

English 4520F  
December 5, 2011

*Finnegans Wake*

### James Joyce from 1922 to 1941

January 31, 1922: makes last revisions to *Ulysses*  
February 2, 1922: *Ulysses* published (also Joyce's 40th birthday)  
March 10, 1923: announces first new pages of writing  
1923-early 1939: writes *Work in Progress*, mostly in Paris  
April 1924: first fragment of *Work in Progress* published  
1930-1934: frequent trips to Zurich to consult with eye doctor  
May 1931: Joyce and Nora married  
December 1931: death of father John Stanislaus Joyce  
February 15, 1932: grandson Stephen James Joyce born  
March 1932: Lucia's nervous breakdown, schizophrenia diagnosed  
late 1933: *Ulysses* ruled not pornographic in US; published 1934  
May 4, 1939: *Finnegans Wake* published  
late 1940: fall of France, Joyce and family to Zurich  
January 13, 1941: death in Zurich after abdominal operation

Gilbert & Sullivan's  
*Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride* (1881)

Reginald Bunthorne's aria  
"Am I alone, and unobserved?"  
sung by Martyn Green  
with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company  
(1951)  
lyrics rewritten as  
"Running Out of Patience, or Punthorne's Pride"  
by Sebastian Knowles (2003)

### Bunthorne / Sebastian Knowles aria – 1

Am I alone? And unobserved? I am.  
Then let me own, I'm an academic sham.  
My reading of the *Wake's* a fake.  
Up to about page nine, I'm fine.  
But the idea of reading every word's absurd.  
Let me confess.  
A languid love of Livia does not blight me,  
Acronyms of HCE do not delight me,  
I do not care for "thunderwords" or "Wellingturds,"  
Everything one sees is in Chinese,  
Even my attempts at the marginalia end in abject failure,  
In short, my reading of the *Wake's* an affectation,  
Born of a morbid love of reputation!

### Bunthorne / Sebastian Knowles aria – 2

If you're anxious for to shine in the high Joycean line  
As a man of tenure rare,  
You must get up all the germs of the neologic terms,  
And plant them everywhere.  
You must lie about the phrases scattered through the text like daisies  
For no clear reason why  
Though they mean exactly zero you will always be a hero  
If you can make them signify!  
And everyone will say  
As you walk your mystic way,  
"If this young man can read *Finnegans Wake*  
Which is much too deep for me,  
Why what a very singularly deep young man  
this deep young man must be!"

### Bunthorne / Sebastian Knowles aria – 3

Be eloquent in praises of the very dull old pages  
Only read by friends of Fritz Senn  
And praise the ballad highly  
(The one on Persse O'Reilly)  
And leave the rest to them.  
You must get all in a tizzy about Shem and Shaun and Issy  
And they'll all give you a break  
And if desperate start singing, just set the rafters ringing  
With one more verse of "Finnegan's Wake!"  
And everyone will say,  
As you sing your mystic way,  
"If this young man can sing 'Finnegan's Wake'  
Which has too many notes for me,  
Why what a very musically deep young man  
this deep young man must be!"

**Bunthorne / Sebastian Knowles aria – 4**

Then you must learn to be a niggler and prance among the sigla  
 Like Bishop or O' Shea  
 Don't read the book, just quote it, mine for epigrams, footnote it,  
 That's by far the simplest way.  
 Though the McCarthyites may jostle you will rank as an apostle  
 To the great non-reading throng,  
 You'll be one of the high elect  
 If you can drop Swiss German dialect  
 Into an after-dinner song!  
 And everyone will say,  
 As you bluff your desperate way,  
 "If he's trying to fake a book like *Finnegans Wake*  
 And can't fool even me,  
 Why, what an unadulterated kind of fraud  
 this total fraud must be!"

***Finnegans Wake***

by far and away the most unread book in literature  
 (Sebastian Knowles, "*Finnegans Wake* for Dummies" [2009])  
 Within a year of the publication of *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot  
 pronounced the novel a work 'from which none of us can  
 escape'; yet *Finnegans Wake* seems to escape us still.  
 (Tim Conley, "*Finnegans Wake: Some Assembly Required*" [2009])  
*Finnegans Wake* "is not about something; it is that  
 something itself."  
 (Samuel Beckett, "Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . . Joyce" [1929])  
 We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries,  
 to understand our interpreter.  
 (Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* [1959])

***Finnegans Wake* 1**

1) book of the night - dream  
 Freud: condensation and displacement

One great part of every human existence is passed  
 in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by  
 the use of wideawake language, cutanddry  
 grammar and goahead plot.

(Joyce to Harriet Shaw Weaver, November 24, 1926)

***Finnegans Wake* 2**

2) dream without identifiable dreamer  
 3) structure:  
 —Giambattista Vico's *The New Science*  
 (1725, 1744)  
 —four cycles: a) age of gods, b) age of heroes,  
 c) age of humans, d) ricorso  
 —"The Ballad of Tim Finnegan"  
 (The Clancy Bros. with Tommy Makem)

**"Ballad of Tim Finnegan" introduction**

Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's  
 mauerer, lived in the broadest way immarginable in his rushlit  
 toofarback for messuages before joshuan judges had given us  
 numbers or Helviticus committed deuteronomy . . . During mighty  
 odd years this man of hod, cement and edifices in Toper's Thorp  
 piled building supra building pon the banks for the livers by the  
 Soangso. . . A waalworth of a skyerscape . . . entowerly, erigenating  
 from next to nothing . . . with a burning bush abob off its baubletop  
 and with larrons o' toolers clittering up and tumbles a' buckets  
 clottering down.

