of the linguistic code, so that their meanings are *predictable* to any person with knowledge of who American President Barack Obama is, and of the meanings encoded within the suffixes (although the connection between the signifiers 'Obama', '-*fication*' and '-*mania*' and their signifieds is clearly arbitrary in a Sausurrean sense). This issue is a complex one, and shall be treated in much greater detail in the discussion of portmanteaux later in this chapter. For now we may agree with Saussure that one may distinguish in any language "between what is intrinsically arbitrary [...] and what is only relatively arbitrary" (130), and assert that there is a clear distinction between *unmotivated signs*,

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[18] From an article written by Denis Boyles, 23 July 2008.
< http://article.nationalreview.com/364294/the-obamafication-of-obamamania/denis-boyles>. Saussure uses the example of the French words 'vingt' ("*twenty*"), which is "unmotvated", and 'dix-neuf' ("*nineteen*"), which is "not unmotivated to the same extent" (130).

which are meaningful because their signification is socially agreed upon, and *motivated signs*, which are meaningful because of their exploitation of the linguistic code. As such, another concrete basis upon which the language of *Finnegans Wake* might be determined as operating within the English linguistic code is to test whether the work's non-lexical items are both grammatically categorised and rendered semantically predictable by virtue of their morphological and syntactic exploitation of the English linguistic code.

Before this issue is tackled in full, however, it is considered advantageous for the clarity of the argument being unfolded – and for the benefit of placing *Finnegans Wake* in a larger spectrum of experimental English literature – to demonstrate its principles by means of a brief morphological and syntactic analysis of the first verse of Lewis Carroll's infamous nonsense poem "Jabberwocky". After this closer inspection of the signification that occurs in Carroll's poem through the intersection of grammaticality and non-lexicality – between deviance from and adherence to the English code – we may turn our attention to the *Wakean* text in order to apply our findings more fully, and further investigate the issue of semantic predictability.

2.2.4 The English Code and Carroll's "Jabberwocky"

Tis jest jibberweek's joke. (FW 565.14)

If the underlying claim that the language of *Finnegans Wake* might, in fact, be entirely English – syntactically and morphologically, as well as in its modes of signification – still appears overly ambitious, even perverse, it shall be necessary to position *Finnegans Wake* on a spectrum of realistic to experimental texts. While "Jabberwocky" (Carroll 134) is positioned at the further end of this spectrum (nearer the *Wakean* end, so to speak) the poem affords us an approximately comparable, yet relatively simpler and more accepted (and significantly more anthologised and canonised), experimental use of English language. To our present ends, the first verse of this *'nonsense'* poem offers a sufficient representation of its approach to language:

'Twas brillig, *and the* slith*y* tove*s*
Did gyre *and* gimble *in the* wabe:
All mimsy were *the* borogove*s*
And the mome rath*s* outgrabe. (1-4, emphasis added)

Once the initial confusion over the poem's apparent semantic incoherence is overcome, it may be observed that the lines comprise both lexical and non-lexical items. What bears even more significance, however, is not only the fact *that* there are lexically English words employed within the poem, but exactly *which* words may be attested in the English lexicon. At second glance, it may be perceived that the verse's conjunctions ("and"), prepositions ("in"), determiners ("the") and suffixes (the adjectival '-*y*' and plural '-*s*') are all encoded in standard lexical English (see emphasised items). Conversely, the 'nonsense' words – such as "brillig", "toves" and "gimble" – exclusively constitute adjectives, nouns, and verbs, indicating that a person place or thing, an action or a property is being referenced. As such, the 'English' words and morphemes in the stanza comprise metalinguistic 'function words' that have no referential meaning but express grammatical relationships, and the 'nonsense' words comprise 'content words' which refer (ambiguously) to third-person reality. These 'nonsense' words may be thus defined, *despite* their non-lexical nature, exactly *because* the verse's non-deviant items serve to determine and confirm their grammatical categories.

The ultimate result of this clear functional distinction between the poem's lexical and non-lexical items is that even if no exact referent for "the slithy toves" is forthcoming, a number of conclusions may still be drawn by virtue of both the line's syntax and the words' morphological structures. A "tove" may be specified as a person, place or thing (i.e. a noun), because it follows a lexical determiner (the definite article "the") and an adjective ("slithy", possessing the adjectival suffix '-*y*') (Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense*, 21). As the sign is encoded with the English plural suffix ('-*s*'), it is also clear that we are dealing with more than one "tove", as the syntax of the line has already rendered an interpretation of the '-*s*' as indicating a third-person present verb form highly unlikely. We may say that these "toves" are like "slithes", or have "slithes", and, by virtue of the line's adherence to SVO syntax, that these "slithy toves" performed a series of actions – they "gyred"

and "gimbled" – in a particular place ("in the wabe"). Furthermore, as Jean-Jacques Lecercle points out, the word "outgrabe" "will under analysis yield three constituent morphemes, 'out', 'gribe' and 'past'" (*Philosophy of Nonsense*, 39). Such close morphemic analysis thus demonstrates that this non-lexical and non-attested item may not only be categorised as a verb, but also be conjugated. [19]

This possibility of deriving meaning from the syntax of a sentence, even if the referents of its items are entirely unknown or unknowable, is further demonstrated by the so-called 'Gostak principle', expanded upon by Ogden and Richards in their seminal 1923 study *The Meaning of Meaning*. Quoting Andrew Ingraham's obscure sentence "the gostak distims the goshes," Ogden and Richards demonstrate how the following dialogue may shed light on the meaningfulness of this seemingly meaningless utterance:

Q: What is the gostak?
A: The gostak is that which distims the doshes.
Q: What's distimming?
A: Distimming is that which the gostak does to the doshes.
Q: Okay, but what are doshes?
A: The doshes are what the gostak distims. (46)

As Stefan Themerson highlights, with the exception of the determiner "the", the words in Ingraham's sentence "have no meaning, and yet the sentence is not meaningless" in so far as it informs the reader that "something does something to something" (3). Consequently it is possible to describe the relationships between the terms in the sentence – that the gostak is that which distims the doshes and that distimming is what the gostak does to the doshes – even though there is no confirmation of what gostaks or doshes actually are, because, yet again, the sentence's syntax and sole lexical item allow the non-lexical items to be placed in relatively definitive grammatical categories. In other words, the sentence exploits the meanings encoded within the English linguistic code.

These may seem inauspicious grounds for assigning any pragmatic significance to such language use, however such observations do, at the very least, determine that "Jabberwocky" and the 'gostak' sentence are English in

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[19] For a fuller linguistic reading of the poem, see Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense*, 21.

so far as their non-deviant English morphemes and adherence to English syntactic norms allow us to determine and identify the grammatical categories of their deviant words with some degree of confidence. It would seem, then, that the first verse of "Jabberwocky" is neither strictly nonsensical nor polyglottal, but rather an exploitation of syntactic possibilities of the English language system, and, as Lecercle observes, "at this level, the stanza is a perfectly acceptable, even normal, text" (*Philosophy of Nonsense*, 21).

2.3 Syntactic and Semantic Predictability in the *Wake*

Having explored Carroll's "Jabberwocky" for insight into the ways in which experiments in non-lexicality can intersect with the code, a general basis has been forged on which to test the thesis that the language of *Finnegans Wake* can be considered English – namely it can be said to be so if its text possesses both *syntactic* and *semantic predictability* as determined by the English linguistic code. If the language of *Finnegans Wake* is encoded not within in a foreign or new code – or in no linguistic code at all – but definitively within the English linguistic code, then properties and processes in its language similar to those observed in Carroll's poem should be observable. Indeed, critics often compare the approach to language in both works, and, as Anthony Burgess representatively argues, "*Finnegans Wake* is merely an expansion of the "Jabberwocky" procedure" (*Nonsense*, 20).

2.3.1 Syntactical Features of the *Wakean* Text

In order to explore the syntactic and morphemic adherence of *Finnegans Wake* to the English code – as well as its paradigmatic lexical deviance – the remainder of the present chapter will largely focus, with some necessary digressions, on the following long and peculiar sentence from the book's opening pages:

> Oftwhile balbulous, mithre ahead, with goodly trowel in grasp and ivoroiled overalls which he habitacularly fondseed, like Haroun Childeric Eggeberth he would caligulate by multiplicables the alltitude and malltitude until he seesaw by neatlight of the liquor wheretwin 'twas born, his roundhead staple of other days to rise in undress maisonry upstanded (joygrantit!), a waalworth of a skyerscape of most eyeful hoyth entowerly, erigenating from next to nothing and celescalating the himals and all, hierarchitectitiptitoploftical, with a burning bush abob off its baubletop and with larrons o'toolers clittering up and tombles a'buckets clottering down. (FW 4.30 - 5.4)

Using this line as a means of accessing the text, let us first see what, if anything, can be made of such wandering and apparently nonsensical syntax.

With reference to Bolinger's principle of linear modification, if the sentence is indeed syntactically English then its first word should introduce a certain syntactic predictability. The opening item, "Oftwhile", is a non-lexical item to be sure, but one which appears to be an orthographical – if not a semantic – compound of the temporal adverb 'oft' (or 'often') and the conjunction 'while'. As "balbulous" clearly takes the adjectival *'-ous'* ending, we may discount that this blend is a compound noun, as this would constitute the usually impossible English syntactic formulation *[noun-adjective]*.[20] Rather, in order to make the sentence cohere grammatically, the reader shall have to either discern a phonetic echo of the archaic adverb 'erstwhile' – indicating that the as yet undisclosed subject was 'formerly' "balbulous" – or interpret a latent comma separating the adverb from the conjunction ("Oft[,]while"), and indeed this presents an acceptable and schematically recognisable collocative formulation, a common feature of poetic language particularly.[21]

Once this latent punctuation has been inferred from the line's manifest form, the conjunction 'while' more clearly denotes the initiation of a subordinate clause, after which, if the sentence does indeed exploit the English (and not a '*Wakese*') linguistic code, we will presumably find the [*subject-verb*] phrase to which the opening (inferred) adverb 'oft' relates. Indeed, after a number of digressive clauses further modifying the subordinate

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[20] Although of course, as will be implicitly argued throughout this study, the rules which govern English grammar are by no means hard and fast, as the example of participle adjectives demonstrate, or fans of *Mission Impossible* might attest to.

[21] Examples include Quintus Calaber's lines "oft, while round my neck thy hands were lock'd, from thy sweet lips the half-articulate sound of Father came" (Dyce 88).

'while balbulous' clause, we find the SVO core structure to which the adverb 'oft' relates, with the assertion that "oft":

> he | would caligulate | by multiplicables | the alltitude and malltitude
> *[subject]*   *[verb]*   *[means]*   *[object(s)]*

Next we find the lexical conjunction "until" introducing a new clause that likewise follows the SVO syntax, and modifies the previous clause by stating that this 'caligulation' would occur "until":

> he | seesaw | by neatlight of the liquor wheretwin 'twas born |
> *[subject]*   *[verb]*   *[means]*
>
> his roundhead staple of other days
>   *[object]*

This syntactically standard process of couching SVO clauses in modifying sub-clauses continues. Importantly, these dependent clauses may be recognised by their clear lexical markings, through conjunctions such as "while" "like" "until" and "and". As such, these lexical items not only afford us insight into the grammatical categorisation of non-lexical items, but also allow us to distinguish clauses, and further separate them into independent and dependent clauses, so that the syntactic thrust of the line ultimately can be parsed. If such a line of inquiry is continued all the way through, the core sentence could be inferred as:

> Oft[...] he would caligulate [...] the alltitude and malltitude until he [...]saw [...] his roundhead staple of other days [...] rise [...] with a burning bush abob off its baubletop and with larrons o'toolers clittering up and tombles a'buckets clottering down.

While still unable to attach semantic or pragmatic significance to the line's non-lexical terms, we may clearly observe that an analytic English syntax defines our scheme of interpretation, despite the line's excessive hypotactic digressions and deviations regarding surface level punctuation.

2.3.2 Morphemic Features of the *Wakean* Text

the gradual morphological changes [...] which Professor Ebahi-Ahuri of Philadespoinis
(III) [...] neatly names a boîte à surprises. (FW 165.26-30)

Having established the hypotactically extravagant but syntactically predictable and coherent thrust of the line, let us now investigate in greater detail whether its morphemic elements can help define the grammatical categorisation (if not yet the denotative significance) of the non-lexical signs through their compliance with the English linguistic code.

> Oftwhile balbul*ous*, mithre ahead, *with* good*ly* trowel *in* grasp *and* ivoroil*ed* overall*s* *which* *he* habitacular*ly* fondse*ed*, *like* Haroun Childeric Eggeberth he would caligul*ate* *by* multiplicable*s* the allti*tude* *and* mallti*tude* *until* he seesaw *by* neatlight *of* *the* liquor wheretwin 'twas born, his roundhead staple *of* other day*s* to rise *in* undress maison*ry* upstand*ed* (joygrantit!), *a* waal*worth* *of* *a* skyerscape *of* most eye*ful* hoyth entower*ly*, erigenat*ing* *from* next *to* nothing *and* celescalat*ing* the himal*s* *and* all, hierarchitectitiptitoploftic*al*, *with* *a* burn*ing* bush abob *off* it*s* bauble*top* *and* *with* larron*s* o'tooler*s* clitter*ing* *up* *and* tomble*s* a'bucket*s* clotter*ing* *down*. [emphasis added]

The emphasised morphemes reveal a consistent observance of the morphemic rules of the English linguistic code, with the metalinguistic non-referential features (such as affixes, prepositions, conjunctions, and determiners) all presented in a non-deviant lexical form, as in Carroll's poem.[22] For example, the clause "*and* ivoroil*ed* overall*s* which he habitacular*ly* fondse*ed*" (FW 4.31; emphasis added) contains the following words and morphemes serving their standard lexical functions:

and = clausal conjunction
'-*ed*' = adjective (as in 'ivoroiled')
'-*s*' = plural noun (as in 'overalls')
which = relative pronoun
'-*ly*' = adverb (as in 'habitacularly')
'-*ed*' = regular past tense suffix (as in 'fondseed')

Tellingly, due to the clause's exploitation of the signification encoded within the grammatical features of English syntax, the difference between the '-*ed*' suffix determining "ivoroiled" as an adjective (preceding the noun "overalls", which is in turn confirmed as such by its plural noun '-*s*' suffix) and the '-*ed*'

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[22] Indeed, as may now be more clearly discerned, a good number of the 'content words' are also lexical.

suffix determining "fondseed" as a verb (preceded as it is by the adverb "habitacularly") can be discerned.

The non-deviant determiners and adjectives in the passage may also determine the grammatical category of deviantly encoded non-lexical terms, as in the clause "*a* waalworth of *a* skyerscape *of most* eyeful hoyth entowerly" (FW 4.35-36; emphasis added), where "waalworth" and "skyerscape" are determined as nouns by virtue of the indefinite articles which precede them. "Eyeful" is similarly categorised as an adjective by the preceding lexical item "most," which precedes adjectives in the English code as a modifier of degree (e.g. 'the most terrible', 'the most exquisite', etc.). Furthermore, it may be noted that the non-lexical adverb "entowerly" is constructed by the same morphological means as a standard lexical adverb, with bound prefixes and suffixes around a free stem[23]:

en -	tower -	ly
prefix	stem	suffix
(bound)	(free)	(bound)

Having established that the syntactic, grammatical and morphological rules upon which the language in our sample *Wakean* sentence operates are primarily those of the English linguistic code, we may still only claim with any certainty that these coinages resemble English words morphologically, but that meaning cannot as yet be inferred. If the *Wakean* text is to be considered not only syntactically but also semantically predictable by virtue of its exploitation of the English linguistic code, it shall be necessary to turn to the non-lexical signs themselves – to how coinages are created, and how they forge meaning – as one might well legitimately wonder whether syntactic conformity and grammatical categorisation can really designate the *Wakean* text as English when the words themselves are non-lexical, and thus seemingly non-referential and 'meaningless'.

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[23] A stem, a form to which affixes can be attached, may be considered 'free' when it can stand alone as a semantic unit in itself (such as 'quick' in 'quick*ly*'). A 'bound' stem, on the other hand, cannot occur as a separate word when seperated from other morphemes (such as 'ept' in 'in*ept*').

2.4 Non-Lexical Modes of Signification

So you need hardly spell me how every word will be bound over to carry three score and ten toptypsical readings throughout the book of Doublends Jined. (FW 20.13-16)

Undoubtedly, the greatest barrier to assigning 'meaning' to the cited passage is the abundance of non-lexical terms. As such, the starting point for a first-time reader bombarded with so many new and unknown 'words' must be to ask what its constituent elements are supposed to 'mean'. What significance might "caligulate by multiplicables" hold? Can any possible meaning be derived from the description of something as "balbulous"? What, in the name of sound sense, is a "waalworth" supposed to be? And what class of angel, man or beast might "hierarchitectitiptitoploftical" be supposed to denote? Given the proliferation of such seeming absurdities throughout this single line, the most commonsensical assessment may be to observe soberly that it comprises many words which this first-time reader has never before encountered, and the most one could say, or could wish to say, about such language use is that it is confusing, difficult or even impossible to understand, regardless of its syntactic or morphemic qualities. Confronted with such facts, one would surely be forgiven for concluding that the line is, indeed, "nonsense". The *Wake*'s narrators appear prescient of just such a reaction when they confront the reader directly in one of the work's more lucid (but still deviant) addresses:

> You is feeling like you was lost in the bush, boy? You says: It is a puling sample jungle of woods. You most shouts out: Bethicket me for a stump of a beech if I have the poultriest notions what the farest he all means. (FW 112.3-6)

This feeling of being "lost" in a 'jumble of words', without a notion of what it "all means", is undoubtedly a feeling familiar to anyone intrepid enough to have attempted a line, passage or section of *Finnegans Wake*, and as previously indicated, such readers would find themselves in the company of a great many critics.

2.4.1 Non-Lexicality and Meaning

In order to evaluate this readerly response to such a text, let us begin by considering the following clause: "this is why quarks attract antiquarks to form mesons such as pions, kaons, the J/psi, and the upsilon" (Close, Marten and Sutton 169). This line may appear every bit as baffling to the uninitiated as an assertion that somebody "would caligulate by multiplicables the alltitude and malltitude," yet that is clearly not to say that the text on particle physics from which it is culled constitutes "nonsense". Joyce's *Ulysses* employs a great deal of such esoteric discourse-specific words, such as 'thoracic' (relating to the thorax) or 'epigastric' (relating to the part of the upper abdomen), with the consequence that specific discourse knowledge is required of the reader for "rapid splashing of the face and neck and thoracic and epigastric regions" (U. 786) to fully signify. However frustrating they may be to particular readers, such passages are also clearly not "nonsense".[24] In a non-textual sense, a street in London may be considered to be inhabited by a group of synchronically united English speakers, yet the particle physicist and the linguist living next door to each other might not understand texts written or spoken in each other's discourses.[25] It would seem, then, that 'languages' are not unified stable wholes, but rather loose collections of discourses and exclusive vocabularies, which are (or can be) connected by their exploitation of a shared linguistic code. This is an important distinction to make, as it speaks to the "Heraclitean flux" of language that Steiner observes and highlights that perceived word coinage does not account for the 'nonsense' of a text, as "one can never be certain that the 'coined' word [...] does not have existence, and conventional meaning, in a larger dictionary or a specialised jargon" (Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense*, 29). The charge remains, however, that such terms are meaningful to someone somewhere, while the *Wake*'s nonce-formulations are meaningless to everyone everywhere (except by appeal to their aesthetic or emotive qualities). As such, it shall be

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[24] Katie Wales also highlights that the highly technical register of tha "Ithaca" chapter of *Ulysses* alone employs a great number of such esoteric terms, such as "irruent" (U.825), "erigible" (U.841), and "incrispated" (U.835) (*Lexicology*, 1472).
[25] This problem arises even without even taking cultural, ethnic or religious diversity into the equation, as well as questions of class, group identification, and so on.

necessary to define more rigorously the terms upon which such allegations are being made against the supposedly non-discursive *sui generis Wakean* words themselves.

The stance outlined by O'Faolain, Evans, et al. is, it may be safely averred, tantamount to an assertion of the impossibility of 'sense' without clear and unambiguous 'reference'. In other words, this implication of the synonymity of non-lexicality and 'nonsense' suggests that 'meaning' can only occur if a textual item refers to a *known* thing or concept in a *known* way through conformity to attested orthographical 'words'. Such a direct relationship of form and content is also inherent to Saussure's conceptualisation of the sign as "a combination of a concept and a sound pattern," a view which endorses an understanding of signifiers and signifieds as inseparable (67). The advocates of such a viewpoint might contend that we know what the word 'cow' *means*, for example, because we know what a cow *is*. By the same token we cannot know what "waalworth" *means* because we do not know what a "waalworth" *is*. Rational as an appraisal of the *Wakean* text as incomprehensible "nonsense" might be on these terms, there are two fundamental deficiencies inherent to this conceptualisation of 'meaning'.

To more clearly discern the first inadequacy of considering that language must be both lexical and referential for meaning to occur, we may here introduce the ideas of German philosopher and mathematician Gottlob Frege. Primarily addressing the subject of proper names, Frege argues for just such a distinction between 'sense' and 'reference' ('Sinn' and 'Bedeutung' in Frege's terms) as two different aspects of a word's 'meaning' (152). For Frege, an item's 'reference' is the object to which it refers and its 'sense' the manner in which this object is referred to, as well as the resulting cognitive significance. To use a somewhat sledgehammer example, 'the first and only female British prime minister' and 'Attila the Hen' share the same 'reference' in Margaret Thatcher, yet the 'senses' of both terms are clearly quite different. Clearly, there is something of this effect in the cited *Wakean* passage. However, it might also be observed that a single signifier might manifest many completely different or even opposing 'senses', and such cases are most

usually referred to as 'floating signifiers'.[26] For example the word "America", while always bearing the same geographical referent, might have the 'senses' of 'liberty, freedom, and justice' to one speaker, and 'oppression, tyranny and injustice' to another. If we might agree that a text is always influenced by and dependent upon context, then there is the possibility that, in a meaningful sense, every signifier bear the status of 'floating signifier'. As a consequence, Gordon E. Slethaug argues, "no sign or text is transparent but carries within it a latent subtext that may change or undermine meaning" (547).

Even more pertinent to the issue of impossibility of 'sense' without 'reference', however, is Frege's assertion that "in grasping a sense, one is not thereby assured of a *Bedeutung*" (153), in other words that there *can* be 'sense' without 'reference'.[27] This might be demonstrated by consideration of Bertrand Russell's famous phrase "the present king of France is bald" which, since there is no present king of France, does not 'reference' anything, yet it appears perfectly meaningful (34).[28] If it is acknowledged that all fiction is non-referential, insofar as the characters and events referenced, like Russell's bald French king, are non-existent then the phenomenon of 'sense' without 'reference' can be seen, in fact, as an essential element of all fiction. To the matter of the necessity of lexicality for 'sense' to occur, let us consider the following lines from "The Glunk that Got Thunk" by children's author Dr. Seuss:

> A thing my sister likes to do
> Some evenings after supper,
> Is sit upstairs in her small room
> And use her Thinker-Upper. (1-4)

If the narrator of Dr. Seuss's poem refers to his sister's "Thinker-Upper" (135) instead of her 'mind' or 'imagination', the 'reference' of both lexical and non-

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[26] For a more detailed exploration of the phenomena of 'floating signifiers' as considered by Saussure, Jakobson, Lacan see Slethaug.

[27] The most common objection to this assertion is that it contradicts Frege's definition of 'sense' as the way in which a referent is referred to. However we are, of course, not bound by Frege's wording, and the problem is easily disposed of by understanding 'sense' as indicating cognitive significance. From this perspective, the concept can be seen as approximate – although not completely synonymous – to notions of connotation and denotation, or semantic and pragmatic significance.

[28] Frege offers the example "the least rapidly convergent series," which he argues "has a sense, but demonstrably there is no *Bedeutung*, since for every given convergent series, another convergent, but less rapidly convergent, series can be found" (153).

lexical items is still the same, despite their clearly contrasting 'senses'. British comedian Stanley Unwin is also famous for having using English in a particularly non-lexical and suggestive way (an approach to language which he termed "Unwinese") so that, for example, to someone who had eaten too much Christmas dinner, Unwin advised "if you've done an overstuffy in the tumloader, finisht the job with a ladleho of brandy butter, then pukeit all the way to the toileybox" (Vay xi). Even if Unwin and Dr. Seuss's coinages are unnecessary in so far as perfectly serviceable lexical items already exist to refer to these concepts, the comic implicature of such redundant word coinage should be relatively self-evident.

Three conclusions may be drawn from such a consideration of Frege's conceptualisation of 'sense' and 'reference'. First, different lexical items can share 'references', but their 'senses' will be unavoidably different. Furthermore, a single signifier may have a number of different 'senses' to different speakers, and this might be said of *all* words and texts. Second, not only *can* there be 'sense' without 'reference', but this separation is in fact *essential* for literature. Finally, as evidenced by Dr. Seuss' "Thinker-Upper" or Unwin's "toileybox", non-lexical items can, in fact, produce a *conceivable referent*, and will, additionally, communicate their own 'sense' (comic, childlike, etc.). Importantly, each of these points significantly undermines the assertion that language *must* be both lexical and referential to be meaningful, and opens up the possibility of considering 'meaning' as a play of signification between adherence to and deviance from a particular lexicon or code.

The second problem with the charge that meaning cannot occur without reference, which in turn cannot occur without lexicality, is the inseparable assertion that meaning is fixed and text-based (i.e. located at the level of the sign). From the perspective of literary criticism this model finds its most extreme manifestation in the 'textual determinism' of the more formalist proponents of the 'New Criticism' movement. Representative of such a view, W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley argue that 'meaning' lies exclusively *within* a text, and that to allow its receiver a role in the creation of its meaning is to fall victim to "a confusion between the poem and its *results* (what it *is* and what it *does*)" (21). Largely disregarding Saussure's assertions of "the role of signs as part of social life" (15), this approach thus posits that together a text

and its signification form an autonomous entity, knowable to both its producer and receiver, but not influenceable by them. Let us, however, consider the following case of the Frog-footman in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*.

> 'Where's the servant whose business it is to answer the door?' she began angrily.
> 'Which door?' said the Frog.
> Alice almost stamped with irritation at the slow drawl in which he spoke. 'THIS door, of course!' [...]
> 'To answer the door?' he said. 'What's it been asking of?' [...]
> 'I don't know what you mean,' she said.
> 'I speaks English, doesn't I?' the Frog went on. 'Or are you deaf? What did it ask you?'
> 'Nothing!' Alice said impatiently. (231-2)

Here it seems that the Frog fails to understand what Alice means by "to answer the door" exactly *because* he understands the figurative phrase literally, and, as such, seems to possess no contextual or schematic competence, thus comically confusing semantic and pragmatic significance. This indicates, despite the assertive claims of Wimsatt and Beardsley, that there is in actuality a gulf between textually influenced 'semantic meaning' and extratextually controlled 'pragmatic meaning', and indeed this divide is often exploited (and best exemplified) in such comic literature.

