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## STRUCTURALIST AND POSTSTRUCTURALIST JOYCE: “HE WAR” TO DIFFERENCES!\*

**Abstract:** The article explores the complementary relationship between structuralist and poststructuralist approaches to James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. It does so in two ways: firstly, it traces this interpretive tension through early critical responses, particularly T. S. Eliot’s mythic structuralism and Ezra Pound’s proto-deconstructive reading of Homeric parallels as mere “scaffolding”. Secondly, the study offers a close reading of the “Ithaca” chapter of *Ulysses* and of one of the most anti-representational works, the “Mamafesta” section of *Finnegans Wake*. Drawing on Umberto Eco’s concept of “chaosmos” and Roland Barthes’ shift from excavating structures to constructing interpretive systems, the article argues that Joyce’s work simultaneously absorbs and subverts both structural meaning and anti-representational practice. His textual mechanisms operate through excessive language and systematisation, parodying taxonomic discourse and catalogue-making in ways that at once enact and destabilise the drive toward comprehensive representation. These texts, written decades before the formal emergence of structuralism, anticipate both its theoretical frameworks and the poststructuralist critiques that would follow, particularly the decentering of fixed meaning and the generative instability of signification.

**Key-words:** James Joyce, anti-representation, structuralism, poststructuralism

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Of all the protean writers, James Joyce surely attracted the full spectrum of criticism and reading frameworks, be it semiotics, Irish nationalist, postcolonial or feminist, anarchic or Marxist criticism, formalism, psychoanalytic, or eco criticism, to name just a few.<sup>1</sup> And of the entire spectrum, one pair seems most unlikely brought together, yet most enlightening for Joyce's post-realist stance, i.e. structuralism and post-structuralism. Structuralism claims that there is an underlying structure to all sign-systems, which organises the system. After Marx located this hidden structure in economic production, followed by Freud and his buried psychic unconscious, structuralists found deep structures in language itself,<sup>2</sup> which they extrapolated to all sign-systems, including social and cultural phenomena. Looking at Barthes' *Empire of Signs*, one can observe a twist to structuralism:

I can also—though in no way claiming to represent or to analyze reality itself (these being the major gestures of Western discourse)—isolate somewhere in the world (faraway) a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out of these features deliberately form a system. It is this system which I shall call: Japan.<sup>3</sup>

Here lies the shift in what still seems like structuralism becoming poststructuralism, as Barthes focuses not on excavating the underlying structure of the referential object, but on constructing both the structure and the object, in order to deconstruct (a term only later employed by Derrida) the system of knowledge that contains them. Confront Lévi-Strauss' statement that “[s]igns resemble images in being concrete entities but they resemble concepts in their power of reference”<sup>4</sup> with the poststructuralist tendency to dismiss reference and to focus instead on the self-referencing processes of constructing meaning; for Barthes, there is “the emptiness of language,”<sup>5</sup> or, key

1. For a panoramic view of critical frameworks, see Bernard McKenna, *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Reference Guide* (Greenwood Publishing House, 2002).

2. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, transl. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Basic Books, 1963), 33: “First, structural linguistics shifts from the study of conscious linguistic phenomena to study of their unconscious infra-structure; second, it does not treat terms as independent entities, taking instead as its basis of analysis the relations between terms; third, it introduces the concept of system [...]; finally, structural linguistics aims at discovering general laws.”

3. Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, transl. Richard Howard (Hill and Wang/ The Noonday Press, 1989), 3.

4. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, transl. George Weidenfield and Nicholson Ltd. (University of Chicago Press), 12.

5. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 4.

point for Derrida, the absence of the signified and the proliferation of sign-substitutions/signifiers:

The surrogate does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow preexisted it. From then on it was probably necessary to begin to think that there was no centre, that the centre would not be thought in the form of a being-present, that the centre had no natural locus, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play.<sup>6</sup>

Having already discussed Joyce's *Ulysses* in terms of transgressive metafiction (i.e., fiction which deconstructs the world it simultaneously generates, turning to form in an extremely overt way) elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> therefore from a hard poststructuralist perspective (deconstruction), I turned to the question: how is it possible to read *Ulysses* both in a structuralist and poststructuralist way, are these readings merely imposing one's views on the text or are they different actualisations of textual mechanisms that are already there, in short, is there both a structuralist and a poststructuralist Joyce? What initially started as what seems like an inquisitorial quest for the ultimate Joyce had slowly become a process of absorbing the contraries, bringing them together and, in a radical deconstructivist praxis, replacing "difference" with *différance*, meaning acknowledging that both paradigms function as signifiers in a system of traces and convey meaning only by alluding to each other as signs, substituting the other.<sup>8</sup> The opposition between them is what constitutes meaning, the appeal to each other, the spacing of taxonomical language; taking them as stand-alone signs means precisely the kind of logocentrism that Joyce would dismiss with a clever pun. Therefore, the present analysis focuses on their operational value and, while still from a poststructuralist perspective that cannot be easily casted off when reading Joyce, it acknowledges the trace of structuralism.

A note should be made before plunging into the different readings of *Ulysses*. I do not regard structuralism and poststructuralism

6. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," *A Postmodern Reader*, edited by Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon (State University of New York Press, 1993), 232.

7. Ana-Maria Deliu, "Transgressive Metafiction: Deconstructing Worlds in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*," *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 3, no. 2 (2016): 144–56.

8. For an elaboration of *différance*, see Jacques Derrida, "Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva," in *Positions*, transl. by Alan Bass (The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 28–30.

as dialectical, historical forces, as Daniel Chaffee and Charles Lemert do: “We, as subjects, cannot be (that is, exist) without structured relations with others, which structures cannot adapt to historical change without the freedom of subjects” (138). Instead, as I already argued within the limits of this paper, I choose to see them as functional paradigms that work synchronically in the moment of utterance to create meaning.

For this paper, I will also take into consideration the chapter “Mamafesta” from Joyce’s final work, *Finnegans Wake*. It is tempting to see *Ulysses* as “a progression of style,”<sup>9</sup> culminating with his most anti-literary work, the book that acquired the fame of the least readable novel, and regarding it as the highest form of polyphony and anarchic writing. Except, the anarchic quality did not prevent Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson to find a mythical “skeleton key”<sup>10</sup> and Samuel Beckett<sup>11</sup> or Donald Phillip Verne<sup>12</sup> to read the book as structured on Giambattista Vico’s *A New Science* (which even has affinities with Lévi-Strauss’ view of myth as form!).

### **A visionary polemic: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound**

Pre-structuralist articulations of myth and (dis)order are to be found immediately after the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922, in a period where most reviews dealt with the question of its alleged obscenity. Two articles published in *The Dial*, both famous readings of Joyce’s book, engaged in a polemic that would anticipate the relationship between structuralist and poststructuralist thought around 40 years later.

There is T.S. Eliot’s “‘Ulysses,’ Order and Myth” (1923) which focuses on the mythic parallelism to the Homeric *Odyssey* as a “method”, using myth as a structuring principle of modern experience, an attempt to counteract formlessness with form: “a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.”<sup>13</sup> Of course, this idea reflects T.S. Eliot’s own use of myth in “The Waste Land” and his

9. Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 5–6.

10. Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (Harcourt Brace, 1944).

11. Samuel Beckett, “Dante... Bruno. Vico... Joyce,” in *Finnegans Wake: A Symposium — Our Exagmination Round His Incamination of Work in Progress* (Shakespeare & Co. 1929; facs. rep. edn. New Directions 1972), 1–22.

12. Donald Phillip Verne (ed.), *VICO AND JOYCE*, Suny, 1987.

13. T. S. Eliot, “‘Ulysses,’ Order and Myth,” *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (Faber and Faber, 1975), 177.

aesthetic programme, nevertheless, the myth skeleton does seem to provide the reader with the necessary solid point to be able to indulge further in a semantically fluid world. For instance, the nuptial bed in *Ulysses*, bought by Molly's father, travelled the entire world before arriving at the Blooms, and it has a defect (possibly alluding to adultery). This awkwardly inscribes the modern couple into the heroic tradition, the secret bed shared by Odysseus and the faithful Penelope, crafted by Odysseus himself and impossible to be removed by the suitors or common folks. Myth as a structuring force, parallelisms, form and meaning, although expressed as an aesthetic concern, are all part of what will later become a structuralist way of thinking.