Of the first was he to bare arms and a name: Wassaily  
 Booslaugh of Riesengeborg. . . Hohohoho, Mister Finn, you're  
 going to be Mister Finnagain! . . . Hahahaha, Mister Funn, you're  
 going to be fined again! . . .

Dimb! He stottered from the latter. Damb! he was dud.

**"Ballad of Tim Finnegan" 1**

Tim Finnegan lived in Walkin Street  
 A gentleman Irish mighty odd.  
 He had a tongue both rich and sweet,  
 And to rise in the world he carried a hod.  
 Now Tim had a sort of a tippler's way,  
 With the love of the liquor he was born,  
 And to help him on with his work each day,  
 He'd a drop of the craythur every morn.  
 Whackfolthedah, dance to your partner,  
 Welt the flure yer trotters shake,  
 Wasn't it the truth I told you,  
 Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.

### “Ballad of Tim Finnegan” 2

One morning Tim was rather full,  
His head felt heavy which made him shake,  
He fell from the ladder, and he broke his skull,  
And they carried him home his corpse to wake.  
They rolled him up in a nice clean sheet,  
And laid him out upon the bed,  
With a gallon of whiskey at his feet,  
And a barrel of porter at his head.  
Whackfolthedah, dance to your partner,  
Welt the flure yer trotters shake,  
Wasn't it the truth I told you,  
Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.

### “Ballad of Tim Finnegan” 3

His friends assembled at the wake,  
And Mrs. Finnegan called for lunch,  
First they brought in tay and cake,  
Then pipes, tobacco, and whiskey punch.  
Biddy O' Brien began to cry,  
“Such a neat clean corpse, did you ever see,  
Tim avourneen, why did you die?”  
“Ah, hould your gab,” said Paddy McGee.  
Whackfolthedah, dance to your partner,  
Welt the flure yer trotters shake,  
Wasn't it the truth I told you,  
Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.

### “Ballad of Tim Finnegan” 4

Then Maggy O'Connor took up the job,  
“Biddy,” says she, “you're wrong, I'm sure,”  
But Biddy gave her a belt in the gob,  
And she left her sprawling on the floor;  
Then the war did soon engage,  
Twas woman to woman and man to man,  
Shillelagh law was all the rage,  
And a row and a ruction soon began.  
Whackfolthedah, dance to your partner,  
Welt the flure yer trotters shake,  
Wasn't it the truth I told you,  
Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.

### “Ballad of Tim Finnegan” 5

Then Micky Maloney raised his head,  
When a noggin of whiskey flew at him,  
It missed and falling on the bed,  
The liquor scattered over Tim;  
Begod he revives, see how he rises,  
Timothy rising from the bed,  
Says, “Whirl your liquor round like blazes,  
Thanam o' n dhoul, do ye think I'm dead?”  
[Irish, “Soul to the devil . . .”]  
Whackfolthedah, dance to your partner,  
Welt the flure yer trotters shake,  
Wasn't it the truth I told you,  
Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.

### *Finnegans Wake* 3

4) storytelling and gossip

5) “characters”: “who is who when everybody is somebody else”

HCE: Humphrey Ⓜ (Earwicker, H C E by moving letter round)

Chimpden Δ Anna Livia

Earwicker □ Shem-Cain

ALP: Anna Λ Shaun

Livia Σ Snake

Plurabelle P S. Patrick

Shem (the Penman) T Tristan

Shaun (the Postman) Ⓛ Isolde

Issy X Mamalujo

□ This stands for the title but I do not wish to say it yet until the book has written more of itself.

Joyce, letter to Harriet Shaw  
Weaver, March 24, 1924  
the symbols are in *Finnegans  
Wake*, pp. 119 & 299 fn. 4

### *Finnegans Wake* 4

6) language: puns, “portmanteau words” (Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*)

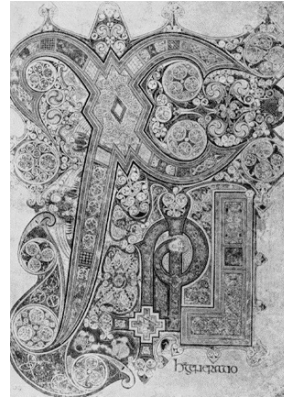
examples:

title *Finnegans Wake*

note: no apostrophe

***Finnegans Wake 5***

when they were yung and easily freudened (p. 115)  
 And trieste, ah trieste ate I my liver! (301)  
 his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles (179)  
 Who can say . . . how many piously forged  
 palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid  
 process from his pelagiarist pen? (181)  
 So you need hardly spell me how every word will be  
 bound over to carry three score and ten toptypical  
 reading throughout the book of Doublends Jined (20)  
 that ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia  
 (120)  
 Wipe your glosses with what you know. (304)

***Finnegans Wake 6***

visual analogy:  
*The Book of Kells*  
 (Irish illuminated  
 MS from ca. 800)

***Finnegans Wake 7***

## 7) textuality

Howth Castle and Environs (I.i, p. 3)  
 Here Comes Everybody (I.ii, p. 32)  
 Haveth Childers Everywhere (III.iii, p. 535)

## notebooks

drafts, manuscripts, proofs

Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce and the  
 Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge UP, 2001):  
 “ideal genetic reader,” “genreader”

***Finnegans Wake 8***8) “lots of fun at *Finnegans Wake*”

## excerpts:

- 1) opening pages (I.1)
- 2) from “The Manifesto of ALP” (I.5)
- 3) 4) from “Shem the Penman” (I.7) ±
- 5) from “Anna Livia Plurabelle” (I.8)  
 Joyce recorded the end of this chapter
- 6) ALP's closing monologue (IV)