The location of meaning is the most debated and problematic issue of its definition, as beyond the semantic significance of the items in a text, 'meaning' can at once be considered what the producer of a text intends it to mean, what the producer intends his or her audience to infer from its use, what the receiver understands the given text to mean, or what the receiver believes he or she is supposed to infer from the text. Clearly, these are four very different definitions, and the divergence between their results can often be striking. For example, if the text "I'm very hot" is produced, the producer could intend it to refer to the temperature in the room and expect the receiver to infer that he or she should open a window. The receiver, however, may understand the text as referring to the physical attractiveness of the text's producer and may infer that a romantic overture is being made, or perhaps that a jocular boast is being put forward. Further compounding the problem, the intended semantic or pragmatic meaning and the actual denotative meaning of a produced text may not align (the same applies to received

meanings), and either producer or receiver may be mistaken in their assumptions about any of these factors.

It would seem, then, that 'meaning' is an umbrella term for myriad different phenomena, which can be sub-categorised, if so desired, by labels such as 'intended meaning', 'received meaning', 'semantic meaning', 'pragmatic meaning', 'denotative meaning', or 'connotative meaning'. If, however, we can tentatively agree that 'meaning' could occur in any and all of these locations and still be considered as such, it would then appear that the above assertion of the nonsense of the *Wakean* text is founded in the mistaken belief that text and discourse are approximately synonymous. If, however, as Widdowson argues, text is merely a "trace" of a discourse which constitutes *both* "what a text producer meant by a text and what a text means to the receiver" (*Discourse Analysis*, 7), then meaning is not entirely contained at the level of text and the production and interpretive reception of such a text are *both* motivated by the creation of discourse and the convergence of meaning (*Discourse Analysis*, 54). Possible conceptualisations of the 'meaning' of a given unit of language in these terms would thus include any *concept* manifested by it, any observable *referent* in third-person reality which it denotes, or any *propositional element* which it expresses (Horwich 3).[29] These three accounts of 'meaning' may be unified into the single definition of a manifested *conceivable reference* – in other words, a reference to any recognisable or conceivable entity, concept, or proposition. Already we might begin to see that this 'referential realm' is so vast that meaning may be considered as constituting all conceivable cognitive reactions to any motivated or unmotivated sign, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, lexical or non-lexical; a definition so broad as to become almost meaningless in itself, and which suggests that 'meaning' may not be dependent on circumstances, but may, in fact, be unavoidable. Under such terms, the lexicality of an item can no longer be seen to hold absolute sway over what it means, just as the non-lexicality of an item does not determine whether or not it can be meaningful.

These findings suggest not only that "the frontier between coinages and normal words is uncertain," (Lecercle, *Philosophy of Nonsense*, 29), but also

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[29] However, such definitions are clearly as valid for other semiotic systems beyond language, for example regarding the 'meaning' of images or sounds.

that because there is no necessary connection between 'reference' and 'sense', and because 'meaning' is not contained within a text but is rather relative and negotiated by reference to extratextual factors, the potential for non-lexical coinages to be meaningful is an inherent aspect of language.

Having demonstrated that the *Wake*'s neologisms have the *theoretical* potential to be meaningful if they can be shown to manifest *conceivable referents*, it is now time to return to the text itself to see if and how this occurs. Before proceeding we should, however, be cautious lest we fall victim to an analysis of the 'ends' of meaning which does not account for the 'means'. As helpful an exegete as Humpty Dumpty can be, we must be equally wary of his claim that when he uses a word "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less" (190). It is thus important to define clearly the consequences of this openness of 'meaning' for this analysis. The argument may be made legitimately that if the language in the cited passage can be demonstrated to invoke *any* cognitive response then, indeed, the charges that the *Wake* is 'nonsense' are significantly problematised. Such an approach would be homologous with the argument that non-mimetic visual art can be meaningful, despite contrary charges that its non-referentiality renders it meaningless. However, this approach is tantamount to Paul Rosenfeld's appeal to the *Wake*'s "rhythmic", "melodic" and the "emotional" aspects, and, as already highlighted, such an appeal to the text's aesthetic or emotive qualities is not the concern of this study. Rather, in light of the evidence gathered, the following principles for analysing the passage's non-lexical items are proposed: if the *Wake*'s text can be shown to manifest *conceivable referents* it may be affirmed that it is meaningful. If these semantic ends are achieved through close analysis of the words' requisite parts, then it can be said that this meaning has been enabled *because* the *Wake* exploits a linguistic code. Finally if it can be shown that these non-lexical items explicitly exploit the English linguistic code, then the work's text may be considered not as 'nonsense' or '*Wakese*, but rather, if surprisingly and counterintuitively, as 'English'.

2.4.2 Lexical Chains of Signification

a word as cunningly hidden in its maze of confused drapery as a fieldmouse in a nest of coloured ribbons. (FW 120.5-6)

Before moving on to a consideration of whether there is meaning encoded within the *Wake*'s neologisms, it is worth digressing briefly to address the notion that language must conform to standard grammatical forms in order to mean. In fact there is a great deal of meaning in the co-textual relation of words that actually bear no grammatical relation to each other, and this is a feature of language that *Finnegans Wake* exploits significantly.

In the absence of a *Wakean* Humpty Dumpty to walk us through the explications of its signs, one is compelled to wonder what process, exactly, is at play when a reader decides that an unfamiliar sign probably constitutes a non-lexical item, and submits it to an act of morphological investigation in order to make it cohere. It would appear that if lexical coherence is not immediately forthcoming by reference to attested forms, and if the sentence does not lend itself to easy and transparent parsing, the reader need not admit defeat, but rather may change approach and search the co-text[30] for recognisable elements whose semantic quality is known. As Katie Wales outlines the process:

> one way of reading [*Finnegans Wake*] is by recognising 'chains' of collocations, sequences of lexical items drawn from the same lexical set, which frequently build up into lexical motifs, to signal a particular scene or 'character' (e.g. plants for the 'daughter' Issy). (Wales, *Lexicology*, 1473)

Such lexical chains are not unique to the *Wakean* text but are present as a system of almost invisible cohesive markers in *all* cohesive texts, from news articles to instruction manuals. Natalia Loukachevitch summarises 'lexical chaining' as the creation of coherence in texts through "the presence of multiple lexical repetitions and closely related words" which are selected on the basis of "some kind of cohesive relationship to a word that is already in the chain" (1). A particularly distinctive feature of Joyce's texts, one which

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[30] 'Co-text', as distinct from 'context' (an extratextual feature) is defined by Widdowson as "the internal linkage of linguistic elements within a text" (*Discourse Analysis*, 128).

marks even the author's earliest works, is their intensified employment of contextually determined lexical chains not only for cohesive effect, but also for thematic amplification. For example in "The Dead", the final story of *Dubliners,* the language is peppered with word choices related to death and ghosts. These words are in no way grammatically related, but have an accumulative effect upon each other to amplify the story's theme of the influence that the dead hold over the living. So one reads, for example, Gabriel Conroy's charge that his wife Gretta "takes three *mortal* hours to dress herself" (151, emphasis added), the Morkan sisters' concern that Gretta "must be *perished* alive" (151, emphasis added), Miss Ivors nod her head "gravely" (161), and Aunt Julia's voice attack "with great *spirit*" the runs of the air she is singing (165). *Ulysses* expands on this principle so that entire chapters are written more strictly within a particular lexical set, so that, for example, the "Hades" chapter deals with death (Bloom, like Miss Ivors, also casts his glance across a cemetery "gravely"), or the "Lestrygonians" chapter largely exploits a food-related lexical chain. This process is expanded in *Finnegans Wake* in two significant ways. The first is in the sheer magnification and elaboration of the technique. For example the text of "Anna Livia Plurabelle", which treats the female protagonist as the personification of the river Liffey, is woven out of the names of "anywhere from eight hundred to one thousand rivernames" (Bishop, *Book of the Dark*, 336). The second *Wakean* expansion of the technique is even more relevant to our purposes here, as the reader is required to key into a lexical chain of signification which is not only lexemic, but also morphological. In other words, such contextually determined lexical chains no longer influence only word choice, but also the individual morphemes of words.

To demonstrate this principle, and how it might reveal itself to the reader, let us return to the morphologically regular but semantically irregular sign "entowerly". Despite its phonetic similarity to the adverbial lexical item 'entirely', the *Wakean* sign is deviant by virtue of its free stem 'tower'. As a free stem is a denotative semantic unit in itself, one may query the significance of this replacement (in the belief that such an alteration does, in fact, bear significance). In search of coherence, the clause in which the item occurs may be investigated for collocational markers. Thus we find "a *waal*worth of a *skyerscape* of most *eyeful hoyth entowerly*" (FW 4.35-36,

emphasis added). As the reader scans the other deviant signs in the clause, a pattern of approximate synonyms associated with 'tower' may be discerned in "waalworth" (wall), "skyerscape" (skyscraper), and "hoyth" (height).[31] These synonymous or related terms – some homophonically latent, each bearing features of this 'structure/domicile/height' chain – serve, accumulatively, to influence and confirm each other. The signification which arises from this associative lexical chain, however, is not a one-way process, as the recognition of the deviantly embedded 'tower' in "entowerly" does not simply change or 'translate' "skyerscape" into 'skyscraper'. Rather a multi-directional process of mutual adaptation is initiated, so that even if a latent 'wall' in "waalworth" is unearthed, the inference of 'skyscraper' in "skyerscape" retroactively allows for the re-designation of "waalworth" as "Woolworth", denoting the Woolworth skyscraper in New York, the world's tallest building at the time of the passage's composition. Similarly, "eyeful" can at any point of this process be adapted beyond associations of 'visually striking' and its approximate homophone 'awful', to 'Eiffel' in conjunction with the lexeme 'tower'. The sentence would seem, then, to be concerned with visually striking and imposing structures, and its non-lexical terms are synonymously united in a lexical chain that collocationally communicates this point.

The identified lexical chain spreads throughout the *Wakean* passage, and other related or synonymous phrases can be discovered, such as a mason's tools and clothing (mitre in "mithre", "trowel", "overalls"), building material (undressed masonry in "undress maisonry"), and notions of height and mass ("alltitude and malltitude"). Thus the passage's lexical chain can be demonstrated to cohesively and coherently signify a *conceivable referent* in the form of a man dressed and equipped like a mason who is constructing tall structures. This is clearly not the full story, but the lexical chain of signification as embedded within the line creates a central thematic unit from which the process of meaning convergence can begin.

Thus the presence of lexical chains in the passage demonstrates that even without recourse to considering the line's grammar, signification may be

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[31] That such signification is enabled by the non-lexical items approximate phonetic likeness to known lexical terms shall have to be accepted on face value for the moment, but this complex issue will be touched upon in greater detail later in this chapter.

inferred through the linking of lexically and morphologically collocational units. Let us now return to the broader question of the problematic aspect of categorically and systematically recognising non-lexical word-formations and determining whether they may manifest conceivable referents.

2.5 Categorising Non-Lexical Items

probable words, possibly said (FW 52.32).

Jean-Jacques Lecercle makes an important distinction between two types of 'nonsense' word-formations relevant to our present purposes; namely the coinage of possible words, known as *charabia*, and the phonetic approximation of foreign lexical items, known as *baragouin* (*Violence of Language*, 4).[32] *Charabia* are words which exploit the possibilities offered by the phonotactics and morphotactics of a given language – for our purposes here English.[33] As Lecercle stresses, "the meaningful combinations of phonemes [...] do not exhaust the possibilities of lawful combinations" (*Philosophy of Nonsense*, 33). In our cited passage, it would appear already that the greater majority of the work's neologisms constitute *charabia* in so far as they conform to the phono- and morphotactics of the English language, and explore the possibilities of other "lawful combinations". For example, the previously cited "entowerly", while non-lexical, conforms to phonetic sounds and morphological rules permissible in the English language. However, a number of foreign elements may be discerned in words such as "maisonry" (suggestive of the French 'maison', "house"), "himals" (the German 'Himmel', "sky" or "heaven"), or "erigenating" (the Greek *êrigeneia*, "early-born" or "Dawn"). These words, through their imitation and adaptation of phonemes, words and word-formations from foreign languages, constitute *baragouin*, which are thus clearly also present in the passage.

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[32] Lecercle's terms are adapted from French philosopher Étienne Souriau's seminal 1965 essay "Sur l'esthétique des mots et des langages forgés." While Lecercle indicates his indebtedness to Souriau's work, he expands and develops the definitions to the point that this study is based, primarily, upon Lecercle's later updating and expansion of their definitions.

[33] 'Phonotactics' refers to the branch of phonology which deals with restrictions placed upon a language by virtue of the permissible combinations of its constituent phonemes – in other words, which sound combinations are permissible within a language. 'Morphotactics', similarly, refers to the study of the restrictions on the ordering of morphemes.

What should one make, however, of a word such as "caligulate" which adds a morphotactically standard verb suffix to the non-lexical stem "calig"? The same pertains to "*ivoroil*ed", "*fondse*ed" and "*clotter*ing" (emphasis added). Confronted with the presence of words for which morphological analysis yields neither pragmatic significance nor semantic predictability beyond grammatical categorisation, we shall have to investigate forms of word-formation beyond the strictly morphological to see if these neologisms can be accommodated within the English linguistic code. After the morphotactic *charabia* thus far investigated, the most common form of such word-formation is frequently, if often loosely and unspecifically, referred to as a portmanteau.

2.5.1 Charabia: Portmanteau Words

Plag defines such portmanteaux (known in linguistics as 'blends') as "words that combine two (rarely three or more) words into one, deleting material from one or both of the source words" (Plag 122). In other words, the process is one of encoding more than one semantic concept in a single orthographic form, as a new non-lexical item is constructed out of the clash of two more standard lexical forms. The coinage 'portmanteaux' for such linguistic phenomena is, in fact, Lewis Carroll's, and, indeed, the most infamous use of the portmanteau is in Carroll's "Jabberwocky", such as the previously cited word "slithy". The pseudo-analyst Humpty Dumpty explicates this non-lexical sign as being just such a portmanteau word, with his assertion that "'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy'" and that as a result if this blend, 'slithy' is "like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word (Carroll 192). Of course, Humpty Dumpty's exegeses include a number of comically dubious interpretations, due to the fact that he misunderstands his own theory, as a number of his explications are purely semantic – such as his definition of 'toves' as "something like badgers [...] something like lizards, and [...] something like corkscrews" (192) – a deviant interpretation because, as Lecercle points out, "the rules for the formation of portmanteau-words are morphological" and never semantic (*Philosophy of Nonsense*, 44). Thus a clear distinction may be made between semantically predictable neologisms,

such as portmanteaux, which morphemically encode relevant information, and semantically unpredictable neologisms, such as Woody Allen's phantom creature "the Frean", which is semantically defined as "a sea monster with the body of a crab and the head of a certified accountant" (95). Clearly there is no aspect of the word "Frean" which indicates crabs or certified accountants, and as a consequence, the word's meaning is entirely unpredictable (this, clearly, is the intended comic purpose). As a consequence, Saussure's argument for the arbitrariness of signs may be seen to be problematised by the semantic predictability of such portmanteaux. As Lecercle emphasises, the portmanteau word, in both lexical and non-lexical terms, serves to "deny the arbitrary character of signs by introducing motivation everywhere, and the linearity of the signifier by compelling the interpreter to find 'words beneath words'" (*The Violence of Language*, 91). With the recognition of the potential for motivated signs, the contention that the *Wake*'s neologisms are meaningful by virtue of their engagement with the English linguistic code may be verified if they can be shown to possess a certain degree of semantic predictability. Indeed, such portmanteaux are everywhere discoverable throughout the *Wake*, their proliferation evidenced by even a cursory view of the text, while the semantic nonce-neologisms of Carroll and Allen are almost entirely absent.

As Ruben Borg points out, the portmanteau, as "a device employed with exceptional frequency" in *Finnegans Wake*, "enjoys an unquestionable pride of place" as "easily the book's most [recognisable] feature" (143). By virtue of both the proliferation of the device, and its creative interaction with the code, portmanteaux can be seen as "a rhetorical strategy that comes to typify the *Wake*'s linguistic inventiveness at large" (Borg 143). The word "celescelating" in our sample passage, for example, can be interpreted as a portmanteau of 'celestial' and 'escalating', and thus offers for interpretation the semantic concept that the "roundhead staple" which is "ris[ing] in undress maisonry" is 'growing' (*escalating*) into the 'heavens' (*caelestis*). Anthony Burgess offers the example of the *Wakean* word "cropse" (FW 55.8), which "combines two opposites – the corpse which is buried in the earth [and] the crops which its decomposition nourishes" (*Nonsense*, 20). Consequently the item may also be defined as a portmanteau. Burgess' emphasis on the 'dreamspeak'

element of such portmanteaux, through his assertion that "this is not the way waking language works" (*Nonsense*, 20), is, however, demonstrably unsupported by reference to word-formation in everyday language.

That the possibility of inferring meaning from known components in a blended neologism is not exclusive to literary or nonsense texts – let alone to *Finnegans Wake* as Burgess suggests – but is rather a common element of everyday English, can be seen by the number of portmanteaux which have made the leap from possible to actual words, such as brunch ('breakfast' and 'lunch'), spork ('spoon' and 'fork') or dumbfound (a 17th century blend of 'dumb' and 'confound'). Even "chortle" and "galumph", two of Carroll's coinages from "Jabberwocky" (134), have entered the lexicon as 'actual words.' Interestingly, both occur in conjugated forms ("galumphed" and "chortling"), yet the compilers of dictionaries have no problem listing their lexemes as 'chortle' and 'galumph.' One might well ask why "chortle," and not, for example, "mimsy", and the most likely answer is that the former, as an ostensible combination of 'chuckling' and 'snorting', must refer to a recognisable unified semantic concept which had previously had no signifier, and this concept must create, in the language user's mind, the impression of synthesis. On the other hand, the professed blend of 'miserable' and 'flimsy' in "mimsy" must constitute an unrecognisable and overly disjunctive semantic concept, and in the absence of perceived synthesis, did not gain traction in regular speech. Regardless of the exact criteria, the point remains that if an ostensibly nonsensical portmanteau such as "chortle" can be considered a semantic word now, then it must also be considered to have been such before its inclusion in the dictionary, and "mimsy" must similarly be considered "as presenting a semantic concept," and, as such, a 'word'. From the opposite perspective, such blends may be widely used and recognised, and possess significance to many language users, yet still not be considered actual words because they do not appear in a dictionary due to their specificity. Such an example would be the recent trend of media-coined portmanteaux intended to reference so-called celebrity 'supercouples',[34] such as "Bennifer" (referring to

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[34] Yet another recent coinage, 'supercouple' ('Supercouple' and 'super couple' are also attested) was, according to Martha Nochimson, coined in the early 1980s to refer to fictional soap opera couple Luke Spencer and Laura Webber from American daytime drama *General*

Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck), "Brangelina" (Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie) or "Tomkat" (Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes). That such blending of two referents into one *conceivable referent* presents a possible English construction (as portmanteaux), and a unified semantic concept is clear. Nevertheless, due to the impossibility of their inclusion in any comprehensive dictionary of the English language, these socio-cultural portmanteaux problematise the notion of classifying 'actual words' as those which are widely used and recognisable.

Having outlined a working definition of portmanteaux, and demonstrated their widespread acceptance in the lexicon – and the troubling consequences resulting thereof for formulating a criteria for 'actual words' – attention shall be focused on two particular cases that represent the varying degrees of semantic predictability which the *Wakean* pun might allow. In the same passage as our sample quote we read parenthetically that a character called Bygmester Finnegan "sternly struxk his tete in a tub for to watsch the future of his fates" (FW 4.21-22). While a number of portmanteaux in the line will most likely jump out at the reader immediately, for the present purposes it shall be sufficient to focus attention on the word "watsch" (FW 4.22). This non-lexical item may be considered a portmanteau of the two English lexical items 'wash' and 'watch', and in context both may permitted (i.e. both 'to wash his face' and to 'watch his future fate(s)'). We shall return to other possible latent significations in our discussion of the *Wake*'s peregrinistic modes of signification (as well as to the problematic pseudo-portmanteau presented by "fates" in the discussion of conversion as a means of word formation), but for now we can summarise that "watsch" presents a portmanteau whose two elements find some degree of convergence by virtue of the manipulation of context.

The same cannot be said, however, for the example of "caligulate" in our sample sentence, the constituent parts of which McHugh annotates as 'calculate' and 'Caligula' (4). While calculating altitude ("alltitudes") and multitudes ("multitudes") is a schematically recognisable concept, the blended element of a tyrannical Roman emperor does not appear to cohere in any

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Hospital, after intense public interest had made the pair a popular culture phenomenon (Nochimson 274). Once again we see a recognisable unified semantic concept which was perceived to have no relevant signifier necessitating coinage, whose status as an 'actual word' is considered problematic.

schematically recognisable fashion, and the portmanteau appears to fail by virtue of its semiotic dissonance. This dissonance, however, more than forging a failed portmanteau, rather operates to highlight a common misconception; namely that such blends form a single notion or referent out of two separate notions or referents, thus forging synthesis out of disjunction. As Gilles Deleuze contends, all portmanteaux consist, rather, of "a strict disjunctive synthesis" (46).

Consequently, by coining a neologism to refer to a late morning meal by means of portmanteau rather than a strictly semantic unit (a very conceivable alternative), 'brunch' is condemned to signify disjunctively, its point of reference always the space between its constituent parts. Thus, despite its reference to a unified and observable event, the process of signification in the blend 'brunch' is ultimately the same as that of 'slithy', which will never signify a synthesised referent or quality but always the disjunction between whatever elements are believed to be being blended (between both 'lithe' and 'slimy', if Humpty Dumpty is to be believed). This is, of course, not to say that the portmanteau quality of a word cannot be lost over time as it assumes the synchronic qualities of a straight semantic unit (such as 'dumbfound'), but the more neologistic a coinage, the more foregrounded this inherent disjunctive synthesis is. Consequently, if we find the components in the blend "caligulate" to be two heterogeneous propositions which cannot be homogenised in any non-abstract manner, then this disjunctive synthesis is not only a property of the *Wakean* portmanteau, but also of the "imperfect synchronisation" (Borg 145) operating in 'standard' English blends. The *Wakean* portmanteau, then, can be seen to foreground the disjunction inherent to all blending.

The point, however, is not to argue that the 'Caligula' element in the blend is merely introduced as a nonce-cipher with the sole aim of highlighting the inherent heterogeneity of blending, but rather that the semantic predictability of the word is not attainable without reference to context. Returning to our notion of lexical chains as the overriding process through which cohesion is created in the *Wakean* text, the discerned disjunction between the blended elements 'calculate' and 'Caligula' can be made to cohere through the previously noted 'domicile/tower/building' associative lexical chain in the passage, when one knows (or comes to learn) that

Caligula embarked on a number of construction projects during his reign, as well as transporting the Vatican Obelisk, a tall phallic-shaped steeple, from Alexandria to Rome (Barrett 198). By virtue of the activation of this lexical chain, the constituent elements of the blend have gained a degree of semantic convergence with their surrounding context, albeit it in a way which, as the root of "caligulate" may hint, is caliginous: dark and obscure.

2.5.2 Charabia: Conversion

This is all well and good for the words in the passage with identifiable morphological or blended elements, but what shall we say of words which are not altered in any way from their lexical form, yet still signify in non-lexical ways? For example the word "seesaw" as a lexical referent to a noun denoting a children's playground toy would appear to be voided in the statement that "he seesaw by neatlight". As the word is unaltered from its lexical form, a proponent of the dominance of semantics for pragmatic significance might argue that this denotation is the only one possible. Even allowing for creative exploitation of the code, the contention would remain that if a word were to be considered as exploiting the English linguistic code to create new meaning, then changing the surface form of the word would be necessary. As such, if "seesaw" is intended here as a verb, as the line's syntax suggests, it would need to be encoded as either 'seesaws' or 'seesawed'. Consequently the word's use here may be considered nonsense through the denial of its semantic qualities and by virtue of its grammatical inaccuracy. Nevertheless, there is in fact much precedence in English language word-formation for what the *Wakean* text is doing here in its typically exaggerated way.

The means by which Carroll coined his neologism 'portmanteau' affords us an appropriate insight into how such a phenomenon might occur, as the word, rather than a new morphological or blended coinage, assigns new significance to an already existing lexical item that denotes 'a large suitcase which opens into two equal parts.' This would seem a process of 'metaphoric meaning' becoming 'semantic meaning' through social acceptance and usage, however it is indicative of the much more common phenomenon of

word-formation by 'conversion'. Plag defines such word-formation as "the derivation of a new word without any covert marking" (107). This process is observable in the cited passage, for example, in the already highlighted syntactic recasting of the lexical noun 'eyeful' as an adjective in the phrase "a most eyeful hoyth entowerly." This conversion is further permissible due to the fact that "eyeful" already contains within its morphological make-up the adjectival ending *'-ful'*. That the phenomenon occurs in standard lexical coinages – as exemplified by the manner in which the nouns 'bottle', 'skin' and 'water' gave rise to the coinage of the verbs 'to bottle', 'to skin', and 'to water' – supports the argument that the *Wake*'s non-lexical coinages are in adherence to so-called lexical coinages. It would seem that yet again English syntax, and not semantics, defines our scheme of interpretation in the *Wake*. In the same manner, the noun "seesaw" is recast as a verb by a process of conversion. As it most likely indicates a past tense verb, in compliance with the "he would" formulation that initiates the clause, it can be interpreted as the past tense form 'saw'. It should be noted, however, that the manifest form of the noun cannot be entirely removed from our interpretation of the clause's pragmatic significance, and a number of interpretations of the presence of this lexical noun could be offered. There is neither the space nor the need to detail them all here, but in the interest of further emphasising the presence of lexical chains in the passage it may be noted that "seesaw" collocates with the rising and falling movement of the line's final clause ("larrons o'toolers clittering *up* and tombles a'buckets clottering *down*" [emphasis added]).[35] Furthermore, while new formations can be created without any superficial alteration to the word, the denotations and connotations of the conversion root present us with an added layering of ambiguity. The intersection between meaningfulness and ambiguity in new coinages, then, occurs *as a result of* a disjunctive synthesis which is a defining quality of both portmanteaux and conversions, both in the *Wakean* text and in standard lexical language use.

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[35] In the interest of concision a number of semantic resonances within this rich passage have been glossed over, such as the lexical chain indicating that the sentence's subject is drunk throughout (such as the declaration that he was "oftwhile balbulous" – 'bibulous'). As such, another possible connotation of this conversion in the statement that "he seesaw by neatlight of the liquor" might be that he was stumbling drunkenly.

2.5.3 Punning

Shun the Punman! (FW 93.13)

Thus far it has been argued that the semantic predictability of the *Wake*'s non-lexical items can occur by virtue of their quality as morphologically adherent formations, or by their quality as a blend of disjunctive elements which are made to converge by keying these elements in to the operating lexical chain in a given line or passage. Similarly, when the surface form is unaltered by affixation, these *Wakean* signs can assume the quality of neologisms by their syntactic re-positioning, so that such words are forced to signify in a different manner by virtue of their newly categorised grammatical role. Moreover, all of these processes have been demonstrated as paradigmatic of processes of word-formation already present within the English lexicon. These observations, however, are not sufficient to summarise the divergent ways in which the words in the cited line signify. What, for example, shall we say of the word "fates" in "watsch the future of his fates" which, in order to allow the polysemantic significations of the blend "watsch", must be made to signify *both* 'face' and 'fates', without any manifest alteration of the word's surface form or syntactic alteration of its grammatical function ('face' and 'fate' both function, after all, as nouns)? Surely there is no precedent for simply interpreting deviant reference in a word whose denotative potential is already fixed within the lexicon without any of the alterations already outlined?

