



Finnegans Wake

James Joyce , John Bishop (Introduction)

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Having done the longest day in literature with his monumental Ulysses, James Joyce set himself even greater challenges for his next book — the night. "A nocturnal state...That is what I want to convey: what goes on in a dream, during a dream." The work, which would exhaust two decades of his life and the odd resources of some sixty languages, culminated in the 1939 publication of Joyce's final and most revolutionary masterpiece, *Finnegans Wake* .

A story with no real beginning or end (it ends in the middle of a sentence and begins in the middle of the same sentence), this "book of Doublends Jined" is as remarkable for its prose as for its circular structure. Written in a fantastic dream language, forged from polyglot puns and portmanteau words, the *Wake* features some of Joyce's most brilliant inventive work. Sixty years after its original publication, it remains, in Anthony Burgess's words, "a great comic vision, one of the few books of the world that can make us laugh aloud on nearly every page."

Finnegans Wake Details

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From Reader Review *Finnegans Wake* for online ebook

Bookdragon Sean says

I take no shame in admitting that I cannot read this book. I was defeated after three paragraphs:

"What clashes here of wills gen wonts, oystrygods gaggin fishy-gods! Brékkek Kékkek Kékkek Kékkek! Kóax Kóax Kóax! Ualu Ualu Ualu! Quaouauh! Where the Baddelaries partisans are still out to mathmaster Malachus Micgranes and the Verdons cata-pelting the camibalistics out of the Whoyteboyce of Hoodie Head. Assiegates and boomerangstroms. Sod's brood, be me fear! Sanglorians, save! Arms apeal with larms, appalling. Killykill-killy: a toll, a toll. What chance cuddleys, what cashels aired and ventilated! What bidimetoloves sinduced by what tegotetab-solvers!"

I can't even begin to decipher that nor do I have the patience or will to do so. I see what Joyce is doing; he is fucking around with words and having a blast, but I don't want any part of it. Is this modernism gone too far?

Manny says

The other day we saw *The Ghost*, the rather fine new movie by Polanski. Ewan McGregor plays a ghostwriter, who's been brought in to fix up the memoirs of a British ex-Prime Minister who absolutely isn't Tony Blair. He's given the manuscript, and groans in pain.

"That bad?" asks the woman who isn't Cherie Blair.

"Well it's got all the words," says McGregor. "They're just not in the right order."

This suggested to me the following simple experiment with *Finnegans Wake*, one of the greatest etc etc in the English language. I downloaded an electronic version from the Web and wrote a little script. It calculates statistics for the frequencies of each letter conditioned on the three preceding ones, then produces random text using that model. And here's a sample of what comes out:

The rest of this review is available elsewhere (the location cannot be given for Goodreads policy reasons)

Ian "Marvin" Graye says

Prelured to a Nocturnal Pleasure

"It isn't a matter of submitting uncritically to a difficult work; it's about trusting that the artist knows what he/she is doing, even if you don't apprehend it right away. Just keep reading: even the most difficult novel will eventually make some sense, and if you realise you've missed things, you can always go back for a second try if still curious...some people like a challenge...some people are open to new, initially puzzling experiences...": Steven Moore

Thirst Daft from the Keg (Only Later in the Can)

Allkey Dalkey. A quest for you! How and where should we dear readers start this vollhuminorous opus tome that is belabelled "*Funny Gunsmoke*"?

Are you the typeface who wants to read a Wake? Or better still to hold its heft until and while yore fast a Schlep?

The meaning ist all betweed the last and first one or two hemidemisences of this nonomonograph:

"Put off the old man at the very font and get right on with the nutty sparker round the back:...A way a lone a lost a last a loved a long the riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle & Environs."

To here or where do we return? Howth Castle & Environs. HCE! Did you see that? What and hoodoo these letters stand for? Is it a code? Please sir, can I have some morse or semaphor?

Is this the first of many mansions of real currency? Will we find the unity of people and place in time in these environs? Here? Down by the river? Recirculating? At night? In your dreams! Whether or not you're sleeping.

Trust Joyce to resuscitate these ancient and wise abreathiations. (view spoiler)(view spoiler)

Plus there's lots more to seacombe, if you feel encurried to go-on!

The Loneliest Sphere Amonkst Us

And so we start at the bigending and return to the beginning. We come full sphericircle via the roundabout or "O" in Vico Road.

At wristwatchtime and to whichwhatend? The qwestian is regardless!

This revolution is not revolting or odious, just kummftibbly commodious.

You could advocake more communionist than communist or unionist, though bewhere if an onion ist made of many lawyers, becoz each one is set inside and upagainst annutter. Too!

And We're Off a Way Alone a Lost Astray

Lost? Astray? A loan? At what interest rate?

Howth else could you find a way, aweigh, that's worth its wait in geldings?

Watch your steppe, or euchred be waylaid. Respect the Bellowtrystic Massterboston Choosit Oilrich-Ammerricunstables and Diasporlastic Paddies. Heed acadamnic Doctorates and your Masters and/or

Mistresses, hair weather they might hail from. Though observe that some tend to bury H.C.E.Z.R., when they say they come to praise him.

Neertheless, hoefully you'll find the riteway to reed this book for you.

Deftkneely beeknot misled by any Ashtraylian or hippopotantipodean of lettuce, french, inkwizitive or other whys.

(view spoiler)

Annalytical Parabbelais

This could be James Joyce's second best book, if it's not deterred.

They're all good, if you like this kind offering.

It's a big wander oliver the world why he was neverwarded a Noble Surprise.

Pearheaps because, like a lot of other civillillians and armoured worriers, he disceased during the World War Too and that made him ineligible. Never mind. The books are still availabellegible, so you can read them if you don't think they're too liffeycult.

Joyce gnu all the words in the dickshunnery and moor B-sides that he made up from the manniplurabold languages of the whirled. He recreated them espeshfully fornication like this, youzing them for the very first and ownly time in this belaboured werk and wurterbuch. Howzat!

Unlikewise, take note of Joyce's punkchewashuns, Oxford commanists, parents' theses, dashful hyphenates, apocraphyl apostropheats, semicolonial Manutians from afaraway, kissed ellipses lipglossy, penultimate fullstoppers and sentences high above suspended.

It's very hard to fellow him, partickly even though he's dead. Still, he's proof that preserving with our ancestuous tends to keep our minds alive.

Sum total lots of readers are put off "*Finnegan's Wank*", because they thank it's too long and too hard. Well, if you don't want to exhurt the mental musculiterature of your mind, you can still please yourself another way (view spoiler). There are lots of other books for ewes.

Someone somewhere over the regenbocean said that James Joyce is the top man in the langauge department. Dispose that's better than the sandwich department. Haha! Lollgoll!

In case this is an eggsample of what seven lindquists might call typographical eros, it's best that each reader be left to their erogenous own devices. A bout with witch and broom, more bryter layter.

James Joyce, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier at the Maison des Amis des Livres, Paris, 1938 © Photo Gisèle Freund / IMEC / Fonds MCC via www.fondation-pb-ysl.net

The Polyguous Diversity of the Multivurst

There are many strangerous words in this book, some olden new, others single-minded, some double-malted, otherskwite polyguous, all of them all in all beeclaws unvacant lots of things happen in your dreams.

It is a whole universe of words and images, that the awefer wrote down as they hopened in the night.

You could say that all his words seem like they were relatively unedificated. However, you know that it would be untrue. You know that it would be a lyre. Ha! Good one, that's Awefeus, off course!

This novel is specifically inntended for any reader who adores perception and heaven and hell (not to mention Dandy Alligator).

Mind you, some readers can be very tempting to overunderstand everything what goes on in the velvet underground belowcated down the rabbit hole.

You could abcess about all of the tributaries of the River Liffey, all of the leaves on the Tree of Life and all of the ingredients in the Sausage of Love. Irvinghowever, there is a chance that this might be a wursted effort.

It is a nuff that yore first reading concentrate on the undiluted pleasesirs of the wurstplay on display.

Afterwords, you can attend a jimjim and work-out the meaning of all detales, if six kneed bees, with an ingenerous glass of mead or a bitter class of grappa.

The first and most imported object of the subject is that you enjoyce your shelf.

Four for the Price of Three (or Three for the Price of Two?)

The novel is diffided into fork quartets, but reely it's a tryst, a three yak worldplay, followed by the red currants of the myth as predicated vicoriously by an inflewential phallusupher who moonlights as a sham barrista.

Buttfirst and befleur they are fourgotten, rejoyce in these words of the righter that have been reserved and reet petited:

"God jests and Man mimics."

If you are righteous enough, you can read Joyce in Gourd's sway. Or vice versa, if you're obwronxious.

Then again, Joyce might have made it all up himself with no helpatall. According to this highpohthesis, he was his own venquillotrist. Sounds good! Move on, Big Sir.

Here you can find infinite jest that ascience to us readers the task of comprehension, aorbemusement and humble mimicry.

There are many theories about the content of the text. You could add and even write a nude science book about it. One will suffice for these purposes.

It sounds like the name of an album by the Red Hot Chili Peppers:

Birth! Sex! Death!

Press enter and return. (view spoiler) See! Magic!!! Complete with three Exhumation Marx!!!

