

English 9014A
December 6, 2011

Finnegans Wake

Ulysses for Dummies

films of *Ulysses*

Ulysses, directed by Joseph Strick (1967)

Leopold Bloom: Milo O'Shea
Molly Bloom: Barbara Jefford
Stephen Dedalus: Maurice Roëves

Bloom, directed by Sean Walsh (2004)

Leopold Bloom: Stephen Rea
Molly Bloom: Angeline Ball
Stephen Dedalus: Hugh O'Connor

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 tombles a' buckets clottering down.

Of the first was he to bare arms and a name: Wassaily Booslaeugh 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”

□ (Earwicker, H C E by moving letter round)

HCE: Humphrey

△ Anna Livia

Chimpden

□ Shem-Cain

Earwicker

△ Shaun

ALP: Anna

Σ Snake

Livia

P S. Patrick

Plurabelle

T Tristan

Shem (the Penman)

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

Shaun (the Postman)

Joyce, letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, March 24, 1924

Issy

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

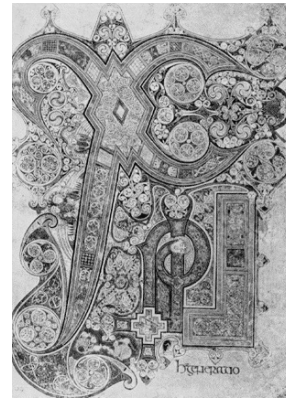
bound over to carry three score and ten toptypical

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)