2.5.3.1 Defining Puns and Their Semantic Ambiguity

In fact there is a well-established precedent for such ambiguity of meaning existing in a single unaltered and non-converted sign, which becomes evident when we move our line of enquiry from morphology to phonetics. While we may have no morphological or semantic basis on which to make the lexical item "fates" signify the front part of a person's head, we may observe that, at the very least, the words fates and face 'sound' like each other. While this may seem unpropitious grounds for assigning *multiple* new denotative meanings to an already lexical word, the practice of aligning

homophonically similar words is also well established in various discourses, and is most commonly referred to as 'punning'.

For our predominantly linguistics purposes here, it is considered most helpful and accurate to understand the act of punning (known technically as *paronomasia*), as Walter Redfern did, as "treat[ing] homonyms as synonyms" (3); in other words treating words which sound alike as though they had the same meaning, regardless of what the intended or resulting effect upon the reader or listener might be. A representative example can once more be taken from Carroll, where the effect, unlike "Jabberwocky" is achieved through strict adherence to the lexicon:

> "And how many hours a day did you do lessons?" said Alice, in a hurry to change the subject.
> "Ten hours the first day," said the Mock Turtle: "nine the next, and so on."
> "What a curious plan!" exclaimed Alice.
> "That's the reason they're called lessons," the Gryphon remarked: "because they lessen from day to day." (87)

The Gryphon clearly mistakes the homophones "lessons" and "lessens" for synonyms, and as a result a pun has occurred. However, lest one object that Carroll's is a somewhat forced and laboured example, it should be pointed out that exploitation of such ambiguity can occur on a spectrum of manifest disjunction to (illusory) synthesis. The first piece of information we learn about Mr. Bloom in *Ulysses*, for example, is that he "ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls" (U.65). Due to the syntactic positioning of 'relish' in the sentence, in conjunction with the preposition 'with', the word may be understood adverbially (relating to how Bloom ate, namely with gusto or great enjoyment) or as a noun (relating to the condiment with which Bloom flavours these "inner organs"). Both meanings coexist within the sentence syntactically and contextually; indeed it is impossible to homogenise them or discover fixed univocal meaning. Here the exclusive denotations inherent in the sign "relish" – that Bloom ate these organs either with 'gusto' and 'enthusiasm,' or with a condiment – appear less laboured by virtue of both the homographicity of the signs and the convergence of context (both denotations are related to the act of eating). The phenomenon, however, is exactly the same as in Carroll's usage.

Lest one object that such wilfully ambiguous language use would appear to be a purely literary phenomenon, it should be noted that such ambiguity can, and does, occur in all genres of text, literary and non-literary alike. For example, Aronoff and Fudeman point to polysemy arising in newspaper headlines as a result of the ambiguities inherent within the homophonic and homographic similarities of the signs within the English lexicon. One such representative example cited in their work is the headline:

BRITISH LEFT WAFFLES ON FALKLAND ISLANDS. (33)[36]

The ambiguity here – as to whether the article to follow will concern British liberals equivocating on the matter of the Falklands war, or the British abandoning breakfast pastries on the islands – occurs because of the homophonicity of different lexical items in the English language. "Left" may denote either a noun referring to 'a person or group favouring liberal, socialist or radical views,' *or* a past simple form of the verb 'to leave'. "Waffles", is similarly ambiguous in so far as it can denote either the third-person singular form of the verb meaning 'to speak at great length without saying anything important or useful,' *or* a plural noun indicating 'a small crisp butter cake'. While this phenomenon may appear superficially similar to conversion, as undifferentiated words functioning differently in different grammatical categories, the distinction is that for conversion to take place the new word formation has to be semantically linked to the base form, so that, for example, 'to bottle' means 'to put something into a bottle' or 'to access' means 'to gain access.' The potential significations of 'left' and 'waffles' are neither denotatively nor connotatively related, yet take orthographically identical forms. Thus the simultaneously possible but semantically opposing significations of "left waffles" result from the equal legitimacy of considering the phrase as constituting either a *[noun(subject) – verb]* or a *[verb – noun(object)]* syntax, an ambiguity resulting not from conversion, but from homonymy.

The consequences of the potential for puns within the English linguistic code are numerous. The most obvious of these is the intractable introduction

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[36] Other examples offered include 'MINERS REFUSE TO WORK AFTER DEATH', 'JUVENILE COURT TO TRY SHOOTING DEFENDANT' and 'KIDS MAKE NUTRITIOUS SNACKS.'

of ambiguity into the system. Tigges observes that "the polysemy which is characteristic of a linguistic ambiguity, and which is ordinarily resolved [...] in a special context," is employed in such puns to "send the reader to the 'other' meaning" and, as a result, the pun may often "present an anomaly between two (or more) semiotic levels" (*Anatomy of Literary Nonsense*, 63). Furthermore, puns, through their exploitation of the ambiguity already present in the homonymic confusion inherent to the English language, present the greatest hurdle for the Saussurean conceptualisation of signs creating meaning by their difference. According to Saussure, the sign may be identified only because "a linguistic system is a series of *phonetic differences* matched with a series of *conceptual differences*" (118, emphasis added). As Attridge contends, however, the pun problematises the very notion of language as a fixed system which transmits "pre-existing, self-sufficient, unequivocal meaning" and because it "undermines the basis on which our assumptions about the communicative efficacy of language rest: in Saussure's terms, that for each signifier there is an inseparable signified" (*Peculiar Language*, 189).

As a result of the fact that the English language economically re-uses the same signifiers for a variety of unrelated signifiers, even the most straight forward and "realistically" descriptive prose cannot be a purely transparent medium that merely reveals third-person reality. Such instances strongly support Derek Attridge's assertion that puns and punning are "not an aberration of language but a direct reflection of its 'normal' working" (*Peculiar Language*, 193). Resulting from this revelation of punning as "a product of language's necessary mode of operation" (*Peculiar Language*, 193) it may be concluded that if the text of *Finnegans Wake* employs puns in its semiotic processes, it exploits the fluid productivity of all language use, rather than breaking with a supposed rigidly denotative code.

2.5.3.2 Punning in *Finnegans Wake*

As a consequence of this semantic instability, the ambiguity of language exploited in *Finnegans Wake* should perhaps best be considered a comically exaggerated exploitation of the ambiguity inherent to and resulting from the very existence of homonyms within the English lexicon. If in "most eyeful hoyth entowerly" a homophonically equivalent (and lexical) phrase such as 'most awful height entirely' may be inferred, this is because 'eyeful – awful', 'hoyth – height' and 'entowerly – entirely' are such homophones being treated synonymously. This is a principle employed in works which are categorically not experimental or avant-garde in nature, as the 'eyeful' Tower pun also occurs in Anita Loos' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, in which the protagonist states "when a girl looks at the Eyefull Tower she really knows she is looking at something" (55). The punning of *Finnegans Wake*, however, is a more complicated matter than that of Loos' work, in so far as it treats lexical items and non-lexical neologisms as homophones, so that beyond connecting two homophonically related lexical items (as in 'eyeful' and 'Eiffel'), a latent homophonic equivalent is related to a neologism whose semantic predictability is only accessible by application of the methods already outlined, and thus subject to further ambiguating polysemantic processes. In other words, instead of merely exploiting two lexical homophones for the purposes of punning, *Finnegans Wake* often forms non-lexical portmanteaux, which it *then* treats also as a pun. For example, on the opening page one reads that "Sir Tristram" had not yet "rearrived from North Armorica" to fight "his penisolate war" (FW 3.4-6). Here we find alternately 'pen' and 'isolate' or 'penis' and 'isolate' blended together to form "penisolate". However, by virtue of its collocation with "war", this portmanteau serves also as an approximate homophonic echo of the Peninsular War between France and the allied powers of Spain, and hence the coinage is *both* a portmanteau and a pun.

Such punning ambiguity also exists at the sentence level in *Finnegans Wake*. The homophonic ambiguity recognisable in the cited newspaper headline results primarily from the fact that both interpretations are syntactically and semantically encoded within the manifest form of the sentence. In the *Wakean* text, however, this phenomenon is often relocated to

a latent *homophonic* exploitation of the words themselves. The line "now eats the vintner over these contents" (FW 318.20) presents us with an example of such a case. As Senn highlights:

> The sense may be a trifle odd, but not really baffling. If we are familiar with the opening line of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, however, we can hear an entirely different semantic development: "Now is the winter of our discontent…" We may not see the thematic connection between the two lines (the context would have to provide that). What matters here is that both of them can be followed independently, both are (syntactically, semantically) self-contained. We can learn to take them both in our (one) stride." (*Nichts Gegen Joyce*, 190)

Another demonstrative example occurs when the reader learns that drinkers in a bar (in chapter II.3) "had been malttreating themselves to their health's contempt" (FW 322.28-29). The sentence can be decoded phonetically as either the drinkers 'treating themselves to malt (whiskey) to their hearts' content,' or 'mal-treating themselves to the contempt of their health' (presumably, by consuming too much malt). Neither reading is given primacy, and the polysemy of the sentence, as with the polysemy of the above headline, cannot be erased. In other words, attributing a univocal 'meaning' to the line is an impossibilty. The quotation from the *Wake* is further ambiguated, however, by the fact that both possible significances adhere to the reader's schematic knowledge of the types of activities that take place in bars, and thus one meaning can be neither schematically nor contextually prioritised over the other. As the polysemy of the *Wakean* sentence remains inerasable, even by schematic means, entire sentences are thus endowed with the disjunctive synthesis of puns and portmanteaux.

The other key difference from the examples from Loos et al., is that non-deviant lexical signs can also be retroactively affected and semantically altered in the *Wakean* chain of signification. While Loos' character offers an immediate elucidation of her pun (that "when a girl looks at the Eyefull Tower she really knows she is looking at something") the process of elucidation in the *Wakean* text is often delayed over many complex hypotactic sub-clauses, such as in the clause "until he seesaw [...] his roundhead *staple* of other days to rise in undress maisonry upstanded" (FW 4.33-35, emphasis added). While the imagined reader may have semantic knowledge of a 'staple' as a noun indicating either "a piece of bent metal or wire pushed through something or

clipped over it as a fastening" or "a main or important element of something, (for example, of a diet)" neither of these definitions allow for any pragmatic significance to be assigned to the line. One, it may be argued, has no schematic experience of a 'metal fastening' or an 'important element' "ris[ing]", whether "in undress maisonry" or not. Nevertheless, as a result of the upcoming 'domicile/tower/building' related lexical chain, the sign can be *retroactively* re-designated as its homophonic echo "steeple", offering the pragmatic significance that the sentence's subject is seeing a "steeple" rise in undressed masonry. This, however, is not a signification made immediately apparent in the contiguous co-text, and before we move on to other forms of neologistic word formation, this issue shall have to be briefly addressed.

2.5.4 Retroactive Modification

indicating that the words which follow may be taken in any order desired. (FW 121.12-13)

This issue of retroactively re-assigning signification raises another form of objection to the English-ness of such processes of signification, and one important enough that it shall be necessary to digress briefly in order counter it before moving on to other forms of non-lexical word coinages identified by Lecercle. Such an objection would be that if the line is indeed technically English by virtue of its syntax and modes of word-formation, it is still operating in decidedly non-English ways, as English is read from left to right and not in a process of constant retroactive re-evaluation and re-assignment of significance. Indeed, this very notion would appear to contradict Saussure's second principle of the sign, namely that it is "linear" in nature (69). To counter this conceptualisation of a strictly sequential and linear view of the signification process of English, let us consider a number of non-deviantly encoded uses from other texts in which such a process is to be found. For example, in Alan Bennett's play *Forty Years On* we read (or, if in performance, hear) the following description of Lawrence of Arabia:

> Clad in the magnificent white silk robes of an Arab prince, with in his belt the short, curved, gold sword of the Ashraf descendants of the Prophet, he hopes to pass unnoticed through London. (56)

In these lines the immediately assumed significance of the British military officer's environment, inferred through his dress and the tone employed, have to be retrospectively re-contextualised and re-designated with the final comic revelation that he is not passing through the deserts of Arabia, but rather the urban landscape of London. For another literary example, let us consider the last lines of the poem "The Right of Way" by William Carlos Williams (50):

> Why bother where I went?
> for I went spinning on the
>
> four wheels of my car
> along the wet road until
>
> I saw a girl with one leg. (23-28)

Once the following line "over the rail of a balcony"(29) is read, it becomes necessary to retroactively re-evaluate the assumed referent from that of a one-legged girl, to a girl who is dangling one of her legs over a balcony rail, and modify the line's significance accordingly. One final example can be offered from Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which we read in the opening line to the "Wandering Rocks" episode that "the superior, the very reverend John Conmee S.J. reset his smooth watch in his interior pocket as he came down the presbytery steps" (U.280). Any initial schematic knowledge about the significance usually assigned to resetting one's watch (namely, of changing the time) has to be retroactively modified once it is revealed that the watch is positioned "in his interior pocket", with the alternate meaning of "reset" (to re-position) retroactively becoming more likely, although some degree of ambiguity remains.

This non-linear processing of significance is also prevalent in everyday non-deviant language use, such as in so-called 'garden path sentences'. Norbert Schwarz offers the example "the old man the boats," which is initially confusing due to the assumption that the schematically familiar collocation "the old man" constitutes a noun phrase, in which case a verb would appear to be lacking. Due to the resulting lack of coherence, the reader needs to

"back up and reparse the sentence correctly" to discover that "man" is in fact the sentence's verb (207).[37]

These examples clearly contradict Saussure's description of the linear order of language. 'Understanding', as we may start to see, may more accurately be thought of as a process of *active interpretation* which needs to be continually and retroactively updated and emended; a process observable in both *Finnegans Wake* and the larger corpus of English language texts.

2.5.5 Baragouin: Translinguistic Peregrinism

Borrowing a word and begging the question. (FW 25-26)

Let us now return to Lecercle's second category of non-lexical word-formation. Lecercle uses the term *baragouin* to refer to neologisms which imitate, adapt, or generally exploit the phonological, morphological or semantic possibilities encoded within a *foreign* linguistic code. The actual process of translinguistic re-appropriation itself is most usually referred to as 'peregrinism', which Dupriez and Halsall similarly define as the act of employing "linguistic elements borrowed from a foreign language", be they phonetic, graphic, melodic, grammatical, syntactic, or connotative (332). As already noted, a number of coinages in our sample quote appear to exploit *foreign* lexicons, such as French ("maisonry"), German ("himals"), and Greek ("erigenating"). It is this exactly this seemingly polyglot aspect of *Wakean* word-formation that offers the strongest support for designating its text as a new language of Babel, or as the invented polyglot 'dream language' of '*Wakese*'. Indeed, such *baragouin* would most usually be considered a significantly non-standard (or at least a solely literary) use of language. Whatever about associative chains of signification and retroactive modification, one might challenge, English does not, by and large, operate through a system of translinguistic association. As such, it shall be necessary to first define the operations of peregrinism in the *Wakean* text in greater detail, before investigating the literary canon and the English lexicon to see whether such *baragouin* may be considered paradigmatic of non-literary,

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[37] Clearly, this example is analogous with the previously cited newspaper headline.

lexical word-formation, or if they are indeed so idiosyncratic as to render the *Wakean* language independent of any one linguistic code.

2.5.5.1 Peregrinism in the *Wake*

Returning to the means by which "staple" was retroactively modified so as to cohere to the operating lexical chain, if one allows for the presence of *baragouin* in the text an alternate process is enabled by which a similar result may be achieved. "Staple" may also take its place in the operating 'domicile/tower/building' lexical chain by virtue of its homophonic approximation of the German or Dutch noun 'stapel' ("a pile, mound or heap") or verb 'stapeln' ("to pile; lay objects on top of each other"). Indeed, such translinguistic associations suitable to the operating lexical chain permeate the passage, such as the presence of the French 'maison' ("house") in "maisonry". Similarly, the clause "with larrons o'toolers clittering up and tombles a'buckets clottering down" – beyond its latent allusions to the archbishops of Dublin and Canterbury[38] – contains a number of French and German *baragouin* that both adhere to the 'domicile/tower/building' lexical chain, and allow pragmatic significance to be assigned. In "larrons o'toolers" we may discern the French 'larron' ("thief"), in "clittering" the German 'klettern' ("to climb"), and in "tombles a'buckets" the French 'tomber' ("to fall down"), thus allowing the lines to be assigned the pragmatic significance of 'with thieves of tools climbing up (the builder's envisioned tower), and buckets tumbling/falling down from it.'

Once such 'peregrinism' is activated within the text, words that might otherwise be considered English portmanteaux take on additional translinguistic significations, such as in the previous example of "watsch" (FW 4.22). As already outlined, this word can be considered a blend of the two English lexical items 'wash' and 'watch', and indeed, in context both may be permitted. The sign's manifest form, however, constitutes a homograph of the German (specifically Austrian or Bavarian dialect) noun 'Watschen ("a slap in the face"), or its verbal form 'watschen' ("to slap in the face"). Signification

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[38] St Laurence O'Toole ["larrons o'toolers"] and St. Thomas Becket ["tombles a'buckets"] respectively.

may thus homophonically transgress "language" borders, and the sign's polysemy is expanded further to allow, in addition to 'watching his fate' and 'washing his face,' the signification of 'slapping his face'.

Given the evidence that new word-formations in the *Wakean* text cannot be entirely devoid of the connotations of their constituent parts (ambiguity and polysemy emerging from the resulting disjunctive synthesis inherent to the process) it is pertinent here to touch briefly on the connotative effect of such peregrinism. The following passage describes the character of the Ondt in the *Wakean* micro-narrative *The Ondt and the Gracehoper*, as related by Shaun to his inquisitors in chapter III.3

> The Ondt was a weltall fellow, raumybult and abelboobied, bynear saw altitudinous wee a schelling in kopfers. He was sair sair sullemn and chairmanlooking when he was not making spaces in his psyche [...] (FW 416.3-6)

While pragmatic significance can be interpreted by investigating the passage's latent relation to the English code – for example that the Ondt was a 'well (or very) tall fellow' – an awareness of Germanic elements in the line opens up a number of associative translinguistic significations – such as that the Ondt was a universal (German 'Weltall' meaning 'universe') fellow. Once (or if) the reader becomes aware of the peregrinistic quality of the passage, a number of other German echoes may be intuited, such as 'Raum' ("space", in "raumybult"), 'beinah so [X] wie [Y]' ("almost as [X] as [Y]" as in "bynear saw altitudinous wee"), 'Kopf' ("head", as in "kopfers"), 'sehr' ("very", as in "sair sair sullemn") and 'Spaß machen' ("make jokes or have fun", as in "making spaces"). These translinguistic features open up possibilities for signification in obvious ways, not so much *instead* of the lexically English possibilities but rather in addition to them.

To our present question, however, the connotative effect of such Germanic peregrinism in the passage may lie in the micro-narrative's allusion to the fable "The Ant and the Grasshopper", attributed to Aesop, in which the industrious and frugal ant survives the harsh winter, having spent his summer storing food, while the idle and procrastinating grasshopper starves of hunger, having spent his summer singing. The employment of German peregrinism to describe the Ondt, the *Wake*'s 'ant' cipher, would appear to activate

schematic notions of racial stereotyping, in which the Germans are considered to be efficient and industrious (*fleißig*) and frugal or even financially tight (*geizig*). The point is not whether these clichés are true of the German people, but rather that they present a schematic mode of understanding which can be accessed by the reader to forge significance. That the context would appear to make such peregrinism cohere supports the assertion that supposedly foreign elements can signify meaning beyond and above the semantic qualities of the lexemes themselves.

It might be contended that the employment of such a proliferation of *foreign* elements into the *Wakean* text has the dual effect of both expanding and obscuring potential signification. Knowledge of these languages would seem integral in allowing many of the *Wake*'s peculiarities to cohere, yet the profusion and diversity of languages employed also remains one of the greatest obstacles to applying pragmatic significance to much of the *Wakean* text. As a result of the impossibility of the reader knowing all of the sixty or so languages utilised in *Finnegans Wake*, one might argue, great scores of potential signification are thus shut off to different readers. This is clearly the case, however the principle is theoretically no different than that of the esoteric word choices already addressed. to highlight the inherent similarities between these practices, let us let us briefly consider the following lines:

> For the boss a coleopter, pondant, partifesswise, blazoned sinister, at the slough, proper. In the lower field a terce of lanciers, shaking unsheathed shafts, their arms crossed in saltire, embusked, sinople. Motto, in letters portent: Hery Crass Evohodie. (FW 546. 7-11)

This short passage may appear to make about as much (non)sense as any other in the *Wake* due to its proliferation of non-lexical terms. However, if one possessed a prior knowledge of entomology or heraldry, the case will be quite different, for such an imagined reader would most likely be able to activate the relevant discourse knowledge and recognise "coleopter" as an entomological term for an order of insects that comprises the beetles (including weevils) that, rather than referencing some rare phenomenon, in fact refers to the largest order of animals on the earth. This imagined reader would also perceive an abundance of the passage's seemingly non-lexical items as lexical references to heraldic features, such as 'fesswise' (in "partifesswise", 'the manner of the

broad horizontal stripe across the middle of the shield'), "blazoned" ('inscribed or painted with arms or a name'), "sinister" ('of, on, or toward the left-hand side of the shield, from the bearer's point of view'), "proper" ('in the natural colours'), "field" ('the surface of an escutcheon'), "terce" ('division of 'field' in three'), "saltire" ('the division of the 'field' in the form of St. Andrew's Cross'), "sinople" ('dark green'), and of course, the more widely known "motto". However, if a reader has no schematic knowledge of these fields and consequently cannot access "saltire" as a lexical heraldic term, he or she might very well assume any of the above to be non-lexical signs, and consequently be tempted to investigate the relevance of all sorts of portmanteaux (such as, perhaps, a particularly salty brand of satire), puns or translinguistic borrowings. In other words, if the relevant schema cannot be keyed into, the line may be made to signify meaning by other hermeneutic means.

The status of the English language of a loose collection of discourses has already been ably demonstrated, however the larger point here is that the employment of *baragouin* is, in its core operations, no different from the employment of esoteric or discourse-specific terms which yield meaning to some readers and not to others. That such *baragouin* may be seen to be semantically predictable, connotative, to possess the same potential to expand and obscure signification as discourse-specific language use, and are open to different hermeneutic modes, decisively debunks any claim that they are 'meaningless'. The accusation that they are decidedly non-English, however, remains unanswered. Such translinguistic flexibility, while allowing signification in the particular case of *Wake*, may be argued to be operating in unique, non-paradigmatic ways. If a person is introduced to a fellow named Laurence (or "larrons o'toolers"), it might be argued, they are not generally at a loss as to whether this is the man's proper name or if he is confiding, in French, to his profession as a thief (perhaps of building utensils).

To better appreciate the veracity or otherwise of this claim, it shall be necessary to shift focus briefly away from the *Wakean* text in order to ascertain to what extent there is any precedence in literature, and ultimately in the English lexicon itself, for word-formation through the exploitation of

phonological, morphological or semantic possibilities encoded within *foreign* linguistic codes.

2.5.5.2 Peregrinism in the Literary Domain

As Lecercle stresses, any word-formation which "imitates, and mocks, the borrowing of foreign words" exploits what has generally been "one of the quickest ways of increasing the lexicon of a language," by taking advantage of the semantic predictability of foreign words (*Philosophy of Nonsense*, 42). As such, peregrinism has been one of the hallmarks of many invented literary languages. For example, Anthony Burgess's invented language 'nadsat' in *A Clockwork Orange* largely constitutes anglicised *baragouin* from Russian, so that one finds, among many examples, "glazzies" referring to 'eyes' (from the Russian *glaz*), "horrorshow" signifying 'good' (from the Russian *khorosho*), or "baboochka" designating 'grandmother' or 'old lady' (from the Russian *babushka*).[39] Once one accesses the peregrinistic aspects of Burgess' invented language, and possesses a prior knowledge of Russian (or access to a glossary), the following neologisms may obtain some degree of semantic predictability:

> "I could have chained his *glazzies* real *horrorshow*," said Dim, and the *baboochkas* were still on with their 'Thanks lads.'" (*Clockwork Orange*, 46; emphasis added)

Another modern example is provided by the character Salvatore in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, who, according to the author "speaks a language made up of fragments of a variety of languages" to achieve a "'Babel' effect" (*Translation*, 57). Salvatore's first typically macaronic words (as translated into macaronic 'English' by William Weaver from Eco's macaronic 'Italian') are "Penitenziagite! Watch out for the draco who cometh in futurum to gnaw your anima! Death is super nos! Pray that Santo Pater come to liberar nos a malo and all our sin!" (*Name of the Rose*, 26).

Lest one think that such "trans-linguistic foolery" is merely the twentieth century whim of a handful of modern or postmodern writers, Noel Malcolm observes that such language use is rather an established feature of the

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[39] For a more comprehensive list of Russian *baragouin* in *A Clockwork Orange* see McDougal 141-149.

heritage of European writing, as observable in various instances of 'macaronic verse', most usually employed to comic or satirical ends (103). An example of such macaronic langauge use in poetry would be the prevalent Latinisation of the vernacular (known as 'dog-Latin' or 'kitchen-Latin). Other texts in this macaronic tradition include the 'descort' in five languages by Raimbaut de Vaqueris, or the dedication of Abraham France's *The Arcadian Rhetorike* of 1588, which constitutes a poem in a mixture of Latin, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese (Malcolm 103-4).

Finnegans Wake, it would seem, rather than a *sui generis* text, exploits and expands upon an established literary tradition. Given, however, the widely held sense that literary language use is somehow different from everyday 'actual' English use,[40] if such practices are to be deemed paradigmatic of the English language then some homologous process shall have to be discovered within the English lexicon. However surprising it may be to one's notion of the distinctiveness of lexicons, this may very well actually be the case.

2.5.5.3 Peregrinism in the English Lexicon

Firstly, it may be argued, with little difficulty, that loanwords constitute the very fundamental basis or building blocks of English. This may be evidenced by a consideration of loanwords from languages such as Afrikaans (aardvark), Arabian (assassin, zero, nadir), Chinese (gung-ho), Yiddish (bagel), or Maori (kiwi), which are clearly not alien presences in the English lexicon. Even the formulation of contemporary neologisms often adapts lexical units from foreign lexicons, such as the recent coinage 'wiki', ("a website that allows collaborative editing of its content and structure by its users") which computer programmer Ward Cunningham coined from the Hawaiian 'wiki-wiki' ("quick-quick"). Such translinguistic transferral has historically been one of the most integral modes of word coinage to compensate for deficiencies in the lexicon's ability to refer economically to recognisable unified concepts. Indeed, Richard Foster Jones points out that in the sixteenth century the development of the English language "swelled its vocabulary by at least one-

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[40] The ways in which literary language is in fact 'different' from texts in other genres will be approached in the upcoming section on discourse domains.

third with words taken from other languages," a practice which continued throughout subsequent centuries (272). Jones continues to identify a difference between the borrowing practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in so far as "the Elizabethans borrowed from necessity, vanity or sheer exuberance," while the seventeenth century borrowings were more "metaphysical" in spirit, a "seeking for the strange and out of the way, perhaps a striving for certain imaginative or sound effects" (272). The notion that such word borrowings are not merely functional and denotative, but rather uniquely suggestive and creative, suggest that the previously outlined connotative effects of *Wakean* peregrinism share some effect with these loanwords within the English lexicon.