Hegelian Babel-bashers may well ask: Is this literary structure opposed to the dialectical or is it just trialectrickery? Is it revolutionary or just gimmicky?

Is this interpretation reliable or just untrustworthy? Is it jest or mimicry?

Genuinely flecked if Eideronpeus knows dancer!

James Joyce and Philippe Soupault with a manuscript of "*Finnegans Wake*" in 1931

The Beginning of Life

So which came first: the chicken or the yegg?

Or as rural farmers say: the fucken' or the clucken'?

It's a good question, isn't it? It could be the clowndation of a "*scienze of new ova*". And that's just the beginning! What about the yend? How will it all stop? Or does it just go round and round like a one-armed canudist?

James Joyce is just a believer of the proposition that there's one big cyclist in hot pursuit of a circuitous root.

He won't stop until he's had a nuff. Sex. A parently. And there is more than a nuff sex to go around of drinks. Round and round, in and out, round after round, in private homes and public houses, homewood or innward bound. It will go on forever and never stop. It will never be gone. Good news for modern men and women. Hey?

So this is why "*Finnegan's Wake*" begins with the latter half of a sentence and ends with the foremast hoff.

It's a circle of liff, a liffcycle, a circle of life, a lifecycle.

Another way of pitching and putting the same goffball into a different hole, is it's a Liffeycycle, a river, the river Liffey ("*An Life*," not "*A Life*" in Irish).(view spoiler)

The river waters start in the mountains and flow towards the ocean, where they turn into clouds that ascend the mountains and regen down upon the earth, thus starting the river again.

It's a good analogy. An even better allegory. What the Florentines called an "*Alighieri*". And Polymathematicians, an "*Algorithm*".

Women, mothers, are responsible for our birth. They are on all fours with it. Or all floors. Blowing up their bellies like a rubadubblebubble.

They are the source and cause, the saucy cause of conception and labour, of production and reproduction, of creation and procreation, of all types of activity and recreation, of all verbal words and wordal verbs:

"They war loving, they love laughing, they laugh weeping, they weep smelling, they smell smiling, they smile hating, they hate thinking, they think feeling, they feel tempting, they tempt daring, they dare waiting, they wait taking, they take thanking, they thank seeking, as born for lorn in lore of love to live and wive by wile and rile by rule of ruse 'reathed rose and hose hol'd home, yeth cometh elope year, coach and four, Sweet Peck-at-my-Heart picks one man more."

Birth entails and entales "*the ensuance of existentiality.*"

Birth is the dawn, the origin, the start of all things fantastic and funtastic.

There is nothing more vital or important than women in da reddish-blond red riding hood.

Livia Veneziani Svevo

"They say I have immortalised [Italo] Svevo, but I've also immortalised the tresses of Signora Svevo. These are long and reddish-blond. My sister who used to see them let down told me about them. There is a river near Dublin which passes dye-houses and its waters are reddish, so I've enjoyed comparing these two things in the book I'm writing. A lady in it will have the tresses which are really Signora Svevo's." - James Joyce

Onward Trysting Sodjers, Marching as to Whores

Offcourse, it's not enough for a woman to be chaste. She must be chased about. And this is the role created epsexually for men.

If women are the rock upon which socxiety is built, then men are the roll. You need both for birthing.

Men have only a minor role at the outset, akindle to a Big Bang, only infinitesimorely smaller.

If he pleases, he is invited to come again, to come on baby light my fire, he to be the flame that comes to light her Feuerabends, and keep her company and shareholders late into the night until the early mourning sickness becomes electriffic.

Women have an infinite capacity for love, men a limitless appetryit for sex, "*the natural bestness of pleisure.*"

They are the nuts and bolts of sex and parenthood and fambily.

After conception, men think their task is done, and that it is their right and obligation to bolt.

This mythconception has a semantic horrogen, obviously. Women must be nuts to put up with men. Men blame the sinductive powers of women.

Men never fall so much for these powers of sinduction as when they are dupelicated or denied.

If a man has trouble resisting the temptation of a woman, his temptatious plight is doubled by the prospect of a threesome:

"Woman will water the wild world over. And the maid of the folley will go where glory. Sure I thought it was larking in the trefoll of the furry glans with two stripping baremaids..."

Again, it seems to be a matter of semantics. The word "tryst" bears a greater etymanological resemblance to the number three than two, right back to the Lithuanian word "trys". (view spoiler)

Eau contraire, a man's passion is often more greatly fanned by the absence of reciprostity or the denile of passion by the female. In this way, many a man who imagines a tryst ends up trystless or in tristesse.

It is liffycult to describe a man's reaction to denial inwards. Iwronically, it turns many a man to one to one correspondence.

What a man cannot describe orally, he must inscribe literally. Hence, litterature has its origents in men's love letters. (view spoiler)

A love affair carried on exclusively on the papers is called a quillotryst. Such a man must content himself with his quill, until other options arise, arouse and present themselves.

When finally a woman commands a man's attention, then it is his swollen duty to respond with an appropriate degree of erectitude.

Finnegan's Wake-Up Call

"What has gone? How it ends?"

Inevitabdly, the human physique deterrorates and one day, as is the way of all fleshes, our time onnurth will come to an end, leaving us inert.

Joyce speculates that the end need not be so bitter, but maybe even better: the big end will one day be a new beginning.

All nights come to an end, but they are followed by another dawn. Our ancestors live on in our genes, even if our children don't innherod our belle bottoms.

That's the way it's been since levis and devlins first loved livvy. But it's the same every wear.

And so, the Liffey goes on, liff goes on, life goes on, and love goes on. We all go on to gather.

We are each of us a small part of a great cycle. However, there would be no cycle without us. And there

would be no remembering of us, unless we wrote it down in all for better call letters, if not order.

The experience of life can be rich and diverse and rewarding, without necessarily being in order.

So how to write a last line? A suitable end. A moment at which it's true, it's said, it's written down, inscribed, it's all been said and done, and there's nothing more to do, nothing more to say, nothing more to tell, like finis, fin, then, well...fools stop!

Anna Livia Plurabelle

"Aye aye, she was lithe and pleasurable."

"You will always call me Leafiest, won't you, dawning?"

James Joyce, "Finnegans Wake"

MISS ELAINE HERE:

[Weiver a Gnidnep Nettirw]

Professor Stephen Knight

"Read it? I haven't even lectured on it!"

Vroom the Beltholes

Candice Postlebee

Liviup tooplural belle

Hyperblurbole?

A Game for Those Throne Open Doubleyous

Riverrun where

Tumblestone and Redfork meet

Howth and House Tully.

SOUNDTRACK:

(view spoiler)

Leo Robertson says

Why you will read *Finnegans Wake*:

The short of it is this: have a think about all your greatest achievements, the accomplishments you're most proud of. What they have in common is hard work and originality. Read *Finnegans Wake*. Fine, you know what? If you're even in this review for the short term, chances are you won't read it. If anyone's still interested, please let me convince you further.

Michael Chabon, Pulitzer-prize winning author, wrote a big article for *The New York Review of Books* on why he wasn't going to try and read *Finnegans Wake* any more, and quite frankly it's the proudest I've ever heard someone sound for not having read a book. If that strikes you as odd too, maybe it's time you too picked up a copy of Joyce's 17-year distilled puntastic masterpiece. No sooner do you enter the book that you realise you'll be here for a while. Your reading slows down every time you hit an unfamiliar word: perhaps it's in one of the sixty to seventy languages that appear in the *Wake*, or maybe it's a Joycean triple-pun, but when whatever they are is every second word in the book, it can feel like you're reading treacle.

Yes, a lot of it is nonsense, and if I wrote a 600+ page book consisting mostly of words that were invented, I would judge anyone who wanted to read it, but you and I didn't write it, the greatest author of the 20th century wrote it, so don't worry: it comes preapproved. It's like that third Bloc Party album that made you turn your nose up the first listen, but somehow you knew you'd get into it if you persevered, the only difference is that with the *Wake* you'd be right.

Also, *Finnegans Wake* is the ace up the sleeve of a surprising number of authors. After a few months spent with the *Finnegans*, maybe you'll pick up *Lolita* and say "Hang on a minute: that pun's a bit familiar"⁽¹⁾, perhaps it's Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* that makes you think "Hm, language as rhythm... Not her idea!", or you could find yourself raising your eyebrow knowingly at the latest Zadie Smith. It has been said that nobody reads *FW* any more, and it's absolutely true. As a result, a lot of writers are having an "originality" field day with it. But you and I will know their secret!

Finnegans Wake, not *Finnegan's*, the wake of many a *Finnegan*, *Finnagain* and *Finnomore*, is a cyclical hallucination of a book. Let Joyce himself tell you the story of two washerwoman having a chat, one slowly turning to stone and the other to an elm tree as night approaches, read the longest story ever written about a man passing out drunk in his own bar, feel characters blending and dissolving then budding off from each other once again in a dark rainy dream, hear the thunder in Joyce's 100 letter words.

Our hapless hero H.C. Earwicker, also known as Heinz cans everywhere and most appropriately *Here Comes Everybody*, is everyone. He's ready to be you, too, even after all this time, if you give the *Wake* a chance. So pick it up, take it slowly, read it aloud, forget what you know about the novel and enjoy the music of the words. What does it mean? Three answers: nothing, we'll never know, and whatever you want.

