

## Polyglot Poetry

*Multilingualism and the Aesthetics of the  
Gesamtkunstwerk*

RAINER GULDIN

Both were white in black arpists at cloever spilling knickt.

JAMES JOYCE, *FINNEGANS WAKE*

mais uma vez junto ao mar polifluxbórboro polivozbárbaro  
polúphloisbos polyfizzyboisterous weitaufrauschend fluctissonante.

HAROLDO DE CAMPOS, *GALÁXIAS*

IN HIS NOVEL *The Flanders Road*, published in 1960, Claude Simon introduces a bilingual passage conceived as a text written in the eighteenth century by one of the ancestors of the characters of the book. The text itself takes the form of a partially annotated French translation from an Italian original dedicated to the engraving of a young man embracing a female centaur. The juxtaposition of two different historical forms of French—eighteenth and early twentieth century—mirrors the bilingualism of the passage, thus suggesting a link between the internal and external plurality of language(s). Toward the very end, the text shifts abruptly back to Italian, moving from translation to simple transcription. The sudden return to the language of the original is not accidental but fraught with a meaning suggestive of Bakhtin's dialogical strategy of carnivalism. The thematic focus, in fact, changes dramatically from high-flown aesthetic considerations about the use of musical instruments and the delicate hues of the yellow and lilac garments worn by the two figures to a more down-to-earth reflection about the animal side of the female centaur and her relation to Bacchus and Venus, that is, to sensual pleasure. The description deftly moves through layers of time, slipping from one text to the other

and ending up with the description of the representation of an imaginary being. The text relies on two specific strategies: the first one creates a disturbing sense of unease as far as the reality depicted is concerned and is complemented by another that focuses on uncertain borders and tentative passages.

As Ralph Sarkonag and Richard Hodgson have pointed out, "Content and form mirror each other—on the one hand, the half human, half animal creature described by words that are translated and then transcribed, and, on the other, the juxtaposition of French and Italian both in the column of gloss in the left hand margin of the text that Simon's own page seeks to replicate as well as in the prose text itself—thereby making" it a "truly hybrid text."<sup>1</sup> Of particular interest in Simon's text is the description of the very part that unites human and animal, the node where the human ends and the equine begins, standing for the unstable border between translating and transcribing as well as for the fluid frontiers between the two languages involved, French and Italian: "The eye distinguishes the delicacy of the white flesh-tintes in the woman from the clarity of the brilliant fur in the animal of a light chestnut colour but one is then confused in attempting to determine the confines."<sup>2</sup> The two beings, and with them the two languages they stand for, are closely interwoven but at the same time distinct from each other: white human flesh, bright animal fur. In Simon's description—and in the authors I discuss in this chapter—the use of different languages within the same text and the reflection about that use comment on each other, gesturing toward one of the most salient aspects of multilingualism in modern literature: the metalinguistic and self-referential functions of the text. But Simon's description also raises other questions directly related to the main topic of my chapter. First of all, the different ways that languages meet, mix, and merge, remaining, despite this, separate from each other. Second, the specific, sometimes conflicting functions attributed to the use of different languages in the same text.<sup>3</sup> And third, the way these two processes question and define the status of the literary work—its totality, the relation of the single parts to each other and to the whole, the copenetration of fragment and unity—as well as raise, in light of the materiality of idioms, which through juxtaposition and interpenetration reveal their fundamental opaqueness, the issue of languages as an adequate means of depicting reality. These three related ques-

tions are essential to understanding the idea of the modern *Gesamtkunstwerk* and its use of different languages to create a complex polyglot and polyvalent work of art as it was practiced by a number of writers linked to the modernist movement.<sup>4</sup> In the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the artist combines different media to attain a multisensory effect, the result of which is that unity is sought after but playfully lost. Another way of achieving this is by juxtaposing and mixing different languages. In this case sensorial multiplicity is attained by linguistic parallelisms, phonetic contrasts, or repeated code switching on different levels of the text. In concrete poetry the effect is enhanced by the use of particular page settings, unconventional lettering, or additional visual elements like colors.

In this chapter I focus on a few significant cases of multilingual writing looking first at the Zürich-Dadaists who practiced the *Simultangedicht*, a polyglot cooperative poem in which each poet contributed a few lines in a different language. I then move on to Ezra Pound's ideogrammic method—as he developed it in the *Cantos*—and Joyce's use of puns in *Finnegans Wake*. These writers rely heavily on multilingualism in the elaboration of their poetic points of view. After World War II this line of artistic inquiry was picked up by the concrete poets—probably the last avant-garde movement of modernism with an international audience.<sup>5</sup> Eugen Gomringer made use of German, Spanish, and English in his poetical texts and at the same time tried to combine painting techniques with writing, using the white page as a surface for inscription. Most of the elements set out in the first part of the chapter converge and combine in the work of the Brazilian concrete poet Haroldo de Campos, who translated parts of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Pound's *Cantos*, bearing witness to the international aesthetic and sociopolitical dimension of the project of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which spanned continents, languages, and cultures in an attempt to embrace and blend different styles, codes, and idioms. His multilingual prose poem *Galáxias*, written between 1963 and 1976, is a culmination point and open-ended commentary on the tradition of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. At the same time it represents a dismissal of its universalistic tendency, thus articulating two essential moments: the search for unity and the practice of fragmentation, revealing the hidden dynamics of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, torn between the illusion of an (im)possible synthesis and the incessant, tempting menace of fragmentation.

