

## *Finnegans Wake* and Post-structuralist Ideas

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The criticisms on Joyce's works have undergone various changes as the critical theories have developed. Each of the theories reflects the favored literary criterion of the age and every one of them has its own value and validity. In the forties and fifties the formalist criticism was favored and during the sixties the critical approaches of historical, psychological, sociological, and Marxist theories were applied to analyze Joyce's works. In the seventies the critical theories underwent great change and they are transformed into psychological theory, the reader's response theory, archetypal theory, etc. Recently we have more theories such as feminist theory, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, or cultural studies.

In the sixties and seventies, distinguished from the American academic world there arose a new canon called deconstruction in France mainly by the critics such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Philippe Sollers, Michel Foucault, Stephen Heath, etc. *Tel Quel* was one of the major supporting journals of French post-structuralism and through this journal the new aspect of Joyce has been explored. Rather Joyce's text, especially *Finnegans Wake*, was the key text for the post-structuralists and their critical theories. Among the *Tel Quel* critics Stephen Heath and Philippe Sollers worked on Joyce in *Tel Quel* in the seventies. They were more concerned with the relationship between art and society, language and power, rather than the explanation of literary texts. Since the *Tel Quel* group was not concerned with the category novel or fiction

they used the term 'text' instead of literary 'work'.

In his article 'From Work to Text', Barthes proposes seven essential characteristics of the 'Text' distinguishing and comparing it from the 'Work'. All of seven propositions show the fundamental attributes of the post-structuralism, and in the second proposition Barthes takes the Text from the traditional literary category, saying, the Text does not stop at (good) Literature; it cannot be contained in a hierarchy, even in a simple division of genres. What constitutes the Text is, on the contrary (or precisely), its subversive force in respect of the old classifications. . . . If the Text poses problems of classification (which is furthermore one of its social functions), this is because it always involves a certain experience of limits (to take up an expression from Philippe Sollers). . . . the Text is that which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc.). (Barthes, *Image Music - Text* 157)

With its unreadability and its resistance to being communicated, the traditional literary theory is not an appropriate critical tool to interpret *Finnegans Wake*. In *Finnegans Wake* the content of the language is not clear at all and the words consistently refuse to represent and communicate; rather it gives pleasure to the reader in its opacity and its multi-layered writing. In his article, *Ambiviolences: Notes for reading Joyce* Stephen Heath shows the essential approach of the post-structuralist to Joyce:

The writing of *Finnegans Wake*, however, work in progress (wordloosed over seven seas'[FW 219. 16], develops according to a fundamental incompleteness; the text produces a derisive hesitation of sense, the final revelation of meaning being always for later.' The writing opens out onto a multiplicity of fragments of sense, of possibilities, which are traced and retraced, colliding and breaking ceaselessly in the play of this text that resists any homogenization. As collideorscape'(FW 143. 28), *Finnegans Wake* is the space of a writing -reading, of an ambiviolence (Language this allfare for the loathe of Marses ambiviolent [. . .](FW 518. 2), disturbing the categories that claim to define and represent literary practice, leaving the latter in ruins, and criticism too. (Heath 31-32)

The language of *Finnegans Wake* is no longer communicable and transparent; rather it is a complex of codes to be cracked causing cacophony and tonal confusion. And thus it is always becoming as a process, rather than as a representation of reality. In the linguistic labyrinth the content is always ready to be distorted and distracted. Also its world is full of self-contradictions and protean characters, whose identities are continuously changing. The Wakean language presents a dreaming mind which has the night logic in which any reasonable discriminations are dissolved by the linguistic deformations. The words are distorted to obtain multiple meanings, leitmotifs, and themes. In this way its language goes through metamorphosis as the protean characters do. The multiple identities in characterizations, themes, and language bring about constant destruction and reproduction simultaneously by the perpetual interfolding and the unfolding of successive layers to achieve the living core of meaning. In his sixth proposition in the article *From Work to Text* Barthes again distinguishes the Text from the work, saying, 'The work is normally the object of a consumption. . . . The text (if only by its frequent unreadability)' decants the work (the work permitting) from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice. (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 161-2) Here the Text is experienced only in an activity of production. (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 157) The unconventional quality of the book changes the traditional relationship between the reader and the Text.