(1) Incidentally, Vladimir Nabokov said that *Finnegans Wake* was "nothing but a formless and dull mass of phony folklore, a cold pudding of a book, a persistent snore in the next room [...] and only the infrequent snatches of heavenly intonations redeem it from utter insipidity." Oh please! Could he be more jealous?

Edward says

Everybody knows the plot of *Finnegans Wake*. Rich, old man Finnegan has died, leaving behind no will and no direct heirs. A riotous comedy of errors ensues at his wake (an open-casket affair), where his extended family and business associates (a collection of colourful, conniving characters to say the least), vie for supremacy, each one plotting and scheming to inherit Finnegan's vast business empire and considerable real estate portfolio, which features amongst numerous holdings the grand and opulent Howth castle and environs, whose grounds so wonderfully brought to life by Joyce's vivid descriptions, form the setting of the novel. But it's the characters in *Finnegans Wake* that really stand out. Who can forget cruel Mr Snood, whose Machiavellian machinations can be seen beneath each interaction, or doddering old Mrs Buttercup, whose innocent bumbling antics serve to hilariously thwart his plans at every step. The uproarious hijinks come to a head with the famous twist in the final act, whereupon Finnegan arises from his casket before stunned guests, proclaiming the words, "*Finnegan wakes!*", revealing the whole thing to have been nothing more than an elaborate ruse. Finnegan, having lain conscious in state the entire time, and having witnessed the appalling behaviour of his associates and potential heirs, decides to leave the entire estate to a previously unmentioned boy named Billy, the simpleminded child of a village milk-maid, who having some months ago touched Finnegan's heart with a simple unassuming gesture of kindness (this act, which is recounted by Finnegan at this point in the narrative – Billy's offering to a parched and lonely Finnegan of a glass of milk and a kind shoulder - has been variously analysed and interpreted by critics since the novel's publication, being a particularly poignant moment, rich in symbolism and moral significance), has revealed to Finnegan - an otherwise stingy and curmudgeonly man - the importance of kindness and friendship, a lesson upon which Finnegan now intends to reform his own life, beginning this very moment, by expelling each and every parasitic so-called friend directly from the castle, "*beyond a swerve of shore and bend of bay, past Eve and Adam's, and back along riverrun whence they came!*" The novel's cathartic climax and its heart-warming closing scene in which Billy and his mother Daisy, upon arriving at the castle, realise their life of hard poverty is finally at an end – their tearful embrace, and Daisy's brief monologue which concludes the novel, spoken in endearing and authentic local dialect ("*Oer Billy, I reckon I've tugged me last teat*") – are some of the most powerful and enduring moments in all of literature.

Finnegans Wake was published in 1939 to a confused and divided critical reception, its uncomplicated and light-hearted comedic tone representing a surprising departure from the author's earlier, far more serious works. Rumour has it that Joyce had for some time been working on an alternative version of the novel, one almost entirely concerned with puns and wordplay, filled with obscure and esoteric references, and devoid of any persistent characters or coherent plot. But fortunately Joyce was moved by close friends to abandon that enterprise, it all being quite silly and pretentious really, and who would want to read a book like that anyway.

Fernando says

Inextricable, inexpugnable, intraducible, interminable, indescifrable, ilegible, insufrible, inabarcable, inescrutable, insostenible, inaccesible, impenetrable, impredecible, inalcanzable, inasequible, incomprendible, incongruente, intimidante, inaceptable, intragable, insoportable, invulnerable, indefinible, inexplicable, imposible.

Estos son algunos de los adjetivos calificativos que podrían aplicarse perfectamente a este obra de arte colosal.

Si con Ulises James Joyce había llegado al límite de todas las variantes posibles con el lenguaje, con el

Finnegans Wake lo traspasa para transformarlo en algo con entidad propia y convertirlo en nuevo universo literario.

La complejidad extrema de lo lingüístico introducido en el libro, sumado a decenas de neologismos, creadas por el escritor, se estiran hasta la cantidad de 250.000 palabras a lo largo de un apretadísimo texto de 628 páginas.

Para revolucionar al texto, Joyce incluye vocablos distorsionados, sonidos guturales de bebés, onomatopeyas, creaciones lingüísticas, 3.500 nombres propios reales e inventados e idiomas de todo el planeta, incluyendo dialectos y lenguas muertas. Más de 70 idiomas para ser más precisos.

Jugar con las palabras es otro de sus pasatiempos preferidos y para ello se transforma en un digno sucesor de Lewis Carroll, quien ya en sus libros "Alicia en el país de las maravillas" y "A través del espejo", ya acuña el sistema de creación híbrida de palabras o inventa nombres totalmente inverosímiles (el del Jabberwocky es un ejemplo claro).

En algunos capítulos como el que cierra el Libro I y atribuido a uno de los personajes principales, Anna Livia Plurabelle descubrimos que por ejemplo Joyce incluye los nombres de más de 600 ríos de todo el mundo. Cualquiera parte del libro que uno lea es innovadora o revolucionaria, de hecho la ambivalencia está inherente en el título mismo de libro, "Finnegans Wake" (así, sin apostrofe), dado que "wake" significa tanto "velatorio" como "despertar", de ahí la naturaleza circular del libro, donde el comienzo del primer capítulo es una frase ya empezada que enlaza con la frase inacabada de la última página, y aunque parezca mentira, este libro tiene también una trama o argumento, pero oculta entre toneladas de palabras inconexas, diálogos oníricos y frases desconcertantes.

Otro aspecto más que interesante es la construcción que Joyce hace con las palabras y la creación de vocablos híbridos. Muchos de ellos a partir de una raíz en común son contruidos con dos y hasta tres palabras distintas y demuestra hasta qué punto retorció vocablos para darles un nuevo sentido.

Cito algunos ejemplos de conjunciones de palabras para ser más gráfico: escéano (escena+océano), sordiota (sordo+idiota), literasura (literatura+basura), amornecer (amor+amanecer), obsceñor (obsceno+señor). Estos términos están tomados de la traducción de Marcelo Zabaloy, quien realizó la primera traducción completa al español por primera vez en la historia, pero es algo que voy a comentar más adelante.

Relacionado a este tema y para comprender y compartir que Joyce no escribió este libro sin ningún sentido sino con erudición y en forma meticulosa, tomemos esta palabra de cien letras aparentemente incongruente, que ya en la tercera página nos choca de lleno:

¡bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohooordene nthurnuk!

Este término, vocablo o como quiera llamarse no está incluido por que sí. Investigando un poco, me encontré en internet con una explicación del mismo y que es la siguiente. Comienza con "bababadal", un termino que significa "Torre de Babel" en el Génesis 11:1-9, en el que Dios castiga a todos a hablar en decenas de distintos idiomas (qué casualidad, algo que puebla todas las páginas de este libro), este largo término se desglosa en decir "trueno" en diez idiomas distintos, asociando sus raíces fonéticas a estos idiomas, a saber: gharaghta (hindi/r'ad), kamminarronkonn (japonés/kaminari), bronn (griego/brontê), tonnerronn (francés/tonnerre), tuonn (italiano/tuono), thunn (inglés/thunder), trovarr (portugués/ trovão), hounawnskawn (sueco y irlandés/aska y scán), toohooordenen (danés/torden), thurnuk (irish/tórnach).

¿A qué quiero llegar con esto? En primer lugar a afirmar que James Joyce era un genio, le pese a quién le pese, incluso a todos sus detractores y críticos a quienes les advirtió "*Puedo justificar cada línea de mi libro*". En segundo lugar a comprender que ningún lector normal (como yo) podría descifrar eso nunca sin su ayuda o por gente que se dedica a estudiar el libro y además, que esa palabra está ¡en la tercera página! Imaginen si quisiéramos descubrir cada palabra extraña a lo largo de las 628 páginas. Nos llevaría cientos de años. Me saco el sombrero ante tanta genialidad.

Pasando al argumento del libro en sí, a grosso modo, el libro trata, en primer lugar, sobre una referencia a Adán y Eva y la caída del hombre y con el relato mítico del gigante Finn MacCool, quien trastoca su existencia en Finnegans, un albañil de Dublín, quien mientras trabaja en la construcción de un muro, cae de

la escalera y se mata. Su esposa Annie dispone el cuerpo del muerto para que sirva de festín en el velatorio, no obstante este desaparece antes de que puedan empezar a devorarlo.

A eso sigue un velatorio lleno de incidentes, hay una pelea dónde accidentalmente se derrama whisky sobre el cadáver de Finnegan, que se levanta de su ataúd suplicando un trago. Pero para acomplejar más el argumento, ese mismo Finnegan puede ser considerado un sueño del gigante Finn y puede que lo que suceda a partir de allí pase a formar parte de lo onírico, donde todo es posible y a la vez es replicado a través del lenguaje críptico en que está escrito el libro.

Por otro lado se narran las peripecias de un tabernero dublinés, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker. Su nombre irá mutando en decenas de otros que comenzarán con las iniciales HCE, puesto que este personaje se metamorfoseará constantemente, de ahí que las iniciales no están tomadas al azar: HCE es también "Here Comes Everybody". HCE es un hombre en particular, pero también somos todos nosotros ("Aquí llegan todos").

