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

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 – I

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!

an infantile epistle, dated, small em monday, reading: capital pec 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)
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!
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!”

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,
If you can drop Swiss German dialect
Into an after-dinner song!
As you bluff your desperate way,
“As 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!”
“Ballad of Tim Finnegan” introduction
(from Finnegans Wake 4.18-5.12 + 6.9-10)

Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen’s
maurer, 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 buildung supra buildung pon the banks for the livers by the
Soangso. . . . A waalworth of a skyscape . . . 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 trogers 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 trogers 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 trogers 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 trogers 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’nhoul, do ye tink I’m dead?”
[Irish, “Soul to the devil . . .”]
Whackfolthedah, dance to your partner,
Welt the flure yer trogers 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”

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

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 hibruws (228.33-34)
Outragedy of poetscalds! Acomedy of letters! (425.24)
Great Shapesphere (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 stolentelling! (424.35)
What a meanderthalltale to unfurl (19.25-26)
this is nat language at any sines of the world (83.12)
here keen again and begin again to make soundsense and sensenound 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 explosition! (419.11)
Wipe your glosses with what you know. (304 fn3)

“portmanteau words” and “puns” (3)

the book of Doublends Jined (20.16)
beginning:
riverun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore
to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vics of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environ. (3.1-3)
ending:
Finn, again! Take. Bussofithee, mememormee! Till thousandsth thee. 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)
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5) textuality
  - Howth Castle and Environ (3.2-3)
  - Here Comes Everybody (32.18-19)
  - Haveth Childers Everywhere (535.34-35)
  - Hughes Caput Earlyfouter (197.8)
  + hundreds of other examples of HCE

notebooks, drafts, manuscripts, proofs
“ideal genetic reader,” “genreader”

Finnegans Wake 214.1-19 - rivers
beads went bobbing till she rounded up last hinterve with a marigold and a cobbler’s candle in a side strain of a main drain of a manzinhurries off Bachelor’s Walk. But all that’s left to the last of the Meaghers in the long of the years prefixed and between is one kneebuckle and two hooks in the front. Do you tell me. that now? I do in truth. Orara por Orle and poor Las Animas! Uxa Ulla, we’re umbus all! Mezhe, didn’t you hear it a deluge of times, after and after, respond to spond? You dey, you deed! I need, I need! It’s that irrawaddy I’ve stoke in my ass. It all but husheth the lethe stzswound. Oronoko! What’s your trouble? Is that the great Finn leader himself in his joakim 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 Amphitheater 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. Murtie, full of grease, the load is with me! Your prayers. I saught ye! Madammanngat!

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6) “lots of fun at Finnegans Wake”

. . . and at the Grad Club