The characteristics of multiplication, obscurity, and indeterminacy of the Text obliterate the distance between writing and reading, in no way by intensifying the projection of the reader into the work but by joining them in a single signifying practice. (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 162) Another quality of *Finnegans Wake*, that of fragmentation, reverses the role of the reader; from that of the consumer to the producer. In *Finnegans Wake*, words have their own independent and autonomous connotation without necessarily being connected to another in a traditional way. In a dream the repressed desire, the subconscious guilt sense, and various kinds of memories are intermingled in a chaotic way. The disorderly scraps of the dreamer's mind and the lack of

coherence in his thoughts are presented by the disconnection and irrelevance between the words. The disruptive use of language makes the words orphaned and hypercoded. In this state the language becomes a signified rather than rhetoric, and the whole picture of the book makes cacophony rather than symphony. As Barthes indicates, in this disconnected and distracted complication the story of *Finnegans Wake*, the reader can play the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which re-produces it, (Barthes, *Image Music Text* 162) and his role as the individual interpreter makes him, further, the co-author of the Text by his practical collaboration to complete the Text.

The essential quality of the Text, which allows a reader to make numerous interpretations of his own and multiple perspectives, lies in the open nature of the Text, and it allows itself a flexible modality. One of the leading English post-structuralists, Colin MacCabe compares the Text with the traditional work which is closed.

The classic realist text constantly tries to ignore the enunciation in order to fix a world of the enounced. Firmly established in their interchangeability, the text attempts to repress the pronouns as relations and assert them as absolute terms. It thus attempts to give itself an origin, outside the systematic and open substitutability of the reader's discourse, in a fixed and closed set of exchanges. The realist text generates itself by the same process of circulation through an empty term. . . . This empty term is the it' of the narrative and the result of the passage through absence is that the realist text has the power to name, to construct fictions. The realist text, however, wishes to deny the absence on which it is constructed and to assert reality as the presence which provides the text with a simple origin outside language. (MacCabe 95-6)

Compared with this realist text, Joyce's text emphasizes the emptiness and the absence of the author's voice refusing the possibility of any origin and any fixed set of substitution rules. (MacCabe 96) In this emptiness and absence of the author's voice a reader can either create any meaning or project himself at his will without the interruption of the writer.

The fundamental idea which the modernists have for their art is its separation from society or morality. In this, language as an artistic medium in literature is no longer attached to external reality. In other words, the language does not sustain the representational function of communication in a society any more. With this notion of language art can be autonomic and independent.

The notion of autonomy of art and of its self-constitutive nature was first initiated by the Cubist painting, in which the Cubists reshape the external world according to their internal impression and cognition of it. Instead of attempting to copy the outside world on their canvases they present the image of their minds. And thus their paintings have the characteristics of abstraction and cerebration.

As the Cubist painters break the outside world reality and reconstruct it in their mind, the literary modernists break the ordinary usage of language and change the function of the language from the representational to the autotelic. Therefore language in literature is distinguished from ordinary language and has nothing to do with the actual world. In an autonomous literary work, language becomes metalanguage and it does not refer to the external world.

The new notion of language and art of modernist is accepted in the post-structuralists' arguments but from different context. Roland Barthes suggests similar notion that a writer should resist the language of usual use to deprive it of a corpus of prescriptions and habits common to all the writers. So that language should be a frontier . . . a field of action, the definition of, and hope for, a possibility. (Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology* 9) Barthes continues:

It [language] is not the locus of a social commitment, but merely a reflex response involving no choice, the undivided property of men, not of writers. . . . No one can without formalities pretend to insert his freedom as a writer into the resistant medium of language because, behind the latter, the whole of History stands unified and complete in the manner of a Natural Order. Hence, for the writer, a language is nothing but a human horizon which provides a distant setting of familiarity, the value of which, indicently, is entirely negative. . . . (Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology* 9-10)

Different from the modernists the post-structuralists want to talk about language in connection with society rather than separates it from society. In this way they bring the language back to society but not in the way of representation or acknowledgement of the society. Rather they attempts to liberate it through the defamiliarized use of language. Here the attitude of the post-structuralists toward the relationship between language(or art) and society is not that of separation or division but of radical liberation or revolution.