## Why Write Multilingual Texts?

Languages can be brought to mix and mesh in different ways. First of all there is the case of authors who create successive parallel versions of the same text in different languages, very often using self-translation to achieve this. The works of Vladimir Nabokov, Samuel Beckett, Yvan Goll, and Hans Arp are instances of this specific writing strategy. In this text, however, I would like to focus on multilingual texts that stage the copresence of one or more languages by alternating between languages by lines or paragraphs, by code switching within sentences, and by using of single-word or word-cluster multilingual puns in an attempt to make languages contaminate and affect each other by textual contiguity. With respect to the functions of multilingualism, I pursue two lines of inquiry closely related to the idea of a literary *Gesamtkunstwerk*: the relationship of fragment and unity—that is, of a single language and overall linguistic arrangement—and the issue of the adequacy of languages to representation.

During the first half of the twentieth century, as Rainier Grutman has pointed out, “European schools of stylistic and rhetorical analysis considered the language of a work of art . . . as an organic whole that could serve as a yardstick for the interpretations of such ‘deviations’ as language blending or word borrowing.”<sup>6</sup> Literary practice, thus, as the following examples show, was well ahead of critical reception.<sup>7</sup> An example of the particular attitude Grutman refers to is Leo Spitzer’s “Language Mixing as Stylistic Device and Expression of Acoustic Inventiveness,” published in 1928 at the very height of literary modernism.<sup>8</sup>

Spitzer analyses what he calls “bewußte Sprachmischung,” the intentional mixing of languages, in the work of the German journalist and writer Alfred Kerr. Kerr makes use of dialect and foreign languages in order to create a specific atmosphere, to suggest authenticity and realism. The two, adds Spitzer, are only a step away from each other. The inner dialectical plurality of a single language, then, is linked explicitly to the plurality of different languages, a connection to bear in mind, as it plays an important role in Joyce’s self-translation of a multilingual passage from *Finnegans Wake*. The use of foreign words leads to an awkward and entangled mixture (“sonderbares und unentwirrbares Gemisch”) and to a contamination of the author’s voice by the voices of his characters. Author and characters who intermix languages, Spitzer suggests, do not really

know who they are; their identity is endangered, and they are easily influenced and often victims of their impressions, constantly shifting roles, and masks.<sup>9</sup> According to Spitzer, only two viable solutions are at hand: an author can safeguard the unity and distinctiveness of the writing language by avoiding any foreign intrusion or an author can use words and phrases of other languages to suggest foreign or exotic worlds. There is no other possibility. Spitzer’s interpretation of multilingualism, then, is acted out on the front of unity alone: textual unity, unity of character, authorial voice, and writing language. The only gain associated with multilingual writing is an atmospheric touch vaguely suggesting realism. The danger, on the other hand, consists in eclecticism and linguistic hodgepodge, that is, in diversity without a unifying principle. Spitzer’s qualifications are negative throughout: “The use of foreign words is an unnecessary embellishment and the polyglot flicker achieved by it much too colorful” (“[Es] bedarf nicht des Paillettenwerkes der Fremdwörter . . . allzu bunt ist das polyglotte Flimmern”).<sup>10</sup> The mixing of different languages adds only supplementary flavor to the text. It should, therefore, not become a habitual consistent stylistic feature but remain an occasional strategy. Only this way can it be an effective stylistic device. Kerr’s frequent and often unjustified use of multilingual elements to spice up his style is, no doubt, questionable, but Spitzer’s very choice of author along with his restrictive interpretation of the phenomenon leads him to miss out on some of the essential aspects of multilingualism.

András Horn has developed a typology of the aesthetic functions of multilingualism that reiterates some of the points made by Spitzer but that also introduces a series of new aspects.<sup>11</sup> Horn defines various criteria. The first two, linguistic characterization and the furthering of illusion are employed above all, Horn states, to create aesthetic credibility, recalling Spitzer’s definition.<sup>12</sup> Another of Horn’s categories, on the other hand, is relevant to the topic under discussion, as it deals with the creation of unity in plurality (“Einheit in der Mannigfaltigkeit”).<sup>13</sup> Horn quotes a passage from a poem by William Dunbar, a fifteenth-century author. This text combines Latin and Middle English passages in an attempt to convey the universal meaning of death. A similar use can be detected in Pound’s *Cantos*. Multilingual passages, however, tend also to break up and disrupt ideas of unity rather than cementing them and do so even when striving to achieve a harmonic whole of interacting parts. In addition to being used

to create aesthetic credibility and to posit unity in plurality, multilingualism can, according to Horn, also be employed for comic effects. Here the lighthearted humorous aspect predominates. Morphological mixing tends to blur the border and dismantle the unity of the single word.

In discussing the use of phonetic divergences between languages, Horn stresses the importance of the associative realm they open up for the reader, the different worlds they lead into. If a writer wants to convey a meaning that is specific to a certain language he or she is forced to make use of language mixing, which allows him or her to take advantage of the surprising alienating effect it creates. The meshing of idioms creates tension and draws attention to the uniqueness of each language. Despite these considerations, in his last remarks Horn insists on the predominance of what he calls the physiognomic aspect: "Foreign words are above all a vehicle of aesthetic expression" ("Fremdsprachliches ist vor allem als Vehikel des Ausdrucks ästhetisch wichtig"). The mixing of languages, then, fundamentally helps authors to differentiate their means of expression. Horn concedes that his typology might be insufficient, and it is indeed when it comes to the use of multilingualism in modernism, especially in view of the idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Horn's idea of the predominance of expressive communicative beauty ("Vorherrschaft des Erscheinungsschönen," "Dominanz des Ausdrucksschönen") misses what Jakobson termed the poetic and metalinguistic function of literature and the self-referential aspect of texts.<sup>14</sup> Multilingualism in modernism is, in fact, used above all to point to the medium as such and to the work of art in its artificiality.