Y además de HCE y ALP, nos encontramos con sus hijos gemelos, Shem el escritor y Shaun el cartero quienes se disputan el amor de la joven Iseut con todo el bagaje de lectura que estas instancias generan en el libro.

El *Finnegans Wake* es un libro que se lee a ciegas y el primer obstáculo con el que el lector se choca en la oscuridad es el del lenguaje. No hay otro modo de explicarlo.

Para ser sincero en esto, sostengo que el personaje principal del libro es el lenguaje. Es la causa, la consecuencia, el medio y el fin. Es el amo total y cuando el lector lo lee, cae fácilmente en el hecho de intentar entender lo que allí se narra generando una parálisis o bloqueo de lectura, y en otros casos ciertos estados de desesperación que desembocan en abandonarlo para no retomarlo más. Si uno piensa que al leer el *Ulises* Joyce llegó al límite de lo imaginable y soportable, con el *Finnegans Wake* se cae en un abismo mucho peor y desconcertante.

Y si el *Ulises* es el libro de lo que sucede en el día, el *Finnegans Wake* es el libro de la noche y esto se explica con facilidad: en el *Ulises*, todo transcurre durante el día con los personajes de Leopoldo Bloom y Stephen Dédalus caminándose todo Dublin. En el *Finnegans Wake* todo lo que se lee en las 628 páginas sucede en una noche.

El supuesto final del libro, o sea de las últimas páginas traza una relación directa con el *Ulises*, puesto que el monólogo interior de Anna Livia Plurabelle se equipara al de Molly Bloom durante ocho eternas oraciones que ocupan las últimas cuarenta páginas (¡40!) del libro sin freno ni la utilización de una sola coma. La diferencia es que en el *Finnegans Wake* este monólogo es más corto, pero no por ello menos difícil de leer. No voy a ser hipócrita y confieso que salteé varias páginas en distintos momentos de la lectura, porque es tanta la abundancia indescifrable del texto que logra un desconcierto exasperante en el lector y uno se anula. Debe cerrar el libro y retomarlo en otra ocasión para no sucumbir, pero me siento tranquilo con el hecho de saber que no es ningún crimen, pues parafraseando a Kafka, si un libro no nos parte la cabeza, ¿para qué leerlo? En mi caso no fue por falta de interés sino que por momentos me sentí ampliamente superado por el texto, puesto que al fin y a cabo soy un simple lector falible.

Respecto de su traductor, Marcelo Zabaloy, es altamente meritorio reconocer que fue el primero que se animó a traducir el libro en forma completa luego de otras traducciones anteriores consideradas en cierto modo deficientes y más meritorio aún porque Zabaloy está completamente fuera de todo circuito literario: tradujo el libro ¡por hobby durante siete largos años siendo Analista de Sistemas!

Ni escritor, ni traductor sino tan sólo un hombre que arregla computadoras en su Bahía Blanca natal, en el centro-sur de Argentina y que además realizó también su propia traducción del *Ulises*, ambas publicados por la editorial El Cuenco de Plata.

La complicación de la edición de Zabaloy reside en que junto con la editorial decidieron no incluir notas aclaratorias al pie, explicando que la edición del libro se hubiera estirado a 1.500 o 2.000 páginas.

Lo complejo de las palabras en el texto es explicado por Zabaloy cuando dice "*en una línea donde hay diez palabras, cuatro de ellas no existen. No están en los diccionarios. Estás obligado a crear neologismos. El *Finnegans Wake* es acercarse a algo que no tiene entidad real, una suerte de lengua universal, que crea*

amalgamando elementos tomados de más de ochenta idiomas naturales, con el inglés como sustrato común. Es como si en tu casa tuvieras un galpón y alguien te trajera una bolsa con diez kilos de rompecabezas, y de los cien kilos tenés treinta kilos de un gris que varía de una punta a otra, en cien escalas. Donde el piso y el techo es lo mismo y tenés que poner cada pieza correctamente para que quede armado."

De todos modos, Zabaloy no trabajó sin herramientas. Leyó el libro en su idioma original, acumuló ensayos, críticas, enciclopedias, leyó la edición francesa corregida por el mismísimo Joyce, consultó el FWEET (Finnegans Wake Extensible Elucidation Treasury), una página online con más de 80.000 anotaciones desde que se publicó el libro y se apoyó en la mayoría de los libros que distintos escritores publicaron librerías en la lectura, como los de Roland McHugh y conoció a Hervé Michel, quien lo tradujo al francés, entre otras cosas.

Solo tengo palabras de admiración para el esfuerzo titánico, descomunal de Marcelo Zabaloy en el que invirtió siete años de su vida.

Por último y para cerrar esta larga reseña, vuelvo a retomar la figura de James Joyce, eterna, gigante, quien le dedicó 17 años de su vida para crear obra única, publicada dos años antes de su muerte, prácticamente ciego, fuertemente deprimido, con su hija internada en un hospital psiquiátrico y escapando de los nazis que ya habían puesto en marcha su escalofriante máquina de muerte.

Joyce, luego de mostrar a críticos y editores la primera página del libro supo afirmar:

«Los críticos que tan agradecidos estaban por Ulises se quejan ahora de mi nuevo trabajo. Como son incapaces de entenderlo, sostienen que no tiene sentido. Ahora bien, si no tuviese ningún sentido se habría podido escribir rápidamente, sin pensar, sin dolor, sin erudición, pero te aseguro que estas veinte páginas que tenemos ante nosotros me han costado 1.200 horas y un enorme gasto de espíritu.»

Maestro, qué más puedo agregar. Luego de leer semejante libro, paradójicamente, me quedé sin palabras.

Laura says

In *What Is Art?* Tolstoy unleashes criticism on all things artistic, sparing no one. His main argument is that art--whether literature, paintings, music, or drama--should be accessible to everyone. He says anything that the common man cannot understand or that does not represent the common man is actually a form of war on the common man. All art must teach; all art must be accessible; all art must tell the common man's story. Else, it is not art but an elitist manipulation--a dangerous one, at that. The main target of his anger is art that is enigmatic solely for the sake of being enigmatic. He even spends an entire chapter on Wagner to prove his point. While one could argue that this kind of critique is a signal of the Stalinist suppression of anything not "for the people," (the Bolsheviks actually praised Tolstoy and suppressed Dostoevsky) I do think that Tolstoy has a valid point--especially with regards to Joycean Modernism.

I'll be honest, Modernism does annoy me. I understand the idea behind using style to comment on, well, style, but I really can't stand this pompous approach to art. It's boring and kind of defeats the point of publishing for the masses. This obviously does not apply to all Modernists; Hemingway and Fitzgerald are both very accessible. But Joyce is definitely an author who delights in name dropping and pretentious ramblings. Not my cup of tea.

I had to read *Finnegans Wake* for a Modernist British literature class in undergrad and couldn't finish it. I suppose I'm a lesser English major for criticizing the inimitable James Joyce, but I found this novel pretentious and, frankly, stupid. As far as I can tell, there's no plot and really no characters. Every word in every sentence is a combination of three or more languages. This may sound interesting, but it's really painful to read and a ridiculous way to address linguistic issues. If you have something so profound to say, why the hell can't you make your writing accessible? Are you trying to keep it a secret? What is the point of

combining 30+ languages to create linguistic garbage? I learned nothing from this novel other than language itself can be a kind of prison. I think D.H. Lawrence makes this argument much more powerfully in *Lady Chatterly's Lover*--another Modernist novel, yes, but one whose acclaim does not exist just because the author was able to reference every piece of literature written before the Common Era.

I guess I do understand the acclaim this novel receives: it references everything and Joyce DID have to be rather brilliant to know all of these languages. You can also see the coming of Post-Modernism here with Joyce's total disregard for anything (and I mean ANYTHING) traditional. Perhaps that is why I hated it.

Moreover, going back to Tolstoy, I think there are political and biased reasons for this novel's godlike status. There are countless books that attempt to find *Wake's* meaning and many a floundering grad student struggling to grasp Joyce's points. The pretentiousness of this novel ensures there will never be a shortage of criticism about it, and, having the ability to make sense of nonsense allows one to appear cultured and genius-like. This does create a problem when you think about it. Only a few books out of the zillions that have been written are included in the canon, and mostly for their reinforcing our own racial, classist, gendered, and sexual prejudices. *Finnegans Wake* certainly fits this criteria by being accessible to only, say, 5 people on the planet. This isn't necessarily because of racism or sexism, but because of this idea that the best literature is NOT understood by the lowly masses. "They want John Grisham or Stephenie Meyer? Let them have Joyce!" is probably the best way to put it.

All in all, I can't stand this book. If you want a good post-modern novel, read Kundera or Vonnegut. *Finnegans Wake* is waste of time (and brain power).

K.D. Absolutely says

Looks daunting, unintelligible and incomprehensible at first. However, read it aloud and with open mind and the meaning *might* come down on you. I said "might" because no matter how much thinking I put on some of the paragraphs or lines, some meanings seemed so obscure and I had no choice but to let them stay that way.

