

English 9014A  
December 4, 2012

*Finnegans Wake*

We are still learning to be  
James Joyce's contemporaries,  
to understand our interpreter.  
(first words of  
Richard Ellmann's  
biography of Joyce,  
1959, revised 1982)

#### 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  
1936: *Ulysses* published in UK  
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

an infantile epistle, dated, small em monday,  
reading: capital pee Papli comma capital aitch  
How are you note of interrogation capital eye I  
am very well full stop new paragraph signature  
with flourishes capital em Milly no stop:  
(*Ulysses*, "Ithaca" 17:1791-94)  
it is not a miseffectual whyacinthinous riot of  
blots and blurs and bars and balls and hoops and  
wriggles and juxtaposed jottings linked by spurts  
of speed: it only looks as like it as damn it  
(*Finnegans Wake* 118.28-31)

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)  
from *James Joyce Quarterly* 46:1 (Fall 2008): 97-111

#### 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***

*Finnegans Wake* "is not about something; it is that  
 something itself."  
 (Samuel Beckett, "Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . . Joyce" [1929])

"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* 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)  
 but: dream without identifiable dreamer

***Finnegans Wake* 2****2) 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  
 Book I: eight chapters (two groups of four)  
 Book II: four chapters  
 Book III: four chapters  
 Book IV: one chapter  
 —"The Ballad of Tim Finnegan"  
 (The Clancy Bros. with Tommy Makem)

**“Ballad of Tim Finnegan” introduction***(from Finnegan's Wake 4:18-5.12 + 6.9-10)*

Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's murer, 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 bauble top 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*

#### 3) storytelling and gossip

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

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

Δ Anna Livia

◻ Shem-Cain

Λ Shaun

Σ Snake

P S. Patrick

T Tristan

I Isolde

X Mamlujo

◻ 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 3*

#### 3) storytelling and gossip

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

HCE: Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker – husband

ALP: Anna Livia Plurabelle – wife

Shem (the Penman) and

Shaun (the Postman) – twin sons

Issy – daughter

+ Sackerson, Kate, the 4, the 12, the 2, the 3, the 28

### *Finnegans Wake 4*

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

“’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe.”

“That’s enough to begin with,” Humpty Dumpty interrupted: “there are plenty of hard words there. ‘*Brillig*’ means four o’clock in the afternoon - the time when you begin broiling things for dinner.”

“That’ll do very well,” said Alice: “and ‘*slithy*’”

“Well, ‘*slithy*’ means ‘lithe and slimy.’ ‘*Lithe*’ is the same as ‘active.’ You see it’s like a portmanteau - there are two meanings packed up into one word.”

#### “portmanteau words” and “puns” (1)

Phall if you but will, rise you must (4:15-16)

Wring out the clothes! Wring in the dew! (213.19-20)

Lord help you, Maria, full of grease, the load is with me! (214.18-19)

his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles (179.24-27)

his farced epistol to the hibrwu (228.33-34)

Outragedy of poetscaids! Acomedy of letters! (425.24)

Great Shapisphere (295.4)

we grisly old Sykos who have done our unsmiling bit on ‘alices, when they were yung and easily freudened (115.21-23)

Three quarks for Muster Mark! (383.1)

#### “portmanteau words” and “puns” (2)

The last word in stoltentelling! (424.35)

What a meanderthalltale to unfurl (19.25-26)

this is nat language at any sinse of the world (83.12)

here keen again and begin again to make soundsense and sensesound kin again (121.14-16)

Ho, Lord ! Twins of his bosom. Lord save us! (215.28-29)

Ho, talk save us! (215.34)

Every talk has his stay (597.19)

How good you are in explosion! (419.11)

Wipe your glosses with what you know. (304 fn3)

#### “portmanteau words” and “puns” (3)

the book of Doublends Jined (20.16)

beginning:

riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs. (3.1-3)

ending:

Finn, again! Take. Bussoftthee, mememormee! Till thousandsthee. Lps. The keys to. Given! A way a lone a last a loved a long the (628.14-16)

title: *Finnegans Wake* (NOTE: no apostrophe)

### *Finnegans Wake 5*

#### 5) textuality

Howth Castle and Environs (3.2-3)  
Here Comes Everybody (32.18-19)  
Haveth Childers Everywhere (535.34-35)  
Huges Caput Earlyfouler (197.8)  
 + hundreds of other examples of HCE

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

### first draft of opening of I.8

O TELL me all now about Anna Livia.  
 I want to know all about Anna Livia. Well, you know Anna Livia? Yes, of course, I know Anna. Tell me all. Tell me now. You'll die when you hear. Well, you see, when the old chap did what you know. Yes, I know, go on. Or whatever it was [they try to make out] he [tried to do] <sup>1</sup> in the <sup>2</sup> [Phoenix] park. He's an awful old rep. What was it he did at all? It was [put] in the papers what he did. [Time will tell. I know it will] O, the old rep! What age is he at all at all?

### *Finnegans Wake 214.1-19 - rivers*

beads went bobbing till she rounded up lost histereve with a marigold and a cobbler's candle in a side strain of a main drain of a manzinahurries off Bachelor's Walk. But all that's left to the last of the Meaghers in the loup of the years prefixed and between is one kneebuckle and two hooks in the front. Do you tell me, that now? I do in troth. Orara por Orbe and poor Las Animas! Ussa, Ulla, we're umbas all! Mezha, didn't you hear it a deluge of times, ufer and ufer, respond to spond? You deed, you deed! I need, I need! It's that irrawaddyng I've stoke in my aars. It all but husheth the lethest zswound. Oronoko! What's your trouble? Is that the great Finnleader himself in his joakimono on his statue riding the high horse there forehengist? Father of Otters, it is himself! Yonne there! Isset that? On Fallareen Common? You're thinking of Astley's Amphitheayter where the bobby restrained you making sugarstuck pouts to the ghostwhite horse of the Peppers. Throw the cobwebs from your eyes, woman, and spread your washing proper! It's well I know your sort of slop. Flap! Ireland sober is Ireland stiff Lord help you, Maria, full of grease, the load is with me! Your prayers. I sonht zo! Madammangut!

### *Finnegans Wake 6*

#### 6) “lots of fun at *Finnegans Wake*”

... and at the Grad Club