Both Spitzer and Horn focus on the phonetic and expressive side of multilingualism but ignore what it does: construct a metalanguage, a work of art that consists in different elements striving apart and yet reaching for unity, an idiom that constantly reproduces and abolishes itself, a multilingual *Gesamtkunstwerk* that calls attention to its frailty, a mixed idiom that questions the possibility of realistic representation. In modernist literature and within the movement of concrete poetry multilingualism is used as a means of self-reference. The unity of the single medium is broken down and the illusion that artistic description can represent the world is shattered. At the same time a new heterogeneous and shifting unity is constructed.

## Multilingualism and Translation

The idea of a multilingual *Gesamtkunstwerk* is inseparable from a theory of translation even if the latter is sometimes only implicitly assumed. As the following considerations show, the major contributors to the development of a plurilingual form of literature in the twentieth century have explicitly dealt with this relationship: from Pound's intertranslation to Joyce's hypertranslation and Augusto de Campos' *intradução* ("intranslation"). I rely on these theories of translation to explore the status and relationship of the different languages within a single work, especially in view of the connection between fragment and unity. Do the languages just coexist side by side, or does the use of a series of different idioms introduce a dynamic aspect into the text, breaking up its unity, even as it tries to attain an overreaching synthesis? Are the single languages thus engaged in a permanent process of silent reciprocal translation and retranslation? And, furthermore, what happens when a multilingual text is translated into another language? How can the original complexity be maintained?

One of the main sources of the modern *Gesamtkunstwerk* is German romanticism and, above all, the aesthetic reflections of the Schlegel brothers. Fragment 116 from the *Athenaem* describes "romantic universal poetry" ("romantische Universalpoesie") as the aspiration to an all-embracing unity of poetry and prose, to the melding of all the literary genres into one, to the fusing of literature and literary theory, life and art, art and science, postulating at the same time the very impossibility of ever achieving this.<sup>15</sup> This unending process of acquisition and amalgamation, which is basically a self-defeating effort to attain a final synthesis, expresses and proves the fundamentally fragmentary character of any work of art and testifies, at the same time, to the very necessity of an all-encompassing *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This unresolved but productive contradiction is expressed in the process of translation itself, defined as an ever-failing effort of total absorption and integration that draws its assimilative impetus from the very impossibility of a conclusive synthesis. Translation could thus be termed, in a certain way, the secret principle that animates the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and this is so from the very beginning.

Antoine Berman showed that within German romanticism the idea of a general principle of translation arises, what he calls the idea of "universal

translatability" ("versabilité infini").<sup>16</sup> With the *Gesamtkunstwerk* this general principle becomes internal to the text itself, regulating processes of exchange between single parts and managing complex interactions between part and whole. In modernism the themes of multilingualism and translation are intimately linked, not only because the bilingual writer acts as a translator of other texts and a self-translator of his own. The relationship between the different languages within the same text can be conceived as a form of internal translation. Multilingual texts always contain a theory of translation, either explicit or implicit, that explain the relation between the different languages present in the work.

Werner Hamacher pointed to a series of implicit multilingual constellations in Walter Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around Nineteen Hundred* that not only shed new light on the translation concept developed in his "The Task of the Translator" but also on the relationship between multilingualism, translation, and the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.<sup>17</sup> The messianic harmony adumbrated in Benjamin's concept of "pure language" finds thus a correspondence in his own plurilingual writing practice. In the mixing of languages, one glimpses the "Ursprache," and the text evinces a totalizing unity whose theoretical proximity to the plurilingual concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* developed here is evident.<sup>18</sup> Hamacher analyzes the bilingual correspondences between the German *violett*, violet, and the French *viol*, violation. This sudden lateral shift from one language to another abruptly reveals some of the hidden connections of the text, in this case the thematic link between the plush, violet curtain in his parents' bedroom, the scent of lavender, sexual violence, and reading: "In this one word—a word that is no longer simply one—everything is dissembled with everything else through a complex play of translations between and within the French and German languages." To apprehend these connections the reader has to concentrate not so much on "the proximate semantic contents of the words" as on "their formal . . . correspondences, anasematically, with the suspension of the words' semantic intentions."<sup>19</sup> These interlingual correspondences, as Hamacher pointed out, are, however, not static and have no consistency but are "generated—and indeed without pre-given rules—by each new configuration 'everytime in a completely new, original and non-deductible way.'"<sup>20</sup>

As with the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the unity strived for by these polyglot processes of interpretation is fundamentally unstable and never final.

"Every intention," writes Hamacher, "is ironic as long as the complete common measure of all linguistic modes—that is, pure language—is still outstanding; and since the privileged medium of its presentation—translation, and also that translation within a language that is called interpretation—remains itself tied to a linguistic mode and thus prevents the intention from reaching its totality through the very manner of its promotion, every intention is infinitely ironic." The same ironic point of view applies to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* itself. All the possible interlingual relationships to be discovered in the text "only present themselves in the medium of translation among various languages, between levels and segments of the text and word fragments of one or another of its languages. As fragments, all the monads of this text relate to one another in the movement of translation and dissemblance, and this movement never finds completion."<sup>21</sup>