What is more interesting is that this article was a response to Ezra Pound's review, published in *The Dial* in 1922. With incredible critical intuition, Ezra Pound notes that the "correspondences are part of Joyce's medievalism and are chiefly his own affair, a scaffold, a means of construction, justified by the result, and justifiable by it only."<sup>14</sup> Instead of seeing myth as foundational, in an essentialist way, as bearing some kind of metaphysical "being-present" centre that organises thought structures, Ezra Pound anticipates the deconstruction movement and acknowledges myth as a functional "scaffold" that allows for substitutions of signs. If it organises thoughts or the material of the novel, a mythical structure does not do so as a determined structure, but as the interplay of chaotic experience and the need for meaning. As Anthony Domestico notes, "it does not create a form so much as generate a means to balance form with formless[ness]."<sup>15</sup> I only have to add (and exemplify later) that form is not even representational in the structuralist sense of transcribing hidden archetypal structures.

### The Poetics of Chaosmos

Umberto Eco's much later reading of Joyce, *The Aesthetic of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce* (1962), understands medievalism as a model of coherence and order for Joyce, a holistic view of the world, which clashes with the fragmented individual consciousness of the twentieth century. The word "chaosmos" is cut out of the chapter "Mamafesta" (book I, chapter 5) of *Finnegans Wake*. Eco aims

14. Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, 1954), 70.

15. Anthony Domestico, "'Ulysses,' Order and Myth," *The Modernism Lab*, <https://campuspress.yale.edu/modernismlab/ulysses-order-and-myth/>.

to follow the process of the young artist who conserves and repudiates the mental forms that preside over the ordered cosmos proposed by medieval Christian tradition and who, still thinking as a medieval, dissolves the ordered Cosmos into the polyvalent form of the Chaosmos.<sup>16</sup>

What Eco regards as medieval is the sense of the whole, the knowable cosmic structure, the orderly medieval sensibility for catalogues, lists and encyclopaedias (a meta-list of their occurrences would include the inventory of rhetorical figures in *Aeolus*, the catalogue of styles in “Oxen of the Sun” or the catalogue of clichés in “Eumaenus,” the lists in “Cyclops” and “Ithaca”—all of these in *Ulysses*—and, of course, the list of possible names for a manifesto that has virtually no other quality than going by many names, “Mamafesta”). The chaos would come from the post-realist realisation that the world is not representable, that there are no infinite lists.

We will return to this sensibility, but for now let us turn our attention to the context in which “chaosmos” appears for Joyce:

Because, Soferim Bebel, if it goes to that, (and dormerwindow gossip will cry it from the housetops no surelier than the writing on the wall will hue it to the mod of men that mote in the main street) every person, place and thing in the chaosmos of Alle anyway connected with the gobblydumped turkery was moving and changing every part of the time: the travelling inkhorn (possibly pot), the hare and turtle pen and paper, the continually more and less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators, the as time went on as it will variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vobable scriptsigns.<sup>17</sup>

As with any non-representational polysemantic text, I believe that the attempt to deliver a close reading is futile. However, for the purposes of this paper, it is necessarily to note that the writer (Hebr. soferim) of Babel, a construct that confuses languages, projects onto its roof (meaning in an overtly way) the “mod” (old. En. mind, spirit) and also the mood or mode of men, concerned with every other (Gr. *allê*) person, place and thing (or, simply put, with all nouns), and that this Alle “was moving and changing” even through time (understood as in historiography, part by part) possibly by means of acculturation (“[melting]pot”, “travelling inkhorn”) but most importantly through

16. Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetic of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 11.

17. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, <http://www.finwake.com>, 118.

unstable words, signifiers, “scriptsigns”. Therefore, as I see it, the text tells us two very important things: 1) this is a textual world, which practices anti-representation, oddly enough, to mimic the way signs are used as signifiers in creating cultural networks and 2) there is no cosmic holistic structure to write about, there is only “intermisunderstanding” that creates meaning, broken nodes of communication that create culture.