In order to better understand the consequences of such peregrinistic word-formation within the English lexicon, let us consider the specific German loanword 'schadenfreude' as an exemplary case of the translinguistic flexibility of the English code. When Vladimir Nabokov's biographer Brian Boyd states, for example, that

> Edmund Wilson [...] became convinced that Nabokov was a malicious practical joker and decided, especially as their relationship deteriorated, that *schadenfreude* was a key to Nabokov's personality (Boyd, 71; emphasis added)

it makes little sense to argue that Boyd is writing in English for the majority of the sentence, then switches to German for the word 'schadenfreude', and then back to English for the sentence's remaining six words. Such a claim becomes even less persuasive when we notice that the loanword is not capitalised, as German nouns are. Despite its German origin and simultaneously extant German cognate the word not only signifies lexically in English (as 'pleasure derived from the misfortune of another'), but also conforms to English, and not German, formal conventions (i.e. the non-capitalisation of nouns). This process of assimilation exactly corresponds to the peregrinism employed in the phrase "with larrons o'toolers clittering up and tombles a'buckets clottering down," in which the translinguistic borrowings are also encoded formally and morphemically in English, with the French 'larron' and 'tomber' pluralised with the English '-*s*' ("larrons" and "tombles").

It should also be noted that this loanword 'schadenfreude' has suffered the fate of being incorporated into portmanteaux, and not only in experimental texts such as Joyce's. Thus we may observe Lincoln Caplan, in *Skadden: Power, Money, and the Rise of a Legal Empire*, describe the delight that competitors took in Skadden Arps's troubles of the early 1990s as "Skaddenfreude" (231), or *The Economist* political magazine refer to the delight taken in the fall of New York Governor Eliot Spitzer in March 2008 as "Spitzenfreude".[41] That the dialogue and transfer between supposedly different 'languages' can allow for a word from a foreign lexicon to be assimilated formally and lexically into the English lexicon, and then exploited in the play of portmanteau in economic and political commentary, should go some way to demonstrating a borderless nature to language, of which the *Wake* may in fact appear paradigmatic. Similar cases abound in the English lexicon, such as the German loanword 'festschrift' (once again, not capitalised). 'Festschriftee', an exclusively 'English' derivation of this German loanword, is similarly morphemically encoded according to the rules of the English code. Indeed, a closer examination of the processes of word-formation in our *Wakean* sample passage demonstrates that exactly such adherent morphological acts of linguistic transformation are equally present.

If, for example, one reads that the subject of our sample sentence was "oftwhile balbulous," the adjective may be interpreted as an approximation of the Latin 'balbulus' ("stuttering"), with the Latinate suffix *'–us'* reformulated as the English adjectival morpheme *'–ous'*. Conversely, a homophonic reference to the English lexical term 'bibulous' (excessively fond of drinking alcohol) may be inferred. This English lexical term, however, entered the lexicon from the Latin 'bibulus' (from *bibere* "to drink") and had its adjectival suffix altered to incorporate the English formal adjectival encoding *'–ous'*. If the *Wakean* text makes the Latin 'balbulus' into a morphemically English neologism 'balbulous', it is operating on very much the same lines that caused the Latin 'bibulus' to give us the English lexical item 'bibulous'.

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[41] The article "The Hypocrites' Club" (Mar 13th 2008), written by an anonymous contributor, can be accessed at
<http://www.economist.com/world/united-states/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10852872>.

To believe, then, that the English language is as independent from other languages as the island is geographically from the mainland, would seem to ignore its essentially polyglot nature, comprising as it does loanwords from most world languages to varying degrees. The central misapprehension is the belief that a 'language' is linguistically defined or designed, while it may, in fact, only be linguistically *described*. In reality English, or any language for that matter, is "more the product of socio-political realities than of actual linguistic factors," and as a consequence is often considered little more than "a dialect with an army and navy" (Christensen and Levinson 1330). As Saussure puts it, "languages have no natural boundaries" and, as a result, "it is difficult to say what the difference is between a language and a dialect" (202). Christensen and Levinson point to a number of 'languages' that are mutually intelligible, despite being separated by political borders (such as Norwegian and Swedish, or Hindi and Urdu), as well as to 'dialects' of one 'language' which are so distinct as to be mutually unintelligible (such as Chinese 'dialect groups' Mandarin and Cantonese) (1330). There are also nations with many languages (such as Switzerland, Nigeria and India) and languages with no nation (such as Kurdish). To these problems of distinguishing *between* languages we might add our previous observations that 'languages' themselves are so *internally* divided that, rather than a unified whole, they constitute a loose collection of discourses and exclusive vocabularies, which are only associated by grammatical features. What is important to note is that a 'language' is defined arbitrarily according to political and social factors (including those such as 'group identity'), and not according to its linguistic features. Thus a crucial distinction is to be made between the 'English language' as a political and socio-cultural entity and the 'English linguistic code' as a particular system of rules which can be exploited to form a discourse. While *Finnegans Wake* may not be considered as belonging to the English language for whatever social or political reasons, it would seem that it does, in fact, engage in a meaningful way with the English linguistic code, even in this regard of its peregrinistic impulses.

The evidence, then, weighs heavily against a purely lexical, stable and unambiguous conceptualisation of a 'language' and its rules, and largely supports Derek Attridge's assertion that

once a belief in a pure communicative language has been abandoned, the sharp difference between monoglot and polyglot discourse disappears; any language is many languages – a Babel of registers, dialects, older and newer forms, slang and borrowed items, accents and idiosyncrasies – and all that the *Wake* does is to extend this logic to its comic extreme. (*Joyce Effects*, 161)

In other words, once it can be seen that a 'language' is not defined on linguistic terms (but rather on socio-political ones) and that peregrinism is an essential feature of the English linguistic code itself, the distinction between the (supposedly) monoglot English 'language' and the 'polyglot' *Wakese* becomes largely untenable, except by a question of degree. As Slote contends, the *Wakean* language constitutes a space wherein "the English language – already a veritable gallimaufry of tongues – is opened out to the babelian exterior it already inhabits" (*Derrida's war at* Finnegans Wake, 196). Thus, Arnold Bennett's representative contention that *Finnegans Wake* is "written in James Joyce's new language, invented by himself" (in Deming 404) is problematised by the ways in which this supposedly 'Babelian' method of constructing neologisms in the *Wake* can be demonstrated to function in ways paradigmatic of the norms of observable English word-formation practices. Indeed, if Joseph Campbell defines the quality of the Wake's "dream language" as one in which "words carry multiple meanings" (*Mythic Worlds*, 16), then it has been demonstrated that this is very much a property of 'waking' language too, and that "Babel is a condition of all language, not just that of the *Wake*" (Attridge, *Joyce Effects*, 161-2).

2.5.6 Summary: From a Textual to an Extratextual Analysis

The process of investigating whether the *Wake*'s text exploits the English linguistic code has resulted in a gradual accumulation of evidence against the conceptualisations of the *Wake* as nonsense or a new language, and for an even greater expansion of its status as 'English'. The work's seemingly "nonsense" word-formations have been seen to conform to the word-formation practices of 'English', such as portmanteaux and conversions, and these technically adherent coinages have been proven to signify (in a disjunctively synthetic way) by exploiting the semantics encoded specifically within the English linguistic code. The polyglottal impulse of these coinages

has been demonstrated as paradigmatic of the English practice of word-formation – although adapted for a process of lexical chaining which incorporates individual morphemes. The *Wakean* text has also been found to incorporate standard English practices of manipulating the code to comic ends, such as puns (treating homophones as synonyms) and retroactive modification. As such, the findings thus far ultimately support the assertion, made in an unsigned review of *Work in Progress* in the *Times Literary Supplement* on July 17, 1930, that "by deformation, punning and the interpolation of foreign languages [Joyce] has given his English a suggestiveness, [and] a capacity for multiple associations such as his theme demands (in Deming 411).

Perhaps the most significant finding, however, has been that the semantic ambiguity which results from the *Wake*'s exploitations of the English linguistic code cannot be distinguished from the ambiguity that arises in the lexical use of the 'English language', or if so, merely by a question of degree. As Attridge contends, *Finnegans Wake* "finds its pleasures in the knowledge that language, by its very nature, is unstable and ambiguous" (*Joyce Effects*, 161). This understanding of the English language as an inherently ambiguous and equivocal system is most commonly challenged by reference to the ability of language users to consider a piece of text within its larger co-text, and apply contextual and schematic knowledge to determine which 'meaning' is correct and consequently restore univocality. Consequently, these extratextual factors shall have to be considered if we are to achieve a deeper understanding of the function of this ambiguity in the *Wakean* text and in everyday English usage.

2.6   Extratextual Factors: Context and Schemata

For pragmatic significance to be inferred from a text the *semantic* and *systemic* knowledge of what is encoded in the language system itself, which has been the focus of our analysis thus far, will not suffice. Indeed, references to 'floating signifiers' and discursive knowledge have already demonstrated that text alone does not bear its own meaning, but signifies only through negotiation with its context and the schematic knowledge of the receiver. As

these factors are so crucial for 'meaning' to occur, they shall be treated here in much greater depth so that the *Wake*'s processes of signification, and their similitude with the processes by which discourse is inferred from purely lexical texts, may be better understood.

2.6.1 Co-Text, Context and Schemata

The following analysis of extratextual factors on meaning would benefit here from a deeper distinction between "co-text" and "context" than has been offered thus far. The term "co-text", as employed here, refers strictly to the textual items that surround a word or passage, coming before and after it. The notion is roughly equivalent to the term 'syntagms' in Saussure, which refer to a structural context within which signs gain significance, above and beyond their inherent signification, through the *intra*textual sequential relation of words to the others present within the text. As Saussure notes, "normally we do not express ourselves by using single linguistic signs, but groups of signs, organised in complexes which themselves are signs" (127). Thus all signifiers within a syntagm serve to influence each other's meaning. The "context" of a given word or passage, on the other hand, is not a textual but rather an extratextual "psychological construction" which does not merely mirror the surrounding text, but constitutes a conceptual representation of those features which are taken as relevant (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 22). In the plainest possible terms, "co-text" is the strictly *textual* context of a text, while "context" is "not what is perceived in a particular situation, but what is conceived as relevant" (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 21).

However, meaning also cannot occur unless the interpreter possesses a *schematic* knowledge of "the customary and conventional ways in which [a person's] socio-cultural reality is structured" (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 53). In essence each such a schema constitutes a "set of default assumptions" (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 53) concerning how the world is perceived to work. This conceptual system is inevitably extremely powerful in influencing and shaping not only how a given person interprets a sign or text, but also how he or she assumes a text is supposed or intended to be interpreted (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 53). As this process of

interpretation becomes assimilated (and thus invisible to the receiver of texts), 'meaning' is assumed to be merely the result of a commonsensical understanding of how the world works, rather than a culturally shaped but objectively arbitrary conceptual system of interpretation. In other words, while context constitutes the "aspects of extra-linguistic reality that are taken to be relevant" to a given example of text or communication (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 128), schemata rather embody a learned set of pre-conceived ideologies and theories about reality, and a resulting series of assumptions concerning the 'correct' ways of comprehending this reality. In the previously cited newspaper headline, for example, a reader with schematic knowledge of the genre of newspaper journalism and the event of the Falklands war, will bring to the text a number of expectations and assumptions which will allow him or her to know that waffles are not usually included among the weaponry of the British military, and that such newspaper articles often discuss the views of the political left and right on such issues. The reader will therefore, assumedly, overcome the problem presented by the headline's lexical and grammatical ambiguities and assume the correct meaning by keying in to the correct schemata.

The most important contention to be made for the moment is that a text's meaning cannot be 'uncovered' by exclusive attention to the language itself, but is rather 'constructed' through the relation of this text to its co-text, to the 'context' inferred therefrom, and to "the conceptual context of our knowledge of how such texts are designed to function" resulting from our schematic knowledge of the world (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 5).

Before testing the influence of context and schemata as they apply to the text of *Finnegans Wake* let us first of all exemplify it with one everyday and one literary example. The following sign should be familiar to most:

Presumably, few would have much difficulty decoding the intended meaning of the sentence. Be that as it may, there is no indication within the actual text "SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY" as to whether the sentence means "an imperative to drivers to drive more slowly or carefully, as there are (or may be) children playing in the immediate surroundings" or that the driver should drive more carefully because the children who generally play in this area are particularly slow (whether the children are then physically slow or slow-witted would present another ambiguity). There is no semantic, syntactic or grammatical reason for preferring one meaning to the other. Indeed, taking the sign purely on its own terms, there is no indication that driving or drivers are even referred to or to be inferred. As such, the contention is that situational context (the sign's positioning at the side of the road) will enable the meaning as an imperative to drivers, and schematic knowledge of such signs will enable the drivers to follow the intended meaning without wondering if it is he or she, or the children, who are or should be slow. As this example demonstrates, there is an intrinsic ambiguity in language, and to interpret any text solely by virtue of the semantic or denotative qualities of its lexical units –

without any reference to contextual or schematic factors – is to become lost in its inerasable polysemy.

For a literary example of these extratextual forces on meaning, let us return to the ambiguity that arises in Alice's use of the phrase 'to answer the door' in her interaction with the Frog-footman. The breakdown in communication and 'meaning' results not only from the Frog's dual semantic competence and pragmatic incompetence, but also from deficits in contextual awareness and schematic knowledge – the awareness of what the phrase *usually* means in such a context. This further demonstrates that the "recognition of the extent to which a piece of language keys into context appropriately so as to acquire a certain reference, force, and effect requires more than linguistic knowledge" (Widdowson, *Discourse Analysis*, 13). In this way it is ably demonstrated, as Widdowson argues, that a text is only the *trace* of the process by which 'meaning' is created (*Discourse Analysis*, 9). Thus the search for a text's meaning solely in the semantic quality of its words – as we have seen New Critics W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley advocate – constitutes a conflation of meaning and "the perceptible traces of the process" of mediating meaning; a conflation which actually contributes to the failure of convergence (*Discourse Analysis*, 7).

If this much is true, and it appears that the *Wake* is composed, textually at least, by an exploitation of English linguistic code, then surely context and schematic knowledge should equally help to define its meaning? As we shall see, however, this argument for the power of such exratextual forces to disambiguate signification is problematic, both in terms of everyday English and the language of the *Wake*.

2.6.2 (Dis)ambiguating Contexts in *Finnegans Wake*

Let us begin by examining the *Wakean* neologism "ghoat" (FW 51.13), which appears in chapter I.3. Clearly as a non-lexical item, appeals to semantics will not offer possible meaning. As a pun the item might be argued to phonetically echo 'goat', or as a portmanteau it may constitute a blending of such elements as 'goat' and 'hot', however out of context it is difficult, if not impossible, to infer a meaning with any degree of confidence. It would appear,

in fact, that this non-lexical item is not intrinsically meaning-neutral, but rather, to the contrary, out of any given context its *potential* meanings become *infinite* to the point that the sign becomes, to all practical and pragmatic purposes, meaningless. This infinitude of potential signification occurs for the very good reason that the presence of context is essential for significance to occur, as the very identification of any particular use of language as a "text" depends on the recognition that it is intended to be related to a context, and as the purpose of interpretation is to assign "pragmatic significance" to this encoded relationship between semantics and context (Widdowson, *Text Context Pretext,* 36). Indeed, if we place the sign within its co-text, this necessary interplay between text and context is elucidated:

> that fishabed *ghoat*story of the haardly creditable edventyres of the Haberdasher, the two Curchies and the three Enkelchums in their Bearskin *ghoat*s! (FW 51.13-15, emphasis added)

As can be seen, the sign appears twice, in "that fishabed ghoatstory" and "in their Bearskin ghoats," and greater consideration of the unit's co-text allows us to discern two mutually exclusive significations of the term, namely 'ghost' (as in 'ghost story') and 'coats' (as in 'bearskin coats'). The reader, with reference to their schematic knowledge of the world, will assumedly neither imagine that a 'coat story' is being told, nor that the "three Enkelchums" are in their 'bearskin ghosts'. Thus context and schematic knowledge have allowed the same sign to move from near infinite possibilities of signification to possible (though by no means univocal) and exclusive significations. To infer from this example a rule that context and schemata fix signification, however, would be premature.

As a contrary example, let us consider the following passage from ALP's one-sided dialogue with her sleeping husband that closes Book IV:

> Rise up, man of the hooths, you have slept so long! Or is it only so mesleems? [...] Rise up now and aruse! Norvena's over. [...] Here is your shirt, the day one, come back. The stock, your collar. Also your double brogues. A comforter as well. (FW 619.25-36)

The word "comforter" has the appearance of a non-deviant lexical item, and accordingly one may decide to turn to a dictionary for help. Upon doing so, one will find the following three definitions for this noun:

comforter (noun)
1. a warm quilt.
2. the Holy Spirit.
3. (dated) a woollen scarf.

In the context of sleeping ("you have slept so long"), references to the Novena ("Norvena's over") and clothing ("shirt", "stock", "collar", "double brogues") we may find that all three significations are equally possible. Consequently, the context does not fix or stabilise the meaning of the word, but is rather manipulated in such a way so as to allow for the possibility of all three definitions. Once again, the equivocal nature of the "relish" with which Mr. Bloom eats "the inner organs of beasts and fowls" (U.65) is exemplary of just such a marriage of homonyms and context to create an irreducible plurality of meaning. 'Punning', then, occurs not only from the treatment of homonyms as synonyms, but also from the manipulation of context's capacity to constrict signification, yet allow contrary significations to legitimately coexist.

These observations indicate that despite our intuition concerning the clarifying power of context, this extratextual force cannot fix univocal meaning, but rather only reduces the potentially infinite significations of uncontextualised signs to a finite number of pragmatic interpretations. Context, then, cannot actually reduce potential signification to the point that equivocality has been erased, and as a result the ambiguity inherent to language is left intact. Thus we find ourselves presented with a considerable body of support for Attridge's claim that

> *Finnegans Wake* may not be an aberration of the literary but an unusually thoroughgoing exemplification of the literary, of the very conditions of existence of *Middlemarch* or *Sons and Lovers* as literary texts - namely the impossibility of ever being limited by originating intention, or external reference, or constraining context. (*Peculiar Language*, 232)

2.6.3 Discourse Domains: Schematic Activation in Literary Texts

Words, it may be seen, serve not as purely referential and denotative ciphers, but rather as schematic activators that trigger a 'schematic image', and one of the primary reasons why all literature is so equivocal is because it constitutes the space of the greatest number of possible combinations of varying schemata. A recipe, for example, will generally constitute and conform to a single schema, which a reader with a schematic knowledge of such texts can access unproblematically, and should find most such instances of a text to be equally transparent. A literary text, however, by virtue of its references to varying geographies, histories, cultures and practices – as well as its employment of metaphors, references, and intertexts – activates myriad schemata. As a result no two readers will key into the exact same combination of schematic images when reading the same text. If signification may only be enabled when the reader or interlocutor is able to activate the schemata relevant to the text, the same must be said for the *Wake*'s peregrinistic appropriation of foreign languages, as well as its employment of obscure lexical items, semantically predictable (but only disjunctively synthetic) neologisms, quotations, intertextual allusions, and genre-specific lexicons. If the problematic question of the known and the unknown for any reading of any text, literary or otherwise, is dependent upon an infinitely complex net of schematic knowledge, then once more the *Wake* can be seen as exploiting this inherent and unavoidable feature of meaning-making to extreme ends. In this sense, the processes of signification in *Finnegans Wake* mirror those inherent to all attempts to infer discourse from text, with the principle merely expanded to the point that an absolute convergence of meaning becomes something of an impossibility by any practical terms.

However, while context and schematic knowledge may help to delimit, but not fix, potential signification in a given example of text, the issue still remains as to why and how the processes of interpretation outlined thus far are enabled or even permissible in the first place. Once more, we shall find, the reason is schematic. To demonstrate the process let us again move temporarily outside the experimental letters of *Finnegans Wake* to everyday

non-deviant discourse and consider the following quote from the *Irish Times* newspaper:

> The Germans would seem to be more loving with their children.

Certainly the sentence appears to offer no grammatical or semantic difficulty, with its pragmatic significance being that in comparison to other peoples it would appear that Germans have a more affectionate relationship with their offspring. However, once the sentence is placed in its proper context, this meaning changes significantly. As it appeared fully in the paper, the sentence was printed thus:

> 28. The Germans would seem to be more loving with their children (6)

In this new context – not an article on Teutonic parent-child relationships but rather the paper's cryptic crossword *Crosaire* – the sentence takes on an entirely different meaning. In this different domain of discourse the reader is expected, even encouraged, not to understand the sentence semantically, but by different hermeneutic means entirely. Consequently, once placed within this particular discourse domain, the sentence can no longer be thought to mean 'it would appear that Germans have a more affectionate relationship with their offspring' but rather the 'meaning' becomes the single English word "kinder", achieved by recognition that the English synonym for 'more loving' and the German word for 'children' are homonyms. The result is somewhat like that of the pun, however the hermeneutic means of achieving this similar end are significantly different.

To take another example from the same crossword, the clue

> 32. Allow Henry to be so murderous (6)

forges the 'intended' meaning through the recognition that a synonym for 'allow' is 'let', and a nickname for 'Henry' is 'Hal', which when combined form the synonym for 'murderous' 'lethal'. In this designated domain of discourse, the reader is encouraged not only to actively search out translinguistic homonyms for meaning creation, but also to break words down into their constituent morphemes ('let' and 'Hal') and treat these morphemes as though they were lexemes and as synonymous units in themselves.

Perhaps the most elucidatory example of the phenomena of such discursively marked alternative hermeneutic modes is the anagram, in which the 'message' or 'meaning may still be discerned *despite* the fact that the surface form bears no semantic or denotative relation to the ultimate signification of the sign. For example, if one were to be informed in a business memo that "delays upset traders" one would most likely understand the sentence as a statement of fact concerning traders' dislike for receiving their goods too late, and agree or disagree depending on one's experience and schematic knowledge of the reactions of traders to such hold-ups. However if one were to read "15. Delays upset traders (7)", in order to interpret the intended meaning correctly one would have to understand "delays" not as a plural noun but as a third-person simple present verb form, understand "upset" as meaning 're-arrange the letters of', and divest the word 'traders' of all semantic and denotative qualities and see it merely as a jumble of letters to be rearranged into a synonym of the re-categorised 'delays'. If the reader correctly engages in this unusual hermeneutic act, then he or she will successfully interpret the sentence's meaning – the lexical item 'retards'. That these alternate significations can be successfully interpreted from a single non-deviant series of signifiers underscores the fact that the alternate meanings occur as a result of the hermeneutics applied, and not within the language encoding itself. Consequently, if we can conclude that standard English sentences in everyday genres of text may be subjected successfully to such alternate hermeneutic practices, then the reading practices outlined thus far for *Finnegans Wake* may be considered to conform to the broader phenomena of genre-centred and discursively marked hermeneutics.

It is important to underline that the distinction here is not that between 'sense' and 'reference', especially if we understand 'sense' to be additional to the literal or primary reference. Keying into schemata may encode pragmatic significance within a given sentence that is *additional to* – or at the very least related to – its denotative or semantic meaning. What we are presented with in the case of the cryptic crossword is an entirely different mode of hermeneutics that elicits results almost entirely unrelated to the denotative qualities of the manifest sentence form. Consequently, the notion that meaning is created by encoding and decoding messages in fixed and

consistent ways is significantly undermined, and the hermeneutic modes needed to provide the *Wakean* text with pragmatic significance (lexical chains, retroactive modification, translinguistic analysis, etc.) can once again be demonstrated as conforming to 'standard', if discursively marked, processes of signification.

This possibility of applying different hermeneutic modes to the same text until it coheres brings with it, inherently, perhaps the most fundamental argument against a view of *Finnegans Wake* as nonsense, as it entails the ultimate impossibility of meaninglessness of texts marked as belonging to the poetic domain of discourse. In this domain, which deals primarily with the arbitrary fashioning of "events" into a cause-and-effect teleological story (most commonly referred to as a 'narrative'), the notion of nonsense becomes an impossibility because it is the domain of the broadest cross-section of hermeneutic tools available to the reader. As Attridge argues,

> a narrative is never made up of anything other than functions: in differing degrees, everything in it signifies [...] in the realm of discourse, what is noted is by definition noteworthy. Even were a detail to appear irretrievably insignificant, resistant to all functionality, it would nonetheless end up with precisely the meaning of absurdity or uselessness: everything has meaning or nothing has [...] art is a system which is pure, no unit ever goes wasted, however long, however loose, however tenuous may be the thread connecting it to one of the levels of the story. (*Peculiar Language*, 219-220)

2.6.3.1 The Literary Domain and the Author-Function

As to the matter of how texts become discursively marked, three brief examples may be offered of varying complexity, although many more are conceivable. Firstly, and most obviously, a discourse domain can be marked formally, or even titled, so that the title 'recipe' or the clue number and bracketed number at the front and end of the above examples (as well as their positioning in cookery books or newspapers) would clearly mark these two texts as a recipe and a crossword, and the hermeneutic tools with which they will be tackled by the reader with schematic knowledge of the discourses will be extremely different by necessity. Discourse domains can also be encoded grammatically or semantically in texts, so that, for example, if the opening line

of this chapter had not been "much ink has been spilled over the vexing subject of the seemingly inscrutable language of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*," but rather "ink spilt over subject of inscrutable language," or, even worse, the five word compound monster "inscrutable language ink spill fears," then any sane reader would be totally at a loss as to what might possibly be meant, and might even voice concerns for the writer's sanity. However, the same reader might not bat an eyelash at opening his or her daily paper and reading a similar compound noun such as "Maze escaper kidnap case collapse."[42] Due to the compound noun occurring in the marked domain of newspaper headlines, the reader, provided that he or she can key into the relevant schemata, could understand this pseudo-word as referring to the specific collapse of a case against a kidnapper who had escaped from the Maze prison in Northern Ireland. Thus recognising the discourse domain and applying the appropriate hermeneutic model (as well as keying into the relevant schemata) renders this seeming grammatical nightmare understandable.

As for literary texts, the issue is rather more complex, but this study posits that these texts are marked by the very author figure which literary theory of the last fifty years (in particular the work of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida) has been trying so hard to expunge. French literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes sets the charge of the death of the author with the assertion that a text "is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and crash" (Barthes, 170). Clearly Barthes is justified in his endeavours to deflate the myth that the reader of a text passively receives a meaning which is actively created by the author alone. Despite this important repudiation of authorial intention as the sole domain in which meaning can be created, a crucial caveat is offered by philosopher Michel Foucault in his assertion that the author cannot simply be removed so that the 'work' itself can be focussed on solely (as Barthes suggests) because a text can only be defined as a work if it has an author. Consequently, "in a [civilisation] like our own there are a number of discourses

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[42] This headline is from an actual article on the BBC website, published on 26 June 2008, which can be found at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/7475724.stm>.

that are endowed with the 'author-function,' while others are deprived of it" (Foucault 202). A recipe, for example, is not a 'work' only by virtue of the fact that it is not considered to have an author. The appropriateness of hermeneutic approaches to discursively marked texts is so apparent to the reader, that many writer have intentionally inverted these practices for comic purposes. Woody Allen, for example, in his short story "The Metterling Lists" critically analyses the laundry lists of a supposed 'author', the humour arising from treating such clearly referential texts as though they were inscribed with the 'author-function' and applying the 'wrong' hermeneutic tools for understanding the text. As such, when the narrator maintains, in a pseudo-literary register, that "the fifth list [...] had always puzzled scholars, principally because of the total absence of socks" (147), the comic implicature of applying the wrong hermeneutics to an incorrectly marked domain of discourse should be clear to all readers.