Still I found this book amazing. It is one of its kind. What amazed me really was its play of words. Unmatched. Never seen before. Close to it so far is Anthony Burgess's *Clockwork* but it seems like kindergarten level to Joyce's masteral degree. Joyce used what they call as "portmanteau" or the fusing together of two or more words in the same or different languages. Thus "kissmiss" is both the festive season and something that might happen during it, with a suggestion of fatefulness; the Holy Father becomes a "hoary frother"; and an old photo is a "fadograph." Reading this book requires Job's patience but in the end, it is rewarding for the fact that this is another testimony to James Joyce's brilliance as a writer. *Finnegans Wake* is the playful luminous moon to *Ulysses'* serious bright sun. One complement the other like flaunting to the world that James Joyce could be funny after writing the very profound retelling of Homer's classic epic poem, *Odyssey*.

I admit that at some point, I thought I would not be able to finish this. I thought of giving up after two chapters and I did not understanding ANYTHING. I felt like I was just wasting my time. However, a GR friend advised me to read write ups in the internet and it helped. I referred to the internet after reading each chapter or part of it. There were times when I could not correlate the two so I let that pass too. That approach of reading a chapter of the book then refer to the internet helped because at least I was picking up the basic

plot. Still, it was confusing. The stories in it seemed not connected to each other and there was no main plot. It was only towards the end when I realized that James Joyce was not telling one story but many, as many as 17 according to Wiki. The most ubiquitous, among the 17, is a story of a fall that turns out not to be entirely negative, including the Fall of Man; an indiscretion in Phoenix Park, Dublin, a sex scandal involving an older man and two girls; and a tumble (*Humpty Dumpty*, yes that children's song) from a ladder by an Irish builder, **Tim Finnegan**.

This book offers just a different kind of reading experience. One of its kind. It is amazing how James Joyce put together this book and wrote all those verses that are so funny. Definitely brilliant.

And oh I love that unfinished sentence in the end that goes back to the first sentence. When I started reading and saw the first sentence that looked truncated, I was thrown off immediately and shrieked "*What is this?*" but I said if I was able to finish *Ulysses*, I should be able to read this one too. Of course, the big encouragement of my GR friends motivated me to continue reading just in time for my daughter to ask this library copy back.

(I now see some of those GR friends liking this review, so I better stop now.) Thank you so much, GR friends!

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Causabon's Key To All Mythologies with Guinness and Opera: "Finnegans Wake" by James Joyce

"We'll meet again, we'll part once more. The spot I'll seek if the hour you'll find. My chart shines high where the blue milk's upset."

In "Finnegans Wake" by James Joyce

Joyce could really write. "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" is exquisite, and "Ulysses" is a masterpiece. I see Joyce as a product of his 'modernist' era, certainly, but a sincere one. He was reaching for something, a kind of synthesis of prose and poetry that came close to the true language of the mind. It's remarkable how much of *Finnegans Wake* is comprehensible, in spite of the fact that Joyce's words don't actually exist; we know what he means, or we can guess at it, which would be impossible if it was just gibberish.

There's more stuff on the other side of the rainbow.

Fionnuala says

The Slalom of Joyledge

**Howto scaledown this Beschova finntail
This filletov beginnings that sings of all endings,
This pest of a pal in jest
And bad cess to you, Joyking
For the reeding is tufftuff
But the prize is the laffing
Tho low in the belly
It sores with the learning
Of finnglish and jinglish
Pigeon linguish and djoytisch**

**Ten stories tall
And twenty the deepings
some to the writeoff
And Moore to the leftings
Finn's houseful of hawsers
And hods and their spilling
Give Humpty his tallwall
And role in all fallings
Atomnal, Printernal
Summerian, Hibernial**

**Story forth into bygoness
O Joyking of spieling
Ewe raddle us with riddles
Till we're red in the blushers
Veins vulging in temples
And grey matter smarting
We reed in the rushes
Of joycfull mehinding
Seepon, seepunder,
pong of pondyman**

**Thru hart strings and wordlings
And lingo lang twanging
Ewe bleat all the sorrel
Of wars evel waging
In valleys, on hillsides
In shore water rising
Tho miss chiefs and piss takes
Give rest from serratelling
spoofoon, spoofoonder,
sham of shemyman.**

**Futurepresent pastperfect
As the river at her rising
The trees bend to bog**

From the turf seeds fresh reedlings
Men breed new wars
As old wars reseeding
Bodies for battles
Procreation creating
Weepon, weeponder,
Song of sorrowmon

Atom, Eve and their childer
The first family feuding
Cain abling his sister
Edem for all triblings
In cest and in jest
The story ewer spouring
By yon labious banks
And by perchypole sarding
thru noughty times ever
And foriver insemenating

O Batterfull of codlogicals
O Senchus Mór pranKing
Exagminating yore glosses
Yore musikers and blarneying
French rhymes, Moore's chimes
Jack's house ever building
Alicetella's fun essay
Swift Sternley past teaching
Reminding this scribbler
To finnish vociferating
Now's nunc or nimmer!

.....

The following commentaries and glosses may help understanding:
(all words in italics occur in both *Finnegans Wake* and 'The Slalom of Joyledge';
all words underlined occur only in 'The Slalom of Joyledge')

The Slalom of Joyledge: the Salmon of Knowledge was a mythical fish from the Fenian cycle of legends, and was thought to embody all the knowledge of the world. Joyce's book is full of knowledge and reading it is a steep learning curve.

Beschoffs: a fish shop established in Dublin in 1913, which was famous for cod fillets in batter.

scaledown: remove scales, reduce, descend a slope

'Bad cess to you' is a curse, recalling the medieval cess pit.

Tim Finnegan, in the ballad 'Finnegan's Wake', was a hod carrier on a building site who fell off a wall and died. He was **resurrected** when whiskey accidentally fell on his lips during his wake.

Humphrey, one of the main characters in *Finnegans Wake*, himself suffers a fall and a **resurrection**.

Humpty Dumpty, also mentioned in FW, famously fell off a wall.

The series of falls recall The Fall of Man.

Sard is a reference to fish, and is alternative slang for a four letter word beginning with f.

Perchypole : a fishing rod or other type of rod/pole.

Raddle : red colouring on ewes to mark their encounter with the ram.

Sorrel or red clover: a plant that causes infertility in sheep.

Joyking : James Joyce or 'King James Joyce', author of the Finnegans Wake bible of sorts.

Pranquean: Joyce's name for the 16th Irish pirate queen Granuaile, also known as Gráinne Ní Mháile or Grace O'Malley, who was a blithe borrower from traders along the west coast of Ireland and known for her sense of humour.

PranKing: my alternative name for James Joyce, himself a pirateer and plagiarist since he was a blithe borrower of words and ideas, and a purveyor of every manner of jest and wordplay.

The Senchus Mór , referred to in Finnegans Wake, is a 5th century account of the Brehon laws of Ireland, written in ancient dialect. It contains many later commentaries and glosses inserted between the lines and in the margins. It is the perfect metaphor for Finnegans Wake, itself a corpus of Irish history, written in what sometimes seems like obscure dialect, and which contains commentaries inserted throughout the text and glosses in the margins.

Shem the penman: Joyce's pseudonym for himself in the Wake. Shem is the brother of Shaun and Izzy, and son of Humphrey and Anna, the first family around whom the action revolves.

Shaun: represents Irish Nationalism. Shaun is partly inspired by the character 'Shaun the Post' in Dion Boucicault's 19th century play Arrah Na Pogue.

Izzy, sister of Shem and Shaun represents a series of female figures in history, mythology and literature. She is:

Isolde: legendary figure betrothed to King Mark who eloped with the younger Tristan;

Grainne: legendary figure betrothed to Fionn Mac Cumhal who eloped with young Diarmuid;

Deirdre of the Sorrows: princess of Ulster whose beauty caused war and destruction;

Fionnuala: daughter of the sea god Mannanán Mac Lir who was banished into exile;

Alice Liddell: Lewis Carroll's young friend;

Stella : Esther Johnson, Jonathan Swift's young friend;

Vanessa , Esther Vanhomrigh, also associated with Swift.

Anna, wife of Humphrey and mother of Izzy, Shem and Shaun. She is also known as Anna Livia Plurabelle. She is the personification of the river Liffey which flows out to the sea at Dublin Bay. In the last lines of the book she transforms into the sea god Mannanán's daughter, Fionnuala, exiled to the Sea of Moyle for centuries.

Humphrey, her husband, is the personification of the Hill of Howth, a horn of land on the north edge of Dublin city which thrusts into Dublin bay. Humphrey also represents Fionn Mac Cumhal and other mythological and historical figures.

Percy French and Thomas Moore: two nineteenth century song writers whose 'songs of yore' recur in Joyce's text. Moore's 'Silent, O Moyle', for example is used to tell of the sea god's daughter's exile to the Sea of Moyle. Other popular songs, rhymes and doggerel feature frequently in the text, in particular, the rhyme known as 'The House that Jack Built'.

Everything in *Finnegans Wake* has several meanings and while the meanings are often camouflaged, they are nevertheless reinforced through constant layering. Many things which have been said in other texts are unsaid in 'Finnegans Wake', as in taken apart, remade, further dismantled, further refurbished in a continuous cycle similar to the geological ages of the world. Joyce's text is therefore a palimpsest in every sense of the word, a veritable *Geoglyphy* carved out of history.

Darwin8u says

"Wipe your glosses with what you know."