### Dadaism: The Multilingual *Simultangedicht*

Dadaism tried from the very outset to break up, through linguistic hybridization, the monolingual unity of the literary work, and bilingualism is often achieved by simple juxtaposition of separate text units. "Balsam Cartouche" is a nonsensical poem in which two different languages interact. Hans Arp and Tristan Tzara each contributed to the poem in his own language, which has nine lines in German and seven in French, respectively.<sup>22</sup> No clear principle of alternation is to be found. The poem begins and ends in German. Some attempts at inner structuring can, however, be detected: frequent alliteration within lines of the same language and occasional rhyming between verses of the same language, both in French and in German. Sometimes these rhymes connect two verses separated by a verse of the other language, as if the two monolingual texts had been written first on their own and then shuffled like a pack of cards. As Leonard Forster has remarked, the combining of different languages does not serve the purpose of immediate communication but rather encourages the "exploration of the expressive resources of language at a deep, subconscious magical level. Arp's own poetry at this time is not designed to extend the way in which language can be made to *express*, but to explore what it can be made to *do*."<sup>24</sup> The Dadaist attack on language as a mere vehicle of communication of conventional sense paved the way for an interpretation of language as a raw material, just like colors or the

canvases are in painting. A growing consciousness ensued of language as a material in and of itself, not just as a mold for thought or a transparent means, not something to see through but to be seen.

One of the best examples of Dada tonal poetry is "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer," a simultaneous poem in three languages that was staged at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich on March 31, 1916, by Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Janco, and Tristan Tzara, who presented the German, English, and French parts respectively.<sup>25</sup> A "rhythmic interlude" composed of a whistle, a bass drum, and a rattle played by Janco, Huelsenbeck, and Tzara that accompanied the spoken words throughout the poem added another layer of meaning and thus created, through simple juxtaposition, an intermittent multilayered cacophony. The parallel texts read by the three artists were interspersed with quotations from newspaper clips, the Bible, verses inspired by African songs, popular songs, and loose syllables. Pauses were built into the separate readings by which specific meetings between the sounds and between meanings of the three languages were provoked. The single texts furthermore contain recurrent inner rhymes that make them answer each other like rebounding echoes in a closed room.

The threefold poem tells the slightly obscene and devious story of a well-traveled admiral looking for a haven to rest his weary limbs and a sweet girl to lie with. Despite all the titillating excitement, the shouting, screaming, and whimpering, the admiral will end up finding nothing. "L'amiral n'a rien trouvé" is the last line in which all three voices finally and quietly converge, echoing the equally monolingual title and closing the poem with an ironic self-referential commentary about the possibilities of artistic creation. This very idea is partially reechoed in the text, in another language and with clearly biblical associations ("Wer suchet dem wirt aufgetan"; "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" [Matthew 7:7]), parodistically combining the search for sexual pleasure with the search for spiritual redemption.

The carnivalesque intent of this deliberate mixing of different languages, voices and musical instruments, familiar and foreign cultures, lofty artistic creativity and low-life motivations, religion and sexuality is evident. The Dadaists thus created the multilingual dialogical text well before Bakhtin formulated his aesthetic theory of heteroglossia.<sup>26</sup> Form and content, once again, comment on each other, showing that the apparent

chaotic outburst is the calculated result of a series of formal decisions combined with a moment of unpredictability due to chance encounters between the colliding sounds. The figure of the admiral unsuccessfully looking for a place to stay is used to introduce exotic countries and strange-sounding words. Because he has traveled around the world, his presence suggests a geographic and linguistic totality; that totality is shattered and blown to bits only to recollapse into unity at the very end.<sup>27</sup>

This circular design is particularly telling in view of an illuminating commentary by Augusto de Campos on Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Mallarmé's *A Throw of the Dice*. The common denominator, writes de Campos, referring to the exegesis of Robert Greer Cohn, is "the formula: unity, dualism, multiplicity, and again unity. The circular construction common to both works is evident at first glance: The first sentence of *Finnegans Wake* continues the last, and the last words of Mallarmé's poem are also the first."<sup>28</sup> "L'amiral cherche une maison à louer," then, can be seen as a scenic representation of the multilingual *Gesamtkunstwerk*, torn between unity and fragment: a whole universe of sound unfolds and differentiates itself, only to implode in pre-babelic harmony and subdued silence at the end.

A "Note for the Bourgeoisie" added at the bottom of the page and signed by Tristan Tzara sketches briefly the multimedia artistic horizon within which the poem has to be set, showing that the plurilinguistic text should be seen as an extension of practices used in painting and in music. "The attempts at transmutation of objects and colors by the first cubist painters (1917), Picasso, Braque, Duchamp, Villon, Delaunay, aroused the wish to apply the same principles of simultaneity in poetry. . . . Mallarmé [had] tried out a typographical reform in his poem: 'A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance'; Marinetti popularized this subordination in his 'Words in Freedom.'"<sup>29</sup> This simultaneity was explored by Hans Arp in the course of his artistic career in both his poetry and in paintings and sculptures.

Born in Strasbourg in 1886, Arp commuted between German and French using his bilingualism mainly as an aesthetic stimulus. In the years before World War I his artistic practice led him to distrust and ultimately reject representational forms of painting. His later discovery of new forms of artistic expression in the plastic arts took place only after a flight from realism and a detour into literature and writing. Many of his poems exist

in German and French parallel versions. Likewise, he made use of "different media in the plastic arts," repeating "the same piece of sculpture in different materials—first in bronze, then in one kind of stone, then in another kind of stone."<sup>30</sup> For Arp, language was not a means of expression but fundamentally a material, the same way that bronze, marble, or wood are. His combination of different media, idioms, and materials stems from a deep-seated distrust of all artistic languages as adequate means of expression and is, at the same time, a way of exploring subconscious form patterns.