It is suggested, then, that while the identity of a text's author has no bearing on its meaning (James Joyce, for example, is merely a name, not a code of meaning; and even this name, and its various connotations, should most accurately be thought of as a biographically constructed alter-ego of a flesh and blood individual who will forever remain unknowable to us), this 'author-function' is a necessary part of a text's make-up in so far as it indicates to the reader the discourse domain of the text being read, and hence the appropriate range of hermeneutic tools to be applied. For while Foucault rightly argues that texts have not always had authors, but that the whole notion of authorship came into being at a particular moment in history, and may pass out of being at some future moment (198), it is the contention of this study that the coming into being of this author figure was necessary as soon as the problematic value of language as a means of representation in a world of conflicting truths came to be realised.[43] The most extreme, but perhaps also most exemplary, instances of the fundamental divergence of discursively marked hermeneutic approaches to the same text as informed by the

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[43] Foucault, on the other hand, considers this moment to coincide with the transformation of discourses from 'acts' to products, as a result of which the author figure was created so that transgressive discourses could be attributed to owners who could be punished (202). Foucault's argument supports this study's assertion, however, in so far as he characterises the author as "the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (209).

perceived absence or presence of an 'author figure' are the texts of the three Abrahamic 'religions of the book.' Any such 'holy book' is determined by atheists (or adherents of another religion) to be marked as literature in possession of the 'author-function', which are to be interpreted connotatively and whose truth-value is ambiguous. A religion's adherents, on the other hand, on a rising scale depending on how devout or fundamental they may be, consider these works to belong to the semantic and didactic domain of recipes and instruction manuals (whose truth-values are considered actual and demonstrable), and thus apply an entirely different set of hermeneutic tools in understanding them.[44]

The intention, of course, is not to argue that *Finnegans Wake* is one long cryptic crossword puzzle, but rather to highlight that language is not only interpreted lexically, and that the same series of signs can be assigned a number of different significances depending on which domain of discourse the reader believes it to be designated to. In fact there is one significant way in which the *Wake* differs from the above cited cryptic crossword clues, as such clues have one definitive and testable meaning, thus placing them outside the 'author-function'. The ambiguities of the cryptic lines in the *Wake*, on the other hand, do not and cannot be demonstrated to possess any one correct meaning, thus placing them firmly within the 'author-function'. In any case, to argue that *Finnegans Wake* is not English would appear to both seriously overestimate the individual importance of the lexicon in the English linguistic code – an arbitrary manmade taxonomy born of an *a priori* assumption of separate and separable monoglot languages – and to underestimate the role that domains of discourse play in the signification process.

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[44] Of course this matter is viewed here only in terms of how the text of such works is interpreted; the value of the artefact itself, wherein the defilement of such a book, or even non-belief, may be punishable by death, is a separate matter, although the sociological and psychological importance of discourse domains is demonstrated.

2.6.4 Approaches to Etymology in the Literary Domain

a very fairworded instance of falsemeaning adamelegy. (FW 76.25-26)

Regarding this issue of discourse domains, and their effect upon the *Wakean* text, the most important tension between what might approximately be called the Saussurean and Deconstructive semiotic models is the former's insistence on a synchronic analysis of texts, and the permissibility of a diachronic approach in the latter. Indeed, it is in these two semiotic approaches that we may see not only two opposing theories of signification, but also opposite ends of the spectrum of hermeneutic tools available to the language user for differently marked discourse domains.

For Saussure, intent on analysing language as the reality of the knowledge of a community (or speaker therein), a word's etymology cannot play a role in its signification in a given act of communication.[45] As the historical meanings of a given sign no longer signify in such a manner in the *langue* of the ordinary language-user, Saussure argues, any study of how language is actually used shall have to ignore the diachronic elements (such as a word's etymology) and focus solely on the synchronic, which, as Saussure stresses, "does not comprise everything which is simultaneous, but only the set of facts corresponding to any particular language" (90-1). As Roy Harris, one of Saussure's English translators, argues,

> words, sounds and constructions connected solely by processes of historical development over the centuries cannot possibly, according to Saussure's analysis, enter into structural relations with one another, any more than Napoleon's France and Caesar's Rome can be structurally under one and the same political system. (x)

Derrida, the founder of the deconstructive semiotic model, contends the Saussurean notion of the inseparable relation between signifier and signified with his concept of concept of 'Différance' (a play on the French 'différer'

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[45] Saussure's discussion of how, and why, one must distinguish between synchrony and diachrony, and the consequences of confusing the two, is, unfortunately, too detailed and nuanced to enter into here (see Saussure 79-98). However, the impression should not be that Saussure engages with diachronic linguistics merely to dismiss it out of hand; indeed a great deal of the *Course in General Linguistics* is dedicated to a fuller engagement with the approach (see Saussure 139-181). Nevertheless, most important for our purposes here is that in his endeavour to scientifically study *langue*, Saussure considered that the history of a given word's various and changing meanings could not play a part in the process of signification in a particular act of communication.

meaning both 'to defer' and 'to differ'), which posits language as an endless chain of differentiated and deferred meaning. This theory both updates and upsets de Saussure's conceptualisation of the relation between signifier and signified because for Derrida each signified is *also* a signifier, and as a consequence the process of signification is indefinite. Signs, Derrida argues, can never summon forth what they 'mean', and as such their 'meaning' may only be defined through appeal to additional words, from which they differ, and as a result meaning is infinitely postponed through an endless chain of signifiers. As a result, "through infinite circulation and references, from sign to sign and from representer to representer [...] one can no longer dispose of meaning; one can no longer stop it, it is carried into an endless movement of signification" (*Of Grammatology*, 233-4). The consequence, Derrida argues, is that there is no final or absolute meaning – no 'transcendental signified' – to any text, and as such "the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (*Writing and Difference*, 354).

The ultimate consequence of this separation of signifier and signified is that any text bears within it a great number of unintended and contrary strands of meaning, and to these ends deconstruction often employs etymological analyses in order to demonstrate the contrary significations which reside within a text.[46] This attestation of the significance of etymology in a text has a long tradition. Giambattista Vico, considered by many the primary influence of the *Wake* (see Verene), argues for the legitimacy of this approach when he points to the etymology of 'etymology' as the Greek *etymos*, or *etumos*, meaning 'true', and thus indicates that it is itself the study or science of truth, or, in Attridge's phrasing, "a discourse on true meaning" (*Peculiar Language*, 99; see Vico, *New Science*, 403). In stark contrast to Saussure's argument for the arbitrariness of the sign, such belief in a word's etymology as its 'truer' meaning clearly constitutes a belief in the inherent meaning of the sign.

While the Saussurean and Deconstructive views on etymological meaning may appear incompatible, the issue may be somewhat resolved if we accept that different texts possess markers of their domain of discourse,

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[46] The most famous, and also most exemplary, instance of the deconstructive employment of etymological analysis is J. Hillis Miller's "The Critic as Host" (see bibliography).

and that these markers inform the reader whether the etymological traces within the text should be shut out (as with a recipe) or enabled (as with works marked with the 'author-function', such as with *Finnegans Wake*). *Ulysses*, for example, uses words which, when applied to context, can *only* be understood etymologically if coherence is to occur. In the second line of the novel we read that "a yellow dressinggown, ungirdled, was *sustained* behind [Buck Mulligan] by the morning air" (U.1, emphasis added), where "sustained" must be understood in its 'original' sense as 'held up' (from the Latin *sustinere*, from *sub-* 'from below' and *tenere* 'hold') if the line is to cohere to our schematic knowledge of what the wind may do to an ungirdled dressinggown. However, while *Ulysses* allows such etymological readings more easily by virtue of its inscription with the author-function, it would appear that the lines between the literary and non-literary, and between the diachronic and the synchronic, are not fixed. In other words, if the reader cannot make a given text cohere semantically and synchronically, he or she has the capacity to move into other modes of semantic interpretation, as with the example of the cryptic crossword clue.

Returning to the example of recipes, the etymology of 'basil' is clearly irrelevant for following a recipe correctly. Indeed, if one were to interpret a recipe for basil chicken as communicating the cowardliness (a connotation of 'chicken') of royalty or kingship (the etymology of 'basil' deriving from the Greek *basilikos*, 'royal', or *basileus,* 'king') it may be said that in a meaningful sense a failure to pragmatically 'understand' the message being relayed has occurred. The word's etymology, however, may have semantic force in a line such as "Basil and the two other men from King's Avenance" (FW 374.31-32), wherein, in an endeavour to make the line cohere collocationally (by virtue of its lexical chains of signification), the royal or kingly connotations of the word's etymology could be seen to bear relevance on the line's other regal vocabulary. As Tigges argues, in wordplay "the requirement is that the meanings of the word played upon are etymologically linked" (Tigges, 60), however it should be added that such etymological linking is enabled (or not, as the case may be) on the hermeneutic side, and not the creative side, of language meaning.

In its concept of an absent signification which can only be hermeneutically negotiated, Derrida's deconstructive method would appear to coalesce with this study's assertion of the unavoidable plurality of signification and the inerasability of equivocality. However, given our conclusions about context, schemata and discourse domains, deconstruction may be summarised as an investigation of how signs *would* signify, how language *would* mean, if such factors as schematic knowledge, pragmatic competence, context, co-textual cohesion, and even syntax, did not exist as limiting (though not determining) factors on signification. The fact that such factors do exist, and help limit (though not fix or define) meaning does not undermine deconstruction's ultimate points of the impossibility of definitive meaning and the problematic nature (whether impossible or inaccessible) of authorial intention; however it does bring into question its notion that all texts (whether a recipe or *Heart of Darkness*) exist within one domain of discourse in which one hermeneutic method is equally applicable. Similarly, Saussurean linguistics could be summarised as an investigation into how signs *would* signify, how language *would* mean, if such factors as homophonic punning, etymology, and portmanteaux did not problematise the relation of the signifier to the signified, and engender the hermeneutics to be used for different genres of text.

The deficiency inherent to the two approaches to signification is that both propose the application of a single hermeneutic method for a variety of texts positioned in discrete discourse domains. How then shall it be maintained that both recipes and poetry should be read *either* to infer their 'message' or their implicature, in view of the fact that the hermeneutic competences required to successfully engage with these texts are clearly contrastive. The apparent conclusion to be drawn is that both Saussurean linguistics and Derridean deconstruction are too rigid in their understanding of the process of signification in so far as they are closed off to the possibility that different hermeneutic codes may be legitimately activated in different domains of discourse, and *either* approach may be a legitimate hermeneutic approach *depending on the domain* of any given text. In the possibility of both models legitimately existing simultaneously, and offering plausible, if significantly different, interpretations of a single strand of text, the legitimacy

of the sheer variety of semiotic processes in *Finnegans Wake*, and of the variety of hermeneutic tools available to the reader, is supported.

2.6.4.1 Etymology in *Finnegans Wake*

As to the influence of etymological meaning in *Finnegans Wake*, a strange phenomenon is recognisable once the text is viewed in the literary discourse domain wherein such interpretative approaches are legitimised. If we turn to the book's opening page with our etymological hats on, it may be observed that beyond the associative lexical chain of signification at work, there is also a deeply associative etymological chain which connects the words. To wit, in the opening paragraph one finds a series of items which are superficially distinct, but etymologically related. For example we learn that "a commodius vicus of *recirculation*" brings us "back to Howth Castle and *Environs*" (FW 3.1-3, emphasis added). "Environs" actually relates to "recirculation" in so far as it stems from the Old French *environer*, which is comprised of *en* ("in") + *viron* ("circuit"). When interpreted etymologically, then, the line could be afforded the pragmatic significance of indicating that the "recirculation" present at the manifest level of the text, is bringing us back to more circulations. Similarly, within the reference to "the scraggy isthmus" (FW 3.5-6) we may discover that *scrag* is an alteration of Scots and northern English 'crag' meaning 'neck', and "isthmus" – a lexical English word meaning 'a narrow strip of land with sea on either side forming a link between two larger areas of land' – is derived etymologically from the Greek *isthmos*, also meaning 'neck'. The pattern continues with the revelation that "the great *fall* […] entailed […] the pftjs*chute* of Finnegan" (FW 3.18-19, emphasis added) with 'chute' from "pftjschute" originating from the Old French 'cheoit' ("to fall"), constituting another recirculation in which we learn that the "great fall" entailed a fall. This circular fall, we are told, may send "an *unquiring* one well to the west in *quest* of his tumptytumtoes" (FW 3.21, emphasis added). Once more the signs are etymologically linked, as 'inquire' (rendered as "unquire" in the *Wakean* text) derives from the Old French *enquerre*, which is in turn based on *quaerere*, the same etymological root of "quest". Finally, to fully flog the horse, in the mirroring words "*hump*tyhillhead" and "*tump*tytumtoes" (FW 3.21-22,

emphasis added), we find that the first morpheme of both words have the same referent – with 'hump' meaning 'a rounded raised mass of earth or land' and 'tump' a 'small, rounded hill or mound' – and are etymologically related.

As a consequence, Burrell's assertion that in *Finnegans Wake* the neologisms "are based on the same etymological principles as standard English" (2) may be considered correct but deficient, in so far as it neglects the subtextual etymological collocations which associatively link its non-lexical items, as it appears that words in *Finnegans Wake* influence each other in a subtextual mode of etymological linear modification. What significance or implicature may result from this subtextual etymological chain is open to interpretation, but it may be posited that in this particular case the technique is employed to underline the notion of recirculation that pervades the work's opening page.

If non-synchronic means of signification such as etymology can be enabled within the literary domain, the result will undoubtedly be an increase in ambiguity due to the suspension of the usual synchronic delimiting of signifying potential. Through such an enablement of diachronic signification, the ambiguity and polysemy of puns, portmanteaux and *baragouin* – features not only of texts operating within the domain of the 'author-function', but of all English language use – is considerably expanded in Joyce's text. Indeed, Joyce's etymological punning "while drawing attention to historical linearity, exploits the felt gap" between the synchronic and the diachronic, thus making more apparent the disjunctive synthesis prevalent in all modes of language (Bell 51).

2.7   Summary of Findings

Having come this far, let us now summarise how signification occurs in both *Finnegans Wake* and language in general. As to whether the text of *Finnegans Wake* constitutes a non-language, a new language, a polyglot hybrid of languages or an exaggerated exemplification of the English linguistic code, the findings thus far support significantly the stance that the *Wakean* text "does not invent in a vacuum, but by imitating and exploiting rules" of the

English linguistic code, and that "what is chiefly imitated is the regular derivation of words from existing suffixes or prefixes, the borrowing of foreign words, or the conversion of a word from its habitual part of speech to another" (Lecercle, *Philosophy of Language*, 40).[47] In other words, rather than being "nat language at any sinse of the world" (FW 83.12)" the *Wake* is language in *every* sense of the word, and a creative and highly exaggerated form of the English language at that.

If the fact that the text of the *Wake* presents a plurality of meaning which cannot be reduced to a single 'message' or ultimate signified is considered antithetical to the workings of the English language system, it is has been demonstrated that the text serves not to pervert representation, but to highlight the inherent disconnect between signifier and signified, between the processes of encoding and decoding messages, and to stress the reader's role, as well as the role of extratextual factors such as context, schemata and discourse domains, in the creation of meaning.

Thus, on the basis of the evidence thus far investigated, the important conclusion to be drawn is that the language of *Finnegans Wake* undermines two myths about the process of semiosis, namely that words themselves transport unambiguous and univocal meanings in and of themselves, and that meaning can only occur by non-deviant reference to the rules of grammar and the lexicon. Consequently, the major submission of this chapter is that when Robert McAlmon contends that to Joyce "language does not mean the English language, it means a medium capable of suggestion, implication, and evocation; a medium as free as any medium should be" (in Deming, 408) he fails to appreciate that the English language, rather than a strictly grammatical and semantic codification of stable univocal meaning, is endlessly capable of such suggestion, implication, evocation and play, and it is these very characteristics of the code itself that *Finnegans Wake* explores.

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[47] Lecercle's conclusions pertain to the process at work in Carroll's *Jabberwocky*, but it is suggested that they have been demonstrated to be equally valid for the *Wake*.

3 Deviance and Implicature in *Finnegans Wake*

3.1 "Improbable Possibles": Confronting Unfeasibility in the *Wakean* Text

we are in for a sequentiality of improbable possibles (FW 110.15).

Having substantiated the claim that the language of *Finnegans Wake* signifies by undergoing, in a comically exaggerated manner, the same semiotic processes as those of all English texts, one substantial objection remains. Despite the significant gains to be made from reading the book in terms of how it engages with the English linguistic code, the reader is still confronted with such a degree of structural ambiguity and linguistic unfeasibility that such conformity cannot erase the text's inherent opacity. This obstruction to assigning pragmatic significance to the *Wake* goes beyond the mere equivocality of the text – as demonstrated, no piece of text can lay claim to a 'meaning' in the monosemantic or univocal sense of the word. Rather it speaks to the linguistic unfeasibility encoded into the *Wakean* text, an unfeasibility which obstructs the reader's ability to discern context, to parse sentences and to assign grammatical categories to words. In other words, there remain features of the text which serve to impede the process of signification, as a disparity remains between the text's grammatical adherence and its understandability. To these ends, this part of the study will investigate the problems these wilful deviations from the code raise for the reader and for our working theory of signification in the work. This will be approached through a systematic analysis of the text's unfeasible language use, morphemic and syntactic ambiguities, and the repercussions of the book's narrative digressions for contextual certainty.

When asked what exactly makes *Finnegans Wake* so difficult, Fritz Senn replied, "if we knew some of the causes, the difficulties might go away" (*Fritz Senn and FW*). Addressing this contention that a more comprehensive knowledge of the causes of difficulty may help to dissipate it, the present

chapter shall shift focus towards a greater consideration of the variety of discourse at play within the text, and an investigation of how – and more ultimately why – difficulty is created in the *Wakean* text. As shall be seen, by virtue of such linguistic unfeasibility and violation of the English linguistic code an interesting dual semiotic process occurs in which ambiguity is amplified *and* meaning is created. To these ends it shall be necessary to introduce the ideas of linguists Del Hymes and Paul Grice, who argue that grammatical correctness is not synonymous with meaningful language use, and who explore the ways in which meaning is forged not only by coherence to linguistic rules (as, for example, Noam Chomsky argues), but also by the very act of breaking with them.

3.1.1 Possibility and Feasibility in the Linguistic Code

Del Hymes introduced the notion of 'communicative competence', which states that "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless" (278). This assertion constitutes a reversal of Noam Chomsky's 'theory of competence', the assertion that 'linguistic competence' of the rules underlying a piece of text plays a more substantial role in meaning than the performance of that text.[48] In Hymes' view, the linguistic rules prioritised by Chomsky are subservient to social rules, wherein the language user needs to know when, how and to whom to employ the rules of language in order to forge less problematic pragmatic significance. In other words, not only can meaning result from violating the English linguistic code, but in some circumstances such violation is the most appropriate course. Indeed, as Hymes highlights, "some occasions call for being appropriately ungrammatical" (277).

Hymes identifies the four distinct aspects of communicative competence as the *possible* (what can be encoded in a language), the *feasible* (the extent to which a piece of text can be readily processed), the *appropriate* (the extent to which the text is relevant to context), and the *performed* (the extent to which the text is an example of actually occurring language use) (Hymes

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[48] As Hymes highlights, what Chomsky dubs 'linguistic performance' is roughly synonymous with "the process often termed encoding and decoding", as it has been referred to throughout this study (Hymes 55).

63).[49] In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that linguistic and lexical probability within the linguistic code is not the exclusive ground upon which meaning occurs, as unattested or improbable language use may still be semantically predictable if it is possible within the code. An important expansion of this theory resulting from Hymes' rules of communicative competence is that a text may be linguistically possible yet at the same time unfeasible. In other words, a text might be a grammatically and lexically correct encoding in respect to the language code, yet remain difficult to decipher or understand. Widdowson offers the example of "this is the corn the rat the cat the dog chased killed ate" as an example of a grammatically correct (or, in Hymes' terms, 'possible') sentence which is rendered practically incoherent by its lack of feasibility (*Discourse Analysis*, 14). While some degree of scrutiny could eventually parse the sentence into more meaningful separate clauses ('this is the corn the rat ate,' 'this is the rat the cat killed,' 'this is the cat the dog chased'), its phrasing is ultimately an impediment to meaning, regardless of its grammatical correctness. That these simultaneous qualities of possibility and unfeasibility are everywhere evident throughout *Finnegans Wake* means that access to the work's "tenuous narratives," as David Hayman calls them, can only be obtained "through the dense weave of a language designed as much to shield as to reveal them" (42).

3.1.2 Variety of Discourse in Finnegans Wake

In order to position *Finnegans Wake* in the realm of English literature (linguistically speaking) it has been both necessary and desirable to view such works as existing on a 'spectrum of possibility and feasibility' on which all works signify by virtue of their relations to the English code. As the previous chapter endeavoured to demonstrate, *Finnegans Wake* exists at one extreme

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[49] As is often the case when different theoretical approaches are applied, a problem of terminology arises here. In the previous section of this study a distinction was made between 'probable' and 'possible' formulations, where unattested and improbable language use may still signify if it exploits what is phonotactically and morphotactically possible within the English linguistic code. For Hymes, 'possibility', when concerned with language, is roughly synonymous with "grammaticality", or the category of words and rules, but in the larger sense he argues that "something possible within a formal system is grammatical, cultural, or, on occasion, communicative" (Hymes 65-66). The notion of 'probable' language as employed in this study is equivalent to Hymes' question as to whether a piece of language is actually *performed*.

end of this spectrum, rather than in a unique linguistic sphere. Once, for example, the modes of signification applied to 19th century realist fiction are seen to be homologous with works of varying degrees of linguistic experimentation – from the non-lexical writings of Dr. Seuss and Lewis Carroll, to Anthony Burgess' creation of 'nadsat' in his *A Clockwork Orange*, to Russell Hoban's imaginative projection of the linguistic code in a future state in *Riddley Walker* – then the *Wake*'s method would seem an attempt to dissolve, rather than to relocate, the arbitrary cut-off point a which a text may be considered to belong to the English language. Under Hymes' terms, we may expand on these findings to observe that the works mentioned are all largely 'possible', but vary significantly in the feasibility of their language use. Two further points should be stressed here. The first is that, on a macro-level, the *Wakean* text generally may be considered possible, unfeasible and not performed (whether it may be considered appropriate to purpose and context shall be addressed later in this chapter). Secondly, if *Finnegans Wake* is to be found on a 'spectrum of possibility and feasibility' within the English code, it should be stressed that one of the great myths concerning the work is that its language is uniform throughout – be that a belief that it is uniformly '*Wake*se', uniformly 'nonsense', or uniform in its modes of possible and feasible discourse. Beyond the abstract entity of *Finnegans Wake* existing at the extreme end of a spectrum of texts which adhere to the English linguistic code to variously exaggerated or conservative degrees, on a micro-level analysis sentences may be observed within the work which operate to varying degrees of possibility and feasibility, and which employ language which may be considered probable or improbable ('performed' or not 'performed'). As Ronald Symond argues, although the work is "invested everywhere with double and treble meanings or suggestions, there is no characteristically 'Joycean' style," as "the gamut of [Joyce's] effects range from jagged staccato to the smoothest and most delicate rhythms" (in Deming 607). As such, entirely possible and feasible sentences may be observed throughout. Thus the narrator's rather straightforward assertion that "a baser meaning has been read into these characters the literal sense of which decency can safely

scarcely hint" (FW 33.14-15),[50] may co-exist with lyrically archaic but linguistically compliant sentences such as "and low stole o'er the stillness the heartbeats of sleep" (FW 403.5). At the far end of the *Wakean* spectrum, one may observe seemingly non-linguistic gallimaufries (by degrees impossible and unfeasible) such as "As we there are where are we are we there from tomtittot to teetootomtotalitarian. Tea tea too oo" (FW 260.1-3); or entirely non-grammatical, non-lexical nonce-utterances (which may or may not be onomatopoetic in design or reception) such as "Brékkek Kékkek Kékkek Kékkek! Kóax Kóax Kóax! Ualu Ualu Ualu! Quaouauh!" (FW 4.2-3). By the same token, despite the *Wake*'s neologisms being overwhelmingly phonotactically compliant, one may still observe lines such as "Prszss Orel Orel the King of Orlbrdsz" (FW 105.10-11). Add to these samples the digressive and hypotactic sentences already addressed, and one still has only scratched the surface of the myriad varieties of language employed within the work. Even on the basis of these few sample quotes we may concur with Fritz Senn's assertion that "as a linguist Joyce pulls all traditional registers, often in parody, and adds a few of his own" (*Came Bearing*, 233). In the face of this evidence of the multifaceted nature of the *Wake*'s engagement with the linguistic code, this chapter's analysis of the creation of 'difficulty' through unfeasible language use shall be expanded to incorporate a more representative sampling of *Wakean* passages, in order to analyse in greater detail the work's by turns possible and impossible, feasible and unfeasible language use, as it manifestly defies the grammar, syntax and lexicon of the English code in a motivated manner.

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[50] The irony should be pointed out, that the Wakean sentence which most manifestly conforms to the lexicon – i.e. the one within which convergence of meaning occurs closes to its surface level – refers to the possibilities of reading "baser" or deeper meanings into graphological characters on a page.

3.2   Morphemic Ambiguity in *Finnegans Wake*

Nomomorphemy for me! (FW 599.19).

While it was demonstrated in the previous chapter that the morphemic, metalinguistic elements of the *Wakean* text take predominantly non-deviant lexical forms, a broader view of the *Wake*'s various modes of discourse reveals there are, in fact, instances when this divide between the metalinguistic and the referential breaks down. Although this confusion as to whether words should be assigned metalinguistic or referential force rarely occurs in Book I (hence the general belief that it contains many of the book's most 'readable' passages), it is observable in a sentence preceding the key passage analysed in the previous chapter: "He addle liddle phifie *Annie* ugged the little craythur" (FW 4.28-29, emphasis added). If the sentence conforms to English syntactic norms, as is suggested here, we must assume that "addle", following as it does the non-problematic pronominal subject "he", must constitute a verb, and "liddle phifie" an adjective-noun phrase comprising the sentence's object. Here, however, the syntax of the sentence breaks down, as a new subject, the third-person proper noun "Annie" (who apparently "ugged the little craythur") is introduced without punctuation or a conjunction. If one is to assume that punctuation is absent, then the problem remains of where to insert this latent comma or full stop. If one assumes the sentence to comprise two separate statements, concerning two separate subjects, the line needs to be re-punctuated with a full stop, such as "He addle liddle phifie[.] Annie ugged the little craythur." If, on the other hand, one assumes the sentence to constitute a unified statement concerning a stable subject, then it could be re-punctuated as "He addle liddle phifie Annie [,] ugged the little craythur," in which sense "Annie" would constitute the name of the 'little wife' ("liddle phifie") that "he" had, and 'ugged' would be categorised as a verb implicitly related to the opening pronominal subject "he". If one decides, however, that this latent syntactic interpretation is jarring due to the absence of a conjunction, one may decide that "Annie" in fact bears a homophonic resemblance to the conjunction-subject phrase 'and he', and the sentence could be re-encoded as ""He addle liddle phifie [and he] ugged the little

cr,aythur." If the non-deviant 'and he' had been used, it might be interpreted that the compound sentence comprises two statements about a male third-person singular, both that 'he had a little wife' ("he addle liddle phifie") and that he 'hugged the little creature' ("he ugged the little craythur"). Such a formulation would have constituted the most desirable surface form which the sentence might have taken, due to our schematic expectations that sentences be cohesive. Nevertheless, the very problematic issue remains that due to the possibility of the sign "Annie" encoding both a referent to a female person 'out there', *and* the metalinguistic "and he" (a coordinator intended to join two independent clauses into a compound sentence), differentiating the sentence's referential elements from its non-referential elements becomes intractably difficult. As it is, the best one might say is that manifestly the sentence does not conform to English grammatical standards, and latently it provides at least three exclusive possibilities for signification. While the distinction between 'content' and 'function words' breaks down in this particular instance, the sentence may still signify, with heightened polysemy, if its possibilities for exploiting the English linguistic code are examined. In fact it is only through such endeavours that it may signify at all.