In the verbal experiment the moral concern of the right or wrong does not matter any more. As the significance of language Barthes suggests validity instead of truth. Here what they concern about the function of language is not what it represents but how it works. Barthes says: 'if criticism is only a meta-language, its task is not to discover forms of truth' but forms of validity.' In itself, a language cannot be true or false; it is either valid or non-valid. It is valid when it consists of a coherent system of signs. (Lodge 649-650)

The language of *Finnegans Wake* is neither representational nor communicative and it presents chaotic flux instead of the coherent system of signs. *Finnegans Wake*, with its peculiar linguistic system, shares the fundamental assumptions of language with post-structuralism which proved to be very helpful to explain the text. This paper will explore the language of the text from three major principles argued by post-structuralism.

## I. The Spontaneity

What the word spontaneity means here is the quality which is self-generated or not premeditated. In a literary work, this can be achieved by the complete non-commitment and detachment, or the self-less-ness of the writer in his work. In *Finnegans Wake* each word becomes a self-contained entity without being firmly interlocked one to another. The words in this state become mutable and they constantly change their meanings in an autonomous way. There are no fixed meanings in words and the meanings of them will be changed depending

on temporary assumptions. In the text especially the use of the portmanteau words, puns, synesthesia, or coinword produces multiple meanings. For example, the initials of A. L. P. represent Anna Livia Plurabelle and her name itself can be signified in several ways: Anna' is the name of one of the oldest goddesses of life. Livia' can be the river Life, or Liffey, which flows through Dublin, and the word to live. Plurabelle' may mean the variety and wonder of life's plurality. The opening word of Book I, Chapter 8, O can be either the Omega with which she answers H. C. E.'s Alpha, or female O, because she is the brook of life, or it may mean eau, water in French. In this chapter the two washerwomen gossip about H. C. E. as they wash his dirty linen, the names of rivers embellish their chatter. For example, one of them says, Or whatever it was they threed to make out he thried to two in the Fiendish park. He's an awful old repe. (196. 9-11)(Underlines are mine) In the sentence, the underlined word repe can be either the name of river Repe or rep. Besides this the funs can be found also: threed can be the mixture of two words tried and three, and thried can be that of tried and thrice. The name of the park Fiendish can be devilish and Phoenix, the name of the park in Dublin. The meaning of devilish is quite appropriate expression considering what happens in there, and the sense of guilt from which H. C. E. suffers all night in his dream.

In this way the meanings of the words in *Finnegans Wake* are ceaselessly shattered and violated, and thus they never have any fixed identities or stabilities. This unstabilized, multi-layered, fragmentary, and irreducible to the single line of a truth writing finds its value in its heterogeneity and its unfixed polysemy. In this writing the words are self-generating and they cease to be symbols of external reality and become dynamic units which create constantly various changing visions of reality. Stephen Heath calls this kind of writing the theatricalization of language:

The impetus of the writing of *Finnegans Wake* is, then, the theatricalization of language: the space of the text is defined as a scribener's (229. 07) on which

language is drawn out of the world of communication and questioned in its production; the text is the scene on which a vast company of actorwords' agitate in a perpetual confrontation, made and remade in a MUTUOMORPHOMUTATION'(281. 09-10), collided together, split, fused, fragmented in the drama of the writing. . . . This illimitation is held in the production of an anti-language, a negation of language: this is nat language at any sinse of the world'(83. 12) (Heath 57)

The language of the *Finnegans Wake* provides only the source for the production of meaning. And it is self-contained and self-generating without fixing or closing the meaning.

## 2. The Displaced Transition

In Joyce's works, one argument or opinion is never sustained long and they are subverted immediately by the interruption of the opposite. *Finnegans Wake* is a work of constant destroying and building, decaying and renewing. The language is a process: it constantly produces meaning and undermines it, shaping and reshaping it. With its immense potential and unpredictable possibility the language continuously goes through transformation. The context of *Finnegans Wake* is continuously undermined not only by its incoherence and inconsistency but also by the quality of displacement of language. There appear even the two contradictory meanings in one word like seim anew in *Finnegans Wake* or "Yo, nes" in *Ulysses*. So the meanings are unstablized by the ceaseless self-contradiction and displacement, or the inherent dualism.