### Ezra Pound's Ideogrammic Method

The devouring aspect of Joyce's and Pound's omnivorosity in their use of cultural and linguistic material to achieve a totalizing effect in *Finnegans Wake* and the *Cantos* also plays an absolutely central role in Augusto and Haroldo de Campos's project of concrete poetry that not only incorporates a huge variety of transcultural and translanguistic material but also swallows and digests the pioneering work of Joyce and Pound—especially their multilingualism—in an involuted moment of self-reference. The recurrent imagery in Pound's *Cantos* and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is the result of two very different writing strategies. Joyce's practice of inserting elements into appropriate parts of his work was based on a preexisting plan. Pound, on the other hand, used the different elements as he went along without reworking his earlier sections. Both, however, attempt to create an interconnected multilingual web.<sup>31</sup> Before turning to Joyce's multilingual puns, I would like to discuss briefly Pound's use of ideograms in relation to a multilingual *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Pound's ideogrammic method, based on his reading of Ernest Fenollosa's analysis of the Chinese written character, represents the main cohesive principle of the *Cantos*. It tells us how the single parts relate to each other, determining the organization within mono- or plurilingual conglomerations, and it also informs the overall structure. It could be described as a form of listing or cataloguing, reuniting a series of heterogeneous elements, "extracting an intelligible form from items that have no syllogistic connection."<sup>32</sup> Hugh Kenner speaks of multiple plots presented in extremely condensed form and quotes Fenollosa's own reference to the moving image: ideograms hold "something of the character of a continu-

ous motion picture."<sup>33</sup> This connection was relaborated by Haroldo de Campos in his *Ideogram: Logic, Poetry, Language*, in which he also re-published Sergei Eisenstein's text from 1929 on the cinematic principle and the ideogram.<sup>34</sup> Patterns of images take the place of "sequential linkage between successive scenes."<sup>35</sup> The ideogrammic method, thus, is a cohesive principle that abolishes causal linearity by uniting heterogeneous elements associated metaphorically, allowing "transfers of force between words."<sup>36</sup> As with metaphors, these transfers follow the principles of both similitude and difference: "The Chinese ideograph, like the metaphor, deals in exceedingly condensed juxtapositions. . . . Juxtaposed things illuminate one another."<sup>37</sup>

Pound makes use of several languages in his *Cantos*, attributing to them a series of functions. English, Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Spanish, and Provençal are combined at various levels of meaning and in different contexts, creating a mosaic of multilingual clusters that traverse the book. According to Vladimir Krynsky the languages that dominate Pound's polyglottic work are Greek, Latin, Chinese, Italian, Spanish, and English because they express the three main axes around which the *Cantos* are organized: Eleusis, Confucius, and the constitutional project of the American Declaration of Independence.<sup>38</sup>

Kenner defines the following functions: exploring the musicality of languages and the specific tonalities of national sensibility, using foreign language quotes as if they were inscrutable stone inscriptions, suggesting through juxtaposition of Latin and Chinese passages the ubiquity of certain universal concepts, and creating historical depth by referring to ideas born well before our era. Basically Pound, thus, uses multilingualism for two conflicting and complementary reasons: to point out the fundamental diversity of languages and to emphasize the universality of certain ideas both synchronically and diachronically. Krynsky speaks in this connection of a universalizing code.<sup>39</sup> The relation of the multilingual passages to each other must be considered within the context of the ideogrammic method: a multifaceted mosaic of disparate elements interacting with each other.

Ezra Pound's road to the *Cantos* is constellated with a series of translations through which he criticized and perfected his writing, submitting it to the most diverse variations and stashing the material away for his future works: Chinese poems, verses from the Japanese Noh theater, the

French troubadours, Guido Cavalcanti, ProPERTius, and the French symbolists, above all Laforgue. He even transposed Sophocles' *Trachiniae* into American slang.<sup>40</sup> De Campos draws a connection between Pound's translating activity and his ideogrammic method. To discover Joyce's influence in the work of the Brazilian writer Guimarães Rosa, as does de Campos, one would have to compare his work with a Portuguese translation of *Finnegans Wake*: "Ideogrammic method. Criticism by analysis and comparison of the material (via translation)."<sup>41</sup> The French translator of Campos's *Galaxias*, Ines Oseki-Dépré, describes this particular form of translation as "intertranslation" ("intertraduction"), probably referring to the intertextual aspect implied in Pound's use of passages in foreign languages that refer not only to another historical and linguistic reality but also to a different literary context. Through the multilingual net emerges a global culture spanning centuries and continents.

### The Use of Multilingual Puns in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

Like Pound in his *Cantos*, Joyce makes use of different languages both in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in order to articulate "a totalizing vision" of the "vertical-historical dimensions of multilingualism . . . and of its horizontal-contemporary dimensions in a polycentric Europe and larger world."<sup>42</sup> In his *Finnegans Wake* Joyce makes systematic use of polyglot puns in the hope of achieving multiple associations through the construction of a supple web of interwoven elements. His multilingualism is "simultaneously musical and iconic or hieroglyphic."<sup>43</sup> Polyglot puns, furthermore, open up multiple associations akin to the way the unconscious expresses itself in dreams. Multilingualism is attributed a series of functions: Joyce allows languages to playfully interact and affect each other in an attempt to rejuvenate English as an artistic medium; in addition to this, multilingualism is an answer to Joyce's deep-seated mistrust of all languages as a means of precise expression; the polyglot side of the book, finally, is homologous to its thematically polyvalent dimension.<sup>44</sup>

Forster, quoting James Atherton, analyzes a short passage that I would like to discuss here briefly in order to show how he didn't just juxtapose different languages like the Dadaists or Pound before him but mixed and blended them.<sup>45</sup> Both were white in black arpists at cloever spilling

knckt."<sup>46</sup> The passage does not just use different languages but also deftly blends literary quotations and allusions to other artists, creating a suggestive dense multilayered verbivocovisual cluster.