As previously indicated, it may be observed as a general rule of thumb that such morphemic confusion is predominantly absent from the largely linguistically possible language of Book I, yet is particularly noticeable in the infamously opaque Book II. William York Tindall said of Book II's four chapters "than this [...] nothing is denser" (153), and Patrick Parrinder has similarly described Book II as the "worst and most disorienting quagmire [...] in the *Wake*" (205). It shall be argued presently that the greatest reason for such opacity results precisely from the introduction of morphemic confusion into the discursive modes at this point of the *Wake*. Early in chapter II.3, for example, at the beginning of the micro-narrative critically known as "The Norwegian Captain" we read:

> **It was** long after once there was a lealand in the luffing *ore* **it was** less after lives thor a toyler in the town at all *ohr* **it was** note before he drew out the moddle of Kersse by jerkin his dressing <u>but and</u> *or* **it was** not before athwartships he buttonhaled the Norweeger's capstan. (FW 311.5-9, emphasis added)

Once again, the sentence appears at first glance to constitute a grammatical farrago. However employment of the analytical methods already outlined may help to parse this digressive and hyptotactic sentence and clarify matters to a certain extent. Once one scans the line for non-deviant lexical markers, it may be observed that the lexical phrase "it was" occurs four times (emphasised in bold), suggesting four separate clauses. If the sentence does indeed comprise four clauses, then it would necessitate a conjunction directly preceding these four empty non-referential 'it' subjects. Rereading the sentence on the strength of this assumption, we find the conjunction 'or' treated punningly, with its lexical homophones 'ore' and 'ohr' treated synonymously (emphasised in italics). The crucial complication arising for the process of signification at play in the passage is that these conjunctions cannot be interpreted as only constituting linguistic markers, denoting the initiation of a new clause on a purely metalinguistic level, but also as signifying real-world referents.

Such manifest re-encodings of metalinguistic function words (or) as referential content words (ore/ohr) is also reversed in the sentence, as 'his dressing button' is re-encoded as "his dressing but and" (underlined). As a consequence, the referent 'button' is manifestly concealed, and the final clause can be modified in three oppositional ways to be either 'but', 'and' or 'or' "not before athwartships he buttonhaled the Norweeger's capstan," yet again injecting unknowability and unverifiability into the signification process.

3.2.1 Structural Ambiguity in the *Wake*

This possibility of understanding clauses in simultaneously contradictory ways brings us to another impediment to the achievement of pragmatic significance, namely the work's prevalent modes of accumulative digressive hypotaxis and modification. As a consequence of the surfeit of sub-clauses in the average *Wakean* sentence the cohesive elements become blurred to the point that syntactic ambiguity results from the presence of a number of equally possible, yet contradictory, ways in which a single line may be parsed. This is a phenomenon known technically as *structural ambiguity*, which refers to

sentences which have "more than one phrase structure tree assignable to them" (Small, Adriaens, Cottrell and Tanenhaus, 4).

This is a largely different phenomenon from the homophonic polysemy already outlined in the examples of the Falklands headline or the drinkers "malltreating" themselves to their "health's contempt", in which one line may contain two phonetically related deep structures within one surface structure. As an example of the nature of ambiguity now being addressed, let us consider an example from the opening lines of the particularly perplexing chapter II.3:

> **That** the fright of his light in tribalbalbutience *hides* aback in the doom of the balk of the deaf **but that** the height of his life from a bride's eye stammpunct *is* when a man that means a mountain barring his distance *wades* a lymph that *plays* the lazy winning she likes **yet that** pride that bogs the party *begs* the glory of a *Wake* while the scheme is like your rumba round me garden, allatheses, with perhelps the prop of a prompt to them, **was now or never** in Etheria Deserta, as in Grander Suburbia, with Finnfannfawners, ruric or cospolite, for much or moment indispute. (FW 309.2-10 emphasis added)

Yet again, the syntactic ambiguity of the sentence arises from the near total absence of punctuation, and before the line can be considered its inherently contrary potential parsings, non-deviant syntactic markers shall have to be identified so that it may be separated it into clauses. By means of linear modification, the opening lexical conjunction 'that' suggests the presence of subordinate clauses, and, indeed, the recurrence of the non-deviant 'that' would support this supposition (emphasised in bold). However, parsing from here is, as in most cases in the *Wake*, a matter of trial and error (or as already outlined, retroactive modification) as one must differentiate the instances of 'that' which can serve in a conjunctional role (as they are followed by a noun or pronoun) from those which cannot (those which are, for example, followed by a verb). As a result, it may be inferred that the employment of 'that' in the clause "but *that* the height of his life [...] is when" (emphasis added) is conjunctional. However, in "a lymph *that* plays the lazy" the word clearly constitutes a relative pronoun. Assuming that all instances of 'that' followed by a noun (and not those followed by a verb) indicate the beginning of a new subordinate clause, we can separate the sentence into the following clauses,

parsed into their most basic 'that – noun – verb' form: (conjunctions in bold, subjects underlined, verbs in italics)

> 1) **That** <u>the fright of his light</u> [...] *hides* aback in the doom of the balk of the deaf
> 2) but **that** <u>the height of his life</u> [...] *is* when <u>a man</u> [...] *wades* a lymph that plays the lazy winning she likes
> 3) yet **that** <u>pride</u> [...] *begs* the glory of a *Wake* while the scheme is like your rumba round me garden [...]
> 4) was now or never [...] for much or moment indispute. (FW 309.2-10, emphasis added)

Thus we see the sentence providing three subordinate propositions which were "now or never" in dispute. Having come this far, however, there remain two syntactic ambiguities that cannot be resolved.

The first ambiguity results from the fact, as highlighted by John Bishop, that the sentence has no subject (274). This occurs, without breaking the grammatical rules of English, by reversing the usual *'main–subordinate clause'* order. For example, the act of rephrasing the utterance 'it was never in dispute that he killed her' as 'that he killed her, was never in dispute' moves the pleonastic (or dummy) pronoun 'it' – and hence the sentence's empty subject – outside of its utterance. The same has been done in this *Wakean* sentence. The second, and much more integral, ambiguity lies in the fact that due to its complex structure of a main clause and a series of proposed dependent sub-clauses, the sentence possesses two equally legitimate but directly contradictory significations. McHugh parses and interprets the line as "that man hides from thunder, but that marriage is the height of his life, yet that pride kills him, while the scheme is cyclical, was never much in dispute" (309). However, the opposite possibility is also encoded within the sentence, in so far as the line can be parsed so that the three proposed subordinate clauses could be either "now [...] much [...] indispute" or "never [...] for [... a ...] moment indispute." That the syntax allows the sentence to mean both that the 'facts' simultaneously are and are not in dispute creates an ambiguity of signification so that meaning is at once created and destabilised through this adherence.

It would seem, then, that the conclusion to be drawn is that such instances do not undermine our previous assertion that reading *Finnegans*

Wake in and as English is the only way in which it can signify (in a way that attempting to parse this or other *Wakean* sentences according to the rules of French grammar, for example, by and large will not), but that just as the previous chapter demonstrated that the language of the *Wake* is at once both semantically predictable and semantically ambiguous, here it may be seen that it is equally both syntactically predictable and syntactically ambiguous. Consequently, it must be accepted that as with all language use, the *Wake*'s ambiguities cannot be overcome, nor can its heterogeneous, often contradictory, meaning be homogenised.

Yet what shall be said of the narrator's wilful obscurity as to whether the facts of the cited lines are in dispute or not? Surely, in the absence of certainty in such matters, the question of whether or not there is a narrative being related becomes vexed to the point that the text reverts back to nonsense? As a consequence, we shall have to investigate further these digressions and their influence on the question of the determinability of context in the *Wake*.

3.3   Difficulties of *Wakean* Context

The greatest obstacle to signification incurred by the *Wake*'s almost chronic digressions is the resulting difficulty in determining context throughout the work. If we concur with Widdowson that the context of an utterance or unit of text "cannot simply be the situation in which it occurs but the features of the situation that are taken as relevant" (*Discourse Analysis*, 20) – in other words that context is a psychological construct, which is shared and constantly updated and re-evaluated by the speakers – then the problem presented by the *Wake*'s text is determining which features are to be considered relevant for context. As a result, despite the previous chapter's demonstrations of the ways in which context may influence meaning, a deeper question emerges; namely, what exactly do we mean when we speak of a *Wakean* context? As Fritz Senn points out, in *Finnegans Wake* "we often suffer from context amnesia, not for lack of attention, but because of bewilderment. The trees, or even leaves, are so diversely distractive that the wood to be lost in is hard to notice" (*Vexations,* 69). In order to test the determinability of a *Wakean*

context, it is thus necessary to ascertain whether the book's narrative content can be discerned from digression, a question which, ultimately, is inseparable from a deeper investigation into the syntax of the work's digressive sentence structures.

3.3.1 Syntactic Digression in the Wake

As Attridge correctly points out, "the reader searching for a principle by which to distinguish what is central from what is digressive in Joyce's text is not given much assistance," and the work's hugely digressive, though syntactically correct, sentences problematise this necessary separation of "central core" and "digressive envelope" (*Peculiar Language*, 212). In order to better understand what distinguishing a sentence's central core from its digressive elements means exactly, let us take the example of another rather long single sentence, this time from chapter I.3.:

> It was the Lord's own day for damp (to wait for a postponed regatta's eventualising is not of Battlecock Shettledore - Juxta - Mare only) and the request for a fully armed explanation was put (in Loo of Pat) to the porty (a native of the sisterisle — Meathman or Meccan? — by his brogue, exrace eyes, lokil calour and lucal odour which are said to have been average clownturkish (though the capelist's voiced nasal liquids and the way he sneezed at zees haul us back to the craogs and bryns of the Silurian Ordovices) who, the lesser pilgrimage accomplished, had made, pats' and pigs' older inselt, the southeast bluffs of the stranger stepshore, a regifugium persecutorum, hence hindquarters) as he paused at evenchime for some or so minutes (hit the pipe dannyboy! Time to won, barmon. I'll take ten to win.) amid the devil's one duldrum (Apple by her blossom window and Charlotte at her toss panomancy his sole admirers, his only tearts in store) for a fragrend culubosh during his weekend pastime of executing with Anny Oakley deadliness (the consummatory pairs of provocatives, of which remained provokingly but two, the ones he fell for, Lili and Tutu, cork em!) empties which had not very long before contained Reid's family (you ruad that before, soaky, but all the bottles in sodemd histry will not soften your bloodathirst!) stout. (FW 51.21 - 52.6)

Using the practices already outlined thus far (identifying lexical markers, the logic of linear modification, etc.) a core sentence can be discerned and parsed as:

> the request for a fully armed explanation was put [...] to the porty [...] as he paused at evenchime for some or so minutes [...]for a fragrend culubosh during his weekend pastime of executing [...] empties which had not very long before contained Reid's family [...] stout.

Once again we may say that the sample sentence is possible in the English linguistic code, if unfeasible due to its extensive digressive hypotaxis. If we wish to give this sentence pragmatic significance, we could say that "the porty", while smoking a pipe and drinking a pint of stout, is asked for an explanation, presumably of an incident which has already occurred in the narrative, and this pragmatic significance is achievable because of the sentence's possibility within the English linguistic code. As such, it may be argued that Attridge is overstating the matter somewhat when he asserts that in the *Wake*, as a consequence of the work's proliferation of "dissolves and montages, shifts and leaps, condensed phrases and multiple allusions," it becomes "impossible to draw out any single thread as central - whether it be plot, time sequence, character, symbolic structure, mythic framework, voice, attitude, dogma, or any other of the threads that run through conventional novels" (*Peculiar Language*, 217). Placed under enough scrutiny, the lines of the *Wake* will generally yield to a parsing that will allow the reader to attribute some degree of pragmatic significance. The issues arise, not from an inability to unearth the central core of any line or passage, but rather how to reconcile this syntactic core with the endless digressions in which it is sheathed.

Once this central syntactic core has been unearthed the more relevant question thus becomes what is to be done with this huge abundance of enveloping digressions. Are they to be considered merely noise, creating the ambiguity of the *Wake*'s language which it is the reader's task to unpuzzle, and which is to be discarded once the central sentence core has been uncovered? If this is indeed the case, then there is certainly a great deal of superfluous and discardable material in the *Wake*, most likely the majority of its text. If the concept of a central narrative in the work is refuted, then it might even be contended that *all* of *Finnegans Wake* is digression, as the presence of 'narrative' constitutes the only grounds upon which 'digression' may be distinguished and defined. To this point Senn avers that "the *Wake* itself appears to offer almost nothing but trash and refuse, rubbish, odds and ends,

middenheaps" (*Vexations*, 62). The *Wake* even characterises itself as just such a jumble of disparate elements in a number of catalogues of the seemingly random elements of its substance, such as

> curtrages and rattlin buttins, nappy spattees and flasks of all nations, clavicures and scampulars, maps, keys and woodpiles of haypennies and moonled brooches with bloodstaned breeks in em, boaston nightgarters and masses of shoesets and nickelly nacks and foder allmicheal and a lugly parson of cates and howitzer muchears and midgers and maggets, ills and ells with loffs of toffs and pleures of bells and the last sigh that come fro the hart (bucklied!) and the fairest sin the sunsaw (FW 11-26)

Similarly, chapter I.7 presents a page and a half list of items littered on the floor, walls, doorways etc. of Shem's house ("The Haunted Inkbottle"), from "burst loveletters, telltale stories, stickyback snaps [and] doubtful eggshells" to "worms of snot, toothsome pickings, cans of Swiss condensed bilk [and] highbrow lotions" (FW 183.11 – 184.2). Such digressive lists abound, such as the two page list of "abusive names" hurled at HCE by the visitor at the gate (FW 71.10 – 72.16), the three page list of 111 presents delivered by ALP to her children (FW 210.6 – 212.19), the four pages of potential titles for ALP's Letter (FW 103.5 – 107.7), or the mammoth fourteen page list of the attributes of "Finn Mc Cool" in the Quiz chapter (FW 125.10 – 139.14). These lists are surely digression in its purest form, prolonged catalogues which advance no plot or action; intransitive verbs in comparison to the transitive verbs of narrative.

It may be argued, however, that these catalogues are different from the narrative "events" peppered throughout the work – for example, the Prankquean episode, or the HCE chapters I.2 to I.4 – in so far as these events relate, in the broadest sense possible, some sort of character performing some sort of action with some sort of (often highly abstract) consequences. The same claim cannot be made of the catalogues. The issue of connecting these smaller opaque narratives, however, is relatively impossible on the evidence of the text itself, and as such, narrative cohesion remains largely absent from the work as a whole. Consequently it may be posited, in very broad terms indeed, that *Finnegans Wake* is made up not of "unilinear plot" but rather of both digressive micro-narratives – which are continuously undermined by hypotactic and contradictory digressions on the

micro-level of the sentence – and outright non-narratological digressions. In other words, such "events" can be discerned and contrasted from "digression" of the book's catalogues, but the distinction is highly problematic in so far as these micro-narrative events are related through core sentence structures couched in hyper-digressive and often non-cohesive sub-clauses which are in themselves also catalogues of a sort.

To offer a representative example, in chapter I.6 the reader might discern a determinate micro-narrative, discrete from its larger context of the chapter's quiz structure, concerning a Mookse and a Gripes (FW 152.15 – 159.18). This "fable" relates details of the two characters' appearance and geography, and that they converse across a river described as "the most unconsciously boggylooking stream he ever locked his eyes with" (FW 153.2-4). The Gripes is positioned "on the yonder bank" from the Mookse, sitting "parched [perched] on a limb" of a tree (FW 153.9-10). Nevertheless, beyond such superficial details, the content of their conversation, and the effect it has upon the other interlocutor are difficult to infer, and while an ending to the tale may be discerned, it is equally difficult to say in what way it is a consequence of the events having occurred up to that point. Consequently, a denial of a "unilinear plot" in *Finnegans Wake* is not a denial of the existence these micro-narratives, and their differentiation from the instances of pure (and almost painfully elongated) digression, but a refutation, rather, of any cohesive, non-abstract causality or character stability between them – as well as within them – throughout the course of the whole text. As Sailer argues, "two opposing directions are nearly always at work simultaneously in any passage in *Finnegans Wake*, a narrative forward movement and a motivic recursive movement. Usually one or the other prevails" (197). However, in line with our observations concerning the Tale of the Mookse and the Gripes, Sailer finds that while "one might expect that in the fables and tales, the narrative forward movement would dominate and that in other passages the motivic recursive movement would do so, but this is not the general pattern," and while these narrative events contain "much narrative material, long subsections of it are so heavily motivic that their narrative content is virtually indeterminate" (197).

Returning to the highly digressive sentence concerning the "porty," and shifting focus from the central core to the digressive sub-clauses, a further complication to the sentence's processes of signification can be discerned. While there is not space for a full explication of the sentence's sub-clauses here, the relative clauses related directly to the "Porty" shall be analysed here as representative of the general effect. In the parenthesis modifying the object (i.e. the Porty who is asked for an explanation) we read that he is

> a native of the sisterisle — Meathman or Meccan? — by his brogue, exrace eyes, lokil calour and lucal odour which are said to have been average clownturkish

If the fact that the "Porty" is a native of the "sisterisle" is indicated by his "brogue", then we may infer that he is an Irishman, a brogue being a marked accent when speaking English (especially Irish or Scottish), and Ireland being the sister island of Britain. It would appear that his local colour and odour (his "lokil calour and lucal odour") would support such an assertion. However, if he is an Irishman, it would seem that identifying which part of the island he is from is problematic. He could be from the countryside or the West (where the accent is described as a "brogue"), or from County Meath ("Meathman") or from different parts of Dublin, perhaps Lucan ("lucal") or Drumcondra (where one finds the Clonturk Park seen in "clownturkish"). However, also encoded in the language is the possibility that he is not from Ireland at all, but rather from the Middle East, either from Mecca ("Meccan") or "Turkey" ("clownturkish"). If we continue to read in search of further clarification, we find only further digression and problematic elements. Next we encounter another hypotactical modification, which offers the caveat that "though the capelist's voiced nasal liquids and the way he sneezed at zees haul us back to the craogs and bryns of the Silurian Ordovices." Here it would appear that despite his already identified "brogue", the Porty's accent, and especially his 'voiced nasals' and 'voiced liquids' (phonetic sonorants), might hint at another place of origin. According to article on "Wales" in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "at the time of the Roman invasion of Britain, 55 B.C., four distinct dominant tribes, or families, are enumerated west of the Severn," which it identifies as the Decangi, the Ordovices, the Dimetae, and the Silures (261). This would indicate that the Porty's accent would locate him back at the hills

(Welsh *bryn*) and rocks (Welsh *craig*) of ancient Celtic tribes in modern-day Wales. Such a suggestion would be further supported by the assertion that the "Porty" "sneezed at zees" as the Welsh language, *Britannica* informs us, does not contain the letter 'Z'. In passing it should be noted that once again a lexical understanding of "sneezed" would not allow any coherence in collocation with letters of the alphabet, however if the phrase is seen as a play on the English idiom (and idioms are a perfect example of non-lexical language use) "not to be sneezed at", meaning not to be rejected without consideration, the Porty, in his speech (his voiced nasals and liquids) can be said to have rejected Z's. However, as the digressions continue, other options for the Porty's origin are connotatively supported; he may be from Chapelizod in East Dublin ("the capelist") *or* the Middle East (he has accomplished "the lesser pilgrimage", namely the Muslim journey to Mecca, but not Arafat). How then, shall one discern what is central from what is digressive in the complex labyrinth of the *Wake*'s grammar? As we have seen in this chapter, the attempt to gut any *Wakean* sentence of its digressive sub-clauses most often will offer up a parsed core sentence, but the integrity of this core as 'narrative' is undermined by both the ability to parse sentences in different ways – with alternative, often contradictory significations – and the irreconcilability of the digressive clauses with this core.

We may surmise, then, that if the purpose of the core sentence is to relay a set of proposed narrative facts (such as that the Porty was asked for an explanation while smoking a pipe and drinking stout), the digressions are intended to undermine and problematise this information. The implicature being that despite the desire to relate the details of an ostensible narrative, such facts about the sentence's subject and object are unknowable. As one of the narrators at the *Wake* puts it, "it is a slopperish matter, given the wet and low visibility [...] to idendifine the individuone" (FW 51.3-6) due to the fact that "the unfacts, did we possess them, are too imprecisely few to warrant our certitude" (FW 57.16-17). Thus it may be concluded that the *Wakean* text clearly has both constructive and destructive impulses, and that the unfeasibility of the sentence structures throughout the work are intended to support this assertion of narratological unknowability by implicature.

3.4 Creativity: Creating Implicature by Breaking the Co-operative Principle

What is meant by the assertion that by forging an unfeasible text – through the confusion of morphemes and lexemes and the introduction of digressive contradictory sub-clauses – the language of *Finnegans Wake* is creating an implicature? In order to better understand what is meant here, and to move towards an understanding of how the *Wakean* text forges meaning through its *non*-adherence to the norms of the English code, the time has come to introduce Paul Grice's notion of the co-operative principle.

The philosopher Paul Grice proposed four 'conversational maxims' based on his cooperative principle which states that a conversational contribution should be made "such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged," and is so called because listeners and speakers must speak cooperatively in order to be understood in a particular way (Grice 26). The principle describes how effective communication in conversation is achieved in common social situations and is further broken down into the Maxims of *Quality* (only say what you believe to be true, have evidence for), *Quantity* (do not offer more or less information than is required for the particular purpose), *Relevance* (contribute in a manner that is relevant to the interlocution) and *Manner* (avoid ambiguity and prolixity) (Grice, 26-28).

As will be clear to most language users, however, these maxims are not always adhered to, as people clearly do not only speak the truth in ways which are informationally appropriate, relevant and concise, but break with these rules for all manner of motivations. Such non-adherence to the co-operative principle is, however, as meaningful as adherence, as "non-adherence is marked and taken to imply some significance, an extra dimension of meaning not directly signalled by what is actually said" (Widdowson, *Language Creativity*, 507). This extra dimension of significance is referred to by Grice as an "implicature" (24), and is created by the statement of untruths which are signalled as such (such as hyperbole, sarcasm, coyness, etc.), the employment of prolix, evasive or discursive

language, or a motivated violation of the maxims of the cooperative principle by any other means.

If the creation of such implicatures is considered to be the essential quality of 'creativity', then it may be said that any work of literature that strictly adheres to the four maxims would cease to be creative, and thus cease to be literature. It is not through compliant conformity with the rules of the co-operative principle and of the English linguistic code that gives a text its poetic function (such adherence is the domain of recipes and instruction manuals), but rather its divergences from these practical modes of signification. Metaphors, for example, are a blatant violation of the quality maxim, and their meaning is forged not by semantic means, but by the implicature created by their very breaking of the co-operative principle. As Lecercle highlights, "metaphors are self-destroying because they exaggerate one of the characteristics of all metaphors, their blatant falsity" (*Philosophy of Nonsense*, 29). In more literary terms, Wolfgang Iser describes texts which adhere to these maxims as lacking in creativity and interest for the reader as "the more a text [individualises] or confirms an expectation it has initially aroused, the more aware we become of its didactic purpose, so that at best we can only accept or reject the thesis forced upon us." Ultimately, for Iser, "the very clarity of such texts will make us want to free ourselves from their clutches" (215).

The issue of the quality manner when related to texts designated to the poetic discourse domain (by virtue of their 'author-function') is complicated by the fact that, insofar as the characters being referenced are non-existent, all literature, regardless of its supposed level of 'realism', is non-referential and thus breaks the quality maxim. As a consequence of this fact, literary texts create implicature, before and beyond any consideration of their content, just by virtue of being considered literary texts, as once a text is designated as a poem or novel, it is known and expected that it wilfully refers to people and events which have no referents in third-person reality. A telling example of this feature of literature is the historical novel, which, while set in he midst of "real" historical events, always inserts a fictional character as a matter of course, as this element is necessary for the quality maxim to be broken and for

implicature to be allowed to be created, despite the work's pretence of historicity.[51]

As to the matter of the motivated violation of the maxim of manner – which dictates that one avoid ambiguity and prolixity – Widdowson argues that

> creativity is best understood as a motivated violation of the manner maxim which focuses on the message form factor in the [realisation] of speech act conditions in a way that disrupts normal expectations, creates implicatures, of one kind or another, and thereby brings about [...] a particular perlocutionary effect. (Widdowson, *Language Creativity*, 508)

In other words, if a text violates the Gricean maxims through acts of obscurantism, ambiguity or prolixity (as *Finnegans Wake* clearly does), in order for signification to occur the interpreter (be it reader or critic) must not focus exclusively on the form "for its own sake" but rather attempt to understand what implicature is being created, and for what ultimate pragmatic purpose (*Language Creativity*, 508). If it may be agreed that the language of *Finnegans Wake* clearly does not adhere to the manner maxim, it may simultaneously be concluded that once again such a motivated violation is in adherence to the properties of the poetic function in a greatly exaggerated form, and that some sort of implicature must be created by the *Wake*'s violations of the co-operative principle.

The *Wake*'s violation of the maxim of manner is further complicated, however, by the ambiguity that results from employing neologisms instead of better-known dictionary terms, a violation which creates further implicatures. Returning to the example of Dr. Seuss's poem *The Glunk that got Thunk*, in which the narrator refers to his sister's "Thinker-Upper" instead of her 'mind' or 'imagination', it may be argued that the denotative 'meaning' (the reference to the girl's 'imagination') is essentially the same, yet that by bypassing the dictionary term and forging a new signifier, the poem creates an implicature of some kind (most likely in the case of Dr Seuss the implicature is for comic purposes). By the same token, an author of a book on psychology would not refer to a person's "Thinker-Upper" – even if he or she knew the referent

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[51] Examples of such historical novels which create an implicature in this way include those of Walter Scott (*Waverly*, *Rob Roy*, *Ivanhoe*), and Leo Tolstoy (*War and Peace*). The technique finds a more recent resurgence in works from authors such as Pat Baker (*Regeneration*, *The Eye in the Door*, *The Ghost Road*) and Sebastian Barry (*A Long Long Way*).

would be perfectly clear – because an unwanted implicature would be created.