The displacement is produced not only by the language but also by the characters. In the work the dream dissolves logical distinctions, and everything is intermingled in a chaotic way. The identities of people and their relationships are shifting as circumstances changes. One person has two contradictory character or plural one. For example, the Shem and Shaun are twin brothers who have just opposite characters, but they seem to be the alter-egos of one

person who are inter-changed and reversed his role according to various situations.

Technique of parody also produce the displacement through its subversive effect. One example could be Mulligan's blasphemous parody of Mass at the beginning of *Ulysses*. The similar example is found in *Finnegans Wake* also. In Book III, Chapter 2, Jaun's[Shaun's] double-talking sermon is both sanctimonious and prurient. Jaun rises before the girls and begins to instruct them repeating the words and advice of a parish priest, and enumerates for them the fourteen commandments and prohibitions for their better guidance in life. Jaun's long list of prohibitions of Never to pattern is the interpolated directions. But many of them are sexual nature, modelled on familiar Catholic prescription:

Never miss your lostsomewhere mass for the couple in Myles you butrose to  
brideworship. Never hate mere pork which is bad for your knife of a good  
Friday. Never let a hog of the howth trample underfoot your linen of  
Killiney. Never play lady's game for the Lord's stake. Never lose your heart  
away till you win his diamond back. . . . First thou shalt not smile. Twice  
thou shalt not love. Lust, thou shalt not commix idolatry. Hip confiners help  
compunction. Never park your brief stays in the men's convenience. Never  
clean your buttoncups with your dirty pair of sassers. . . . Especially beware  
please of being at a party to any demoralizing home life. That saps a chap.  
Keep cool faith in the firm, have warm hoop in the house and begin frem  
athome to be chary of charity. Where it is nobler in the main to supper than  
the boys and errors of outrager's virtue. Give back those stolen kisses;  
restaure those allcotten glooves. (433. 10-434. 6)

Not only the parody but also the dualistic approach of Joyce contributes to produce the displacement. As it is seen in Shem/Shawn, Joyce's female characters are dualistic: she is simultaneously flesh and spirit, human and sublime. As a catalyst, she both debases and purifies a man. Anna Livia in *Finnegans Wake* has contradictory qualities. She continually protects, restores, and redeems and also she continually distracts, deteriorates and seduces. As a

divine figure she purifies the sinfulness of a man but as a tempter she causes guilt in him and drives him to sin. Her characterization is made deliberately ambiguous and multi-dimensional to include as many elements as possible.

Anna Livia appears as the river Liffy and her dualistic functions in both negative and positive aspects are metaphorically those of water. Her qualities of accessibility, changeability, acceptability, and redemption are those of a river. Her contradictory image as one who, by her charms, is both a nurturer and a destroyer of man is related to the symbolic concept of water as both a source of life and a threat to man. One washer woman gossips about the hermit and Anna Livia:

Michael Arklow was his riverend name, . . . and one venersderg in junojuly, oso sweet and so cool and so limber she looked, Nance the Nixie, Nanon L'Escaut, in the silence, of the sycomores, all listening, the kindling curves you simply can't stop feeling, he plunged both of his newly anointed hands, . . . He cuddle not help himself, thurso that hot on him, he had to forget the monk in the man so, rubbing her up and smoothing her down, he baised his lippes in smiling mood, kiss akiss after kisokushk (as he warned her niver to, niver to, nevar) on Anna-na-Poghue's of the freckled forehead. (203. 18-204. 1)

Anna Livia, as river Liffy, is both nurturing and erotic figure. As a life-giver her eroticism is itself both a nurturer and a threat to man. In one episode of Book I, Chapter 8, the hermit Michael Arklow dips his hands and wets his lips in the stream. Michael Arklow is thirsting for water as well as for a slender young female. He kisses Anna Livia as well as drinking water on a hot day. Anna Livia, as a stream (because she is rather young here), is not only a source of life but also a tempter.