"Arpist" points to a literary forerunner, Hans Arp, whose work was well known to Joyce, especially "his 'Wortkullierungen,' word-graftings, arising out of a pun, the portmanteau-word, and the use of distorted spellings."<sup>47</sup> Words prey on one another like parasites. Words from one language are implanted onto words from another like a shoot from a branch or like a twig of a living tree that is grafted into a cut made in another tree to form a new growth. The implication is that slow osmotic processes ensue between the two heterogeneous units, reminding one of the imaginary half-human, half-animal from Claude Simon's text. Portmanteau words, on the other hand, are created by combining two or more words—from the same or from different languages—and their meanings. Mono- or multilingual puns, finally, exploit the tension arising out of homophony accompanied by plurality of meaning. All these techniques try to break up the phonetic and orthographic unity of the single word, as well as the unity of its meaning, through fragmenting imports and unbidden foreign implants, suggesting at the same time another kind of fragmented overarching unity.

In the passage in question, the two languages powerfully affecting each other are English and German. The actual meaning of this bilingual text can only be reconstructed by a series of translation movements that create a dense web of interlinking connections in, between, and above the two idioms. Some textual signals point to the playful dimension of this complex interchange. The "Spiel" implies playful (mis)spellings. Hans Arp's treatment of language reminds one of the delicate play of an (h)arpist. Arp's clever spelling plays on the different chords of language; Joyce's own game stereophonically extends this practice to different languages at the same time.

The reference to the colors "black" and "white" implies the magic arts and their magic spell(ing)s, chess playing; as well as the German title of a collection of poetry by Arp, *Weisst du schwarz du*, which is, again, based on a pun. The second-person singular of the German verb *wissen*, *du weisst*, can mean both "to know" as well as refer to the color white, *weissen*—"to whiten"—and *schwarzen*—"to blacken." The distortion of the



spelling on the word "clever" opens up further dimensions of meaning, all circling around the bilingual multimediatric talent of Hans Arp, his linguistic creativity, and cleverness. The word "clover" hidden in "cloever" points to the German *Kleeblatt*—"clover leaf"—a word used to designate a trio of close friends.<sup>48</sup> At the time Joyce was in Zürich, Hans Arp and his two friends from the Dadaist group in Zürich, Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara, formed just such a close artistic friendship. There is also a multilingual pun on "clover," again made visible through translation into German. "Klee" not only refers to the artist of the same name, Paul Klee, whom Arp and Joyce both profoundly admired, but also suggests through homophony the French *clef*, "key," implying perhaps that the key to a true understanding of Joyce's and Arp's artistic endeavors can be found in their similar use of language.

The last word "knickt" could be read as a multilingual word-grafting that implants the vowel "k" from the English "to know" onto the German *nicht*, as this word is separated from the rest of the sentence and followed by a question mark: "Nicht?" ("Isn't it?") If the "k" is not pronounced, applying thus an English reading to the word, it points back to the title of Hans Arp's volume of poetry, giving the whole section a sudden ironic twist: "Weisst du schwarz du [k]nisch[k]t?" The self-defeating quality of this sort of wordplay based on distorted spelling is also expressed in the word "spilling," suggesting loss, failure and defeat. But, then again, the movement from one word to the other through the filter of translation might suggest the very opposite. The liberating game—"Spiel"—of spelling drains the words of their conventional everyday meaning, making it leak out, spill out, but with the effect of refreshing and revitalizing our perception of words and language. If, on the other hand, we read the "k," we get the German verb *knicken*, meaning both "to break" and "to bend." And this last ambivalent self-referential bit of information refers us back, in a circular movement, to that which unites Arp and Joyce: their ironical treatment of language(s).

### Translating Translation: Joyce Translates Joyce

In the beginning of 1938 Joyce decided to translate two passages from *Finnegans Wake*—the washerwoman's dialogue in Anna Livia—into Italian.<sup>49</sup> These passages had already been translated into French by a team

of translators comprising Yvan Goll, Adrienne Monnier, Philippe Soupault, and Samuel Beckett. To realize this project he asked Nino Frank—whom he had met in 1926 through Yvan Goll—for help. For two afternoons a week for three consecutive months they worked together on the two passages that were later to be published in *Prospective* on February 15 and December 15 respectively.

The decisive difference between the earlier collective translation and this new one done by the author himself lies in the fact that whereas the team of translators had decided to conserve the same foreign sonority of the original, so as not to level out the multilingualism of Joyce's text (the same decision was made by Augusto and Haroldo de Campos in their Portuguese translation *Panorama of Finnegans Wake*), Joyce himself decided to translate everything into Italian, transposing the plurality of languages of the English original into the plurality of different forms of Italian. He thus showed that behind the idea of linguistic plurality hides the idea of a possible plurality of means of representation, which points to the very artificiality of representation itself.<sup>50</sup> As Jacqueline Risset states, "What emerges above all from the detailed analysis of the Italian version is that *this* translation is no pursuit of hypothetical equivalents of the original text (as given, definitive) but a later elaboration representing (in relation to the first text seen as really—literally—'work in progress') a kind of extension, a new stage, a more daring variation on the text in process."<sup>51</sup> A complex displacement takes place, transposing one plurality into another: the plurality of different languages yields the plurality of different linguistic registers. Joyce's translation shows that every language is intrinsically plural, in a geographic, social, and historical way. Languages consist in dialects and sociolects and have a historical dimension, visible through etymological analysis. The English version consists of heterogeneous phrases using Latin, Greek, and German elements, offering a vocabulary with a sonority clearly not English. The Italian translation, on the other hand, makes use only of Italian terms. The linguistic deformations are consequently rendered in Italian, without recourse or allusion to any other language.