3.4.1 Representing Unrepresentability

If it may be agreed that an implicature is created by the *Wake*'s possible but unfeasible use of language, how shall we go about interpreting what such an implicature might be? Widdowson's suggestion that ideational manipulation of the Gricean maxim of manner could be employed to "represent some novel take on conventional reality" (*Language Creativity*, 508) would appear most relevant to *Finnegans Wake*, and we find due cause to introduce the theories of French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard.

Lyotard posits that 'modern art' is the predictable and logical result of any historical moment that recognises the intrinsically unrepresentable nature of reality (77). Under Lyotard's conceptualisation, any art may be considered 'modern' which attempts "to present the fact that the unrepresentable exists" (78). Such wrestling with the problems of representation have run through and underpinned modernist and postmodernist modes of artistic expression prevalent since the early 20th century, as well as contemporaneous literary theories, to the point that Roland Barthes could claim in 1967, with some degree of self-assuredness, that "writing can no longer designate an operation of recording notation, representation, 'depiction'" (170) and thus proclaim the death of the author. The *Wake*'s presentation of a series of 'narrative events' and lengthy digressive passages, both sharing the digressive quality of focussing on formal texture rather than referential or mimetic concerns, correlates with Lyotard's contention that integral to the presentation of the unrepresentable nature of reality is an overriding 'incredulity towards meta-narratives,' manifested in an undermining of the legitimacy of grand, large-scale theories and philosophies of the world, such as the progress of history, the knowability of everything by science, and the possibility of absolute freedom (7). Lyotard argues that such grand-narratives can no longer be considered adequate for representing the difference, diversity and incompatibility of modern beliefs and desires, and consequently

postmodernity is characterised by the abundance of 'micro-narratives'. Lyotard's submission of the inadequacy of grand narratives and the problem of representation are as 'anti-theological' as Barthes' death of the author, as both reveal a concept of written texts as refusing "to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text)" (Barthes, 171). Equally, both attest to the inherent complications of representing a reality created through its perception and defined by its unhomogenisable pluralism. As a result of this recognition of the problematic representation of language, literary criticism has come to be primarily concerned with deconstructing texts in pursuit of meaning, to the ends of demonstrating that representation, as a straightforward, unproblematic mode of signification, is in fact irreducibly complex, mutable, and perhaps, even, impossible. Fictional texts such as *Finnegans Wake* (or, for that matter, Carroll's Alice books, *Tristram Shandy*, etc.) that choose to engage in this debate have the even more complex task of attempting to represent the intrinsic impossibility of representation itself. As Marilyn L. Brownstein argues, "the postmodern, itself a response to modernity's foregrounded and overdetermining forms, copes with reality's unrepresentability by attempting its representation" (79).

In the above investigation of morphemic confusion in Book II, the impediment to signification became discerning which parts of the text are referential and which are not. While regarding the subjectless opening sentence of II.3, for example, it was found that the sentence means both that the 'facts' are verifiable and that they are not. Returning to Deleuze's notion of the "strict disjunctive synthesis" inherent to portmanteaux (46), the French philosopher further contends that "when the esoteric word functions not only to connote or coordinate two heterogeneous series but to introduce disjunctions in the series, then the portmanteau word is necessary or necessarily founded" (47). Resulting from this accumulation of apparently motivated attempts to "introduce disjunctions" into the semiotic processes of the *Wakean* text through neologistic and syntactic ambiguity – as well through the narrators' inability to make the related facts cohere – the unfeasibility of the *Wake*'s excessive language would appear to create an implicature of both the desire to relate a narrative, and an admission to the unverifiability of details or facts of any such narrative. This extreme non-adherence to the

Gricean maxims would appear to signal a realisation of the inadequacy of the truth claim of representation, as these motivated violations constitute, by implicature, the acknowledgement of the unerasability of equivocality (already demonstrated in this paper to be a feature of all language use), the role of the individual in actively creating meaning, the anti-theological abandonment of meta-narratives (and hence the death of Barthes' author-God figure), and the representation of the intrinsically unrepresentable nature of reality. Indeed it is within *Finnegans Wake* that a space of convergence of Lyotard and Barthes' theories can be found. If Barthes argues that the death of the Author-God is a result of the cognisance of the fact that any text "is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings blend and crash" (170), *Finnegans Wake* may be considered the very embodiment of this concept, self-reflexively forging itself as "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes, 170) to the simultaneous and congruent ends of deauthorisation and the representation of the unrepresentability of reality.

Finnegans Wake claims of itself that it is "the one place [...] where the possible [is] the improbable and the improbable the inevitable" and as a result the reader of the book is "in for a sequentiality of improbable possibles [...] for utterly impossible as are all these events they are probably as like those which may have taken place as any others which never took person at all are ever likely to be" (FW 110.9-21). This attempt at representing the unrepresentable, of depicting a series of improbable possibilities and probable impossibilities, denies the existence of a meaning making Author-God by denying the book an 'ultimate signified'; a single intended meaning to be decoded. Herring argues that the book's plot "is unstable in that there is no one plot from beginning to end, but rather many recognizable stories and plot types with familiar and unfamiliar twists, told from varying perspectives" (190) – however the same claim for the instability and plurality of meaning, and the existence of many synchronous meanings, presented with familiar and unfamiliar twists, told from varying perspectives, may be made. The work's mutual denial of a meta-narrative and of an 'ultimate signified' equally constitute a denial of the representability of reality, and of Barthes' authorial

'secret meaning' to be decoded by intimate knowledge of the book's creator. Ultimately, narrative in *Finnegans Wake*, just as its signification, remains infinitely deferred and unknowable. As the narrator reminds the reader searching for any meta-narrative, "the unfacts, did we possess them, are too imprecisely few to warrant our certitude" (FW 57.16-17).

If these contentions are allowed to be true, however it must also be admitted that this 'modern moment' of acknowledging the unrepresentable nature of reality, and attempting its representation, has been repeatedly re-occurring in the history of written texts; arguably in the texts which form the Abrahamic religions of the book, with their impossibilia (or *adynata* in Greek) and attempts to depict transcendental rather than representational empirical truths (these texts present a dual movement in and of themselves, as they argue that truth is only obtainable through metaphor, yet assert that there is a divine Author behind all things); certainly in the ludic narratives of early novels such as *Tristram Shandy*, in paintings of the sublime, in the nonsense poetry of the 17th century (John Hoskyns, et al.), in the writings of Lewis Carroll, and, reacting against the Enlightenment, in the Ubu plays, Italian futurism, dadaism, modernism, historiographical metafiction, and post-structuralism. In such a context we may see *Finnegans Wake* as continuing within literary tradition, rather than breaking from it, but if we are to say what differentiates it from these other texts (and *Finnegans Wake* is clearly different from most other texts) how shall we understand its own particular mode of representing the unrepresentable?

In moving from the (im)possibility and (un)feasibility of various instances of *Wakean* text to the implicatures created by these modes, we have clearly progressed from a linguistic line of analysis to a literary one; from the study of means to ends. In order to finally address the unique ways in which means and ends coalesce in the *Wake*, and to highlight the text's unique confrontation with the issue of representing the unrepresentable, the final section of this study shall investigate the *Wake*'s most peculiar and individual trait, namely the influence of its cyclical structure upon its semiotic processes.

4 Cyclical Structure and Signification of *Finnegans Wake*

4.1 The Cyclical Structure of *Finnegans Wake*

Perhaps the most widely circulated "fact" concerning *Finnegans Wake* – beyond the immediate difficulty presented by its extensive employment of word coinage and hypotaxis thus far analysed – is that it is "the book of Doublends Jined" (FW 20.15-16), a book of 'double-ends joined'[52] in which the opening sentence fragment ("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" FW 3.1-3) constitutes a continuation from its unfinished closing line ("A way a lone a last a loved a long the"; FW 628.15-16) to forge an ostensibly never-ending cycle. Conventionally, the prevalent approach to the *Wake*'s cyclical method of perpetually changing essences and accidents is to treat the book as a work of cyclical history, drawing on the ideas in Vico's *La Scienza Nuova* ("The New Science"). According to this belief, the *Wake* employs such a cyclical structure in order to elicit, as Ovid had done before, repeated physical metamorphoses as representative of a universal principle which reflects the cyclical, regenerative nature of the world: winter gives way to spring, generations die and are replaced; Troy falls, Rome rises, nothing is permanent.[53]

However – given the line of investigation being undertaken here – rather than offer another allegorical interpretation of the thematic implications of the work's cyclical and metamorphic devices, what shall be explored in the remaining pages is the process by which the work's cyclical structure creates a metamorphosis of *meaning*, as the opposition of prolepsis and anagnosis creates and alters content, and signification thereof. Bernard Benstock alludes to this essential form of cyclical metamorphosis in *Finnegans Wake* with the

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[52] As well as a book of 'Dublin's giant' HCE/Finnegan
[53] This observation is made by Branko Gorjup in *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood* in comparing Atwood's poetics of metamorphosis with Ovid's (Gorjup, 132), although the comparison to the *Wake* here is equally valid and salient.

observation that the essence of the work, in its self-defined form as a "collideorscape" (FW 143.28), "is not the unit of color but the architectonics of change" (*Twice-Told Tales*, 95). If we are concerned with the processes of signification at work in *Finnegans Wake*, the manner in which the book's cyclical structure serves as a narratological force and engenders previously impossible significance shall have to be confronted, and to these ends the focus shall move to the means by which the complex relation between proleptic and anagnostic transferrals results in the cyclical modification of signification throughout.

4.1.1 Anagnosis

In his paper "Anagnostic Probes" Senn demonstrates how signification in *Ulysses* often functions proleptically, eliciting a delayed recognition from the reader, which results in a postponed clarification or confirmation; a retroactive modification, which Senn dubs 'anagnosis', from the Greek 'to know again' (*Inductive Scrutinies*, 83). A well-known example is Bloom's comment to Bantom Lyons that he was just about to "throw away" his paper, which is later anagnostically clarified as having been understood as a tip on the horse Throwaway.

> – I was just going to throw it away, Mr Bloom said.
> Bantam Lyons raised his eyes suddenly and leered weakly.
> – What's that? his sharp voice said.
> – I say you can keep it, Mr Bloom answered. I was going to throw it away that moment.
> Bantam Lyons doubted an instant, leering: then thrust the outspread sheets back on Mr Bloom's arms.
> – I'll risk it, he said. Here, thanks. (U. 106)

In this instance, 'throw away' signifies, to both Bloom and the first-time reader, the phrasal verb's lexical entry, as they cannot access, as Bantam Lyons can, the phrase as an obscure homophone signifying a racehorse competing in the 1904 Ascot Gold Cup. Later context allows the reader to anagnostically discern the referential gulf between the characters, and it may be observed that as a result of this anagnostic realignment the signification of Bloom and Lyon's conversation remains stable, but the significance has been modified. In

other words, there are signifieds present in the text which are, for all practical purposes, impossible to infer until later context opens up these channels of signification.

Through its considerable expansion of this anagnostic principle, *Finnegans Wake* creates a state of constant semantic flux, as signification is perpetually deferred and then altered by continual contextual repositioning of its text through as reader's familiarity with the book's infrastructural nodes increases. As the narrator says at one point of the "besieged" (FW 75.5) Earwicker: "it may be, we moest ons hasten selves te declareer it, that he reglimmed? presaw?" (FW 75.8-10). This question of pre-seeing and re-seeing highlights the fundamental issue of the effect of the cyclical structure on the process of meaning making in the text. In contrast with the book's farsighted, if forgetful, narrators, the most pertinent question to be asked of the reader at any given stage in the cycle is whether or not, in reading a particular line, he or she is 'reglimming' or 'preseeing.' In other words, the extent to which the reader is re-reading a passage with anagnostic insight, or pre-seeing prognostically unobtainable information yet to be unveiled in the book's narrative cycle, appreciably alters the possible signification of a given word or line. The process at work is a significant expansion of the already outlined mode of retroactive semantic re-evaluation, as the text's cyclical process regenerates "the seim anew" (FW 215.23) by transforming 'the same' lexical items into 'the new' through the postponement of possible significance and referents in the book's signifiers. This process in *Finnegans Wake* shall be referred to here, from Fritz Senn's coinage, as anagnosis.

In order to demonstrate how such anagnostic processes are at play from the book's opening pages, let us take a closer look at the book's opening sentence fragment:

> 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. (FW 3.1-3)

Jacque Aubert calls attention to the fact that the first-time reader cannot know if the book's opening word "riverrun" is a verb or proper noun. If the word is a verb, then the absence of a subject is problematic, and if the word is a noun the matter is ambiguated by the double absence of both a determiner ('a' or

'the' riverrun) and a capitalised first letter (Riverrun) that would categorise the word as a proper noun (69). As Aubert concludes, "if 'riverrun' remains unreadable, it is because it remains undifferentiated" (69). As a result, the linguistic elements which allow grammatical categorisation – that have been so essential for our assertion of the *Wake*'s English encoding – are absent from the line. Only anagnostically, on subsequent readings, can the reader have a better idea of its function. On a micro-level reading, the reader must wait thirteen words for the verb "brings" to retroactively assign the word proper noun status, and, on a macro-level, 625 pages until awareness of its status as a sentence fragment once more anagnostically modifies its significance.

Such anagnostic processes can be seen to be at work in the line's reference to "Howth Castle and Environs." Later in the book, the ideal first-time reader will encounter a character called "Harold or Humphrey Chimpden" Earwicker (FW 30.2-3), and learn that "all holographs so far exhumed initialled by Haromphrey bear the sigla H.C.E." (FW 32.13-14). Once this knowledge has been gained, the reader may anagnostically infer that the phrase "Howth Castle and Environs" refers to this character acrostically. The important issue to be underlined here is the impossibility of the reader prognostically intuiting that a reference to a Dublin castle and its surrounding area might imply the presence of a character, let alone a character obliquely named Chimpden Earwicker, whether Harold or Humphrey. This trend continues, and the first-time reader will continue to encounter many acrostic allusions to this HCE character,[54] as well as loose homophonic approximations of the name Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker,[55] well before he or she has encountered such a character in the text, or has been even afforded the possibility of recognising the presence of a character in these encodings at all.

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[54] Such as "hod, cement and edifices" (FW 4.26-27), "Haroun Childeric Eggeberth" (FW 4.32), "he calmly extensolies" (FW 6.35), "*Hic cubat edilis*" (FW 7.22-23), "How Copenhagen ended" (FW 10.21-22), "happinest childher everwere" (FW 11.15-16), "Hush! Caution ! Echoland! How charmingly exquisite!" (FW 13.5-6), "heathersmoke and cloudweed Eire's" (FW 13.22-23), "Hither, craching eastuards [...] hence, cool at ebb" (FW 17.25-26), "hatch, a celt, an earshare" (FW 18.30-31), "Hark, the corne entreats!" (FW 21.3), "homerigh, castle and earthenhouse" (FW 21.13), "hive, comb and earwax" (FW 25.6), "Humme the Cheapner, Esc" (FW 29.18-19), "humile, commune and ensectuous" (FW 29.30), and "hubbub caused in Edenborough" (FW 29.35-36).
[55] Such as "Unfru-Chikda-Uru-Wukru" (FW 24.7)

These opening indicators of the impossibility of prognostic knowledge in this cyclical text – in which such significations can only be anagnostically enabled (and then only depending on the degree of the reader's memory and observance) – set up a standard of delayed signification which permeates the book. Consider, for example, one of the proposed titles for ALP's "mamafesta" in chapter I.5: "How the Buckling Shut at Rush in January" (FW 105.21-22). Annotators, such as McHugh, emphasise a latent, cataphoric reference to "How Buckley Shot the Russian General", a textual event occurring over two hundred pages later (in chapter II.3). Be that as it may, lexical items that allude to future textual events, no matter how opaque they may be, must not necessarily be assigned a status of "not-yet-meaning". This example's manifest form is a non-deviant encoding and may, as one tentative example, be understood by an ideal first-time reader, in and of itself, as: "how the belt was quickly fastened at the start of the year." While it may be agreed that the line contains such a homophonically activated proleptic echo, there is nothing in the language encoding which references "Generals", Russian or otherwise. Only an ideal re-reader of the sentence, encountering it on subsequent reading cycles with deepened prospective and retrospective vision, will have potential access to the prognostic awareness of this later textual event.

Similarly, the reader is informed at one point that it

> canbe in some future we shall presently here amid those zouave players of Inkermann the mime mumming the mick and his nick miming their maggies (FW 48.9-11).

This oblique reference to actors ("players") engaged in a play ("mime") occurs a full six chapters before a play ostensibly called "The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies" (FW 219.18-19) takes place. The shadowy narrators of this cyclical text would seem to possess an in-built prescient 'memory' of future textual events in a given 'present' passage, which the reader, as yet inconversant with them, may only access anagnostically. As the quote demonstrates, "in some future" re-reading of this present passage - *here* - it can be that we will *hear* the proleptic echo. The *Wake*, in one of its most metatextual moments, refers to the influence of such proleptic/anagnostic processes on its modes of signification as "Today's truth, tomorrow's trend" (FW 614.21). In any given unit of *Wakean* text we may take "Today's truth" as

the present signification (or, the presently possible signification), with the address to the reader outlining how "tomorrow's trend" ('trend' as an indicator of the general direction in which something is developing or changing), or a future re-reading, will bring a future modification in latent semantic potential. It is through this tension that the book creates "Teems of times and happy returns. The seim anew" (FW 215.22-23); "happy returns" to lines and "times" manifestly 'the same', but teeming with anagnostically renewed and altered potential latent significance.

It should be becoming explicit at this stage that what is being argued here is that the text's meaning cannot be disentangled from this cyclically informed anagnostic/proleptic process of signification, as the text signifies in markedly different ways to the first-time reader than it does to the re-reader, to the point that some form of understanding can only come through "steal[ing] our historic presents from the past postpropheticals" (FW 11.30-31). Thus it may be seen that in order to create a truly cyclical text, merely merging the *Wake*'s closing and opening sentence fragments would not have sufficed. The work, rather, needed to be written in a language that allowed for cyclical semantic regeneration. The work's non-lexical coinages, by further opening up possibilities of signification, serve this function as the book's "variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns" (FW 118.26-28).

4.1.2 "One's upon a thyme": Failed Narrative Markers in *Finnegans Wake*

This issue of cyclicity, and its inherent voiding of notions of beginnings and endings, raises the issue of narrative markers, literary encodings which clearly indicate the initiation and termination of narratives. The *Wake*, true to the complexities arising from its cyclical structure, employs such narrative markers, but in significantly non-standard ways. "Once upon a time," perhaps the most common narrative marker in the tradition of Western letters and oral traditions, makes a number of appearances in the book. This stock storytelling device constitutes a schematic genre marker which indicates the beginning of a narrative set in the past. A number of related implications arise, such as the

presence of a third-person narrator and the assurance of a resolution by indicating to the reader (or listener) that, at some point or other, they will be offered the closure of "and they all lived happily ever after, the end." In *Finnegans Wake* we find a number of variants of the phrase, such as "One's upon a thyme" (FW 20. 23-25), "once upon a wall and a hooghoog wall a was and such a wallhole did exist" (FW 69. 7-8), "Eins within a space and a wearywide space it wast ere wohned a Mookse" (FW 152.18-19), "once upon a spray what a queer and queasy spree it was" (FW 319.14-15), "ones upon a topers" (FW 327.27), "Once upon a drunk and a fairly good drunk it was" (FW 453.20), "Once upon a grass and a hopping high grass it was" (FW 516.01), "once upon awhile" (FW 561.05), "One's apurr apuss a story" (FW 597.16), "oats upon a trencher" (FW 602.36). Despite the employment of such markers, however, the narrative does not usually unfold in schematically expected ways. The full context of the first cited instance is exemplary to this effect:

> The movibles are scrawling in motions, marching, all of them ago, in pitpat and zingzang for every busy eerie whig's a bit of a torytale to tell. One's upon a thyme and two's behind their lettice leap and three's among the strubbely beds. [...] You can ask your ass if he believes it. (FW 20.21-26)

It may be observed that the narrator is addressing the text itself (its scrawls and movable type), and its assertion that everybody has a story (or a 'tall tale') to tell. This approximation of the 'once upon a time' formula would appear to be an example of how one of these many narratives *would* begin, and not the actual initiation of such a narrative. As McCarthy points out, "for the most part the motif echoes a traditional narrative formula without functioning as one" (*Attempts at Narration*). The question, once more, becomes not what this narrative might be, but rather whether or not it may be believed.

Returning to the book's opening line, this tension born of the distance between the desire to relate a story and the ability to do so is inherent from its opening words; "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" (FW 3.1-3, emphasis added). As McCarthy points out, while the subject of this opening sentence may be difficult to discern, it has a clear

object, namely "us", presumably both the narrator and narratee. As a result, the focus is shifted from "an ongoing narrative about to be retold" to "the process through which we as readers are about to see and hear things once more" (*Attempts at Narration*). The narratological devices in *Finnegans Wake* may be seen to serve as a distancing device, as the problems of the verifiability of the book's narrative obstruct any clear knowledge of, or insight into, the events which its narrators have ostensibly been put in place to relate. The result is a narrative in which "we find both a desire to narrate and a steady retreat from narrative, or at least a tendency to turn it into a subject for discussion instead of a means of conveying a story" (McCarthy, *Attempts at Narration*).

4.1.3 Cyclical Narrative and Re-Signification

Teems of times and happy returns. The seim anew. (FW 215.22-23)

Despite the inconsequential nature of such narratological markers in the *Wake*, their very presence would appear to indicate "an attempt at narration or at least an unconscious desire for a story" (McCarthy, *Genetic Studies*). This desire is most commonly derailed, however, by the narrator's awareness that he or she is relating a second-hand narrative, usually inherited from a source so often retold and reshaped as to be no longer verifiable. In his preamble to "The Mookse and the Gripes", for example, the tale's narrator – referred to as "Professor Jones"[56] – highlights that the story he is about to unfold is his own "easyfree translation of the old fabulist's parable" (FW 152.12-13). This indicates that "the story has been transformed from a pre-existing text that we will never see" (Benstock, *Twice-Told Tales*, 98). Equally, the opening of I.2 presents a list of "theories from older sources" (FW 30.5); historicising texts claiming to provide an authoritative genesis of HCE's agnomen, each of which is ultimately discarded for "the best authenticated version, the Dumlat" (FW 30.10), which itself will be ultimately invalidated by the existence of myriad

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[56] The tale occurs within the answer question eleven of I.6, the "Quiz" chapter. The problematic nature of the *Wake*'s narrators is exemplified in this instance, as the Jones character, a Shaun cipher, is initially a character in an ostensible dialogue who then 'assumes' the role of narrator for the duration of the tale. The resulting mise-en-abyme positions Jones as both the narrator of a tale and a character within a dialogue which itself is being 'narrated'.

counter-myths presenting other versions and interpretations of the event. Once more, the book's opening page highlights the recycled nature its impending narrative, as it is revealed that the story of Finnegan "is *retaled* early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy" (FW 3.17-18, emphasis added). As McCarthy observes, the *Wake* "starts to narrate the fall of an 'oldparr' but never quite does: instead, it says that the story of the fall, whatever it might be, is perpetually retold and that enquirers must go west to search for its origins" (*Genetic Studies*).

So it is that if determining Shem's appearance is a process of "putting truth and untruth together" (FW 169.8), then the creation of narrative content in *Finnegans Wake* can be seen as a largely similar process. While there may be "one thousand and one stories, all told, of the same" (FW 5.28-29) we will only ever hear the re-tellings and re-interpretations of an absent originating event, as the disjointed narrative is re-pieced back together, like Humpty Dumpty, from the ashes of amnesia and fragments of memory. As a consequence, the *Wake*'s cyclical structure and anagnostic principle not only defer and alter the modes of signification at work in individual signs, but also shapes and reshapes both the creation and reception of the work's elusive micro-narratives. In other words, the manner in which the narrators present their ostensible chronicles of the Earwicker family is irretrievably marked by the fact that they are narrating not a linear narrative, but a cyclical one based on unverifiable and unknowable sources, which has all, to some extent, already occurred. It is in the context of this complex process – as the *Wake*'s narrators' remember and forget the narratives they are relating – that we are presented with a moment of prospective and retrospective introspection, in the question "What has gone? How it ends?" The narrator's response is to directly instruct the reader to

> Begin to forget it. It will remember itself from every sides, with all gestures, in each our word. Today's truth, tomorrow's trend. Forget, remember! […] Forget! (FW 614.20-26)

Thus we see the *Wakean* text serving as the historicising 'annals' of its own (non)narratives through its self-prescribed "cycloannalism" (FW 254.28); the natural process of its 'cycles' of prolepsis and analepsis.

The ultimate consequence of the *Wake*'s cyclical structure in regard to both the book's syntactic and semantic ambiguity, is that the work's semiosis is complicated by the tension between a reader who must deal with the impossibility of proleptic knowledge (or, on subsequent readings, the challenge of anagnostic memory) and the narrators' simultaneous proleptic and anagnostic modes. This process, however, triggers not a passive yielding to the unknowability of narrative facts, but rather an active hermeneutic process forged by *both* the narrators' and the readers' schematic compulsion to apply a linear structure to a cycle which ostensibly lacks any one beginning, middle or end. Finn Fordham succinctly summarises the consequences of just a dynamic with the assertion that, as a result of the book's cyclical device,

> paradox would reign forever over interpretations of the *Wake*, since we could never finally disentangle what follows and/or what precedes what. Narratological analyses would flounder as they tried to separate flashback from anticipation, analepsis from prolepsis. (463)

With this paradox firmly in mind, let us begin tentatively to approach a narratological analysis which attempts not to separate analepsis from prolepsis, but rather to explore how the tension born of this dichotomy actually informs the presentation, and even the creation, of narrative content.

4.1.4 The Metamorphic Influence of Memory and Amnesia in *Finnegans Wake*

Jacques Mailhos insightfully observes that ALP's question "You know where I am bringing you? You remember?" (FW 622.17) - posed to HCE in the book's closing pages - could just as easily be addressed to the reader, who, possessing a strong enough memory, might answer "back to Howth Castle and Environs" (FW 3.2-3; Mailhos, 66). Putting aside the issue that such a reading assumes the reader to possess the foreknowledge that the book is nearing the end of a cycle, and not merely an end, ALP's question also highlights the heightened awareness of the need for memory in the face of an oncoming threat of amnesia which permeates the waking process of Book IV. In the book's closing section this conflict between remembrance of the dream and the onslaught of amnesia which waking will bring is brought into its sharpest focus. As a result, we find ALP's final pleas for memory

peppered with the compulsion against lēthē. The warning "Don't forget! The grand fooneral will now shortly occur. Remember" (617.25-6) testifies to forgetting as a permanent threat to future possibilities. This is particularly so in the context of ALP's closing recollection of a walk she once took with HCE, which is conjured up by her hope for its future re-occurrence; a hope that "We will take our walk before in the timpul they ring the earthly bells" (621.33-34). It is this faculty of memory which allows for the possibility of contemplating, and even hoping for, a future reoccurrence – without memory of the past, there can be no conception of a future. Although at its most heightened at the moment of ALP's "passing out" (FW 627.34), this deep-rooted fear of forgetting content and narrative (and the sources of narrative) permeates the book. The highest cluster of references to remembering and forgetting are to be found in closing chapters; I.8, II.4 and Book IV in particular. II.4, for example, contains, by this study's count, 22 references to remembering, forgetting, or warning against forgetting the past, from the assurance that "they all four remembored who made the world" to the admission that "then after that they used to be so forgetful" (FW 396.35), all the time warning each other "dinna forget" (FW 391.5). Even deep in the dream, in chapter II.3, we find "an intredipation of our dreams which we foregot at wiking" (FW 338.29-30); a fear ("*intrepid*ation") of the onslaught of amnesia that waking, in ending the dream, will inevitably bring. And yet, such amnesia is necessary to perpetuate the book's narrative cycles - to return to Finnegan's "grand fooneral" - as it necessitates the memorialisation process that constitutes the *Wake*'s (admittedly uncertain and disjointed) narrative recollection of its own content, the 'interpretation of the dream' which constitutes the re-tellings of the "one thousand and one stories, all told, of the same" (FW 5.28). Accordingly, the narrative is structured, on a fundamental level, on the recounting of, and reference to, written accounts of past events, always extratextual and unknowable, and the collective amnesia which forces its narrators to reinterpret these memorialising artefacts, and thus alter their significance.