Anna Livia is a wife also. And as the river purges the dirt from Earwicker's clothing in its water, Anna Livia accepts his faults and tries to cleanse him of his bad reputation and thus protect him from the cruel world. As the river Liffy, Anna Livia washes away the guilt of Earwicker as a priest baptises a man with water in a ritual that symbolizes renewal and purification.

So Anne Robinson Taylor relates this female quality to water saying, Nothing could be stronger or more perpetual than the river; yet the force of nature is flow, is a specific loss of boundaries -she becomes the all. Once again the woman represents eternal power and dissolution. (Taylor 216)

The displacements in Joyce's text occur not only through the dualism but also through the constant change of the context which is, was and will be writing its own runes for ever(19. 35-36). The displacements cause indeterminacy and uncertainty, and thus the critics often try to unfold and arrive at the final meaning without success. So Stephen Heath says:

What is constructed in the play of their interrelations in the writing is a discontinuity in progress, a constant displacement from fiction to fiction. It is this discontinuity that realizes the negativity of Joyce's writing. There is no fiction, no level of narrative, that stops' the others (as a context stops' the multiple possibilities of meaning, the play of the signifier, thus avoiding the loss of the meaning). The irony of *Ulysses* is that of this perpetual displacement, that, briefly noted by Kristeva, of the capture of a meaning always already old, always already exceeded, as funny as it is ephemeral.'

(Heath 40)

The discontinuity, however, does not necessarily bring about the fragmentary or deconstructive quality in Joyce's work. Rather dissociated and even contradictory fragments cohere in a different way from that of rigidly ordered unity. Their cohesion is achieved by the abrupt juncture of two opposites and it can make more dynamic relationships than consistent and logical process of story does.

### 3. The Plurality

The post-structuralist idea of the absence of the absolute can be best found in the *Finnegans Wake* and the pluralistic characteristic of the text contributes

to it as those of displacement and spontaneity do. As it has been indicated, Joyce tries to avoid the limited, closed, and precise rendering of meaning. Like the amorphous dream, the meaning remains flexible, pluralistic and yields manifold interpretations. In the dreaming mind the mythic and the factual, fictional and historical elements are intermingled and interchanged. In a dream they have freeplay freed from the control of the intellectual and logical mind.

The essential characteristic of the language of *Finnegans Wake* is its plurality and its pun possibility. *Finnegans Wake* contains thousands of words taken from foreign languages, either reproduced verbatim or in new coinages. The Wakean language includes not only foreign languages but also lots of contemporary slang. So all kinds of words come into play and are mixed-up as in totalled in toldteld and teldtold in tittletell tattle (597.8-9) The autotelic nature of Wakean language produces various meanings which are independent and even contradict each other, and increases the possibilities of interpretation. In the beginning of *Finnegans Wake*, there appears a thunder which represents Vico's cyclical view of history and the fall on the cosmic, mythic, and human levels.

The fall(bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronnontonnerrontuonnthunntrovarrh  
ounawnskawntooohooordenenthumuk!)of a once wallstrait oldparr is related  
early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy. The great  
fall of the offwall entailed at such short notice the pfjschute of Finnegan,  
erse solid man, that the humptyhillhead of himself promptly sends an  
unquiring one well to the west in quest of his tumptytumtoes(3. 15-21)

The thunderwords in the above include the French, Italian, Swedish, Irish, Portuguese, Danish, Greek, Hindustani, and even Japanese, etc. It is Adam's fall, the fall of the Wall Street stock market, of Old Parr, of Finn MacCool, of Finnegan, the hod-carrier who falls from his ladder in the ballad 'Finnegan's Wake', of Humpty Dumpty, who fell from his wall. These various falls coming from the nursery rhyme world to the twentieth-century world are disparate, that

is, there is no connection among them. The words are hybrid producing numerous metamorphic varieties. So Beckett says about *Finnegans Wake*, There is an endless verbal germination, maturation, putrefaction, the cyclic dynamism of the intermediate. (Beckett *Our Examination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* 16) This dynamism comes from the peculiar qualities of Joyce's language: those of the autonomy, the ceaseless self-contradiction, and the multivalence. And with these the work resists consistently remaining on one level of meaning.