The way Eco resolves the tension between the conception of a holistic world and a fragmented one is through the theory of epiphany. He considers epiphany the central poetic drive throughout Joyce’s oeuvre and even employs essentialist terms in describing it: the poetic epiphany reveals “the profound soul of things, and it is he [the poet] who makes them exist solely through the poetic word.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, *Finnegans Wake* becomes “a great epiphany of the cosmic structure resolved into language.”<sup>19</sup> But epiphany is a misleading concept, since we associate it with a whole and presentable (metaphysical) world, a reality that reveals itself, while Eco takes into consideration the question of a modern consciousness: “This is not an example of the revelation of a thing itself in its objective essence, *quidditas*, but the revelation of what the thing means to us in that moment. It is the value bestowed on the thing at that moment which actually makes the thing.”<sup>20</sup> Still, whether epiphany is the central drive for Joyce is questionable, as we will see, but for now is important to retain that the appearance of order is undermined, for Eco, by the modernist gaze (or agency) of the author, and that epiphany itself is not essentialist but agential (it does not reveal a determined structure but something perceived by the writer).

Eco’s structuralism will relax even more after his elaborations on semiotics and the concept of *opera aperta*; in this sense, I consider worth quoting David Robey’s introductory words to *The Open Work* extensively:

In its all-embracing, systematic character Eco’s general semiotics has more than a little in common, as noted above, with the philosophical system of Thomas Aquinas, the subject of his doctoral thesis. But a major difference between Eco’s theory and most philosophical or scientific systems is his distinctive insistence that the theory makes no claim to represent the real nature of things. It is here that we can see the most

18. Eco, *The Aesthetic*, 24.

19. Eco, *The Aesthetic*, 77.

20. Eco, *The Aesthetic*, 27.

conspicuous and important connection with *Opera aperta* and its theme of the disorder, instability, and essential incomprehensibility of the modern world. The theme lies behind the title and much of the argument of *La struttura assente* which, while taking over many of the fundamentals of structuralist thought, contains a vigorous criticism of the French structuralism of the sixties—which Eco himself compares (*The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, p. v) to Thomist thought—for what he calls its “ontological” rather than “methodological” character: its conviction that the ordered systems it describes are the systems of the world, a conviction illustrated in its most extreme form in Levi Strauss’s belief that structural analysis serves ultimately to reveal the perennial laws governing the working of the human mind. Eco maintains that structures are “methodological” in that they are provisional, hypothetical products of the mind, and at most only partially reflect the essential nature of things. The ultimate truth, the structure behind all structures, is permanently absent, beyond our intellectual grasp.<sup>21</sup> (xxi)

As with the case of Barthes, we see a structuralist thinker engaging with poststructuralist modes of thinking, incorporating the impossibility of extracting through paradigms the whole (and holistic) truth into the need to construct the paradigms, to operate them in grasping the world, to see them as primarily functional, not ontological. Considering this insight, it is even clearer that Eco’s conception of epiphany must be understood in a more open way, focusing on his quick addition that the things that form the deep structures “exist solely through the poetic word,” they are constructed through the modern agency of the poet.<sup>22</sup>

### **“He war” to differences! “Ithaca” and “Mamafesta”**

If we look closely at Joyce’s most anti-representational textual instances, “Ithaca” from *Ulysses* (chapter 17) and “Mamafesta” from *Finnegans Wake* (book I, chapter 5), how is it possible that structuralist

21. David Robey, Introduction to *The Open Work*, by Umberto Eco (Harvard University Press, 1989), xxi.

22. Poststructuralist (and postmodern) readings of Joyce will discard agency altogether. See Colin MacCabe’s thesis that anti-representational language has no dominant subject that aligns language against things (4) and Karen Lawrence’ demonstration that “the text deliberately acts as if it were cut off from any single consciousness,” using multiple styles not as an expressive inheritance related to modernist authenticism, but as a cultural inheritance (7–9). Even the structuralist perspective of Robert Scholes accounts for Leopold Bloom as a cybernetic self of James Joyce, meaning a dispersion of the ego through a whole ecosystem (164–65).

elements (not only structural, but which pertains to ideas of origin in language) can melt into what is the further we have gotten so far from stable meaning and agency in literature?