I tend never to retread the same book twice. I finish a novel or a book, digest it, then move on. Having just finished 'Finnegans Wake' I'm not sure that approach is even possible. This is a book that is simply impossible to really finish. Yes, I read from the beginning to end. Yes, I listened to it while reading. Yes, I spoke sentences out loud. Yes, I shouted words. Yes, I underlined phrases that tickled and rhymes that ringed. But, I feel like I've scratched the semantic surface of a great field. I'm not sure when I'll return, but I'm pretty certain that the gravity is there. I feel it even as I gladly set this book aside. This is a novel that demands attention. It frustrates and confuses the most diligent seeker. I never felt in control. I never felt in command. I was in the river, and floated for a time and am just happy I didn't drown. It is world I will return to like a dream-filled sleep when the day is done and night returns.

Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

Was bin you? ::

Ein luger ; faelscher ; Father of ; flibber flabber ; Miss MacLeader ; desimulate ; hazug ; trick a her stir ; leogere ; false wit ; phonitical ; cheet a puma ; con ; equal vadar ; story hearer ; promotorcross ; mensoganto ; rascal ; h??i ; hyper cryter ; Hair Pseudo ; mwongo ; path and logical ; dish o nest and storter ; libel and label ; not a squarestraight shooter ; counterfèting ; defamé ; calumniacator ; ;

Porce? Vava Varoom? Howso? ::

I say I confirm I assert I am truthtosay Allalivia *Finnegans Wake* durchaus and straight through and Whole Thing to have geread I claim. Hand on heart!

Juan? ::

Juan the Second, anni dom twenty und twelve bisunto gesters this our lawd's year of twenty eat foreteens, a certain day of a month of showers the very tens and ones of onehundredelv. Zwar. None and sept weeks of wakes in the woche.

o?; ::

Outsea dorsea mostlich. In char. Avec avis and kittehs.

V ::

Meet McPugh and McQue. Con Campbell. Wort by wort, healthy yeasties.

Quant? ::

Fourmal mahlzeit meistlich.

Qual odor? :: Yes well donkey shay! I furt her make of a claim to have been being udder standing of a it. Maistro! And am therefore and thuswhy dubbel accused as.

Who? ::

Finn MacCool!!!!

Otter stuff from primeval daze. Donnerwetter!

The final four pages of the Anna Livia chapter (I, 8) were rendered into Basic English by C.K. Ogden with the cooperation of Joyce. McHugh's Annotations incorporate some of the notes made by Joyce for Ogden. See Ogden's book, *The General Basic English Dictionary*. I have not been able to track down Ogden's rendering. See also the article "Universalizing Languages: *Finnegans Wake* Meets Basic English," by Susan Shaw Sailer: <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307...>

One might suspect that some remarks made regarding *The Wake* are in reality directed toward the 15th century Voynich Manuscript. Here's the slowdown-lowdown:

<http://www.nationalpost.com/m/wp/full...>

"Despite their skills, not one of the above was able to read the manuscript, leading to the growing suspicion that the text does not involve any encryption, because that would have been broken by now. And it may not even involve any actual language, either: In 2004, the aforementioned Gordon Rugg declared that the text was just gibberish — an ancient hoax possibly assembled through a non-functional version of a Renaissance coding technique called the "Cardan grille." Rugg could not, however, explain why anyone in the Renaissance would do such a thing, nor did he address the amazing effort that went into the hundreds of illustrations. After a century of study, the Voynich Manuscript still mocks us."

and the manuscript itself has been webbified:

<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/digi...>

How does Finneganian work? Allow Data to explain. Joyce tends to keep his words to "ten or fewer" at a time. Curious that one of Data's pieces is from Mozart, albeit a symphony, because one is reminded of the scene from *Amadeus* in which Mozart explicates the possibilities contained within the operatic genre of writing multiple voices singing *simultaneously*, something which, in ordinary circumstances, is impossible when one word must *follow* its prior word. In Finneganian we can have them all at once. And not only do we have "ten or fewer words" at a time, we also have ten or more *characters* and stories at a time. The figures of

our human history are all here, all at once: Here Comes Everybody!!!!

Does anyone still believe that the English language is a monolingual language? Is English not already a Finneganian?

A video in which a few words of Joseph Campbell regarding *The Wake* are read over pretty images. [thanks to Friend Nick for bringing this to my attention].

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature...>

Thoughts on Joyce from Slavoj Žižek's [book: *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* 90563], Verso, 2007. p 202.

“This is also what Lacan’s thesis on ‘Joyce-the-symptom’ aims at: Joyce’s famous statement that he wrote *Finnegans Wake* in order to keep literary historians busy for the next four hundred years has to be read against the background of Lacan’s assertion that within a psychoanalytic cure a symptom is always addressed to the analyst and, as such, points forward towards its interpretation. The ‘modernism’ of Joyce resides in the fact that his works--at least *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*--are not simply external to their interpretation but, as it were, take into account in advance their possible interpretations, and enter into dialogue with them. In so far as an interpretation or a theoretical explanation of a work of art endeavours to ‘frame’ its object, one can say that this modernist dialectics provides another example of how the frame is always included in, is a part of, the framed content: in modernism, a theory about the work is comprised in the work, the work is a kind of pre-emptive strike at possible theories about itself.

“On that account, it is inappropriate to criticize Joyce for no longer writing for a naive reader capable of an immediate consumption of his works but for a reflected reader who is able to read only with an eye on possible theoretical interpretations of what he is reading--in short, for a literary scientist: such a ‘reflected’ approach in no way diminishes our enjoyment of the work--on the contrary, it supplements our reading with a surplus-enjoyment which is one of the trademarks of true modernism.”

Further precedence for *Finnegans Wake*.

From Rabelais’ second book, *Gargantua*, chapter two, we find the following *Antidoted Bubbles*, apparently a satirical poem known as a *coq-à-l’âne* (“*” represents the bits of manuscript eaten by mice):

*****arrived the Cimbrian conqueror,
*****in through air for fear of all that dew,
*****e arrives, the tubs can take no more
****resh butter pouring down like stew.

**bespattered grandma in full view:
She cried aloud: 'Herren. Fish him right out!
His beard cow-patted is as if by glue;
Or hold him a ladder, better 'tis than nowt.'

To lick his slipper some said was true bliss,
Better indeed than pardoners to pay;
But an affected rascal came amiss
Up from the dip where roaches swim and play,
And said, 'My Lords, for God's sake, your hands stay!
The eel is in that booth quite unrevealed.
There you shall find, if you would look that way,
Deep in his amice a great fault concealed.'

He was about that Chapter to intone
But found, within, the horns of a young cow.
'My mitre's depth,' he said, 'is cold as stone.
It chills my freezing brain, I know not how.'
With turnips' reek they warm his icy brow:
He'd stay at home quite happily and glad
If they should find new harnesses somehow
For all those folk whose brains have turned quite mad.

Eleven stanzas follow. Also, one things of Lewis Carroll and Dr Seuss in relation to the playfulness of *Finnegans Wake*.

If you can stomach the insipid, cloying prose, Michael Chabon has a piece in the NYRB reflecting on a year of reading the *Wake*: [What to Make of Finnegans Wake?](#). (Thank you, MJ, for the link).

Donald Barthelme, that master of postmodern minimalism, said "After all, we are all realists." How does that apply to Joyce's *Wake*? The first hypothesis would be that it is a realism relating to the experience of language, night(marre)-time language, or, in accordance with the 21st being the century of the *Wake*, the experience of being in between language(s). Joyce lived between English and Gaelic. We are in a globalized world in which English appears as the contemporary monolithic Latin. But isn't Joyce's work suggesting an alternative experience against English-as-monolith? that what our multi-cultural, multi-lingual global experience implies is a betweenness? Languages have always existed as a betweenness of official, universalizable Sprache and local, particularistic Dialekt; witness Spanglish or Ebonics. Can we locate the language wars between prescriptivists and descriptivists in this same betweenness? that we should, rather than prescribe how Joyce should have written his book, take him as describing a possibility of our being between language(s)? between knowing the rules and at the same time knowing that (guilty!) we break them and how those rules are always the possibility of their own trespass?

A precedent for the *Wake* discovered in ancient India, a Sanskrit novella, Subandhu's Vasavadatta, from the 5th or 6th century, a.d. Take the sentence from the *Wake*, "they were yung and easily freudened," and

imagine translating it into a non-European language and culture. Compare the result with this passage, rendered by two translators, an American and an Indian:

From Louis Gray (1913):

"Thus, even though a [Bh?ma], he is [[no foe of Baka]], for he is [horrible] and a [[foe of them that praise him]]; though a [fire], he is a [[wind]], for he is a [devourer of his own place of refuge] and a [[dog in his mother]]". (Single brackets represent single puns, double double.)

From Harinath De (1908, published 1994):

"The wicked man combines the incompatible appellations of being *Bh?ma* and yet no foe to the demon *Baka* in the sense that he is terrible and hostile to those worthy of praise; of being *??ray??a* fire, yet *Matari?v?* in the sense of being a destroyer of shelters and adopting a canine behaviour towards his own mother."

(Taken from Steven Moore's *The Novel: An Alternate History* volume 1: Beginnings to 1600, pp424-425.)