The characteristic of plurality of *Finnegans Wake* does not confine to the linguistic phenomena; thematically as well as in the characterizations the work produces meanings which go to any direction.

As the thunder has multiple meanings, characters have plural roles. The main male character H. C. E. represents Here Comes Everybody, or Haveth Childers Everywhere as Joyce refers him in the work and his identification changes to any figure as circumstances allows. This is same with the female, A. L. P. She is the Bringer of Plurabilities, having 1001 children as well as Muse and Guinevere. Just as Earwicker is metamorphosed into a mountain or a tree, so A. L. P. becomes a passing cloud and flowing stream. By calling her as Anna was, Livia ia, Plurabelle's to be Joyce endows her the synchronicity: Anna is a river, always changing yet ever the same, the Heraclitean flux which bears all life on its current. Her omnipresence is revealed in that she is the circular river of time, flowing past Eve and Adam in the first sentence of the book, and which meets the last sentence of the book to make the cyclic pattern.

Thematically the text has multi-levels. By juxtaposing many layers, mythic, legendary, historical, literary, biblical, etc., and endowing multitudinous identities the writer can achieve the sense of complexity, of an ever-changing universe and of the dynamic and fluid reality. So one narrator in *Finnegans Wake* warns the reader that he would never be able to grasp the certainty: since in this scherzarade of one's thousand one nightinesses that sword of certainty which would indetified the body never falls. (51. 4-6) Joyce's multiplicity comes

from his polyhistoric and multilingual knowledge.

This kind of text requires the modes of reading. Joyce deliberately opens more associative possibilities to achieve the multiple implications so that readers always could find new meaning in the text. It demands that the reader constantly seek the possibilities and multiplicities of interpretations. As Julia Kristeva says, to read is to pick up, to pluck, to keep a watch one, to recognize traces, to take, and to steal. Thus to read indicates an aggressive participation, an active appropriation of the other. She continues to indicate, to read' become production, industry: writing reading, paragrammatic activity, would be the aspiration towards a total aggressiveness and participation. (Kristeva 181) The *Finnegans Wake* text becomes productive and generative achieving the reconstruction through deconstruction.

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## Abstract

## 『피네간의 경야』와 해체주의

전 은 경

조이스 작품에 대한 비평은 각 시대마다 나름의 독특한 비평이론에 따라 변천해 왔다. 60년대와 70년대에는 해체주의 비평이 불란서의 비평가들을 중심으로 하여 발달되었으며, 이들의 이론은 『텔 퀘』(*Tel Quel*)저널을 통하여 주로 소개되었다. 70년대에 들어서 이 저널은 필립 솔레르와 스티븐 히드가 조이스의 작품에 대한 해체주의적 비평을 적용한 글을 발표하게 되면서 조이스의 작품과 해체주의를 연계하게 되었다. 해체주의 비평이론가들 중 특히 로랑 바르트의 언어와 텍스트에 대한 참신한 이해는 조이스의 『피네간의 경야』의 독특한 언어체계와 텍스트성을 설명하는데 크게 도움이 된다. 이것은 『피네간의 경야』와 해체주의가 기본적으로 인식의 틀을 같이 하기 때문일 것이다.

본 논문에서는 『피네간의 경야』의 어떠한 점들이 해체주의적 성격을 띠고 있다고 하는지를 해체주의의 근간이 되는 원칙들 중 특히 세 가지, “자발성”(spontaneity), “전치”(displacement), “다의성”(plurality)를 중심으로 살펴보고자 한다. 가변적인 언어에서 우러난 다층적 의미체계를 가진 이 작품을 이해하는데에는 그에 상응하는 비평이론을 필요로 하고 있으며, 역으로 해체주의의 이해를 위해서는 『피네간의 경야』는 필수적이라 하겠다. 해체성이 곧 생산적으로 이어지는 『피네간의 경야』는 끊임없이 해체와 아울러 재구성이 동시에 이루어지고 있으므로 무한히 생산적인 텍스트가 되고 있다.