In his translation, Joyce insists, furthermore, on the spoken register, multiplying the use of common phrases and proverbs, leading to a total immersion into the world of idiomatic Italian. This accentuation of the spoken word is poured into an extremely sophisticated formal mold of

rhythmic patterns, recurrent syntactic structures, and phonetic texturing. In the invention of new words, the principle of deformation is guided above all by sound. In the text, dialects, literary archaisms, specialized idioms, the spoken language of everyday life, the language of the cultural elite, and Dante's Italian are not only juxtaposed but mixed and fused. The text "is worked in such a way that the different levels . . . find themselves in some way de-ranked and de-rooted by virtue of being re-planted in a new overall context," abolishing through this any clear-cut hierarchy of high and low.<sup>52</sup> The opposing sides touch, compenetrating and contaminating each other. In this way, old expressions are renewed, and language itself is treated as if it were a dialect. As Risser says, "It is language whose field is disturbed, moved in accordance with a forgotten creativity," suggesting a new possibility: the fusion of different linguistic registers "further upstream, as it were, from the perspective of the plurality of languages."<sup>53</sup>

Joyce's translation not only criticizes the adequacy of languages to representation; it also comments on the inner organization of the literary work of art itself. He conceives of the different languages and the different linguistic registers of a single language as active layers, moving planes and not fixed stratifications. This mobile definition of language(s) finds its counterpart in one of the main themes of the two passages and the book itself: the river of words running through the pages. Discourse conducts discourse, moving along the words like the river running through the linen of the main character.

The basic principle driving the text of *Finnegans Wake* is to put the entire language into play. In Joyce's hypertexttranslation, which is a combination of translation and rewriting, this principle is not lost but carried over in the process. The creative principle, the text's dynamic, is carried inside the language of the translation, permitting the linguistic plurality of the original to affect the language of translation, which reveals the inner plurality of all languages and breaks down its supposed unity and fixity, making it creative in its turn. Joyce's Italian translation "consists in this 'putting back into play'; it is (in relation to the original) a 'follow-up' game—truly a 're-play.'"<sup>54</sup> In the French translation, on the other hand, the goal is the painstaking, explanatory pursuit of specific equivalents. The problem with cultural references to discourses outside the realm of the Italian language is that they tend to evoke a foreign authority, thus arresting the creative flow of language and petrifying its inventive play.

Joyce's hypertexttranslation, refusing to follow the English original that drew on different idioms, shows that Italian, like any other language, in its inner stratification contains all other languages. The bilingualism of *Finnegans Wake*, thus, mirrors the plural discourses at work within a single language. "Italian, viewed as aggregate of strata, of reservoirs, polyglotism, is transformed into 'plurilinguism,' dialects, tones, lexical levels merging together in a contradictory co-presence."<sup>55</sup> Joyce thus defines through his practice of hypertexttranslation two different but intimately related forms of a polyphonic *Gesamtkunstwerk*. He undoes all languages but at the same time searches for their final integration in the form of one true language, comparable to Walter Benjamin's "pure language." The Italian version of Anna Livia is, furthermore, closer than its French counterpart to Joyce's own writing, bordering on the limit of "nonsense."

### Constellations: Haroldo de Campos's *Galaxias*

Noigandres, the Brazilian group of concrete poets, was founded by the de Campos brothers and Decio Pignatari in 1952.<sup>56</sup> The three writers made frequent use of different languages in their poems, always looking for new and challenging solutions. Pignatari's "Cuban Stele" written in 1962 and published as a folder in *Noigandres Anthology* combines Latin, English, and Portuguese "on three typographically marked axes." It reproduces the classical fable of the wolf and the lamb and translates it into the postcolonial, geopolitical context of the early sixties. Augusto de Campos's trilingual, Portuguese, English, and French poem "Cidade-cité-cité," on the other hand, creates a gargantuan polysyllabic word conveying some of the voracity of a modern, constantly expanding megalopolis.<sup>57</sup>

The best example of a multilingual text in view of the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, however, is Haroldo de Campos's *Galaxias*. The text, imagined at the extreme borders of poetry and prose, can be interpreted as a search for the materiality of language, a revolt against the transparency of the word. It draws its inspiration from three main sources: Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Pound's *Cantos*, and Mallarmé's *A Throw of the Dice as well as his unfinished project of the absolute book, The Book*. The connections between Joyce and Mallarmé are discussed by Augusto de Campos in *Panorama of Finnegans Wake*, which was first published by the de Campos brothers in 1962.<sup>58</sup> The book presents creative transpositions of

eleven fragments in a bilingual presentation accompanied by explanatory passages.