Returning once more to the final and opening fragments from this perspective, this overriding urge against forgetting can be observed in ALP's final plea to "mememormee!" ('memory' or 'remember me'; FW 628.14). This

appeal to remember her – and the book's content – leads the reader back to a generative, or re-generative, invocation of memory in the book's closing and opening words, "the / riverrun", which evoke the German 'Erinnerung' ('memory'). This memorialising river returns the re-reader "back to Howth Castle and Environs", and to an inventory of textual events enumerated in the second paragraph which have not yet occurred, or have not yet re-occurred> In other words, the reader is cyclically returned to a forward-looking beginning which counterpoises the book's final acts of remembrance. This "riverrun"/"Erinnerung" results, then, in a marked bifurcation between readers on first and subsequent entrances into the *Wake*'s cycle. To the first-time reader, this inventory of future textual events creates a tangible tension born of unattainable prognostication, as the text's prescient awareness of its future events stands in stark contrast with, and even defiance of, the reader's ignorance. To the re-reader, the inventory potentially invokes memories of these future events. It must be added, however, that even retrospectively informed re-readings require a powerful memory of the text's myriad motifs and cadences, as "The charges are, you will remember, the chances are, you won't"; but regardless of whether the reader can key into these nodal micro-narratives "we are recurrently meeting em […] in cycloannalism, from space to space, time after time, in various phases of scripture" (FW 254.23-28).

This tension borne out of reading a cyclical narrative in an (assumedly) linear fashion, resulting in the knowable and unknowable coexisting simultaneously, raises the question of how we shall best approach a narrative which makes such constant reference to its own future, and how such a text signifies to a reader who cannot know such a thing. The *Wake*, considered as an entity above and beyond its myriad narrative voices, "remember[s] itself from every sides" (FW 614.20), with both forward and backward looking capacity. Appropriately, then, the book's various speakers are prone to prescient insight, not only of future events of significant narrative importance, but of immediately impending occurrences, as if vaguely remembering having experienced them before. Among the myriad examples we may number the washerwoman's prescient query "Fieluhr? […] what age is at?" (FW 213.14), uttered moments before the church bells ring out the hour, and the Ass's similar demonstration of foreknowledge when his belief that he has seen an

apparition of Shaun directly precedes the Postman's appearance (FW 403.18-407.28). Similarly, in the opening chapter the four-headed narrator unit 'Mamalujo' demonstrate prophetic knowledge of ALP's final monologue when they refer to "the night she signs her final tear. Zee End. But that's a world of ways away" (FW 28.27-29). A world of ways away indeed, as the reader must struggle through exactly 600 pages of dense *Wakean* language before possibly coming to an awareness of the line's larger significance, and adjusting his or her understanding retrospectively upon re-entering the cycle. If the reader has just finished a cycle, however, this "final tear" will be fresh in their mind and they will be able to key in to the narrative implications much more easily. The key point to be made here is that both possibilities exist simultaneously within the line, and as a result the line's meaning, in its micro- and macro-narrative senses, can never be homogenised. That in a cyclically structured narrative these narrators will have confronted these events before goes some way to explaining their apparent clairvoyance, but does not help the reader to key into a cyclical narrative process which is at all times unobtainable to them in its entirety.

4.2   Anagnostic and Proleptic Processes in "Anna Livia Plurabelle"

This overall dynamic is best exemplified in the dialogic "Anna Livia Plurabelle" episode. Having established the existence, if not the details, of the Earwicker narrative and its dissemination throughout Book I, this closing and transitional chapter outlines the manner in which this myth continues to be re-created and perpetuated. Terence Killeen argues that "Neither in terms of tone, nor phraseology, is it actually possible to distinguish between the two women" (*Life, Death, and the Washerwomen*). Acknowledging the validity of the observation, it may however be contended that they are differentiated through their personification of the noted memory/amnesia binary opposition in their roles of Questioner and Respondent. It is the Questioner's amnesia-bred desire for knowledge, to be told "all about Anna Livia" (FW 196.2-3), which initiates the memorialising process and necessitates the narrative's telling and retelling, eliciting narrative content from the memorialist Respondent, who appears cognisant of the past and the HCE/ALP myth, and

aware of the cyclical retelling in which she is involved. When asked "Do you tell me that now?" this Respondent testily answers: "Mezha, didn't you hear it a deluge of times ufer and ufer respund to spond?" (FW 214.5-8). The Questioner, antithetically, is marked by a perpetual attestation to her own amnesia, with reactions such as "Well, I never now heard the like of that!" (FW 198.27-28), "Is that a faith?" (FW 199.33), "You don't say […]?" (FW 200.21-22), and "Are you sarthin suir?" (FW 203.9), to details she has ostensibly heard 'a deluge of times, over and over.' The teller needs the amnesiac questioner to necessitate the story's telling and retelling, and, contrastingly, the questioner is dependent upon the teller to acquire a memory of an unexperienced, or unremembered, past.

Such a discourse, which creates content and defers meaning out of the tension between memory and amnesia, may be paralleled with the amnestic/memorial reading process, already outlined, with the Questioner embodying the first-time reader, the Respondent reifying the text's simultaneous deferral of significance and cognisance of its own narrative future. By extension, the chapter's discourse could also be posited as a hypothetical dialogue between the prognostically deficient Reader on the first go round on the *Wake*'s cycle – played by the amnesiac Questioner – and the anagnostically capable re-Reader on subsequent cycles – played by the memorial Answerer. So while Colin MacCabe perceptively argues that the critical difficulty with *Finnegans Wake* arises from the text's refusal "to reproduce the relation between reader and text, on which literary criticism is predicated" (3), the narrative at hand may be seen as simulating this text's unique reader-relationship through the washerwomen's representation and embodiment of the reader's struggle to construct meaning in the face of impossible prognostication. In this sense the chapter may be seen as a *pars pro toto* of the reading processes any unaided reader of the *Wake* must endure throughout the whole work.

One more resulting factor ought to be briefly outlined: in order to create a non-linear, atemporal and cyclical narrative it is necessary to remove any beginning or end from the overall tale, and thus to keep the narrative's origin absent and extratextual. This is achieved in the narrative of *Finnegans Wake* by the crucial absence of a number of key memories, which constitute the

book's central myths; namely the search for knowledge of Earwicker's secret sin and the content and intent of ALP's letter. Margot Norris argues that "[t]he lack of an authentic source, of a "true" version, suggests that the original sin, the original trauma, was itself experienced as a fiction or myth at the moment of it occurrence" (26).

Once more, "Anna Livia Plurabelle" is exemplary of such a process, as despite the narrators' best attempts to establish a linear, teleological narrative – mirroring the reader's schematic desire to impose on the text a containing linear narrative movement from a beginning to an end – they are confounded by the lack of an origin, which necessarily results in an eternal cyclical search. "Where did I stop?" one asks only to be answered, "Never stop. Continuarration!" (FW 205.13-14), as both reader and narrator are fruitlessly searching in a continuous cyclical narration for the absent narratological origin of the myth "in the loup of the years" (FW 214.4). "Well, you know or don't you kennet or haven't I told you every telling has a *taling* and that's the he and the she of it" (FW 213.11-12, emphasis added) one washerwoman insists, the implication being that if every tale has an ending – a 'tailing' – then it must have had a beginning. When the Respondent opens her recycling of events with the seemingly authoritative assertion that "well, you know when the old cheb went futt and did what you know" and the Questioner encourages "yes, I know, go on" (FW 216.6-7), the reader may infer a common consensus on the exact nature of the 'old chap's' crime. He or she may assume the narrators' assertions that "you know" and "I know" what happened to be reliable. Only a few lines later, however, we find this certitude undermined with the equivocation "or whatever it was they threed to make out he thried to two in the Fiendish park" (FW 196.9-11). Once confidence in universal memory of the narrative being related - the belief that "Yes, of course, we all know Anna Livia" - gives way to such universal amnesia that the pertinent question becomes: "What was it he did a tail at all on Animal Sendai? And how long was he under loch and neagh?" (FW 196.18-20). The Questioner knows the consequences of HCE's actions – that he was punished, put under 'lock and key' – but not the actions themselves, the crime that resulted in his incarceration and interment in Lough Neagh. This awareness of a current status quo and search for a reason for its so being is a form of genetic study,

a search for origins and reasons; for the unknown cause which resulted in the known effect.

The genetic search shifts to ALP's sexual and reproductive life in which we find that amnesia of the narrative being related is not only a condition of the two narrators but also of the subjects of their narrative. ALP "can't remember half of the cradlenames she smacked on" her children (FW 201.32-33), who, represented by the Roman numeral III – "wan bywan bywan" (FW 201.29-30) – are morphed into 111 offspring as a result of amnesia coming into contact with semantic ambiguity. As for ALP's first sexual partner,

> [s]he sid herself she hardly knows whuon the annals her graveller was […] or what he did or how blyth she played or how when why where and who offon he jumpnad her and how it was gave her away. (FW 202.23-26)

It thus becomes the narrators' task to paramnestically fill in or 'remember' this absent content, despite the impossibility of gaining reliable information from primary sources. The initial account of ALP's first sexual encounter, when she "was just a young thin pale soft shy slim slip of a thing" and her lover "was a heavy trudging lurching lieabroad of a Curraghman" (FW 202.26-29), is almost immediately deemed spatially and temporally incorrect, "corribly wrong" and "anacheronistic" (FW 202.34-35); too far to the west (hence "Corrib"), too recent in time (hence anachronistic). This original sexual encounter is modified to "ages behind that" (FW 202.36), not in the flat Curragh of Kildare but in the easterly mountainous "county Wickenlow, garden of Erin" (FW 203.1), equating the encounter with Eden and the Fall. This location is, however, subjected to repeated questioning and relocation, to "the dinkel dale of Luggelaw" (FW 203.17), then Kippure on the Dublin border (FW 204.13); and before that again to Devil's Glen (FW 204.15); the search for origin and an original sin shifting location from Irish flatlands to mountain to dale, in a backwards temporal and spatial search for an authoritative narrative beginning, *ab ovo*. The temporarily authoritative account with "local heremite" Michael Arklow is immediately undermined by the revelation that "two lads in scoutsch breeches went through her before that" (FW 204.5-6), as her potential partners are also systematically undermined by a parade of predecessors. Once more, alternative origins are offered: "And ere that again

[…] she was licked by a hound […] while poing her pee" (FW 204.11-12), and before that again she "wriggled in all the stagnant black pools of rainy under a fallow coo and she laughed innocefree with her limbs aloft" (FW 204.17-19). That the genetic search mirrors the cyclical route of the Liffey in reverse, from its rise in Kippure in the Wicklow mountains through the counties Wicklow, Kildare and Dublin into the Irish sea, to be reborn in rain clouds, confirms a cyclical movement in which no matter how far back one pursues an origin, a precedent is always to be found. While HCE, the book's ostensible Adam figure, is conspicuous by his absence, the presence of the biblical Adam's first wife Lilith in the suggestive presence of Lilith Kinsella's torn drawers (FW 205.7-12) highlights that even ALP as Eve has a predecessor.

The aspiration towards linearity mirrors that of Mr. Deasy's traditional Christian position presented in the second chapter of *Ulysses*, that "all history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God" (U.42), placing the book's cyclical structure firmly within a religious discourse. As Northrop Frye points out, the Biblical myth, in contrast with earlier cyclical polytheistic myths, "stresses a total beginning and end of time and space" (71). However the principle of procreation which the washerwomen have been trying to overcome in their portrayal of ALP's sexual history – "the he and the she of it" – precludes an originating creational act, given the need for predecessors to engender each generation in turn. In the Christian world-view, this problem is overcome through virgin birth, which allows an origin to be constructed. This underlying attempt to emplot an originating virgin birth into a cyclical narrative which will not allow it – already implicit in the narrators' efforts to equate the encounter with Eden and Genesis – are born out in the lines: "Pingpong! There's the Belle for Sexaloitez! And Concepta de Send-us-pray! Pang! Wring out the clothes! Wring in the dew!" (FW 213.18-20). As the bells ring out, the washerwomen observe a prostitute on the banks, a loitering Belle providing sex for the people (German 'Leute'), directly followed by Concepta, a typical nun's name given in reference to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The images conflate symbols of productiveless intercourse, productiveless virginity, the Immaculate Conception and the "pangs" of childbirth; all within the context of the ringing of the six o'clock Angelus bell – a Christian memorialising devotion to the Incarnation and Annunciation – and

an evocation of its second line 'et concepit de Spiritus Sancto' – 'and she conceived of the Holy Ghost'. However, the implicit devotion to virgin conception is undermined by a latent reference to the Swiss fertility ritual of Sechseläuten, in which 'Winter' is burned in effigy to allow for the passing into Spring. This celebration of cyclical regeneration eternally 'rings out the old, and rings in the new' in circular 'rings' (the allusion to Tennyson's "In Memoriam" is appropriate in this context of these memorialising processes) subverts this endeavour to place HCE and ALP in the roles of Adam and Eve, to position them as "first" in a sequence.

Such extratextuality of origin and absence of linearity necessitates an eternally cyclical hermeneutic search "in the loup of the years," but while a loop is cyclical, a 'leap year' breaks the cycle – a representation of the book's 3 + 1 structure[57] – wherein the cycle does not result in stasis, but rather altered states of heterogeneous meaning potential. This structure is ultimately born out in the washerwomen's shift of from their opening plea to "Tell me all about Anna Livia" to a finishing call to "Tell me of John or Shaun," the pertinent question being: "Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons or daughters of?" (FW 216.1-2). The answer, Anna Livia, demonstrates that while we are exiting the chapter on the same focus on which we entered it, we have moved cyclically to the next generation. As with ALP's final monologue, where we also exit the text at the point at which we (re)enter it, the creation of memorial content, through the filter of the reader's and narrators' amnesia, has allowed for the perpetual possibility of future anagnostically altered re-tellings of the tale.

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[57] *Finnegans Wake* is apparently structured on the contention in Vico's *The New Science* that civilisation develops in a recurring cycle (*ricorso*) of three ages: the divine, the heroic, and the human. Thus the *Wake* is generally considered to follow this progression, with the fourth and final book constituting the *ricorso* which brings the reader back to the beginning.

5 Conclusion

This study has endeavoured to prove, by alternately linguistic and literary modes of analysis, that the language of *Finnegans Wake* is not so much muddy as translucent, as it forges, through meaningful engagements with – and violations of – the English linguistic code, an intractable plurality of meaning that exemplifies the inherent gulf between signifier and signified, between the processes of encoding and decoding text, and the ambiguities that arise from the reader's role in the creation of meaning. As John Paul Riquelme argues, the language of the *Wake* "forces us to collaborate with Joyce by rewriting his text as we read it through our actively re-creative response" (3-4), yet this hermeneutic circle represents not the idiosyncrasies of Joyce's writings, but rather an exemplification of all semiotic processes, and of man's inherent desire to discover meaning in the stimuli of the world around him. The *Wake*, by virtue of its unique engagement with the untold and endless ways in which 'reality' may continually created and recreated through exploitation of the linguistic code, speaks to the very heart of 'meaning' and 'language', and to man's role as *homo significans*.

In reaching these conclusions, this study has endeavoured to consider the semiotic processes of *Finnegans Wake* from as many perspectives as possible, most markedly the adherent, the deviant and the cyclical. The body of evidence collected in the first chapter corroborated the assertion that, despite seemingly intuitive notions of the rules which prescribe what may constitute 'words', the work's neologistic portmanteaux, conversions, puns, translinguistic borrowings and etymological wordplay engage, in a comically exaggerated but positive fashion, with the syntactic, phonotactic and morphotactic encodings of English linguistic code. Indeed, the *Wake*'s ability to signify has been shown to be a consequence of the ways in which these modes of word-formation emulate and take advantage of the rules of the English language. Addressing the epistemological question of the meaningfulness of 'meaningless' words, the resulting evidence for the

unavoidable polysemy produced by engaging with the English code strongly supports Anthony Burgess' assertion that "there is as much sense in nonsense as there is nonsense in sense" (*Nonsense*, 21). On an extratextual level, the chapter also illustrated that the means by which the reader keys into lexical chains, context and schemata to forge an equivocal but identifiable convergence of meaning from the discourse trace of the *Wakean* text also adhere to the standard hermeneutic processes for texts inscribed with the 'author-function'.

Addressing the unfeasible language use prevalent in *Finnegans Wake* (specifically its morphemic and structural ambiguity, and the problematic effects of polysemy and syntactic digression on determining context) the second chapter employed the linguistic theories of Dell Hymes and Paul Grice to support the concept of the motivated violations of linguistic and communicative norms in *Finnegans Wake* as homologous with the process of 'creativity' in all literary texts. As a consequence, even the *Wake*'s violations of the linguistic code are demonstrated, yet again, to amplify standard processes, in this case of the means by which implicatures of meaning are created. Employing Jean-François Lyotard's conceptualisation of the 'postmodern' as constituting not only an acknowledgement that the unrepresentable exists, but an attempt to represent of the unrepresentability of reality, it was shown that the implicatures created by the *Wake*'s motivated violations of the Gricean maxims – as well as its hyper-exemplification of the inherent polysemy of language and abandonment of 'meta-narratives' – constitute a realisation of the impossibility of erasing equivocality and ambiguity, and of accessing a predetermined meaning in the world, as well as a refutation of the truth claim of representation.

In the study's final section, the ways in which the tension between the book's cyclically influenced prognostic and anagnostic modes defer and alter signification was explored with reference to the work's most famous chapter "Anna Livia Plurabelle". By extension, the effect of the *Wake*'s semiotic processes upon its narratological modes were addressed, with particular reference to the text's failed narrative markers, and to the cyclical influence of both the reader's and the narrators' memory and amnesia on the creation of narrative content.

Having considered the semiotic processes of *Finnegans Wake* from these varying perspectives, the findings of this study support Attridge's summation of the *quidditas* of the *Wake*; namely that

> the *Wake* teaches us [...] that no text can be mastered, that meaning is not something solid and unchanging beneath the words, attainable once and for all. All reading, the *Wake* insists, is an endless interchange: the reader is affected by the text at the same time as the text is affected by the reader, and neither retains a secure identity upon which the other can depend. (*Reading Joyce*, 11)

Thus while the authors of realism give the illusory impression of being both the Sphinx and Oedipus, texts such as *Finnegans Wake* demonstrate that all language is sphinx-like in its ambiguity, all readers Oedipal in their struggle to interpret, and notions of understanding and interpreting are much more synonymous than most commonly acknowledged.

The overriding motivation behind this thesis was not to supplant previous models of investing the *Wake*'s Delphic language use with coherence, but to complement the great pool of work which has deepened our understanding of Joyce's unusual and endlessly fascinating final work. Despite the many frustrating aspects of the work – and the frustrations inherent in the intractable knowledge that it shall never fully be made to cohere – it has been the author's sincere ambition that this study shall contribute not only towards a reconciliation of the work's ambiguities with its inventive modes of meaning-making, but towards an appreciation of what *Finnegans Wake*, as "one of the great monuments of twentieth-century experimental letters" (Bishop, *Introduction*, vii), and experimental literature in general may teach us about the epistemological possibilities of language itself, and about our potential to evolve beyond our current notions of what constitutes 'meaning'.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal information

First name(s) / Surname(s)	**Paul Fagan**
Address(es)	Veronikagasse 12/1. Vienna 1170, Austria
Telephone(s)	0043 (0)1 9255986 Mobile: 0043 (0)69919076957
Fax(es)	01 721327289
E-mail	soul_survivor_00@yahoo.com
Nationality	Irish
Date of birth	5th March 1982
Gender	Male

Education and training

Dates	2008 - present
Title of qualification awarded	Masters in Anglophone Cultures and Literatures
Principal subjects/occupational skills covered	Modern, Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	University of Vienna, Austria
Level in national or international classification	Masters Degree (pending)

Education and training

Dates	1999- 2003
Title of qualification awarded	Bachelor of Arts, International, in Mode 1
Principal subjects/occupational skills covered	Modern, Middle and Old English Literature and Linguistics.
Name and type of organisation providing education and training	University College Dublin, Ireland Universität Zürich, Switzerland (Erasmus year 2001-2002)

Level in national or international classification | Honours Degree

Other language(s)

Self-assessment

European level (*)

	Understanding			**Speaking**			**Writing**
	Listening		Reading	Spoken interaction		Spoken production	
German	C1		C1	C1		B2	B2
Gaelic	B1		B1	B1		B1	B1

(*) Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Academic conferences and publications	**June 2008:** Presented paper at the XXIst International Joyce Symposium in Tours ("*Hamlet* and the allusive method in *Finnegans Wake*"); to be published by Syracuse UP in an upcoming collection of essays on Joyce and Shakespeare, ed. Laura Pelaschiar.

Feb 2009: Presented paper at the James Joyce Italian Foundation Graduate Conference in Rome ("Forget, Remember! Forget!": the Metamorphic Influence of Memory and Amnesia in "Anna Livia Plurabelle").

June 2009: Spoke at the Trieste Joyce Summer School by request, delivering the talk "'nat language at any sinse of the world': the Linguistics of 'Wakese'". Also delivered a shorter version of the same talk by request at the University of Vienna Bloomsday celebration in the same month.

Sept 2009: Presented paper at the University College Dublin Conference 'The European Avant-Garde' ("'nat language in any sinse of the world' : Avant-Garde approaches to language in Joyce and Tzara"). Contribution accepted for publication in the conf. proceedings.

April 2010: Paper accepted for the Durham University Conference 'James Joyce and the 19th Century' ("'a fadograph of a yestern scene': The influence of 19th century modes of representation in *Finnegans Wake*").

ABSTRACT

Much ink has been spilled over the vexing subject of the seemingly inscrutable language of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Expanding on the linguistic and stylistic experimentations of his magnum opus *Ulysses*, Joyce composed the *Wake* almost exclusively in neologisms, resulting in the work's infamy as a work of immeasurable difficulty, and even meaninglessness.

By interweaving linguistic and literary analyses, this study demonstrates that characterisations of the *Wake*'s language as nonsensical, or as constituting a new language of '*Wakese*', result from the deficit of methodical explorations of the book's processes of signification. In order to correct this critical shortfall, this thesis shifts focus from *what* the text means to *how* it manages to do so, despite the odds. This exploration of the linguistic and semiotic processes of *Finnegans Wake* ultimately results in a surprising, even counterintuitive, demonstration that the code which invests the text with pragmatic significance is, in fact, the English linguistic code which Joyce, in writing his last work, is so often assumed to have abandoned.

The semiotic processes at play in *Finnegans Wake* are considered from three perspectives, namely the adherent, the deviant and the cyclical. The first demonstrates that the work's neologisms and excessively digressive syntax conform, in a comically exaggerated fashion, to the syntactic, phonotactic and morphotactic encodings of English linguistic code, and through this deviant adherence produce "meaning" and undermine language's claim to univocal meaning. The apparently unique analytical modes necessary to make the *Wakean* text cohere are also found to conform to standard hermeneutic processes. In the second chapter, the writings of Dell Hymes and Paul Grice are employed to explore 'creativity' in the *Wake* as the standard process of forging implicatures of meaning through motivated violations of linguistic and communicative norms. In the final section, the ways in which the book's cyclical structure defers and alters signification through the tension between prognosis and anagnosis is explored with reference to the work's most famous chapter "Anna Livia Plurabelle".

Concomitant with such a line of investigation is an enquiry into the larger issue of the ways in which a full analysis of the *Wake*'s engagement with the English linguistic code may help to deepen our understanding and definition of semiotic processes in general, and of "language" itself.

ABSTRACT

Über die scheinbar notorisch unergründliche Sprache von James Joyces *Finnegans Wake* wurde viel geschrieben. Über die linguistischen und stilistischen Experimente seines Opus Magnum *Ulysses* hinausgehend, verfasste Joyce „The Wake" nahezu ausschließlich in Neologismen, was dem Werk den Ruf einbrachte, von schier unermesslicher Komplexität oder sogar widersinnig zu sein.

Durch Vernetzung von linguistischer und literarischer Analyse zeigt diese Studie, dass die Bewertung der *Finnegans Wake*-Sprache als unsinnig oder als völlig neues Sprachkonstrukt („Wakese") aus dem Mangel einer methodologischen Untersuchung der Bedeutungskonstitution resultiert. Um dieses Defizit zu korrigieren, wird in dieser Masterarbeit der Fokus nicht darauf gelegt *was* der Text bedeutet, sondern *wie* er, allen Schwierigkeiten zu Trotz, überhaupt etwas signifiziert. Eine solche Untersuchung der linguistischen und semiotischen Prozesse von *Finnegans Wake* führt zur Erkenntnis, dass der Code, welcher den Text mit pragmatischer Bedeutung speist, der des „English linguistic code" ist – also jener Code, von dem so oft angenommen wird, Joyce habe ihn beim Schreiben seines letzten Werkes verlassen.

Die semiotischen Prozesse, die *Finnegans Wake* freisetzt, werden aus drei Perspektiven erörtert: der anhaftenden, der abweichenden und der zyklischen Perspektive. Erstere zeigt, dass die Neologismen und die überbordende Syntax des Werkes in komisch überspitzter Weise den syntaktischen, phonotaktischen und morphotaktischen Verschlüsselungen des „English linguistic code" entsprechen und durch diese abweichende Adhärenz sowohl „Bedeutung" erzeugen als auch den Anspruch auf sprachliche Eindeutigkeit untergraben. Wie sich zudem herausstellt, folgt das scheinbar völlig neue Untersuchungsinventar, welches entwickelt wurde um den *Wake´*schen Text als kohärent erfassen zu können, den gebräuchlichen Gesetzen der Hermeneutik.

Im zweiten Kapitel werden die Arbeiten von Dell Hymes und Paul Grice dazu herangezogen, um den Prozeß der „Kreativität" in *Finnegans Wake* als einen bewußten sprachlichen und kommunikativen Normverstoß zu gestalten. Im Schlußabschnitt wird anhand des bekanntesten Kapitels des Werkes, „Anna Livia Plurabelle", untersucht, wie die zyklische Struktur des Buches in Spannung von „Prognosis" und „Anagnosis" Bedeutung verschiebt und verändert.

Vor dem Hintergrund dieses roten Fadens wird die übergeordnete Fragestellung erörtert, inwieweit eine vollständige Analyse der Auseinandersetzung des *Finnegans Wake* mit dem „English linguistic code" zum besseren Verständnis semiotischer Prozesse und zur Erfassung von „Sprache" an sich beitragen kann.