What does this suggest about the *Wake*? On the other hand, how is it possible for a reader to believe that any author could write a novel which contains nothing but univocal semantic content? Irony, metaphor, pun, ambiguity and ambivalence are the constituents, the conditions of possibility, of the novel. Isn't this what the *Wake* carries out to a degree of genius beyond the capacity of a merely single natural language?

Several artificial languages are woven into *The Wake*. Here's something more recent: from *The New Yorker*:

"Utopian for Beginners: An amateur linguist loses control of the language he invented."

by Joshua Foer

<http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/20...>

[Of course, Wakian is in no way to be construed as 'artificial,' only 'artful.'

The Restored Finnegans Wake. Eds. Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon. London: Penguin Classics, 2012.

This is a clear reading text produced out of 30 years labor upon Joyce's various versions of and notebooks for his *Work in Progress/Finnegans Wake*. Forth coming is a hypertext edition of the *Wake* which will include all of the pre-*Wake* drafts as well as the entirety of the extant notebooks. This hypertext edition underlies the recently published restored *Wake*. For more information see the Houyhnhnm Press .

My intention is to read one to two pages of the *Wake* per day. This oughta keep me reading for 491 days. I will also regularly push a status update in order to increase my status in the literary world as One Who Reads the *Wake*, or perhaps so that one may observe my failure to get past page 20, to have all that pretentiousness rubbed back in my own face. I do not intend to write a review. That would seem a bit obscene. But I have 491 days to decide about that.

My reading, at the beginning is untethered, but, being bookish as I am, I will likely accumulate some kind of bookish reading partner, if anything insightful presents itself.

Annutter Review of mine of Wake, wherein is out=line'd our Wake wit chapter first-lines ::
<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Warwick says

A sort of triumph, a sort of failure.

It's impossible to rate, really, but it's not remotely like anything else in English literature so in that way it's certainly impressive.

On one hand it's outrageously pretentious. But even if you want to hate it, there's no denying you can get enormous enjoyment from going through some of the passages here. A sentence can be read in as much detail as some entire books. You can reread the whole thing and it'll be completely different. Some bits are very funny, some are very sexy, many parts are jaw-droppingly beautiful, all of it is completely insane.

It drives me crazy. I think I love it.

Emily says

Many people find this book perplexing, but I find it's something like a magic hat crossed with a hall of mirrors. You can pull almost anything out of it, but usually you'll get a twisted reflection of your own ideas, obsessions, or hidden fantasies. Perhaps that's the cause for perplexion, but I think its good to dig all that stuff up.

I love this book for its tangled etymologies, and the way these pieces of words delve so deeply into a common mystical, lingual history that spans nations and cultures. When Joyce ventured through the tortured decade it took write this monstrous masterpiece, he was both graced and plagued by so many coincidences that came out of the language and myths he was integrating. He wanted to write an epic using 'dream language'; he's trying to take the modernist 'stream of consciousness' one step further, with this artistic expression of the consciousness of dreams. The book thrives on paradox: it's the waking stream of consciousness of sleep.

The story is simply one man's dream, but that dream seeps into the consciousness, language, and archetypes of all humanity, and hundreds of mystical traditions. These ideas sound Jungian, and actually Jung was a contemporary of Joyce's, who thought Joyce was insane. Actually, this relationship becomes one of the coincidences that manifests itself in the text. As I mentioned, Jung thought Joyce was arrogant and ridiculous. However, Joyce respected Jung and wanted, desperately, for Jung treat his daughter Lucia, who had Paranoid Schizophrenia. Jung did treat Lucia, and he and Joyce became friends through a common care for Joyce's daughter. There is a famous quote where Jung compares Joyce to his daughter saying, "They are two people going to the bottom of a river--one falling, the other diving."

Jung, Joyce, and Lucia, all become characters woven into the dream language of Finnegans Wake. You can find this story hiding in crumbled phrases such as this:

"How glad you'll be I waked you! My! How well you'll feel! For ever after... I only hope whole heavens sees us. For I feel I could near faint away. Into the deeps. Annamores leep. Let me lean, just a lea, if you le, bowldstrong bigtider. Allgearls is wea. At times. So. While you're adamant evar. Wrhps, that wind as if out of norewere! As on the night of Apophanyes. Jumpst shootst throbbst into me mouth like bogue and arrohs. Ludegude of Lashlanns, how he whips me cheeks! Sea, sea! Here, weir, reach, island, bridge. Where you

meet I."

As you can see I love this book, and would recommend it to a variety of people. The magic hall of mirrors becomes quite fascinating, you just need a proper entry point.

Geoff says

Finnegans Wake is Joyce's masterpiece, the culmination of his life's work, the apex of his art, the tremendous final achievement of the 20th century's greatest prose stylist. To ignore Joyce's masterpiece is to miss out on one of a handful of great events in literary history. *Dubliners* anticipated *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *A Portrait of the Artist...* anticipated *Ulysses*, *Ulysses* anticipated *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce's individual works are particularly momentous set side by side, as the trajectory of his craft's transfiguration can be clearly traced. For Joyce, all roads led to the *Wake*. We cannot consider the snow "faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead", we cannot consider "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo", we cannot consider "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed", without considering "A way a lone a last a loved a long the 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." To accept Joyce's place in the history of literature is to accept *Finnegans Wake* as his greatest contribution. To ignore or dismiss it is to leave a gaping hole in your understanding of the progress of literary aesthetics in the modern age. As William Gass said: "*FW* is the high-water mark of Modernism, and not to have been fundamentally influenced by it as a writer is not to have lived in your time. Not to live in your time is a serious moral flaw."

Finnegans Wake, at first blush, might seem the most uninviting literary relic imaginable. It begins in the middle of a fragment of a sentence and immediately immerses the reader in a floodtide of its *Wakelanguage* without any ado- no lamp, lantern, or quickflickering guidepost torches to ease one's way in and through. And, to be sure, this is a very difficult book, perhaps the most difficult book you or I will ever read. But let me here briefly comment on what the *Wake* is not: it is not gibberish, it is not "the product of a diseased mind", it is not "an elaborate prank" to make fools of readers and academia. To be a proponent of any of these claims is to have not spent time with the text. It is to not trust that Joyce, after having perfected and exhausted the potentialities of the form of the novel with *Ulysses*, was capable of going beyond that achievement, to forge for himself and for us an utterly new way- to push the idea of the novel, and the language of the novel, past itself and into a new mode or form. What more would one person have to accomplish than write *Ulysses* to earn an audience's confidence? *Finnegans Wake* is not only not unreadababble, it is perhaps the most carefully, minutely, complexly composed work of art the modern era has produced. A third of Joyce's life was spent rendering the *Wake* into the form in which we have it now. Might we, as readers, not allow ourselves to be a fraction of a percent as generous with our time, to try to understand what he was attempting, on his terms?

Enough of what the *Wake* isn't, on to what it is. First of all, it is music. Second, it is an experimental prose work, a work whose form and content are one and the same, where there is no boundary between style and substance. Thirdly and onward, it is an occurrence of language. It is a vast palimpsest, a layering and weaving of etyms. It is the realization and perfection of the work of *static* art that Joyce was approaching his entire career- art, literature, that does not progress from point to point as in traditional narrative, but exists and is experienced in cycles, circles, reverberations, (re)generations, iterations, emergences, divested of the

encumbrances of space and time. It is Flaubert's ideal "book about nothing."* It is the density and obscurity of night rendered into waterfall rainbow river language. "A permanent member of the avant-garde." "An unpopularizable book." A great riddle or maze. An amalgamation of gods. Obscure pun-drenched birdtongue, strangest little song you'll ever damn hear. Hen scratchings on the magazine wall, typographically rendered, a polyvocal defence of the great shame and guilt of man. The tonguetwister of allhumanity dreamingwaking together, it was uncovered in a burial mound. Vico's four horsemen of the arkpokalypse. Mamalujo broadcasting from the hill of Shaun and a donkey brayayaying over radio waves intercepted telling strange advertisements out of Carthage and burning Roam. It is the Egyptian Book of the Dead within the Book of Kells within the Old Testament and the New within Dante and Shakespeare and Milton and Goethe and Swift et Sterne et al. and Wilde's trial to boot. It is a motley chorus composed of all of Ireland's saints and sinners. "Then's now with now's then in tense continuant. Heard." It is Finn MacCool's salmon flitting in the deep well and Tristan and Isolde's marriage ship sailing out under the cry of gulls (forewaves whispering whshhpwshpshp) and at the same time it is their opera made prose, mild und leise. It is the excrement ink writ on the foolscap flesh of Shem the Penman, thus it is Shemdean spawn. It is Anna Livia Plurabelle's missive to the antagonistic greater world of chitterchattererflitterflatterers (how loathe they have become to me!) and little Issy star cloud sister's spilled milk across the great nightspan, bababbling brooks about the laying mountainous mass of sleepman. Treacling trickling trickster tome, laplapping gossip and news, soundbites and screams and diatribes from Lucifer's caindom, enabler of murtherer, and also song of the cockcrowcoolicolala! Noman's humming in the valley of the wal. Shaft of light pierce o'reillying the mourning mist. A confuscation of mystification by utteration and ululation with confabulation and iteration of vocalization of a Wake in Preegress! Hush! Caution! Echoland! What a funferall! The last lief on the stonetree. "The untireties of livesliving being the one substance of a streamsbecoming. Totalled in toldteld and teldtold in tittletell tattle." Mind your hats goan in!