*Galaxias* consists of fifty single pages without numbering. The length of each line is dictated by a rhythmic pattern. The jagged right margins, furthermore, enhance the idea that each page represents a constellation of its own. The complete absence of any punctuation marks and capital letters, finally, creates an endless phrase revolving around itself, a flux of signs "flowing uninterrupted across the page, as a *galactic* expansion. Each page, by itself, makes a 'concretion,' or autonomously coalescing body, interchangeable with any other page for reading purposes."<sup>59</sup> The image of ever-expanding galaxies has both visual and musical connotations. Like Pound and Joyce before him, de Campos works with neologisms, citations, multilingual puns, and heterogeneous juxtapositions in an attempt to integrate more and more aspects and thereby create an open-ended plurilinguistic *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

"The 'verbivocovisual' elements of Joyce's prose—the 'montage word' regarded as a composite mosaic unit or a basic textual node . . . were emphasized from the very beginning of the Concrete Poetry movement. . . . The ideogram is obtained by superimposing words, true lexical montages. Its general infrastructure is a 'circular design, of which every part is beginning, middle, and end.'<sup>60</sup> De Campos redefined Pound's concept of ideogram, criticizing his interpretation of Fenollosa by calling attention to the phonemic, ideogrammic character of morphemes and words themselves. In his reading of Fenollosa, Pound had stressed the fact that Chinese ideograms are closer to things than English words because of their visual dimension. According to de Campos, on the other hand, whose interpretation is also guided by the work of Gertrude Stein and Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*, ideograms are interesting not because of their nature as visual signs standing for a particular meaning but rather because of their parallelistic, paratactic syntax—in short, their relationality. Concrete poetry is therefore less a matter of spatial form and typographic devices than of ideogrammatizing the verbal units themselves.<sup>61</sup> This is particularly evident in *Galaxias* where the emergence of letters and morphemes organized in morphophonemic clusters—in constellations—through multiple paronomasia and assonance ensures that the text is seen rather than seen through by the reader.

*Galaxias* is organized around a few interchangeable key terms that run

throughout the text; de Campos calls them "semantic vertebræ": the sea, the trip, the book. As in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the musical composition, the constant flowing of a multilingual word flux, accounts for the absence of any linear, causally constructed plot. In a short portrait of Haroldo de Campos, Vilém Flusser notes how words are sounds, and visible signs carrying a specific meaning: "These words are modified on three different levels. As sounds they are made to resonate in different ways, as visible shapes they are transformed by shifting single letters, and as meaningful entities they are modified by a play of connotations. This way, an uninterrupted multilingual stream of words and neologisms is created."<sup>62</sup>

De Campos makes frequent use of different languages, very often at the outset of a new page. German, Latin, Greek, Italian, English, French, and Spanish words or sentences are interspersed in the text and sometimes indicate a specific geographic or cultural context or gesture toward a meta-linguistic dimension. This creates an all-encompassing web of quotations, including a variety of linguistic registers ranging from everyday language to citations from classical literature. This multilingual metalanguage abolishes all borders between languages and within languages themselves.

In the passage quoted at the very beginning, referring to the book as a multitudinous open-ended sea, the string of attributes, "polifluxoboro polivozhabábaro políphloisbos polyfyzzyboisterous weitraufauschend fluc-tissonante," moves through different languages, from Portuguese to Greek, English, German, and back to Portuguese. As with Pound, this ideogrammic multilingual superimposing of words is linked to the practice of translation, to enacting intertextuality by way of translation. The first two words are De Campos' own creation ("une mise-en-scène de l'intertextualité via la traduction").<sup>63</sup> "Políphloisbos" is a Homeric term that also appears in Pound's *Cantos*, followed by three poetic transcriptions, that is, translations implying a creative transformative dimension: "polyfyzzy-boisterous" (Joyce), "weitraufauschend" (Voss), and "fluc-tissonante" by the Brazilian poet and translator Odorico Mendes who translated the *Odyssey* in the mid-nineteenth century. Once more, the multilingual aspect is tied up with a theory of translation as transcreation and poetic instrument.

To explain the multiple processes of translation taking place within the text itself, the term "intranslation" (*intradução*) invented by Augusto de Campos seems most appropriate. The term, which refers to the irreducible

copresence of elements from different linguistic or cultural origins, is a combination of *introdução*, "introduction," and *tradução*, "translation," and probably contains a double meaning: translation within, that is, an internal form of translation that owes to the interpenetration of the dissimilar elements constituting a text and the final impossibility of this process ever coming to a stop, an idea that has accompanied the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* from the beginning.

An analysis of the significance of multilingualism for the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* makes it possible to introduce yet another aspect into the theoretical discussion. In Haroldo de Campos's work, the Brazilian discourse of cannibalism plays a decisive role. Together with the other Noigandres poets he took up and expanded the cannibalistic metaphor of cross-cultural contact as it had been formulated in Oswald de Andrade's modernist "manifesto antropófago"—published in 1928—to describe the workings of translation itself. On the other hand, de Campos's pancannibalistic project of "transcreation" uses translation as a transformative force by which to reinterpret the Western tradition of creating new constellations, that is, multilayered systems of correspondences across cultures and ages.

The concept of cannibalism was adopted by Brazilian modernism as a means of suggesting the violent dimension inherent in all forms of cultural appropriation and at the same time as a refusal to conform to the ideal of the noble savage as it had been developed in the colonial motherland. The cannibal feeds freely on anything he might lay his hands on, enriching and strengthening himself in the process. He could be compared to Bakhtin's carnivalesque vision of a collective, endlessly devouring and masticating mouth that is never satiated. In both Bakhtin's and Oswald de Andrade's vision social and cultural hierarchies are playfully turned upside down.

In this sense, *Galáxias* is an omnivorous, anthropophagous work without beginning or end, assimilating and incorporating the whole of modern and classical literature in an endless movement of devoration and redevoration. The idea of anthropophagy and *Gesamtkunstwerk* share the same concern for totality through devoration and the same insight into the impossibility of any final fusion.