Firstly, I understand anti-representational language in poststructuralist terms, starting from the idea that “[i]t is only given the essential homogeneity of experience and a position from which the elements within it can be judged that it is possible to talk of a representational theory of language”<sup>23</sup> and the thesis that “*Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are concerned not with representing experience through language but with experiencing language through a destruction of representation.”<sup>24</sup> If we are simply looking for meaning in “Ithaca,” at the level of the narrative, paralleling Odysseus’ return to Ithaca, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus are withdrawing to Bloom’s house, intoxicated with alcohol. He realises that he does not have the keys and he struggles to get inside for what feels like Odysseus’ struggles to get back in kingship. The most convenient structuralist impulse would be the appeal of myth as archetypal structure that organises the way in which a subject perceives reality. As we have seen, myth can also be no more than a “scaffold” for Joyce, it can be structural, but not necessarily structuralist. In any case, focusing on meaning in relation with a central subject that perceives experiences is obviously not the best approach for post-realist Joyce, where meaning is to be found in language and derived from its conflict with the subject.

Hence, we turn to language for meaning. The text presents a seemingly closed form of question and answer, and a hyperlogical and scientific rhetoric. There is no narrative voice or perspective (the subject in the structure is obliterated). Who is asking the questions and who is responding? The text seems to interrogate itself, and in doing so, it attempts to use only denotative, overprecise language that mimics a scientific approach to represent reality. The idea that reality can be grasped within a system of signifiers is part of a structuralist mode of thinking; “broadly speaking, [...] all fields of empirical research are structuralist.”<sup>25</sup> Until he drifts to sleep and language flaunts reference in an overt way, it uses denotative language even for thought processes and affects (as opposed to the stream-of-consciousness from “Penelope”). The scene where Bloom goes to bed aware of Molly’s adultery is significant in this sense:

23. Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* (Springer, 1983), 4.

24. MacCabe, *James Joyce*, 4.

25. Daniel Chaffee and Charles Lemert, “Structuralism and Poststructuralism,” in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. Bryan S. Turner (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 124.

What did his limbs, when gradually extended, encounter?

New clean bedlinen, additional odours, the presence of a human form, female, hers, the imprint of a human form, male, not his, some crumbs, some flakes of potted meat, recooked, which he removed.

If he had smiled why would he have smiled?

To reflect that each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be first, last, only and alone whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity.

What preceding series?<sup>26</sup>

The text goes on to catalogue twenty-six men with whom Molly presumably had sexual affairs. Of course, oversystematisation in this case creates a humorous effect, a relief which subverts the very idea of systematisation. The ambiguity of laughter in Joyce's text consists of a sardonic laughter of mastery and dominance, and a laughter of release, a meta-laughter that laughs at the project of totalisation.<sup>27</sup>

There are two interrelated processes that construct systems while simultaneously subverting them: firstly, attempting to refer to a thing by giving an excessive description of its properties, usually conveyed as a series that aims for exhaustiveness. For instance, boiling water is rendered as a chemical description, an account of Dublin's water supply system and an "ode" to water, that includes a detailed account of "its healing virtues," "its persevering penetrativeness," "its infallibility as paradigm and paragon," "its submarine fauna and flora (anacoustic, photophobe)," an ode that ends with "the noxiousness of its effluvia in lacustrine marshes, pestilential fens, faded flowerwater, stagnant pools in the waning moon."<sup>28</sup> The superfluous information parodies the method of describing reality part by part as if it would form a coherent whole – parodies, in fact, the means of taxonomical language. Separating the elements of a phenomenon, all delicately differentiated in meaning and placed in clear relations to one another, shows the limits of representation since only an infinite amount of

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26. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, <http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/~rac101/concord/texts/ulysses/>, 304.

27. Andrew J. Mitchell and Sam Slote, Introduction to *Derrida and Joyce: On Totality and Equivocation* (State University of New York Press, 2013), 11–12.

28. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, <http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/~rac101/concord/texts/ulysses/>, 279.

details would construct a whole image. As Lawrence puts it, “reality is infinitely expandable by being infinitely divisible.”<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, as we already anticipated when talking about Eco’s chaosmos, the act of cataloguing reality pertains to a sense of comprehensiveness and representability. Eco puts it in relation to a medieval *modus operandi*, yet there is also the antique example of the catalogue of ships in the *Iliad* that aims for a complete enumeration with mnemonic function. Even in *The Odyssey*, which communicates after all with the (post)modern odyssey of Bloom, Erich Auerbach observes “the need of the Homeric style to leave nothing which it mentions half in darkness and unexternalized,”<sup>30</sup> “with an orderliness which even passion does not disturb.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the textual form of Q&A documents Bloom’s reactions to his wife’s adultery with the orderliness of cold hard facts, and, overall, Joyce’s “Ithaca” incorporates the temptation of lists (the budget of the day, the objects in the drawers and on the shelves, Bloom’s books, the uses of water, the men Molly slept with) as if trying to make sense of the day that passed, but there are both frequent lapses from catalogues (e.g.: his spending that day) and superfluous elements (e.g.: “stagnant pools in the waning moon,” my emphasis). The lacks and the abundance both self-consciously undermine the very idea of cataloguing.

“Mamafesta” is about a letter that ALP addresses to her husband, HCE, dictated to Shem the Penman, and entrusted to Shaun the Postman for delivery. The letter does not reach its destination; in fact, it is never read since the contents are never shown. Instead, we are presented with a three pages long list of possible names by which the letter is known (known to whom, we may ask, though the subject is again obliterated). Her untitled “mamafesta” (manifesto/mama-festa) is never known for what it is but only by its many designators which stand for qualities. A small sample would be:

Thus we hear of, *The Augusta Angustissimost for Old Seabeastius’ Salvation, Rockabill Booby in the Wave Trough, Here’s to the Relicts of All Decencies, Anna Stessa’s Rise to Notice, Knickle Down Duddy Gunne and Arishe Sir Cannon, My Golden One and My Selver Wedding, Amoury Treestam and Icy Siseule.*<sup>32</sup>

29. Lawrence, *The Odyssey*, 565.

30. Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar,” in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, transl. William R. Trask (Princeton University Press, 1953), 5.

31. Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar,” 6.

32. Joyce, *Finnegans*, 104.

At best, the reader could infer that the letter is about venerable people (Lat. *augustus*, Gr. *sebastos*), but of course the writing of the letter was provoked by the sexual trespass of HCE. Is it about a tragic love story, as in Tristan and Isolde (“Treestam and Icy Siseule”) or a dysfunctional relationship with an “icy soul?”<sup>33</sup> Is it about a rise, a resurrection, “Anna Stessa’s Rise to Notice” (Gr. *anastasis*) or about a fall and a death, “Knickle Down Duddy Gunne” (“kneel down,” “dead and gone”)? Both meanings are valid (as well as others) in a highly polysemantic, anti-representational praxis of language. In Joyce’s words, “[t]he proteiform graph itself is a polyhedron of scripture.”<sup>34</sup> The names are semantically loaded with possible qualities of the letter, but the “scripture,” the logocentric view of the world, is parodied by excessive polysemantics.

This is how the text proposes a scheme and then it undermines it. It incorporates into its semantic flow logocentric and structuralist ways of capturing the world in language, yet it flaunts referentiality by showing the impossibility of representing the world. “And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war.”<sup>35</sup> For Joyce, the myth of Babel is also the myth of babblers: the mythical origin of language cannot be without its deconstruction, in the poststructuralist sense.

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33. Derrida talks about how a word from Joyce can form meaning both as a grapheme (written) and a phoneme (vocalised), “in a word gramophonied” (*Gramophone*, 49). He also talks about the paradoxical state that the text invites us to voice it, yet the moment you voice it, you have settled meaning (*Two Words*, 156).

34. Joyce, *Finnegans*, 107.

35. Joyce, *Finnegans*, 258.

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