Lastly, *Finnegans Wake* is the least pessimistic book I know. After one has accustomed oneself to the night language, after one is acquainted with Joyce's modes and methods, this book is pure joy. One begins to anticipate the moments and emergence of themes, iterations of characters in different guises, developments and repetitions of rhythms, word and sound groupings that recur in exact placement, much as one listens to a beloved symphony or opera. The music of the *Wake*, like a true Irish wake, is a rejoicing at the deathbed, rounds of songs rollicking the departed soul into the next cycle of existence. What is more optimistic than Joyce's interpretation of Vico's historical cycles? That as we approach our non-being the clock resets, time ticks ahead again for us among the shades of history, the sun rises as it always will, the night dissipates, the fog of this dream-life clears and mankind emerges again, to suffer it all, sing it all, weep through it all, live it all again. That these ages resound again and again not through great men only but through everyman, that the resurrection of the meaning of man comes in the simplest of assemblages- husband, wife, son, daughter. This affirmation is a mainstay throughout all of Joyce's work- that the universal erupts through the banal, that the commonplace is the point where the cosmos enacts its drama. What could be a more joyous celebration and confirmation, not only of human life as it emerges from the darkness of meaninglessness in the only possible way it can, through language, but of the creative life in particular, the life whose purpose is to make new forms out of the fragments of the old, to anticipate the new, to instill a beautiful renewal of purpose for each emerging epoch, that it might know its own language, make its own music?

Nathan's review is a fount of information, please do visit the museyroom. Tip!

And if you are abcedminded, when you set out on your own reeding of the *Wake*, please to be joining and contributing to the Wake Grappa. We're all of us over there at different points on the turning of the widening gyre, so feel free to hop on at any time.

*The entire plot of *Finnegans Wake* can be summed up essentially in that classic cliched opening phrase "It

was a dark and stormy night...”

Paul Bryant says

Stealing an idea from Manny's review, here's part of the (British) Highway Code if it was written by James Joyce any time during the last 17 years of his life. This is the section called

ROAD SIGNALS

Swarn and inform other roadusers aminxt that nombre of evelings, including pedestrigirls and jumbleboys (see 'and twinglings of twitchbells in rondel' section twoozle para fleeph), of your inbended actions. You should have a kelchy chose and clayblade and at all times make prayes to the three of clubs always, having checked it is not misleading to tuss like a whoopy anisine, whipping your eyesoult and gnatsching your teats over the brividdy road users before changing course or direction, stopping or moving off (djowl there, longfoot here, and bejesus back again) and the doctor's bill for Joe McJohn and all his catholic lemony heathens.

Cancel them after use, the rancid old patootsies. Make sure your signals will not unblade your corsets forswooth and let the loobully moons aloose to confuse the caboose and grake the speens of the urgier others. This is not allowed. If, for instance, you want to stop adilly and look adolly, as we do, as we done and as we will, do not blooger the whooger untill you pass the galoshes of Mrs Minchum Birny Kirny and the little jeepie twins. Yes! Kadiddly! Your brake lights will warn kachooth and your broken lights will foghorn willikins my billikins, or you can use an arm to signal to emphasise or pomphesise or undersize the loof of the lamplight lillyjoggings in all their creamy birny underthings which you can quite see if you stand on a chair. And o lord groggins, remember that signalling does not give you priority.

Kelly McCubbin says

The easiest book in the world... seriously. With scholars unable to ever reach consensus on what the book is or how it should be read or even if it actually has value, you can simply ignore them. Your opinions are just as valid. Add to this the wads of cultural ephemera that Joyce has packed the book with and you find yourself in the rare position to occasionally be BETTER qualified to interpret parts of the text than academics.

Try this, get some friends together, pop the cork on a few bottles of wine and, in your most twee Irish accents read it to each other. A whole new world of dirty jokes, awful puns, barbed insults and musical references will suddenly pop out of this previously "impenetrable" text.

And don't be afraid to get sidetracked, it's part of the point.

MJ Nicholls says

Let me explain the five-star rating. When I was teenager I was ludicrously shy. I was the son and heir of a shyness that was criminally vulgar. My all-conquering shyness kept Morrissey in gold-plated ormolu swans

for eight years. Any contact with human beings made me mumble in horror and scuttle off to lurk in dark corners. But I developed this automatic writing technique in school to ease my mounting stress whenever teachers were poaching victims to answer questions, perform presentations or generally humiliate. I would start out composing a piece of surrealist free-association prose, usually violently satirical. As the teachers (or pupils or other humans) closed in around me, my prose would lapse into soothing gibberish. Sometimes I wrote a stream of pretty sounding words (I was a rabid sesquipedalian in my teens)—zeugmatic, antediluvian, milquetoast, mugwump. Luscious lovely words! Sometimes language broke down into neologisms or gibberish—boobleplop, artycary, frumpalerp, etc. Nervy, throbbing syllables. I came to associate collapsed language with an inner space where I went to hide from the imagined humiliations of interacting with others. Once I escaped the imprisonment of my inner conscious (over a four-year period known as *The Torture Years*), I always used nonsense writing as a means of getting through difficult situations—where others might doodle, for example, I would write Joycean Jabberwocky. Still do, usually on the phone. So this book, to me, is *The Little Book of Calm*. Except it isn't little, and it makes people shit themselves. Me? I love this magnificent beast. Unless you suffer from similar deep-seated psychological wounds that threaten to gradually consume your entire adult life, don't read this.

Nicholas Karpuk says

This is not a fair score, I'll admit it right up front. This book affirms my reasoning for reading the first few pages of a book before buying it. This I bought because I've been trying to read more classics, but my experience has shown me that classics shouldn't be exempted from the first few page practice.

Here's the second paragraph of the book:

"Sir Tristram, violer d'amores, fr'over the short sea, had passen-core rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wilderfight his penisolate war: nor had topsawyers rocks by the stream Oconee exaggerated themselfe to Laurens county's gogios while they went doublin their mumper all the time: nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to taugtaug thuartpeatrick: not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all's fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathondjoe. Rot a peck of pa's malt had Jhem or Shen brewed by arclight and rory end to the regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface."

I've read a few books with a confusing intro. It's a common practice in sci-fi, where you throw the reader in head first with mysterious nouns and let them work it out as they go. This is not the case, because after a few pages I realized Mr. Joyce wasn't going to start making anymore sense than he already was. Here's a quote from page 311, when I skipped ahead to see if it was all like this:

"It was long after once there was a lealand in the luffing ore it was less after lives thor a toycler in the tawn at all ohr it was note before he drew out the moddle of Kersse by jerkin his dressing but and or it was not before athwartships he buttonhaled the Norweeager's capstan."

I considered this might be a phonetic thing, similar to what Twain used, but no matter how I tried with the first few pages I could not parse it into anything comprehensible. Even *Canterbury Tales* has the decency to make sense when read aloud. If I can not comprehend a book on a sentence level, a paragraph level, or a chapter level I'm just going to give up.

Here's the first sentence of the intro, which I went back to look at after throwing the book in the trash, feeling

bad, and retrieving it:

"There is no agreement as to what *Finnegans Wake* is about, whether or not it is "about" anything, or even whether it is, in any sense of the word, "readable".

Oh good. That's very encouraging. Here's the thing, I don't read as a challenge. I read for ideas, or to be entertained. I like to read books with ideas I might struggle with, it's fun to think about it. I do not like fighting to choke down the words themselves. Joyce makes up words, uses dialect, and god knows what else in the first few chapters, it's like he's trying to be obtuse to make a game out of it.

That might be fun in a short story, but this is 600-some pages.

If someone can suggest a good method for consuming this damn thing, the Rosetta Stone for why I should care, I'm open to ideas, but otherwise, it's getting put away

David Lentz says

"Tim Finnegan's Wake"

by David B. Lentz

When God reeled in good auld Tim Finnegan,
And looked into his green Irish peepers,
Said He, "Now, what was I thinkin'?"
Poor lad, he ain't one of the keepers."

To hell Tim descended without any fear,
To the devil, whom not much is lost on,
Said he, "I'm sure you'll be comfortable here,
Among all your old friends from South Boston."

Tim's jokes night and day caused Satan to swear,
As migraines crept behind blood red eyelids,
"An eternity with you is just too much to bear.
You're going home to your wife and your nine kids."

So up pops Tim at his wake from his casket.
"It can't be," went a howl from his wife.
When he belched the sea from his own breadbasket,
Said she, "Someone, hand me a knife."

Now Tim's fishing off George's Banks
Catching codfish, haddock and hake.
The happiest folk in town to give thanks,
Is John Hancock for Finnegan's wake.

Finn's now a legend among life underwriters,
In Beantown and all over the States.

In him beats the heart of a fighter.
Sad to hear how they increased his rates.

Finn's tale is best told with a dram of Jameson.
You're entitled to whatever sense you can make.
Just cause you're dead, it don't mean you're gone.
You may take comfort in Finnegans wake.

from "Bloomsday: The Bostoniad"
